

The Secret Life of Severus Snape

by OzRatbag2

When Eileen Snape listened to the hushed warnings of her sister, Kathleen, little did she realise that her decisions regarding her son's education would affect not only him, but also her only grandchild. Written for Sunny33

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 8

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Prologue

The sound of skipping steps drew David's attention upwards as Jane made her way across the tarmac towards him. His best friend looked happy, actually. Jane always looked happy to see him. They'd been friends since infants and until David had received his letter from Hogwarts this morning, it seemed like they'd spend their entire schooling together.

Jane hadn't been happy with him for not telling her that he'd be going to some school in Scotland, and there had been tears and anger and – well, she wasn't sure why he'd never said anything. As David had explained to Jane, he didn't know until this morning that he'd been accepted on a full bursary and wasn't sure he wanted to go away to school either, but that they'd always be friends, best friends.

Holding hands with Jane as she sat down sadly beside him on the bench, David scuffed his shoes on the hard surface under his feet and picked at a loose thread on the crease of his grey wool shorts. There really was nothing David could say to make Jane happy and so the friends just simply sat in the sunshine not talking as David allowed his mind to wander, knowing that he couldn't say any more because most of it was a secret. Life just wasn't fair, and David had never wished more in that moment that Jane could come away to Hogwarts with him.

But it was not to be. David had always known that he was different – magical. His mum had always emphasised that David keep it as a family secret, this magic stuff. Dad didn't understand it, but was far more interested in understanding that it was a gift that David would have to develop and be trained to use responsibly. David knew that his dad loved him and after the family discussion over breakfast this morning, made it very clear that he, David, was loved just as much as dad loved mum. It made a difference from the hazy memories he had of his first father. David remembered his temper and hacking cough, the drinking, cursing, spitting and perpetual smell of coal, soot and smoke that lingered like a cloud throughout the house.

And he remembered how timid and scared his mum was at that time, and how she always made sure to send him on an errand to the corner shops whenever his father came home on the rare occasions when he didn't stay in the pub just near the pit entrance. Seeing him was, at times, unavoidable, but his mum, Eileen, always made excuses for him and sent him to his room when his father was the worse for the drink. David couldn't remember much else about his father except that after he'd died, Dad married his mum and they'd moved away from the dank dreary atmosphere of Spinner's End to Harrogate. His father had scared him as his dad never did, and his father

never took him anywhere like his dad. There were never any football games or family picnics, and his father was hardly ever home long enough to suggest any family activities like taking David tramping around the countryside, or to the head of the natural spring just outside town. His dad did all that and more, and David loved him for it. But the best times for David were when his dad took him to work and let him look through all the interesting cupboards and nooks in the hardware shop. And if David was good and didn't make too much mess, there was always the large jar of sweets his dad kept in the top drawer of his desk behind the counter.

But, there'd be no more of that fun until school holidays and so David was determined to enjoy these last few weeks before he went down to London with his mum to shop for his books and uniform and then his first magical journey to Hogwarts. There was excitement and fear all mingling together as David tried to think what it would be like to be so far away from his mum and dad. Mum had made it all sound so special and good that he'd been accepted, and she'd made such a fuss of David understanding that Professor Dumbledore, the current Headmaster would do everything to protect David from the nebulous but hushed whispers of a darkness descending on that fantastical and magical world. Dad was just Dad, but even David could feel a tension between his parents that he'd never noticed before.

Anyway, there'd be time for all that organising in the weeks to come, but the precious time was now with Jane, his plain Jane Jones, not that David was anything other than average looking, except for his huge Prince nose. He hated his nose, but his ever practical mum always made a point of saying that he'd grow into it eventually, and that along with his dark hair and dark brown eyes they were distinguished features. David hoped that he would grow into his face soon, but patience had never been a particularly well developed family trait.

Had he realised in that moment just what his mum had planned for him by taking his distinguished features to extremes, David might just have turned his back on the world that would be at times be his saviour and prison in almost equal terms.

~*~

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Chapter One

Chapter 2 of 8

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Chapter One

"Are you sure all of this is really necessary, Eileen?" Peter asked as he spied the dubiously large assortment of vials and decanters full of all sorts of concoctions scattered all over Eileen's worktable.

"I have to keep him safe, Peter, and this is the best way I know how to achieve that. You don't understand the darkness that's coming, but for my sister to make a point of writing to me, I... it's a worry."

"If it's so much of a worry, why can't you let the lad stay here at home, and then there wouldn't be any need for any of these lotions and potions. What child of eleven is going to remember what to take when, and how do you know they won't hurt him?"

"Peter, please, David's a bright boy, and he needs to go to Hogwarts not just to learn but because he'll be safe there. Professor Dumbledore has promised me he'll look out for David, and this is the surest way to make sure he'll be able to learn without anyone being able to tie him back to me. Oh, don't look at me like that, love. I went to school with Tom Riddle, and even though I was only a firstie and safe from his notice to a degree because my family are Purebloods, he was downright scary even then. Kathleen says he's gathering an army, and Mudbloods and Muggle lovers will be the first people he eradicates."

"Mudbloods and Muggle lovers? It all sounds like nonsense and silly words designed to scare you."

"You don't understand, love. It's all very real, unfortunately, and even though David is a half-blood, it will automatically draw attention and comment because Kathleen tells me that my brother Atticus has fallen in with Riddle's crowd. If he didn't look so much like Atticus, we might be able to just let him be, but the best way to hide him is in plain sight. I wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't necessary to protect David from them. Professor Dumbledore has promised me that his identity will remain a secret. Please, you have to trust me that is the best way to do this. Spinner's End belongs to David anyway, or at least it will once he reaches his majority in the Wizarding world. If there was only one decent thing Tobias did in his life, it was leaving that derelict old terrace to David."

"I don't like one bit of this, Eileen. You're making him play a part, and it's not just something he can slough off when it all gets too much - it's seven years or more of his life you're talking about. No, no, you can't do it to him. I won't let you mould that loving boy into something he's not - something he'd never be willingly."

"Just for a year then, Peter, give me a year, and if he really doesn't like it or finds it too hard to remember, then we'll send him to France for his education."

"I need to think about it. It's... the whole thing is troubling me. Oh, I trust you that you think you're doing the right thing, but at what cost? What's it going to do to our son to have to play a part he doesn't have to play? It'll change him all right, and not for the better if you ask me."

~*~

Eileen, knowing full well that Peter needed time to wrap his mind around the idea of deliberately making David assume a role of a character and deliberately isolating himself from his classmates, rather than him remaining a child used to being part of a group of friends. It was a risky endeavour, but she honestly couldn't think of how else to protect him, other than denying him the chance and right to learn all about his magical heritage. But, if Kathleen's letter was to be believed, and Eileen had no doubt that the tone of it was right, then the family was in danger if Eileen couldn't protect both David and Peter from the malicious prejudice of the world she'd grown up in. Better to let the boy have access to the best teachers in a safe and protected castle, all the while simply accentuating his natural features.

Eileen remembered only too well the cold nature of her very august pure-blooded family. They made sure at every opportunity and gathering of the extended clan that family and the purity of the Prince line was paramount, and that anything that diluted or polluted that purity was to be excised like a canker. Eileen had been the family canker, disinherited and regarded as dead for marrying not only outside the circle of influence that the Princes thought they commanded, but to a useless little Muggle. Oh,

she'd heard all the rhetoric and vitriol spewed in her direction, how she'd brought disgrace on the family and essentially rutted with an animal. All ties were severed though once it became plainly obvious that this wasn't a mere dalliance, when Eileen showed up at the Prince estates in Sussex obviously pregnant. Severus David Snape was born a scant six months later, his father celebrating by going out on a three-day bender, leaving Eileen and a colicky baby in the dank terrace in Spinner's End, with no money to feed the meter or herself.

The next six years followed a similar pattern, Tobias' drinking and violent tempers diluting any affection she might have once felt for him. As much as she tried to shield David from the coarse nature of his father, the more Toby decided that Eileen made an adequate target to take his frustrations out on. His anger was unfocused on many occasions. He made light of his son's stupid first name, even though Eileen more often than not called him by his middle name of David, and then alternately berated Eileen for not thinking Tobias was good enough as a name. Tobias, little knowing that David was a name given as a thank you to the young doctor who delivered her son, not some nancy boy Tobias thought Eileen had been fucking on the side.

Nothing was ever good enough, and it was in those brief moments when Tobias failed to come home for days on end, that Eileen foolishly hoped he'd found some other tart to occupy his time. When that day finally came, it was bittersweet. Spinner's End was a pit town, small and only really existing to service the families of the men who worked in the coal industry. There'd been a collapse in one of the shafts, and Tobias had been caught along with several other men when the shoring had collapsed. As much as Eileen felt for all the families affected, she couldn't help breathing a large sigh of relief that Tobias wouldn't be around to torment her or David any more. That sensation gave way rapidly after the pit owners had compensated the affected families. Eileen had no skills in the Muggle world and no true credentials in order to get a job. Her only course of action was to begin brewing again, and she hoped that in such a remote corner of the country, the Ministry of Magic wouldn't find out that she was plying her tinctures, potions and salves to Muggles.

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Eileen had literally run into Peter Granger as she was coming out of the high street chemist in Harrogate. He'd apologised profusely, made a fuss of David and offered to buy them some afternoon tea to make up for not watching where he was going. Hungry and cold Eileen had accepted, and both she and David had made a friend in Peter Granger. Soon, Eileen made a point of calling in at Peter's hardware shop, a few doors down from the chemist, whenever she was in town. He was an educated man who talked about all sorts of different subjects and always made sure to include David in any conversation, and David blossomed from the shy scared child into a lad who questioned everything and liked nothing more than exploring all the nooks and odd tools in the shop. The turning point in their friendship had come unexpectedly when Eileen, taking orders from the pharmacist one rainy Saturday, forgot the time and both she and David missed the last train home. Peter had taken the pair of them in for the night, given Eileen and David his bed and slept downstairs in the shop.

After that weekend, where Peter made a point to take David out to play in the park close by to give Eileen some time to simply window shop, it came as no real surprise to either Peter or Eileen that their friendship changed, and when Peter proposed to Eileen, he did so also asking if he could adopt David as his own son.

That had been five years ago and Eileen and Peter had never had so many arguments as they'd had in the last few weeks since David had received his Hogwarts letter. They didn't look likely to end any time soon either.

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David had always looked forward to his weekends and holidays being a chance for him to roam around town and his friends' homes either all together in a pack or with Jane. The thought of having to prepare for a new school year far away from his comfortable life was something that was both exciting and frightening. It was the last few idyllic weeks before he'd be heading down to London and into Diagon Alley to get his required supplies for the coming school year. It was somewhere his mum had never really talked about, but since the letter had arrived by owl, his mum seemed almost more excited about David going away to her old school. David only hoped he'd have as much fun as his mum seemed to remember, and make friends as easily as he did here at home.

Things seemed only strained at home, with his mum and dad shooting odd looks at him and each other all the time, or so it seemed. No one would tell him what was going on, but David and his mum were setting off early in the morning to visit his old home in Spinner's End. She'd told him it would be an adventure, but sitting on the old table wearing his play clothes rather than the usual good clothes he wore for visiting, David was growing increasingly bored watching his mum pull books off the ratty old shelves. As far as David was concerned, this wasn't a treat but punishment for something he couldn't name. Kicking his feet back and forth scraping at the threadbare carpet with increasing impatience and frustration, David voiced his boredom in the Yorkie slang he knew his mother hated.

"Ah want ta nip on 'ooam, mam, ah'm stalled."

"I don't like it when you resort to that common rubbish. You sound like you're gargling marbles, and if you sound thick people will treat you that way."

David ducked his head at his mum's sharp words and stopped kicking his legs. Eileen sighed and put down the books in her hands and walked over to where David was sitting still. Pushing his messy dark brown hair back off his face, Eileen cradled his cheek and urged David to look up at her.

"I know you're bored, love, but I need to find these books. After all, you'll need some of them at school, and they're expensive to buy new. Second hand will have to do for now."

Sensing from the dark look on David's face, that no amount of cajoling was going to work if the books looked and smelt old, she wandered off upstairs to find her old school trunk. A little flick here, a wave of the wand there and it would look almost new.

Once Eileen had gone up the stairs, David hopped off the low table and decided to have a look around himself. He was glad he didn't live here anymore. It smelt, was dark and dreary, and everything looked like it was going to fall apart, but the bookshelves were crammed with titles, some he could read and others that looked like they were written in other languages. Pulling one off at random, he settled into the old sofa and opened a page at random to read about 'Polyjuice Potion, The Draught of the Living Death, Amortentia and Wolfsbane.' All of them had illustrations, some of plants, seeds and the oddest looking half human shapes, called mandrake. The only Mandrake David knew was the magician in the old comics his dad liked to read on the sly. It all looked like nonsense, and David's logical mind had a hard time comprehending just why he was going so far away to a strange place to learn how to be a wizard, when it all looked like nothing more than messing around as his dad put it. But, he supposed, it must be important if his mum was making such a fuss about getting it all ready for him, so he'd fit in he guessed.

Dropping the book next to him on the old sofa, David let his head fall back and fell asleep quickly, the thought of all the weird subjects he'd be learning in order to be a proper wizard tumbling through his mind.

Having lost track of the time as she looked through all the old memories in her school trunk, Eileen stopped at the top of the narrow stairs and looked down on David, fast asleep on the sofa hugging her old copy of *Moste Potent Potions*. This brought a wry smile to her face as she came down the stairs and sat opposite David simply content to watch him sleeping peacefully. It had, for him, been a very long and boring day, but then Eileen had dithered wondering if Peter was right, and that it would be better to allow David to travel to Hogwarts without all the subterfuge she'd organised for him. Of course, it might still all come to naught if David rebelled against the idea all together. Oh, well, she'd cross that bridge when she came to it. Standing to wake David gently, the old mantle clock chimed five o'clock, and David shifted restlessly, allowing Eileen to shake him gently and wake him so that they could catch the train home in time for supper.

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The next few weeks were a flurry of activity in the Granger household. There were robes to modify from Eileen's more feminine styles, books to rehabilitate and lessons to be learned. David was at times excited to be learning something new, particularly as his mother had only ever let him watch her brewing previously, but some of it was all a mystery. Oh, they'd all had a long conversation one evening after supper. David had been allowed to stay up as a rare treat, but the strained words between his parents wasn't worth it he decided after his mum had outlined her plan for him. He couldn't understand just why he had to pretend to be someone he wasn't - and yet he was in a way. His dad kept trying to get David to say he wasn't going to follow through with the idea of his hair being grown magically and for him to assume his old name. It was all going to have to be a secret too, and it seemed to David that his mum's idea that secrets were all right if the end justified the means - whatever that meant was simply so he'd comply with her wishes. Neither his mum or dad seemed too forthcoming on just why he had to pretend to be someone else.

It was all very confusing, but David had agreed that it could be like acting in a play - just a very long one. After reassurances from his dad that he was still, and would always be, his son no matter what happened, Peter had eventually agreed that it should be David's decision about what happened next. To this end, Eileen and David went back to Spinner's End for several consecutive days so that David could learn to play his role in relative anonymity.

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Chapter Two

Chapter 3 of 8

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Chapter Two

David didn't have to act when he and his mum found themselves on platform nine and three quarters early on the morning of the first of September. He was in a foul mood, surly and uncommunicative because he'd been forced to change his appearance, not only lengthening his hair, but making his much hated large hooked nose appear even more prominent on his small face. He was small for his age, thin and with very pale porcelain coloured skin tones. The only thing David could count as a positive was that his perpetually reddened cheeks had been smoothed away with the foul brew his mother had made him drink. Not even the memory of going into Diagon Alley for the first time last week could erase the dark mood swirling around him. Everything was second hand, except his new wand, procured from Ollivander's. It just looked like a crooked dark twig to David, though he did get the most wonderful warm sensation from holding it the first time, so he supposed that once he learnt the right spells he'd feel less like a twat waving it around. It was safely packed away in his school trunk, along with the hated robes and old tatty books his mum had altered and magically manipulated. The best one of the robes had been packed into his bag and taken onto the train with him, so he could change just before arrived at Hogsmeade station.

They'd all travelled together as a family from Harrogate, as Peter used the occasion for a last fancy meal in a hotel close to The Leaky Cauldron and to shore up some new contacts in London, as well as catching up with old friends. It had been an uncomfortable journey, no one speaking to each other more than necessary, and David was content to stare vacantly out the window of the train as it sped through the countryside. Peter couldn't even come to the station with Eileen and David, mainly because Eileen had told him that he couldn't get onto the magical station to wave David off, but also because Eileen had felt it best not to draw too much attention from their farewells. Her suspicion and paranoia was becoming very irritating, and Peter felt they'd be in for a good long chat once they returned home to Harrogate. Peter was still annoyed with Eileen for managing to cajole David into assuming an odious role in a play Peter felt was beyond their son's comprehension to understand fully.

But, Eileen, of course, had made a powerful case that David would find the best protection at Hogwarts and that a full bursary meant they'd not have to worry about trying to find school fees for the next seven years. So, Peter and Eileen had come to an impasse, one that they were steadily trying to work around in order to keep their previously strong marriage together.

Peter just hoped that Eileen's faith in Albus Dumbledore was well considered and justified.

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David couldn't stop gawking and turning his head as though on a swivel when he and Eileen made their way onto Platform nine and three quarters. The steam billowing from under the scarlet steam engine, along the sounds of countless familiars all hooting, purring and hissing added to all the sounds of children and parents saying their goodbyes. Eileen spared a wry smile for David's reaction, as it was remarkably similar to her own reaction when she'd first taken the train to school all those years ago. The Hogwarts house-elves were busy loading the trunks onto the train, and it amused her to know that David had never seen any creatures like them before. She wished in that moment she could afford to freeze this point in time so that David could remember his first real taste of understanding that he wasn't so different from all the other children milling around the platform. After all, next year, this would all be very familiar to him, and the awe and excitement she saw as he looked all around him would never really be repeated.

But the whistle on the large engine effectively ended Eileen's thoughts as she put her arm around David's shoulder and guided him towards his carriage along with a large number of other excited eleven year olds off on their first great adventure. Stopping while just out of earshot, Eileen nervously brushed over David's shirt and hugged him tightly. Smoothing her hands over his upper arms, Eileen pulled away all the while hurriedly reminding her son to only answer to Severus, not David, and to remember that he would be safe at Hogwarts. These reminders effectively ended David's excitement at seeing all the new things in front of him, and though he hugged his mum goodbye, he climbed onto the train in the full awareness that his dual roles had already begun and it wasn't nearly as much fun as he'd thought it might be. Not even the hope that he might come across the girl he'd met in the rundown park in Spinner's End improved his mood appreciably. He thought he'd caught a glimpse of Lily Evans amongst the other children lining up to board the train, but maybe not. If it had been her, she was surrounded by a whole group of other boys and girls, and he didn't feel like trying to seek her out in such a large group.

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The journey was uneventful other than the sounds of over-excited children running up and down the aisle outside his partitioned rows of compartments in the carriage. Several times the door had opened noisily, but on seeing his scowling face, no one had ever stayed long, other than one boy who asked if he'd been born with such a nasty look on his mug. Using one of his mum's patented looks, David merely stared at the intruder until he shrugged his shoulders and went off to torment someone else. The only really interesting point in the whole journey, other than arriving tired and hungry at Hogsmeade station, was the sound of the squeaky wheel on the food trolley as it came along the aisle, its owner calling out the names of foods he'd never heard of before. He'd got up and had a look when she stopped as did a large number of other children, but as he couldn't afford to try any of the treats, it soon lost its appeal.

Sitting back down, David opened the large paper bag containing the sandwiches and flask of cordial his mum had packed for him and discovered that his dad had added a pound note, a large slab of Dundee cake, and a packet of sweets. Forgetting all about the sandwiches, David fished out the cordial and cake, and demolished both of them in short order. Feeling full and with the steady rocking motion of the train, it wasn't long before all the anxiety and excitement of the day saw David fall asleep, only waking when the engine whistle blew, announcing the train's arrival at Hogsmeade station.

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The smug prat he'd come across on the train pushed David out of the way to get into the same boat as Lily Evans and two other boys. All of them laughed at him as the boy waved and blew a kiss as the little boat headed out across the lake towards the castle on the other side. David spent the entire ride across the lake thinking of how he would enjoy learning all the new spells if it meant he could hex off the smirk on the face of the boy who dared to tease him so. That or David felt he might just resort to punching him instead sooner rather than later.

Once his own little boat had made it to the far side of the shore under the darkened turrets of Hogwarts castle, a tall, thin witch came out and directed all of the children into two rows in alphabetical order. David nearly gave himself away in that instant as he tried to initially line up with the 'G's' before he remembered that here his surname was Snape, not Granger. Moving down the rows to find his place, David didn't speak but was too busy watching where Professor McGonagall was leading them and gasping in awe along with everyone else as they first spied the ceiling in the large hall they were admitted to.

David remembered very little of the sorting other than someone prodding him in the back when it was his turn to move forward and place the Sorting Hat on his head. It was all a jumble of half remembered phrases, but what he did remember clearly was the hat telling him he could see ambition, secrecy and cunning very clearly, placing David in Slytherin at that moment. He wasn't sure it had been meant as a compliment either. Not feeling particularly cunning or ambitious, yet knowing he was holding in a very large secret, David made his way to the Slytherin table passing close to the Gryffindor table where he gave Lily a shy smile, which she returned.

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Once the feast was over and the Slytherin prefect, Lucius Malfoy, had gathered David and five other first years, he lead them down the winding paths of the lower levels of the castle to the large dour looking tapestry guarding the entrance to the Slytherin common room. Once inside, all of them were lined up so that the upper years could be introduced to the newest serpents individually. David's isolation and fear of discovery increased as each of his house mates all echoed that they were Purebloods and from long illustrious families, some of them taking a long time to list their '*connections*'. Polite clapping and knowing looks from some of the older students welcomed each of them into the Slytherin fold, but when Lucius looked at David, he stumbled over his name, and once he mentioned that his father had been a Muggle, no one seemed interested in hearing anything else. His second hand robes, stuttered words and obvious inability to name an illustrious family to back up his claim to membership of Slytherin made him feel even more isolated, and he wondered just what the stupid mouldy old hat had been thinking when it put him in a house where he obviously wasn't welcome. Wiping his eyes lest anyone see how upset he was, David made his way to the dormitory area of the common room and changed for bed. Feigning sleep, David waited for the other boys to extinguish the lamps, growing more unsettled at their scathing and not quietly voiced ire and threats that a loser like Severus Snape had ended up in their house.

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Chapter Three

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Chapter Three

The next years of his schooling followed a very similar pattern, with the exception that Lily actively sought him out on more than one occasion. Oh, she used schoolwork as an excuse, but as they were paired in Potions by Professor Slughorn, David decided that this was a huge plus for him to have the prettiest girl in their class working with him since their first year. It was her choice of friends that wasn't particularly tolerable, but Lily acted as a buffer from the Marauders' excesses on occasion. Sirius Black, the prat from the train, and James Potter were the worst of Lily's friends, but they usually waited until Lily wasn't around to torment David for his heritage, parentage and anything else that seemed to garner an angry response. The worst thing was when they gave him the nickname of Snivellus, in direct response to his upset and pain at realising that he had no true friends, and was reviled by his housemates for his lack of background and by everyone else because he'd ended up in Slytherin house - the home of all bad wizards. Black particularly liked to torment David with a sympathetic audience to make the teasing all the more malicious. If only he'd waited until he was safely in his dormitory before he'd given into the pressure of constantly acting a lonely role during those first few weeks of his first year.

The most laughable slur Black chose to repeat often to whoever happened to be around at that chosen moment was the idea that Snape had known more curses and hexes than any other first year. Many of the students and some of the teacher's believed Black implicitly, and it made Snape all the more feared. What no one chose to examine was where he might have learnt those tricks, particularly when Sirius Black had come to Hogwarts with a healthy arsenal of nasty curses himself.

Self defence was still regarded as the sole domain of the Gryffindors and other houses. Anyone from Slytherin using such an argument usually found themselves carpeted by whichever teacher happened to catch young Snape in the act. More often or not, it was Professor McGonagall or Headmaster Dumbledore who expressed disappointment in his antics, glossing over the fact that he had, more often than not, been goaded in the extreme by both Black and Potter. In the four years he'd been at Hogwarts, he'd never really managed to outwit either Black or Potter not that he hadn't tried hard enough in the process. No, any curses or hexes he knew and tried to adapt, had been first perfected on him by the golden boys of Gryffindor Tower.

~*~

And so David resorted to schoolwork as his outlet. He knew he was bright, loved reading and exploring new ideas and the like. Hogwarts gave him the opportunity and permission to extend himself outside the realm of simply maths, science or the beauty of the written word. All too often he occupied quite happily a quiet spot in the library pouring over not only his assignments, but a large number of extra books that looked interesting, or might come in handy at some stage. It was no surprise that he was one of the top students in his year, along with Lily Evans who also threw herself into learning and adapting to this new and strange world. David liked her a lot. In fact, any thoughts of Jane took a smaller part of his thoughts when Lily was close by. David liked to think that Lily might be interested in him as more than a friend, but she seemed content to have David as a friend, nothing more. So they bounced ideas off each other, shared bibliographies and generally were content to work peacefully side by side in the dignified confines of the library stacks. Sirius and James couldn't attack him openly in the library either, though he was constantly on his guard when Lily left him by himself. Leaving the quiet peace of the stacks meant that David knew absolutely that his tormentors would be waiting for him to leave, and then they'd attack him slinking

away like the cowards they were only for him to hobble back to the relative safety of his dormitory. Just once he wanted to get the better of both of them - just once, but the opportunity had not presented itself so far.

~*~

The isolation David felt so keenly at Hogwarts was directly opposite to catching up with his mates from primary school once he got home to Harrogate. Most of them, including Jane, had all gone to the local comprehensive in Harrogate. David, along with several other children had instead been shipped off to other boarding schools, though no one else was magical. It was a relief to hop off the train each holiday and feel relaxed at home after an obligatory night spent in the dank and dreary terrace in Spinner's End. This was done to reverse the foul brew he had to drink each week at school to mask his appearance, and because Lily Evans also lived in the same town. What better way to have a few precious hours talking to Lily without the need of constantly watching his back as he did at Hogwarts. As David grew older, he found the more he hated the terrace in Spinner's End. It was merely a stopping point on his way to Hogwarts or the shell he hid in for a solitary night as he shed the persona he'd been forced to assume by his mum, but he couldn't ever see it being a home. Living above the shop in Harrogate was always warm and secure. It was his sanctuary and one David relished returning to because it meant he could throw off the secrecy and artifice of his day to day school life and simply be himself. No, it seemed to David that the snobbery and hatred he elicited at Hogwarts was nowhere in evidence where it really mattered - at home, and as much as he enjoyed his lessons, he had no idea just what he was supposed to do for a job once school was finally finished with, in three years' time.

Oh, there were the half-hearted jibes from his friends about not knowing any of the latest bands, or why David never talked about school and the teachers like his friends did, but perhaps the hardest thing about straddling two worlds was that David always felt the uncomfortable sensation that he didn't really fit in anywhere. It didn't stop him from meeting up with Jane and the others and hanging out at the local chippy or milk bar. Then there were the mornings they all converged on the local record shop, laughing and looking through all the new psychedelic colours of bands with far more popularity and street cred than any of them could claim. There was always the thought echoed by all the boys that these chaps never had to worry about pulling a bird, the general consensus was they had to beat the groupies off with a stick, and wouldn't that be fun for a lark. All any of them could do was drop hints for birthday presents and wish. None were truly from families who were flush with cash, and so the most they all could do was window shop and scour the local paper for the very scarce holiday delivery jobs. When they weren't roaming up the high street or lounging around making a bag of greasy chips last for as long as possible, as they took turns feeding the jukebox, there were the impromptu games of football in the local park, or the occasional game of touch footy or cricket.

~*~

Had David understood just how hard the next two years would be on his psyche, he might just have chosen to flee to the Muggle world and do something, anything to avoid the pain and ostracism hurtling towards him.

~*~

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Chapter Four

Chapter 5 of 8

When Eileen Snape listened to the hushed warnings of her sister, Kathleen, little did she realise that her decisions regarding her son's education would affect not only him but also her only grandchild.

Chapter Four

"Oi, Snively? Stupid bloody tosspot. Look at me when I'm talking to you, you ugly greasy poofster."

A shadow fell over the book he was cradling on his lap, and David had to clench the book tightly in a vain effort not to react to his tormenters presence.

David ground his teeth doing his best not to react to Black's taunts. It seemed a shame to avoid such a lovely warm spring day down near the lake, and it made a pleasant change from studying in the filtered light of the Library.

"What are you, fucking deaf, Snape? I was talking to you and it's not really on for you to ignore me. Isn't that right, James?"

"He's just a rude little shit, Sirius. Whadd'ya think we can do to make him listen to us?"

No idea, Prongs, but I reckon he's scared of us. After all, he'll never amount to anything, not that he was worth a tinker's fart beforehand. I think he's playing hard to get. What do you think, James? I think Snively is just gagging for it. Isn't that right, Snivellus? You're just a cowardly faggot."

David tossed his book aside and was on his feet with his wand pointing directly at Sirius's heart almost as soon as Black had stopped talking. Always one to play to a crowd, Sirius grinned maliciously and turned to address the students who'd gathered like moths to a flame at the hint of a duel or something more physical. David looked over the milling boys behind Potter and Black, noting with a grim satisfaction that several of his own housemates were standing around with shark-like grins in anticipation of hexing anyone, including David with whom they had 'issues' to resolve. As much as there would have been satisfaction in hexing Black in the back, as he had done many times to David, it wouldn't do to have so many witnesses to report him to the Headmaster.

"James, Stop it! I mean it. Stop picking on Sev." Lily came running up from the lake with several of her friends in tow just to add to the humiliation that David felt at being cornered and bullied by so many of his peers.

"Aw, Lily, we were just having a friendly chat, asking about some home work, weren't we, Prongs?"

"Certainly, and when I asked a simple question he pulled his wand on me, didn't he, James?" Sirius turned and looked for further support from the milling crowd around him. Lily turned her gaze behind her and saw lots of nods and mumbled words backing up Sirius' version of events.

David spat noisily at Black's feet, catching the edge of his left boot. Looking briefly at his feet, Sirius turned quickly and hexed David before he could even think of what

spell to use to follow up his opening salvo.

"No! Sirius. Put him down right now!"

"No, I don't think I will, Lily. He spat at me, you saw it, and I think Snively could do with a bit of humility. He should understand just how hated he is and how much he scares the other students. I'm doing everyone a service here, Lils. Now leave off and let me get on with it."

Sirius shook off Lily's hands from his arm, turned around and was witness to David trying to prevent everyone seeing his underpants. The cold anger his mother had always tried to warn him about was growing as Sirius laughed and pointed out to the assembled students just how much of a loser Snape was.

"Couldn't even afford to use powder in the wash, though I suppose it's one up on wearing frilly knickers. Or, do you save those for special occasions, Snape?"

As David tried to protect what little dignity he could, he wondered to himself if the Unforgivables were invented by some poor sod tormented by the likes of the Gryffindor Marauders. As soon as he could concentrate to reverse a spell of his own invention, he'd show them all, even Lily who thought nothing of passing on one of the spells he'd invented. Lily had promised him that she'd never talk about them, yet she obviously had told someone. None of them cared, not even the teachers, who more often than not punished David when it was as a result of being goaded by the Gryffindor golden boys.

Blind hatred consumed David, further hindering his attempts to reverse the hex and beat the living shit out of Black. It'd be worth the long stay in the school Infirmary just to loosen as many of the pricks teeth as he could. The laughter of the other students fuelled that hatred even more, and the final humiliation was to hear Lily giggling before she tried to stop, mostly unsuccessfully.

"Sirius, put him down, please. You've had your fun, but enough is enough."

"No, Lils, he's had this coming for years. Not so easy to get out of it when you're not lurking in the shadows, is it, Snivellus? Maybe now you'll realise just how much you should be wary of me, you fucking faggot."

David screamed at that point, his humiliation complete when Lily didn't reverse the hex, but thought asking would achieve the same result. Finally concentrating, though David swore he could see spots in front of his eyes, he managed to reverse the spell and landed heavily on the ground at Black's feet.

Coughing and rubbing the left shoulder he'd landed on, David tried to stand, clutching handfuls of dirt and grass to throw in Black's face.

"Oh, and while you're down there, Snape, wipe that slime off my boots. These cost good money and having any part of you on them makes me worry that it'll eat through the leather. No, better yet, lick it off. You'll enjoy it," Sirius said, playing to the crowd which continued to grow.

"Probably the closest you'll ever get to anything that wasn't some wizards cast offs."

Crouching on his haunches, David listened to the laughter all around him, and then with an unfocused shout, he launched himself at Black, bringing him down heavily. As he pushed himself back on his haunches, David made sure he punched his tormenter in the bollocks with both hands.

It was, David decided, remarkably satisfying to hear Black squeal like a girl, all the while clutching his jewels as he rolled around the dusty patch of ground. David smirked, only to find himself face to face with Lily, a look of fury on her face as she poked him in the chest.

"What did you do that for, Sev? Why didn't you just leave while you had the chance? Punching Sirius there, of all places, that was cruel."

To further emphasise her point, Lily had stopped poking David and grabbed hold of his wand arm. David didn't even realise he'd pulled his wand, but Lily kept trying to push his forearm down so that his wand pointed at the ground.

"Enough, Sev. You should leave now, you've done enough."

David looked at Lily incredulously and, perhaps seeing her clearly for the first time, realised nothing he said or did would ever be good enough to snare the heart of Lily Evans.

"I'll leave when I'm good and ready, you filthy Mudblood." David said roughly, shaking Lily's hands from his right forearm.

All the colour drained from Lily's face, and she turned and fled, not even looking back when David tried to clear his throat and call after her.

Turning swiftly towards Black, Potter and the rest of the crowd, David's nose met Potter's fist with an awful wet crunching sound. The crowd of boys and girls closed in on him jeering, many of them slapping the hand of one fist with the other hand, or drawing their wands. Other than Potter, no one managed to pummel David as an authoritative clap and strange mist descended on everyone gathered, cutting through the rising voices gathered around him.

"Episkey!"

"Now, Mr Potter, if you could escort Mr Black to the Infirmary, I will deal with Mr Snape. As for the rest of you, twenty points will be taken from each of you. You should be ashamed of yourselves. Now, away with you!"

Another loud clap and Severus found everyone disappearing as quickly as rats up the proverbial drainpipe. Wiping his bloodied hands on his robes, David faced the Headmaster with his head bent to hide the hot tears threatening to fall, all the while waiting to find out what punishment he would be facing. His mum would never forgive him if he ended up expelled for fighting. Mind you, she'd be understandably irate to hear he'd used *'that'* word against another student. In fact, David wasn't sure whom he feared more, Professor Dumbledore or his mum.

"My office I believe, Mr Snape. We have much to discuss, not least why you feel I shouldn't expel you for using that particular word towards another classmate."

Nodding his head, David picked up the book he'd been quietly reading and trailed behind the Headmaster all the way to his office, dreading just what Professor Dumbledore was planning to do to him behind closed doors.

~*~

It seemed to David as though he'd been scrutinised by Professor Dumbledore for a very long time, as the Headmaster sat behind his desk, his fingers steepled as he stared at the miscreant in front of him.

"So, Mr Granger, David, just what should I do with you? I confess I'm at a loss as to whether I shouldn't call on Eileen and let her deal with you instead. I'm not sure she deserves that though."

David's head shot up to hear the Headmaster call him by his real name, but it was the hard stare and look of anger behind his normally sparkling eyes that really chilled David to his core.

David cleared his throat and tried to speak several times, but merely croaked before he put his head in his hands and shook with silent tears.

"Ah, remorse is all very well, David, though how useful it is after the event is debatable. I've watched you all these years hoping you'd eventually find your niche within the school community, but today's spectacle... No, I don't think you'll ever find any true friends here, certainly not if you continue to use such derogatory words when you're angry. You've learnt some nasty habits in that nest of vipers it seems."

"I... I didn't mean to, sir. She laughed at me with the others and then blamed me for hanging around instead of leaving once I'd managed to reverse the spell. I need to go and apologise to her before you send me home."

Looking at the Headmaster earnestly, David continued speaking, almost trying to rationalise why he'd called Lily something he'd heard the other Slytherins' use under their breath towards any and all of the Muggle-born students.

"Why did she laugh? If she hadn't laughed like the others..." David trailed off, shaking his head slowly as he ran his hands through his hair tugging at the roots as if to clear his head.

"I've made a complete cock up of things, haven't I, sir? I'll go and pack my bags and leave. I've got friends at home and maybe Mum and Dad will send me to the local comprehensive. I've been studying the coursework in case, in case it all became too much."

David shut up, fully aware that he was rambling and becoming more and more panicked at the thought of having to explain just what he'd done to his mum. Dad might not understand a lot of it, but he'd express his disappointment as only his dad could.

"No, I think not, Mr Snape," Dumbledore said emphasising David's more commonly known name in the Wizarding world. "I think you'll just have to cope with the part of your schooling left as your mother hoped you would. She expended a lot of effort to get you safe, and to throw it all away now seems premature wouldn't you say?"

"You're not expelling me?" David couldn't hide the incredulous tone in his question.

"No, I'm not, but I have a task that only you can accomplish. You have a unique perspective on your housemates, and I find myself in need of those skills, if you're willing?"

"Anything, sir. I'll do anything to help you, but what could I do that someone like you couldn't?"

"I need someone to report on the goings on within the school, but most especially Slytherin House. There is a darkness descending on our world, Mr Snape, and I find myself at a loss of how to stay on top of certain activities. I need someone I can trust to report directly to me. After all, if this group of thugs takes control of our world, then your parents are targets. You don't want that, do you, David?"

"No, sir, but what can I do?"

"Well, you've conveniently ostracised yourself even further from your classmates. It seems you've made yourself a non-entity to a degree, a caricature of everything people fear, though I do recognise that Mr Black was the main catalyst as he appears to have been ever since your first year. That doesn't excuse your actions, but it does give you the perfect cover for what I need."

"But what happens if I get caught listening? They'll, they have no boundaries. What happens then, sir?"

"I have some tricks I can teach you to help you, David, but if you get caught, then you are, unfortunately on your own to a degree. The only person who will know of your actions will be me, and my successor if such is needed. No, I am asking you to risk your life for every single day, but then I was under the impression that you'd been doing this more or less since you climbed onboard the train in your first year. Perhaps I am mistaken."

"And if I choose not to do this, sir?"

"Well, then I would pack your bags, Mr Granger. I suspect that after I talk to Eileen, you will be back in Harrogate before morning."

David gaped at the corner that the Headmaster had deftly steered him into, all the while recognising that he could say no and face his mother's wrath, or say yes and perhaps find a way to rub everyone's nose into it once the task was done successfully.

Looking at Professor Dumbledore with a piercing look, David straightened up and nodded his head once decisively.

"A wise decision, David, a wise decision indeed."

~*~

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Chapter Five

Chapter 6 of 8

When Eileen Snape listened to the hushed warnings of her sister, Kathleen, little did she realise that her decisions regarding her son's education would affect not only him but also her only grandchild. Written for Sunny33

Chapter Five

David sat quietly at the Leaving Feast with his classmates, together and yet with a very visible divide between all of them. The intensive lessons he'd endured with the Headmaster had paid off with David's ability to exist as a student, yet operate on an entirely different level as Professor Dumbledore's eyes and ears around the school. With all the secrets David held close to his chest, he found himself almost perpetually scowling, which scared people away from him even more, not that he noticed half the time.

He'd tried everything he could to apologise to Lily for what he'd said down near the lake, but she ignored his pleas for the rest of his fifth year, and so David had given up in the end. It was all the more galling to realise he'd probably pushed Lily into James Potter's arms. It certainly seemed that way, as Potter paraded his prize in front of him regularly. To add to his perpetually foul mood, Potter had saved David's life in his sixth year. Thinking about it made David narrow his eyes and scowl at the pair of them passing by, but it was an incident he wanted to forget as soon as possible. He'd been sworn to secrecy about Lupin's unfortunate aversion to the full moon by the Headmaster. The only plus side of the Headmaster's intervention down at the lake and following Potter pulling him back from the snapping jaws of a ravenous werewolf,

was that Severus was left pretty much to his own devices. People shied away from him in the corridors, convinced that whatever grudge David had on Black and Potter in particular would rub off on the other students.

The only person who seemed to gravitate to him was Lucius Malfoy and his circle of friends, who went out of their way to cultivate David as someone *made of the right stuff*, whatever that meant. At his coming of age in January, Lucius Malfoy had held a party for him at his family home and gifted David with a very fine set of dress robes. It was there he'd first met Lord Voldemort and been encouraged to join their group once his schooling was complete.

Albus Dumbledore's only reaction when David had passed on this information had been to clap his hands cheerfully and assure David he'd done far better than he, the Headmaster, could have hoped for. Now, sitting waiting for the feast to finish and his final escape home to Harrogate, David wondered just what had been accomplished by everyone around him by making him into someone useful. He now understood why his mum had felt he needed to hide his true self, but it didn't make any of it any easier, and the fact that he couldn't say anything just added to David's sense of isolation.

It was, however, the ultimate realisation that the Headmaster had in David, the perfect spy, someone who could be counted on to do whatever was needed to achieve his nebulous goals. David looked around the Great Hall, taking in the scenes around him for the last time, the Hufflepuff banners proudly unfurled. He didn't know if he'd ever want to come back, but that was a false wish, and David knew it. Professor Dumbledore had arranged for David to begin an apprenticeship with one of his many colleagues in the area of Potions from September. David was looking forward to it, even though he was under no illusions that it would place him forever in the Headmaster's debt, and everything that such an obligation entailed. It was the thought of ingratiating himself into Lucius Malfoy's good graces for an unspecified period of time that gave David cause to think that running away, far, far away would be infinitely more sensible.

Unfortunately, this was merely another pipe dream, and though Lord Voldemort had encouraged and flattered David with promises of untold knowledge and the ability to seek support from the brotherhood against anyone who dared taunt him any further, it was the lack of concrete information that worried David. He'd promised to think about Voldemort's offer, all the while as Dumbledore pushed him to be his eyes and ears in a far more dangerous environment than the Slytherin common room.

~*~

The one constant throughout his schooling had been Jane, even when David had thought he might like Lily Evans more. They'd grown closer as the years passed, and their friendship had changed almost without either of them realising it during the last Christmas holidays. Jane had made David very aware of just what she thought of him, and David hesitantly told Jane he felt the same way too. He just hoped he didn't cock it up with Jane as he had with Lily. He didn't think he would, but they had lots of things to talk about once David sloughed off the loathsome '*Snake*' personality and face he'd been forced to assume ever since his first year. David never wanted to set foot in the terrace in Spinner's End ever again after tomorrow evening.

~*~

"Oh, David, I always knew you were different, but I just couldn't put my finger on what it was you were hiding from me."

"I had to keep quiet about it all, Jane. If they'd found out at school, Mum and Dad would have been in danger. You would have too, and I wouldn't have ever been able to forgive myself if something happened to you because of me. Then there's the Statute of Secrecy, and I literally couldn't tell you for so long, but I applied to the Ministry of Magic to get permission to tell you everything."

"So, this statute, that's why you never ever talked about school or anything like that. I thought you were trying to brush me off for the longest time."

"I would never do that, but it's all so complicated, and I've been working with Professor Dumbledore against a faction who want to control who has access to magic, who is worthy is probably the best way to put it. It's nasty work, and I wish I'd never heard of any of them. They're all batty, but this group that I've been investigating are just pure evil. I need you to know I would never be doing this if I didn't think it wasn't worthwhile keeping an eye on them. The things they brag about though..."

David shook his head as if trying to clear the mental image of the Death Eaters' version of a fun-filled Saturday night. They'd scarred him permanently with a loathsome tattoo and then made sure David understood that the only escape from their organisation was by death. He wasn't sure just how much he could keep from Jane. If they were going to make a go of the novelty of going out together, then David felt he had to try and protect Jane from the things he'd had to see and do as part of his cover.

"What exactly does a wizard do after school? It's not like you could really be satisfied working in the butcher's I suppose."

David ceased his maudlin thoughts, laughed and swung his arm around her shoulders as they sat close together looking towards the spring outside town, enjoying their picnic lunch.

"No, nothing like that. I've got an apprenticeship to do Potions. It's a bit like chemistry and gardening all in one I suppose. I start in September, about the time you'll be heading off to university actually. It seems like we're always saying goodbye to one another."

"I know. I really don't like it, David. Why can't you come to uni with me, that way we could eventually get a flat and see what happens from there."

"I can't think of anything more I'd prefer to do, but I can't. Mum was right when she said I had to be trained with my gift, and as much as I'd like to leave it all behind, I can't. Too many people are relying on me to do everything I can to undermine this group of thugs. There is only one way out for me, and that's not something I want to even think about. We're going to have to be careful, Jane. I can't do without you. I love you too much to try and live without you."

"I love you too, David, but if we do stay together, you have to trust me with everything; no more secrets. My heart can't take the thought that you'd lie to me or have another life I can't be part of."

"I don't want you to have to see what I have to do. I don't want to do what I have to do, but I will never not trust you or keep things about us from you. That other person - that Snake - he isn't me, but the lines, they're blurred."

"And Lily?" Jane asked hesitantly.

"I... I... she hates me. I hurt her, you see, and now she hates me. I had to do it, but she is no threat to you, to us. Snape loved her, loves her still, I think, but David loves you, Jane. He... I always have. I've had to try and separate both personalities, but if I ever slip up, then you'll just have to make sure I know who I am to you."

"Always, David, you can always rely on me to argue sense into you," Jane said softly as she moved to kiss David rather thoroughly.

~*~

END OF PART ONE

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Prologue II

Chapter 7 of 8

When Eileen Snape listened to the hushed warnings of her sister, Kathleen, little did she realise that her decisions regarding her son's education would affect not only him but also her only grandchild.

Prologue Part II

August 1991

David was enjoying the simple normality of being at home with both of his darling girls. He and Jane had had some major hiccups in their journey thus far, and neither were under any illusions that this state of affairs was likely to end any time soon. But as hard as it was to try and forget the past, David was revelling in the fact that today was the day when Hermione would receive her Hogwarts letter. Dumbledore had given David leave to return home to Jane and Hermione for a precious week and slough off his more familiar visage. Standing behind Jane, his hands wrapped loosely around her, their heads pressed close together as they watched the little brown speckled owl picking at the occasional insect in the potted herbs on the kitchen sill, the owl hampered at times by the large piece of parchment rolled against its leg. Talking quietly lest they disturb their visitor, all the while voicing the occasional fear and hope for their only child, the antics of the little owl kept the pair of them entertained as they waited for Hermione to arrive home from a birthday party at a friend's place just up the road.

As much as David had occasionally hoped that Hermione would not be magical, he did have to admit to a remarkable amount of pride when he found out that her name had been added to the register of future students in Albus Dumbledore's office. He and Jane had discussed the whole issue in depth at various times over the years, and any doubt over Hermione's magical ability had been nullified when Hermione had been found one day reading all sorts of books that she could have only have removed from David's magical bookcase by summoning them. It was one of the very few times where both of them had found it hard to punish Hermione for touching those special books without their permission. From that moment, both Jane and David recognised that when Hermione went to Hogwarts she would have to try and separate Snape from her indulgent and loving father, a state of affairs that neither of them were looking forward to in the slightest. It seemed the wheel of David's life had come full circle, and he had no idea how to defend against it.

For all that Voldemort had been supposedly defeated by the infant Harry Potter, David was all too aware that as his Dark Mark had not faded completely which meant that his expertise in certain areas could again be called on. Dumbledore had hinted as much on several occasions in the last eleven years since that fateful night in Godric's Hollow. David, once he realised that young Potter would be a classmate of Hermione, seriously considered sending her to France for her education, but once he'd examined his guilty feelings over Lily's death, and everything that those thoughts entailed, it was all too clear that he wanted to keep Hermione close for her safety. Aside from his own confused thoughts, Jane had vetoed the idea of Beaubaxtons almost as soon as David had suggested it.

A wry smile reminded David of just how well that conversation had gone as he moved his head and kissed Jane softly on the side of her jaw.

~*~

"So many mistakes, Jane, so many. If only I'd rebelled against mum's plans and just been myself. We wouldn't... I wouldn't be facing the prospect of teaching Hermione and making her hate me. He's hated, you know nape. They all hate him. Dumbledore only tolerates him because he's... I'm useful. He knows every grubby secret about what I've had to do, and he constantly holds the threat of it all over me like a treat he can withdraw if I try to leave."

"We could move, go to Australia. You've always said you wanted to go, and we'd be free ou'd be free. No more subterfuge, no more secrets and I can find work. There's one constant here entists are always in demand."

"I don't deserve you. I don't think I ever did."

"Oh, stop being so maudlin. It's like I'm married to two men at times when you're like this. You've said yourself that Hermione would have to be taught to manage her gift, and the only way to do that is for her to go to school somewhere. Sending her to Hogwarts is almost too far away, but if you think I'll agree to send our daughter to France for her education, you can think again!"

"I often think it would have been far better if she'd been born without magic."

"No, it wouldn't, David. Then she wouldn't be our Hermione. I do reserve the right to teach her all the subjects she'll need to know in the Muggle world, should she choose to have a non-magical career. You... your mum didn't give you a choice, but Hermione deserves to make her own choices when the time comes."

~*~

Any further introspection from David ended abruptly when the front door banged shut and excited footsteps hurried towards the kitchen. Both David and Jane turned towards the door to see Hermione running through the door, only to stop suddenly as soon as she saw the little owl on the sill.

"Is that for me?"

Both Jane and David nodded their heads simultaneously, and all three of them turned to in time to see the owl shake himself and ruffle his feathers self-importantly. Hermione walked slowly towards the window just as a small leg extended, the parchment resting on the edge of one of the pots.

"How do I do it, dad?"

"Well, you'll need this sickle for the pouch," David said as he pulled the small silver coin from his pocket and placed it into Hermione's open hand.

"It's always best to thank a post owl, even a Hogwarts owl, for delivering your mail; otherwise, they can be creative about how and where they bring mail to you in the future. Once you've thanked him, you can approach slowly and untie the thong on his leg, then open the pouch just there and put the coin inside."

Hermione followed her father's instructions and was soon clutching the parchment letter, smiling broadly. Ripping open the envelope, Hermione squealed in pleasure and then waved the letter in front of her parents.

Sharing a private smile of pleasure as their daughter started talking rapidly about everything she'd need for the new school year, Jane and David held each other close and enjoyed the excited happiness of their own little witch.

~*~

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Updating will be sporadic (how unusual) as I am currently studying. You only need to worry if I put my assignments here and my fic into my tutor.

Many thanks to the fabulous team of scattered logic and MagicAally, who have helped me get the story to the stage it is at currently. Without their input, I doubt this would be half as good. I am truly very, very lucky to have had their continuing help. Any remaining mistakes (yes, my comma fetish) are mine alone.

Should anyone see any more plot holes, please let me know. The first part was written very quickly, and as such, there may well be more spots of vagueness ladled throughout it.

Pt II Chapter One

Chapter 8 of 8

When Eileen Snape listened to the hushed warnings of her sister, Kathleen, little did she realise that her decisions regarding her son's education would affect not only him, but also her only grandchild. Written for Sunny33

Part II - Chapter One

1991-1992 Hermione's first year

Hermione had taken the lessons David and Jane had prepared for her regarding how she was to treat her father in public to heart, but it was heartbreaking for David to realise that, instead of encouraging his daughter as he would at home, he'd be forced to pander to his own house, or questions would be asked very shortly. Better for Hermione to pretend to be the Muggle-born daughter of two dentists rather than the half-blood daughter of the most hated Hogwarts teacher. For safety, only for Hermione's safety.

The thought of having to deny any filial care, as well as dismissing his daughter's inquisitive nature in Potions and around the school, was such that David seriously considered defying Jane and sending Hermione to Beaubaxtons rather than risking the chance that Hermione would grow to resent him and his covering cruelty. He and Jane had had many long roundabout conversations in bed at night, some more heated than others, alternately arguing and then dismissing the idea of not hiding Hermione's parentage, as well as dredging up alternate schooling arrangements. In the end, they continually came back to one simple expedient. It was safer to have Hermione close to David, where he could and would be able to subtly ensure that Hermione was all right. How David was to ensure this was still up in the air to a degree, but he knew there had to be a way that didn't involve detentions or Dumbledore acting as go-between. The less sway and interaction Dumbledore held over Hermione, the better.

Perhaps the hardest moment in their intensive "lessons" had been when David, his week away from Hogwarts at an end, allowed Hermione to see him transform into the towering and glowering personage of Severus Snape. Both Jane and David had talked seriously with Hermione over the breakfast table, ensuring that Hermione understood that, underneath any disguise, her father would always be the person who loved her dearer than life itself, not Snape, who was nothing but a shell, an actor in a very long play. Instead of heading into the spare bedroom, which David usually retreated to, to drink his potion and Apparate to and from Hogsmeade, both he and Jane had decided that, for this first transformation in front of Hermione, the more familiar surroundings of the living room would suit better just in case Hermione couldn't cope with the physical changes happening in front of her.

Sparing a brief worried look at Jane, David opened the flask in his hand and took a large swig of the astringent liquid. Standing quietly, he knew that, whilst not painful, it was an uncomfortable sensation particularly as his eyes darkened from their normal brown to a colour so dark it could be mistaken for black. His short brown hair likewise lengthened, growing darker and lank as it touched his shoulders. His usual pale, ruddy appearance also took on a sallow hue, with several new and deeper lines etched into this other face, particularly around his mouth and forehead. But it was the sensation of his teeth re-arranging themselves and gaining a less than subtle yellowing that David particularly hated. Hermione stood patiently in front of her father, watching the transformation silently, cataloguing the changes to the person she knew up until this time simply as "dad."

Once the transformation had finished, David arched an eyebrow and gave Hermione a piercing look as he asked in an acerbic tone just what she thought she was looking at.

Initially startled by the change in her father's voice, Hermione cocked her head to the side and walked slowly around David as he stood silently watching her carefully. Moving to stand next to him, Hermione picked up his right hand and looked at it closely, as she turned it over and then back again.

"I... it's very different, but I can see bits of you in there, dad. Your hands haven't changed much, and that look you give me when you're worried, it's still there. And when you purse your lips, you fold them in a bit. But I'll remember what you and mum said. You're an actor in a play, and I have to play my part too...for safety."

"I know you will, sweetie, but the hardest part for both of us is going to be the fact that you'll have to ignore me when we're at school. I'll find a way that we can talk at some stage if I can, but Snape is hated. I have a reputation as the hardest teacher, the 'bat of the dungeons,' and I've been known to make children cry at regular intervals. Can you cope with that, Hermione? Can you understand why I will have to do this?"

"I think so, but I don't like it."

"I don't like it either, but if it's any consolation, to keep my cover and yours, you might have to do things you know your mum and I wouldn't approve of normally. We've tried to bring you up to respect your elders, but no matter what it is you have to do, I will understand. Keeping all of this our secret is paramount. As long as you can tell me why you had to do whatever it might be, and you don't do anything too dangerous, I'll understand and know that you could find no other way around any given situation."

"Like what, dad?"

"I don't know, Hermione, but you'll be learning all sorts of new and interesting things, and you can't show any sympathy for me. There are too many questions that neither of us can explain fully without endangering you."

Glancing over at Jane with a wry look, David crouched down balancing on the balls of his feet so that he was at eye level with Hermione.

"None of this," David said firmly as he waved a hand in front of himself, "changes who I am underneath it all, but unless we're alone and in a secure place, you have to think of me as just a teacher."

"I will dad, I promise," Hermione said emphatically as she leant forward quickly to embrace her father.

~*~

Sitting quietly in his private quarters, David decided it had been altogether too hard not to share a look or smile with Hermione as she'd been welcomed into the Hogwarts family at her Sorting earlier in the evening. David had sent off a note to Jane as soon as he'd been able to retreat to his rooms, letting her know that Hermione had been sorted into Gryffindor. The stress of waiting for the Sorting Hat to place her had been more nerve wracking than his own placement in Slytherin all those years ago, the knowledge that Hermione was also holding onto a very large secret not helping in the slightest. Although, if pushed to offer a hope for his only child, David would have much preferred to see Hermione in Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff rather than in the same dormitory as Harry Potter. David could only hope that Dumbledore had not somehow nobbled the whole thing for whatever reason.

And, with that thought came the reminder of the irrational surge of anger and hatred as he'd spied the smaller version of James Potter milling around nervously with the other children.

David made a silent vow in that quiet moment, that if young Potter was of the same ilk as his father, and did anything to hurt his only child, he just might be "The Boy Who Did Not Live To See His Twelfth Birthday."

But, for now, David knew absolutely that Minerva McGonagall would treat all the students in her house fairly and stamp out any cruelty that came to her attention, not that David could overtly be seen to be interested in an unknown Muggle-born student in another house. That would definitely be cause for a great many questions he had no desire to answer.

~*~

Looking out over the students gorging themselves on all the tasty treats that the Headmaster had organised for the Halloween Feast, David couldn't see Hermione sitting in her usual place at the end of the Gryffindor table. They'd only had a single chance to cross paths without any witnesses. The Library, it seemed, was as much Hermione's sanctuary as it had been to David. Having known that, once Hermione spied the Library, she would be in her element and unlikely to leave without sufficient inducement, it was the perfect location to wish her a happy birthday in one of the back stacks, having already sent his gift home to Jane so that she could post it to Hogsmeade for owl delivery. The Library was, to a degree, neutral territory and both of them could be there at the same time, though in different sections, without risking anyone putting two and two together and reaching the correct conclusion regarding their true relationship to each other.

But David hadn't had a chance to see and talk to Hermione since then unless it was to tell her harshly to stop showing off in class or put her hand down when she became excited at knowing the answer to any given question in Potions. The way she had looked so hurt nearly made him give up the charade then and there, but there was more at stake than either of them truly understood. Flamel's stone had been moved to Hogwarts, and Dumbledore was keeping David in the dark about what exactly such a move meant. David had his suspicions, but avoided voicing them in the vain hope that they might be false. And so, he had to content himself with watching Hermione moving between her classes and during meals, but there was something off about her in general. The mad excitement of gathering her supplies in Diagon Alley and her arrival at the castle seemed nowhere in evidence in the last few weeks, and David was worried about exactly what had happened to dampen Hermione's normally bubbly and inquisitive nature. Spying Potter and Weasley gorging themselves, David was just about to stand and move down to the Gryffindor table to enquire as only Snape could about just where their classmate was when the nervous twit Quirrell staggered into the middle of the Feast and promptly fainted after uttering the few words guaranteed to cause general pandemonium and panic amongst the sugar laden students.

"Troll...in the dungeons..."

~*~

Fuck! Hermione! David thought to himself standing suddenly and sneaking out the teacher's entrance as quickly as he could, leaving the Slytherin prefects to guide the students back to the Common Room. What had happened to cause Potter and Weasley to be stuffing themselves and Hermione to be heaven only knew where? Quickly finding a quiet spot away from prying eyes, David pulled out a little silver sickle. It was the sickle he'd given Hermione to pay for the owl's delivery, and that Dumbledore had given back to him just prior to the start of the new school year. It had been a good choice for a talisman, small and inconsequential, and Dumbledore had helped him without even realising it. Not only could it lead him to Hermione but it had the added advantage of notifying him when Dumbledore left the school grounds. Uttering a few quiet words to activate it, David put it to his forehead and thought of Hermione, then took off at a brisk walk towards the dungeons, the coin warming the closer he got to her location. Hearing hurried footsteps behind him, David darted into an alcove and waited, watching as Minerva moved past him quickly, then stepped out of his hiding place and followed her towards the loud noises emanating from the girls toilet just ahead.

The scene before him as he raced in the doorway behind Minerva was enough to strike fear into his very soul. Looking around quickly at the amount of damage and the troll unconscious in front of him, he skewered Potter with a look that promised significant pain. David couldn't see Hermione at first, but then he heard a small whimpering sound and turned quickly to see her pressed against the far wall, white faced and shaking uncontrollably. Wanting nothing more than to go over and hug her, all the while reassuring her that she was safe, David let Minerva do the talking, not trusting himself not to give himself away.

And then she lied about how she came to be in the girls toilets instead of at the Halloween Feast to her professor. Openly lied. David knew Hermione too well not to see that fact that she wouldn't look either Minerva or himself in the eye as she recounted her assertion that she thought she could take on a fully grown troll. David was torn between wanting to hug her and wanting to give her detention for such a performance. Turning to watch her leave once she'd been dismissed by Minerva, David arched an eyebrow at his only child as she looked directly at him and gave her father a very nervous smile. It was the sort of wary look that said, "Oh, oh, dad's going to kill me!"

Centering himself back into character, David wondered briefly if he could now convince Jane to send Hermione to Beaubaxtons. All in all, he thought not, though he did wonder if he'd be completely grey and a nervous wreck by the time Hermione got to her seventh year if this was the sort of mischief she planned to continue. Once he'd cleaned up this stinking mess, David resolved to find a better and more secure way to see Hermione far more regularly than he'd managed so far.

~*~

Sitting quietly watching Hermione sleep in the Infirmary, David could only think that Australia was starting to look very attractive as a place to hide out. His only child had made a decent attempt to turn him into a nervous lather of sweat on numerous occasions throughout the year, but managing to dismantle his potions puzzle surely topped the list.

Setting his robes on fire came a very close second, though David did spare a moment for a wry smile remembering that Hermione had held up her side of the agreement to try and do whatever it took to hide their relationship to each other. He just wished he'd been wearing an older set of robes at the time. Hermione, having explained her actions over the Christmas holidays, admitted that she couldn't think of anything else and Ron's argument that he, Snape, had been deliberately nobbling Harry's chances of getting to the Snitch was very convincing. Until Quirrell made his move towards the Philosopher's stone, David hadn't known who had been cursing young Potter, but as Hermione had inadvertently knocked over Quirrell on her way to her father, David had to admit that, as a cover, it really was perfect. Now, there could be no doubt that Hermione had managed to separate Snape from her dad.

~*~

Weasley and Potter had been discharged from the Infirmary by Poppy earlier in the day, but Dumbledore had managed to argue that Hermione needed a night of peace and quiet. Yet another thing that David owed him, though he found it hard looking at her sleeping peacefully to quibble about the old man's intentions. If Poppy seemed curious as to why Snape would spend the night at the bedside of a student not in his house, she showed enough professionalism not to ask, not that she wasn't looking at him oddly as she moved around tidying up before she retired for the night.

Hoping that this was an exceptional year and that some of the stunts she, Potter and Weasley had managed to entangle themselves in would not be repeated next year, David rather thought it was really too much to hope for. They were as thick as thieves, the three of them, and where one was, the other two were very close behind, more often than not keeping lookout. No, he was realistic. For as long as the three of them remained friends, they'd stick their noses into ever more dangerous areas.

And that danger now had a face, sort of. It was a nebulous concept to a degree, but David had no doubt that Lord Voldemort would eventually find a suitable host body, and

then his life would again be a matter of tenuously maintaining his cover as Dumbledore's spy. The memory of past actions left him feeling sick to his stomach. How on earth was he supposed to warn off Hermione in such a way that she'd listen to him? Not just listen to him but pass on every warning to the two twits she called friends. The worry of that thought alone had added another crease between his eyes, one he tended to rub usually when he had a quiet moment unobserved, such as now.

Looking up, he saw Hermione stir restlessly and roll over. Standing quietly, he tucked the blanket around her again, and then he sat down to continue his vigil, vowing to always protect Hermione no matter the personal cost to himself.

~*~

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* (pg 127 PS, pb)