

Enter, Peacetime

by MMADfan

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Takes place during and immediately after the final battle.

Contains spoilers for the fic *Death's Dominion*.
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Chapter 1 of 1

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Alastor Stunned the Death Eater he was duelling, then turned to hex the Death Eater who was wearing down Dean Thomas's defence. As much as he itched to move further onto the battlefield, there were Death Eaters aplenty within reach, and he didn't want to leave Arthur Weasley unguarded. He'd tried to cast a Renervate on him in between fending off Death Eaters, but Weasley hadn't stirred. Alastor could see that the wizard still lived, however, his chest moving with his breath.

He and Weasley had made it several feet onto the grounds, first duelling Voldemort himself until Arthur fell, then after Voldemort had turned to curse a Gryffindor student who had been casting ineffectual curses at his back, other Death Eaters had provided the old Auror with a steady stream of targets. Alastor had lost sight of the Dark Wizard, though he could guess at his location whenever there were new shouts and screams of pain or terror and more Hogwarts defenders fell. He had seen the Headmistress and her contingent of Slytherins making their way onto the battlefield, ridding themselves of all obstacles to their progress until they paused in the centre of the maelstrom.

Alastor presumed that Potter was under his Invisibility Cloak there in what appeared to be an empty area in the middle and that they were waiting for the Dark Wizard to confront the Headmistress before they revealed his continued survival. A quick look with his magical eye revealed young Potter there, his wand in his hand; he briefly had

the impression of someone else hidden on Potter's other side, but it was a mere shimmer, perhaps the aftereffect of a cast spell. His attention was drawn back to the red-haired wizard on the ground behind him, and he Petrified a witch who had been going to kill the leader of the Order of the Phoenix where he lay helpless.

After he'd dropped two more Death Eaters, a voice rang out over the sounds of the battle, and all went eerily and suddenly quiet.

The Dark Wizard was taunting Minerva, but Minerva's taunts were sharper. It seemed, though, that Voldemort was now prepared for such personal insults, and they did not distract him. But neither was Minerva intimidated, and Alastor moved a few feet closer, swivelling his magical eye until he could see the two facing each other, Voldemort seeming to loom over her. Minerva's Slytherins were still ranged behind her, and Alastor worried for a moment that in the end, her generosity toward the young snakes would be her undoing, that she would be hexed in the back by them even as she challenged the Dark Wizard. It was obvious that she'd been abandoned by the wizard who had followed her about like a sycophant for the last several months; Robert Crouch hadn't joined the Death Eaters, but neither had he appeared to help the Headmistress in her greatest hour of need. It would be no surprise to him if the Slytherins turned on Minerva just when she was relying on them. Alastor's worry evaporated as the oldest Slytherin student stepped up beside Minerva and unflinchingly defied the self-styled Dark Lord.

Alastor had no time to wonder about the mysteries of Slytherin. There was a shout, then a wizard screamed in agony. Alastor started and stepped forward, but it seemed that Voldemort and Minerva were still talking, then he smiled as he heard Potter's voice and then Riddle's...must begin to think of him as Riddle, he thought to himself...and Riddle was clearly displeased and surprised. But then he was more than surprised, and Alastor himself nearly dropped his own wand when he heard the next voice and saw a snowy white head appear in the midst of the Slytherins. Good God! How . . . Alastor had seen Dumbledore dying, and he had attended the man's funeral and entombment. But there he was, stepping up on the other side of Potter, and Alastor had no doubt that it was Albus Dumbledore, alive and in the flesh, returned to Hogwarts to defend her.

His grin was immediate and unquenchable, and Alastor was sure that at that moment, all of the Hogwarts defenders felt a similar sense of joy, hope, and renewed confidence. And now there was his old Arithmancy teacher, Gertrude Gamp, as undeterred in her defiance of the Dark by her loss of limb as he himself had been by his own loss. She'd been a Slytherin; Alastor had forgotten that. They spoke of Severus Snape, and Alastor half-expected the lank-haired wizard to appear from thin air, as well, but no, Riddle really had killed him, it seemed, though Minerva still sung his praises. Alastor was unsure whether Snape was deserving of her words, but worthy or not, he'd apparently been killed serving the right side at the end...probably only to serve his own purposes, though, and he'd miscalculated somehow and ended up dead.

But now, there was more noise, more cursing, and the Potter boy was taking back what was his, draining the life from the Dark Wizard as the Death Eaters battled to reach their lord and help him. It seemed that was the signal for the battle to begin again, and Alastor raised a shield just in time to prevent himself from becoming a victim of a Crushing Curse, and from that point, he had no time to look and see what had become of the half-blood Riddle.

It was over quickly after that, and once Moody had enlisted a Hufflepuff and a Gryffindor to watch over Arthur Weasley, he set to assisting the other Aurors and members of Dumbledore's Army in rounding up fleeing and injured Death Eaters. He was almost felled by a Death Eater who had only been feigning unconsciousness, but the blow from the hex only hit him in the left arm, breaking bones, but not incapacitating him. A good mediwitch like Pomfrey could get him mended in no time. He looked around him at the green-lawn-turned-bloody-battlefield, and he was suddenly overcome by sorrow. There were too many injured and dead, students, teachers, Aurors . . . They would come first. He cast a quick spell to numb his arm, and then carried on with his duty.

Alastor, arm now mended, paused in his conversation with a Hogsmeade villager who had stood at the Hogwarts gates and helped keep any of the defeated Death Eaters from escaping. The witch's memory, washed as it was by the adrenaline that had surged through her during the battle, was already spotty and confused, which was why Alastor and other Aurors were now doing their best to question as many of the Hogwarts defenders as possible. In even twenty-four hours, although some memories might be more accurate, a few gaps filled in by fresh recollections, more memories would have faded or become embellished. Give it a week, and even the most objective observer might have trouble distinguishing what they themselves had witnessed as opposed to what they had heard or supposed after the fact. The Ministry would no doubt supplement these written eyewitness reports with reports taken after viewing the Pensieve memories of some of the primary figures in the battle, but identifying participants and getting down some basic facts was an important task at that moment...as was identifying the dead and wounded on both sides.

The blue-haired witch whom he had been questioning followed his gaze. "Bloody hell," the witch said softly. "I'd heard he was back, but I hadn't seen him yet with my own eyes. Both of them."

The two wizards, one tall and white-haired, the other slighter and dark-haired, had emerged from the Forbidden Forest, where they had incinerated Riddle's remains in a location never to be revealed, and were now walking slowly toward the castle. Both were silent, and both looked weary and pensive.

"Bloody hell, indeed," Alastor agreed, nodding. Somehow, it had seemed easier to believe that Potter had once again survived the Dark Wizard's curse than to believe that Dumbledore still lived, but Alastor knew it was he. Dumbledore had always been master of deception, an even greater deceiver than any Dark Wizard.

Dumbledore's deceptions . . . in some ways, Alastor found them worse...worse personally, not objectively. He remembered the first time he had encountered one of Dumbledore's grand deceptions, when he was scarcely older than young Potter was now. It had been a relief, a great relief, to learn that Dumbledore had been dissembling, but . . . in an odd way, learning of the deceit seemed to double the pain Alastor had felt when he had believed it to be truth. He didn't know why it should be so, but it was. Scrimgeour had shrugged it off, that deceit which had enabled them to defeat Grindelwald, but then, Rufus had known of it from the start, and he didn't even hold the *Crucio* he had received from Dumbledore against the older wizard.

When Alastor had questioned the other Auror about it, Scrimgeour had said that if he'd ever had any doubt that Dumbledore was acting in order to fool Grindelwald, it was the *Cruciatus* that had dispelled the doubt. At Moody's incredulous stare, Scrimgeour had explained that he hadn't thought it possible to cast a *Crucio* that hurt as little as that one had. Rufus had obstinately refused to speak of the events again, citing the secrecy orders from the Ministry, and Alastor had learned to live with the puzzle of Dumbledore's deception, focussing his memory instead on the sacrifice that his former teacher had made months before that, saving his life.

Alastor finished questioning the blue-haired witch and moved on to talk to a slim, bearded young wizard in a white turban named Singh, who was sitting on a fallen bit of stonework just inside the gates. When he realised that Singh had been hit by a couple curses and not yet received treatment for them, Alastor chided him, then sent him up to the castle accompanied by the blond student who'd been out taking photographs of the battlefield. Apparently the wizard had been unwilling to use anything stronger than a standard Shield Charm against the fleeing Death Eaters, and had devoted himself to protecting the others defending the gates who had no such qualms about using force. He also...foolishly, in Alastor's opinion...had declared himself unhurt when the Hogwarts house-elves had been out on the grounds seeking the injured. Now he was clearly unwell, his lips drained of colour and his dark eyes dull.

Alastor gazed after the two wizards as they headed up to the castle, and realised that he needed to rest, as well. He wasn't as young as he once was, and although he'd had a bite to eat shortly before dawn, readying himself for the conflict to come, it was now midmorning and he had expended a good deal of energy. The house-elves, apparently at Flitwick's direction, had set up some buffet tables in the Great Hall. Perhaps it was time for a meal and a few minutes of rest. He could catch up with the news, find out what was happening, how many Death Eaters had been captured, whether they were all accounted for, who on their own side was dead . . .

He was just finishing a second thick sandwich of cold roast beef and soft garlicky white cheese when a house-elf in a blue tea towel Apparated directly in front of him, startling him.

"This wizard is Alastor Moody?" the house-elf asked solemnly.

"Yes, I'm Moody," Alastor said, ready to scold the elf for having so discourteously Apparated too close to him.

"The wizard Albus Dumbledore requests this wizard's presence in the Hogwarts infirmary." The house-elf looked at the glass of pumpkin juice in Moody's hand. "His immediate presence."

"Is it the Headmistress? How is Professor McGonagall? Is she all right?" Alastor asked, putting down his glass. No one had been able to tell him anything other than that

she'd been very badly injured right at the end of the battle and had been brought to the infirmary, Apparated by her house-elf, but cradled in Dumbledore's arms.

The house-elf nodded. "Gervio has seen our Headmistress. She lives and is being cared for. The wizard Dumbledore is with her." The house-elf continued to look up at him expectantly. "The wizard Dumbledore's request is strong, Mr Alastor Moody. You must go to him."

Moody raised an eyebrow, but as he stood and opened his mouth to reply, the house-elf Disapparated.

He climbed the stairs, becoming aware of an ache in his stump, and he wondered why Dumbledore wanted to see him...him, in particular. Since the first surprise of seeing Albus appear in the midst of the battle, Alastor had worked out that Albus must have been *somewhere* over the past year, and somewhere close. This, combined with the disappearance of Robbie Crouch, led him to the inevitable conclusion that Dumbledore had been masquerading as Crouch the entire time. He had certainly given Dumbledore no reason for increased affection for him; he had treated Crouch with suspicion and open dislike. Not only that, but he had shown clear interest in supplanting Crouch in Minerva's affections. At least he hadn't pressed his attentions upon her.

Two students, one a Slytherin and one a Hufflepuff by the emblems on their robes, stood at the entrance to the infirmary. They looked to be fourth- or fifth-years. Young, at any rate. They all seemed young to Moody. Babies.

The Hufflepuff stepped forward. "You require medical attention, sir?"

Moody shook his head. "I'm here to see the Headmaster. He sent for me. Professor Dumbledore," he said to clarify, though it seemed no clarification was necessary.

The girl stepped back and looked at the other young witch. "You want to go in this time, Lettie?"

The Slytherin nodded. "Come this way, sir, and I'll find someone to bring you to Professor Dumbledore," she said softly.

"You two the door wardens?" Moody asked gruffly. They didn't look capable of keeping out a Cornish pixie.

"Not exactly, sir," the girl replied as she opened one of the large double-doors behind her. "We're to direct the bereaved to the appropriate room to wait so that they are not confronted by anything upsetting in the infirmary, and to keep others from entering and disturbing the Healers at their work. Visiting hours will be established later this afternoon and lists of those transferred to St. Mungo's will also be available at that time." Lettie had clearly been well-rehearsed for her role. "People have been very cooperative." The Slytherin caught the attention of one of the mediwitches who had come up from St. Mungo's, and they had a short whispered conversation.

"He's over here," the older witch said, leading him around a corner and pointing toward a partially closed door. "You will need to be quiet. He is with the Headmistress, and she is . . . she could be doing better."

Alastor nodded and approached the door cautiously, uncertain both of what he would see when he entered and of what kind of greeting he would receive.

The figure on the bed was entirely still, and her head was swathed in white. Alastor scarcely recognised Minerva. She seemed so small in that bed, the light in the room, dim, but her face so pale, she seemed to shine like the moon. He was aware of a second figure seated in a chair beside her, an ordinary straight-backed infirmary chair; Albus had pulled as close to the bed as he could, and he was bent over, elbows on his knees, hands folded beneath his lowered forehead, almost in an attitude of prayer. Alastor stepped all the way into the room, and Albus looked up at him. A ghost of a smile appeared on the older wizard's face.

"Thank you for coming, Alastor," he said softly. "Close the door behind you, will you?"

Alastor nodded, closed the door, and took a step forward.

Albus looked back at Minerva's face before waving Alastor to come closer.

"How is she?" Alastor asked.

"They say she will wake up . . . Healer Baton . . ." Albus swallowed and looked at Minerva. "Healer Baton did some special tests. He said there . . . there should be no permanent damage." Albus looked up at Alastor. "She will be fine."

Alastor thought that Albus sounded less than certain, but he nodded. "She'll wake up and be telling us all what's what before we know it, I'm sure," he replied quietly.

"I need you to do me a favour, my boy, a favour for us both," Albus said.

"Anything," Alastor said, and he meant it. If Albus were to ask him to pluck out his other eye, at that moment, he would do it.

"I was meant to go to give them the news of the battle, to fetch them, or if not I, then Minerva," Albus said softly, looking down at his beloved.

"Yes," Alastor replied, though he felt that Albus had explained nothing.

"It's Severus, Alastor. It's Severus."

"Snape?"

"Yes."

"Did Vol er, did Riddle really kill him?"

"Tom did his best," Albus replied, "but he did not count on us. Miss Granger and I were there, sent by Minerva. When Hermione and Severus left me, Severus was still alive. I have hope that he survived."

"Granger and Snape . . ." Alastor was confused.

"Yes. Severus was already dying when we were finally able to make our attack on the Death Eaters whom Tom had left behind with him. Hermione killed Nagini, then we did our best for Severus. She Portkeyed away with him to safety. I burned the Shack to the ground after they'd left...removing the unconscious Death Eaters first, of course."

No, Dumbledore wouldn't even leave Death Eaters in a burning building, no matter how much they might deserve such an end.

"So, what do you want me to do?" Alastor asked.

"First, I want you to know what Severus said before Tom had Nagini attack him, Alastor. You must understand that Severus had no knowledge of our presence, nor of our plan to try to rescue him. He believed that he was going to certain death when he Apparated one last time to Tom's side."

Alastor nodded shortly. A traitor's end. Death was to be expected.

"Miss Granger and I were in the room, but concealed. We witnessed what Severus believed were his last words and final actions on this earth." Albus swallowed and blinked; a few tears rolled down his cheeks. "He declared his love and devotion to Minerva. He told Tom that he had been betraying him for years. He told Tom . . . he told him that I was like a father to him." Albus couldn't continue, looking away and wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

Even after the incident in which he had cursed Snape in the back and Minerva had shown him the error of his ways, Alastor still hadn't fully believed in Snape's loyalty. And he certainly believed that Snape was acting for his own purposes, motivated by some objective of his own, some goal he wished to attain...a position of power, most likely...and that he was ready to switch to whichever was the winning side when the time was right. Alastor was abashed to realise that he had been wrong about the Slytherin wizard all along...or perhaps not *all* along, but at least recently, and at the end.

"But you were able to rescue him?" Alastor asked. "You and Granger?"

Albus nodded. He reached over and took Minerva's hand and held it between his hands as he gazed at her face. "It was Minerva's hope that he live, and mine, and it was her plan that saved him." Albus looked back up at Alastor. "I have not heard from them, but I am hoping that no news is good news, and that he did not later succumb to Nagini's bites."

"He was bitten more than once?" Alastor grimaced.

"Yes, but we had potions ready for him, and other treatments. I have hope for him."

"So . . . where do I come in?" Alastor asked.

"I want you to go down and fetch him and Miss Granger back to the castle. Dead or alive," Albus said, his voice cracking with emotion and fatigue, "he needs to come home, back to us."

"Does he know about . . . about you?"

Albus shook his head. "No. So do not make any reference to me, even if he appears to be unconscious."

"All right, I'll bring them back." The old Auror nodded. "But where are they?"

"At the Hog's Head. With Aberforth and Egeria Egidius."

"Right."

"Alastor," Albus said softly, looking up at him, "this is an opportunity for you to make amends, at least to a degree. You understand that, don't you?"

Alastor averted his gaze and nodded mutely.

"Tell me that you understand, Alastor."

"Yes, sir, I understand." He raised his natural eye to meet Albus's. "I didn't have faith in you, or in Minerva . . . and I . . ." Alastor could feel the heat suffuse his face. "And I refused to see any of Snape's acts as evidence of . . . of his loyalty." He swallowed. He knew what Albus wanted to hear, and, indeed, what he knew he should admit. "I was wrong. I was wrong, and I could have caused injury to the Order. I did do injury to him, to Snape. I am sorry, Albus," he ended softly.

Albus nodded. "Thank you, my boy, but it is not only to me whom you owe this apology, you know, and someday, I hope that you can find it in yourself to give it to the one whom you wronged far more."

"I will try."

"Very good. And so that you completely understand, you need to know that without Severus, we would have had far greater difficulty defeating Tom. I do not know if it would have been possible. But for years, Severus gave much, suffered much, and accomplished much, and in the end, he was willing to sacrifice his life, believing it necessary for our victory. If it were not for Minerva's plan and our efforts, he would, indeed, be dead." Albus cocked his head at him, observing him. "You would have got your wish, Alastor. You wanted him dead, did you not?"

"I... No... I do not know," Alastor said. "Perhaps." He sighed. "Shall I go now?"

"Yes, go now, bring him back with dignity, dead or alive, Alastor. Bring him home in honour."

Alastor nodded. "He will come through those gates as befits a hero." He quirked a smile. "Or what remains of the gates. It's quite a mess out there."

Albus smiled slightly. "I will wait to worry about such things. I believe that Filius is in charge of Hogwarts now, just until Minerva gets back on her feet. After you return, if you feel up to it and Robards doesn't need you elsewhere, you could check with Filius and see if there's anything else you can do to help here."

"I will." He straightened. "You can count on me, sir."

"I know I can, my boy." Albus turned his attention back to Minerva.

Alastor took a step toward the door. "When she wakes up . . . when she wakes up, tell her I hope she gets well soon."

Albus nodded. "I will. She will be glad to know that you saw to Severus's safe return home."

Alastor approached the Hog's Head slowly. He was uncertain what he was supposed to do now. He'd Apparated from the gates to the edge of the village and walked from there. Hogsmeade had been very quiet, though there were a number of Aurors on the high street, patrolling in case any Death Eaters had escaped the grounds and were inclined to make trouble or seek shelter in the village. They were also a deterrent for any ordinary mischief-makers or thieves who might wish to take advantage of the situation. At the corner of the side street leading to the Hog's Head, Alastor had passed a young Auror standing alertly, but she recognised him and nodded, allowing him to pass.

Now he stood before the Hog's Head and looked at the closed and shuttered edifice. He could feel the tingle of wards now that he was closer to it, strong wards. He couldn't see through the door or shutters with his magical eye, and he did not know if his voice would even carry through them. Hopefully, a Patronus would be able to penetrate the wards; he seemed to remember that Aberforth could send and receive Patronus messages.

Alastor summoned a distant, happy memory, and cast, sending his fox to find Aberforth. He watched the Patronus disappear through the pub's wall, and he waited. A moment later, the small peep door opened, and Alastor could see Aberforth's blue eyes looking out at him.

"Eh! Watcher want?" Aberforth seemed suspicious despite the Patronus message.

"You know me, Aberforth. Himself sent me to fetch your friend, if you know what I mean," Alastor said.

"Aye, I know what you mean." Aberforth seemed to frown, his eyes squinting out through the little door. "It's safe then, is it?"

"Safe as houses," Alastor replied. "The bastard's dead."

Aberforth nodded and disappeared, shutting the peep door. A second later, Alastor felt a shimmer in the wards and heard the sliding and thunking of locks. He swivelled his eye around and tried again to look through the door. This time, he was able to see Aberforth fussing with the locks, though the other wizard was fuzzier and more indistinct than usual even through a heavy oak door. Must be Albus's wards; Aberforth was a dab hand with wards, but he couldn't have achieved anything this strong.

The door scraped open. "Get in here."

Alastor edged through the opening Aberforth gave him. As soon as he was through, Aberforth slammed the door shut and reset the wards.

"Where is he? And is he . . ." Alastor trailed off.

"He's through here." Aberforth pushed aside a curtain and motioned the other wizard into a back room.

Alastor entered the room, then took a step back, bumping into Aberforth. Snape looked like death. Pale on a good day, this was not a good day. Snape's skin looked translucent, pulled tight over an almost fleshless face. Alastor had noticed that the wizard had been losing weight, but now that he was lying there unconscious, covered only with a sheet and a soft grey blanket, no layers of robes hiding him, Alastor could see that the other wizard was practically emaciated, and the Nagini venom had done him no good.

Hermione stood from her chair at the wizard's side and turned to face the door, her wand drawn, but only held loosely in her hand, and Egeria Egidius on Snape's other side looked up and smiled faintly.

"Is he . . ." Alastor couldn't take his eyes...either of them...off the wizard whom he had hated for so long. He felt ill, sick with himself and sick with what had been done to Snape.

"He's alive. He should make it, but it's been a hard night," Healer Egidius said.

"You're here; does that mean it's over?" Hermione asked.

Alastor nodded and came closer. "It's over."

"How's Harry?"

"He's fine. Don't think he has a scratch on him," Alastor told her.

"And Ron? Ronald Weasley? And the Headmistress? And the...and everyone?"

Alastor shook his head. "I think Ronald is all right. There were losses, though, hard losses, but now's not the time to talk about them." He nodded toward the wizard lying on the pallet set on a long table. "I was sent for him. To bring him . . . to bring him home, he said."

"We can't Apparate with him," Egeria said. "He couldn't stand the strain yet. If you say it's safe to move him, we can carry him. I have a stretcher. If it's safe."

"It's safe. Doubt we'll see many on the streets but other Aurors," Alastor said gruffly. "And I'll be with you. I'll see to it naught happens to him."

Hermione looked up at him, and her eyes swam with tears. "Will you? Now that he's like this, almost dead?" She backed toward the table and touched Snape's arm. "I know what you did that time, what you did to him."

"That's none of your affair," Alastor replied sharply. He paused, taking a breath, considering the young witch in front of him. "But I made my peace with Snape about that. And now I'm here to see that he gets back to Hogwarts safely." Both of his eyes met Hermione's. "He'll come to no harm. The battle's fought and won. But if any try to hurt him . . ." Alastor shrugged. "They'll have four Gryffindors to deal with, won't they, lassie. I'll let no more harm come to him if I can help it."

"Right then." Egeria stood and waved her wand, Summoning a stretcher from where it leaned against the wall. She brought it level with the table, where it floated obediently. Another swish of the Healer's wand, and Severus was gently Levitated, pallet, sheets, and all, and settled onto the Charmed stretcher. A spasm crossed the wizard's face, but he did not regain consciousness.

"You're sure it's okay to move 'im," Aberforth asked, looking with furrowed brow at the sick wizard, who was breathing through pale, dry lips.

Egeria nodded briskly. "He needs to be in hospital, or in the infirmary, at least. I only brought limited supplies with me." She glanced over at the array of potions and Charmed instruments on the sideboard. "I'll return for all that later, if you don't mind, Aberforth, and just bring one bag with me now."

"Aye, that's fine," Aberforth replied. "It's all safe enough here, and I won't reopen for another day or two."

"You'll have a lot of thirsty, celebrating customers when you do. I may come by for a pint or two, myself," Alastor said. "Now, though, let's get him back to the castle. It's a long walk."

The four Gryffindors left the pub with the unconscious Slytherin floating on his Charmed stretcher, Alastor leading the way, Aberforth warding the door behind them and then taking up the rear, and the two witches walking on either side of the stretcher.

It was, indeed, a long walk up from the village, and Alastor's legs, both of them, were sore by the time they reached the gates. That boy was out taking photographs again, and Alastor considered shooing him and his camera away, but then he thought, no, if Snape is a hero, it should be documented. There will then be some proof if there are ever any doubters, and he himself would be a witness, he and the rest of the Gryffindor honour guard.

It seemed that Snape was a quintessential Slytherin, after all, Alastor thought as they stepped through the open doors of the castle, although not in the way that he had believed. Snape had fooled them all, fooled even the most powerful Dark Wizard in history, and he had achieved greatness, even if it was ephemeral. Alastor glanced back with his magical eye at the wizard floating behind him. It would be ephemeral greatness, he was certain of that, but perhaps with some lasting core to it. He did not envy Snape his life, neither what he'd endured nor what was to come. It was hard to find a place in the world in peacetime after years of battle...or years of spying...Alastor knew that himself. He was not called "Mad-Eye" only on account of his magical eye, after all.

Poppy Pomfrey met them at the top of the stairs, her eyes shadowed with exhaustion, but her smile bright.

Alastor nodded to her. "We brought him back, as requested," he said brusquely.

"There's a room ready for him," Poppy said. She looked past Alastor, taking in Severus's appearance. Her smile did not fade. "He'll be fine now. He's home. He's home with us."

~Fin~

Author's Note: Readers who are familiar with [Death's Dominion](#) will recognize this one-shot as a kind of "out-take" from near the end of the story.

". . . Moody left, a peculiar dazed expression on his face . . ."

Chapter Thirty: And death shall have no dominion,

Death's Dominion