

Harry Potter and the Unlikely Gryffindor

by Hera Malfoy

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Sight dying in brightest flash of light.
Purest of blood, raised in Mud.

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The Singing Sensation of Azkaban

Chapter 1 of 1

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The slime was lovely this time of year. What time of year was it, exactly? Or what year, for that matter?

The days seemed to blend together like a noxious potion spilled on the floor. There was no sunrise, no sunset, just four stone walls and a set of rusty bars for a door. And the guards, let us not forget about them. Lovely chaps, but they were never good for conversation, frankly. There was precious little of that these days. For who would speak to a convicted Death Eater? No one in their right mind would, which was fine with these inmates. After all, the left mind was always considered the seat of power.

The lone occupant of that slimy cell sighed, picking at the hangnails on her long fingers. Her once white-blond hair was dingy, and her skin had taken on a rather sallow color to match what had once been the whites of her eyes. The next cell over, an off-white-haired man was doing the same thing. Except he had taken to biting his dirty nails, spitting the clippings against the far wall, humming rather loudly to himself. He seemed rather pleased with the work on his left hand and started on his right, even though he had clipped both sets of nails quite short the day before. Routine was what kept these people alive. Their food always came at set times during the day, and their chamber pots were always cleaned early in the morning.

To break that routine was to break their already tenuous hold on their sanity. At least what they thought was sanity. Sometimes perception could be stronger in a place where reality was what you told yourself every day. If you changed the message, you could change your reality. However, hope was as feeble as wishing for your wand back. At least to do a little cleaning in the cell. The stench was horrid, for both guard and inmate. But after a few days, the smell became indistinguishable from all the other smells in this place.

The food that was brought morning, noon, and night was not the best in the world. In fact, it was so bad the rats were resorting to cannibalism just to stay alive. But the rats had an option, and the inmates highly doubted eating other people would be a dignified thing to do for the highest house in the land. Besides, they knew what each person put into their bodies every day. Why in the seven hells would they want to eat what had eaten the food here? Crusty bread so old it was guaranteed to be harder than the stone walls. Some orange lumpy substance indistinguishable from what ended up in the chamber pots every evening. But self preservation was all there was left, and the only thing left to do was hold your nose and throw it down as fast as you could before you could taste it.

The occupants of these cells had gotten quite good at not tasting their food, well, most of them, that is. The man in question appeared as a rather dignified bag-man. His hair was so dirty it had formed dreadlocks. Like nearly every Malfoy, his hair had once been white-blond, shock straight and able to reflect the light of the sun so that he appeared to be surrounded by a halo. Now the only 'halo' he had was a bunch of flies that seemed to find his smell rather interesting, and no matter what he did, they always swarmed around the top of his head. Lord of the flies, indeed.

"Draconious! I appreciate you trying to lighten my mood, but might I remind you that your singing is enough to drive our guards suicidal!" Lucius hissed, grinding his teeth at the gentleman in the cell across from him. He had been hit by the stray fingernail clippings that he had spit out of his cell. And even though this man was family, he was still rather perturbed with the whole situation.

The occupant merely smiled, spitting another piece of fingernail across his cell. "If that were true, dear cousin, our gracious guardians would have fled long ago." The man could be infuriatingly infuriating at times. He had had a strong head on his shoulders once, but now all that intelligence went into choosing another portion of Mozart's Requiem to butcher.

Lucius rolled his eyes, pointedly looking away from Draconious and toward the slightly younger woman opposite his annoying cousin's cell. "Lucinda," he asked, watching her carefully unfold a yellowed piece of parchment. Her blue eyes scanned reverently over the contents before she folded it up before anyone could see it. This parchment held the smiling, giggling picture of the person she longed to see. She had spent the early days of her incarceration in Azkaban pacing the floor of her cell, shooting stabbing insults at anyone stupid enough to ask how she was doing. But now, she sat where she had sat for nearly ten years. Her fire had been utterly spent, her indignation was gone, as was the cunning that had put her on top of her class at Durmstrang.

Lucinda was the near spitting image of her brother, Lucius. Though that was where their similarities ended. She had joined Voldemort's cause from the beginning, although, unlike Lucius, she was not quiet about it. She was more like her sister-in-law, Bellatrix. She was reverent in her service to the Dark Lord in a way that sometimes frightened others. But the one thing that she loved above all was her family. She had met Draconious for the first time at her initiation, and had fallen madly in love with her fellow Death Eater. They had been married almost straight away, and their daughter Hera followed soon afterward.

Though they had spent precious little time with their daughter before the Ministry had taken them away to Azkaban. They were arrested almost immediately after the death of Lily and James Potter since they had flaunted their association with the Dark Lord so openly. There was no real evidence to convict them, but the fear that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named would return at any moment had spurred the court to arrest and convict all of his known followers.

Their toddler daughter, Hera, was taken away to live in a wizarding foster home. From what Lucius had gleaned from reports, she was quite a destructive child. She was not yet old enough at the time to tell between pure-blood and the other Wizarding folk. She just lashed out at everyone who was not her family.

She had calmed down after a few months, and had even begun to tolerate some of the other children being in the same room as she. Lucius had dug through every report he could find that the foster mother had made concerning Hera. The pictures of her depicted a tall, skinny, somewhat tom-boyish girl with long silver-blond hair. She almost never wore wizard robes. She instead wore what was in style for Muggle children then: torn acid washed blue jeans, faded, untied sneakers and a rather vile black shirt depicting U2, in huge white print. Whatever that meant, Lucius had no idea. Everything was oversized and hid everything feminine about her. Even her hair was put up in a pony tail that seemed to swish behind her like a Thestral's tail swatting flies.

Though her life was not to be as tranquil as her foster parents had hoped it would be. The family that had taken her in was murdered suddenly, and Hera disappeared completely. She was three years old and already showing great promise as a witch. Even though she more often than not would take out her anger with reflexive magic. There were numerous copies of letters sent to the foster family warning that such offenses so close to Muggles would not be tolerated. Lucius had to smile even through the gloom after her disappearance. Even taken away from her family, she was still a Malfoy. She apparently had found her disdain for Muggles after all.

"I wonder what she looks like now..." Lucinda said dreamily to no one in particular, her voice trailing off into the darkness.

Lucius understood his sister's pain. He worried about Draco the same way, wondering how he was fairing under his master's command. He hoped that the Death Eaters had found Hera, as they had promised they would. Draco was betrothed to Hera from the moment of his birth. Such was the way the families made sure that their blood was pure. Marrying cousins was accepted as one method. Lucius himself had married his second cousin, Narcissa. The mere mention of his lovely wife's name was enough to bring a smile to his dirtied face. Even through these trying times, the Malfoy family was going to maintain their dignity. Draco would meet his betrothed, and they would marry; thus keeping the lines pure.

Though lately, odd thoughts were entering his head. Hera would be the age to be dating, if she was being raised in a non-wizarding household. And that could present trouble. Hera was nearly two years older than Draco, nearly nineteen years old. Though age differences were nothing too scandalous as long as everything was in good taste. However, nothing would sour his stomach more than if Hera were raised in America. American wizards left a bad taste in Lucius' mouth. Ever since they had assisted in winning the Revolutionary War, the Yanks had been thumbing their noses at the rest of Wizarding society. Even the pure-bloods that had somehow managed to keep their status. That was certainly the last thing the Malfoy family needed, a Yankee mudding up their image.

Headmistress McGonagall read over the list of prospective new students. She had noticed that the list was smaller than the year previous and that the revised list had not arrived until a few days ago. Normally, the list would arrive several months before classes started. McGonagall had a sneaking suspicion that some parents were owling the Ministry to take their child's name off of the list. She sighed, shaking her head. She had many letters to write, so best not to waste the time that she had thinking dark thoughts.

She lifted her wand to the first name on the list, tapped the name, and a quill started scratching out the name and address of the young girl receiving the letter. She watched as the letter folded itself up, inserted itself into the envelope, and tied itself to the leg of a waiting Ministry Post Owl. She continued on to the second name, then the third and beyond.

"I am surprised to not see a Weasley on the list this year." Minerva chuckled, shaking her head at Dumbledore's remark. Somehow the changing times were made more bearable by his picture above her head. McGonagall knew that if she had to do this alone, she could not succeed. And of course Albus would come back with his statement that she was stronger than she knew. That may have worked when she was a student, and again when she was an instructor, but now that she was headmistress, it seemed to ring hollow. The one man that she had leaned upon for leadership all these years was gone, and now all she had to lean on was herself.

She sighed and shook her head. Nothing would get done if all she ever did was sulk in her own self pity. So she pointed her wand at the list again and set the quills writing. Near the end of the list, however, one name stuck out. Each prospective student had their full name and age listed on the parchment. The name that had her perplexed was: Hera Artemis Malfoy, Age 19. Age nineteen? Was this some sort of joke perpetrated by someone at the Ministry with nothing better to do? She repeated the name to herself, "Hera Malfoy." Why did that name sound familiar to her? She knew she had heard it before, quite some time ago, but the circumstances were a mystery.

"Ah ... I believe I remember seeing that name on many a list when I was headmaster." Minerva lifted her head to look at Dumbledore's portrait.

"It is not a hoax then? Why is she so old?" She looked down at the parchment again, pursing her lips into a flat line.

"Do you remember what happened to Lucius Malfoy's younger sister and her husband the night Harry's parents were killed? They were arrested, as everyone was afraid of Voldemort," Dumbledore ignored Minerva's hiss, "and his return. So, in their fear, they imprisoned many of his followers. Lucius escaped by pleading that he did Voldemort's bidding under the Imperius Curse. And Minerva, please do stop hissing, you sound as though you have a slow leak."

McGonagall screwed up her face for an instant, then decided to let the matter go. "How does that explain why Hera was not trained?"

"After her parents were arrested, Hera was placed in a Wizarding foster home. She had quite a hard time adjusting to not having all her needs met by house-elves, but she soon learned to be happy. Although, later that year, Voldemort, somehow having gained a new body, came after her. Why he did not seek to rally his followers behind him is a mystery. All we know is that Hera and Voldemort disappeared again after that night, and although I had been trying to find out where she had gone, I must admit that I have had no luck.

"Though, if she is still alive, which I strongly suspect, and if she was taken to a different country, which is again a very real possibility, the Ministry would have the power to bar her name from that country's Wizarding school lists. It is a strange law, Minerva, but apparently the Ministry wishes to keep wizards born in Britian, taught in Britain. It has always been a contest between the countries as to who produces the most powerful witches and wizards." Dumbledore shook his head, sitting back in his chair, steeping his fingers as though deep in thought.

McGonagall nodded, looking down at the parchment again. Perhaps she should continue Dumbledore's search for the young Malfoy. Although, if she were raised in Muggle society, which was a very real possibility, then this girl would have the culture shock of a lifetime. Minerva pointed her wand at the parchment and sent the quill back to writing, though instead of sending it directly to the owl, she turned the letter over and wrote a note of her own on the back. If Hera had been raised among Muggles, then the best people to help her adjust to Wizarding society would be the Weasleys. Besides, she would more than pay her way by regaling Arthur with her experience with Muggle schools. And quite possibly, American society, which McGonagall had to admit, seemed a bit daunting.

Minerva watched as the owl flew off, disappearing into the clouds. It was very possible that whoever had killed the foster family had also killed Hera. But if that were even a possibility, Albus would not have kept trying to bring her to Hogwarts for all this time. Sighing, McGonagall got out a quill and started her letter to Molly Weasley. She hoped that Molly would not be put off by Hera's last name. McGonagall knew that the Weasleys were viewed as the bastard step-children of the pure-blood houses. But she also hoped that Hera was a level-headed young woman and would not insult the Weasleys; otherwise, they would never trust the headmistress ever again.