

Suspended Dawn

by Rose of the West

They would always have Paris. Karkaroff/Sinistra

Daybreak

Chapter 1 of 3

They would always have Paris. Karkaroff/Sinistra

Disclaimer: The characters here and the world they inhabit are the creation and property of JK Rowling and her assigns.

She was so excited to be invited to one of Professor Slughorn's parties that she could barely get her lipstick straight beforehand. She wasn't sure he really knew who she was. When she went for her student-advisor meetings every year, he usually mumbled, "Oh, yes, the strawberry-blonde...." This time he had said something about her excellent O.W.L. marks and had invited her to a party he was having.

It was the first truly grown-up event she ever went to in her life. The house elves offered her a small glass of wine and small hors d'oeuvre. She took them so that she could have something in her hands and looked around. The crowd was filled with many of her more influential housemates, of course, but there were a few others she didn't know as well from other houses. She nodded at people she knew and suddenly stopped short.

She had the sensation that someone was looking at her back. It crossed her mind to wonder if a knit top with a scooping front and back neckline was the best choice. She turned and saw a man she'd never seen before. He had dark hair and the most mesmerizing dark eyes she'd ever seen. He nodded and walked toward her. She quickly stuffed the cheese-something in her hand into her mouth so that she could shake hands. He took it between both of his and then kissed it with a click of his heels.

"Ah, Igor, you've met our Auriga. Quite a dark little horse... she took eight O.W.L.s with Outstandings. Only one student in recent history to surpass that, also Slytherin, of course..."

"Actually, it's Aurora," she murmured, not sure why it was important that this wizard know her proper name.

"And just as beautiful as the dawn. I'm ferry pleased to meet you." He leaned down and kissed her hand again.

"Igor Karkaroff is an associate of the greatest student I ever taught." Slughorn looked at Aurora meaningfully. "He has many important people to meet."

She nodded her understanding that she was to stay away from this important personage. Even if it was her first time attending this event, she knew that it was designed to help Professor Slughorn gain influence and certain creature comforts by making suitable introductions. Gossip in the Common Room had been quite informative on that point. She was here as a treat or perhaps because her grades suddenly indicated she might have such influence someday.

She spent the rest of the evening chatting with classmates about the latest transfiguration project McGonagall had given them. Yet the skin of her shoulders burned with the knowledge that he was staring at her. She couldn't help turning every so often when she suspected his eyes were upon her. He smiled, and once he raised his glass in her direction. She invariably blushed and turned back away.

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He saw her again the following summer in Diagon Alley. He was trailing some Mudbloods for the Dark Lord, and she was purchasing her things for her last year at Hogwarts. He tried to think of some pretext for going up to her and speaking with her, but he came up with nothing, so he watched.

Slughorn had told him that she was too young, and she was, but she was already much older today than the previous winter. She was so beautiful, and she had acquired a new grace. Her head turned and caught the light. He wondered, as he had that night, whether the red-gold of her hair glowed in the sunrise. He was determined to find out. He was likewise determined to discover anything he could about her. He was completely smitten, and he knew it. He gloried in the thought that the power and prestige he won through his work for the pure-blood cause might be shared by her.

Suddenly she looked up at him. She had grown much more poised. Instead of blushing and turning away, she looked back at him, full on. She eventually smiled and answered a question asked by the woman to her side.

Now he looked at the witch and wizard who accompanied her. Glancing from them to the object of his attention, he realized that they must be her parents. Both were handsome people; the mother tended toward portliness, but he wouldn't mind if Aurora gained a little. He could see that the reddish hues of her hair came from her father. He seemed to be a pleasant, happy man. They made an attractive family. He could easily see himself walking down the street with an Aurora who aged as that pair had aged, taking their own little ones to shop for school.

The Sinistras walked on, and Aurora turned to look back at him. He hoped he would see her again, soon, for the sun did indeed rise in the smile she gave him. He turned back to the matter he had in hand. The greater glory he achieved; the sooner he would have something to offer his goddess.

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She couldn't understand why she thought so much about him. He was constantly upon her mind, especially when she spent late nights at the top of the Astronomy tower, practicing for her N.E.W.T. On her star charts, she kept connecting the stars in shapes that made the letters I, G, O, and R. Then she would quickly siphon the ink back into her pen. It would be horribly embarrassing to be caught with such a fantasy, especially since she had no reason to think it was reciprocated.

A school year is a set amount of time, and it eventually passes. During the weeks between when Aurora's seventh year ended and her N.E.W.T. grades were expected to arrive, her parents made her the gift of a trip to Europe. They sent her with Mr. Sinistra's younger sister, but Aurora was usually able to wander by herself during the day. She looked at various things but ended in Paris, where she stayed for over a week.

She was walking over a bridge with a view of the Eiffel Tower when she bumped into a man. His arms went around her to keep from falling and her hands clung to those arms. She looked up and saw...him.

"Mr. Karkaroff! What a surprise!"

"And for me as vell. I visit family and stop in my favorite city for a few days, but why are you here?"

"I'm on a trip. It was a gift from my parents for finishing my education."

"Vill you be here long?"

"A few days." Her heart was racing, and she couldn't figure out why.

"Vill you meet me? I can show you city."

"I think I would enjoy that."

Suddenly they realized they were still clasped together and each took a step backward. They smiled in embarrassment. Then they exchanged contact information and went back on their respective paths. Aurora reflected that he wasn't as old as she had originally thought. He couldn't be more than five years older than she was. She took a last glance backward and hoped he didn't think she was hopelessly young and foolish.

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He sat in the deepest part of the courtroom and fretted. He hoped she wouldn't come even if he craved a glimpse of her. All the hopes he once had where she was concerned were dust now. She should never even glance at him.

He had discovered too late that the glory he hoped to achieve would be one-sided. Only one wizard would have the power and prestige that was promised them all. That wizard was not Igor Karkaroff. Now other wizards gave him great promises. He could have his freedom and leave the country as long as he told all he could.

He sat in the well and thought of naming names. He caught glimpses of some of the families he would soon be mentioning and lost heart. He would never be accepted in this society if he told all he knew, and he might be in danger. He couldn't do it. He would face Azkaban rather than accept the offer that had been made.

A rustle of a witch settling into her seat caught his attention. She didn't look directly at him, but he caught a glimpse of the red-gold hair. It was she. Her parents had recently been killed. He wasn't part of the party that had gone to their house, but he knew who was.

His resolve was strengthened, and his lips were loosened. He would grant retribution to his goddess. He would worship her this much. He would be forced out of England, and he would never see her again. There was a standing job offer at Durmstrang. His conviction here would not affect that, and he would live comfortably for as long as he liked. There would be comfort but no joy, for he would never see his Aurora again.

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Aurora didn't know why she thought about him so much. He was a Death Eater and had probably killed people. Yet he was so gentle with her and so openly admired her. No, she shouldn't think about him, but for some reason she couldn't help it. "Le cur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point," she thought to herself. Then she realized that Blaise Pascal was a Frenchman, and that got her thinking of Paris and Igor.

She worked hard for three years, learning more about the sky and its ways. She watched the stars long into the night, wondering if he saw the same ones. No one knew exactly where Durmstrang was, after all. She dreamed of their time in Paris, wishing now that he had kissed her. She cursed herself for having been too much of a lady to kiss him.

He had given the information that made punishing her parents' killers possible. Did that justify her feelings? She let herself believe that it did. She almost felt bad for the murderers when she saw how painfully young they were, but they were killers and deserved to be in prison. When Igor's deportation had been announced, she had almost lost faith. His look up to her had been so beautiful, so full of hard work and determination, that she was inspired to work hard as well. If she could get a job teaching, perhaps...

Durmstrang rejected her application. They did not need teachers in Astronomy. She found herself accepting an offer at Hogwarts. She would be expected to teach all of the Astronomy classes and assist the House Head in overseeing the Slytherin students. She almost rejected the offer when she realized that the Head was Severus Snape, but what could she do? The Ministry wasn't hiring in her field, and she had no intention of going anywhere else. She wanted to be someplace that Igor could possibly find her.

After she finished her round of study, she took another vacation in Paris. She intended to go to all the places he had shown her, but found that most days she loitered in the very spot where they had bumped into each other, where for all intents and purposes she had stood in his arms for several minutes. She looked at the monument in the distance and pondered her world.

"Am I going blind, or is the dawn light before my eyes?"

She turned and found herself within his arms again. Without waiting an instant they both reached for each other and kissed. They had aged enough to stop trusting the Fate that had just managed to bring them together. After all, Aurora reasoned to herself, perhaps Fate was only willing to do this much.

Hours later, she lay in his arms in the rooms he took over the summer. Making love had not been as simple as the novels had lead her to believe, but they had persevered until both knew complete pleasure. Learning to please and be pleased was an enjoyable way to discover the generous heart and inventive mind of the man who occupied so much of her thoughts.

Somewhere a clock chimed four in the morning. Igor chuckled. "I vondered, when ve first met... vould Aurora shine vith the dawn? Now I know in few hours."

She looked up at him in contentment. "I thought I would never find you again. I'm so grateful for what you did for my parents."

"It was all I could do."

"I can never repay you."

"Then ve vill not speak of it." She realized that he was embarrassed.

A/N: The Pascal quote above is translated, "The heart has reasons that reason knows not."

Thank you to Owlbait and Kyria of Delphi for beta reading.

Mid-Day

Chapter 2 of 3

Several years pass, if not in wedded bliss, then in a form of happiness.

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Aurora and Igor had an idyllic vacation. They took long walks through the city and viewed it through many different lights. He played with her hair and declared, "Yu are as beautiful as I imagine when I am in my rooms at Durmstrang. Yu glow in dawn's light and you make me smile when I see yu."

She knew her smile was a little crooked and that her love of chocolate had already made certain changes to her hips. However, she also knew that in her eyes, whatever imperfections existed in Igor melted away. She was perfectly happy to be beautiful in his eyes. Perhaps it meant...

"I loff yu, Aurora." His look was so very intent when he was speaking to her just then. He had an all or nothing way of looking at things that made her know it was real and it was forever, unlike the time when Regulus Black had...What was she thinking?

She kissed him hard. "I love you, too, Igor. I think I've loved you since we met at Slughorn's party. I kept looking to see if you were still watching me, and I was always so glad that you were."

He kissed her again. "Ve must marry."

"But... we have jobs in two different countries!"

"Ve vill haf whole summers... here... in Paris. I vill buy an apartment. It vill vork, and efen when yu are not vith me, I vill dream of *my* Aurora, *my* dawn light."

She asked herself if there were better offers to consider. There weren't, and she really didn't want any other offers. Some day, perhaps he would be able to come to Hogwarts or she would go to Durmstrang. Why wait if that was the case?

"All right," she answered.

"Besides," he said, "Vhen yu grow large vith my child, yu vill need marriage certificate."

"That's true." She blushed, sure she wasn't pregnant... yet.

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Igor saw Aurora onto her train at the beginning of August. She would need to prepare her classrooms and for the teaching generally. He gave her what hints he could about managing a classroom, but the culture of Hogwarts was very different from that of Durmstrang and the disciplinary tactics would be very different, too.

They had discussed whether to make their marriage public or not. Igor was sure that knowledge of it would work against her at Hogwarts, so Aurora agreed not to mention it. He made sure she had their marriage certificate carefully packed away. They didn't think it would be an issue this year, but if she did conceive, he wanted her to be able to prove she was properly married and had been all along.

After watching her train disappear, he turned and looked for his own. They would meet again for Christmas. It would be for less than two weeks, but they would make it be enough.

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She grew to hate the first few days of school. Instead of the warm man who held her tenderly and spoke to her softly, there was a shorter man who sneered at her and pointedly looked at the ring on her hand before saying, "Did you have a good vacation, Professor *Sinistra*?"

She always held her bag more tightly and said, "Yes, Severus, quite nice." She was sure he knew about her marriage. He would look at her at meals or during meetings when they discussed the Slytherin students. She would suddenly find herself thinking of Igor, his kisses, or the way he undressed her as though he was unwrapping china. Then she would look up at Severus and see his eyes narrowed and curious.

The best moment of the school year was the day she arrived at King's Cross and switched to the station from which she took a train to France. Sometimes Igor met her at the train station and sometimes she went to meet him. They always clung to each other until they felt as though they couldn't tell where one stopped and the other began. They kissed, mingling their breath until they felt as though they had breathed each other in. Then they made their way to their apartment and spent a heady evening in their bedroom.

When they finally felt as though they remembered each other, they started taking walks together through the city. They ate at different cafes and restaurants, and they looked at various shops. They didn't buy much. They purchased necessities for the apartment and a trinket now and then for each other.

One type of shop they avoided, by tacit agreement. They always walked quickly past baby shops. For some reason Aurora didn't get pregnant, although both had hoped to have at least two or three children. They decided not to worry about it. Perhaps Fate decided that since they couldn't be together all the time they should wait. There was plenty of time. Neither was thirty years old yet. Still, it grated on them enough that they didn't look at baby things. They couldn't stand the pressure.

Summer invariably ended and they went back to their schools. When Aurora got to the staff room for the first meeting, Severus was usually sitting there. The heads had their meeting before the general staff. He smirked at her and looked at her intently. She would recall her last tearful moments with her husband, and Snape would twist his lips and clear his throat.

"I trust your vacation was pleasurable, Professor...*Sinistra*?"

Every year, on the night she arrived at Hogwarts, Aurora started a calendar where she could scratch off the days until the next summer.

* * * * *

To say Igor was thrilled when the Tri-wizard Tournament was announced was an understatement. "We will be at Hogwarts all year, my dawn," he said. "We will find a way to be together every night."

They stared at the ceiling of their rented tent for the Quidditch Cup and smiled hopefully. Igor had been let into the country for this event and he would be coming to Hogwarts for the tournament. As he observed, they could be together for the entire school year.

His arm had tingled as the Dark Mark hung in the air over the campground. Aurors came and questioned him, a fact that embarrassed him in front of his wife. Aurora shook her head and took his hand to lead him back to their tent. Once there, she knelt at his feet and pressed her lips to the now-quiet mark on his arm. Soothed by her love, he had undressed her and they returned to their joy in the coming school year. Although someone among the Death Eaters had been imprudent, it wouldn't affect the tournament. They would allow themselves to be happy about that.

He returned to Durmstrang and then explained to the students what would happen that year. Some of the parents were worried about sending their children when times were so uncertain. Igor carefully explained that the students would not be taking classes with the Muggle-born students at Hogwarts. Some parents still refused permission, but the majority became excited by the trip and stood delightedly at the Durmstrang dock as the ship left.

Igor guided the ship through the waters that would lead him to Hogwarts. Every moment brought him closer to Hogwarts... and Aurora. He couldn't let the thought of her distract him. Bringing the ship through the lake was difficult, especially if he did not want to end with that squid on his bow.

She was the first thing he saw as daylight became visible. It might be late in the day, but she was the dawn for him even then. She stood with the Hogwart's faculty, but she looked into his eyes and for an instant it was as though they were the only two people in the world.

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"You'll have to wait, Professor," said Snape out of the corner of his mouth. "We'll invite him to sit near us at dinner, but you can't go at each other on the table."

"We can wait to 'go at each other' as you so delicately put it," she responded. "But I *am* spending the night with my husband."

"Just mind that you're able to teach your classes," answered Snape. "I have far too much going on to make your excuses to Dumbledore."

"When have you ever made my excuses to Dumbledore?"

He frowned. "Just see that it doesn't happen tonight. I have enough on my mind without worrying about your inappropriate romantic encounters."

She lifted a shoulder and narrowed her eyes. "There's noting inappropriate about two married people engaging in lovemaking."

He winced. "Remember what I said."

"Perhaps you'll remember that I'm a Slytherin, too. I can be cunning when I have the need."

The introductions were carried out with little difficulty, and dinner went quite well. Severus made a point of ignoring Igor, so it fell to Aurora to include him in the conversation. "You speak English quite well, Headmaster," she teased him.

"Ah, it is due to the love of my life," he whispered. "Every summer she tutors me in it."

They chatted together in delight as they made their plans to meet in the evening.

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He came to the door she pointed out. As soon as he saw her, he pulled her close and started kissing her. "My dawn shines for me in the moonlight." His lips devoured her throat as his hands started fondling her.

"Wait! Igor! There are some things I must tell you." She tried to put some space between them, but his passion was intoxicating.

"I wish to be alone with my wife," he said, his voice husky with desire. "Talk is for later."

She put her finger to his lips and led him up to her rooms. The door was barely closed when he was pulling her to the bed and tugging at her skirts. "Is time for love, woman. Come to bed."

There was no reasoning with him when his accent lapsed like that, and why would she want to? Her desire for him was unbearable as well, perhaps intensified by...his hands were all over her, driving her to the brink of distraction. Her clothes were long gone, and his fingers were tracing along her knee, drawing it around his hip.

She was only too eager to accede to his demands. She pushed up against him, opening for him, welcoming him, accepting him. He growled and held her tighter as she lost all sense of time or place. She was simply a woman with the only man who existed for her. She sighed contentedly and lay quietly, prepared to bask in his nearness, but it seemed he wasn't done, yet.

"Yu are more peautiful than efer," he muttered as he started touching her again. "So full, so ripe..."

"There's a reason for that," she whispered. "Igor, I'm pregnant."

His lips stilled as he looked up into her eyes. "Is true?" He sat up and whispered a charm to brighten the lights so that he could look her over from head to toe. He placed a

hand on her unchanged tummy and frowned. "Is too small. Our sons will be big."

"No, silly," she smiled as she tugged him up close to her face, "the baby starts very, very small. By next May I shall be quite large, indeed." She held her hands out to show how big her tummy would get.

"Is true, then?" His voice was thick and husky as he whispered something she didn't understand. Then he leaned up over her and spoke in careful English. "I had given up hope. I had thought to be happy with just my dawn, but now...Aurora, I love you so very much."

"I think knowing we would be together this year, knowing that we would share this... I think that is what allowed us to conceive. I love you too, Igor."

He started kissing her with a new intensity, and she realized that she would be tired indeed at breakfast the next morning. Severus might scold, but she would be triumphant.

A/N: Thank you to Kyria of Delphi and Owlbait for the beta review.

Also thanks to LynF and Owlbait for an after-posting fix!

Nightfall

Chapter 3 of 3

Disaster strikes, but there is a plan, and a hope.

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A/N: Thanks to Owlbait and Kyria of Delphi for the beta review!

Also, several lines in this chapter are direct quotes from Severus and Igor's conversation in the gardens during the Yule Ball in Goblet of Fire

Igor slipped out of her bed just before dawn. He chuckled to himself as he dressed that he would not watch her rise this morning. It was too important that he be on hand as his students arose and prepared for the day in a strange place. She seemed to hardly be breathing as he kissed her and patted her flat tummy. He had exhausted her with his love, but he didn't regret it. There would be time for rest another day when they could not be together.

He walked across the lawn and toward the ship. He let himself down to the belowdecks common room, where he sat and waited. He dozed a little as he thought about the child. Perhaps some day he could return to Hogwarts and bring his own son to compete in the tournament. Now that there was one, surely there could be others as well. Aurora was young, healthy, and strong.

He was in a happy mood as he felt it. A tingle in his arm. It wasn't the first time. It told him that the Dark Lord was not dead as he had thought... as he had hoped. What would happen if he came back? How would that affect Igor... and Aurora? Now there was a child to think of, and for the first time, his heart went cold at the thought of his own son or daughter.

He gathered his students and arrived at breakfast a little early, earlier than his wife. Snape's eyebrow and lip curled. "And where is the fair Aurora? She said she wouldn't be late today."

"I am sure she is preparing. I left her hours ago, asleep. It's just as well that she is late. Severus, I wish to ask a question of you."

The other man shrugged. Not sure whether to consider it as permission or a denial, the larger man pressed on. "My arm," he lowered his voice to a whisper, "the Dark Mark... it is itching and burning. Do you feel it, too?"

Snape's left hand disappeared under the table, but his face did not change. "I don't know what you mean."

"I'm sure you do, Severus. If he comes back, what will happen to us?"

"There's no us, Igor. You sold out our friends."

He snorted loudly. "You were protected by Dumbledore during the trials. What will happen to you?"

Severus sighed. "I'm sure what you want to know, Igor, is what will happen to *you*. After the way you behaved, it's a good question." He sat up straighter and changed the tone of his voice. "But it is not time for such discussion." He nodded toward the door, where Aurora stood. She was beaming with joy but otherwise looked pale and tired. "I must say I've seen her look much better than this, Igor."

"She shines in my eyes, Severus. Look at how happily she comes for me."

Snape's eyebrow raised. "I think I shall leave such visions to you. I have a class in just a few moments." He got up and left the Great Hall.

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Aurora didn't realize the threat that was in her world until they were at the Yule Ball. She stood with the others, waiting to enter the Great Hall for the event. Younger students lined the stairways, watching the participants arrive with eagerness, pointing out this gown or those dress robes. Aurora herself was in a gown in hues of gold. It covered her pregnancy convincingly and Igor beamed every time he looked at her.

At length, the competitors arrived and it was time for the procession into the hall. Aurora walked in on Igor's arm, happy to be his "date" for the evening. He led her up to the table where Dumbledore already stood. Madame Maxime and her date, Hagrid, went to Dumbledore's other side and the three school Heads sat together.

That was the high point of the evening. Igor felt some need to frown at his champion. Aurora knew it was because the boy's date was Muggle-born, but she couldn't agree. Miss Granger was as lovely as she had ever been, perhaps prettier than most of the girls in the room. There was conversation full of one-upsmanship between the school Heads until the dancing started.

Aurora was happy that the sideways comments were finally ended. Dancing with Igor was heaven. She could spin and twirl with him all night. She loved the feel of his arms around her.

It was ruined when other teachers wanted to dance with them. One of the first who came was Professor Moody. Aurora was a little afraid of him, since he acted so suspicious of all Slytherins. She clung to Igor, hoping Moody would find another partner, but he suggested Igor dance with Septima Vector. Moody touched Igor on his left arm, just above his Dark Mark. Aurora could tell from the look on Igor's face that the mark started to burn when he did that.

"I'll do it," she said quietly. The last thing she wanted was for Igor to feel pain or to start a scene.

"That was smart of you," said Moody. They danced for a bit, Aurora being careful not to touch the wooden leg. "You shouldn't go about with Death Eaters, especially ones who betrayed their fellows to save their own skins. It's bad luck to be so close to people like that."

She got away from him as soon as she could. Igor came to her as soon as the song was over. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"I think I'm over-tired, now. Do you mind if I go up to my room, Igor? You can join me as soon as the party is over."

He pressed her hands and told her that he hoped to follow soon.

Igor found Snape in the rose garden, kissing the witch Moody had told Igor to dance with. The two seemed quite attached. Indeed, if they didn't stop, it appeared that they would soon give any students who passed by an entirely different sort of education than the one contracted by the parents of Hogwarts.

"Severus! I beg to interrupt!" said Igor.

The two parted enough to look each other in the eye. "Later?" asked the witch. Snape must have signaled assent, because the witch smiled brightly and kissed his cheek before hurrying back to the building.

"What's the matter, Igor?" Snape snapped, clearly angry to have his assignation interrupted.

"The mark, Severus... It's been burning more than ever."

"If your Dark Mark is burning, it's nothing to me, I don't see what there is to fuss about, Igor."

"She's pregnant, Severus."

The other wizard stopped dead in his tracks. He blasted a hole through some rose bushes. Finding two Hogwarts students, he sent them on their way with detentions. He went a few steps down a path, blasted another hole, and repeated the process. It appeared that if Snape was not to be allowed to pursue his romance, no one else would, either.

Igor followed him, eager to get help. "You see how dire the situation is, Severus. I need to look after Aurora... and our child... Severus, you can't pretend this isn't happening!"

"Then flee. Flee, I will make your excuses. I, however, am remaining at Hogwarts."

Snape stalked off. Igor looked after him. He couldn't run, for to run would leave Aurora exposed to danger, yet he couldn't stay, either. He sighed. The Fates would have their way with him. It was Aurora and the child whom he needed to protect, now.

Aurora couldn't breathe when Igor described his conversation with Snape. "Why don't we both just leave and go home to Paris? No one knows about our apartment there."

"I can't take that chance. If they discover us together, they will kill us both, and the baby, too." She could see his eyes glisten at the thought.

"I don't want to be without you."

"We must not think of it." He turned away and blew his nose.

"Igor, I can't lose you. There has to be a way..." She reached over and put her hand on his arm.

He swung his arm to throw her off. "Voman! Enough!" He turned to look at her, and she could see a tear run down his face.

Aurora looked up at him. He'd never raised his voice to her before. She considered the situation. Fretting and getting emotional were not the way to solve this problem. Wasn't there some way to make it all work to their advantage? She went to him and started unfastening his robes. "We should take advantage of now, then," she said.

"Is all we have," he said gruffly.

"Yes," she said. "We can figure out the rest, I'm sure."

"I will run, and you will be safe," he was still speaking emotionally.

She didn't speak as she finished unfastening his robe and jacket. She pushed them over his shoulders and slid her hands under the waistband of his trousers. "Perhaps," she said, "or perhaps the Headmaster of Durmstrang will join his brilliant mind with my Slytherin one, and we'll figure this out."

"Voman," he whispered into her neck, his voice still thick, but now with passion. His hands slid below the hem of her dress.

"Is there something you want, Igor?"

"Is time for loff."

"It's past time for love." She lifted her face to receive his kiss and pulled him close. The bed was barely close enough as they quickly moved onto it.

Over the next months, Igor watched Snape carefully. Snape seemed to spend all his time talking to Dumbledore, who nodded thoughtfully and looked around whatever room they were in, his fingers stroking his beard thoughtfully. One day Igor had to know what they discussed.

"Have you told Dumbledore about the child?"

"Of course not!" snapped Snape. Then he looked at Igor with narrowed eyes. "What child?"

"Severus, were you listening when I told you Aurora is pregnant?"

Snape's face took on a look of understanding. "Oh, I recall," he answered. "No, of course not. Dumbledore would not receive that news in a good way. Best to let him discover it in his own way and as late in the day as possible."

"What do you talk about, all the time?"

"I don't believe it's your business, Igor."

"I see you both looking at me as you talk."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"What are we discussing, boys?" Professor Moody came toward them. "What could two ex-Death Eaters have to discuss? Hmm?"

"Vot else but Tournament?" asked Igor.

Snape said nothing but instead looked at the old Auror with narrow eyes. Igor glanced between the two and for the first time realized that his left arm was itching. What could that mean? Moody finally shrugged and left. He tossed his opinion of the tournament over his shoulder. "I like the chances of that Potter kid. I think he's going to win it. He's the savior of the Wizarding world, after all."

Igor blustered at the insult to his school's champion while Severus sneered.

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Even knowing that the evil day would come did not prevent the heartbreak that came with it. Aurora had thought and processed as much information as she could. Her whole body ached as she climbed up into the Quidditch stands, and her soul ached as she watched Igor rub his arm. The dull ache, the occasional itch, the infrequent burn... they had all long since combined in such a way that it always hurt. He didn't tell her, but from the way he muttered, "Is like before," she suspected that he had known this feeling in his past. Tonight it ached constantly, and as soon as the two Hogwarts champions disappeared, Igor's felt intense pain in his arm.

When the two boys returned through the Port-key and rumors of Harry Potter's story circulated, Igor said, "I must go now."

"I love you," she whispered.

"Remember Paris," he answered. "Is the home of our loff."

As all the others milled around in rumor and confusion, she watched him walk toward the gate of grounds and disappear.

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She made her way back to the castle and the infirmary just in time, according to Poppy. Even so, she spent many hours in agony, waiting for her body and the child to finally work together. Poppy handed her a small bundle. "She's a beautiful child, Aurora."

She looked at the beautiful face a bit ruefully. "Igor was so sure of a boy." Then she smiled in delight, as she found herself falling in love already.

She kissed the tiny head and looked to the future. Igor would succeed in hiding from the Death Eaters, she was sure. She would find ways to help defeat those Death Eaters. After it was all over, they would return to Paris, where it all happened. In the meanwhile, she would work, and watch, and wait...