

No Snakes, Please!

by lyn_f

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One-shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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I don't own them. It's all JK Rowling's. I'm just borrowing them for the moment.

Astoria sighed as she looked at her troubled husband. It had been five years since the Dark Lord had been defeated, and even to this day, Draco could not sleep through the night without being woken up by a nightmare. This night was no exception. She had been trying to get him to talk about his experiences, but Draco had always refused, saying he didn't want to discuss it.

She had the feeling that tonight was different. Draco sat there, looking out the window, focussing on what, she didn't know. After she poured some Firewhisky into a glass, she brought it over to him, who barely acknowledged her with a nod.

"I never want to see another snake for as long as I live," Draco said.

Astoria frowned. "Snake?" she asked. "Why are you thinking of snakes?"

Draco looked at Astoria with troubled eyes. "That cursed snake killed too many people. Severus Snape." He bowed his head. "Charity Burbage."

She frowned. "Who?"

"She was the Muggle Studies professor at Hogwarts," Draco said as he took a sip from his glass. "It was a particularly difficult time."

She nodded. "I can only imagine. It must not have been pleasant having the Dark Lord in your house."

Draco shook his head. "It should have been the greatest honour. Having the Dark Lord in your house? I should be falling over with glee, having *him*... in my house. It was... I mean, it was not pleasant seeing my parents broken and defeated." He shuddered at the memory. "But seeing that snake... that was the worst."

Astoria sat down next to Draco and took his hand. She recognised that this was the first time Draco seemed willing to talk about his wartime experiences. On one hand, she wanted him to discuss it because she thought it would help him move on and not wallow in the grief he'd been experiencing for the past several years. However, she did not want to press him in case he decided against continuing. She continued to rub little circles on the back of his hand.

Draco looked down at their hands. "I am so glad I have you in my life, Astoria," he said quietly. "I don't think I could have coped without you."

She nodded while continuing to hold his hand.

"That snake was a nightmare. And what it did to Professor Burbage..." He shuddered. "It was horrible. Just horrible."

"What happened, Draco?"

He shuddered again. "She was floating overhead, magically bound... The Dark Lord took Father's wand... he... he..." He swallowed hard. Noticing the still-filled glass of Firewhisky, he swallowed it all in one gulp. As he winced at the burning sensation in his throat, he continued. "He killed her... and... the snake..." He shuddered again. "He fed her to that godforsaken snake," he whispered.

"Oh, Draco!" Astoria exclaimed as she squeezed his hand.

Draco sighed. "I'm all right. It's just... that was a nightmare. No matter what Aunt Bellatrix said about how it was a huge honour to have the Dark Lord in our house, after that, I just didn't think it was one. I mean... after demanding that I killed Dumbledore and then watching all the death and destruction that happened afterwards..." His voice dropped to a whisper. "I don't think I could ever think of living through anything like that ever again."

"And you won't have to," she said. "It's a different world out there."

He made a face. "Led by those bloody Gryffindor do-gooders," he said with a sneer.

She shook her head. "As much as I hate to say it, we should let bygones be bygones. It's a new world, and we have another chance at life."

Draco twitched. "If you say so." He looked up at his wife. "Just don't ask me if we could have a pet snake."

Astoria raised an eyebrow. "And if we go to Magical Menagerie and I ask you for a garter snake?"

He glared at her. "I may have to kill you."

Laughing, she playfully swatted at him. "Well then. I guess we won't be welcoming any snakes in our house any time soon."

He crossed his arms across his chest. "We'd better not."

A/N: Prompt issued by christev: Write a scene in which Draco tells someone (Pansy, Harry, Ginny, Blaise, etc.) about Charity Burbage's death. Can be during the DH year, can be years afterward. How does he tell it? Does he admit the fear he was feeling? Does he break down? Does he feel guilt? Relief that he didn't kill or get killed? Without the disclaimer and A/N, this story contains exactly 700 words according to Microsoft Word. Thanks go to Pennfana for the beta-reading.