

Purity and Power

by janus

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus was studying, peering closely at his book in the firelight, his feet on the floor, shoulder-width apart, knees bent at right-angles. He absently ran the quill through his lips in between the sentences he inscribed in his textbook. The room went quiet behind him, the discussion, chatter and vying of his housemates stilled unusually.

He looked up curiously. Lucius had arrived and stood next to the fire, looking at him. That alone would not have accounted for the sudden silence. Severus was respectively quiet, waiting to be addressed.

"This is the boy, Father, about whom I told you. Severus Snape, from the Prince family." Lucius was more formal than usual. His father.

There was a light behind Lucius, in the shadows. No, it was not a light, but pale robes, pale hair, pale skin, absorbing and then radiating all the light in the room.

Everyone was looking at him, and he wanted to bow his face beneath his swing of hair. His shoe had a hole in it and he wanted to slide it under a corner of the carpet but there was no time. He was imagining himself retreating, even as he was standing straight, head erect.

"Come into the light... Severus."

He was still silent. The man before him was an older version of Lucius, but there was something more in him - an assumption of command that was so certain it was easy and relaxed. Severus saw immediately that much as he admired Lucius, the older boy reached for his father's manner, and by his very reaching missed the mark. Abraxas did not even look superior or amused. He was simply always the most important person present, and not just in a children's common room. Severus also saw himself and vowed to learn to relax his hands at least - a small step towards the way he wished to be. He must present something quickly, something understated and memorable. Bravado would not serve him and shyness or subservience would be failure.

"A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Malfoy, sir." He did not bow, but he inclined his head in sincere respect and he... smiled, a little sideways, showing his openness, his curiosity, his keenness. He transformed in a second, instinctively. It was as if they stood in an empty room, with Lucius witness, as they looked at one another.

"Let me see your school-book." Severus placed it in his gloved hand. He waited while the great man paged through it critically. Severus still looked up at him with that little smile, not sly, not quite coy, but projecting all his faith in his work and worth into this encounter with someone... wonderful.

The gloved hand raised his chin seriously but gently - no need to be harsh. Grey eyes looked into his, searching but impassive. The man was looking for something. Occlumency. Severus had been working and this was the real test - not essays and exams, but this moment. *I can reach past the stars. If I can feed my mind and heart I will change the world. If I am given the chance...* He summoned this one thought and poured it from himself without appearing to do so. His will was almost palpable between them.

He was released, and the gloved hand rested on his head for just a second. Was it a blessing?

The man turned to his son. "An invitation for the next holidays, I think. And... he needs new robes. And more food."

When they left, the room was darker, the fire less bright, less significant. The chatter began again, though some few still stared at Severus. His skin tingled where his clothing brushed it, where it was touched by the dungeon draft. He sat and held his book, looking at the cover. He held it to his substantial nose and hoped for a lingering scent from the white glove - snow, or marble perhaps, or smooth white sheets. He searched for the scent of pure power.