

Life After

by Mela

A vampire saves Severus Snape. Snape becomes the protector of the new generation at Hogwarts.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 10

A vampire saves Severus Snape. Snape becomes the protector of the new generation at Hogwarts.

Note: This is the beginning of a new story, made possible with the aid of WriterMerrin. She had to edit dozens of mistakes in this "Prologue", and I assure you that all remaining ones are mine! As everyone knows, the world of this story is not mine.

Prologue

"Look ... at... me...", (*) he asked the boy. The boy complied, and the last image he saw was that of her green eyes. Then, his heart stopped.

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Prince Vladislav was one of the few remaining members of a species that had all but died out. He was a vampire. It would have been easy to regenerate his species by creating more vampires, an act difficult but not impossible. He had no wish to do so, however. It was the vampires he and the other originals had sired that had destroyed his race. Lost in the immense power of being immortal, they had forgotten who they had been and had turned against their sires so that they would rule the earth. The originals, they had never craved to rule the other species. Thus, the originals and a few of the vampires they had created had valiantly fought against the depraved creatures their likes had become. They had won, too, even if the victory was bitter and had cost too many lives.

Prince Vladislav avoided thinking of the past and of his decision to not risk creating any more of his kind. Today, however, was an exception. The events of the past were foremost in his mind. The reason was an old man, a dead old man. The old man, Albus Dumbledore, had not always been old, and when he had been but a child, he had saved one of his vampiric children, one who had remained at his side during the dreadful times of the past. Thus he had a debt towards Dumbledore, one that he had been asked to repay shortly before the old man was killed.

No more than a shadow against the wall, he watched the scene dispassionately. Today, he would fulfill his debt, not without fear that the transformation could create a monster, a twisted, evil monster. He heard the last beat of the man's pulse and started counting down. Time was of the essence. He wished that the children would leave soon, or it would not matter whether they left or stayed. Damn the boy's sentimentality. The cold voice that sounded was almost a godsend as the boy hastened out of the Shrieking Shack immediately upon hearing it. It took them no longer than thirty seconds to go away, but they were thirty seconds too many.

Once the heart stopped beating, one only had three minutes' time. The shadow detached himself from the shade of the wall and knelt next to the man on the ground. Thankfully, the cause of this clinical death was not blood loss, but the snake's venom that had reached the heart. Fifty-five seconds since the last beat, and the kneeling man knew he should hurry. He bent over the victim's neck and bit on the unscathed side of it. He drew blood; the venom could not hurt him. At the same time, he sliced his wrist and let his own silver blood trickle over the other side of the man's neck, the one sliced open by the snake. Ninety seconds and the man kept counting. Then, the man lying on the ground flinched. He did not take a breath, and his heart did not beat, but he had obviously moved. The kneeling man retreated from above his neck and watched as the other man's eyes turned red.

"I am Vladislav. I am your Sire," the man spoke softly, still cloaked in the shadows.

Severus Snape looked at him in confusion. He remembered everything that had happened up to the point that the boy had looked at him with his mother's eyes. There was no way he could have survived his trauma. Slowly, he took in the other man's appearance.

"A vampire? How?" he asked.

"I owed Albus Dumbledore a favor, a debt. A life for a life," the old vampire offered.

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19 years later

He wondered why he kept attending the Sorting Ceremony year after year. Even though attending was not an accurate term, since no one knew he was there. He was hidden in the secret corridor behind the landscape painting that adorned the west side of the Great Hall, just behind the table of the Slytherin House. Nonetheless, this magical painting had an interesting quality. It was transparent from behind, and thus he had an excellent view of the proceedings in the Great Hall. Names were called, but he paid little to no attention. He watched Minerva and marveled at how old she looked. He frowned. He had not aged at all during these years. If anything, he looked even younger than he had when he'd died. Then a name caught his attention.

"Potter, Albus Severus," Minerva called, and there was a tiny hitch in her voice.

He focused on the child who approached the podium. His superior eyesight made it possible for him, even at this distance, to discern that he had her eyes. Lily's eyes. Not that it mattered anymore. His love for her was just a memory. He used his vampiric telepathic skill to enter the child's mind, and he heard the words of the Sorting Hat, as if it was speaking in his own mind. The Sorting Hat that had once been burned and yet appeared to be unscathed.

'Don't worry so much, boy. You don't belong in Slytherin House because you have neither respect nor admiration for any of its best traits. You don't belong in Gryffindor House either because you did not have the courage to accept it if you were sorted in Slytherin. You are intelligent, but not enough to analyze rationally, independently from emotion. You are loyal to family and friends, though anxious not to disappoint them, and this is the reason you belong to Hufflepuff,' the Hat reached its verdict and shouted it to the crowd.

Severus Snape smirked. Then he frowned, though. Potter had given his name to a child, one bearing Lily's eyes. For this reason alone, he would have to look after the little one. He knew that Potter also had an older boy, but he had never given him any thought. This one, though, he would keep an eye on.

Severus Snape used the maze of secret corridors that led to the South Wall of Hogwarts and exited right in the middle of the Forbidden Forest. There, under an ancient tree, lay the entrance to his underground home.

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Two years later

Severus Snape found himself once again attending a Sorting Ceremony. His eyes strayed once or twice towards the boy with the green eyes. The boy did not do justice to any of his names. He was an excellent student, but that was it. He wondered, though, why the boy looked so tense tonight.

Just then, in answer, a name was called, and he could not help but look.

"Potter, Lily," and there was a hitch again in McGonagall's voice.

He looked at the girl and saw that she did not have her grandmother's eyes. She had red hair and freckles, a true Weasley in her appearance. And yet, there was something in her stride or in her posture that reminded him of another girl a long ago time, a girl playing with him in a park situated in a Muggle neighborhood.

The Hat was placed on her head, and it shouted, "Slytherin!" He turned his eyes, first to the Gryffindor table where James Potter looked angry, then to the Hufflepuff table, where Albus Severus Potter looked sad and anxious. The Headmistress seemed to be shocked. The girl herself, though, was another story. She smiled serenely. She walked to the table of her House and was received awkwardly.

Severus Snape watched her interactions with the other students. For the first time in over two decades, he smiled. Then he panicked. He remembered all too well the customary pranks. As a Head of Slytherin, he had never tried to curb them as they had been a long-time tradition. He had always punished the first-year students who had dared complain about them. It was his belief that if they could not handle them they should not belong in Slytherin. Now, however, the idea of this little girl being subjected to a prank did not sit well with him. He did not realize immediately that for the first time in his life as a vampire he had taken up a cause. He did not realize that it was also the first time as a vampire that he felt an emotion. He left the corridor, his robes billowing behind him, and turned towards the Slytherin common room. When he reached it, by use of secondary corridors devoid of portraits, he called for the ghost of the Bloody Baron.

The ghost arrived shortly.

"So, I was right all along. You are alive," the Bloody Baron announced, arrogantly as ever.

"Only by a very loose definition of alive. And I must insist that you don't reveal my presence to anyone," Severus Snape dictated coldly.

"Even if I felt inclined to do so, the oaths that bind me to Slytherin House would not allow me to act against the Head of the House," the Bloody Baron exclaimed.

"I ceased being the Head of the House a long time ago," Severus Snape contradicted the ghost.

"Once you've earned the title, then you keep it for life and sometimes for beyond," the ghost explained.

"Very well, then there is something I need you to do," Severus Snape ordered. "Among the first years there is a girl. Her name is Potter. You have to keep her unharmed from any pranks. Make it clear that she is under your protection," he continued.

The ghost seemed to weigh whether he should say something, but decided against it.

Scorpius Malfoy looked forward to returning to the Slytherin common room. He was an excellent student, teachers and fellow students liked him well enough, and he was well mannered and polite. Tonight, however, he felt differently. He believed in justice, and it was high time it was administered. For two years now he had suffered all sorts of pranks delivered by Weasleys and Potters, all in the name of an old time feud between their fathers. He had to admit that none of the pranks were particularly devious or harming, but finally he would be able to give back what he had taken.

Lily Potter followed the older students towards the dungeons. She had not missed the reactions of her brothers, and she was angry with them. She wondered why they could not be happy for her. She had always found their notion about Gryffindor House being the best, ridiculous and more than arrogant. Just before they entered the common room, one of the Prefects cleared his throat.

"I would like to welcome you, but also give you a warning. There is an initiation ritual in this House, albeit an unofficial one. Don't be surprised if you find yourselves being the victims of pranks, and don't go crying to the Head of House. He will just send you back for more," the Prefect warned.

Lily shrugged it off. She had suffered enough pranks by her brothers during the last few years. She had given as well as she took, but that was another story.

Just as she entered and headed towards the girls' dormitory, she was cornered by a couple of older students with their wands drawn. Before they had a chance to try anything, though, the Bloody Baron descended between her and her would-be tormentors.

"I am afraid I can't let you do this," the ghost bellowed.

Scorpius Malfoy snickered.

"This is a longstanding tradition. You may not intervene," he said firmly.

"Since I am the one who started the tradition, boy, I may and can very well stop it," the ghost replied.

"You can't stop us. You are just a ghost," Scorpius claimed arrogantly.

The Bloody Baron smiled, but his smile was nothing comforting. It raised the hackles of everyone present.

"Then let it be a lesson in the qualities of ectoplasm," he shouted just before a frozen whirlwind went through the boy. When the ghost emerged from the other side of the boy, the boy collapsed on the floor.

"Is he dead?" asked one of the frozen bystanders.

"Merely unconscious," replied the ghost. "This girl is under my protection, so you'd better avoid upsetting her."

Lily was puzzled. She told herself that she should be angry, since she did not need any special treatment, but on the other hand it would be convenient to have an advantage in such a competitive House.

Thus, she smiled regally, like a princess would, and entered the dormitory.

Severus Snape, who had been watching through a hole in a portrait, felt like applauding. He decided at that moment that he liked the girl, even if she was Potter's daughter.

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Scorpius Malfoy visited the Head of his House, Raymond Hamilton, in order to complain.

"Harry Potter used his influence in favor of his children!" the boy complained.

Raymond Hamilton remained skeptical.

"Slytherins have always used their connections, Scorpius, and that has never been a problem. However, in this case, I doubt that Potter had anything to do with the incident you described. As a Gryffindor, he would not know of the tradition, and even if he did, it would be against his beliefs to act like that. Moreover, I seriously doubt that the Bloody Baron would agree to act in such a way for the sake of a Potter," the professor explained patiently as Scorpius Malfoy was one of his favorite students.

"Then why did the ghost protect her?" the boy asked.

"That is the question, isn't it?" the professor mused aloud.

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Severus Snape kept watching for the whole first semester. Lily was a mediocre student at best. She was not stupid, but she did not seem fond of studying. She preferred taking walks around the lake, playing games with her friends and having fun in general. He hated that. She had so much potential, and she was wasting it stupidly. When she managed to explode her cauldron while brewing a most simple potion, he felt that she had gone too far. He instructed the Bloody Baron to lead her to a deserted potions lab.

Lily had not hesitated to follow the Bloody Baron, but as they delved deeper and deeper in the dungeons, she started doubting her choice to not inform anyone of this trip. Not that she had any real friends in her House, or in any other of the Houses for that matter.

With her wand drawn, she entered the dark room just behind the ghost. Once she was in the room, the ghost vanished, and she heard the door slam shut behind her. She felt like panicking, but with a deep breath, she called, "*Lumos!*" The tip of her wand gave just enough light for her to see the benches and the potion brewing.

Just then, the small cone of light emerging from her wand showed her two red eyes, and she screamed.

"Are you afraid of monsters, Miss Potter?" a deep voice asked her.

* quote from HPDH, page 528

Chapter II

Chapter 2 of 10

A lesson and a discussion between close friends.

Chapter II

Lily was indeed scared of monsters. She would have to be stupid to not be. Had she been a Muggle, she might have considered that the school was a safe place, a place free of dark creatures and danger. Being her parents' daughter, though, she knew that in her world schools were as dangerous places as any.

She paled and panicked. In a recess of her mind still capable of rational thought, she tried to assess the danger this monster posed to her. Was he more dangerous than Fluffy, the Cerberus her father had faced in his first year?

Severus Snape watched her facial expressions, trying to gauge her reaction. He did not want to frighten the child too much, since it would be counter-productive.

After a few moments, she seemed to collect herself. She repeated his question, "*are you afraid of monsters, Miss Potter?*" in her mind.

"Yes, I am," she replied so as if his question had not been rhetorical. She was proud that her voice trembled only slightly and her hands were mostly stable.

"Good, then you will pay attention," he informed her, his tone harsh and cruel.

She shuddered but held her ground.

"You are a lazy dunderhead, a disgrace to your House. Hence I have decided that you need extra tutoring," he decreed.

Lily was flabbergasted. A red-eyed monster threatening to ... make her study! That was absurd. Her mind worked at double speed. It looked like something her nerdy cousin could have devised.

"Did Rose put you up to this?" she asked.

When he opened his mouth, one glimpse of his fangs quickly made her forget any idea that Rose could have conjured him.

"If you are as daft as you look, I doubt any amount of tutoring will help you. Why, of all your cousins loitering around this place, did you have to be the dimwitted one?" The red-eyed monster looked more frustrated than terrifying at the moment.

"I take exception at being called stupid," she announced, having gained some courage by his obvious lack of aggression.

He approached her, and she retreated one step or two until she had her back to the wall.

"I don't mind the extra tutoring," she hastened to reassure him, trying to gauge how to make him leave her alone.

He smirked.

"You will be spending two hours every afternoon here. Should you fail to appear, I will have the Bloody Baron deliver a warning or I might decide to deal with the matter myself. Red hair makes a wonderful ingredient for certain potions. I'm sure you would not mind being bald," he threatened her in a low voice without any trace of anger or sentiment.

"Will you not warn me against telling others, like for example the Headmistress?" she asked, curious for his reply.

"No! Slytherins do not tell. Do not become an even greater disappointment than the one you already are." He finished his speech and moved out so quickly that to her eyes it looked like he vanished.

Slowly, she found the way back to the dormitory and started pondering the enigma that she had encountered.

That evening Rose, her bookworm of a cousin, was not the only one surprised to see her in the library, researching books about magical creatures.

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Reymond Hamilton had been troubled by Scorpius Malfoy's revelation more than he would ever admit. Questioning the Bloody Baron had proved to be an exercise in futility. The Headmistress had been obviously wrong when she had claimed that the House ghosts are bound to the will of the Head of the House. The problem was that Minerva was seldom if ever wrong about anything.

The truth was that he was uncomfortable in his role as Head of Slytherin House. After the war, the Head of his House had changed almost every third year. Most of the professors to have undertaken this role were either DADA professors or Potions Masters, as these two specializations were usually followed by Slytherins. The Dark Arts and the subtlety of poisons, his favorite kind of potions, had always intrigued and drawn the members of his House, like a moth to the flame.

He enjoyed his teaching duties, and he believed himself to be good in his duties towards the children under his care. Nonetheless the castle itself failed to provide him with the support so many Heads of Houses had enjoyed before him. The staircases never obliged him like they did for Minerva and Filius. The castle did not whisper to him when there was trouble for his charges. He had assumed that the position was cursed like another one had been before the war, but had hesitated to bring this information forward. After all it went against his Slytherin nature to admit to a disadvantage before his colleagues and the Headmistress.

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Lily was frustrated. Her research in the library had given her a headache but no answers. She dreaded having to return to meet the red-eyed lunatic. She considered not going, and she thought of asking for someone's help. Then she was ashamed of her thought. Her father had faced a troll in his first term at school, and she was afraid of just a man threatening to make her study. Her brothers always teased her and called her a 'ninny'. This was her opportunity to prove them wrong.

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Draco Malfoy contemplated the letter before him. It was from Scorpius, and it contained news from his school year. He focused on the paragraph that had troubled him during his initial reading of the letter. It was indeed very strange, the way the Bloody Baron had protected Potter's daughter. He agreed with Hamilton, though. It was improbable, if not completely impossible, that Harry Potter had contributed to this.

Draco Malfoy was experienced in matters pertaining to the House of Slytherin. The protection afforded by the Bloody Baron puzzled him, and it made him wary. Nothing was free in that House, and he wondered at what cost for the girl this protection came.

Normally he would not have cared. She was not related to him and therefore not his responsibility. Unfortunately however, he had reason to care.

He placed the letter on the coffee table and approached his fireplace to make a Floo call.

He exited through another fireplace into a small, crumbled room filled with strange objects and boiling cauldrons. Between the two rows of benches, he spotted his friend, or rather his red hair. The red-haired man straightened from where he was bent over a cauldron.

"Hey, what are you doing here in the middle of the week? Not that I don't appreciate the company, but you never veer from your habits," George Weasley greeted him with a warm smile.

"I received some news from Hogwarts that I would like to share with you," Draco informed his unlikely friend.

"Is Scorpius all right?" George looked really worried.

"He is fine," Draco replied tersely.

"Oh, very well. Move on to the kitchen, and I will follow you as soon as I remove this new concoction from the fire," George replied.

George Weasley's simple apartment consisted just of this workroom, a bedchamber, a bathroom and a kitchen. Everyone who knew him, though, knew how much he liked it.

Draco opened with familiarity a cupboard, took out two cups, found the pot with the brewed coffee and started pouring in both cups.

There were not many people who knew of his longstanding friendship with George. It had started many years ago, in the aftermath of a war. They had both lost the most important things in their lives. George had lost his twin brother, and he, shallow as he had been, his pride and everything he had believed in. In the two decades since, some things had changed but others had not.

George's entrance into the kitchen shook Draco out of his thoughts.

"What's up?" he asked in his typically casual way.

"It's about your niece and god-daughter," Draco replied.

"Yeah, she's in Slytherin, I've heard. I've always known that Lily would end up there. She has had all of us wrapped around her little finger since she was born." George smiled with pride and love for his sister's youngest child.

"The House is not the problem per se. The fact that the Bloody Baron has appointed itself her protector is what troubles me," Draco explained to George.

"Why would the ghost do that?" George looked puzzled.

"That's the question," Draco said.

"Will you ask Scorpius to look after Lily?" George asked.

"I plan to. But it will be hard to explain to him the why of my request. The Potters, James and Albus Severus, have tormented him enough these two years, so I doubt he bears any benevolence toward your niece," Draco explained.

"I'm sorry. It's Ginny's influence, you know. She was hurt as a child by your father's actions, and she has neither forgotten nor forgiven your family for it," George was apologetic. James and Albus Severus were good kids, but there were times when they could be cruel. He did not blame Harry for having given to his children everything that he had missed during his own miserable childhood, but Ginny should have kept the balance. All three of their children were spoilt.

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Lily returned to the dungeon promptly on time. She entered the cavernous room and looked around for her tormentor. He was nowhere to be seen. She saw a blackboard that had not been there the previous time, and there were instructions on it. They were instructions for a potion; she recognized that much. She looked on the long table and saw that everything that she would require to brew the potion was there. She should have been relieved that he was not there, but she was not.

"Who would be stupid enough to allow an inept first-year student to brew a potion without supervision?" she muttered to herself, contemplating whether she should start chopping the roots required for the potion or wait for him to arrive. She wondered whether he planned to arrive at all.

"Finally, an astute observation, Miss Potter. But, just because you could not see me, does not mean that I am not here. Do not tarry anymore. You will need the entire two hours to brew the potion," Severus Snape commented and smirked in glee as he saw her jump in fright.

Lily looked at the dark man who had suddenly appeared on the other side of the table and swallowed a curse. She started chopping ingredients and preparing her potion without any comment. Sometimes silence was indeed golden, she thought and did not voice any of the retorts that came to her mind. Unfortunately, brewing the potion required her entire focus, and thus she was unable to study the dark man. By the time she finished the potion, she was exhausted.

"An adequate try, Miss Potter," he commented.

"May I leave now?" she asked, ready to flee.

"Not unless you can identify the potion that you just brewed," he replied and watched her pale.

Lily was ready to start crying. She really had no idea.

He pointed at a first-year Potions book which he had earlier laid on the table.

"You mean for me to go through it right now? You had said that I only needed to spend two hours per day here!" Lily was too tired to care that she had shouted at someone dangerous.

Severus Snape looked at the girl. She really looked exhausted. It had been too long since he had had any contact with humans, and he had forgotten how frail they were. Nonetheless, there was no way he could take his words back, not without losing face. So he just smirked evilly and pointed again at the book.

With a sigh, she sat at the table and started going through the contents of the book. Lily tried to think clearly. What would she do if she were Rose, the know-it-all? That's when she knew. She needed to think which of the ingredients she has used for the potions was the least likely to appear in many potions, and then she would search through the various potions in the book to find just the ones containing this ingredient. Seaweed, that was the one she had not encountered before in Potions class. She looked at the book's index and found three entries for seaweed: page 55, page 120 and page 132. She found the first page and went through that potion's ingredients, but they did not match. She lucked out with her second choice. She looked up at the dark man and announced merrily, "It's an anti-rust potion."

"That's correct, Miss Potter. Since you obviously lack the required theoretical knowledge and need to go through the book, instead of already knowing the answer, I will give you tomorrow to study. You will return here the day after tomorrow, and I hope that your performance will be better. Since it is late, the Bloody Baron will escort you back to your dormitory," the dark man ended his little speech.

She was so relieved for the reprieve he had decreed for the next day that she decided to be polite. "Good night," she said before she followed the ghost that had appeared out of thin air.

"Good night, child," he wished her after she was out of hearing range.

Scorpius Malfoy was the only one who noticed Lily Potter coming back to the dormitory mere moments before the curfew. He thought of saying something rude and bringing everyone's attention on her, but she looked so tired that he decided against it. Whatever it was that she had found herself in was obviously taking its toll on her.

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Note: I owe many thanks to WriterMerrin for her help and corrections (and there are dozens of mistakes for her to correct).

Chapter III

Rose Weasley usually spent her afternoons in the Hogwarts library. She enjoyed reading and studying very much. In her extended family, her mother and she were the only ones who loved reading. Thus, it was very rare that she would encounter any of her cousins within the library walls. That explained why she was so surprised to spot Lily in the library for the second time within the same week. The thought passed through her mind that she should offer to help Lily with her studying, to encourage this new habit of hers, but she quickly dismissed it. People already gossiped about her, frequently calling her a nerd. She did not need to be seen socializing with a much younger student, and one of another House to add to the insult. None of her classmates would understand why she would spend any time talking to a younger student. So she just greeted her cousin and returned to her own studies.

Lily noticed Rose, returned her greeting with an absent-minded 'hallo' and promptly found an empty seat at a corner table of the library to sit. She had slept like the dead the previous night, almost missing the morning wake-up call. Despite being tired, she was happy to have come out of the first session with her fanged tutor unharmed. If she was honest with herself, she would also admit that she had indeed learnt something, even if that something was a totally useless potion. So, she opened her Potions book and started reading the first chapter, one that she should have learnt by heart a couple of weeks ago.

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Harry Potter looked over his morning paper at his wife. She sipped her tea while going through a fashion magazine. All three of their children were away at Hogwarts. Ginny and he were still young, and they could enjoy having the house to themselves if they wanted. Not that they ever did anymore. He loved his wife. He truly did. Sometimes, though, he wondered if they had anything other than their children in common.

Most of their talk focused on the children, as they both adored all three of their kids. James was their firstborn, their pride. Albus Severus, the most easygoing of their children, was their joy. Lily, their little girl, had had them wrapped around her little finger since she was born. Harry's thoughts turned once again to his children, and he pondered how different they were from each other.

He worried about all three of them. James was going through puberty and was prone to involve himself in trouble. Albus Severus was a quiet one, but tended to imitate his brother as much as possible. Lily was the one that worried him most. She was less forthcoming than her brothers, and she was often secretive. He still remembered that when she was five, she had managed to keep a frog as a pet for three months before they knew about it.

He frowned at the memory, but Ginny was so engrossed in her magazine that she missed his frown. When he rose to leave for work some minutes later, she kissed him absentmindedly and wished him to have a good day at work.

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Right after her last class for the day, Lily returned to the underground laboratory. The one day respite had helped alleviate her tiredness, but had done little to ease her trepidation regarding the next lesson. She entered the room and immediately pulled to a stop. Gone were the table and cauldrons. The only thing that remained the same was the blackboard. She quickly read the instructions on it and groaned. It seemed that today's lesson was going to be about Charms and not Potions.

"I so hate foolish wand waving," she murmured.

Had Severus Snape considered himself to be capable of feeling, he would have smiled at the girl's words. As it was, he did not even smirk.

He moved forward for the girl to notice him, and immediately afterwards he started the lesson. He was as severe as ever, but he also took care not to overtax her.

At the end of the hour-long Charms tutoring session, Lily decided that it would be much better for her if she was a better student in class and managed thus to avoid these tutoring sessions. Whereas it was true that in just under one hour she had learnt how to perform a perfect "*Lumos*", it was also true that the lesson had been an extremely unpleasant one.

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Draco kissed his wife tenderly. They had been married for fifteen years, and she was his light. He sometimes wondered at the miracle of the fact that she still loved him. He was no longer handsome, and he was well aware of his receding hairline and the pouch in his middle. And still, his beloved wife looked at him with stars in her eyes. The only thing that had ever caused them any grief in their marriage had been their inability to have other children after Scorpius.

Astoria returned the kiss of her husband, aware that something was on his mind. It had always been like that between them. She was always able to tell when something troubled him. She loved him, and she was as much in love with him as at their wedding. Fifteen years had done nothing to dim the strength of their relationship. She knew all her husband's secrets, even the one that he had once feared might dim her love for him.

"Is there something, you want to share with me?" she asked him softly.

Draco looked up at his wife and smiled. "Yes, there is. I have a task for Scorpius, but subtlety is required in the asking."

"It might be better then, if I asked him to do whatever it is you require. After all, he never says no to his mother," Astoria commented.

"You are right as always," Draco acknowledged.

"Then tell me, husband dear, what is it that we want our son to do, but are afraid to ask of him?" Astoria asked.

And he answered.

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It was during the weekend that Lily finally had some time free. That was when she realized that she had no further clues regarding her tutor's identity. She had not found any time to read more about magical creatures. She briefly thought about looking into it, but then decided that there were better ways to spend the weekend.

Scorpius looked at the younger girl playing exploding snap with some other girls from her year. She was a plain one, despite her famous last name. He recalled his mother's letter and her request and wondered at it. Nevertheless, if his mother wanted him to do it, he would. He had always been close to his parents, and he would never knowingly do anything to sadden his mother. Well, other than smuggling fireworks into Hogwarts when he was eleven years old, sampling his father's firewhiskey when he was twelve, smoking one of his father's cigars when he was thirteen, and stealing a kiss from one of the waitresses at Rosmerta's the previous week.

Every first-year Slytherin knew that Scorpius Malfoy was their House's rising star. He was in his third year, but had such exceptional good looks that girls of all years swooned at the sight of him. He was intelligent and fiercely loyal. He was an excellent student and an even better Quidditch player. Thus, it was no surprise that all four girls turned red and hastened to welcome him when he sat next to them. The girls abandoned their game and immediately turned their attention to him. Scorpius asked them a few questions about their classes and pretended to listen to their inane answers. He did not fail to notice his classmates looking at him strangely for having

voluntarily approached the silly first-year students. He chose to ignore the quizzing looks and turned this focus to the girls, and to one of them in particular. Lily Potter was more reserved than the others. His first impression was that she was an unexceptional, quiet girl. She was definitely better mannered and less arrogant than her brother James. Scorpius talked with the girls for a few more minutes, and then he left them, so as not to lose face for fraternizing with younger students.

...

Fifteen days later Raymond Hamilton attended the monthly teachers' session. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the progress of the students and to note any abnormal occurrences. He found these meetings boring but necessary. They often served as an early warning system in cases of problems. Just last year Roger Bragg's marks had slipped in all his classes. It had been pointed out in one of these meetings, and his Head of House had soon afterwards found out that he had started doing drugs. In this meeting, however, the news was the exact opposite. Apparently, Lily Potter had suddenly, in the course of just one month, turned into a stellar student.

IV

Chapter 4 of 10

The life of Severus Snape as a vampire. Lily and Scorpius.

Thank you, WriterMerrin!

IV

The Forbidden Forest is filled with dangerous creatures. Its inhabitants know to keep the secrets of the Forest and of the many folks that are to be found within it. This is common knowledge and one of the main reasons for which Severus Snape chose it as his home in his new life. The other reason was the close proximity to Hogwarts. His sire, Vladimir, helped him shape an existing cavern into a home. Many layers of permanent spells protected his new residence from water and moisture, earth and rock destabilization.

He had not seen Vladimir in over fifteen years. The ancient vampire had stayed with him during his transition period. Vladimir had taught him to feed from animals and from humans without harming them. He had shown Severus how to use his new speed and agility and how to compensate for the photosensitivity and lack of reflection. Severus had tried hard to keep his distance from him, but Vladimir saw too much and proved to be immune to sarcasm. He resembled Albus too much, or rather the ideal that Severus had thought Albus to be. It was strange, but Severus had not resented Vladimir's efforts. He had paid attention to all the lessons and all the caveats offered by the older vampire. Feelings had been numbed for him a number of years ago, but Severus found his existence useful since he was able to research everything he had not had the time to before. Well, almost everything, since he had problems with certain ingredients, such as those required for the Wolfsbane potion.

Others might have found the solitude unsettling and even daunting. Severus, however, had lived in this way his entire adult life, and thus did not think anything of it. His library in his new home was extensive and grew steadily over the years. He had once feared that he would be unable to buy books and ingredients, but with some effort he had managed to find an owl in the Forbidden Forest that was willing to do his bidding. Money would have also been a problem, but Vladimir had insisted on giving him an enormous amount of currency. He had tried to object, but the ancient one considered him family.

Severus had also subscribed to *The Quibbler* and the *Daily Prophet* under an assumed name and thus kept in touch with the news of the Wizarding world. In short, everything was well and tidy in his ordered new life. That is until he changed his habits to accommodate tutoring a young girl in his weekly routine. The girl turned out to have a good head on her shoulders, and soon she had managed to become a good student. Their tutoring sessions had then been reduced to twice weekly. Such few hours should not have had any impact on his life. Coming and going to Hogwarts so often, though, had consequences. He saw more and listened to more. The Bloody Baron was a fountain of information, but also a menace. The ghost seemed to regard him as the Head of Slytherin House, insisting that he had neglected his duties. Severus scoffed at the words of the Ghost, but decided to look from time to time into the goings of his House.

Time passes quickly when one is ageless. Well before he knew it, the seasons had changed twice, and his student Lily was in her third year at Hogwarts. Nothing much had changed in these two years. Kingsley Shacklebolt was still Minister of Magic, Draco Malfoy was nominated as businessman of the year in both Muggle and Wizarding worlds, Potter was still Head of the Auror Department and trusted advisor of Kingsley, and Minerva was looking for a replacement in order to retire.

...

Scorpius Malfoy took in his surroundings and chose a table with a view over the entire place. The girl tucked under his arm complained.

"Why did we have to come to Rosmerta's? This place is for children! We could go to 'Tease,' the new hip place in Hogsmeade. That's where everyone who is anyone is going to be," she whined.

"My dear, you may go wherever you want. I will be staying here," he replied so as if she had no say.

"But I am your girlfriend! Couples go together. If I show up alone, James Potter and his new girlfriend, Alice, will make fun of me. And they are seventh years, so the others will follow them," she tried to explain to Scorpius.

Scorpius looked at her and replied, "Renata, the solution to your problem would be for you to stop being my girlfriend. I already told you that I'm staying. Suit yourself!"

Renata thought about it, but Scorpius was the most good-looking student at Hogwarts, not to mention the richest one.

"Don't be silly! I'm your girlfriend," she said as she kissed him and sat next to him at the corner table.

Scorpius would not have minded going to the new place 'Tease,' but two years ago he had promised his mother to look after plain little Lily Potter. He kept his promises. Honour had been drilled into him by his mother from a very young age. He might have decided that his promise would not need to extend to the next years, but it was obvious that her brothers did a very poor job of looking after their sister. It was true that she had turned out to be a good student, but she also was a menace. Wherever there was trouble, she would be smack in the middle of it. In these past two years, he had retrieved her from more scrapes than he cared to count. Just before the end of her first year, he had had to get her out of the tentacles of the Giant Squid. She and her friends had decided to swim in the Lake. Naturally, she was the only one who dared to actually jump in the lake. In the beginning of her second year, she decided to find the Room of Requirement and ended instead in front of the Mirror of Erised. Making her snap out of it had been tough. Just before Christmas in the same year, she ventured out to the Forbidden Forest. She still had not told him what she was looking for that time. By spring he had located her in Hog's Head talking to a crook who claimed to know all dangerous creatures of the world. This year, he had had to save her from Peeves when she tried to trap the poltergeist in a contraption she had seen in a Muggle retro movie.

One would think that the girl would be grateful for being rescued. However, she resented his efforts, and more than once he had been a victim to her vitriolic reaction. She

claimed to not need his help, to be an independent witch. That was naturally after the terror had passed, after she had stopped clinging on him.

Renata's kisses brought him back to the present. He looked around and saw that plain Lily and her friends had entered the shop. She saw him and smiled, shouting a greeting at the same time. He raised his glass to her.

"I don't understand how you can be friendly with that girl. It is true that she is James' sister, but it is not as if she is as trendy as her brother. I should also add that half the time you fight with her and you shout at each other," she pouted.

Scorpius, however, focused on Lily instead of Renata. He had not missed the light flick of her wand as she passed the bar. The silly girl was probably trying to get herself arrested. Spiking the non-alcoholic drinks in an establishment where minors frequented was a punishable offense. He stood up, approached the bar and casually undid her spell. She saw him and looked at him with murder in her eyes. He simply inclined his head and returned to an irate Renata.

...

George Weasley raised his glass to the photo before him.

"I am tired, Fred. Our shop is still successful, our family is well, and I am lonely. I have many nephews and nieces and one goddaughter, but my own home is empty. I am forty something, but everyone thinks that my life is still pranks and laughs. There is only one person who understands me, and he can never be mine. How I wish you were still alive. We would have dated those twin sisters, and we would have married some fine girls, and each one of us would have his own family. Your death changed all that. There is a void in my soul that cannot be filled."

...

V

Chapter 5 of 10

Lily finds out what kind of creature her tutor is

Thank you very much, WriterMerrin!

Chapter V

Lily held the small book reverently. It had just arrived via owl mail. She had spent an entire month's allowance to purchase it. She hoped that it would be worth it. She had spent the last two and a half years trying to figure out the enigma that was her mysterious tutor. She had studied every single book on non-humans in the Hogwarts library. She had discreetly asked Hagrid. She had even tried asking her tutor. He had frowned and flashed his fangs. She had thought to talk with the Merpeople on the subject, but the Giant Squid had had a different opinion. It was fortunate that Scorpius had managed to extricate her. There was also that other time when she had thought that the Creatures hunter passing through Hogsmeade might know the answer. She had been lucky once again to have been saved by Scorpius. Her venture to the Forbidden Forest to search for her tutor had also proved futile. She avoided remembering her other attempt that had ended before the Mirror of Erised. Seeing an older version of herself dressed in white next to a very handsome Scorpius Malfoy had shaken her.

After that incident, she had decided to keep her distance from Scorpius. It would not do for him to guess her infatuation with him.

...

Severus Snape slipped into Hogwarts. It was not for one of his tutoring sessions with the girl.

His past as a spy had taught him the value of good information. Since he had decided to involve himself in her life as a tutor and protector, he needed to know everything about her environment.

He had often justified his action to himself by thinking that he was doing this for the love of her grandmother. He was not delusional enough to also believe this. Lily Evans was nothing more than a sad memory anymore.

The aim of his visit this evening was to find out more about Scorpius Malfoy. The boy had seemed to be predominant in young Lily's mind.

...

Draco fixed the covers over his sleeping wife. With tenderness he straightened a blond tendril that had fallen over her eye and nose. She was the best part of him. She had still been in school when they had first met at her sister's wedding. She had never held his past against him, not even back then. Even though there had been no legal sanctions against his family after the war, the first few years had been difficult. Still they had been better than the two years before the final battle. In his nightmares he could still hear the threats that Voldemort had made should he fail in his task. He had played them all so well. Threatening him with his parents' wellbeing and his parents with their child's.

People had often thought that his regret was for his role in Dumbledore's demise. That was not true. He was sorry for many things and for his role in the war, but he had never forgiven the old man enough to feel sorry for his death. In his mind Dumbledore had been as bad as Voldemort. Dumbledore had used children in the war. Even the Muggles knew that this was reprehensible and forbidden. And those he had not used as his pawns and soldiers, those he had left to their fate. Dumbledore had known of his task, and yet for a whole year he had done nothing to help him out of the predicament. Had the old man approached him with a plan to hide his whole family, they would have willingly gone. He had known, but he had not helped, leaving him and many of his classmates to Voldemort. Once upon a time, becoming a Death Eater had been a choice, a bad one to be sure, but a choice nevertheless. In those last few years though, it was never a choice. It was blackmail. Just that. If you cared for your family, you did what the Monster dictated.

There were only two others who had ever understood. One dead one alive. Severus Snape and George Weasley. Poor George had never been able to forgive Dumbledore. The twins had been his most faithful soldiers. And in the end, they had been betrayed. Many had fought in the war against Voldemort, but the twins had fought for Dumbledore. Their faith and trust had been absolute. And yet, this wound was one that George had never shared with his family. They would not have understood. Arthur had simply shrugged the revelations about Dumbledore with a 'we are all just humans, with human weaknesses' comment. Draco had been the only one privy to George's inability to forgive Dumbledore, since he shared it.

Astoria sighed in her sleep, and Draco placed a kiss on her cheek. He closed his eyes and returned to sleep.

...

Severus Snape finished his glass of blood. Vladimir would appreciate his experiments for improving the nutritional value of bottled blood.

His recent foray at Hogwarts was not without consequences. He had slipped into the Headmistress' suite while she slept. She looked old and frail. The Bloody Baron had informed him that, while she wanted to retire, she had been unable to find a suitable replacement. He understood. Being Headmaster of Hogwarts meant holding the responsibility for the future of the wizarding world in your hands. This responsibility could easily be neglected or abused. He had decided to help ease her load until she was able to find her replacement.

Instead of just looking into the school files for information on Scorpius Malfoy, he had spent the night dismantling the protective wards of the school and then creating new ones supported by his life force instead of Minerva's.

Theoretically, that should have not been possible, but the School recognized him as Head of Slytherin House and former Headmaster. He had also managed to take a look into Scorpius Malfoy's transcripts. He had feared that the boy would be as spoilt as his father had been.

However, young Scorpius seemed to be an excellent student and one his teachers adored. The only detentions he had ever got were for skirmishes with the Potters and Weasleys. He was angry to see that in many of these cases the boy had ended to the Hospital Wing hexed with malicious curses. Seeing this, it puzzled him why he was so kind to Lily. If the boy thought to take out his revenge on her, he would regret it. Severus Snape would make sure of it.

...

"Harry, what are you doing here so late? You have a wife back home. With all the children at school, you should be enjoying your evenings with your wife," Kingsley commented lightheartedly to his friend.

"There is this case that I need to follow closely," Harry replied.

"There is always a case. Go home to your wife," Kingsley advised.

Harry avoided looking at the other man. Kingsley was one of his best friends. But he had never told anyone of how he felt nowadays regarding his marriage. There was nothing wrong per se. Sex was still good, but after twenty years with the same person, one required something more in a relationship than just a good fuck. He wished they would talk more about meaningful things. He was not interested in the latest gossip or the newest trend. But discussions on political reforms, religion, or international relations left his wife bored, and she refused to participate in them. And even after so many years, he still felt that she wanted something more from him. She had his heart, his body, his children. What more could he give her?

...

Lily closed the book. It had indeed held an answer. It seemed that her tutor was a vampire. That was surprising indeed. She would have guessed earlier, but everyone knew that vampires were close to extinct. It had been fifty years since the last sighting of a vampire. She would soon inform him that she knew what he was.

VI

Chapter 6 of 10

The story continues

Dear Writermerrin, thank you so much!

...

VI

A month later, Lily found the courage to confront her mentor with her newfound knowledge of his true nature.

She had expected a reaction. She got a mild, "Brava, Miss Potter!"

She had expected her revelation to cause a significant change in their relationship. However, he had remained as stern a taskmaster as always.

She had awaited contentment at her successful deduction. Instead, she was troubled with more questions than before. The predominant one was why a vampire would choose to spend time with a mortal girl and assist her.

And yet, she was no longer obsessed with finding the answers. She was curious, but she had also decided to accept her tutor's need for privacy. Instead, she tried to show him that she did not care whether he told her or not, like she did not care for anyone or anything else. And indeed no one else noted, other than Scorpius.

Scorpius, who made her heart flutter and tied her stomach into knots. Scorpius, who was as much a playboy as her brothers, but a far better person.

...

Draco Malfoy opened his eyes. His first sight was a mound of soft flesh with a cherry nipple on top. He opened his mouth, and his tongue darted out to lick the top. He felt the body next to him shiver. He moved his head over the breast and sucked the nipple into his mouth.

"Good morning, husband," Astoria greeted him lazily.

He raised his head for a moment.

"Good morning, wife."

...

Scorpius Malfoy opened his eyes when a stray ray of sunshine landed on his face. It took him a moment to shake himself awake from sleep. When he did, he groaned loudly and looked at his side. Right next to him there was a naked, female body. Just another day, just another meaningless conquest. Sometimes, he thought he was just

as bad as James Potter had been before he graduated.

Potter's graduation had changed things for the better. Finally free from the pranks and heavy competition, he was able to be more social with members of other Houses. His tentative friendship with Albus Severus was a surprise, but a good one.

It was a couple of months into their sixth year when they were forced by Lily's recklessness to put their differences aside and work together for the first time.

Lily had hated him ever since. Until then, her family had been unaware of her escapades. Harry Potter had tried to curb her tendency for trouble after that incident. His intervention had brought the exact opposite result. In the last year, Lily had turned wild. He often wondered how she managed to continue to be a very good student

...

Astoria Malfoy entered George Weasley's shop and looked around. This visit was not an easy one for her. She had known, even before she'd married Draco, of the special friendship between the two men. However, in over twenty years, she had never encountered George Weasley. She did not even remember him from school, since he had been four years older than she had been and in another House. She had always loved her husband fiercely, and she had always wanted him to have everything. However, this she had found difficult to do. For years she had even thought of it as unthinkable. The passing of the years, though, and the toll on Draco, of having to keep his friendship with George hidden, even from her, changed her mind, as no argument could have ever done.

A polite clerk asked her if she required any assistance. Astoria took a deep breath and asked to see the proprietor. She was led to a wooden door. The clerk knocked and shouted, "Boss, there's someone here to see you."

Without waiting for a reply, the clerk opened the door and ushered her into a small office.

She had expected a red-haired man. The man, who raised his head from the papers before him, had hair the color of salt with only hints of red in between. A look of surprise crossed his face, and he immediately stood up. His surprise was followed by panic, that something must be wrong with Draco for Astoria to be there. He did not dare ask, though, lest he unwittingly reveal Draco's secret.

Astoria watched him panic, and she immediately spoke up to reassure him.

"Good morning, Mr. Weasley. This is just a social visit. There is nothing to worry about," she said.

He coughed to hide his uneasiness. He wondered whether she had found out about Draco and him, whether she had come to threaten him, or to plead with him to leave her husband alone.

"Would you like to take a seat, Mrs. Malfoy?" he asked as politely as possible, considering the circumstances.

"That would be lovely, thank you. I am sorry to have interrupted you from your paperwork, but I was passing by and thought it would be nice to finally meet my husband's best friend," she chatted, as if Draco and he were just buddies.

"I would like to invite you for dinner. Is Saturday evening convenient for you?" she continued.

"I, eh, I, ah ..., " he mumbled like an awkward teenager.

"It is settled then. We will be expecting you around seven at home. If you can't make it, just send us an owl with another date that would be convenient for you. It was nice meeting you. I wish you a pleasant day." She finished her speech without any pause to breathe and left immediately.

He remained standing before his desk, trying to comprehend what had just happened.

As soon as his wits returned, he scribbled a note to Draco, describing his wife's visit and her invitation, and asking for instruction as to what he was supposed to do.

The owl that took the note brought back a reply just minutes later.

George opened the note and read, "You will obviously come for dinner on Saturday. If you don't, I will personally come and drag you there. Since Astoria invited you, it would upset her if you didn't show up."

A few miles away, Draco pondered on this latest development and wondered whether he should ask his wife for the reason of it or if he should just follow her lead. Since he trusted her with his life and heart, he decided to follow the second option.

...

Severus Snape looked at the girl before him. He often wondered whether his intervention had caused her rebellion. It had taken great effort to not shout at her a couple of months ago, when she had pierced her ears. Then, she had started painting her lips and eyelids black. He really hated that and would have liked to force her to stop doing it.

He had asked the Bloody Baron to tell that useless Head of Slytherin House, Hamilton, to take her into hand for this outrageousness, but Hamilton had done nothing.

Then she had cut her hair short. That was when he had grown really angry. Did no one see the destructive path she was walking down? The Bloody Baron had murmured something about 'normal adolescent behaviour,' but he would hear nothing of it.

So he had just kept his mouth shut and started pressuring her into more studying and into original research. He even shared with her a couple of his own studies, trying to force her to take interest in something productive. She did more than well, and she seemed to enjoy the learning process, but in her free time she continued to be wild and unpredictable.

...

Severus pumped one last time inside the woman, and then he bit her. She had her eyes closed, and she moaned as he started drinking her blood. It was in this last year that Severus Snape had started having intense cravings for sex when he was feeding. For this, he blamed his increased involvement in the mortal world. In order to be able to better protect the young hoyden, who was his student, he had been forced to spend many evenings and nights in the shadows of Hogsmeade and Hogwarts watching the mortals.

With a flick of his tongue, he closed the two punctures on the neck of the woman. He kissed her gently and left her with a murmured, 'goodbye.' She just smiled and changed sides. It was one fact of life that had remained the same during the last twenty years. The waitresses at Rosmerta's were always accommodating and willing to fuck.

...

Lily was angry. She was sixteen and a half years old, but nobody treated her like a woman. Her two older brothers thought her to be a kid. Her parents vocally disapproved of her new looks. No one really understood her. Well, that wasn't strictly true. Scorpius was a good friend, but he also was a disappointment. He would have sex with any female, but not with her. Not that she wanted to lose her virginity to her best friend.

And now her mother had just announced that she was once again pregnant. Whereas it was true that due to their longer lifespan witches could have children at her mother's age, Lily found it embarrassing.

...

Kingsley treated Harry to a fourth glass of firewhiskey.

"Maybe it is a good thing to have another baby. It will give Ginny a purpose to have another kid to nurture, and something for us to share once again. It could help our marriage. And you know that I will love the baby," Harry said mostly to himself.

"Right, if you say so." Only a stupid man would gainsay the Head of the Auror Department when he was drunk. And Kingsley had never been stupid.

...

George Floored to Malfoy Manor at seven o'clock sharp, holding a bottle of reserved elf wine. He exited the fireplace in the living room of the Malfoys' and faced Astoria and Draco. He held his breath. Draco was his usual self, dressed to the nines, despite the pouch at his stomach and his receding hairline. Astoria, on the other hand, was beauty personified, even if her choice of dress surprised him. It was a little more daring than he would have thought appropriate for dinner. He had to acknowledge though that she was truly magnificent in her red sleeveless dress that showed a bit too much cleavage. Draco smirked at his friend's surprise, and then he welcomed him. George had feared that dinner would prove to be awkward, but was pleasantly surprised when it wasn't. Astoria was well read and intelligent and a brilliant conversationalist. Draco did not try to pretend that they were strangers, bringing forth open discussions that they had on common investments and interests. Draco's affection and love for his wife was obvious, and yet George did not feel any jealousy at seeing them like this.

...

Lily approached a semi-filthy table.

"Raise your blouse higher and take your pants off," the man instructed.

Lily complied.

"Lie down on the table," he ordered.

Lily did as she was told.

He approached her, and she closed her eyes, preparing herself for the pain.

At the first prick of the needle, she knew that it was not as painful as she had feared. She smiled when she thought of everyone's reaction to her getting a tattoo just above her buttocks.

...

"Life sucks," Albus Severus said in a half-drunk drawl.

"I fail to see your point," Scorpius replied. He then elaborated. "We can have any girl we want; they even flock around us, begging to be taken. We are excellent students, and we will certainly be accepted in any academic programme we choose. Our families are financially secure, mine more than yours. Our families are politically well connected, yours more than mine. We are young and healthy. I simply can't imagine why you would think that our life is not ideal."

Albus Severus raised his glass to his lips, sipped on his firewhiskey and frowned before replying.

"We are eighteen and have never in our lives done anything important. My parents, they fought a war since they were eleven years old. At eighteen, they had already won that war. How could I ever compete with that? How could I ever follow in their footsteps? James is a wastrel, pampered by everyone, because of my father. Lily is someone I don't recognize. We are at the same school, and yet House rivalry and age distinctions have kept us apart. Who is this teenager in her place? I worry about her, and I am glad that you keep an eye on her, but still I miss her terribly. My mum, she is pregnant, at her age. How can my parents do that to themselves? They hardly talk with each other, and it has been years since I saw any real conversation between them. A baby can't fix relationships. I had planned to move to Europe to study, and yet, what if this baby needs me?"

"Blah, blah. So your family has problems. Welcome to the real world. Maybe I should loan you my paternal grandparents. Try having Lucius and Narcissa for grandparents, and then you can talk about dysfunctional families. Now, let's go try those luscious twins at the corner table. They have been staring at us for an hour."

Albus Severus sighed, but stood up and followed his friend to the other table.

...

Severus directed Lily to remove the cauldron from the fire, while he remained as far away from the potion as possible. She had dark circles under her eyes and copious amounts of sweat ran down her body. He had finally found a way to hinder her rebelliousness. Hard work was the trick. He sometimes wondered why she accepted that.

Lily bottled the potion.

"Congratulations, Miss Potter. You have just managed to brew Wolfsbane. If your other career plans fail, you can always earn enough by this skill," he informed her drily.

Lily smiled at her vampire. And he was that, her closest ally during all these years in Hogwarts.

"I think it's time you called me Lily, sir."

"And I think it's time you went to sleep, Miss Potter. Don't make my punish you," he replied, but without any real anger.

Lily made a grimace.

"I don't think I can handle any more of your punishments. My lovely tattoo cost me fifteen hours of dissecting various worms for potion ingredients and my outing to Hog's Head today. I think I am done with rebelliousness," she honestly said. She omitted that she had already decided some time ago that she had matured enough to be over that stage of adolescence.

"Go to sleep, Lily, and leave an old man to his peace!" her mentor waved her away, fed up with her antics.

Lily laughed and shouted a farewell as she left the room.

...

George Weasley had thought that the invitation had been a one time event. It had been an interesting experience. He had enjoyed himself very much, but could not shake his feelings of guilt, now that he had met Astoria. When Draco had come to the shop for lunch during the following week, he had felt awkward and hesitant. It was more a feeling of being superfluous. He had always thought that he was not the only one needing Draco but that the need was reciprocal. Now, he had his doubts. How could someone who had the love of someone as great as Astoria need anyone else?

Draco had sensed his misgivings, but had not said anything on the matter. Their discussion had remained in the acceptable fields of their common investments and the current political situation.

George was surprised when he received an owl sent by Astoria with an invitation for a Saturday brunch. He replied eagerly, like a starved man.

...

"How is the pregnancy proceeding?" Kingsley asked Harry over their customary lunch meeting.

"Quite well, thank you for asking. The mediwitch assured us that everything is going well and the baby shall be born before Christmas," Harry replied.

"Is Ginny happy?"

Harry grimaced. "I don't know. She says so, but I am not sure."

Harry sighed and for the first time dared voice some of his pain.

"I don't know how to please her. It's all I ever wanted, to be a good husband and father. And I have failed in both," Harry admitted in a low voice.

Kingsley remained silent.

"James is a scoundrel. He counts on the family name to get him out of trouble. Lily has turned into a Goth, and she never shares anything with anyone of us, not even her mother. Albus Severus is the only one doing alright, even though he is also wild. And Ginny, I always wonder, what did I do wrong, how can I fix our relationship?"

Kingsley had been an Auror for many years before becoming Minister of Magic. He knew that Harry should have known, but failed to do so, due to his closeness to Ginevra. Because every Auror knew that the victims of Voldemort seldom recovered, and even if they did they remained traumatized. Harry had also been a victim, but he had managed to heal, and that had been as miraculous as his achievement to kill Voldemort.

...

Lily sat next to Scorpius.

He greeted her heartily.

"So tell me, little freak. What will I need to save you from next time?" he asked her affectionately.

"Oh, I don't know. I am over my rebelliousness. But, I have been thinking that it is high time I lost my virginity. I am already sixteen years old after all," she replied evenly, as if she spoke of the next Quidditch match.

Scorpius choked.

"You are only sixteen. You need to wait until you are at least eighteen or married!" he informed her.

"Your current girlfriend is in my year! Don't be a hypocrite! But I am open to suggestions as to who would be the right one for this endeavour." She smiled at him.

Scorpius considered her. He hoped that Albus Severus would understand the necessity of what he was about to promise.

He touched her lips with his forefinger.

"We both know, sweetheart, that the only one you would consider losing your virginity to is me. However, I will not do it. Not a day before you are eighteen. If you still want it then. But do not even think about it until then. And I will have your promise on that!" he stated solemnly.

Lily thought about it. It was true that she had no other candidate in mind. On the other hand, two years were a long time.

"I'll promise that I'll think about it!" She kissed the finger that touched her lips and stood up and ran away before he had any chance to say anything more.

...

After their dinner, Draco, Astoria and George moved to the living room to continue their discussion. Astoria held a glass of sweet wine, while the two men preferred coffee.

Draco and Astoria sat next to each other and George in an armchair opposite them. It was telling of how relaxed everyone was and how comfortable their evening dinners had become that these dinners had turned into an every day occurrence.

George would have felt like an intruder had Astoria not actively convinced him that he was more than welcome. There were even some times that Astoria would be tired and would go to sleep after their dinner, leaving the two men to continue their discussion alone. Nothing untoward would ever happen in these instances, but it was still extraordinary.

Astoria was happy. Draco was so much more peaceful now that part of his friendship with George was not hidden any more. And Astoria had come to care about George too. George, who looked at her with such respect and tenderness that she sometimes wanted to scream at him that she was not perfect either. George, whose loneliness and soul-deep sadness made her want to cry.

...

Severus Snape lounged in the armchair while the woman crawled to him. She opened his fly and almost tenderly took his member out. He was hard and ready. She shivered at the coldness of his skin, but did not otherwise react. She opened her mouth and dived for him. He grabbed her ears and fucked her mouth. She mewled and even gagged once or twice, but was too much a professional to attempt to complain. When he had finished and was certain that she had swallowed every drop, he positioned her on his lap and found himself face to tits. He played with one nipple while he bit on the other breast. When he was satisfied, he asked her to stand up. She complied eagerly, received her payment and bid him goodbye.

The pale stranger with the cold skin was her favourite customer. He paid her much better than any other client, but she would have taken him even if he didn't. She did not know who he was, but he was providing her with the potions required to keep her little angel alive. Most of her customers did not want to know whether the whore they fucked had any family, but he knew, and he provided for little Zoe, who had been born with a defective heart, and who just might grow into an adult if she had access to the right potions.

...

Summer came. Scorpius and Albus Severus passed their NEWTs with great success. They decided to spend the next semester travelling in Europe before they had to decide what they would do with their lives. The only deadline was that Albus Severus wanted to have returned before his baby sibling was born. Lily returned to her family's house. With James and Albus Severus gone, the house was too quiet. Her mother was absorbed with her pregnancy, and her father was constantly at work. She felt lonely and detached. During the family Sunday brunch was the only time that every member of the extended family currently in England would get together. It would have been insufferable had her favourite uncle and godfather not been present.

She regretted having not sent more frequent letters to him, but was glad to see him happier than any other time in the past. She looked around, but no one else seemed to notice any difference. She attributed it to being the only one not having seen him for some time.

"So how is my favourite girl in the whole world?" he asked her teasingly.

She told him the truth about the empty house, and he invited her to help him out in the shop in the mornings. She accepted joyously.

Fleur's voice alerted her to an absence she had not noticed.

"Where is Uncle Bill?" she asked George.

"The Potions master who brewed him the Wolfsbane decided to move to Tibet to further study obscure ritualistic potions making. Until another one can be found, he has to do without," George explained haltingly.

Lily moved closer to him and whispered in his ear, "I don't want to raise any expectations, but I know how to brew the Wolfsbane. However, since I am a minor, I do not have access to some of the ingredients."

George turned to her, shock evident on his face.

He unceremoniously dragged her outside, while the other members of the family wondered about what had happened.

He Apparated them to his shop.

"Explain yourself, young miss!" he ordered her.

"I-know-how-to-brew-the-Wolfsbane," she intoned every word so as if she were speaking to an imbecile.

"My dear niece, this is impossible, as the Wolfsbane potion was created by a long dead Potions master, named Damocles. The recipe was taught by him to several other Potions makers, upon their wand oath that they could only teach it to one person every twenty years. Unfortunately the only living ones alive to know the recipe at this time chose to reveal it to people who are now perished. Therefore there is no way you know how to brew it, unless of course you had access to someone dead like Severus Snape!" George explained patiently.

Lily shrugged and repeated, "And yet I know how to brew it!"

George then asked the one pertinent question.

"How did you learn how to brew it?"

"This I have made an oath not to reveal," she replied casually.

George was torn. Lily was an unruly teenager, but she was also honest and decent and loved her family.

"I need to think about it. Please, write down the ingredients you want me to acquire, and I will provide the workspace for you to brew it if I can find a Potions master of the ones who know how to brew it to verify that your potion is indeed the Wolfsbane," he told his niece.

Lily bristled under the lack of trust, but was also aware of one thing. She finally knew her mentor's identity. She knew, at last, why the Bloody Baron bowed to his will and why he was able to move freely in Hogwarts. Her father had made all three of them study the biographies of Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape when they had made fun of her brother's name.

George knocked on the main doors of Malfoy Manor. He would have never thought of going there uninvited had he not been so upset. A house-elf opened the door and Astoria appeared right behind it.

"Hallo, George, please come in," she invited him warmly, as if it was normal that he had gone there.

"Draco is in his home office. It is next to the study; let me take you right there." Astoria started guiding him to the corridor.

George touched her arm lightly.

"I need your advice, too," he whispered.

"Alright," Astoria replied, realizing what this meant in terms of friendship.

They entered Draco's home office, and George immediately told them of what had occurred. The tea tray arrived just as George finished his explanations.

"Poor Lily will be devastated by your lack of trust," Astoria said, and both men looked at her surprised, because it would never have occurred to them. George jumped up, ready to go and mend the fences, but Astoria told him that a couple of minutes would not make any difference.

As it was, Draco had a ready solution. One of his firms was a potions company. The problem was that it was based in the Amazon region and potions like the Wolfbane could not be shipped by magical means, while they expired if shipped by Muggle means due to their short shelf life. Draco called his chief potions maker and bribed him with enough money to make a quick trip to England.

It took less than half an hour for Draco to arrange this, and meanwhile Astoria had vanished. She returned as George was ready to leave and gave him a package.

"Give this to Lily, and she just might forgive you," she told him.

George bent and placed a tender kiss on Astoria's cheek.

"Thank you! Thank you both so much!"

He left via Floo. Draco hugged his wife and whispered in her ear, "You are the most extraordinary and amazing woman, my dear, and I am the luckiest man in the whole world."

She giggled like a much younger girl and left him to his work.

Draco, however, had difficulty concentrating on his work. George was happy because of what this could mean for his brother if his niece was indeed able to brew the Wolfsbane. Draco, as an outsider, wondered though. If it was so, how had the girl learnt to brew the potion?

...

In his hidden home in the Forbidden Forest, Severus Snape was unaware of how many times his name had been spoken in these last few hours by a multitude of people. Summer was always a quiet time for him. For the first time, however, he realized that he missed someone. He missed little Lily, who was growing up fast. It saddened him that in just a couple of years she would graduate and then he would probably never see her again. She was an imp, but she was also his friend in a way, especially this last year that she had found out that he was a vampire. She was outrageous with her pierced ears and bat tattoo, but she was also decent and nice. When she grew up, she would become a remarkable woman.

...

George informed Lily of the arrangement with the Potions maker, and then he begged her forgiveness for finding it hard to believe her.

"Since I haven't brewed it yet, and you believe me now, I think I will forgive you," she told him.

George handed her the package.

Lily opened it immediately and found inside an original Billenwise bracelet.

"Wow! I have no idea how you even knew who Billenwise is. Do you know how difficult it is to find an original of his? The waiting list is way too long! Thank you so very much." She hugged him and left the shop. After all she would need to rest if she was to brew to potion tomorrow, and she also had to inform a couple of her classmates of her bracelet. She even wrote a letter to Scorpius bragging about it.

...

Scorpius contemplated the nightly sky. Not far away, Albus Severus was kissing another conquest, a dark-haired quarter Veela. He did not envy him. He was tired of these hurried encounters, of the one-night stands. The sky held no answers for him, and he kept wondering what he should do with his life. He was good in almost every field of magic, but nothing held any particular interest for him. He even had some business acumen, due to his father's summer training ever since he was ten, but did not particularly like it or crave to become a businessman. A moan drew his attention. Albus Severus had divested the woman of her clothing. His head was currently between her legs and his hands on her breasts. Scorpius sipped his beer and settled for the show that would follow.

...

Severus Snape touched the bruise on the prostitute's cheek.

"Just an angry client," she apologised.

"I don't like to fuck bruised women. I will pay you to be your only customer," he informed her coldly.

"I can't, I don't want your pity," she replied.

"Whether you want it or not is irrelevant. You will do it for Zoe," he replied evenly.

She nodded. He was right of course.

He placed her on the bed on all fours and pounded into her. Just when she thought that she would faint, he bit her neck. He left soon afterwards, and she found on her bed enough money to pay the rent for many months. She showered and went to the other room. Little Zoe slept peacefully. Next to her bed there were three vials filled with the potion that allowed her defective heart to beat.

...

Lily had never before been allowed into the Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes

workshop. It was divided into two parts, one dedicated to mechanical assemblies and one to the concoction of potions. She stood before the workbench. Her hair was tied in a tight bun. She wore her school uniform because of the stain-resistant material. She concentrated on the task before her. The aged Potions master did his best to intimidate her, certain that there was absolutely no way that this adolescent knew how to brew the complex potion. However, Lily had learnt from the scariest teacher of all, and she almost laughed at the pitiful attempt. Her uncle was there too. Mr. Malfoy, Scorpius' father was also there, a fact that puzzled her, despite her uncle's explanation that Mr. Malfoy was the Potions master's employer.

The ingredients were laid before her, and she had already checked them. She would have preferred her own equipment from the Hogwarts dungeon, but she would make do with the existing one.

She commenced and everything fell into place. Potions making brought her peace and a sense of belonging. She was unaware of the people watching her. George with pride, Draco with surprise, and the Potions master with incredulity.

Eight hours later, she removed the cauldron from the fire and placed the potion into six identical vials. The potions master took one. He smelled the liquid inside. He then dropped a small moonstone inside, and the liquid changed colour. He then turned to Lily.

"I would have never believed it had I not seen it with my own eyes. You may apprentice with me after you finish school. Well done, young lady!" He shook hands with Mr. Malfoy and left.

George had a broad grin on his face. "Should we call Bill and inform him of your success?" he asked and without waiting for an answer got some Floo powder to throw into the fireplace.

"Wait, Uncle," Lily stopped him. "Please, take the vials and give them to Bill for his use, and for the use of the other local werewolves, but I don't want anyone to know that I brewed the potion." George was surprised at the request, but would honour it.

"Mr. Malfoy, would you please also keep your silence?"

"Absolutely. Only my wife will be informed as she is already aware of this experiment. Naturally, you are kindly requested to consider whether you would like to work for one of the Potions Firms of Malfoy Enterprises," Draco Malfoy said without any sneer. It was strange but this older Mr. Malfoy was nothing like the boy her parents had described him to be.

...

"Mr. Potter, you need to come to St. Mungo's," a head announced from his fireplace at work.

Harry immediately jumped up.

"What has happened?" he asked and run towards the fireplace.

"It's your wife. She has had a miscarriage," the head said and vanished in order to allow Potter to step through.

Harry felt anguish at the words, but his first thoughts were of Ginny, of how this must have hurt her.

He stepped through and immediately asked the nurse, "My wife, how is she?"

The nurse replied carefully, "She will need some time to recover, but she is alright. At least physically. Depression is a danger at the moment however."

Harry sat for many long hours next to his wife's bed as she slept. He held her hand and noticed how pale she was and the lines on her face. They were not laugh lines, and it was his fault. If only he had been a better husband. If only he had known how to make her happy.

...

Chapter VII

Chapter 7 of 10

Lily now knows the identity of the vampire. Minerva finds out, too.

"I am needed at home," Albus Severus informed his friend as he hurriedly packed his luggage.

"Alright, I'll pack immediately," Scorpius said.

"You do not have to come with me. After all, we just arrived in Rome."

"Nah, I can always return at a later time. So why are you crying, tough man?" Scorpius asked.

"Mother lost the baby," Albus Severus replied.

"I'm sorry. We need to hurry if we are to catch the ten o'clock Portkey."

...

James Potter read the crumpled paper.

"You need to leave now, if you want to get in time to the Portkey Authority," his teammate offered.

"We have a game to play. I can't leave," James explained.

"Nobody will think anything of it. Family emergencies come first," his fellow athlete insisted.

"Look, I'm sorry that this happened, but I can't destroy my career, just because my mother had the idiotic idea to get pregnant at her age. It was obviously meant to happen. I'll send her a get well card and some chocolates, and she will be fine." James shrugged the matter off as inconsequential.

"You are a cold fish," his teammate said and left with a disapproving frown.

...

Lily sat next to her mother's bed and held her hand. It was the first time that her mother looked old. Her father had spent the entire previous night here, but when her mother had woken up, she had sent him away. It had looked almost as if her mother resented her father.

...

Minerva McGonagall felt a sudden pain in her chest, and suddenly she could hardly breathe.

The portraits saw and raised the alarm.

Severus Snape felt the disturbance in his wards and immediately headed for the castle.

Within five minutes he was in the Headmistress' office. She was still alive, and because of that no one else had managed to break into her office to assist her. He opened the medicine cabinet, took out the potions required, mixed two of them together and added a few drops of a third one and finally he administered it to the Headmistress.

It took a couple of seconds, but at last she breathed normally. She opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"I knew it. I have known ever since you took the burden of the wards on yourself. The Castle, it recognized you as its Headmaster and as Head of Slytherin House. That's why I've never felt comfortable as Headmistress. That's why Hamilton is about to leave, as his predecessors did," she told him.

"Rest now, Minerva," he told her. With a wordless command he released the wards on the door and vanished through the fireplace.

A bunch of people entered the office in order to assist the Headmistress.

Minerva kept her silence regarding her visitor and claimed she had been able to get the potion from the cabinet herself.

...

Astoria took her nightgown off and looked at herself in the mirror. She was not old, but there were a few signs of age on her body. Her breasts, they were a bit heavier, and her midsection was a bit rounded. Her legs were not as smooth as they had once been, and she had a couple of laugh lines on her face. She closed her eyes and tried to think of internal signs of age.

Suddenly she felt hands on her breasts. She opened her eyes and saw her husband standing behind her. He massaged her breasts with his hands and then used his fingers to tease her nipples. As he pulled them gently at first and more insistently then, she moaned.

He grinned and kissed her neck.

"Come to bed, wife," he ordered pseudo sternly. She followed him eagerly. Age and maturity had their advantages.

...

Albus Severus arrived at the hospital together with Scorpius. They saw Lily drinking a cup of tea in the waiting area outside the rooms.

Albus hugged her closely. "How is she?" he asked, concerned.

Scorpius cleared his throat.

"I'm sorry, Lily, for your family's loss. I will be on my way now. I only came with Albus so that he would not get lost," he added.

Lily extended her arm and grabbed him. She then left her brother and hugged Scorpius. In his arms she allowed herself to let her tears fall.

Scorpius stood awkwardly, but continued to hold her and gently patted her on the shoulder.

As he took her hands in his, he could not help noticing her bracelet. He was surprised, but he did not let it show. Lily and Albus were in no condition to discuss jewels.

...

Severus Snape lay on the bed.

"Come on, woman. Provide the services I pay you for," he called irritably.

She climbed on the bed and bent to do what she did best. She tried a lick here and there and a little sucking, but within seconds she found herself with his member pressed deep in her mouth. She was skilled enough and good in managing not to gag. She used her hands to play with his balls while he strove to reach her throat. She hated this. She did not know when she had started to, but after he had become her only client, she had started resenting his cold skin and tasteless come, his paleness and the sameness of sex with him. It was true that he was almost clinical in his approach and had never hurt her despite his demands. Sometimes though she wished he would just show some emotion, even if it would be rage.

When he was finished, he had her lie down on the bed. He bent his head over her leg and bit on her left thigh. Intellectually she knew that he would bite her every time they had sex, but she never remembered much about the biting. It did not hurt after the initial shock, and it was always hazy in her memory.

Once again, when he left, there was more than enough money on the bed and three vials of potions in the next room.

...

Scorpius sat between his parents as he told them of his travelling and of the reasons for his early return. After he had finished, his father told him of his newest business ventures, trying to tempt him as always to choose this path as a career. Scorpius, however, had suddenly had an epiphany during the last few hours and thought that he might have found the right career for him. He was, however, not ready to reveal it to anyone. So he turned to another subject.

"Mother, how come that Lily Potter was wearing an original Billenwise bracelet today?" he asked.

It was common knowledge that Billenwise jewels were the most exclusive jewels to be bought in the wizarding world. However, no one outside the family knew that their creator was Astoria Malfoy. What made these jewels and especially the bracelets unique was that each one of them was designed with the specific recipient in mind, and somehow Scorpius doubted that Lily's parents had asked the company's sales department for such a present for their daughter.

Astoria smiled.

"That, my son, falls under business confidentiality. We would not want someone suing us, would we now?"

Scorpius groaned. It would be easier to get his father to tell him, but he would have to wait to catch him alone.

...

"My brother is named after you," Lily confronted her mentor with her new-found knowledge of his identity.

"Your father was always an idiot," he replied indifferently.

"You are a hero. Why do you let people believe that you are dead?"

"If it has escaped your knowledge, I am undead. As to the hero part, that could not be farther from the truth."

He scowled at her and she smiled in reply.

"Now pay attention to this potion. It is still developing, and small changes might be required in the future," he informed her.

"I brewed the Wolfsbane for my uncle," Lily informed him, upset that he had not inquired how she had found out his identity.

"I wish you had not done it. It might complicate things," he told her.

He had lived these three last decades without any mortal knowing of his continued existence. Now, in the space of two weeks, this had changed. He would need to consider the potential ramifications. Both, Minerva and Lily, were trustworthy, but people might start wondering. Maybe he should not have taught the girl how to brew the Wolfsbane, but there was no way he regretted saving Minerva. And it never paid to regret what had already been done.

...

The woman touched her bruised face. She was angry with herself. A client was responsible for this, but it was not the one who had requested exclusivity. The cold man who had demanded to be her exclusive client had never touched her in anger, had never caused her any pain, had never requested anything she was not willing to give. Now, she wondered why she despised him, why she had chosen to break her promise, why she had gone out to find other clients. The bruise caused her pain, but the real agony was her fear of when her "exclusive" client found out that she had broken her promise and had taken other clients. She was not truly repentant. If only she had chosen wiser and taken another less abusive client, no one would be the wiser. Now she would have to find a way to keep this from him. She caressed her sleeping daughter's hair and prayed for everything to be alright.

...

Ginny was tired of Harry coddling her. She wanted him to go away, to leave her alone. It had been weeks since she had returned from St. Mungo's. She snapped at him, but he did not get it. He kept doing it. He would bring her breakfast to bed, along with her favourite magazines. He would send her flowers and had even cut back on his work hours to be more at home. She only wanted to be left in peace.

The one thing she had asked him to do, he had refused. She had demanded that he forgave James for not coming. Harry had refused, and the chasm between her husband and son had grown even wider.

...

Draco threw a card in the middle and then placed his hand over his wife's thigh. George looked at his cards, chewed his cigar. He then took another card and raised the stakes. Astoria checked her cards and her last remaining chip. She pouted and turned to Draco. "Will you lend me one more?" she asked.

"No," he replied and moved his hand to her waist.

George looked at her and tossed her one chip.

"Here, take this. I can't stand watching pouting females."

She offered him a million-watt smile, and he blushed.

She then blew him a kiss from afar. Draco laughed at her antics.

She lost both chips in that round, so she just quit and watched the game between her husband and George. George kept chewing at his unlit cigar during the next rounds, while her husband's hand kept roaming on her body in between rounds.

George won the game, and when he stood up to leave, Astoria hugged George and for the first time ever gave him a peck on his left cheek.

"Thank you for the chip. And don't forget to come on Friday to watch the Quidditch game with Draco.

He will be all alone at home, since I will be attending a meeting of the Witches' Christmas Events Committee."

George nodded, embarrassed by both her kiss and invitation. "Yes, madam. Good night Astoria, Draco!"

...

Many thanks to WriterMerrin for beta-ing!

VIII

Chapter 8 of 10

Scorpius visits his parents and dreads fulfilling a promise

Scorpius entered the manor and headed directly towards the dining room. Hearing their laughter as soon as he approached, he smiled. It was quite embarrassing for a young man to know that his parents had such a good time together. And then, just as he entered, he heard a third voice join in the laughter. He saw him a moment later sitting at the table. Recognition was instant. George Weasley was famous, especially among teenagers. His products were a must-have for every student, especially the pranksters. He was shocked by Mr. Weasley's presence, as he had no idea that his parents knew the man. Scorpius' breeding took over, and he did not let his surprise show.

He kissed his mother gently, slapped his father's back and offered a polite, "Good evening, Mr. Weasley," to his parents' guest.

He had come to discuss with them his career choice, but the discussion would now have to wait. He joined them for dinner and was astonished by the evident close friendship between his parents and Mr. Weasley.

George looked at his friends' son and felt envious. Had things turned out differently, he might also have had a child to be proud of. Astoria, perceptive and sensitive to his moods as always, covered his hands with hers.

"Scorpius was a menace during his childhood," she whispered to him. George smiled at her.

Draco watched the by-play and thought that maybe it was time for something he had only ever dreamed of.

...

Severus Snape looked down at the woman before him. No amount of make-up could disguise the bruise on her face and the guilt in her eyes. Legitimacy was hardly necessary for him to know the exact thought that went through her mind. He handed her some money.

"Consider this a severance payment," he said and turned to leave.

She grabbed his clothes, attempting to hold him.

"Please, I won't do it again. I'll do anything you want," she pleaded.

Pity compelled him to reply.

"I'll continue sending you the medicine for the baby."

She knelt and wept. Because, even though he had just proved her that decent people still existed, it also served to showcase how she was not one of them.

...

Lily looked at her reflection. The last year had brought changes in her body. Just a few months shy of her 18th birthday, she was finally a woman. She could not wait for her birthday. She remembered Scorpius' promise, and she had even written him a letter to remind him. On her birthday she would lose her virginity. If Scorpius did not keep his promise, she would find someone else.

...

Scorpius avoided Albus Severus as much as he could. The letter in his pocket was a harsh reminder of an idiotic old promise. He always kept his promises, but in this case doing so would alienate him from his best friend. If said best friend ever found out. Which he would because Scorpius doubted he could keep anything secret for very long from Albus Severus. It was not as if he had not salivated over Lily when he had last seen her, a couple of weeks before. She had turned out to be a fetching young woman. Her most attractive feature was her newfound self-confidence.

Scorpius had kept in touch with various Slytherins and knew she still kept away from most others. And as far as they could tell him, she still vanished almost every afternoon. This was a mystery he had not managed to solve during all his years at Hogwarts. Maybe he should demand an explanation if they were going to be intimate. In any case he needed to start preparing the perfect night for her. But first he would need to explain to her that if she insisted on him realizing his promise, it would only be for

the one night.

...

"I want a divorce," Ginny stated.

Harry did not reply at first. All he had ever wanted was a family and to be able give his wife everything she might wish.

If this was what she needed from him, he would give it to her, even if it killed him. So he nodded.

...

Thank you WriterMerrin!

IX

Chapter 9 of 10

Scorpius and Lily

My most sincere thanks go to WriterMerrin. Without her support my stories would be painful to the eye.

...

IX

Lily entered a room filled with candles floating. A bed dominated her view, covered in red linens, rose petals strewn on the pillows. Soft music played in the background. Lily gulped. She had no reason to be nervous. She had asked for this. She would not face a stranger, but one of her dearest friends.

She located him standing in the shadows. In the light of the candles, she appreciated his form: white blond locks, piercing blue eyes, a body toned and fit. He only wore a loose pair of pants. His feet were bare as was his upper body. He smirked, mocking her and at the same time daring her.

She walked forward to him, fully determined to get her present of her eighteenth birthday.

He raised one hand and gently touched her hair. "Are you sure?" he inquired.

"Absolutely," she replied.

His fingers trailed her face and ended up on her lips, teasing. She took one finger in her mouth and sucked on it.

"Merlin, you are supposed to be innocent," Scorpius groaned.

"This is the twenty-first century," Lily replied, releasing his finger.

Scorpius bent to kiss her. Their kiss was sweet.

Lily's nervousness melted away.

His hands roamed over her body, touching, teasing, teaching, coaxing.

Lily closed her eyes and just felt.

In a rare exhibition of wandless magic, Scorpius disrobed her and made his pants vanish.

Lily opened her eyes and admired the protruding rod. Straight and long, it appealed to her. She knelt and touched it, laughing at the instinctive jerking response. Her tongue darted then out of her mouth and tasted the soft skin. Scorpius sighed, but she had already stood up. Touching was nice, tasting not so much.

He grabbed her, less patiently than before, laid her on the bed and once again asked.

"Are you certain?"

"Yes," she replied.

Fingers played with her nipples, and finger touched her most private parts. Moisture had gathered from before, and he inserted one finger and then two in the tiny opening.

She pulled his hair to complain.

He kissed her and soothed the complaint with caresses. Time passed, and he did not know how much longer he would stand this without entering her. Then, she urged him.

"More," she demanded.

He entered her in one swift move, and she screamed, using her nails to scratch him at the same time.

"You idiot, that hurt," she accused him.

He counted to hundred before he started moving inside her. She was now soothing the scratches with little caresses.

"How does it feel?" he asked.

"The pain has subsided. But it is not particularly comfortable," she informed him.

Understanding that he would not be able to make her climax, Scorpius sped up, and a moment later he came.

"That's just disgusting," Lily complained upon feeling his come between her legs.

Scorpius looked at her sadly. He had wanted this experience to be perfect for her.

"I'm sorry," he offered, "let me make it better for you."

He lowered his head towards her stomach and peppered her navel with kisses. He then tried to move lower, but Lily stopped him. He raised his head and looked at her.

Lily saw in his eyes his determination to please her. She recognized the efforts he had made, as well as the fact that he truly cared for her. She realized, though, that she did not want him to continue.

"Don't be sorry. I'm glad it was you; thank you," she said simply and kissed his forehead.

...

Kingsley met with Harry in a bar. He worried about Harry. The Head of the Auror Department had lost weight, and dark circles had formed under his eyes. Kingsley was the only one who knew that Ginevra Potter nee Weasley had filed for divorce. He was also informed that Harry did not plan to fight it. He wondered about that, since family meant everything to Harry. As far as Kingsley knew, neither Harry nor Ginny had told their children yet.

"I don't want to talk about it," Harry said instead of offering a greeting.

Kingsley respected his friend's request. He ordered a glass of Firewhisky and opened a discussion on business related items.

Harry did not seem to listen, but when the subject came to Hogwarts and Minerva's failing health, Harry responded, recognizing the implications. Whereas they both cared for Minerva, this was always a matter of interest to the Ministry. The position of Headmaster of Hogwarts would need to be filled sooner or later, and Minerva had not chosen her successor. This puzzled the two men, as it was part of Hogwarts' Charter that the Headmasters always selected their successors, even if in modern times this selection required the board's approval. The two men agreed that they would need to discuss the matter with Minerva. Harry thought to also use the opportunity of his visit to Hogwarts to inform his daughter of the divorce proceedings. She had just turned eighteen, and she would graduate in just a couple of days, so he really did not have any excuse to keep it from her. He just wished he knew of a way to make matters between himself and Ginny alright.

Chapter X

Chapter 10 of 10

Lily and Severus make a bargain.

Severus Snape scowled. Firing his blood donor had been a bad idea. His blood lust had been steadily rising, and he would have to find someone else. He could always hire another prostitute, but during these last few years, he had grown to hate the idea. Stealing blood from any passerby was also an option, but not one he would consider, at least not for the time being.

He did not need the complication of his bloodlust at this time. Minerva had been pressuring him to reveal his existence and take over her position. He could not really see it, how the parents would entrust their kids to a school having a vampire as Headmaster. He had tried pointing out the impossibility of the plan to Minerva, but she insisted. She had even played the "Dumbledore would have wanted this" card. He ought to have corrected her misunderstanding that he could still feel anything, but unfortunately he would have been lying, at least as far as it concerned his feeling of guilt.

...

It was a rare quiet afternoon. Draco for once did not have to be at the office, while Astoria's Committee meeting had been cancelled. They were together in the study, Draco sitting in his favourite armchair and Astoria on the carpet between his legs, sucking his cock. His left hand was on her hair, encouraging her efforts, and he used his right hand to play with her left nipple. They were both so engrossed in their play that they missed the flames in the fireplace turning green and someone's following entrance. The floo network was warded, and there were only two persons who would have been allowed through: Draco and George Weasley. In this case it was the latter. He had looked for Draco in his office and had gotten worried when he wasn't there. He had often popped in unannounced during the last year, at first at the insistence of Astoria that she wanted him to feel at home. This was the first time, though, that he caught them in such a private moment. He turned crimson and quickly looked for floo powder in order to leave immediately, but was unable to locate it. He thought he would have to make his presence known, but the sight of them caught his attention.

The sight of them was riveting. His own cock filled inside his trousers. At that moment, Draco looked towards the fireplace and saw him. George saw him startle, but he did not otherwise react. Instead, he returned his attention to Astoria and quickened the pace in which he fucked her mouth. George watched, aroused and feeling guilty for it. At last he managed to locate the floo powder and left as silently as he had arrived.

Back in the study Draco smiled in satisfaction as he watched George's reaction and subsequent departure. Very soon, things would be manipulated as they should be. Meanwhile, he had a wife to take care of. With this thought, he pinched the nipple he had been teasing for some time now hard. She groaned but could not really squeal with his cock deep in her mouth.

...

Lily paced the room. Her latest potion was not working at all. Having graduated from Hogwarts only a couple of weeks previously, she was already working part time during the summer for a known potions firm. She had no idea why all of a sudden she could not complete this potion. She had made it more than a dozen times with her mentor during the past year, and it had always worked. She needed to deliver the potion to her boss as soon as possible. She would have to contact Severus Snape and ask for his assistance. She could not return to Hogwarts, at least not without a good excuse, or she would endanger his secret, but thankfully he had given her a means to contact him by owl.

She received a reply sooner than she expected. She frowned at the instructions included. She would have to go to the Forbidden Forest after sunset and wait with her eyes covered by a blindfold. The things she would do for a potion. Then it occurred to her that she was the youngest potions maker in Great Britain and, given the amount of money she was making, she surrendered to the idea that she would have to visit the Forbidden Forest.

...

Severus was not particularly worried that his bloodlust would affect him during the girl's visit. He would never harm a child or an innocent. He wondered at the difficult situation she must have found herself in to be forced to contact him so soon after she had graduated. He did not regret getting to know her when she was a first year, and he did not dislike the fact that he had turned her into an excellent student. He even felt proud that he had managed to turn her wild streak into something productive and that she had not turned out as unruly as her parents before her.

He located her easily in the Forbidden forest, but wasn't amused when he found out that she was peeking under the blindfold. He had quickly cast a blinding spell on her and told her that it served her well for disobeying his instructions. As he took her in his arms to take her to his lair, he realized she had curves, womanly curves. It did not matter. She was still an innocent.

He brought her to his home, the first human to have entered it since his Sire helped him built it. He removed the spell and waited.

"Good evening, Miss Potter. How can I be of help?" he asked mockingly.

Lily looked at him, angered at having been blinded but recognizing that he had every right.

"Hallo, you can't really blame me for trying to sidestep your instructions. The Forbidden Forest is a terrifying place to be. And I need help with the clarity potion. I suddenly cannot make it," she said.

His eyes lighted, and he listened to the beat of her blood pulsing through her body. There was only one reason the specific recipe for the potion would not work for her anymore.

"Who did you sleep with?" he asked and she paled at his enmity.

"Scorpius," she replied not even thinking of not replying.

"Damn you," he cursed her.

He did not really care who she had slept with. He cared very much though that she had slept with someone. She was no longer an innocent, and he was a very hungry vampire.

"I demand payment for my reply," he spat out.

"Okay," she replied carefully, suddenly weary of the beast before her.

"Give me your wrist," he ordered.

"You want my blood?" she asked, shocked and unsure.

"Yes!" he said, not adding that he would much prefer her blood and her body. He could no longer see the child that she had been before him, but saw instead the young delicious woman that could satisfy his needs.

He was not a monster though. He could restrain himself.

"Alright," she mumbled and gave him her wrist, closing her eyes.

He bit, and she shouted at the sharp pain. A moment later the pain became a numbed throb.

He gulped the red liquid like a starved man. He was careful to maintain control and indeed succeeded. When he was finished, he had Lily sit in a chair and explained to her all about virgins and potions. He even offered her an alternate recipe that would work for her now. When he blindfolded her to take her back to the surface, he advised her to drink a glass of orange juice.

Early the next morning Lily delivered the finished potion, cashed her payment and decided that a little bit of her blood was worth it, even as she shuddered at the image of the beast drinking from her wrist.

.....

"George flooded in the study yesterday. He saw us. He liked what he saw. How do you feel about it?" Draco asked his wife during breakfast and smirked at her reaction. It was not every day that his prim and proper wife sputtered her orange juice all over the expensive table cloth.

She recouped quickly.

"Since we are talking about indelicate subjects, how about you tell me now after twenty years of marriage what excites you with regards to our friend George?" she asked.

"Should I show you?"

"Do you want to?"

"Yes. It is time you knew everything," Draco said.

"Why now?"

"Because at long last the war is forgotten. It was never about the flesh, Astoria. It was about survivor's guilt and pain and sadness," Draco explained.

"I know," she whispered as they headed for the Pensieve, an old Malfoy heirloom, carefully hidden in a secret armoire.

...

Albus Severus closed the book before him. "Why did we choose to study healing?" he asked Scorpius.

"You didn't. I did and you just followed," Scorpius replied.

The same question had been asked a dozen times during the last year. How could Scorpius tell his best friend that it was so that he would prevent seeing in others the sadness he had seen in the Potters when Ginevra had lost her baby.

He always laughed at the question and had managed to avoid answering.

...

Astoria had been shocked. She had not recognized George in the angry young man who hated Draco with a passion and who wanted to make him pay for the sins of others. She had almost not recognized Draco in the bitter, arrogant young man who was so guilt ridden that he was ready to allow George anything to alleviate these suffocating feelings. Their couplings had been violent, and George had always been the aggressor. These were the first memories.

Then she had watched in the next few memories how there had been a fleeting caress here and there, a hint of care from George that he would not harm Draco. Then in

later memories, there was an occasional hug and more talk between them, the first hints of a friendship.

Afterwards, three years after the end of the war, a first kiss, a thank you for helping me get over the past few years. Afterwards their relationship had been more friendship and less carnal, but she had watched as once or twice per year they would get physical, usually in connection with some difficulty or sad event.

Now that she had seen, she felt even stronger connected to her husband's best friend.

...

"It's time, Severus," Minerva said. The vampire looked far better than he had the previous week, and Minerva wondered at the change. Little did she know that it was due to the infusion of human blood.

Severus Snape would have liked to deny her request this time too. But the truth was that Minerva was dying and there was no appropriate successor.

"I will relent in informing the Minister of Magic of my continued existence for the time being," he offered.

"No, I want to hand you the reins now. It is too late to wait for them to get used to the idea of you being alive. If it is a fait accompli, they shall have a hard time overthrowing you. Otherwise they might never accept my request," Minerva explained, proving that she had listened to the points made by him during his previous visits.

"Very well," he replied.

Now all he had to do was find someone to donate blood frequently, so that he would not endanger his students. As he had the thought, he could not help but recall the sweetness of Lily Potter's blood.

...

Harry met with Kingsley in the same bar they had been meeting in for several years now.

He was already half inebriated. He had started drinking earlier, upon receipt of the court's decision to award Ginny the divorce she craved so much. It had taken more than a year, but she had her freedom now. She had already left the house, taking with her a good part of their savings.

"All I've ever wanted was a family," Harry told the other man.

"You have three kids," Kingsley offered.

"They are all grown up, living their own lives, and I return every night to an empty house," Harry mumbled.

Kingsley commiserated with him for a while but was then called to an urgent meeting, leaving Harry to continue his drinking alone.

...

Being a potions maker was boring. Without having any formal apprenticeship, she was only permitted to make specific potions without being supervised by a Master. She had earned some money this summer, but not as much as she would have liked. She could always ask her father for money, but she wanted to be independent. When her boss offered her a big bonus if she managed to make a volatile potion, under proper supervision of course, she decided that she could not miss the opportunity.

So she contacted Severus Snape once again. He sent her the same instructions, and this time she followed them to the letter.

She did not notice that he held her for a moment longer when he brought them to his home.

"How can I help you, Miss Potter?" he inquired sardonically, much in the same way he had the previous time.

Lily, however, noticed a difference in the way he looked at her, almost with anticipation.

She outlined the requirements for the potion.

"If you would be willing to make the same exchange as the last time," he said, and his fangs gleamed as he smirked.

Lily shuddered but thrust her arm to him.

"Such rashness," he commented, and she shivered as he ran a finger down the length of her arm. Just a moment later sharp fangs connected with her skin. This time she managed to hold back the scream. The sensation was somewhat different this time, the pain more numbed. It must have something to do with the feel of his tongue on her wrist, she mused as she waited for him to finish drinking from her.

Afterwards he helped her with the potion, and when it was bottled and stamped as valid, he invited her to stay for a bit and listen to a proposal he had to make.

"Do you plan to spend the rest of your life as a mediocre potions maker, or would you rather be a Potions Mistress?" he asked.

Lily looked at him sadly. She would have loved the second choice, but she had found out that she could not stomach working for any of the Masters who had asked her to after her successful making of Wolfsbane. She explained this and he smirked.

"How about becoming my apprentice?" he asked.

"You are not involved in any formal institution at this moment. Actually, as far as I know, I'm the only one who knows that you are alive," she commented pragmatically.

"You and Minerva, but this shall change soon. I'll be Hogwarts' headmaster starting next semester. And this is your one chance to become my apprentice," he said.

"What do you require in exchange?" she asked.

"It is a good thing you were a Slytherin and do not expect me to offer this opportunity to you for free," he stated. Then he added, "The same thing that you have willingly given me twice. Your blood."

The first time, she had thought that it had been worth the gain. She had even chosen this a second time. And yet she had had a couple of nightmares during the previous weeks, in which the same beast who had tasted her blood devoured her whole. She wondered if she could have it done to her on a frequent basis. Then, she contemplated that she had already spent seven years under the tutelage of this same beast, and yet he had never hurt her.

"I accept," she said simply.

...

Astoria moaned in her sleep. Ever since she had seen Draco's memories of his couplings with George, she had been having fantasies related to them. She dreamed of the restrained violence in George's handling and how it would be if it was directed towards her. Next to her Draco laid his wand back on his nightstand. A quick Legilimency in his wife's mind proved that everything went according to plan.

...

Albus Severus and Scorpius looked at the young girl lying in the hospital bed of the Childrens' Magical Maladies Unit. She had been left outside St. Mungo's with a note attached.

The contents of the note read, "I'm sorry. I can't help her. The potions do not work anymore. Please, do something for my baby." A small vial had been left with the child, containing a potion that was so much more advanced than current research that the Healers had been stunned. The young girl's only hope lay in finding the Potions Master who had brewed this so that he could make the required adjustments. Because even though the potion was so advanced it was still only a temporary relief and not a full cure.

That day watching the little girl, Scorpius decided that he would specialize in the healing of young children.

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Notes: A thousand thanks to WriterMerrin!