

Of Chocolate and Contracts

by peppermint

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Clambering into the carriage, Angharad took the last seat available, squished up tight against Hyperion Malfoy. "Hallo, Hyperion," she said with a smile as he tucked his arm around her shoulder with a friendly grin. She sat back against the carriage seat and sighed with pleasure. It was wonderful to escape the logic-obsessed nest of Ravenclaws at home and be back among the Slytherins, who truly understood her. Angharad was intelligent and responsible, a seventh-year prefect but her family was just so... dry. Her mum had been a Gryffindor, and she was the only one at home who Angharad felt really knew her well at all. Her da was loving and kind, and nice enough, but he didn't understand why Angharad would rather play Quidditch and loll about in the orchard and garden instead of playing chess or draughts.

She shook her head as the carriage was coming to a stop.

"Are you all right, Addie?" Hyperion asked concernedly as they stepped out of the carriage and made their way into the castle.

She nodded to Hyperion. "Fine. Just thinking about how glad I am to be back with my housemates for the year. You wouldn't understand; practically your entire family have been in Slytherin since the Founders' days."

Hyperion wrinkled his nose. "Except cousin Griselda. How anyone in the Malfoy line could have been a Hufflepuff is beyond my comprehension."

Angharad giggled as they took seats at the Slytherin table. "She's going to be my sister Griselda soon enough. You heard that her parents accepted Wynn's suit, of course. I'm almost sorry to miss the engagement party. My grandmother is over the moon for the Marchbanks and Malfoy lines to merge. I think we're the last unrelated Pureblood families in existence and she's already crowing about the potential for children with strong magical abilities," she said offhandedly, puzzled at the flush of pink that coloured Hyperion's cheeks.

"I, ah, did hear that. Supposedly the binding will be at Yuletide," he stammered. "Look, here's Professor Dumbledore with the first-years."

They watched the queue of children file into the Great Hall. Any new Slytherins were of great interest to the rest of the house. Their head of house, Professor Slughorn, was especially interested in influential families and students with exceptional talent. Both Angharad and Hyperion were members of his silly supper club; Hyperion for his Divination talent, Angharad for her wicked skill with hexes and charms.

They ceased their talking but for an occasional comment on the sorting. When a dark-haired, handsome boy took his seat on the stool, Angharad felt a chill slip down her spine. The Sorting Hat had barely slipped onto the boy's head when it called out "Slytherin!" She elbowed Hyperion and hissed, "does that boy give you the heebie-jeebies like he does me?"

Hyperion nodded, one eye on the lad as he made his way to the Slytherin table and took a seat with the other firsties. "Riddle, his name was. Name isn't familiar; his father must be a Muggle. I'll look in *Nature's Nobility* when we get back to the common room to be sure, though. Lad will want to know his family background, if he has one. He has a strange air about him, though. He looks charming, but there's something else under the surface. Something sinister and very powerful."

Angharad turned her attention to Headmaster Dippet's welcome speech before responding to Hyperion's assessment of the boy. "I'll speak to the other prefects and ask them to keep an eye on him. I hope you're wrong, Hyperion, but your sense of people is uncanny," she said quietly. She tried to push the unwary feeling away from her awareness and concentrated on the chatter of her housemates.

The next morning, Hyperion slid into his customary seat beside Angharad at the breakfast table. "Well, sunshine, what's the gossip?" he asked brightly.

Angharad yawned, pouring herself a cuppa. "You know how those harpies in my year are," she said with affection, winking across the table at Jessamy Nott and Elspeth Rookwood as she spoke, "Kept me up all night informing me of their summer conquests."

"Addie! Have you forgotten that Hyperion is a boy? You can't tease us like that in front of him, it's dreadfully improper!" Jessamy hissed, kicking her under the table.

Angharad was about to retort in kind when the windows opened and a horde of owls descended upon the tables, bringing the morning mail. Her family's snowy owl, Beauty, dropped a package into her lap, dipped her beak into Hyperion's tea, and was off again. Hyperion was still attending to the letter which had arrived with Virgil, the Malfoy eagle owl. She opened her package and was satisfied to see it was her start-of-term allotment of Honeydukes', along with a letter in her mother's graceful handwriting. She was about to ask Hyperion if he fancied a raspberry cream, which were his favorite, when he went white and stuffed the letter into the pocket of his robe. Then he leapt from the table and hurried from the Great Hall like the Grim was at his heels.

She blinked, the box of chocolates still outstretched. Elspeth cocked her head to the side in puzzlement. "What in the world was that about? It looked like bad news. You'd better go after him, Addie."

Scowling, Angharad shoved her chocolates into her bookbag and went back to her tea. "If he wanted me to know, he would have told me. Obviously, it doesn't concern me," she informed Elspeth in a frosty tone, tossing her honey-blond curls over her shoulder. She shook open the letter from her mother to better shut out Elspeth and the indignant shock written all over the other girl's face. Of course she was curious about the letter, but it was none of her business.

Angharad,

In the wake of your brother's engagement, several offers were put forth for your hand. Your Marchbanks grandparents think it best to secure your future now. The eldest son of a prominent family made the best offer, but your father refused as this young man wanted you pulled from your schooling to marry immediately. Grandmother Marchbanks was forced to settle for a younger son, but your father and I feel this is a better match for you in every way.

Your father and I, along with the other family, will arrive at Hogwarts at seven this evening for the formalities of the contract. Headmaster Dippet has kindly offered us the use of his sitting room. I trust I don't need to advise you on the proper attire.

My apologies for disrupting your first day of term.

Until this evening,

Mother

Angharad folded the letter and put it into her skirt pocket, her face betraying nothing. She ate her breakfast and departed for N.E.W.T. Transfiguration with the rest of her year, Hyperion's odd behaviour and the bothersome new firstie all but forgotten.

At her first break, she dashed up the stairs to the seventh-floor corridor and paced in front of the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy, concentrating on her need for a place to vent her spleen. Soon, a door materialized out of the wall and she dashed through, slamming it behind her.

The room was full of vast stacks of delicate china and a giant hearth. She grabbed the first teacup she saw and hurled it at the hearth with a frustrated scream. She had known that someday she would need to marry, she just hadn't expected her parents to cow to her grandparents so soon. She wasn't even out of school yet, and what if she wanted to continue her education? Oh, that's right. She was a girl, so it didn't matter. She'd probably be forced to wed some blood-purity obsessed wizard, keeping up appearances in pure-blood society, having tea with simpering idiots who thought OWLs were more than enough education for a woman.

It felt amazingly good to hurl the teacup, and she kept on smashing china until she collapsed to her knees, sobbing. The room shifted around her, the dishes fading away to be replaced by a den of soft pillows. She curled up on the biggest of the pillows, hugged another to her chest, and cried herself to sleep, knowing the room would wake her in time for the midday meal.

Later that evening, Angharad waited in Headmaster Dippet's study for her parents to arrive. She had been tempted to just wear her uniform to remind this wizard she was still a schoolgirl, but had instead donned the aubergine dress robes she and her mother had purchased in Diagon Alley before the beginning of term. The robes were smartly tailored to make the most of her full curves, and she did rather like them. It was just a shame to waste their debut on such an abhorrent occasion. Scowling, she perched on the arm of the settee as the flames in the hearth flashed green and her mother stepped out, followed by her father.

"Angharad, school your expression, love. You look dreadful with a scowl." Her mother chided, crossing the room to embrace her with a fond smile. "I know you're probably not very happy about this, but don't make any hasty judgments just yet, hmm?"

Her father put his arm around her shoulder and squeezed her gently. "Your grandmother is a horror, but we managed to work this out to your advantage. You'll see."

She laid her head against her father's shoulder for a moment, savoring the familiar pipe-tobacco scent of his robes. The scent and the warmth of his arm around her quelled the incessant fluttering of the butterflies in the pit of her stomach. "I promise I'll be civil and I won't throw any china," she quipped. "When will they arrive?"

Her mother glanced at the clock over the mantle, then to the study door. "Any moment now. Headmaster Dippet wanted to go over a few of the school's rules for betrothed witches, in case they wanted to push for special treatment."

Angharad nodded, taking a seat on the front edge of an armchair facing the door. The butterflies were back in full force, but she was determined to appear cool and calm. The door opened, and she couldn't believe her eyes.

"Addie?!" sputtered her intended, looking to his parents with confusion.

She rose to her feet with a bewildered expression. "Why the secrecy, Mum?"

Her mother had the good grace to blush, but said nothing.

Her father smiled, taking her arm to guide her forward. "Angharad Clementine, may I introduce you to Hyperion Solus Malfoy, your husband-to-be? Hyperion, this is Angharad."

Stepping forward, Hyperion greeted her with a smile. "Now I suppose you know why I ran out of the Great Hall in such a dither this morning."

Angharad just shook her head. "This is a far better outcome than I expected. I'm still not pleased to be forced into a betrothal, mind you, but at least I'll be able to finish at Hogwarts!"

Hyperion took her hand and pressed his lips to her knuckles, bowing from the waist. "Yes, of course. After all, I must finish and take my NEWTs as well," he noted, "and I believe we've discussed apprenticeships as well." Leaning a bit closer, he said, *sotto voce*, "You're well shut of Abraxas, the daft git."

"Now, Hyperion. Don't speak that way about your brother," interjected his mother.

Hyperion pulled a face which made Angharad smile. No, she wasn't pleased at the circumstances, but there were far worse people to be betrothed to than her best friend, whose views she knew, habits she admired, and heart she loved.

"I'm sure this will be a fertile and prosperous union," Mr Malfoy declared in his booming voice. "Shall we sign the paperwork?"

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Angharad and Hyperion enjoyed several happy years in the English countryside before young Tom Riddle's rise to power caused them to eventually flee the country with their young daughter and infant son. The Marchbanks had never subscribed to pure-blood mania, and Hyperion had no interest in capitulating to Abraxas' demands that he join Riddle's coterie of brutes.

They eventually settled in New Zealand and purchased a sheep farm, but that is a story for another time.

A/N: Addie and Hyperion seem to think I need to tell more of their adventures, should I ever find the time.

Many thanks to lady_karelia/ladyinthecloak for the 11th hour beta :) I'd say she's darling, but she'd just laugh at me (she is, though!).