A Dark Omen

by unlikely_sisters

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Severus was on his way to the apothecary to restock Hogwarts' potions supplies, a bothersome ritual marking the end of the summer vacation. As always, the colourful shops with their gilded signs glowing in the late summer sun and the excited hustle and bustle of families making last-minute back-to-school purchases did nothing to lighten his mood. Tomorrow, his peace and quiet would end, as he would once more be saddled with the futile task of drumming knowledge into this year's flock of dunderheads.

What's more, Lily's boy was coming to Hogwarts...

Just then, he spotted Lucius Malfoy and Draco outside Madam Malkin's. Unfortunately, they had noticed him, so he had to wait for them to come over and exchange the obligatory pleasantries.

"Severus, what a delightful surprise," the blond wizard drawled silkily, his posture and attire oozing sophistication. Beside him, the carefully groomed heir of the Malfoy dynasty sullenly eyed the brooms on display at the Quidditch store across the street.

"Lucius, How's the family?" Severus asked with the same cool politeness.

"Splendid. Draco's leaving for school. I'm sure he'll do extremely well and assert Slytherin's claim on the House Cup."

He noticed the threatening undertone, fully aware that the influential pureblood could make life difficult for him, should his son fail to excel. He'd considered Lucius a friend once, but the wealthy Slytherin only knew alliances of convenience.

"That would be most welcome."

Suddenly, Severus' arm tingled. It was something he hadn't felt in almost ten years. The sensation nearly caused him to panic, yet he kept his face devoid of emotion. He'd hoped to never feel it again. He'd wanted to believe the Dark Lord had vanished for good. Now, however, Severus knew. It was only a matter of time before he'd return.

Glancing at Lucius, he noticed the fear in his eyes. No doubt, he'd felt it, too. His hand clamped down on his son's shoulder, as if he knew that he wouldn't be able to protect him.

A short distance away, he saw the new DADA professor stepping out of the Leaky Cauldron. He, too, appeared distressed. What a sorry excuse for a wizard. It rankled that Dumbledore had given him the job that should have been Severus'. Or could it be… could Quirrell, too, be carrying the Dark Mark? Severus decided to keep an eye on the silly turban wearer in case he tried to harm Harry.

As the tingling subsided, the apprehension it had stirred remained.

"So, Harry Potter is going to Hogwarts. You'll have him right under your nose."

There was an insinuation within those words he didn't like. Obviously, Lucius was already thinking about ways to gain favour with the Dark Lord, if only for self-preservation. Severus, on the other hand, had no loved ones. He'd already lost the one person he'd ever cared about. He would choose a different path, one most likely leading to his demise.

"Indeed."

From now on, he'd have to play a precarious game of duplicity.

Prompt: An unseen presence unsettles the denizens of Diagon Alley.