

The Knight in Tarnished Armour

by Dreamy_Dragon

A little bedtime story...

One

Chapter 1 of 1

A little bedtime story...

'Mummy, tell me a story,' the little girl demanded, her grey eyes peering imploringly at her mother.

'Please?' she added, *batting her long eyelashes.*

Her mum couldn't help but smile as she adjusted her duvet. 'All right. Any special requests?'

'The one about the silver-eyed wizard,' said the girl without a second's hesitation.

Once upon a time, there was a boy with a face like an angel and striking silver eyes. He was of noble blood, born to loving, rich parents. Like them, he was of great magical power, and he was beautiful.

His parents named him in reference to his intelligence and magical abilities. Unfortunately, they committed the tiny oversight of realising that the name they chose also alluded to another angel. One that had fallen. To which depths is debatable, but since this doesn't concern our story, let's just acknowledge that he *had* fallen.

The boy grew up in a splendid manor house, wanting for nothing. As was the custom in his world, he was sent to the best magical school when he reached the appropriate age. There, he joined the same house as all his ancestors before him. This too was a noble house famous for many things, though as always there were the petty-minded who claimed it was the house associated with the Dark arts.

The boy was good at heart, but he was also cunning, bright and ambitious. He soon became the pride of his house at school, making many friends and succeeding in all his endeavours.

The day he came of age, his father sat him down and gave him three gifts: a cane adorned with a silver snake's head, a signet ring and a long talk about the properties of said items, responsibility and the dangers the wizarding world was facing from non-magical people. The ring would signal true friendship, love and honesty, whereas the snake's eyes on the cane's head would flash red if someone was untrustworthy or if there was danger. The silver-eyed wizard listened well and took his father's words to heart.

Not long after, one of his friends at school introduced him to a powerful wizard who promised to keep the wizarding world safe from harm and unwelcome intruders. He was gathering followers quickly, luring them with false promises, prying on their ambitions and weaknesses.

The biggest weakness of the silver-eyed wizard was his arrogance. He had never encountered an obstacle and was used to things going his way. Together with many of his friends, he joined the self-proclaimed Dark Lord. His ring remained suspiciously cool while the snake's eyes seemed to be constantly flashing red around his new

friend, both of which the wizard ignored, thinking that maybe the old heirlooms had gone a bit funny.

For a while, everything was fine. The Dark Lord's followers gathered power and riches. The young man became a proud wizard, soon ascending his father as lord of the manor. He met a beautiful girl, of an ancient family just like his, thought he was in love and decided to marry her. Once more, the wizard with the silver eyes failed to notice, or maybe decided to ignore, that his ring didn't grow warmer when his fiancée was around. At least the snake's eyes didn't flash red this time.

Three days before the wedding, a seer came to his house. She told him that he would meet the love of his life, the one who would be his true companion, but he would know her not. He would meet her in battle three times. Once she would defeat him. Once he was to see her suffer but prevail. Once he would save her life and only then would he recognise her. The wizard treated the seer with the appropriate respect, but privately thought that her prophecy was a load of tosh and married his fiancée anyway.

As the Dark Lord became stronger, he became greedier, more ruthless, hungry for yet more power, and he sought to purge the world of all those who in his eyes weren't worthy to be magical. The wizard and some of his friends were becoming uncomfortable with the Dark Lord's methods, but hardly anyone dared to defy their master openly because those who did tended to meet untimely and usually violent ends. Until the day when the Dark Lord simply vanished. Rumour had it that he was vanquished by a small boy with extraordinary powers.

The silver-eyed wizard was very interested in these rumours, but mostly he used all his cunning to keep his wife and his newborn son safe, making sure that nobody could prove his connection to the Dark Lord. It took considerable skill, but he wasn't sneaky, intelligent and ambitious for nothing.

For a while peace reigned; the silver-eyed wizard found that life without a Dark Lord suited him just fine. There was plenty of money, plenty of opportunity for a little plotting here and there, and most of all there was plenty of time to enjoy the good things in life.

However, those who had thought that peace would be only temporary were proven right when the Dark Lord returned, stronger and more terrible than before. His former followers had little choice but to ally themselves to him again. Some did willingly, some reluctantly like the silver-eyed wizard, but return to the Dark Lord they did, and terrible things started to happen.

One day, the wizard and some of his friends were sent by their master to retrieve a prophecy for him. They had a carefully crafted plan, yet they didn't succeed. Instead, they were forced to face their opponents in battle. Epic tales have been written about it, so let it just be noted that the wizard and his friends were defeated after fierce duelling. Among the victors was a fair maiden, a witch of remarkable power and intelligence equal to the wizard's. He utterly failed to notice anything special about her. His ring, however, did.

The silver-eyed wizard was imprisoned for his crimes and suffered cruelly. He was almost a broken man by the time his master saw fit to free him. When he came home, he learnt that his house wasn't his anymore, as the Dark Lord had taken it over.

No longer a shining, rising star but ridiculed and humiliated in front of his family and his friends...many who turned out to be false...the wizard nearly gave in to despair but for the sake of his son, his wife, and the one true friend he had. The worst day was yet to come when the Dark Lord took his wand from him. It had been in his family for centuries, and of course, the snake's head that formed the handle had very special powers. As little as the wizard had often heeded the warnings the snake's eyes had given him, he now very much wished he had it back.

In that year, the arrival of Spring held no promises.

Early in that bleak Spring, some of the Dark Lord's minions brought a number of captives to the manor. The fair maiden from the battle at the Ministry was among them. Did the wizard recognise her? Perhaps, as she had become one of the most wanted fugitives by then. In any case, at that time his only goal had become to make somehow sure that he and his family survived the war. Yet, when he watched her being tortured in front of him and heard her screams, something stirred inside of him. Though he couldn't do anything to help her, he very much hoped she would survive.

Not only did she survive, but she and her faithful companions managed to escape as well. This resulted in a very unpleasant evening for the silver-eyed wizard and the other people who had been present at the event; yet the parts of his soul and his heart that had awakened again couldn't help but be glad that the maiden and her friends were alive.

As all wars do, this one ended eventually, much sooner than many had expected and some had hoped.

The silver-eyed wizard wasn't too sorry that the Dark Lord's side didn't come out victorious. He had estimated correctly that his chances of survival would be very slim if the Dark Lord won the war. To the wizard's relief, his son and his wife survived too as well as the one true friend he had. He was so happy to see his friend alive after the vicious attack of the Dark Lord's giant snake that he easily forgave him for being a spy all along.

Peace brought many changes, and those of the Dark Lord's followers who survived and were captured had to stand trial.

Most of them were sent straight to prison never to see freedom again. If they could find a person of good repute to testify for them, those who weren't accused of capital crimes were given the choice between prison and contributing to rebuilding after the war. The silver-eyed wizard and his family were among them. He was very certain that he didn't want to go to prison ever again, so he chose to help the reconstruction, as did both his wife and his son.

The wizard was asked to use his considerable knowledge of the Dark Arts to teach the students at the magical school. His service would last for four years and he would report to the Headmistress, a powerful, stern, yet kind witch. The wizard readily accepted, glad to have got off comparatively lightly.

To his surprise, he found that he didn't loathe teaching as much as he had thought he would. At times, he actually enjoyed interacting with the students. It came as another surprise that there were bright and exceptional pupils from all houses and all kinds of backgrounds.

Slowly, the wizard's view of the world began to change. What didn't come as a real surprise was his wife's decision to leave him. He was sad to see his marriage end, but after a while didn't miss it all that much.

Three years had passed peacefully and the wizard had adjusted well to his temporary life as a teacher when a new student joined the second year of his advanced course. Many pupils who had left during the war had come back to complete their education. Yet, the wizard wasn't at all prepared to see this particular student. It was the maiden from the Battle at the Ministry who had later been captured and brought to his manor. He didn't know where she had been during the past years, but it seemed to him that she had changed. She seemed more grown-up, more magical. Or maybe, he simply looked at her...really looked at her...for the first time. Once he had started, he couldn't stop looking. It seemed to him he had never met such an extraordinary witch.

The witch appeared to be very suspicious of him, though she showed him the respect due a teacher. Barely. And he really couldn't blame her. He had long since begun to treat all students equally, but he made an extra effort during the lessons a certain witch attended. Whenever she happened to be in his vicinity, he did his best to show how much he had changed since the war.

As the year progressed the witch seemed to become a little less suspicious, but she still treated him with frosty politeness. The wizard very much wanted her to be nice to him, though if asked he couldn't have said why. One thing he did know was that the witch didn't mean him any harm as his ring grew warm whenever she was around.

Things began to change between them when, on a very cold winter night, they met accidentally in the kitchen. They were both looking for a late night cup of tea. Actually, the wizard had been looking for something stronger, but he didn't tell the witch because the kitchen elves immediately assumed that they both wanted tea.

The elves sat them down at a table and fetched two mugs with piping hot tea and a plate of biscuits, telling them very sternly that under no circumstance would they be allowed to take any food or drink back to their rooms.

The wizard hadn't always been kind to elves, but he had since learnt to treat his subordinates decently. Plus, he didn't think it would impress the witch if he put the elves in

their place now.

The two sat in the kitchen, nibbled biscuits and drank tea. The room was warm and smelt like Christmas, and eventually they began to talk. Not about the war, but about what had happened in the years since it ended, about the school and about their plans for the future. They didn't notice that the mugs and the plate kept refilling themselves...or if they did they pretended not to. By the time they finished talking, the night sky had already been replaced by a wintry dawn.

After that night, things between the silver-eyed wizard and the witch were much more amicable; a few times, he caught her even looking at him with a strange expression on her face.

Who knows how their burgeoning friendship might have progressed if one of the wizard's former associates hadn't still been on the loose and decided to attack some of the surviving war heroes. They all knew how to protect themselves, so he didn't manage to kill anyone, but he used some nasty curses and inflicted serious damage on the red-haired friend of the witch. She was very shaken by this turn of events and started to take long solitary walks around the lake near the school.

The wizard was always glad to see her return safe and sound, but knew better than to interfere. Until the day when the witch left for one of her strolls and his ring...for the first and only time...suddenly became icy cold. He decided to follow her, but made sure she didn't notice him. They had progressed nearly halfway around the lake when he saw a slight movement behind a tree. The witch didn't realise the danger because she had already walked past it.

Before the Death Eater had the chance to move as much as a muscle, the silver-eyed wizard had already fired a stunning and binding spell at him. The witch turned just in time to see her attacker falling to the ground, nicely trussed up.

She looked from the Death Eater to the wizard and back again before she hurried over to the wizard, threw his arms around him and whispered her thanks into his ear. The wizard held her for a moment until she stopped shaking quite so badly. Then he did the only sensible thing and kissed her. Judging by her response, the witch thought this was a sensible move too. They continued to kiss until they remembered the witch's attacker, which took a while.

The school year ended soon after the incident. The witch had completed her education, and the silver-eyed wizard was free to leave the school too. They continued to see each other often until a few years later, when the witch had become a well-known lawyer, she moved into his manor with him. The wizard had found his true love and companion, just as the prophecy had foretold.

And they lived happily ever after.

The girl was quiet for a moment after the story ended. Then, she asked, 'Did they have kids?'

'Yes, they had a little girl,' her mother said.

's good,' the girl mumbled, already half asleep.

'Yes, it is.'

When her daughter was sleeping soundly, Hermione whispered, 'Good night, darling.' She gently pushed a stubborn, white-blond curl away from the girl's face before she activated the monitoring spell and went downstairs to join Lucius for a glass of wine.

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A/N: Many thanks to Karelia and Valady for beta reading.

Originally written as a present for magic_knickers in the Imhg exchange on livejournal.

Her prompt was: In order to stay out of Azkaban, Lucius Malfoy accepts Headmistress McGonagall's offer to become the new Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor at Hogwarts. Hermione is returning to make up for her 7th year and is outraged that this "Death Eater" is teaching children!