

Witness

by kellychambliss

Many years after Voldemort is finally overthrown, a Bulgarian former refugee comes forward to help answer one of the great mysteries of the wars: what happened to Snape and McGonagall. AU after the Battle of Hogwarts

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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A/N: This story diverges from canon sometime during the Battle of Hogwarts. There are OCs, and touch of voyeurism a little latter, and perhaps more sentiment than is customary for Severus, but otherwise, no warnings.

My unending thanks to those best of betas and therapists, The Real Snape and Tetley the Second

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The World was all before them, where to choose

Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:

They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,

Through Eden took their solitary way.

...John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

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Tucked into a dingy back street in Sofia, the little wizarding café was dingy in its own right, which was one of the reasons that Ivo Dobrev had suggested meeting there. He still wasn't sure that he wanted to do this, and he was half-hoping that the grimy tables and dodgy-looking neighbourhood would put the girl off. Perhaps she wouldn't even appear.

Well, she was not a girl, really, since she was already an historian or something. A professional. "Diantha Morris, Researcher, Dark Wars Oral History Project," or so her card read.

It was quite an official-looking card, with her picture on the right (smiling and nodding, but not waving, so that she could be taken seriously) and on the left, the insignia of the Dumbledore Institute. Impressive credentials, to say the truth: the Dumbledore Institute had become a prestigious organisation in post-war wizarding Britain.

But it wasn't prestige that had made Ivo decide, after all these years, to speak about his war experiences. It had been seeing the name "Dumbledore" in the *Svetŭt*

*Sŭvetnika...*the Bulgarian *Wizard World* newspaper.

The advertisement had been just a small one, in the classified pages: a group of British researchers from the Dumbledore Institute were looking to interview Europeans about their experiences during the Dark Wars.

Part of Ivo was exasperated by this insistence on talk and more talk. It had been over thirty years since Hogwarts and Britain had fallen to Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters; over twenty years since Voldemort had finally been overthrown, and still the Brits had not come to terms with it all.

Well, no more had the Bulgarians, he supposed. Or the Europeans in general. Before it ended, the dark regime had spread far beyond British shores.

But it had started there, in Scotland, at Hogwarts. And as a student from Durmstrang, Ivo had been at Hogwarts on the night the second war had essentially begun...that long-ago night of the Triwizard Tournament, when that boy had died. The night Voldemort had made his return to the world of the living.

That's why Ivo had decided to speak...because he had been there, and because he had known Dumbledore. Had met him, shaken his hand. When Dumbledore had smiled at Ivo and said, "I am pleased to welcome you to Hogwarts, Mr Dobrev," Ivo had believed him utterly. That had been part of the man's great magic, the way he could make even a lonely, awkward, foreign boy feel important.

But after Ivo had answered the advertisement and received the owl with Diantha Morris's card and her offer to meet him anywhere in Sofia that he liked, he had second-guessed himself. He was fifty-two years old now, and he felt every day of it, even though his wife laughed at him and pointed out that, in fact, he was barely middle-aged.

Yet she had looked at him with worry, his Bilyana; she knew the dark days when depression clouded his eyes, and she did not wish to see them again.

Thinking of Bilyana made Ivo feel a bit disloyal: if he had never told his wife about his war years, why should he now talk to an English girl who had not even been alive when Hogwarts fell and the real war began?

At the corner near the café, Ivo stopped and used the comforting solidity of his fingers to tally again his reasons.

1. He would talk for his own son, who was now eighteen...only two years younger than Ivo had been when he'd found himself in the Vanda refugee camp. Yet Pavel knew almost nothing about the war. Ivo had been shocked recently to hear him talking with his friends, and only one of them could even say when Dumbledore had died. They needed to know, these young people. They needed to know what had been sacrificed for them. What they had escaped.

2. He would talk for himself, so that when the day came that he ceased to be...and it would come, something he had not understood when he was Pavel's age, not even in the worst days of the war...when that day came, his life would not be like a line drawn in sand, soon smoothed away as if it had never been. He, Ivan Marinov Dobrev, would be in the history books.

3. Last and least, he would talk for the sheer kick of it...the kick of knowing that it would be he, this same Ivan Marinov Dobrev, this ordinary, unknown Bulgarian, who would answer for the British one of the enduring mysteries of their war: what had happened to two of their most talked-about fighters, who on the night of the Battle of Hogwarts had vanished without a trace.

He would tell them about Severus Snape and Minerva McGonagall.

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Yet when Ivo opened the door of the café, the doubts assailed him once again. He was a private man and preferred to be so, and part of him was afraid that by putting his memories into words, he would be giving a piece of himself away. And what if this Diantha Morris refused to believe him, if she scoffed at him? Or if he opened himself up to her, and she laughed?

If the woman had not already been there, sitting at a table against the wall, he might very well have left and thereafter never said a word. But she ~~was~~ was there, and she spotted him at once, and so the die was cast. Nothing to be done about it then.

"Mr Dobrev?" she asked, smiling and standing up to extend her hand. "Diantha Morris. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. I'm really looking forward to talking with someone who was at Vanda Camp. There's so much about it that we don't know in my country, and I think that's very unfortunate. We need to know everything we can about the history of the Dark Wars if we have any chance of avoiding another Dark Lord in the future."

Ah, but we have no such chance, my dear Ivo thought as he shook her hand, *human nature being what it is*

But this he did not say aloud. Bilyana would have said he was being a cynic, and he had no wish to discomfort this girl. She would learn the world's truths soon enough, or she would not, but either way, it would not be the words of a greying, diffident old man that would teach her.

Aloud he said, "I am pleased to meet you. I'll do my best to answer your questions."

"Thank you," she replied, sitting down again and busying herself with a set of Dicto-Quills. "I know you've read our brochure, but to summarise...with your permission (just sign here, please), I'll record our conversations. I'll be asking you things, but do feel free to respond in any way that is comfortable for you. Just talk to me in your own words; there are no right or wrong answers, of course."

She was naïve, this Miss Morris. One thing Ivo had learnt...there were always right and wrong answers.

He dutifully wrote his name on her parchment and thought again that Bilyana was wrong: he ~~was~~ was getting old; why else was he nowadays always noticing how impossibly young everyone seemed to be?

"May I get you anything?" Miss Morris offered. "A coffee, or...?"

"Coffee, thank you," Ivo said. He didn't want any, but he knew that the café owner was unlikely to let them sit without buying.

Miss Morris waited until the coffees appeared, and then she nodded, suddenly all business.

"Right, then. Why don't we start with some of the details of the Vanda refugee settlement. What it was like, how you ended up there. In Romania..."

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He had ended up there because Bulgaria in those days had been no place for a one-time protégé of Igor Karkaroff, someone who was trusted neither by the side that Karkaroff had betrayed nor the side that he had betrayed them for.

And by that time, not long before the Battle of Hogwarts, Ivo had come to realise that even if he had still believed that the wizarding world needed to be ruled by purebloods, he had nothing like the stomach necessary to bring that rule about.

And so he fled over the border into Romania, hoping to make his way to the dragon preserve where, rumour had it, supporters of Dumbledore could be found. But the going had been far more dangerous than he had ever expected, and when he had come across a group of refugees headed towards a safe, unplottable sanctuary deep in the countryside, he had asked (in fact, he had practically begged) to be allowed to join them.

Vanda camp had been chaotic in those early days, and no one spared much attention for a quiet Bulgarian wizard with no visible wounds, a young man who made no trouble, who lent a hand when asked but otherwise kept to himself. He was given a bed in the main dormitory building, an enormous cavern of a place called the Cattle Shed, and thereafter left mostly alone.

He wasn't unhappy, not really. Just numb, mostly. And relieved. At Vanda, for the first time since that dreadful end of the Triwizard year, nothing was expected of him, nothing was up to him. His basic needs were met, and he didn't constantly have to watch his back. There were a few camp gangs and thugs, but compared to his years at Durmstrang, they were nothing.

He was content to live at Vanda day by day, looking to neither past nor future. Nearly everyone else, though, was desperate to move on, to get out of the camp, or at the very least, to get out of the Cattle Shed and into one of the private tents. But those were usually assigned only to families: even magically-expanded camps reach finite physical space eventually, and the Cattle Shed was an efficient way to house the many single people.

It was in the Cattle Shed that he first saw Professors Snape and McGonagall.

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"We know that magic was rationed at Vanda," Miss Morris said, consulting some notes. "Why was that? Wasn't the camp unplottable? And more or less smothered in wards?"

"Yes, it was," Ivo replied, watching the Dicto-Quills as they scratched quietly along. He found it easier to look at them than at his questioner's eager, interested face, which served only to remind him how difficult it would be to make her understand what the camp had really been like. "But the wards took a lot of energy to maintain; they could have thinned or cracked, and then there were so many of us...people feared that such a large concentration of magic could be detected, no matter how unplottable we thought we were."

He was quiet a moment, thinking. "How realistic were these fears? I cannot say. But the rationing...I think it made us feel as if we had a little control. It gave us a way to protect ourselves, even a little bit, and we were afraid. If there had been spies in our midst, or if the Death Eaters had found us...you must understand, no one knew what Voldemort's plans were, whether he would try to exterminate the Muggle-borns or enslave them or what he would do."

"How was the rationing managed?"

"We all had a trace put on us, such as the children have. We could still use magic, just not often and not much."

It had been more difficult than he'd expected, the restriction of his magic...like the loss of a limb. But he had managed. They all had. What else could they have done?

Miss Morris now changed the subject rather briskly. "Were there any British refugees in the camp?"

"A handful only. I'm not sure how they got there. But the way things were then...it's hard to explain now how confused everything was. The war had escalated so fast. We had so many months of tension, of waiting, of nothing happening, and then suddenly, it was as if the world exploded. Death Eaters everywhere, more and more Muggle-borns disappearing. And then we heard that Hogwarts had been lost, and the British Ministry taken over... People just fled, any way they could, and a few British ended up in Vanda."

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Not long after his own arrival, Ivo ran across a Hogwarts boy he'd known during the Tournament year, a Slytherin named Blake Walford. Walford had left school by the time of the Battle, but his younger sister had been there; she'd been one of those evacuated from the castle when the fighting began. The family had collected her from the evacuation point and come almost directly to the camp, although Walford was vague about the how and the why. Ivo, of course, did not press for details; at Vanda, people's secrets were their own.

Walford was brash, and he liked to shock, but he wasn't Dark at all, just a bit of a loner, like Ivo himself, and Ivo felt a kinship with him. It was no easier to be a Slytherin in those days than to be from Durmstrang.

For his part, Walford seemed delighted when he spotted Ivo at breakfast one morning in the camp mess.

"Well, if it isn't Ivo il Divo," he said, using the silly nickname from their schooldays, and Ivo found himself grinning. His year at Hogwarts had been difficult for him, away from home among such strange people and food, yet for a moment he wished for nothing more than to be back there, spending his nights being rocked to sleep on the lake. Those days had been strange, yes. But simpler. Or so they seemed now.

He and Walford spent time together, lazing and talking, but neither confided much in the other. And then one day, a few months after their arrival, Walford and his family were simply gone. Ivo never heard of them again.

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That had been the way of it at the camp: people got their chance to leave and took it.

Ivo often wondered what had become of them all.

"Did you meet any of the other Brits?" Miss Morris asked, naturally more interested in her own people than in his. "Or recognise any of them?"

Sipping the remains of his coffee, Ivo let the silence stretch out. He was aware that he might yet come to regret revealing what he knew, but he'd begun it, and there was no going back. So if this was to be his chance to strut his brief hour upon the stage, he wanted to miss none of it.

"Just the Slytherin boy," he said carefully, leaning back in his chair. After what he judged to be a sufficient pause, he added, "and the professors."

"The professors?"

"Professor Snape. And Professor McGonagall. From Hogwarts."

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Miss Morris's reaction was all that Ivo could have hoped. Her eyes widened to an almost comical degree, and she lost her professional veneer as she stammered, "I...you...what? Do you mean...? Please. Let me be sure I understand you. At the Vanda refugee settlement, you saw Severus Snape? And Minerva McGonagall? *After* the Battle of Hogwarts?"

Ivo nodded a brief assent to each query, but she was hardly satisfied. The questions came faster than he could answer them: "Are you sure? How did you know who they were? When did they arrive? How? Did they acknowledge each other, speak to each other? Did they know you? Are you *sure*?"

"I am very sure, Miss Morris," Ivo broke in finally. "I knew who they were because I saw them often during my year at Hogwarts. I know what has been said of them: that they were rivals, even enemies. That it was she who drove him from the school on the night of the Battle, duelled with him."

He lifted his hands in a gesture of ignorance. "These things may be true, I do not know. But Professors Snape and McGonagall were not enemies during the Tournament year. In fact, until the Hogwarts students assured me that I was mistaken, I thought they were friends. Certainly they spoke often together. And if they fought each other during the Battle, they made it up, for they definitely were not enemies at Vanda."

"You saw them speak together at Vanda?"

"Daily. And nightly, they slept together."

Miss Morris seemed almost to stop breathing. "In the same tent, you mean."

Ivo was enjoying himself. "No. In the same bed."

But there was a price to pay for his little moment of drama: as he had feared, Miss Morris did not believe him. Her eyes flashed, and she snapped, "Oh, I see. You're taking the piss. I suppose you think this is funny, to drag me all the way over here and then..."

"Miss Morris. I assure you. I would find no humour in ill-treating you so. I understand that my story must sound fantastical, but I am telling you the truth. The professors from Hogwarts, Snape and McGonagall...they were two months in Vanda camp. This I myself saw."

Something in his face or tone must have convinced her, for she sat back and looked at him for a long minute. Then she fitted fresh parchment under her Dicto-Quills and waved her wand to refill the coffees.

"Tell me," she said.

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He had been in the camp a little over a week, and already his life had taken on a routine. There were many jobs to be done, so he had been assigned a work detail, doing Muggle-style washing-up after breakfast and lunch...only the heaviest of the cleaning and construction jobs were done magically. He knew how to wash up the Muggle way, courtesy of a non-magical grandmother, so he did not find the work as onerous as some did. But it was tedious.

Yet even the washing-up soon became something...not to look forward to, exactly, but to focus on, to give shape to his day. Despite all the work to be done, there were a great many empty hours to fill, and not much to fill them with.

Sometimes in the afternoons, newspapers would arrive...the local Romanian paper, the Bulgarian Svetŭt Sŭvetnika, occasionally The Daily Prophet...and often half the camp would gather round to hear the front pages read aloud.

That's how Ivo had learned about the fall of Hogwarts: in the Voldemort-controlled Prophet, the fall was presented as a great triumph, but everyone in the camp understood how much had truly been lost. Not even the fact that Harry Potter had escaped (or, as the paper would have it, "deserted his deluded followers") could do much to cheer them; everyone assumed that of course he would be arrested soon, if he weren't dead already.

The article also contained a list of missing "traitors." Most of the names meant nothing to Ivo, but he recognised a few: Minerva McGonagall, Filius Flitwick.

And Severus Snape. The Daily Prophet had a great deal to say about him: How Voldemort had become suspicious of him and had discovered him to be a spy. How Snape had cravenly cursed several Death Eater colleagues as he fled the Dark Lord's righteous wrath. How, even though Snape had managed to escape, the Ministry of Magic had every confidence that the cowardly betrayer would soon be apprehended.

Ivo remembered Snape as a dark, angry man, constantly sneering, of whom many students had been afraid. But a spy for Dumbledore? Whoever could have guessed?

This unexpected news had been enough to occupy Ivo's mind for much of the afternoon, but soon even its interest palled. Hogwarts was a world away, and his knowledge of it came from a lifetime ago. The boy he had been then seemed a stranger to him.

When dinner time arrived, he waited in line for his food and then wandered back early to the Cattle Shed, weary but not sleepy, wondering how he would fill the evening, unwilling to let his thoughts move too far from the here and now.

And in the Cattle Shed, there they were...Severus Snape and Minerva McGonagall, standing side by side near the bed next to his own.

He recognised them at once, although he wasn't sure he would have done so had they not just been brought to his mind by the newspaper articles. They were dressed differently than at Hogwarts...no emerald-green robes or high hats or distinctive billowing-bat sleeves. But their plain black robes didn't conceal Snape's nose or his disdainful eye, McGonagall's stern mouth or knot of dark hair.

They both seemed a little worse for wear: McGonagall had a long scratch on one cheek, and Snape was thinner and paler than Ivo would have thought anyone could be and still remain upright; his dark eyes were like shadowed bruises in his white face.

But both of them looked as fierce as Ivo remembered, and he stepped back into the shadows, not wanting to be seen staring. Not wanting to be seen at all.

The professors were accompanied by a harried camp worker who was pointing out the loo and the shower rooms and explaining about rules and meals and reminding them about the restrictions on magic. Then she showed them the low-energy spell that would erect privacy wards around the bed, turning the atmosphere opaque, so that no one could see in or out, but air could still circulate.

Ivo didn't expect that they would use the wards often; the misty white walls made even the huge Cattle Shed feel claustrophobic and clammy, and not only that, but they didn't work well. They faded out and had to be constantly renewed, at a considerable expense of rations, so after a day or two, few people took the trouble.

The worker watched as McGonagall was able to raise the wall on her first try. "Yes, quite good," she said. "Well, I believe that's everything. I know it all seems a little overwhelming at first, but you'll adjust quickly. I think you'll actually find yourselves fairly comfortable here."

Snape scowled. "Of course we appreciate the pep-talk and the platitudes," he said, and then, glancing pointedly around the warehouse-like sleeping room, added, "but I would say that 'here' is just another term for hell on earth."

Professor McGonagall shot him a warning look. "Thank you so much for your assistance," she said to the worker. "I'm sure we'll be fine."

"Well, if you have any questions," the woman gestured vaguely, "someone is usually around."

She walked off, leaving the professors alone, and McGonagall turned to Snape.

"You might allow us at least a day, Severus," she said tartly, "before you set about alienating all and sundry."

But the look she gave him this time belied her tone, and if Ivo was shocked to see her lean over and kiss Snape's cheek lightly, he was even more shocked when Snape

pulled her into his arms and rested that same cheek against her hair.

"I'll set about alienating Merlin himself," he said, "if that fucking Potter dies before he bothers to deliver us all from this nightmare."

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

Many years after Voldemort is finally overthrown, a Bulgarian former refugee comes forward to help answer one of the great mysteries of the wars: what happened to Snape and McGonagall. AU after the Battle of Hogwarts

Her coffee forgotten, Miss Morris was staring at Ivo in fascination. "And they didn't try to conceal their identities at all? But they must have known that the entire wizarding world was looking for them."

"The British wizarding world, perhaps. But to most people at Vanda, they were just another couple...strangers, wanderers, like all of us. They may have used glamours occasionally; I can't say, since I didn't often see them in public. They kept to themselves a great deal."

"But surely someone would have recognised them at some point. In fact, now that I think about it, I know I've seen at least one other report of Snape being spotted at a refugee camp. But I don't remember the details; I didn't read it carefully, since it didn't seem very likely. I mean, over the years, people have reported seeing Snape or McGonagall in practically every country on the planet."

"There have been many rumours," Ivo agreed.

"Oh, hundreds, probably thousands." Miss Morris was animated; clearly, here was a subject she enjoyed. "If you want to know my own theory, I've always believed that Harry Potter knows more about what happened to his professors than he's ever said. He may have been the one who finally killed Voldemort, but he must have had a great deal of help over the years. I've always wondered if he wasn't in touch with McGonagall somehow, and some of the others who went missing. And now that I know she was with Snape, too..."

She broke off and looked at Ivo with something like suspicion, as if she could tell he was feeling amused at the idea that someone of her age had "always" thought anything about the Dark Wars. Or perhaps she realised that she had been talking to Ivo almost as a colleague rather than an interview subject.

In any case, she retreated to her professional demeanour and said rather sternly, "You do know that we will check out your story very carefully."

Ivo was not surprised. "Please, check anything you like; it will not change what I saw. You can talk with Blake Walford, if you can find him. He saw them, too."

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The professors had been at the camp nearly a week, and Ivo was heading to the shower rooms after his breakfast shift in the mess hall, when he saw Blake Walford hurrying towards him.

"You'll never guess who I just saw," Walford said excitedly, grabbing Ivo's arm and dragging him toward his family's tent. "Go on, Divo-man, try. I'll give you a hint: Hogwarts. But you'll never guess, not if you live as long as Dumbledore."

"You saw Professors Snape and McGonagall."

The expression on Walford's face gave Ivo one of the best laughs he'd had in some time.

"How did you...?" Walford demanded. "Shit! Are you a legilimens or something?"

"No, I'm not a legilimens. I've seen the professors, too, that's all. They have the bed next to mine."

Walford laughed. "'The' bed, singular? What's happened to your English? You're making it sound like the two of them have just one bed."

"Yes, in English, I believe that's what 'they have the bed next to mine' means. 'They' plural. 'Bed' singular."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa." Walford stopped dead in the middle of the compound. "Wait a minute. I thought everybody in the Shed had their own bed."

"Well, they do. But not everyone stays in it. You know how it is, Walford. People sleep together. No one cares, as long as nobody's being forced. And trust me, your Hogwarts professors are not being forced."

Walford's face was a study. "So are you saying...? Oh, god, you are. You are. You're saying that Snape and McGonagall are, like, together? You know, like...lovers and shit? That's what you mean, isn't it? God. That is just massively disgusting."

"Why?" Ivo asked, though he had not been unsurprised himself on that first night, when he realised that McGonagall had no intention of retiring to the bed assigned her in the women's wing.

"Why?" Walford echoed. "Come on, do you know how old she must be? Gag me. Plus, everyone knows they hate each other. And hell, man, I mean...she's a Gryffindor!"

The Hogwarts House system being yet another British custom that baffled Ivo, he merely shrugged and began walking again towards Walford's tent. A few months ago, before the world had fallen apart, such an age difference might have made him snicker. Now...well, who could care about such things now?

Walford, it appeared, had quickly reconciled himself to the situation, too.

"So," he said, flopping down outside his family's tent and making room for Ivo to sit next to him. "Snape and McGonagall are lovers, huh? Have you ever seen them fuck?"

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Ivo did not tell this last part to Miss Morris, but nevertheless, her mind appeared to be running along the same lines.

"This is amazing, Mr Dobrev," she said. "I think Minerva is one of the last people anyone would have guessed as a romantic partner for Severus. Their long-standing rivalry, their ages... All those stories about how hostile they were during that last Hogwarts year..."

She shook her head. "And now you're telling me that they actually shared the same bed? When there was no need? No over-crowding, or anything like that?"

"No. It was their choice solely. In fact, in all their stay at Vanda, I never saw them spend a night apart."

"Did you ever witness them, you know, uh...be intimate with each other?"

Be intimate. Well, that was one way of putting it, Ivo thought. But on the whole, he preferred Walford's way.

"No!" he wanted to say to Miss Morris. "Not 'intimate.' Say 'fuck.'"

Because that's what people did in a refugee camp. They fucked. They weren't "intimate," except in the sense that the whole damned camp was "intimate," everyone living cheek by jowl, no solitude, precious little dignity.

Life there was too elemental for euphemisms. You took your food and your sleep and your shits and your pleasures when and where you could, often in full view of anyone not too dazed or depressed to watch. Privacy wasn't a luxury...most of the time, it wasn't even a possibility.

Of course people fucked. It was their solace and their Obliviator and their desperation and their time-filler and sometimes their only buffer against annihilation. Snape and McGonagall were no exception.

Miss Morris was looking at him expectantly, and Ivo knew he was going to have to tell her something, even if he didn't think she was being very professional in asking.

To Walford, he'd simply lied and said, "No." But what should he say to this naïve, clueless woman? ...this girl, sitting there so confident that she could touch "history," that she could make sense of the refugee camps, of the war, of anything from that dark time...when the very comfort and safety in which she dwelt meant that she'd never understand the slightest thing about them.

Then again, what did it matter? Ivo had come to bear witness, and bear witness he would. He would tell Miss Morris what he knew, and after that, well, the world could do as it pleased. The way it always did.

So he began.

"When people first got to the camp," he said, "they were so relieved just to feel safe again. Yes, it was crowded, and there was so little magic, but most people didn't care at first. You see, they never thought they were going to stay. A week or two, to catch their breath and get back on their feet, and then they were going to relocate, they were going to go to some stable wizarding place where no one had never heard of Death Eaters...Australia or India or Argentina... And then a week turned into a month, and then two, and then six, and there you still were, cooped up, going nowhere."

He leant forward a bit, trying, in spite of himself, to make her see. "But you still keep on living; what else can you do? So 'being intimate,' as you put it...yes, people needed that. Some were very open about it. They didn't care who heard or saw, because if you were going to wait until you were alone, you were going to wait forever. Other people...they tried to be as private as they could; they'd spend part of their magic allotment for silencing charms. Or the privacy wards."

He was silent himself, remembering, until Miss Morris cleared her throat.

"And Severus and Minerva?" she prompted.

Ivo rolled his eyes, but only in his mind. To him, they would never be "Severus" and "Minerva," no matter what he had seen them do. "Professors Snape and McGonagall," he said.

He would give them their proper respect. In his mind, they had earned it. Of course they had seemed an unlikely couple to him at first: McGonagall old enough to be Snape's mother, Snape himself a damaged, unpleasant man.

But Ivo had changed his mind over the two months he had watched them. He had seen how much they shared: their quick minds, their wit, their love of debate. He'd seen their moments of tenderness and how carefully they looked out for one another.

They'd survived the Battle, they'd lived and loved and yes...they had taken physical pleasure in each other, and there was no shame in it. Nothing to be hidden.

"They didn't have sex often," he said finally, refusing the silliness of Miss Morris's "intimate," yet not ready to share with her the power of "fuck." "And they were very discreet. They used what magic they could, and they kept their clothing on. But I knew."

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Of course he knew. It was only inference at first...he'd seen them use their privacy wards once or twice, and sex was virtually the only reason anyone bothered with the foggy things. But like most people, Snape and McGonagall had abandoned the wards eventually, and then Ivo had been sure.

There was no mistaking the nature of that rhythmic rise and fall of Professor Snape's black-robed body, his form a slightly darker, denser shadow against the black of the night. But so restrained were the professors' movements that Ivo could easily choose not to know what they were doing, and mostly that's what he did choose, in the spirit of polite obliviousness that usually prevailed at the camp.

Until the night there had been no way not to know. The night of the Solstice Celebration.

Almost everyone in the settlement attended it, enjoying the special events: enchanted firework dragons that chased the children harmlessly about, live music provided by some of the residents, extra food, and perhaps most appealing to the adults, a few extra magic rations.

To the extent that he planned anything, Ivo had intended to go to the party, but somehow the laughing crowds had unsettled him, and he went back to the Cattle Shed instead, suddenly desperate for solitude, for the rare chance to be completely alone.

There was no one in the dormitory when he entered. No candles had been lit, no wards erected; there was only the moonlight shining through the skylights, and he relished the darkness, the quiet, the semblance of peace. Lying on his bed, he closed his eyes and listened to the unwonted silence.

They came in quietly as well...Snape and McGonagall. They had almost reached their bed before Ivo heard them, or rather, heard Snape, speaking in a voice soft and brutal.

"...then you're an even greater idiot than I took you for, Minerva, and believe me, sometimes that's great enough. It's difficult, I grant you, to overestimate the credulity of a Gryffindor, but I stupidly thought you might be different. More fool I."

McGonagall in reply was equally low, equally scathing. "You are a fool, if you think you can succeed at this any better than you succeed at anything else that involves

actually dealing with human beings. Do you honestly think a few pathetic insults will drive me away? If that tactic was going to work, it would have worked years ago. It's not exactly a new aspect of your personality, Severus. So go ahead, be as vicious as you will. I'm not leaving you."

"Have you not been paying attention? Haven't you seen the Daily Prophet? I'm a marked man."

"And you weren't a marked man before the Prophet said so? Don't be absurd. One way or another, metaphorically or literally, you've been marked since you were fifteen. That's not news to me. But it hasn't stopped you fighting the Dark Lord, and we will still do that, just in different ways."

"You damned foolish woman, you have no idea what it will be like."

"Of course I do! I've been in three wars, Severus. I understand the risks perfectly. And I know you for what you are, too... I see your darkness, I'm not deceived. I know it all, and it doesn't matter. I have darkness of my own."

They hadn't noticed Ivo, and he lay as still as he could, barely breathing, wishing he was skilled enough to perform a non-verbal concealment charm. But if wishes were thestrals... He didn't have anywhere near the skill to hide himself, and so there was nothing for it but to lie quiet and hope they wouldn't see him.

The sound of a thump caused him to open his eyes, and he saw Snape hitting his chest.

"There's nothing here," Snape snarled, thumping himself again. "You'll risk yourself for nothing. Because I have nothing to give you, can't you see that? You should never have come with me."

"I wanted to. Although it was you suggested it, don't forget."

"It was a moment's weakness, that's all. Nothing more."

"Severus." McGonagall was suddenly calm, matter-of-fact. "We've both had time now to think things over, and if you've realised you don't want a life with me after all, I will accept that. Just say so."

Snape was silent.

"What is it, then?" McGonagall flung out a frustrated hand. "You can't think..." She stopped and took a breath before going on quietly, "When we were at Hogwarts, we could pretend we weren't really together; we could tell ourselves that it was just a convenience, just an affair. But when the castle was lost, well, you said it yourself... we had to make a choice. And so I did. I chose you. Not out of pity or desperation or whatever twisted explanation you've devised to torture yourself with. Don't you understand? I chose you because I want you."

Snape laughed, a harsh sound with no humour in it. "You want this," he sneered, gesturing towards himself. "And you don't think yourself an idiot?"

In answer, McGonagall moved to him and kissed him hard. "A very great idiot indeed," she whispered. "And so are you."

There was a tiny pause before Snape reached out for her; then he was kissing her just as hard, pushing her onto their bed, rucking up her skirts while her hands roved his body, clutching his back, his arse.

They looked almost as if they were fighting, but then a sudden shaft of moonlight bathed the scene, and Ivo saw McGonagall's face, avid and yearning, her eyes locked on Snape, her desire for him as clear as if she had spoken it ...

...and Snape, his touch infinitely gentle, was loosening her hair, combing his long fingers through it, murmuring words that only she could hear.

The moment was far more "intimate" than any sex act, and Ivo felt like an intruder in a way that he never had when he'd witnessed mere physical coupling.

Then the atmosphere shifted, and their heat became almost palpable as Snape, no longer gentle, pressed McGonagall onto her back and drew his wand to Banish her robes. When she laughed and half-raised herself to remove his clothing with just a flick of her hand, Ivo couldn't help but stare.

He had not seen them naked before. They looked ghostly, ethereal, like something of another world: Snape with his narrow torso and stiff, pale cock; McGonagall with her black hair in a wild cloud about her shoulders, her breasts gleaming silver-white in the moonlight.

Hers wasn't a young woman's body, but it flooded Ivo's mind with images of Valkyries, Amazons, all the valiant, bare-breasted warrior women of the centuries. He gazed and felt his own cock rise, and he wanted to groan aloud, as Snape did, at the sight of her.

It was too much; Ivo was aroused and ashamed at once, and he turned his head, unable to continue watching, yet knowing that he would not be able to stop for long.

But when he looked back, they had raised their privacy wards, and he could see nothing but that pearly whiteness.

They seemed to have forgotten a silencing charm, however, and Ivo let himself listen to them: he could hear McGonagall's moans, soft gasping cries halfway between pleasure and need, interspersed with occasional words, and he thought he'd rarely heard anything more exciting. Snape was quieter, a few low grunts and once, her name.

Then there were no more words, just an escalation of sound, McGonagall's soft cries becoming a sustained low keening; Snape's grunts deepening, until Ivo knew he must be close to coming.

It was at that point that the wards began to break apart, the whiteness swirling and eddying like smoke to reveal Snape at the moment of his climax, his head thrown back, his mouth stretched wide in a silent roar that would have been heard by the gods in the heavens had he chosen to give himself voice.

And had there been any gods to listen.

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Slowly, Ivo brought himself back to the present, to the din of the café and to Miss Morris's ardent face. He told her of the professors' argument, but he said nothing about their passion. When he had come to the interview, he had been vague in his mind about exactly how much he would say, and now he knew that he would keep this memory to himself: it was not his to share.

He was relieved that Miss Morris didn't press further; instead, she asked, "But what finally happened to them? Do you know when they left the camp?"

"I know that compared to other people in Vanda, they were not there long at all...two months, perhaps a bit more. It was May or June, I think, when they arrived, and in August they were gone."

"Where did they go? Do you know?"

"No. We did not exchange confidences, of course. They never knew that I was aware of who they were. We would nod, say good evening, good morning, maybe 'pleasant weather, isn't it?' But that was all. We had to live so close, physically speaking. We needed to *not* be close in other ways, if that makes sense to you.

"So I know only that they were finally able to make arrangements to leave, and they did so. I wish there was more I could tell you, Miss Morris. But they were in and out of my life very quickly, and I had troubles of my own. "

Miss Morris nodded. "Yes, I'm sure you did, Mr Dobrev, and I'd like to meet again to discuss your camp experiences further. And of course anything more you remember about Severus and Minerva. Did you actually see them leave the camp?"

"Yes," Ivo nodded and felt a little dizzy; he'd drunk too much coffee. "In fact, I believe I was the only one who did so."

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The sky burned white with heat and sun on the day the two Hogwarts professors left the Vanda refugee camp.

Ivo knew that they were soon to depart, because the day before, he'd seen Professor McGonagall, a parchment in her hand, stride purposefully through the warren of housing tents, heading for the work sheds where Professor Snape sometimes assisted in brewing potions for the hospital ward.

Snape had just been coming out of a shed as she approached, and she'd handed him the parchment without a word. He read it, frowning, and then he had startled Ivo by doing something unprecedented: he'd thrown back his head and laughed aloud, lifting his face to the sky.

Then he scowled.

"Something will happen to prevent it, of course. We won't get out of this hell-hole that easily."

"Thank Merlin for that remark," McGonagall had said. "Otherwise I'd have had to suspect polyjuice. Or the beginnings of spattergroit. Isn't uncharacteristic laughter the first symptom of it?"

"Even your sarcasm reveals you as a Gryffindor, Minerva. Always that lamentable lack of subtlety..."

Yet as he spoke, he'd brushed her cheek with the backs of his fingers, and she'd turned her head to touch her lips to his hand. It was the briefest of gestures, over so quickly that Ivo might have wondered if he'd even seen it, had he not felt a sudden lump in his throat.

The professors moved beyond Ivo's hearing, and he learnt nothing more. But he was not unprepared the next noon to see them leave the Cattle Shed together, each bearing a small shrunken parcel, and walk towards the camp's western boundary.

They were alone, and no one but Ivo noticed them. Peering around the tents, he watched them approach the edge of the camp and stop at the gnarled tree that marked one of the heavily-warded gates.

Most people in Vanda dreamed of the day that they'd be given the secret leaving incantation that Snape now spoke as he raised his wand. Ivo was too far away to hear, but he saw the air near the tree split, as if a giant knife had slashed it, and the skin of the day peeled back to reveal a short, dark passage.

At the end of it, bright in the sunlight, he could see another tree, another road, another reality beyond the enchantments that kept the camp hidden.

The world had re-opened for Severus Snape and Minerva McGonagall.

Ivo felt, obscurely, as if something should happen to note their passage: thunder should sound or lightning should flash or at the very least, magic should shimmer round them, perhaps leave a scorch on the grass to show where they'd been.

But of course nothing of the sort occurred.

Snape and McGonagall simply stood quietly for a moment, unremarkable and unremarked. Then hand-in-hand they stepped forward, and through the gate took their solitary way.

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A/N: Thank you for reading! As always, your reviews and comments cheer me.