

# Veritas or Something Like It

*by dracontia*

Scorpius is home for Easter in his Third Year, and the DADA professor has set Werewolves as the exam topic when they return. Draco and Asteria have to think fast. Sequel to 'A Credit to Their Houses.'

## 'A Credit To Their Houses' universe

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: Scorpius isn't mine, but I take credit (or blame) for his unique and convoluted history, though it profits me nothing.

Regarding Asteria's name: 'Asteria' is the name of a titaness, following the Greek mythological theme of her sister Daphne's name. She has no idea who that 'Astoria' person mentioned in the character list might be.

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Scorpius read and re-read the passage. He'd probably done it a hundred times since they'd been set the lesson on Werewolves to complete over the Easter hols. Everything added up to one astounding answer, and he was glad, for once, that Al and Rose weren't about to consult. It was too personal even to discuss with his two best mates.

This was something he had to ask Father and Mum. Especially Mum.

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The time just before dinner, on a day when Scorpius was home and Mother was happily visiting Aunt Andromeda, was the time Draco felt most content. Even if they only sat together in the parlor, each quietly reading, it reminded him of evenings that he and Astoria used to teach Scorpius to play Exploding Snap and Dragon Mountains, or read to him when he was very small. Those were the times when troubles and secrets faded to insignificance and they were just any other little family.

Even the difficult days spent dosing Scorpius with Silver Tongue Potion and patiently training his stutter away were rendered pleasant by the evidence of success before them. Scorpius could cast an ordinary spell as well as anyone in his year. He was neither the object of scorn nor in danger of being magically crippled by the inability to speak an incantation.

Draco was so lost in reminiscence that he didn't notice Scorpius was staring at his book, unseeing, and chewing his lip. Asteria did, though.

"Out with it, Scorpius," Asteria ordered teasingly. "Otherwise we'll think it's something dreadful and start owling your Head of House for the gory details."

Draco indulged himself in a small chuckle at his son's expense. With the uncomfortable look on Scorpius' face, he was sure it was something embarrassing *Perhaps now he'll finally stop trailing along with whatever kneazle-brained scheme Albus Severus has come up with in any given week.*

All humor dropped quite decidedly dead when Scorpius took a deep breath, stood up, glanced at him but then focused on Asteria, and almost said more than asked, "Mummy... you're a werewolf, aren't you?"

Asteria was completely frozen, the Wolf within helpless with fear. Draco could see all her anxieties crashing down on her, every fear that she wasn't mother enough coming home to roost in the worst way. Too late now to re-think their strategy, or lack thereof; too late to consult each other on the best response of the few they'd discussed once, long ago.

Draco was sick with dread himself, but it was clear that decisive Asteria wasn't going to act here. He gathered himself; managed to put his hand gently on Scorpius' shoulder rather than gripping him (lest one of them...Draco wasn't sure if he was concerned about himself or his son in that regard...should flee); and defaulted to encouraging words while he cast about desperately for inspiration. "You are... very perceptive, dear son."

"So, it's true," Scorpius looked from one to the other, wide-eyed. "That's why you worked on Wolfsbane?"

"You aren't... afraid, are you?" Asteria asked. It broke Draco's heart to hear her so abject.

"How could I be? You're my mum," Scorpius said simply. His frown was unabated, though. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Still Asteria said nothing. Draco knew that the wolf might run under the stress, or maybe even lash out. He had to field this, and he had to do it quickly. The great question was, would Scorpius ask for a timeline? All subsequent answers would rely on that. "It was to protect a child," he extemporized. His mind raced, desperate to find more words. How much would they have to reveal? How little could he get away with revealing? The pause after Draco's words stretched, and they both watched Scorpius with something very much like panic, practically seeing the ingredients reacting in his mind, catalyzing, transforming.

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Scorpius turned his focus inward, sifting through what he knew of werewolf history. "Do you mean... a child werewolf bit Mum, and she's protecting that child?"

Mum turned away. Father's face broke into a gentle, almost relieved, smile. "You do understand, then...what a terrible thing it would be, if anyone was to blame a child for infecting the inventor of improved Wolfsbane?"

They were of a height now, Scorpius realized as he looked into Father's eyes. He felt suddenly grave and responsible, almost a grown-up himself. "No werewolf knows what they're doing when they're transformed... but I suppose a small child would know even less...would feel awful if they knew they were the cause of any trouble," Scorpius imagined from his well-behaved perspective. "Might they even be in trouble themselves?"

"It's a risk we didn't dare take," Father assured him. "In fact, no one even knows about the child, save Gus who was the attending physician."

Mum shifted uncomfortably. "Mr. Potter knows there was... an incident... but he agreed it was better for all concerned to keep it a private matter." Father looked down, plainly worried.

"Then I'll never say a word," Scorpius declared. Mum had been transforming for as long as he could remember, so clearly they'd been protecting this poor soul for some time. If Mr. Potter thought keeping it quiet was for the best...that was like the approval of the law itself. "Not even at home."

Suddenly, both Father's and Mum's arms were around him. "We hoped you'd understand," he heard Father whisper.

"Even if Al or Rose figures it out...they might, they're very clever...I'll say Mum... did it on purpose, to help test Wolfsbane," Scorpius promised. He suddenly felt very brave, and having Father and Mum both put their arms around him, almost as spontaneously and heartily as any Weasley, made him feel braver still.

He thought he felt tears, hot on his shoulder, where Mum's face rested. Father's eyes were shining when he pulled away, nodding. He kissed Scorpius' forehead and pulled him close again. "Our clever, brave, son."

"How could I not be?...you are my parents." Scorpius was so terribly proud of them that he smiled, despite his distress over Mummy's difficulty. The books said that transforming was not the most pleasant experience, even with the help of Wolfsbane. *No wonder they have their own Chocolate Frog Cards.*

"Go on with you...wash for dinner, Great Keeper of Secrets," Mum chided him. Her voice trembled, but Scorpius knew it would be all right, if Mum could make up silly titles again. Scorpius hugged her once more and all but skipped away. He wouldn't feel at such a disadvantage with his friends and their various heroic parents anymore. It didn't matter that he couldn't tell them just how courageous his own parents were. The eyes of his sleek, elegant, inner snake glittered with the secret.

He knew, and it was enough.

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"Just when you think..." Draco's voice cracked. He cleared his throat. "Just when you think you couldn't love him more..."

Asteria conjured a handkerchief and spent quite a bit of time with it. When she finally spoke, her voice was raw. "If he's noticed this, it's only a matter of time before he notices you and..."

"...you mean, before he notices you and Gus?" Draco interrupted waspishly. He instantly regretted it, even before her expression closed off coldly. "Story, I'm sorry. You know I'm happy for you. It's just...there is no 'me and... anyone,'" he said. It wasn't so much bitter as resigned. After all, it was his fault entirely. He couldn't even be angry that she'd broached a topic they'd promised never to discuss while Scorpius was at home.

To her credit, she didn't dwell on his stalled more-and-yet-less-than-friendship with Harry. "Draco... I think it's time I moved out altogether."

"Don't be ridiculous! Scorpius doesn't love you any less...he's proud of you, as he should be!" Draco said. It had been ages since he'd spoken to Asteria fiercely, and never before had he needed to defend her to herself.

"That's not it." Asteria shook her head for emphasis.

Draco wanted to say 'liar.' He literally bit his tongue to prevent it, but his face must have shown something.

"It's not," she said, and he was glad to hear some of her usual steel. "I possess practically zero Slytherin tendencies. I don't like secrets and having to keep them wears on me."

"It's not a secret from him anymore," Draco argued, pretending they were still talking about the same thing. Asteria wasn't fooled.

"You know I'm not talking about my medical condition. I want to be with Gus. I want to wake up with him and share my days, not just our work, with him. I'm really in love. I didn't think it could happen."

Draco could make no rebuttal. Didn't want to, really. If things were different, he might have happily told her to follow her heart long ago. But he would be so lonely now...

She interrupted his thoughts. "I'll wait until Scorpius starts school again in September, and I'll still spend most of my days here every summer. But I won't be sleeping here anymore. It's time we started the farce of separation, since no secrets would survive an easy legal solution."

It would take more than convenience to get Draco to out himself, and Asteria was too honorable to do it for the sake of mere expedience. "I don't suppose I could convince you to hold off a little longer?"

"I've held off as long as I can." She put her arm around him, at odds with the pending distance she would put between them "You're going to be all right now."

Draco rolled his eyes. More cause for resignation. "What am I, a baby bird?"

"No, you're full grown. That's sort of my point."

"Scorpius isn't." He felt her tense to object through her arm around his shoulders and he turned, taking her hand to stave it off. "Before you start... I'm just asking that we not tell him until it's over. He's a fighter, and if he thought there was a chance of us 'reconciling,' I think he would move heaven and earth to stop us separating."

She sighed, but it was a sound of concession. "We'll hold off telling him until it's legally done."

He pulled her close. He would miss this closeness; no matter what she said, their friendship wouldn't be the same once she had Gus to share her evenings and her wit, full time. It wasn't romantic heartbreak, but in some ways, it was sadder. "Thank you."

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Magical World Note: Dragon Mountains is a parcheesi-like game, only far more interesting owing to the small animated dragons that serve as pawns and the fact that quite rugged mountains take the place of the color-coded paths.

Real World Note: The U.K. does not have any form of 'no fault' divorce. The only way all involved parties can avoid airing (or inventing) dirty linen to air in court is via a legal separation of two years or more, at which point a court will declare the marriage ended, if neither party objects.

Technically, Draco and Asteria's marriage never existed owing to lack of consummation; but neither of them cares to go on record with the details that would legally confirm it annulled...or explain where Scorpius came from.