

Fireside Chat

by TheQuilter

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Upon congratulating Karkaroff on Krum's show in the second task, Dumbledore set up a meeting some several weeks off. When the timing had come, Karkaroff found himself seated in Dumbledore's office being offered tea. He frowned and asked after something a little stronger. Dumbledore then offered him a snifter of brandy or a shot of Firewhisky. Choosing the Firewhisky and slamming the drink, before even offering his thanks, Dumbledore was aware that something is bothering Karkaroff. After pouring his own tea, the questions begin.

"Igor, you seem troubled. Would you like to share what is burdening you?"

"Where is Severus? I need to speak with him."

"I am sorry, Severus is, ah, indisposed at the moment. Can I be of some assistance? Perhaps you have some concerns. I have been know to have been impartial. I can offer a pair of ears to you."

Rising to leave the room, Karkaroff turned to Dumbledore and opened his mouth to speak, but shook his head and set down his glass.

"Thank you for the drink. Good night," Karkaroff said tersely.

"You are very welcome and please return again tomorrow night," Dumbledore offered.

"Will Severus have returned by then?" queried Karkaroff.

"We shall see, we shall see. Till tomorrow then," Dumbledore said a little more directly.

Karkaroff nodded and exited the room.

Shortly after, the doorway was sealed shut again.

"Your thoughts, Severus?" Dumbledore spoke to the room in general. Someone else had been there in the room under a Disillusionment Charm. He removed the spell and began to walk forward. Pouring himself a shot of the Firewhisky and throwing back the shot in much the same manner that Karkaroff had, Severus answered.

"He is frightened. The Mark grows darker noticeably every week," Severus answered in one of his ever curt responses.

"Then I shall attempt to persuade him even more forcefully," Dumbledore said sadly.

"If I may, Sir, bid you good evening," said Severus, as his hand was already on the door handle.

"Until tomorrow, then," sighed Dumbledore.

After weeks of these meetings, if that was what one could call them, the time had come again. Though he was never quite sure why, Karkaroff showed up at the gargoyles leading to the Headmaster's suite. He did not trust Dumbledore, but he kept coming back. He wondered if the Headmaster knew, but of course he did. He was the great Dumbledore, the only wizard that the Dark Lord supposedly feared, although that was something that you only heard on the Light side of things. Fear was something that the Dark Lord only wanted to instill in others. He wanted no mention of him fearing, only of him being feared. He opened his mouth to say the password that he personally thought was degrading, as it named a Muggle sweet. But before he could utter the word, the gargoyle sprang out of the way.

"Humph! At least I did not have to mutter that ridiculous word!" Karkaroff muttered to himself.

"Welcome, Igor." Dumbledore intoned as Karkaroff came up the staircase. "I thought you might be along. Tea and biscuits, one lump or two?"

Karkaroff, rolling his eyes, once more requested something with a little more strength. "Dumbledore, why the charade every time? I would like a Firewhisky, please."

"Very well, Igor, a Firewhisky. You still seem a bit worried. Surely you are not concerned with how Victor will do in the final contest. I had thought that you would be pleased with how well he has done so far. You have taught him well. All of your students seem to be doing well in their classes, so that cannot be what is bothering you. Is all well back at Durmstrang?"

It was the single longest set of statements that Dumbledore had spoken to him. How was he to respond? No, thank you, no, fine? That did not seem to be what he was actually asking though. So just what was the Headmaster actually after?

"No, no, I am fine. Durmstrang is good, too. Thank you for your inquiry. But I must ask, what are you truly after? I know that there is a trick here, something that I am meant to figure out."

"No, you misunderstand me, Igor. I am simply inquiring after things of interest to you to allow you some comfort. If you prefer, please, sit, I can always be forthcoming," Dumbledore stated bluntly.

Thus completely confusing and throwing Karkaroff off for the moment, but only for the moment. He sat and tipped back his Firewhisky, pausing as he swallowed and taking a breath after the burn released his mouth and freed it to work again.

"Dumbledore, just what are my chances of survival should the Dark Lord return?"

There, he had asked the question that had burned in his brain since he had been released. The question even more pressing since the Mark was getting dark and beginning to itch. Knowing that this meant an imminent return, and having turned in many who were then imprisoned, if the Dark Lord knew not what he had done, there were several Death Eaters who would not let him forget.

"Survival is what you are concerned with? An admirable trait, in some. I could offer you my protection, but I am sure that you would find that limiting and demeaning. But perhaps, just perhaps, Durmstrang is the best place for you. You are allotted a certain amount of freedom there, and it is hidden from all who have not attended, so that should leave only a few for you to be concerned about. But should you be interested, I have places for you to go and tasks that you would be uniquely suited for, should you choose to accept them. Perhaps that is all that is best said at this time on that subject. Good night, Igor. Until tomorrow."

The old man was off his rocker, bonkers, certifiable, completely insane. It had sounded like the old man was willing him to up and go home and wait to be killed. He could not do that. He would have to come up with his own plan. But could he take Dumbledore at his word? That was a question to ponder until he could figure out how to get a straight answer out of the Headmaster of Hogwarts. He was starting to wonder if anyone ever got a straight answer from him. Just what was he to do now? He slowly walked back to the ship, contemplating all of his choices. He just hoped that Viktor would win the next day. Then, he and the rest of the Durmstrang contingent could go home as winners, and he could decide what to do next.