











doubt, believed as I did that I would automatically be in Slytherin. Then, I heard a voice in my head.

"Ah, another Black. However, you're not like your sister or your parents; indeed, you are very similar to your Uncle Alphard."

This thought scared me, as I knew Uncle Alphard had been in Ravenclaw and was not looked upon too kindly by the family. I shut my eyes tight and thought, 'Please, Slytherin.'

"You do have some ambition, but I do not see you fitting well into Slytherin," the voice responded.

'Look, I need to be in Slytherin, my parents and sister would never forgive me if I wasn't. I am a member of one of the oldest and purest families, and I must be placed in Slytherin,' I thought more forcefully.

"Alright, if you insist, though I do not think you will find acceptance for your differing beliefs there," the Hat responded, and I barely had time to whisper, "Differing beliefs?" before the Hat shouted to the whole hall, "SLYTHERIN!!"

I sighed in relief and stood to remove the Sorting Hat. It was very quiet in the Great Hall all of a sudden, and there was no clapping as I made my way to the Slytherin table. I took a seat next to Bella and looked around, wondering why everyone was staring at me. I looked over at Bella, who was shooting glares around the table. I nudged her and whispered nervously, "Why is everyone staring, Bella?"

Bella looked puzzled, but replied, "Well, Andie, you were up there for what seemed like a lifetime."

I blushed and turned my head down, and after just another moment, Professor McGonagall called the next name on the list, Bones, Amelia, who became a Ravenclaw. I kept my head down and focused on my empty plate until the last person, Yaxley, Paul, became a Slytherin. After the Sorting ended, Professor Dumbledore stood and spoke very briefly about banned objects and out of bounds areas, but I wasn't paying much attention, and instead I was looking around at my new classmates.

Once Dumbledore finished his speech, the food appeared on the table, and we very quickly filled our plates. I don't remember much of that first dinner, as I was trying to determine what the Sorting Hat had meant when it said I had differing beliefs. I didn't understand what it meant; I agreed with all of the beliefs that my parents had about blood purity. The only thing I did not agree with was my sister's obvious fascination for the Dark Arts, but that was not that big of a deal, and we would work through it. I was so lost in thought that Bella had to snap her fingers in front of my eyes in order to catch my attention. I glanced around and noticed that everyone was starting to leave the Great Hall. I stood up quickly, glancing to Bella to see where I was going. She just gave me a push towards the rest of the first years, and left the Hall.

All of the other first years were gathered around the fifth-year prefects, Rodolphus and Julia. They waited until the Great Hall was cleared before telling us to sit back down. We all looked around in confusion before sitting back down at the end of the table.

After we were all seated, Julia shook her blonde curls out of her face and began to speak, "Welcome to the Noble House of Slytherin. It is a great honor to be Sorted here, and as such, there are some guidelines that need to be followed." Her brown eyes made eye contact with each one of us in turn before she resumed her speech, "The most important rule of Slytherin is that we must always present a united front to the rest of the school. You may have petty fights amongst yourselves, but you are not to let the other Houses see this, is that understood?" she asked in a harsh voice.

We all nodded collectively, and I had a shiver run down my back. Rodolphus stepped forward and took over for Julia. "You must make sure to do nothing that will cause Slytherin to lose House Points. If you do something, do not get caught," he cautioned us. "Slytherin has won the House Cup for the last three years, and trust me, if a group of first years screws it up this year, you will all greatly regret it." His voice was deep and soothing, and with his looks it was not hard to see why Bella fancied him.

He nodded to Julia, and she once again began to speak. "As we," she indicated to Rodolphus and herself, "are in our fifth year, we will need to focus on our OWL examinations; therefore you will be paired up and assigned a third-year or fourth-year mentor. In addition, the sixth-year prefects, Robert Finley and Sophie Pucey, will be available should you need help. Please come to Rodolphus and myself as a last resort, is that understood?" she concluded.

We all nodded, and she asked briefly, "Are there any questions?"

When no one spoke, Rodolphus nodded and commanded, "Let's go," before turning on his heel and leaving the Great Hall with Julia. We all hurried to get out of our seats and follow behind them. They led us to the left and down a set of stairs into the dungeon. They led us through a maze of hallways until stopping in front of a stretch of empty wall.

"Salazar," Julia spoke, and at once the wall parted, and we followed the two prefects into the common room.

The first thing I noticed upon entering the common room was the low ceiling and many skull decorations. The room was tastefully decorated in green and black with silver trimmings. However, it did not seem very cozy and instead reminded me of Grimmauld Place, which was so dark and creepy. I looked around for Bella; however she was nowhere to be found, and so I let a soft sigh from my lips. The blonde girl next to me turned her brown eyes questioningly to me, but just then Julia spoke up.

"Girls, come with me; boys, follow Rodolphus," she stated simply, leading us to the right and down a spiral staircase until we reached the bottom landing where a single door held a silver plaque that read 'First Years.'

Julia opened the door for us, saying, "Be in the common room by 7:00 sharp tomorrow morning, if you would like guidance on finding your way to the Great Hall. Good night," and with that she turned away and left us.

I followed the other girls into our room and found my trunk at the foot of the bed directly on my left after entering the room. We were all very quiet while we unpacked until the girl to the right of me spoke, "Well, who else hates awkward silences?"

We all giggled and turned around to face one another in order to introduce ourselves. The girl who had broken the silence had shoulder-length black hair that fell in perfect ringlets down her back. "I'm Danielle Wenlock," she said, "but only my mom calls me Danielle when I am in trouble, so please call me Ellie." Her smile was genuine, so that it reached her green eyes. "My twin brother is also here, his name is Damien. I'm sure you'll all meet him in the morning," she concluded.

To my left was the girl who I had noticed in the common room. She was rather plain-looking and had short blonde hair that reached her chin, and wore glasses that were too large for her face. "I'm Isadora Harden," she said. "I'm the first in my family to be placed in Slytherin." She shrugged, as if to say, 'that's fine with me.'

I spoke up next, "I'm Andromeda Black, but please call me Andie." I saw the look of recognition in the other girls' faces and smiled inwardly. "My older sister, Bella, is a third year, and I have another sister who will be here in two years," I said, missing Cissy very much at that moment.

The last girl in our room was a somewhat chubby girl with strawberry blonde hair pulled back into a severe bun that made her round face look even rounder. However, her smile was very friendly, albeit a bit shy. "I'm Aimee Pucey," she said quietly, "My sister is the sixth-year prefect, and um, well hi," she concluded rather awkwardly.

We all continued to get to know each other until Aimee began to yawn, and we realized we should probably get some sleep. I changed in my nightgown and got into my bed, pulling the curtains around me. I smiled and felt like I belonged. My last thought as I drifted off to sleep was that the Sorting Hat was wrong; I wasn't so different from my family. I was right where I belonged in Slytherin.