

After the Awakening

by phoenix

Irma Pince has a secret that she didn't know she was keeping. How does she react when Severus removes the charm that reveals that she really is Eileen Snape?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This story takes place immediately after the first section of [Beholden to No Man](#), Chapter 3. It shows how Eileen adapts to learning her true identity and will continue paralleling "Beholden". I highly recommend that you read that story before reading this one, or at least up until Chapter 3. As subsequent chapters are posted, I will try to make note of where they fall in the "Beholden" timeline. Click the story title for the link.

Severus Snape paced the length of his quarters, lost in thought. Irma Pince, or more correctly, Eileen Snape, moved over to the fireplace to look in the mirror over the mantle. As Severus had described his romantic dilemma, she had tried to assimilate the information he was throwing out. It was all a jumbled mess; but one that was starting to sort itself out now that she no longer had to concentrate on each and every one of his words.

When she looked into the mirror, she was shocked by what she saw. Her memories of herself as Eileen were beginning to reassert themselves. She had expected to see Eileen. Instead, quite shockingly, she had seen Irma. Reaching up, she traced her new features. Severus had told her that Albus had created Irma for her, to hide her. While her face was still thin, her chin now had a more pointed appearance, and her distinctively hooked nose was gone. The one she had now was not exactly petite, but it was not the nose she had grown familiar with. Of course, that was the one feature that it had been vital to change, for Severus had the exact same nose, although on a bit larger scale. Her hair was now completely grey, but that was to be expected after eighteen years.

Eighteen years. That was a large portion of one's life to lose.

Turning around, she watched Severus continue to pace back and forth. As she watched her son, she could not help the tears that began to form in her eyes. He had known that she was in danger, and he had made this incredible sacrifice to keep her safe. She wanted to be angry with him for taking away her life, her choice to live, but she found that she just could not hold onto that anger. He had done the only thing within his power to protect her.

Crossing the room, she threw her arms around him, no longer able to hold back the tears.

"What are you doing?" he asked irritably.

"Oh, Severus." She found that words were failing her.

At first, he tried to pull away from her, but he finally wrapped his arms around her.

"Why didn't you do it sooner?" she asked quietly, as she finally released him from her embrace.

"I wasn't sure that the Dark Lord was truly and finally vanquished. I didn't want to do anything to risk your safety. Besides, being associated with me at that time would not have been wise. My reputation was tarnished, no matter what Dumbledore might have said. For quite a few years, he was one of very few people who was willing to trust me."

"You didn't just do this because of the promise, did you?" She had determined the answer to this already.

He was silent for quite some time, as he considered how to answer that question. "No. For years, I had segregated myself from everyone. Lived a solitary life. I was convinced that the old prejudices still existed, and that no one wanted to be my friend. Aurelia changed that. She let me see that there can be more to life than just one's profession. Spending time with her, I realized that I missed being part of a family. The two people who had accepted me over the years were both gone. You were the only other one that I thought would accept me and understand me."

After several more seconds, he finally continued. "I decided it was time to fulfill my promise. It was because of me that you had your life taken from you, and I wanted to finally return it to you. Perhaps I should have done so sooner. I apologize for taking so long."

"And you don't trust any of the others here?"

"Not particularly. Minerva and Albus were the only ones I trusted. The others may have been polite or respectful, but they were always aloof. They never befriended me. And *do not* bring up Lupin."

"He would be a good friend if you only let him be," Eileen offered, knowing that they were of an age and that Remus was a gentle and understanding person.

He arched an eyebrow and gave her a disapproving look. "I said, not Lupin."

She was taken aback by the vehemence of his refusal. "Since you are becoming more social, friends will need to be an important part of your future. You cannot expect Aurelia to adopt the same hermitical lifestyle that you have. I would wager that she has a number of friends, and there will come a point that she will want to attend social functions with you."

"I know. I'll deal with that when it becomes a reality." He sounded as though this was not something he was looking forward to.

"It is becoming a reality. Severus, you have to face the fact that you are finally starting to live a normal life." *As am I*, she thought. She had no idea what she would do now. The emotional impact of her regained memory finally overwhelmed her, and she sank into the chair.

"Mother?"

She smiled weakly. "I'm fine. I just need some time to assimilate everything."

As though realizing the selfish nature of his decision, he gripped her hand reassuringly. "I should have thought this through."

She placed her free hand over his and patted it. "You did the right thing. Perhaps you should have done it sooner, but I understand that you feared for my safety. It's...hard to lose one life and have it be replaced by another. Even in this short period of time, I am finding that memories of her past are fading away."

"How are you?"

"Doing better. I'll manage. Irma kept a journal. In it, she made references to the past. I'll read through those, remind myself of some of the details, though Irma did not really socialize with staff very much either. And many of those are gone, so I suspect that there is no one left who will notice. I'll take a few days before I decide what to do. I suspect it will be easier to remain Irma."

"I still wish that I had considered how this would affect you. It was not something that I took into account."

She smiled at him. "Don't worry about me. I survived your father; I can survive this. Now, I think I need some time on my own." Rising from the chair, she was thankful that he didn't say anything else.

Not wanting to return to her quarters yet, she aimlessly wandered around the castle. These were walls that she knew well. After all, she had been the librarian here for eighteen years. No, Irma Pince had been the librarian. But now, Irma was fading from her memory. Even though she had lived the last eighteen years as Irma, she was now starting to think of herself as Eileen.

What should she do? She would be surprised if anyone even remembered Eileen. After all, she had not been very popular as a student. True, she had been the captain of the Gobstones Team, but that had only been because she had been the best at the game. Gobstones had not been very popular at the time, and no one at all played it anymore.

She wasn't sure that she could continue being Irma. In order to hide her effectively, Irma had been given a personality that was quite different from Eileen's. While she doubted the students would notice the difference, surely the staff eventually would. Should she tell them now?

This was a decision she had to sleep on.

When she woke the following morning, she was not as surprised by her reflection. The forty years she had been Eileen Snape had almost completely replaced her memories of being Irma.

Now, she wasn't sure who she was. A large part of her was Eileen, but another part of her was still Irma. Realizing this was a secret too big to keep, she decided to see the headmaster before breakfast.

Adrian was about to enter the Great Hall when she stopped him. "Do you have a few minutes?" she asked tentatively.

"Of course," he replied casually.

"Can we talk about this privately?" She didn't want anyone overhearing what she was about to tell him.

"This way." He led her down the hall to the nearest classroom. "What's bothering you? Is it one of the students?"

She launched right into what she had to say, knowing that if she stopped, she might not finish. "No... this is going to be difficult to explain, and I don't know how easy you'll find this to believe, either. Many years ago, Severus asked Albus Dumbledore for a favor. That favor was to protect his mother from You-Know-Who's wrath." She paused as Adrian watched her expectantly. "I am Severus Snape's mother. Albus created Irma Pince to hide me, and it worked. But now, Severus has fulfilled his promise to restore my memory once You-Know-Who was finally defeated. And now..."

Quickly recovering from momentary shock, he placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Now, you're not sure who you are," he finished softly.

"Exactly," she replied, relieved that he had finished the sentence for her.

"If you can wait a few hours, I would like to talk to you this evening, once the library is closed."

She nodded. "I'll be fine until then. I just thought you should know that one of your staff is not who you think she is."

"I appreciate your candor. I can only imagine how difficult this revelation must have been for you. I'm sure that Albus had intended to be around when your memory was restored. Now, how about we get something to eat?"

As they walked to the staff table, she considered his words. Last night, she had blamed Severus for waiting so long to restore her memory, but Albus had known too, and he had left her as Irma Pince. Obviously, he had also believed that You-Know-Who was not yet safely vanquished. Would he have restored her memory after all these years, or would he have left her forever ignorant of her past? She found that she couldn't answer that question.

The day had dragged on interminably, but finally, Eileen closed the library. She had been more lenient with the students than usual, since she had been so distracted as she tried to determine what she would say to Adrian.

When she arrived at his study, he was not at his desk, but by the window. "Brandy?" he offered.

"Please." She crossed the room and sat in the chair provided. Neither of them said anything. After a while, she assumed that he was waiting for her to speak first. She took a few sips of her drink before she found the courage to speak. "I'm coming to terms with the changes to my life. Though, I'm still not sure what to do about it. Being Irma is all I've known for almost twenty years."

"Would you like to remain Irma?" he asked gently.

She sighed. "I'm not sure if I can. Irma is a different person, and I am already forgetting who she is. I don't know how long I can keep others continuing to believe that I'm still her." Once again, he said nothing. "Being here as the librarian is all that I know how to do. I have no idea what I would do if I weren't here. I want to stay here. I need to stay here."

"The easier thing to do is not always the right thing to do. If you would prefer to be known as Eileen from now on, that would be a simple enough announcement to make. Records could be submitted to the Ministry."

She considered the offer. It was a generous one, but she wasn't sure that she would be comfortable being Eileen again. And she knew how private Severus was, and how much attention this would bring to him. "For now, I think that I'll remain Irma. I need more time to consider this. Perhaps I will change my mind some day."

"My door is open at any time."

"Thank you. And I would appreciate it if you don't mention this conversation to Severus. He already feels badly enough about what he did. Thank you, Adrian."

"It is nothing." He swirled his brandy. "Did he mention why he chose to reverse the charm now, rather than at the start of term?"

"He did," she replied nervously. She wasn't sure how much of Severus's personal life she wanted to share with Adrian.

Adrian raised his eyebrow. "Could I perhaps convince you to share that with me?"

"He just needed time to come to terms with who he is."

"I am concerned that he didn't inform me of this situation. I would have hoped that he would trust me enough to confide in me."

"He has always been very reserved. I am not at all surprised that he didn't tell you. Especially since it is matters of a personal nature that I believe were the catalyst for his emotional growth." She paused, deciding whether or not she should continue. "He has a lady friend."

A broad grin spread across the headmaster's face. "Ah, I thought as much. As to the lady friend, that is. I'm glad that has finally happened. I know that it was something that concerned Albus for years. He always wanted Severus to settle down and have a chance at a normal life. Do you think that might finally be a possibility?"

She shook her head. "It's too early to tell. I'm afraid that he's a man who has no idea how to go about having a successful relationship with a woman, and she's the mother of two besides, so it's going to be quite easy for him to make a mess of things."

"Well, we'll have to see what we can do to prevent that." He flashed a sly smile at her. "Now, it's getting late, and I think that we should both get some sleep. Good night, Eileen."

"Good night, Adrian." Eileen returned to her rooms, feeling quite a bit better than she had the night before. Sharing her secret with Adrian had made her feel better. Perhaps one day she would be willing to be Eileen Snape to the rest of the world, but for now, she would remain Irma Pince.