

# Bed Side/Manor

*by dracontia*

It's good to know where you can get an honest opinion. AI & Scorp universe  
sometime in year six.

## AI & Scorp Show Universe-one shot

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: Don't let the fact that they're practically camped on my doorstep fool you; I don't own these characters.

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All of the herbs for the infirmary were ready to be dispatched when Neville heard a soft knock at the door of Greenhouse Two. He looked up to see an unmistakable head of hair that could only belong to the student he'd once considered least likely to be a pleasure to teach.

Neville had a bit of a soft spot for people who managed to shape up nicely despite others' low expectations.

"Come in, it's open," he called.

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Scorpius held the trunk of the oddly swaying plant carefully, humming to reassure it as he guided it into its new pot. The process had to be done without magic so as not to disturb the development of the buds forming in the crown. Professor Longbottom quickly scooped in a bit more potting mix and patted it down with his hands. "Very nice, Mr. Malfoy. The Palmquists don't seem to mind you, which from them is a high compliment."

"Thank you, sir." Scorpius busied himself sweeping up the loose soil with a spell. Now that the Palmquists were settled into their new homes with a minimum of grumbling, there was no need to do things the hard way. Not to mention that it might be nice to get out of Professor Longbottom's way as quickly as possible.

Scorpius didn't have a crush, per se, but he also didn't really want to hang about long enough to re-notice that his professor (his older, married professor) was bloody fit.

The professor stacked the small, just-emptied pots by hand but elected to float them into the corner with a wave of his wand. "I'm sure you know that you can ask me a question without paying for it in repotted plants."

Scorpius wondered how Professor Longbottom could speak so mildly and still leave him embarrassed at being found out. "Yes, sir. That is to say...I wanted to ask you something, but I'm not sure how to phrase it."

"Looking for inspiration from the soil, then," Professor Longbottom smiled as he dusted some of the substance in question from his hands. He began poking about, making a pleased sound when he discovered his transplanting fork.

"Something like that."

"Has anything come to you after half an hour with the illustrious Palmquists?"

In truth, Scorpius felt almost as adrift as he had when he entered Greenhouse Two, but at least now he felt calm. He doubted that transplanting Bubotubers would have proved as relaxing. He sighed at a glass pane in the wall, watching dust motes fly up from it and dance in the last shaft of evening light. "I know what I don't want to do when I leave school. I'm not quite as clear on what I want to do."

Professor Longbottom took his work coat off and shook it, whipping the sparkles of dust into a frenzy. "Surely you had this talk with your head of house last year."

"Yes, well... Professor Slughorn... he...that is to say, his suggestions were rather..."

"One might think, from his suggestions, that he has his own agenda?" There was that mild voice again. This time, it came with a slightly twisted smile. There was amusement there, and annoyance. Reassuringly, Scorpius felt that neither was directed at him.

"Something very much like that, sir."

The professor nodded. "Madam Bellwether needs these in the infirmary," he said, loading bundles of fresh Dittany and a few other herbs into two boxes. "We'll talk as we go, if you don't mind."

"All right, sir." Scorpius took up one of the boxes without being asked, and was treated to another one of those odd looks adults occasionally favored him with...as if they'd expected him to do something quite different. The difference with Professor Longbottom was that he always followed that expression up with a smile that had a distinct touch of pride to it, as if Scorpius had passed some test that only the professor knew about.

"So, what did our resident Potions master have to say on the matter of your future?"

Scorpius scowled at an inoffensive bundle of herbs. "Oh, he rambled on for a while about the Potions-testing office at the Ministry, and when I pointed out my marks in Herbology he went off on a great tangent about an ex-student of his who was always looking for 'clever help' at his Apothecary. Then he went looking for the business card of some witch who keeps the Magical Plants Pavillion at Kew Gardens and managed to bring a bowl of candied pineapple down on his own head. So instead of a contact, I got sweets. Very useful, he was."

"Well, I can't say that I expected him to be useful... but at least he shared the candied pineapple."

Scorpius joined the professor in a chuckle at Slughorn's expense, only feeling the tiniest sliver of guilt at doing so. "Well, I have to admit...some days it's like having a dotty old Father Christmas in purple and green as our head of house. Sorry, sir!"

Judging from Professor Longbottom's entirely too hearty laughter, he failed to notice Scorpius' alarm at slipping into disrespect. The sound startled an owl from its perch. It hooted reproach at them as it flew off into the twilight.

His laughter subsided to a slight smile once they were inside the castle. "I know Madam Thurston at Kew. I don't know that she has the budget for an assistant at the moment, but I would be willing to mention you to her."

"Thank you, sir. I do like Herbology generally, but... some plants are more pleasant to be around than others."

"You wouldn't have much choice as to what plants you were around at Kew, that's for certain," the professor said. "Catch the door for me, lad." Scorpius held the infirmary door as Professor Longbottom went through. "Special delivery for Madam Bellwether," the professor called softly.

"It's about time. That poor girl! Bad enough that I can't relieve all of the pain; she doesn't need to worry about scarring as well." The nurse rattled a half-full mortar at him. "I was down to one prepared dose and this half-done mess. She'll need at least two more treatments."

"Now, now, it's all right. We've got it here in time, and I've even brought you a helper to grind it. Isn't that right, Mr. Malfoy?"

Scorpius rose to the occasion. "Just tell me how much you need."

She took him at his word, snatching the box from him and thrusting mortar and pestle into his hands. "That paste needs to be smooth and thick, with no leaf edges and no liquid floating on top. Empty it into the beaker when you're through...wait, not until I've sanitized your hands!" She cast the necessary spell on his hands. Scorpius felt scrubbed raw, and winced a little as he took up the stone pestle.

"I'll just peel the stems from these, shall I?" Scorpius almost laughed at the meek tone in the professor's voice. He could never quite tell if Professor Longbottom was just being humble, or very gently having someone on.

"Well, if you're going to stay, you may as well make yourself useful." The nurse called from behind the screen in front of one of the beds. Scorpius could hear a soft whimper, and the sound of the nurse scolding. "Now, dearie, you mustn't fidget! I can Vanish the bandage, but if you don't lie very still while I apply the paste to your arm, you'll pull off more skin." Scorpius looked up at the shadows moving behind the cloth with a concerned expression. He didn't notice that the professor had stopped peeling leaves and was watching him intently.

"Professor, please come here and hold Miss Gold's arm still for me."

"My hands...and my robes, for that matter...are a dreadful mess, I'm afraid. Unless you've got your wand out and can disinfect me, perhaps you could employ Mr. Malfoy."

"Merlin's sake! Well, one of you get over here, then!"

Scorpius hastened around the corner of the screen. He faltered a little at the sight of the girl in the bed...she had to have been a first-year, she seemed so tiny amidst all the white sheets and bandages...but quickly sat down where Madam Bellwether indicated and took the girl's hand. She squinted at him and he noticed the glasses on the bedside table.

"You're Malfoy...one of the ones Slughorn's always on about...aren't you?"

"I don't know what the professor goes on about," Scorpius said honestly, though with no little humor. "But I am Scorpius Malfoy."

"What doesn't he go on about?" she came back smartly. Then she hissed as her attention returned to Madam Bellwether's ministrations.

"Shh, dear, that's half of it off. You're doing well."

Scorpius grinned a little. "How'd you manage to do this to yourself?"

"Twasn't my fault. My Potions partner let loose a Chocolate Frog. The thing jumped right into the potion and blew up a bloody cauldron," she huffed.

"Language, Miss Gold!" the nurse admonished.

For the sake of the fussing nurse, Scorpius refrained from laughing. "They'd better have given you the card, at least." He watched out of the corner of his eye as Madam Bellwether finished applying the paste and fished out her wand to charm fresh bandages into place.

"That was the worst of it...it was a Weasley I already had," she sulked.

He wouldn't swear to it, but Scorpius thought he heard a chuckle from Professor Longbottom's general direction.

"There are rather a lot of them, aren't there?" he asked. The girl didn't have a chance to reply, as Madam Bellwether dosed her with a potion and her little blue eyes immediately began to droop.

"She'll be out in no time," the nurse said approvingly. "You were a great help, my dear...do help me a little further and finish the grinding those leaves while I get a bit of tea? I'm positively parched." Without checking to see if Scorpius agreed, she sailed into her office. A little bemusedly, Scorpius returned to the mortar and pestle. Everything was crushed, but it needed a little more work to attain the proper consistency, judging by the texture of substance the nurse had used.

"Some people dislike hospitals a great deal," Professor Longbottom observed. "Whether it's fear of getting sick themselves, a dislike for all the smells and sounds that go with sickness, or just feeling at a loss for something to say to ill people, they feel nervous and out of sorts around one."

"It's never really bothered me, sir." Scorpius managed to refrain from shrugging. He shook the last bits of residue from the pestle while he debated how much he wanted to share about his history of attending a sickbed. "My grandfather was ill for a long time before he died. We mostly took care of him at home. I could help, a little. I... liked being useful." He wondered if he'd said too much after all, and took his time tipping the paste into the beaker to avoid making eye contact.

Professor Longbottom began gathering the box and the stray packets. "Have you ever considered being a Healer? You have the marks in Potions and Herbology for it."

"I... I need a N.E.W.T. in Charms to apprentice for General Practice," Scorpius almost mumbled. "I just scraped together the O.W.L., so Professor Patil let me into the N.E.W.T.-level class, but...Grandmother is hoping that I'll go to work for the Ministry and start, I du...I don't know, climbing the ladder there."

"You haven't answered my question." The professor leaned against the wall, the box held loosely at his side. He was apparently done pretending to be casual.

"I'd like to be able to help people. I don't fancy being stuck in an office all day, watching people wrinkle their noses at me and trying to figure out which ones I'm supposed to try to impress. But... I don't know how I would feel if I **couldn't** heal someone. I think that would be terribly hard." Scorpius glanced up at Professor Longbottom and wondered why an understanding look was sometimes harder to meet than a hostile one.

"There is that. I suppose you wouldn't know unless you tried. And with any career, you won't be happy unless it's your decision." Suddenly the professor turned all business, as if he'd just noticed the gray rapidly turning black outside the windows. "You'd best get moving...unless I'm mistaken, you have Prefect's rounds tonight."

Scorpius started a little, remembering that he did, in fact, have things to do. "Yes, sir." He whirled in the doorway so quickly that his glasses slid. His cheeks pinked slightly from chagrin as he added, "And, thank you, sir. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mr. Malfoy. And, for what it's worth, if you do decide to become a Healer, I think you've already got the bedside manner."

Scorpius didn't realize that he had a small smile quirking one corner of his mouth until he went to brush his teeth sometime after his rounds.

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Madam Bellwether returned from her office, still fussing. "Why you insist on walking these things upstairs when a house-elf could deliver it in a blink is beyond me."

"Oh, you know I never think of that until it's too late." Neville smiled at her innocently and she threw up her hands in fond exasperation. "Besides, I can always use the walk."

FIN

The Palmquist is from lux\_astraea's contribution to the collaborative fic, 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Victory Photo,' posted under the aegis of the collected genius of Mad\_Chatters\_Tea\_Party.

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