

# Web of Time Respun

*by Crimson Blue*

After the events in Half Blood Prince life moves on and our heroes attempt to help the order in any way they can. Little do they know that once the war is over the real adventure is going to start. A magical backlash upon the demise of the Dark Lord causes his one-time followers the chance at a new life.

## Prolouge

*Chapter 1 of 2*

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### **Prologue**

Severus Snape had fled Hogwarts out of self-preservation, dragging a shell-shocked Draco Malfoy with him. It wasn't until much later, when they were safely away, far away, ensconced in a safe house that Dumbledore himself had set up for him for just such an emergency, that he slowed down enough for the mind-numbing grief to take hold of him. He had killed his mentor, the man who had saved him and loved him like his drunken father had never done. The man who had given him a chance at redemption.

The only balm to the enormous wound was that he had saved the boy, whom he had similar feelings for, though he felt for Draco more like an older brother to a younger. The fact that Albus had ordered him to do it was no comfort--if anything, it made the burden that much greater.

He knew the day that Dumbledore's funeral was to be held on, all of the papers had proclaimed it, and both the men, dark and light, wished that they could attend. It wouldn't be possible, however. So many Aurors and Order members would be there that even heavily disguised, they wouldn't make it five steps. There hadn't been time for Dumbledore's Pensieve to be discovered yet; it detailed his mental will and explanation for the proceedings of the last several days. That would come soon, he knew. Fawkes would retrieve the scroll, and Minerva would be pointed in the right direction.

Snape was too much of a realist to pretend that even after that he would be forgiven. His help might--probably would--be solicited, but only grudgingly, for the greater good, not because of who he was.

But until the truth was discovered, he and Draco would have to be in hiding. He always had contingency plans, though they would be stressed in having to stretch to cover the both of them. There would be no leaving Draco behind, however.

It was after the funeral that the hard choices came about. There was no way that Severus was going to allow Draco to go back--at this point the younger Malfoy was still too susceptible to the doctrines he had been raised with. Severus was finally starting to get through the brain washing the boy had received at home.

There was also the mission to find as many of the Horcruxes as possible and get them to Harry Potter. It had disturbed Severus to see the hate in Harry's eyes that last night, and yet he knew that he could only blame it on himself. He had fostered and fed that hatred, using images of James and the Marauders, and all he felt he could do

was wait for Harry to kill him. In the end, he felt that he deserved it.

At first the going was rough, because they were working with the limited clues that Albus had ordered sent to him in his will. The clues led them to the Scottish coast where one of the soul pieces was found in the tomb of a Nazi soldier. Severus could appreciate the irony of it. They used an anonymous owl to send the piece to the Order.

From there, they were off to Ireland. Severus was thankful that at least he knew about traveling as a Muggle. Poor Draco was at a complete loss and that made blending in that much more difficult. Draco was changing during this time as well, transforming from a sullen, arrogant brat to a more globally aware young man who was almost pleasant to be around at times.

It took them a month and a half, but they had managed to collect two more Horcruxes, passing them, with some difficulty, to the Order. Severus had managed to add a note to Arthur Weasley, trying to explain. The cryptic answer that came back was, that 'the truth was known.'

What truth he meant, Severus was not sure. He had always held a reluctant respect for the Weasleys, particularly the matriarch of the clan. Molly had always had a kind word and a cup of tea waiting when he came to Grimmauld Place, no matter that he never said a word of thanks and snarled constantly. She had a way of understanding people that he rather admired, not that he would ever tell her so.

He hoped that the truth included the fact that Draco had not taken the Dark Mark and that Severus had done what he had to in order to save the boy's soul. Their travels proved to be illuminating for the boy, providing him with more education in the real world than he had ever had in school. It was amusing to the dark man to watch Draco discover things in the Muggle world--especially regarding fashion. There had been more than one occasion that Severus had to tug Draco onwards because the lad was staring at some girl's jean-clad backside.

Their hunts were exhausting and dangerous. He was sure that the Potter boy did not appreciate the full extent of what they were doing for him. He couldn't say that he blamed him, precisely, but a little Gryffindor leniency would be appreciated at times.

The Granger girl, however ... she had shown a surprising amount of maturity about the situation. The last letter that had found its way to them had included a small care package of medical potions and easily kept foodstuffs, all labeled in her careful hand.

As the summer waned, Severus knew that the Final Battle would soon be at hand. Because he was out of England itself, he couldn't be called directly to the Dark Lord's side, but he could still feel the roiling anger of the feared tyrant surging through the Mark on his arm; a constant reminder to him of all that he was striving for. *Even if I never see it, just being free of this pain will make the Dark Lord's fall worth it.* For Severus, though, the biggest goal was making sure that Draco was safe.

At least the Muggle traveling was getting easier with the boy. Draco had developed a healthy appreciation for all that Muggles could do without magic. He had somehow developed a fascination of sorts with DVDs and the cinema, often attempting to drag Severus to new releases as regularly as they could. Severus knew that he had little to fear about Draco going back to his pureblooded ways, as every now and then the boy would talk about never returning to the wizarding world at all. *If things go the wrong way you might just have to do that my young friend...*

They were in Wales now, not too far from Godric's Hollow. Ironic that the last piece of the Dark Lord's soul would be so close to where his nemesis was born. It was probably the Dark Lord's arrogance that led him to think that no one would think to look around the Potters' ancestral home.

Severus wondered what would happen once they sent the last piece on to the Order. He had made plans for them to leave for France as soon as they found it, not wanting to be anywhere in the British Isles when the Final Battle occurred; not for fear of his own life, but because he needed to know that he had done his best for Draco and given him a chance to survive.

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Hermione was the one to receive the final owl, with the final, warded Horcrux contained within the package. Her thoughts, as always, went to the two men who were on the run, hunting these all important items for Harry. Where would they go now? Were they truly safe? Would they ever come back?

She fervently hoped that they would. They could be a big help in the Final Battle, but somehow she knew they wouldn't return for that. Feelings on both sides were too ambiguous and hostile for their return to be safe.

Hermione had been the one to come up with the combination of spells used to disarm a Horcrux. She hadn't done it completely on her own, input from various Order members at different points had helped, as had the creative thinking of the Half-Blood Prince, straight out of his text book. It wasn't so much the spells in them that helped, but the process Snape had used to come to his conclusions. Hermione had played with spells before, 'tweaking' them for her own use, but reading his findings had given her the understanding she needed to learn to craft her own unique spells.

After this, there would be only one more Horcrux and Voldemort. Snape and Malfoy couldn't be expected to get a hold of Nagini. Everyone was sure that the giant snake held the last portion of Tom Riddle's soul, except for the small piece that still resided in the husk of a man.

She sighed, setting the items upon the table in the basement, casting the preparatory spells. Harry had to be the one to destroy them, yes, but she could and would lay the groundwork for him. As powerful as he was, she knew the spells best, and one mistake could be very dangerous.

It was dawn when the Order felt ready to make their move. Unlike other days the sky was not dark and gloomy. The sun was rising making the sky look almost bloody. When Hermione saw it, she found it most appropriate since she knew that a lot of blood would be shed that night before it was all over. All she could was hope that those she held dear to her heart would make it through.

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Severus and Draco were making their way to the Cardiff Airport. It had taken more time than he had counted on to travel incognito through Wales, because he knew that the Aurors were probably on the lookout for them. From the time they had risen, Severus knew that this was the day when all of the answers would be revealed and that the light would either be put out or continue shining brightly.

There in the airport, Severus started handing papers to Draco, and he spoke in a soft yet firm voice.

"Now once we arrive in Paris, I want you to hail a cab and have it take you to the central Banque de France. Inside, you will ask for money from account number 8792731. In the safety deposit box, you will find a set of identification papers for yourself. From there, leave France as soon as you can. Draco, you must promise me this."

Draco looked at his mentor with confusion. *Severus wasn't going with him? He had to come.* So many frantic thoughts ran through his head it took a couple of seconds for it to all form words in his mouth. "But, Uncle, I can't do this without you! Aren't you coming with me?"

Draco's words cut into Severus like a dull knife, the shrillness of the boy's voice reminding him that he was just that... a child in so many ways. It pained him to leave him, but Severus also knew that he had to stay close by, just in case the Dark Lord succeeded. Someone would have to remain to start up the resistance again, and if there were Order survivors, Severus knew he would do his best to get them out of England.

"You will do fine, Draco. You have learned a lot these past few months. If all goes well, I will find you and join you, but if it doesn't, I know I have to stay and try to help. Please understand, I have to do this."

The pain in his godfather's voice moved Draco. For most of his life Severus had been one of the few people he could count on, and the only who had always told him the truth.

"Uncle, if you stay, I stay, and you cannot move me on this. You saved my life... let it count for something now."

The maturity that Draco was now displaying was something new, and the seriousness in his voice could not be ignored. Severus nodded before making the call to change their flight arrangements. If all went well, they would leave to Paris together to start new lives, together.

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The battle was hard. Of course, battles aren't supposed to be easy. The whole point of them was blood and death, and the ones with less blood and death at the end of it all were the winners.

Both sides were suffering losses by the time Harry Potter finally got to the Dark Lord. It was almost anticlimactic, and even amusing, once enough time for reflection was taken afterwards. Harry had his wand in one hand, Gryffindor's sword in the other. The Dark Lord practically launched himself at The-Boy-Who-Lived-So-Many-Times, and Harry had thrown his arms up defensively ... and Voldemort had looked down to find that he was impaled on the sword.

His death had been quick. Harry hadn't really even realized what had happened. As he released the sword, the body of the most feared man of the century fell back onto the ground.

What happened next was a bit of a blur to most people. An unseen magical backlash was released with the final beat of the snaky heart, and all of a sudden, the remaining Death Eaters were on the ground. Aurors and students moved forward hesitantly, only to skitter back when several Death Eaters threw off their masks to reveal befuddled faces.

Young, befuddled faces. Hermione immediately noticed how the robes hung differently, as if on leaner, younger bodies. Bodies aged from around sixteen to nineteen.

The ages of the men and women when they got the Mark, she realized.

"What? Where are we?" a young Bellatrix Lestrange asked, looking around with wide, dark eyes, looking nearly panicked.

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Later that night, a group of weary and shocked people sat around the table in Grimmauld Place. This sudden, strange turn of events was unnerving.

And things weren't about to get easier. Fate proved this when a sudden loud pounding echoed through the first floor of the manor--someone was at the front door.

Hermione rose and went to answer it, wand held out warily. She opened the door to find a wild-eyed Draco Malfoy, whose hand was clamped around the wrist of a confused looking young man who could only be Severus Snape.

"Please ... Granger ... what happened tonight? He doesn't even know who I am!" the boy; no, young man, said, his voice desperate. "What the hell is going on?"

A/N: This is a story written by Gelsey and Anijade, collaboratively. The idea for the Death Eater de-aging was taken, with permission, from Dodge-This off of ff.net- her story can be found here (<http://www.fanfiction.net/s/1926446/1/>). A big thank you to Somigliana for beta-ing- you rock!! Any mistakes left are ours.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter 2 of 2

After the events in Half Blood Prince, life moves on, and our heroes attempt to help the order in any way they can. Little do they know that once the war is over the real adventure is going to start. A magical backlash upon the demise of the Dark Lord causes his one-time followers the chance at a new life.

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Disclaimer: We own nothing. Harry Potter belongs to JKR and various other places including Warner Brothers and others. The idea of the Death Eaters reverting back was borrowed with permission from Dodge-This on ff.net (<http://www.fanfiction.net/s/1926446/1/>). See A/N at the end for more.

Chapter 1

He was Draco Malfoy, the amazing bouncing ... *No, no, no*, he thought with a glare. He swore that if he heard that old crack one more time, Saint Potter would soon find that Draco would succeed in doing what the Dark Lord had failed at.

He couldn't help that he was worried about his godfather and his parents. *Gods, his godfather was his age! And shit, they were his age too- his mother maybe even younger!* It was just damn unnerving.

Snickers came from the two boys every time he moved from the end of the infirmary that held all of the newly-young Death Eaters to the group of Order members and professors at the other.

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On the Order side of the ward, everyone was standing around a version of Severus Snape that most of them hadn't seen in almost twenty years. Minerva kept looking at him and shaking her head in disbelief while Molly patted her hand, telling her that 'it would be alright.' Severus, on the other hand, was getting more and more confused, looking at his one-time teachers standing over him. Only Madam Pomfrey and a girl, who looked to be about his own age, actually seemed to be concerned about his actual person. The young woman leaned over to whisper in his ear, "Don't worry. It will be alright soon."

Finally, Severus found his voice, deciding that he needed answers more than anything else. Clearing his throat, he spoke, "Professor McGonagall? Has there been an accident or something? Could someone please tell me what is going on?"

It was the slightest edge of fear in his voice that caused Minerva to break down in tears. For weeks after the death of Albus, she had harboured a deep seated hatred for the former Potions master, even after they had seen Dumbledore's Pensieve, and all charges had been secretly dropped against him. She had still wanted the man to pay for his crime.

Seeing his innocent, unlined face and dark eyes filled with uncertainty now, however, made the anger and hatred melt away. She sat heavily on his bed and pulled him into a hug. "It will all be okay, Severus, once we figure out what exactly has happened. When we know, we will do our best to explain it to you."

He sat there awkwardly as the older woman—*just when did she get so old*, he wondered—hugged him. He was saved from having to decide whether or not to pull away when the kindly red-haired woman took the professor's arm and pulled her off to one side. His brow furrowed slightly—that couldn't be Molly Weasley, nee Prewett, could it? He could swear that it was, but much more matronly in shape than the last time he had run into her in Diagon Alley.

The young witch from earlier took McGonagall's place next to him, though at a more proper distance than his professor. "My name is Hermione Granger," she told him softly. "I'm going to be Head Girl here at Hogwarts this next year. There are a few things I'd like to ask you, if that is alright?"

Severus was reluctantly impressed by her poise and the quiet authority she exuded. Because of that, he decided that despite the company she seemed to keep—the boy over against the far wall looked like the spitting image of his nemesis, James Potter, though his keen eyes could tell that he wasn't actually James—he would cooperate with her. He nodded sharply, trying to ignore the other people crowded into the room.

He was continuously distracted by the blond boy that was pacing nearby. Apparently, it bothered Hermione, too. She shot a piercing glare at the Potter look-alike and the redhead who bore a surprising semblance to the eldest Weasley boy, and called to the blond who had brought him to these people, "Draco, come here. You're not helping anyone by pacing like that."

Severus observed the wariness in Draco's manner as he approached—apparently he knew this witch. He took a seat, lips compressed into a thin line as if biting back a retort.

"Alright now, Prof ... Severus, may I call you Severus?" He nodded, wondering at her slip. "How old are you? What is the last thing you remember before you came here with Draco?"

Severus had a look of pure concentration on his face as he tried to think back to what had happened before he had found himself with the blond boy named Draco, who looked disturbingly like Lucius. In his mind, he retraced his last moves.

*It had been a Friday. His last class had been Herbology. Not his favourite, but it was something that he knew he needed in order to be a great Potions master. It was the class itself that bored him, not the topic. He could, and did, happily spend many nights just reading up on the properties of the various plants indigenous to Scotland.*

*As the class finally ended, he had found himself cleaning up his workspace alone. His partner had fled the minute the bells had chimed, signaling the end of the day. It didn't bother him though, because he had a lot on his mind and needed the time to ponder it all. Last weekend, Lucius had caught him in Hogsmeade and had asked him once again to join this cause that would supposedly bring order to the wizarding world. He had yet to make a decision about what would be right for him when he had heard a familiar cackling laugh.*

*Looking up, he saw Peter Pettigrew standing there, swinging Severus' book bag on his fingers.*

*"Oooh, let's see what we have here," Peter sneered before opening it up and letting everything inside fall onto the dirt floor.*

*"Give me that," Severus snarled and lunged at the hated Marauder.*

*Peter jumped out of the way, letting the satchel fall to the ground. Severus debated between going after Peter or picking up his fallen things. He settled on the latter—the little rat wasn't worth the trouble. While he was on his knees, he could hear Peter taunting him from the doorway, well out of reach. "Poor Snivellus can't take proper care of his things."*

*Still seething, Severus stuffed his things back into his bag, stalking past Peter on the way out. The plump idiot jumped out of the way, obviously not willing to back up his taunts physically. Now, his mind was made up; he would meet up with Lucius, tonight, in Hogsmeade, and join his cause and finally get some justice and freedom.*

Back on the bed Severus looked at the girl, no, Hermione, and answered her questions.

"I am 18 years old, and the last thing I remember is pushing Peter Pettigrew out of my way before going to meet with Lucius in Hogsmeade to talk to him more about his cause."

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Hermione nodded and sighed. She had suspected as much. The men—and the few women—had been taken back to the time before they had received the Mark. Mentally and physically de-evolved, they had no memory of the previous twenty or so years. The memory around the point of the Mark might be a bit fuzzy, she hypothesized, but no charm or spell or hex that strong could be put in place and not have some hazy effect on the recipients.

Peter actually confronting Prof—Severus, she firmly corrected herself mentally. Peter actually confronting Severus was odd, unless he'd been under orders to ... and the Peter currently in the ward was only sixteen or so, she would swear to it. Could he have been ordered to do it? That might be something to ponder later when she had time. The implications were great if he had indeed been that young.

She knew that Severus watched her as she chewed at her lower lip, a habit she had when she was deep in thought. He should recognize the symptoms, being a rather smart man—boy?—given to deep thinking as well. Draco fidgeted on his other side but didn't dare interrupt the silence.

"I thought something similar," she finally said, realizing belatedly that she was leaving Severus just about as confused as before. "I'm sorry, Prof ... Severus. I know you're confused and that I'm not helping things much. Things are in a bit of an upheaval right now, but everything will even out soon."

She reached over and squeezed his hand briefly, reassuringly, before she even realized what she was doing. She blushed slightly when she did realize it, but didn't jerk away. This was so weird; her professor was her age, and everything was in turmoil, and she was so tired from the battle and ... the list went on and on.

She heard muted whispering from the wall where Harry and Ron were standing. Her lips tightened slightly, and she stood up. "I'll be back in a bit. Draco, stay over here, please. I know where you stand, but you know Harry and Ron .... We're all very tired, and I can't vouch that they'll even try to keep their tempers. Severus, try to get some rest. Everything will be alright."

With that, she smiled slightly and left them, hoping that her two 'brothers' weren't going to make her life that much harder right now.

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On the other end of the ward, behind a section of bespelled curtains, was a group of very displeased individuals. The confusion they all felt was feeding everyone else, and tempers were running high. There had already been a few instances of accidental magic since their wands had been taken when they had suddenly found themselves in the middle of some field hours and hours ago.

Everyone was trying to keep their distance from Bellatrix, who had always been a little strange and highly excitable. She tended to mutter to herself a lot, and it was obvious that she and at least two other personas that only she could hear were all upset. The Blacks were, unfortunately, notoriously dangerous when upset.

Narcissa was on the far side from her sister. The two were close in spurts only, and Cissy never liked to be near Bella when she had that particular gleam in her eye. Rodolphus lounged near her, seemingly unperturbed, and Lucius was prowling the borders of their makeshift prison. There were many others, here and there. Everyone

knew everyone somehow, whether through their families--many were related in some way--or through the small meetings they'd gone to lately, meeting with that charismatic Riddle man.

They had noticed something odd, though. They were all approximately the same age, but they weren't supposed to be. Bella was the eldest, but Narcissa was currently somewhere in the proximity of the same age. That was the most obvious change. They had also talked among themselves. Everyone seemed to have differing opinions of what today's date was. It didn't differ by only days, but by years, and that scared people. And scared Slytherins--though there were several Ravenclaws, two Hufflepuffs and a Gryffindor cringing in a corner--were not a lot to be messed with.

The noise in the makeshift prison was growing by the minute, as the group of sixteen to eighteen year olds were starting to get antsy. Cissy kept looking over at Bella nervously, afraid that her sister was going to have one of her spells again. She wished her parents were more forceful about Bella getting proper medical care, but for some reason they didn't seem to care that their oldest daughter might be mentally ill.

Cissy could remember conversations with Andromeda about how easy it would be for Bella to be well, if they would only take her to a Healer. If only the girl could be forced to take her medicines afterwards. Both girls had known that their father, who was disappointed in only having daughters, would let Bella go mad before actually taking care of her. It was her punishment for not being a boy.

After a scuffle broke out between the two Ravenclaws, Lucius stopped his aggravated pacing and cleared his throat. While they had all been disarmed, he still held some sort of leadership position in the group.

"Alright, all of you settle down. Now, we don't know what is going on right now, but I am sure that things are being sorted out. Here is what we need to do."

He marched in front of the others, surveying them like a general would his troops.

"Obviously something horribly magical has happened, throwing us into the future, all around the same age. Everyone out there seems to want to help us, and they are very interested in Severus, so I am guessing he has been injured. We just need to bide our time and pay attention so that we can use this to our advantage."

A sneer appeared on his almost elfin features, changing him from handsome to almost frightening. While he seemed very confident about what was going on, inside he was probably the most worried. Waking up on what was left of a battlefield, and now the blond boy that looked eerily like him had left him extremely disconcerted. He would say he was a Malfoy, but that was just not possible.

Lucius' words got unanimous agreement--after all, it was the basic Slytherin philosophy and the majority was Slytherin here. However, the crowd was still riled up, if not even more so than before his speech.

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Narcissa finally decided that something had to be done about her sister before the darker girl totally lost it. Bella had a wild look in her eyes and the excited, tense atmosphere was only feeding the already disturbed young woman. Andromeda was usually the one to care for her, but she wasn't here, and Cissy was. She slipped past the others and cautiously put an arm about her older--*was she even older anymore? This is definitely a weird situation!*she thought--sister and led her off to one side.

If Bella was going to go into one of her fits, Cissy would rather have her away from the main group to at least minimize injuries. Bella could be quite violent when the voices got too loud.

She was surprised to feel her sister go still under her hand all of a sudden, the faint trembling stopping, as well as the muttering. Cissy looked up to see what might have caused the reaction, and she found herself looking up, way up.

The man who had just pushed aside the curtain was taller than Lucius and her cousin Sirius. Cissy and her sister weren't short, though they were delicately built and had an aura of vulnerability about them that made them seem smaller than they were, and this man dwarfed them, or so it felt. He was black, and admittedly rather attractive in a different sort of way, what with that gold earring in one ear. He couldn't be more than thirty, she thought, though he looked younger.

She looked at Bellatrix to gauge the exact nature of her reaction. Her sister's nearly black eyes were a little wide, and she seemed to have been brought back to her senses somewhat.

When the man spoke, his voice was deep and slow, but full of authority. "My name is Kingsley Shacklebolt. I'm with the Ministry of Magic, and I'm here as part of the effort to figure out precisely what happened to all of you. I will need to take your statements, individually."

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Kingsley looked over at the two Black sisters. He could see that Bella was not acting within normal limits: Her eyes were glazed over, she rocked slightly, and he had thought he had heard muttering just before he entered. She never took her eyes off of him, however. Pointing at the two girls, he gestured them over.

"Ok, you two, we'll start with you. Come with me." Moving next to the barrier, he waited so that the girls could pass, and he could close it again. Any other time, Kingsley might have taken a moment to admire the view, but this was official Ministry business that he really wanted to get to the bottom of.

Escorting them into Madam Pomfrey's office, he indicated that both young women should sit, and he took a seat opposite them on the desk.

"So, ladies, what is that last thing that you remember?" he asked, trying to keep it casual so that they would be relaxed and truthful. Well, as truthful as Slytherins ever were.

Cissy looked nervously at Bella, who was thankfully starting to calm down. She thought it odd that her sister seemed so fascinated with this man--she still hadn't taken her eyes off him--but was thankful for the calming influence.

"Umm, well, I remember having a fight with my mother. She was telling me that I was going to have to leave school to be married. I didn't want to get married, because Lucius is so much older than I am, and I know that he can be cruel." She looked up at Kingsley with her piercing blue eyes. "Father said it was a good match though and that it would help him in the Ministry, and besides, I am only a girl, and I don't need an education if I have a good husband."

Looking away, her voice got very high and light. "Do I still have to marry him? I know I did well on my OWLs, and I would really like to finish school."

If it were possible, Kingsley's face would have gotten darker, but he kept his anger out of his voice. When he finally spoke his tone was deep and soft. "No, I don't think you will have to marry anyone now, and I am sure that you will be able to finish school."

Kingsley had met Narcissa Malfoy once at a Ministry function, and it was hard to put the haughty woman from then into this scared girl now. Merlin, how are we going to deal with all of this?

He turned his kind and steady gaze to Bellatrix, silently urging her to tell her story. The dark eyes seemed to ground her, and she shook her head, finally finding herself free of the wild anxiety that had been plaguing her since she had found herself ... wherever it was they had been. The voices were still there, whispering softly, but she found it easier to ignore them when she locked gazes with this man.

"I was at home. Mum was hovering over me, making sure my wedding robes were perfect. Father had already come and gone, telling me that I better not screw this up--he'd had to look long and hard to find a man willing to marry someone with my reputation." The last word came out bitterly.

"It was spring break, but I knew I wouldn't be going back to school. The wedding would take care of that. I was thinking of how I should be grateful and that at least it was

Roddy I was marrying and not his bastard of a brother, but I still planned on causing a fuss. I didn't want to marry, not either of them. I'd rather have married my cousin Sirius. I don't remember much else. The last clear thing I remember is Father taking my hand to lead me downstairs, but we went into some room to meet a well-wisher first. That's it."

Her gaze was almost disconcerting, Kingsley thought, but at least it was almost entirely devoid of the madness of before. However, he was incensed by the man who dared call himself these two girls' father. He had obviously had the Mark slapped on his eldest in an effort to make her controllable for her wedding, and his youngest had been shanghaied into it as well. It was probably the Mark that had unhinged Bellatrix.

"Am I married to him now?" she asked, tilting her head curiously.

He shook his head slowly. "No, I don't believe so, my dear," he said kindly. Not if she had taken the Mark before her marriage, and it didn't seem as if she had.

"And how old are each of you?" he asked.

"Sixteen," Cissy said promptly.

"Eighteen," Bella answered after glancing at her sister. There was supposed to be a much bigger age gap than that between them. Bella was the eldest, four years older than Cissy and two years older than Andy. That thought led to the wary question of, "Where is our other sister? Where is Andy?"

Breaking the eye contact, Kingsley sighed, wondering how the hell he was going to answer that question. Giving Bella a kind look, he stood up from the desk and headed to the door, telling them that he would be right back. He knew that the Order needed to be apprised of this information so they could decide what to do with these children--young adults.

The Order had left Snape's side and was standing outside in the hall, discussing the most recent events quietly. Clearing his throat, Kingsley got everyone's attention.

"Well, people, we seem to have a problem. During my interview with the Black sisters--" Hearing a murmur from someone, he nodded. "Yes, I said the Black sisters. These girls have no memories of their time as Death Eaters, and I don't even think they took the Mark willingly. The last thing they remember is being told they were getting married against their will in order to improve their father's standing in the Ministry."

Kingsley gave an involuntary shudder at the thought of how Mr. Black had basically sold his daughters into slavery. With a sigh, he ran a hand over his bald head. "I don't think we can charge them with the crime of being a Death Eater. They have reverted back to who they were before they took the Mark. They don't even seem to realize that they are the wrong age. Oh, and the girls want to see their sister. How are we going to explain that Andromeda is almost forty and that their niece Tonks is older than they are?"

He looked around the group, hoping that one of them would be able to answer. He certainly didn't want to be the one who had to explain things or make a ruling on what to do with them.

It was Minerva--a much calmer Minerva than before--that broke the almost awkward silence that had settled in the wake of his request.

"Well, then, we will just have to argue on their behalf at the Ministry," she said in her Scottish brogue.

It was, surprisingly, Harry that had a problem with it more than anyone. "Argue ... on their behalf?!" he sputtered. "No punishment at all? What about what they did? All the people they hurt?"

"Are you arguing for the people, Harry, or because you are angry?" Kingsley cut in, his voice gentle but firm. "Is this because of what happened to your godfather? Because in all honesty, I don't think the Bellatrix sitting in Madam Pomfrey's office is capable of doing something like that now. She is disturbed and needs the proper care. I think it is highly likely that taking the Mark broke her already fragile mind all of those years ago, and her years spent in Azkaban exacerbated it even more.

"Those people in there," he gestured at the infirmary, "are not the people you've been fighting against. Narcissa Black is a scared girl. Bellatrix needs medical attention. Lucius needs to be brought down to earth, and they all need guidance, but they're not killers--not yet. Would you condemn them for things they cannot bring themselves to do now?"

His quiet words and logical argument quieted the Boy-Who-Lived, though it was obvious much resentment still seethed under the surface.

"Harry, think of it this way," Hermione spoke up quietly, laying a calming hand on her friend's arm. "This is the chance to change their lives for the better. To give them the chance like you had, and Riddle never did--a chance to find friendship and give them enough reasons to be good people. To change their philosophies before it's too late."

Harry calmed further, though those that knew him well would know it wasn't over yet. "So what now?" the young man asked.

"Now you rest," Kingsley said. "I will interview the rest of the ... returnees and report to the Wizengamot. They will let us know when the court appointment is, and we will have our arguments marshaled by then."

A/N: Thank you to Somigliana and GinnyW for the beta-ing jobs! Any mistakes left are ours. Thank you to Triskellion for poking for plot holes. Sorry for any delay in chapters- it is my (Gelsey's) fault. School is going, and I actually have classes to do, lol. Hope you enjoy, and please review, we love it!

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