

Lestrangle Days

by ancientgirl

COMPLETE This is the final installment of my Long Wait series. The kids are all a bit older and have been attending Hogwarts for a few years. They are also joined by some familiar names.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 27

COMPLETE This is the final installment of my Long Wait series. The kids are all a bit older and have been attending Hogwarts for a few years. They are also joined by some familiar names.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for her help and for being my beta.

Chapter 1 - posted

They had been married for a little over thirteen years now. Raven was in his third year at Hogwarts, and Kat had begun her second. Every night, Severus and Hermione thanked the gods in heaven that their children made it through another year. The children's penchant for troublemaking had not waned one bit as they grew; it only increased. They were great kids, intelligent, sensitive towards others' feelings, and not afraid of anything.

Of course, it didn't help that the children's love for mischief was shared by their honorary nannies — Osiris, Severus' cousin; and Crookshanks, Hermione's familiar since her own third year at Hogwarts. Then, add to that, their friends. Also in attendance in Hogwarts were Lucius' and Rosmerta's children — Odette, who was also a third year; and Vladimir, now in his second year. Then, of course, you had Draco and Ginny's children; Samara was in her second year, and Maximilian in his first. And, last but not least, Harry and Pansy's kids — Armando in his second year, and Artemisia in her first.

Whenever all the children were together, Severus felt as though he was the head of a junior death squad rather than a father watching over children, especially since there were six Slytherins in the bunch. It had pleased Severus to no end that both his children were sorted into Slytherin. Hermione, however, had made Severus sleep on the couch for two days after each sorting. She was convinced it was all due to the mischief the children caused with the encouragement of Osiris and Crookshanks. She made them sleep outside for two days after each sorting. At least there were two Gryffindors in the bunch: Harry and Pansy's daughter Artemisia, and Draco and Ginny's son Maximilian had been sorted into Gryffindor. Holidays were never dull, that was for certain.

And so, the new school year had begun. Hermione was sitting in the study grading the first years' essays, while Severus was busy looking through one of his older Dark Arts spell books. The fireplace roared, and then Albus' head appeared.

"Good evening, Hermione, Severus," he said.

"Albus, good evening," Hermione smiled at the Headmaster.

"Albus," said Severus.

"Severus, I received an owl from Remus this evening. You know that Remus and Tonks have been on assignment for the past several months, and they happened upon an old dilapidated house. When they searched the house, Remus found several items he believed to have belonged to Voldemort. Remus thought it would be wise to have someone who was an expert in the Dark Arts have a look at them. Would it be possible for you to go and look at these things?" asked Albus.

"Yes, of course," Severus agreed. "He was right not to touch anything. Voldemort made it a habit of placing various spells on his personal belongings, which could quite possibly kill whomever touched the items. Tell him to owl me his location, and I will be there in the morning."

Albus nodded and closed the connection. Severus looked at Hermione, who was about to open her mouth, then raised his hand to stop her.

"Please, believe me, you do not want to know."

She shrugged her shoulders and went on with her paper grading. During their thirteen years of marriage, he had opened up to her about the things he did as a Death Eater, even those he had done in the name of the Order. Whatever he didn't want to tell her, she knew it must have been horrible enough for him to spare her the details.

* * * * *

Unbeknownst to them, there were two people far away from Hogwarts, plotting their revenge. Bellatrix Lestrange had been in Azkaban for over nineteen years. During her time in the prison, she thought of only one thing: she wanted to get out. She needed to get out and make Severus Snape pay for what he had done to her Dark Lord. It was Snape's deception that turned the tide of the war, his deception that caused the fall of Voldemort. With the help of another faithful servant, she would soon be out. She had planned it all perfectly. The only flaw in her plan was that Wormtail was a complete moron. However, even he could not mess this up; it was too easy. He would gain entrance to the prison with the assistance of Polyjuice Potion. It was easily done, since he remembered where the Burrow was after living there for so many years in his Animagus form. All he needed was one hair from Arthur Weasley's head, and the rest would take care of itself.

Their plan was set in motion the following Saturday morning. Peter Pettigrew walked into the Ministry of Magic in the form of Arthur Weasley. He went to the office in charge of granting passes to the prison passes, and with little explanation he was given a day pass. Of course, it helped that Arthur was now the Minister of Magic, so no one would argue or ask him why he needed to go to Azkaban. As Peter walked out, in the form of Arthur, he looked at his watch. He had half an hour left before he began to turn back into himself.

The next stage of the plan was now set into motion. Peter then Apparated to Knockturn Alley, and approached a woman he had seen on several occasions. She was the right height and build, and even had the same dark long hair. He looked around; there was no one about. He then pointed his wand in her direction.

"*Imperio*," he muttered. "Come here," he instructed. The woman had a glazed and confused look in her eyes as she approached him. He took hold of her and Apparated to the gates of Azkaban Prison. From there it was as though even he was in a dream. They walked through the gates.

"I am here to see the prisoner Bellatrix Lestrange. This is her sister; she wishes to see her," he said. A guard led him and the woman through several dark and damp hallways. As they approached the cell at the end of the hall, Peter held his captive tighter. He looked at his watch again. He had only fifteen minutes left as Arthur's double. The door was opened, and he stepped in with his captive. As the door shut behind him, he threw the woman against the wall. As she recovered herself, Bellatrix took Peter's wand and hit her with a Stupefying Charm.

"Quickly, Bella. My time is running out," said Peter nervously. She exchanged clothes with the woman, then with her wand outlined the edge of the woman's face. As she did so, the skin began to separate from the woman's skull. The unknown woman's eyes grew wide, and streams of tears came rushing out. Her muffled cries were heard within the cell as Bella laughed. When the woman's skin was completely separated, Bellatrix took it and placed it against her own face; with a quick bonding charm, she fused it to her own face.

"We must go. I have but only five minutes," hissed Peter. They turned the woman so that she faced the wall, then knocked on the door, signaling they wanted to be let out. They walked out quickly, not bothering to look behind them; all the way, Peter was looking at his watch. At one minute left, they finally reached the gates of the prison, and Apparated away.

It was several hours later at lunchtime, when the faceless woman was found in the place of Bellatrix Lestrange.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

I'll be posting a chapter a day if I can. I'm sure I will be able to update quickly.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 27

Severus gets an assignment and Albus finds out about Bellatrix.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for being my beta.

Chapter 2

Severus had woken up early that same Saturday morning. He dressed quickly, then came and sat on the bed beside Hermione. He shook her lightly until she opened her eyes.

"Leaving already?" she asked, with a frown. He leaned over and kissed her lips, and stroked her hair.

"The location will take some time getting to. And if those items are indeed Voldemort's, it will take a while to get them ready to be transported. I may not be back until tomorrow morning," he said.

"Be careful, love." She pulled him towards her and hugged him. He chuckled lightly.

"I will, I promise. I want to get back to you as quickly as possible." He kissed her one last time, then walked out of the room. As he was walking past Osiris' and Crookshanks' room, he heard they were up.

"All right, for the last time. She died for about five seconds in Season One, but she was revived by Xander. Now, as soon as she died, that meant that the line no longer ran through her. A new slayer is called right after one dies," said Osiris, in an exasperated tone.

"Okay, I get that. But how come she's still the slayer? Why not just let Faith be the only slayer? I mean, she's always bitching and moaning about never having her own life and having to lie to her mother."

"She can't just leave it to Faith; she's evil. Besides, I think Buffy might have a martyr complex or something. Anyway, she still has her powers, so it's not like she can just stop doing what she does," answered Osiris.

Severus shook his head and rolled his eyes as he continued past the room. He was putting on his traveling cloak, when the door opened. His son Raven came in, holding a piece of paper.

"Dad, you forgot to sign my permission slip yesterday." Raven handed his father the permission slip needed for him to go to Hogsmeade. Severus eyed the paper carefully, and then took out his wand.

"Reveal," he said. His son was crafty, and even though he knew he would never try to put something past him, it was always good to check. When it proved to be the permission slip, he looked at his Raven.

"Don't think it's that I do not trust you, but just in case." he said as he turned, and walked into his study. After he signed the paper, he walked out and handed it to his son, then ruffled the boy's hair.

"Remember to come by tomorrow evening for dinner, and remind your sister and the others," Severus said. Raven nodded as he walked out behind him.

In the meantime, Hermione had gotten up and showered. She was going into Hogsmeade herself, to order more supplies for the potions closet. This year's new crop of first year students could not seem to get a potion right the first time, nor the second or third. She walked into the room occupied by Osiris and Crookshanks to let them know she would be gone for most of the day, but found Crookshanks sleeping soundly. She turned and continued out into the living room, where she found Osiris reading a book on the coffee table.

"Osiris, I'm going to get some potions supplies, then I'll be having lunch with Ginny and Pansy. I should be back around three," she said as she pulled her hat over her riotous curls.

"Where is Severus this morning? I haven't seen him," asked Osiris.

"He's gone to help Remus with something he found. He said he would probably be home in the morning. I'll see you later." She waved to him and smiled, then left. Osiris wondered what Remus could have found that Severus would need to go to him, but then shook his head and continued reading his book.

* * * * *

As lunchtime drew near, Albus began to put away some papers he had been studying, and prepared to go to the Great Hall. As he stood from his desk, his fireplace roared and came to life. He looked into the flames and saw it was Arthur Weasley, with a troubled look on his face.

"Arthur, how are you today?" he asked.

"Not good, Albus, not good at all," the Minister of Magic shook his head.

"Is something wrong?" asked Albus in alarm.

"Bellatrix Lestrage has escaped from Azkaban," Arthur said.

"What? How?" Albus approached the fireplace.

"It seems that this morning someone, posing as me, came by the Ministry and got a pass to see her. The impostor went to the prison, with some woman he claimed to be her sister. That same woman was found ten minutes ago in the cell, wearing Bellatrix's clothes. Albus, they stripped her face off of her head. When the two walked back out, the guards saw me and the woman claiming to be her sister, so the two walked out with no problems," said Arthur.

Albus sat down and shook his head.

"Bellatrix should have received the Dementor's Kiss years ago. We should have pressed harder for it," Arthur said.

"True, but we both know your predecessor had his own agenda. Thankfully, Cornelius Fudge is no longer our concern. Unfortunately, we still seem to be cleaning up his messes," Albus leaned back in his chair and began to stroke his beard.

"We need to let Severus know immediately," said Arthur, as he settled back in his own chair.

"Most certainly. However, he is not here. He left this morning to look at some Dark Arts items Remus and Tonks found. I will get word to him as quickly as possible though. Keep me informed of any new findings, please."

"Yes, of course. Until later then, Albus," Arthur said as he closed the connection.

Albus signed heavily. Almost twenty years had passed, since he had accompanied the Aurors taking Bellatrix Lestrage to Azkaban. During the entire trip there, the only thing she would say was how she would kill Severus Snape to make him pay for being a traitor. Albus stood and walked to his desk, where he wrote a note to Severus. He gave the note to Fawkes, whom he knew would have an easier time finding Severus than any owl. He then flooded Harry and asked him to come to his office.

As he waited for Harry to arrive, Albus was deep in his own thoughts. So deep, that he did not notice a familiar black raven flying behind him and perching himself on one of the Headmaster's bookshelves.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

I hope you are enjoying this so far.

Chapter 3

Osiris gives Severus a find how do you do.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for all of her beta work.

Chapter 3

Osiris settled himself within the bookshelf. He knew that Albus kept a hidden supply of lemon drops, just in case of an emergency. As he placed one in his beak, he heard a door open and close. He looked around a book he had been behind, and saw that Harry had entered the office.

"Harry, good afternoon. I hope I did not take you from anything important," said Albus.

"Good afternoon, Albus. I was just relaxing a bit. You sounded like there was something urgent you needed to talk to me about," stated Harry as he sat down.

Albus nodded, walked around his desk, and sat next to Harry.

"I am afraid there is something most urgent indeed," the Headmaster said. "I spoke to Arthur just moments ago. It seems Bellatrix Lestrange has found a way to escape from Azkaban."

"How is that possible?" he asked as his eyes grew wide. He stood and walked to the window.

"It was quite an elaborate plan. From what Arthur told me, someone posing as him acquired permission this morning at the Ministry to see her. That imposter then showed up in Azkaban with a woman he claimed to have been Bellatrix's sister. They were taken to the cell, where Bellatrix changed places with the woman. We do not know the true identity of the other woman, but she is dead now," Albus ran his hand through his beard. "It is also not known as yet who assisted in Bellatrix's escape."

"I know who helped her," said Harry as he looked out the window. "It was Pettigrew. It had to have been him." He turned and looked at Albus.

"That may very well be a possibility. Am I correct in my recollection of your telling me Tonks was on his trail at one point several years back?" asked Albus.

"Yes. She thought she was close to finding him in the Carpathian Mountains, but as usual he got away," said Harry in frustration.

"Harry, she escaped for one reason, and one reason only," stated Albus, now more worried than he had been since Voldemort had been alive.

"To kill Severus," Harry nodded.

Osiris almost choked on the lemon drop he had in his beak. He quickly spit it out and Apparated back to his rooms. He knew Bellatrix quite well. They had met when he was a student at Hogwarts, and then again on several occasions in the years after. A more unpleasant woman he had never met. He would not wish her on his worst enemy. Well, perhaps on Filch, but certainly no one else. He looked around his rooms, and began to devise a plan. No doubt the woman knew that Severus was still teaching at Hogwarts; if she did not, that fact could be easily found out. As Osiris began to formulate a plan to protect the family and their rooms, he heard the wards being brought down.

Osiris knew that Raven was in Hogsmeade with Odette Malfoy. The other children were in their house common rooms; he had seen them studying only half an hour earlier. He also knew Hermione was in Hogsmeade and would be there most of the afternoon. He looked towards the door; only two more wards and the intruder would be coming in. Severus was gone until Sunday morning, and no one else in the castle knew how to get the wards down.

Osiris panicked. He could not get past the conversation he had heard but a few moments earlier. It was Bella; she was here, and she was coming for them all. He heard the last ward coming down; he flew over the door, and levitated a large gray vase over it. He hovered over the door, poised and ready to drop the vase over the intruder's head. As the door opened, he let the vase fall. Down it went, hard and heavy, shattering right on the top of Severus' head. The Potions Master fell in a heap on the cold stone floor.

"*Huh? Oh, no!*" yelled Osiris, as he swooped down to the ground and began hopping around Severus' unconscious body. After being awakened by the loud crash, Crookshanks ran out of their room and stopped dead in his tracks in front of Severus, then looked at Osiris.

"*Holy shit!*" said Crookshanks.

"*Oh no. Oh...Merlin's hairy asshole! Crooks, he's going to kill me.*" Osiris began flapping his wings and running around Severus' unconscious body.

"*Holy shit!*" said Crookshanks.

"*Stop saying that! Severus, wake up,*" said Osiris, as he tried slapping Severus' face with his wing. In his panicked state, Osiris failed to remember to use an Enervate spell on him.

"*What the hell did you do to him?*" asked Crookshanks, as he approached Severus' body.

"*It was an accident, I didn't mean to knock him out,*" Osiris hung his head as he shook it. "*I... I thought it was someone else. He's going to be so angry when he wakes up.*"

"*Angry is an understatement. You'll be lucky if he doesn't turn you into this year's Christmas dinner centerpiece,*" Crookshanks said as he examined Severus' head. "*At least you didn't kill him; he's still breathing. Although he's got a wicked bump on his head.*"

"*Thank the gods,*" sighed Osiris. "*It's a good thing we Snapes are known for being hard-headed.*"

"*Just who the bloody hell were you trying to decapitate, may I ask?*"

"*I snuck, uh, well, flew, actually, into Albus' office a while ago, hoping to get some of those lemon drops. Damn that old man, he's got me craving them now. Anyway, Harry came in, so I hid behind some books and heard them talking about that crazy Bellatrix Lestrange,*" Osiris approached Severus to make sure his head wasn't bleeding.

"*How many times has Severus told you not go snooping about? Did you just wake up today and decide to go completely nutters?*" Crookshanks sat and shook his head.

"*I wasn't intentionally snooping, all right? Crooks, I know this woman. Bellatrix is completely demented. She drove this couple insane with one of the Unforgivables years back. The day Voldemort was killed, she threatened to hunt Severus down and kill him for being a traitor.*"

"*I would give my left nut, if you could just get to the point some time soon,*" Crookshanks snapped his tail rapidly from side to side.

"All right, don't get your chichis bent out of shape. Look, this crazy bitch escaped from Azkaban earlier today," Osiris explained.

Crookshanks' eyes grew wide, and he stood.

"Aha," Osiris nodded, *"you see now why I was guarding the door?"*

Crookshanks sighed and shook his head. *"Did you forget that this castle is a fortress? Nothing and no one can get past its wards without Albus knowing about it. If that woman came within an inch of this place, don't you think Severus would have been alerted? For all you know, he came in here to get Hermione and the kids away from the castle, and now you've gone and put the man in a coma!"*

Osiris looked at Severus, then back up at Crookshanks. *"Holy shit."*

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Poor Osiris, he really did mean well.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 27

Severus finds out just what happened that morning.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you to June for being my beta.

Chapter 4

After arguing for almost ten minutes as to what to do with Severus, Osiris and Crookshanks decided it would be best to at least get him off the floor. Crookshanks kept saying they should wake him up, to make sure he had not sustained further injuries to his head. But Osiris was not in any hurry to have Severus wake up. Osiris levitated Severus onto the couch, and the two friends both sat on the coffee table to wait for him to regain consciousness.

"So tell me now what else you heard in Albus' office?" said Crookshanks, as he began to lick his paws.

"Harry said he thinks he knows who helped Bellatrix escape. He said it was someone named Pettigrew." At that moment Crookshanks stopped licking his paw, and looked at Osiris.

"Pettigrew? Are you sure that's who he said?" asked Crookshanks.

"Positive. Do you know who that is?" Osiris turned and looked at him.

"Do I? That rat bastard, and I don't just mean that in the figurative sense, is the one who betrayed Harry's parents. You see, they were all friends when they were in school here at Hogwarts. Then, during the first war, Pettigrew told Voldemort where they were, after swearing an oath to keep their location a secret," Crookshanks said, as Osiris gasped.

"What? Pettigrew was their Secret Keeper and he betrayed them? That son of a bitch!" exclaimed Osiris.

"That's not the half of it. After the shit hit the fan at Harry's parents' home, Pettigrew faked his own death, and Sirius Black, Harry's Godfather, lived with the blame of all three deaths for over twelve years." Crookshanks then jumped onto the couch and leaned into Severus' face. Osiris tilted his head, as he did when he was puzzled.

"Just making sure he's still breathing," Crookshanks said. *"Anyway, it turns out that Sirius escaped from Azkaban, too, in Harry's third year. As it happens, that's the year Hermione got me. Ron — remember him?"* Crookshanks asked. Osiris nodded. *"Well, Ron had a pet rat, a rat his family had kept for over twelve years. The exact length of time Pettigrew was thought to have been dead."*

"Ugh, don't tell me Pettigrew lived with scrotum ears all that time as a pet rat?"

"He certainly did. That rat has faked his death more times than Elizabeth Taylor has changed husbands." Crooks then jumped back to the coffee table. Osiris looked at Severus, who was beginning to stir.

"He's an Animagus, then," stated Osiris.

"That's right," Crookshanks nodded. *"He can get into the castle, but the good thing is..."*

"We'll be able to spot him," finished Osiris.

"Right," added Crookshanks.

Severus gave a deep moan, and then began to wake up.

"Oh, what...what the bloody fucking hell happened?" Severus asked as he grabbed the top of his head. He felt a large bump. His eyes slowly began to focus, as he turned his head and looked around the room. He looked towards the entrance door and saw the shards of the vase that had undoubtedly been the one that broke on his head. He wondered how the vase, which was usually placed on the sideboard, came to fall on his head. Just then, he looked to the coffee table, and saw his answer.

"I should have known," Severus said as he sat up slowly. "Osiris, why are you trying to kill me? I guarantee you, the Ministry will not give the Snape inheritance to a raven."

"Who is his wife then?" she asked. It came as no surprise to her that Narcissa and Lucius were no longer together. Their marriage was always one of convenience. Obviously it seemed it was no longer so. Lucius was too passionate for her sister, too wild. Narcissa could bore the life out of anyone.

"Her name is Rosmerta; do you know of her? She worked in the Three Broomsticks. They were married many years ago. I think they have two children, but I have never seen them," said Peter.

"No matter. All part of his cover. Wait for me here," she said as she made her way to the door once more, then looked around at the dirty entrance hall and into the living area, "and clean this place up." Then she was gone.

* * * * *

Lucius sat in his study. He was looking over some papers Draco had dropped off earlier that morning. His son had a wonderful sense for business. Ten years ago, Draco convinced him to invest some of the Malfoy fortune in Muggle technologies. Things called computers and cellular phones and video games were all the rage in the Muggle world, and they were quite the money-making enterprise. Even though Draco and Severus had some of these things in their own homes, Lucius was of the old school. He felt he had no need for the things, but he was most pleased with the piles of galleons in his vault because of them.

Rosemerta had gone into Hogsmeade to do some business of her own at the Three Broomsticks. Lucius heard a knock at the door, and stood to answer it himself. Several years back Hermione drove him to the point of distraction, with her never-ending campaign for house elf rights. He finally had to give in, and agreed to pay the elves in his home and give them vacation time. Today, as it happens, was Kiki's and Zuly's day off. He mumbled obscenities as he strode to the door. His closely guarded emotions nearly gave way to the shock he felt, as he opened the door and saw who his visitor was.

"Bella? Is it really you?" he asked.

She smiled and walked quickly inside.

"Can you not see me, Lucius?" she answered as she strode into the living room.

"Yes, of course, but how, when?" Lucius closed the door and immediately followed her. She was pouring herself a drink when he reached the living room.

"Polyjuice and this morning," she said as she gulped down her glass of brandy.

He smirked, and then crossed his arms in front of his chest.

"I am afraid you are going to have to elaborate further," he told her. He then sat down and waited for her to do the same. She poured herself another drink, then sat in the chair across from him.

"Pettigrew managed to finally brew a batch of Polyjuice potion. He posed as Arthur Weasley, who I understand is now the Minister of Magic," she said, as Lucius nodded.

"Yes, Fudge got quite sloppy several years ago," he stated with a sneer. Lucius was no idiot. He knew why she had escaped, and he knew why she came seeking him. He needed to be very careful in dealing with her.

"Well, we will deal with that later. As I said, the dim-witted little rat managed to pose as Weasley, and then found a woman to bring with him to replace me. When this is all finished I am going to kill that little shit for making me wait so long to get me out of there. But for now, he will have to serve as my servant." Bellatrix then stood and walked to the window. She looked outside into the garden. "It has been so long, Lucius. What has become of this world without our Lord? It is weak; I can feel it."

"What is it you have planned now, Bella?" Lucius stood and walked to her. "Whatever it is, it will not be easy. There are eyes everywhere, especially at the Ministry."

Bellatrix shook her head.

"Nothing worth doing is ever easy. But, for now, my main focus is to kill Severus Snape," she said as she turned to him. "I must ask myself one thing, though. Why is it, that in all these years you have never killed him?"

"And risk going to Azkaban myself? No. Besides, he is a war hero. And you know my position had always been questionable, and more so after Fudge was replaced. I would have been the first suspect. I am not a fool."

"No, that you are not," she smiled. Lucius cringed inside; her smiles always made his blood run cold. He would sooner face ten Voldemort's than have her smile at him. She put down her glass and made her way back to the front door. Once again, Lucius found himself following her. As she opened the door, she looked back to him.

"I will contact you soon," she said.

"Where are you staying?" he asked.

"It's best you don't know for now. I will contact you again soon." She then turned again, and walked out the door, closing it behind her. Lucius looked out the side window as she walked out the gates. When she Apparated away, he immediately ran out the door and stood in the same spot, trying unsuccessfully to sense where she had gone. He sighed and shook his head. *'She always was a hard one to track,'* he thought. Bellatrix always made it a habit to cast a non-tracking charm on herself. He hurried back inside and went straight to his study. He grabbed a handful of floo powder and walked into the fireplace.

"Severus Snape's rooms Hogwarts Castle."

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

I'll have more up soon. I hope you liked this chapter.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 27

Lucius pays Severus a visit and two ex-Death Eaters decide to come clean.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for being my beta.

Chapter 6

Back at Hogwarts, Severus, Harry, and Albus sat in the Snape family's living room. Osiris and Crookshanks had gone to inform Hermione and the other women what had happened. As the three men sat around the living room, the fireplace roared, then Lucius stepped out, patting himself trying to get some of the soot off of his clothes. The three looked at him.

"Let me guess," said Severus. "Bellatrix showed up at your doorstep today, with a basket of tea sandwiches and China's best Oolong."

"Close. I see you have heard the news, then," stated Lucius, walking to the sideboard where he helped himself to a much-needed drink

"Yes, Arthur contacted me a while ago," added Albus.

"How does she look?" asked Severus.

"Like she's been run over several times by the Hogwarts Express," said Lucius as he sat down.

"At least some things don't change," commented Severus with a chuckle.

"She has plans, that one," Lucius said as he looked at Severus and nodded. "Her first priority is to kill you with extreme prejudice, my friend." Lucius smirked as tipped back his tumbler of Scotch. He looked towards Albus and Harry as he sank back into the couch's cushions.

"She also seems to have some plans for Arthur, but for now it's on the back burner." Harry smiled. It was always amusing to him to hear Lucius using Muggle terms.

"Do you know where she is staying?" asked Albus.

Lucius shook his head. "No, she wouldn't tell me. When she Apparated off my grounds, she did so using a non-tracking charm."

"You need to ward your property better, and so should Draco," said Harry.

Lucius nodded in agreement, then began to look worried.

"I have been lax these last few years," Lucius pinched the bridge of his nose, and shut his eyes tightly. He took a deep breath, then exhaled. "I have taken for granted that our world was safe. I keep forgetting there are many like Bella roaming free." Lucius then looked at Severus.

"I am guilty of the same," agreed Severus.

"Severus, you of all people should be more careful," said Lucius. "Amongst the Death Eaters, you are a known traitor. At least I have the luxury of knowing my work for the Order was done behind the scenes. No one is after me."

"Lucius is right, Severus," said Albus. "You and your family must be protected. I suggest you stay on the castle grounds until Bellatrix is apprehended."

Harry looked at Albus.

"Albus, have you forgotten about Pettigrew?" Harry asked. "He lived in this castle for three years as Ron's pet rat. If it wasn't for the Marauders' Map and Crookshanks, he may never have been found out."

Albus stood and walked to the fireplace.

"That's true," said Severus. "Sooner or later, Bella will find a way to get to me, regardless of where I am. I am not going to just sit here and wait for that insane bitch to come for me. I will not hide." Severus stood and walked to Albus.

The Headmaster nodded. He had known Severus since he was a child, and now he was a man with children of his own. Albus also knew that Severus was not the type to just sit and hide. If there was a fight coming, he knew Severus would be at the forefront. Had Severus been a lesser man, he would not have been such a factor in the fall of Voldemort.

"For now, the children and Hermione are safe. I don't think Bella knows you have a family," said Lucius.

"Lucius, did she give you any indication as to when she would be contacting you again?" asked Albus.

"No, none," Lucius stood and began pacing. "I don't expect to hear from her for several days, though. I imagine she is resting, building up her strength. All those years in Azkaban must have made her magic weak to a certain degree."

Albus nodded in agreement.

"Do you think she would try to contact Narcissa, to let her know she's out?" asked Harry.

"Harry, people like Bella don't give a damn about others," Lucius laughed, looking at him. "She didn't even ask me about her sister when I saw her. Besides, they were never that close to begin with. No, Bella came to me because she needs something from me." Lucius looked at Severus. "She knows I can deliver Severus to her."

Severus knew Lucius was right. There would be no other way to get to Bellatrix. He would have to let himself be the bait. In her time, she was one of the most ruthless Death Eaters he had ever known. He also knew that, after twenty years in Azkaban, she had turned into something akin to an animal being let out of a cage. She was hungry for a kill, and he was what she wanted.

"Do you have a plan, Lucius?" asked Albus.

"Not yet," Lucius shook his head, looking at the Headmaster. "Although, I am open to suggestions. I really do not want her in my home again, but I doubt she will be telling me of her location any time soon." Lucius sat down. "I need to speak to Rosmerta."

Harry stood and walked to look out the window.

"What about the children? Shouldn't they know?" Harry said as he turned back to face both former Death Eaters.

"I had hoped to never have to tell my children what I once was," answered Severus.

"I have only grazed the surface of my past with Odette and Vladimir," added Lucius. A look of sadness crossed both men's faces.

In the last several years the wizarding world had become comfortable speaking honestly of what had happened in the past. The Dark Lord was now referred to as Voldemort instead of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. What Voldemort did and tried to do was taught in the schools, and was discussed openly. It was done so in the hopes that someone like him would never again come so close to power.

For his part, Severus wanted his children to know about Voldemort; but he had hoped to never have to tell them that their father had once followed the Dark Lord ... worse, that he had at one time been a most loyal servant.

"Perhaps you should take your children home with you before you leave, Lucius," Albus advised. "I am sure the news would be best dealt with in their home."

Lucius nodded and stood.

Albus walked him to the door, then turned. "Severus, I will send Raven and Kat to you after I see Lucius off."

Severus nodded. Harry sat down on the couch next to him. There was silence for several minutes, and then Severus spoke.

"They are going to hate me," he said, looking into the fire.

"Initially that's what they will think," Harry agreed. "But they are smart kids; they'll understand. You aren't the same person you were when you joined Voldemort. And you're their dad; they'll see that."

Still, Severus remained silent. Harry eventually left for home, knowing he owed his own wife an explanation of the day's events.

* * * * *

A few miles away, Osiris and Crookshanks had Apparated to Hogsmeade. Osiris knew Hermione would be having lunch with Ginny and Pansy, so he figured he would try the Three Broomsticks. Sure enough, as he flew onto the windowsill and peered in, he saw her laughing at something Ginny and Pansy were saying. He stared at her for several minutes before she looked over at the window and saw him. He motioned for her to come outside.

"That's odd," Hermione said. Ginny and Pansy followed her eyes, and saw a large black raven they knew to be Osiris. "I wonder what Osiris is doing here?" Hermione excused herself and walked outside. As she opened the door, she saw Crookshanks staring up at her and then Osiris flying over to her.

"Hermione, you need to get back to the Castle," Osiris said.

"Is everything all right?" she asked.

"Severus should tell you. You should probably tell Ginny and Pansy to go home as well. There are things you all need to know," Osiris told her in an uncharacteristically serious manner.

Hermione furrowed her brow, and nodded. She went inside and relayed the message to the two other women. All three of them left the small establishment and went to their respective homes. Hermione arrived at Hogwarts with Osiris and Crookshanks, with no more words being exchanged. There was something odd going on, and she knew that it must have been serious for Osiris and Crookshanks to be so solemn now.

She walked into the rooms she shared with her husband, the two animals, and occasionally her children. Severus sat on the couch with a snifter of brandy in his hand. He gulped the small amount left in the glass, then looked up at her.

"Severus, what's happening?" she asked, her voice thick with worry.

"Arthur flooded Albus this morning with some troubling news," he rose and poured himself another drink, then looked at her. "Bellatrix Lestrange escaped from Azkaban this morning."

Hermione gasped. "What? How?" She sat down heavily on the armchair closest to her.

"Peter Pettigrew walked into the Ministry looking like Arthur. I'm sure you can figure out the rest," Severus said as he sat down on the couch once more. He rubbed his tired eyes, and sat back.

"She's coming for you," said Hermione.

Severus sighed heavily and nodded. "She has already been in contact with Lucius. No doubt she will be wanting his assistance in apprehending me," he said wearily.

"Where is Lucius now?" she asked, thinking they would both be there plotting their own ways to catch the escaped witch.

"He has taken Odette and Vladimir home for a few days. He is telling them," Severus said quietly.

Hermione rose, and then approached him. She sat next to him and reached for his hand.

"I gather we are expecting our own children to walk through that door any moment then?" she asked. He merely nodded. They sat quietly until they heard their children's laughter outside their door. They looked at each other and took a deep breath as the door opened.

"You wanted to see us?" asked Raven with a smile, as he held his sister's hand.

"Come in and sit. Your father has something he needs to tell you," said Hermione, as the children walked in and sat next to them.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Sooner or later the kids had to find out. I'll have more soon.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 27

Severus tells his children something he had hoped they would never know.

All canon characters belong to JKR

Thanks to June for her help as my beta.

Chapter 7

"Come in and sit. Your father has something he needs to tell you," said Hermione, as the children walked in and sat next to them, wondering why their parents had called them.

Severus stood and walked to the large armchair next to the fireplace. He had his back turned to them as he tried to steel himself for what was about to happen.

"Do you both remember the lessons you have learned in your History Of Magic classes?" he asked them, as he began. Raven and Kat nodded, then looked at each other. "And you remember particularly the discussions of Voldemort? Again they nodded.

"That man was horrible," said Kat as she shuddered. Hermione reached and took her hand, then smiled at her reassuringly.

"I think those Death Eaters were far worse than him," said Raven, "They killed all those innocent people; they did whatever that man told them to do." He then added, "I hope they all rot in hell."

Severus looked at Hermione. It was now or never. He began unbuttoning his frock coat as he started pacing in front of the couch, where the children and Hermione sat.

"Daddy, you didn't call us here to talk about some old history lesson," said Kat.

"No. But, there are things you need to know, and things I need for you to do. I want you both to stay in this castle at all times."

"But this weekend is a Hogsmeade weekend!" Raven yelled, looking at him in confusion.

"Raven, I ask you to do this for a reason," Severus continued to unbutton the coat. He turned his back to his children, slowly took off the coat, and placed it on the coat hook next to the door. He then began to unbutton the cuffs of his white shirt. "The Death Eaters ... what more do you know of them?" he asked as he slowly rolled up his left sleeve.

"They were scum, pretty much," said Raven. "Servants to some insane wizard who wanted to rid the world of Muggles. I imagine once they finished with the Muggles, they probably would have begun killing wizards, too. They all deserved to die, if you ask me."

Severus bowed his head.

"I've heard things," Kat said quietly, as she looked down at the floor. "I've heard the things they did to people during their meetings." Severus winced at the thought of his daughter hearing such things.

"And did they have any identifying marks?" Severus took a deep breath and looked down at the Dark Mark, which was still visible after so many years.

"Only some image branded on their arm. Professor Binns drew us a picture of it once," said Kat.

Severus slowly turned around to face his children and held out the arm, now showing them the Dark Mark. His children gasped in horror and looked at him.

"Did it look like this?" he asked.

"Daddy... no," whispered Kat, as tears ran down her cheeks.

"But you were a war hero. No," said Raven, as he shook his head in confusion.

"There are things you need to know. Things I had hoped to never have to tell you, but I find I now must," said Severus.

"No, I can't hear this, I won't hear this," said Raven, as he stood. Severus walked towards him, but Raven visibly cringed and kept backing away. "How could you have been one of those... things?"

"Raven, let me explain," pleaded Severus.

"Explain what? That you were a slave to a man with some perverted belief that Purebloods should rule this world? That you killed innocent people? I've heard those stories, too! I know what you did," he shook his head. "How could you? You disgust me. I hate you. Don't ever come near me!" Raven ran out of the room with tears streaming down his face.

Severus looked at Hermione, who was now clutching a very frightened Kat.

Osiris flew down from his perch in the corner of the room. "*I'll go watch after him, Severus. He just needs some time.*" He then flew after Raven.

Severus walked to the couch and sat down next to his daughter. She looked down at his arm as he sank back into the cushions. Kat looked at his face, now filled with pain and worry, then again looked down at the Dark Mark on his forearm.

"Did it hurt when they did that to you, Daddy?" asked Kat, as she looked into his eyes. Severus looked at his daughter as she tentatively reached out to his arm.

"Yes," he answered, flinching slightly as she touched the Mark.

She lightly traced the outline of the Mark and felt him shudder beneath her small fingers. She saw a look of pain on his face, and she drew her hand away, not realizing it was the emotional and not physical pain he was reacting to.

"Does it still hurt, Daddy?" she asked as her words faded into a sob.

"It will always hurt, my sweet kitten, always." Severus held her tightly as she cried and threw her arms around his neck. He felt the sting of his own tears fill his eyes.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Osiris had followed Raven to the Astronomy Tower. He knew the boy would be there, since it was his favorite spot. He looked around the room, then saw the boy crying and huddled in a corner. As Osiris swooped down next to him and perched on the sill, Raven looked up.

"Why did he do it, Osiris? How could he have been part of that? My own father ... part of that filth!" The tears ran down his cheeks. "I hate him, Osiris. Those Death Eaters were nothing but hateful cowards. He was a coward."

Osiris ruffled his feathers and hopped onto Raven's knee.

"*I don't ever want to hear you say that about your father again. Do you understand me?*" Osiris knew Raven was upset, but he also knew he needed to tell the boy the truth. "*Your father is the bravest man I have ever known. Do you know that Order of Merlin First Class medal hanging in the study? They don't give that to just anybody.*"

There are less than 20 wizards past or present to have ever been given that."

Raven wiped his tears, and sat back against the wall.

"But why would he have been a part of something like that?" asked Raven. "I don't understand. He fought in the final battle. He was a war hero, but now I don't know. I...I just don't know."

Osiris sighed as he remembered the early days of his and Severus' youth.

"You have to understand one thing about your father. He grew up a very lonely and solitary child. He had no friends, and his father was a cold emotionless man. No, not emotionless. Your Grandfather Snape did have one emotion: hate. He was cruel to Severus and your grandmother.

"The only happy times Severus had were the few occasions during the year when I was allowed to visit. Even those were trying. When he began attending Hogwarts, which was a few years before me, he made very few friends. He met Lucius, who was a couple of years ahead of him. Lucius introduced Severus to some other kids, who all eventually became Death Eaters. For the first time in your father's life he was accepted; he had friends. Do you understand?"

Raven nodded, then wiped the remaining tears on his face.

"About a year before Severus graduated, he took the Dark Mark. I never knew about it until after he began to regret his decision. Voldemort made many promises, and he painted a grand picture. But, your dad was a curious young man, so he went out to seek his own answers. He went out into the Muggle world and loved it. He realized soon after that Voldemort was a liar, who was slowly going mad. One day, after a raid in a small Muggle town, your father couldn't do it anymore. He was so disgusted with himself and with what he had done. He went to Albus, only wanting to turn himself in, but instead Albus asked him to join the Order of the Phoenix and become a spy. Albus gave your father a chance to atone for what he had done, and to help them rid the world of Voldemort and people like him."

"But Dad killed innocent people, Osiris."

"I know, Raven. Your father made a mistake when he was young. A mistake that, for all the good he has done, he will never truly be able to escape from. Believe me; he never wanted you kids to know about his past. During the final battle, he risked his life so that Harry could have the chance to kill Voldemort. Had it not been for your father, none of us would be here."

"And what of Uncle Lucius? Was he a Death Eater, too?"

"Yes. He was a little late in learning his mistake, but about a year before the final battle, he realized Voldemort was insane. When Lucius figured out that your father was a spy, he came to your father, asking if he too could help defeat Voldemort. It hasn't been easy for either of them, Raven."

"I've," Raven swallowed hard, "I've heard things." He looked at Osiris. "I've heard about the Dark Reveals, about the things they did to people."

Osiris bowed his head. *"One time and one time only, I looked into your father's memories of those Dark Reveals. I have never ventured into his mind like that again."* He felt the boy tremble at his words.

"What happened to change his mind?" asked Raven.

"It wasn't really one incident, but a culmination of years of torment, suffered by your father as well as his victims. Like I said, he ventured out into the Muggle world. He loved it; he learned that some Muggles were just as, and even more intelligent than some wizards he knew. Little by little his views began to change, and then, after one particularly violent raid, he couldn't stand it anymore. Those Muggles never did anything to him, and he couldn't live with their cries of pain any longer."

"He's never told me about the final battle. Do you know what happened?" asked Raven.

Osiris nodded. *"I can show you what I remember of it, and I can also show you what your father let me see of it in his memory. He also told me about it later. It was on a Wednesday morning, just before the end of your mother's seventh year here at Hogwarts."* As Osiris told his tale, Raven sat back and closed his eyes wanting only to see the images and hear the words of his protector come into his mind. There was never any eye contact needed between any of them. Osiris and Crookshanks were able to communicate with their family and friends as though he could just speak to them in a normal voice. Osiris wasn't sure if it was magic or some other force, but it made it easy for them all to talk to each other with little effort. This had come about gradually over the years and never questioned.

The final battle happened early in the morning. It started when the Death Eaters began taking down the wards surrounding the grounds of the castle, dismantling the wards one by one. Severus ran into his private rooms. He had just sent the first through fifth year classes to the bunker beneath the dungeons. They were far too young to be in battle, yet the sixth and seventh years were meeting in the Great Hall, along with the members of the Order and some several dozen Aurors.

Osiris had been looking out the window when he turned and saw Severus in his Death Eater robes.

"I'm going with you," said Osiris.

"No, you are not." Severus pointed his wand at his cousin and muttered, *"Ferratus cavea."* Immediately a small iron cage came up around Osiris. "Please, it is far too dangerous for you out there."

"Let me out of here!" Osiris flew around the cage, trying to open it.

"It will remain locked until the end of the battle," Severus approached the cage. "If I do not survive, I have asked Albus to watch over you."

"What if he dies as well?" asked Osiris sadly, as the tears welled up in his small black eyes.

"Then we are all lost." Severus turned and walked out.

Osiris heard the wards go up for the rooms, and then turned to look outside the window. The castle grounds were filling slowly with Death Eaters. The school's wards had been brought down; Voldemort was coming for them all.

~*

I'll have more tomorrow evening.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 27

Osiris continues his story to Raven of the final battle.

Sorry I haven't updated this. I've been so incredibly busy. This story is finished so I just need to make a point of uploading a chapter a day if I can.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thank you for June for her help with all of my stories.

Chapter 8

Osiris continues telling Raven of the final battle.

"*What if Albus dies as well?*" asked Osiris sadly, as the tears welled up in his small black eyes.

"Then we are all lost." Severus turned and walked out.

Osiris heard the wards go up for the rooms, and then turned to look outside the window. The castle grounds were filling slowly with Death Eaters. The school's wards had been brought down; Voldemort was coming for them all.

As he looked out onto the castle grounds, Osiris searched intently for Severus. It was difficult to spot him at first, yet eventually he managed to discern him from the many robed and masked figures. As soon as he could, Severus fought his way to the middle of the field. He deflected hexes from both sides at one point. He looked around and spotted Voldemort holding Bill Weasley under the Cruciatius Curse. Severus approached as the young man's face was growing almost a darker shade of red than his hair. As he walked into view, Voldemort stopped, then looked at the Potions Master.

"Severus, how kind of you to join us. Would you care to finish this one for me?" asked Voldemort, as he grinned down at Bill.

"No, I would not," Severus said as he walked to Bill, then helped him to his feet, "Get away from here." Severus pushed Bill in the direction he had last seen Molly, then turned to look at a shocked Voldemort.

"What is the meaning of this?" the Dark Lord asked as he narrowed eyes.

"Have you not figured it out?" Severus held his wand raised and steady. His intent was not to kill the madman in front of him, merely to hold him there until Harry could get to them. Sibyll Trelawney's prophecy stated that it was Harry who had to deal the final blow to Voldemort; Albus believed the prophecy, and so would Severus. Still, Severus wanted to weaken the monster for Harry, and keep him from hurting others.

Voldemort laughed. "Your father always did say you had a sentimental heart."

Severus felt as though a bucket of ice water had been poured over his head,

"Shocked? Well, I gather you might be. Yes, Severus, I knew your father. He truly was a loyal servant. He followed my instructions for you to the letter. Giving you little hope of ever having a normal life. He molded you for me, made you question your self-worth, made you wonder if there was more out there, made you eager for what I promised you. Unfortunately, I made a small error. I never realized your mother would have any influence on your character." Voldemort sneered at him now.

Severus felt his mind whirling. His father had been a follower of Voldemort, and he never even knew it. He did not doubt this however. He knew deep down inside, Voldemort was telling him the truth.

Voldemort knew this knowledge would put Severus off-kilter and took advantage of the surprise.

"*Expelliarmus!*" yelled Voldemort.

Severus' wand flew out of his hand and landed several feet away from him. Cursing his own stupidity, he began to look around. He needed to know where Harry was; he needed to make sure he held Voldemort there.

"And what did you promise my father for my servitude, if I may ask?" Severus was curious as to just how much his life had been worth to his father.

Voldemort laughed. "Oh, he did not give you to me for monetary gain; no. You see, when all this is over, I will need men by my side to rule this world. I will become a god, Severus, a god!" he yelled. Severus looked at him in confusion.

"Are you so far gone that you actually think you can bring the dead back to life?"

"I do not think I can; I know I can. Your father will stand by my side as we build a race of wizards so..." before he had a chance to finish his diatribe, Severus began laughing. "How dare you! You do not laugh at me! *Crucio!*"

Severus dropped to his knees as the pain began to race through his body. . .

At that moment, Raven looked at Osiris, interrupting his story of the final battle. "What does it feel like to be Crucio'd, Osiris?"

Osiris spread out his wing and touched Raven's shoulder. He whispered a spell, which sent a jolt of what felt like an electric current through the boy's body. Raven blinked at the momentary shock.

"*Imagine that, multiplied by a thousand, going through your body for several minutes, without pause.*" Osiris said. Raven shook his head, overwhelmed at the thought. "*Weaker men would have begged for mercy and surrendered. Your father withstood that from Voldemort for almost an hour before Harry finally reached them.*"

Osiris continued his story. . .

As the battle raged on, many lives were lost on both sides. Voldemort was in the middle of the battlefield, still torturing Severus after almost one hour. He would hit Severus with the Cruciatius Curse and hold it for five minutes, then ten, then fifteen.

Severus felt as though every vein in his body would explode. His skin felt like thousands of bugs were crawling over him. Sweat was raining from his pores, and every nerve felt as though it were on fire. His breath came out in gasps each time Voldemort stopped. At one point, he felt as though he could no longer stand it; then out of the corner of his eye, he finally saw Harry approaching.

Voldemort had his wand pointed at Severus again, then quickly put it down and held out his empty hand.

"I will give you one more opportunity to redeem yourself in my eyes, Severus," the Dark Lord hissed. "Kiss the ring on my hand; swear your allegiance to me once more, and I will spare your life. I will give you anything you wish when this is all over and done with. I will let you rule by my side in your father's stead."

Severus tried to steady his breathing. He lifted his head slowly, reached out his shaking hand, and took the thin hand of his former master. Voldemort smiled. Severus looked into his eyes, and then he spit on the ring.

"So be it!" Voldemort pulled back his hand and snarled. He pointed his wand to Severus once again, this time to end the traitor's life, when a voice behind him caught his attention.

"VOLDEMORT!" shouted Harry, his wand raised and ready.

Voldemort turned and saw Harry standing behind him.

"Ah, so you have found me amidst all of this chaos. How you must truly wish to join your parents," said Voldemort as he fully turned to face Harry, so the boy's wand now aimed straight at his heart. Harry stood straight, his hand shaking, but he held firm. "Well then, come." Voldemort held out his arms and smiled. "Embrace me, Harry. Let us dance one more time and end this."

"Let the devil embrace you," Harry sneered. Before Harry could form the words of the Killing Curse, Voldemort pointed his wand towards him and yelled.

"Expelliarmus!"

Harry's wand flew out of his hand and landed several feet away, just as Severus' wand had done earlier. Voldemort's laughter could be heard for miles. It was then that time seemed to stand still. Everyone surrounding them stopped, and looked at the scene now playing out before them. The final scene to a horrible tragedy would soon play out and end the war, with only one side the victor. Harry's face showed only defeat as he looked at Voldemort.

"Is that all?" asked Voldemort, as he tried to compose himself. He lowered his wand as he continued to mock the wandless Harry, "How easily I have defeated you. The famous Harry Potter has no more tricks up his sleeve?"

Harry's face then lit up.

"Actually, I've got one more trick." With lightning speed, Harry drew from his sleeve his mother's wand, and cast the final blow, *"Avada Kedavra!"*

A stream of green light shot out of the tip of the wand. The sparks coming from the light surrounded them. Harry's aim was perfect. Voldemort fell, and all that was left of him were ashes.

Severus looked up; he saw Harry standing and looking at the ashes flying away in the wind. Severus slowly stood on his shaking legs and looked around him. Aurors began to surround the field, as the Death Eaters began to scatter. One lone blond Death Eater approached them, walking alongside of Arthur Weasley. Lucius took off his mask, then his Death Eater robes, and looked at Severus.

"It is over, my friend," he said. Severus smiled, his body swayed, and he was caught by Arthur and Lucius. As they helped him walk away from the scene, Harry shouted behind him.

"Professor!"

Severus stopped, then turned his head.

"Thank you."

"I just kept him busy, Potter; I just kept him busy." Severus turned back and allowed the two men next to him to help him back to the castle.

"After the battle the cage released me, but I couldn't get the wards down. That evening, your father told me about the final battle after Albus brought him back to the dungeons from infirmary. He sometimes told me what happened after he went on raids with Death Eaters; during those years, he needed a confidant, and no one in their right mind would suspect a bird. After he defected to the Order, there were things he had seen and done as a spy that are best left unknown, but this much about your father, I had to tell you," Osiris finished somberly.

Raven nodded then smiled as he wiped the newly-formed tears from his eyes. When his father showed him the Dark Mark on his arm earlier, he felt his world crumble. He had loved his kind and loving father. As many times as he and his sister caused trouble, his father never reprimanded them severely. Raven realized that the man he knew now was not the man who had become a Death Eater all those years ago. His father was Severus Snape, kind and loving husband and father, Potions Master, Defense Against Dark Arts Professor, recipient of the Order of Merlin First Class, war hero, snarky bastard, and ... most importantly ... his hero.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Well there it is, the final battle. I hope you enjoyed my version of it. I'll have more posted soon.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 27

Raven finally goes back to the dungeons.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June, my wonderful beta.

Chapter 9

After having been up in the Astronomy Tower for almost two hours, Raven and Osiris finally made their way back to the dungeons. Thanks to Osiris, Raven felt he better understood his father, and the reasons he had done the things he did in his youth. Raven had said awful things to him earlier, and was beginning to feel the pangs of remorse. He stood in front of the door to his parents' quarters and reached for the door handle, then paused.

Osiris stood perched on the boy's shoulder, and nudged his small head against Raven's temple.

"Go on, he'll understand," urged Osiris.

Raven turned the door handle and walked in. As he entered, he saw his parents sitting on the couch, with his sister Kat in between them; they all stared at Raven with uncertainty. Severus stood ... with his sleeve still rolled-up and his ever-present Dark Mark visible ... to face his son. Raven gazed at his father's Mark, now knowing its cost, and then he looked up at Severus

"I'm sorry, Dad," he said as he ran into his father's arms.

Severus returned his son's embrace; they stood, holding each other tightly. With Osiris still perched on Raven's shoulder, Severus was able to lift his face and smile at his cousin, silently thanking him.

"I'm the one who is sorry, Raven," Severus pulled back and took the boy's face in his hands. "I have never wanted to change my past as badly as I did when I realized I needed to tell you about it." He brushed the tears from Raven's cheeks, and guided him to the couch.

Raven sat down next to Kat, as Severus sat on the coffee table to face his two children once again.

"The reason for this disclosure now is because we...well, really, I am in danger. There is a Death Eater named Bellatrix Lestrange. She was captured on the battlefield after Harry defeated Voldemort. She found out that I was a spy, and vowed to kill me. My testimony was responsible for sending her to Azkaban."

"Severus," Hermione's voice had a warning tone, but Severus immediately held up his hand to her and shook his head.

"Hermione, they need to know. There is danger involved, and they need to know how serious things may become." Severus' voice shook as he looked at his wife. He had hoped it didn't sound as rough as it did to his own ears, but what he said was true. This was no game, and the children needed to understand that. Hermione nodded in understanding.

"Bellatrix has escaped, and has made some contacts. It is believed she is plotting to kill me as we speak." The children's eyes grew wide, and Hermione felt Kat begin to tremble next to her.

"But she can't get into the castle, can she?" asked Kat, nervously.

"There are ways to get around wards, if one is clever and desperate enough," said Severus. He reached out to caress Kat's cheek, and smiled. "But Albus and I will make sure there are new wards in place that no one can penetrate. Besides, I doubt Bella will risk coming here."

"You said we might be in danger, Dad. Does she... does she want to kill us too?" asked Raven.

"No, sweetheart. You needn't worry about that," Hermione assured him. She took a deep breath, and then continued, while looking at Severus, "Bella wants your father, not us."

Hermione knew that Bellatrix would not think twice about kidnapping and using the children as bait, but they had heard enough stress-filled news for one day. She hoped Severus caught her unspoken wish, to not fill their children's dreams with images of some mad woman coming after them.

In an attempt to lighten the mood, Hermione smiled and stood up. "Let's make some popcorn and sit down to watch a movie. What do you all say?"

Crookshanks immediately entered the room at the mention of popcorn and a movie. "*Can we watch Shrek Two? I love that Puss in Boots.*"

Hermione looked at Crooks and laughed.

"I think we can work that into the program," she said, taking Severus' hand as he rose from the coffee table. She turned to the children, "Go on and pick something you both want to watch, then go into the study and wait for your father and me." The children nodded, then disappeared into their former full-time rooms to choose a movie.

"We need to make sure they don't leave the castle until she's caught, Severus," said Hermione as she wrapped her arms around his waist. She buried her face in his chest and breathed deeply.

"Bellatrix needs to be found quickly," Severus said. "The longer she is out there, the more there is a possibility of her finding out about you and the children. I need to sit down with Lucius."

Severus kissed Hermione's forehead, and they both walked into the study to await their children. As they spent the evening with their children, they tried to forget about Bellatrix Lestrange, if only for a few hours.

* * * * *

That same evening, Lucius found himself having much the same discussion Severus had just had with his own children, Odette and Vladimir. It was no easier for him than it had been for Severus, but in time they forgave their father, much like Raven and Kat forgave Severus.

It had also been necessary for Draco and Harry to tell their own children of those times. It was hard, but having lived through the war as young children themselves, they knew their own children would rise above the frightening images and words.

* * * * *

The rest of the week was spent in quiet contemplation for Severus. He was confident in the notion that his children were more aware of things than before. It had been a great burden lifted off his shoulders when he finally came clean about his past to them.

On Thursday morning, as he sat next to Hermione in the Great Hall, he began to formulate a plan. Severus decided to contact Lucius later that morning to have a meeting in Albus' office to discuss the matter of Bellatrix Lestrange.

At the Gryffindor table, Max Malfoy and Artemesia Potter looked up to find a note flying towards them from the Slytherin table. Draco's son reached out his hand and grabbed it, then held it so he and Artemesia could both read.

Max & Arte:

Meet us outside the Room of Requirement after the last class today.

Raven

Max looked over to Raven and nodded, then the note disappeared. Raven and Kat told the other Slytherins in their gang ... Max's sister Samara, Armando Potter, and Odette and Vladimir Malfoy.

After their classes were done for the day, all the children found their way to the third floor. Even though no students were allowed there, they all knew secret passages that lead them to practically anywhere in the castle without being seen, all courtesy of two very sneaky animals and highly prized map. When they were all in front of the room, Raven performed the task of making the entrance appear. On his third pass, the door appeared and they all walked inside.

Max looked around the room and glared at Raven. "Just once, could you at least make it just a little less Slytherin?"

They sat on the floor atop the large cushions that surrounded a low table. Odette went to the corner and opened the sideboard. She took out two pitchers of pumpkin juice, and handed them to Samara. Then she reached inside once again and took out a plate of chocolate chip cookies and some ham and cheese sandwiches, and placed them on the table. After helping themselves to the food and drink, the children began their weekly meeting.

"So, Armando. Were you able to find anything out about that tapestry that used to hang in the Order headquarters you told us about?" asked Raven.

Armando shook his head, as he took out a small piece of paper from his pocket.

"I'm afraid I couldn't get much. Dad has it tucked away somewhere. I didn't want to ask him outright where it is. Ever since 'the talk'," Armando made quotation mark gestures with his hands, "he's all suspicious every time I ask anything about the past." The rest of the group nodded in understanding.

"Well, we know for certain that Bellatrix is my father's aunt. We really don't need to know more than that," stated Samara.

"Has she tried to contact him?" asked Raven.

"No, Dad said she's always been a hateful person. She doesn't care about anybody, never did. Except Voldemort that is," stated Samara.

"She's bloody insane, too," said Vladimir.

"You would be insane too, if you spent almost twenty years in Azkaban," Artemisia chuckled.

"No, she was crazy before that too," said Armando. "Dad told me once about what she did to his friend Neville's parents."

"Is Neville the Auror we saw a few days ago, talking to Uncle Severus and Aunt Hermione?" asked Max.

"Yes," Armando nodded and looked at his notes. "When Neville was very young, this Bellatrix woman tortured his parents with the Cruciatus Curse until they went mad from it. They wound up spending most of their lives in St. Mungo's. They passed away a couple of years ago."

"How horrible," gasped Odette.

Max swallowed the cookie he was chewing and nodded in agreement. "Yeah. I'll say one thing, though: those Death Eaters were real bad asses. And ruthless bastards, too."

Raven and Odette looked at Max with narrowed eyes, as the rest of the group did the same.

Max sat back, folded his arms across his chest, and held firm. "Don't look at me like that, you two. They may be your fathers, but you can't tell me my Uncle Sev and Granddad Lucius aren't two of the scariest bastards you've ever seen when they get pissed off." The rest of the kids looked at each other and nodded in affirmation.

"True,"

"Yeah,"

"Too right," said Raven as he set down his sandwich, "Now, lets get down to the rest of this meeting."

On the other side of the castle, Severus sat in Albus' office with Hermione by his side, as they waited for Lucius to arrive.

"Severus, I don't like this plan of yours. It's too dangerous," said Hermione as she squeezed his hand.

Severus looked at her, then pulled her towards him and kissed her lightly on the lips. "It's the only way, love. I don't want to risk her coming after me and then finding you or the children. This way..."

"This way, you're a sitting duck," she huffed, interrupting him before he could finish.

"I, madam, am no duck," Severus told his wife. "Hermione, Bellatrix is a fugitive; she will not risk doing anything to me out in the open. The plan is to let her see me, to let her think that there is a chance of getting to me outside of this castle. I don't doubt she will try to make contact with me in some fashion if I am out in public."

As Severus tried to calm Hermione down and make her see his plan was not as dangerous as she thought, the fireplace sprang to life and Lucius stepped out.

"Good afternoon, all." Lucius bowed his head and looked around the room.

Albus sat at his desk, and Hermione and Severus sat on two chairs directly in front of him.

"Lucius, good afternoon. Please, have a seat," said Albus, as he motioned for Lucius to sit.

"How did things go with you?" asked Severus.

Lucius smirked and shook his head. "All things considered I can't complain. Odette had a fit, and Vladimir ran and hid in the dungeons for several hours. Sometime around supper, they calmed down and let me finish explaining things to them. They seemed all right when I dropped them back off at school on Sunday."

"I fared much the same way with Raven. Kat took it a little better, but still, it wasn't easy."

The two former Death Eaters nodded their understanding.

As their conversation died down, Albus spoke. "Gentlemen and Madam, shall we begin?"

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Thanks for reading. I hope you enjoyed this chapter.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 27

Severus comes up with a plan, Rosmerta finds out Bella has been visiting the house and Severus asks Harry for a favor.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for all of her help in doing the beta work for me.

Chapter 10

Albus leaned forward against his desk and placed his hands palms down. He looked at the two wizards and witch before him, and smiled. "Now, I gather, Severus, you have come up with some sort of plan?"

"Well, it's not much of a plan," Severus said. "I thought it would be a wise idea to just get myself out of the castle. Bellatrix is no doubt looking for me, so I'll just let her find me."

"Are you sure you want to open yourself up like that?" Lucius asked, looking at Severus.

Severus turned to him and nodded. "Yes. She's not going to do anything to draw attention to herself. If anything I feel she would approach me in disguise, and in a calm fashion."

Lucius chuckled. "Severus, there is nothing calm about Bella. But, I tend to agree with you in that she will most likely approach you in disguise. I expect to hear from her in the next day or so. She has not contacted me since last Saturday, and I gather she is itching to get to work."

"Severus, please. I think this is too dangerous," begged Hermione.

"Hermione, if I don't do this we will be living our lives constantly looking over our shoulders. I'll not live like that," he said firmly, as he touched her hand and smiled reassuringly. As he saw his wife's eyes begin to water, his own softened. "Please, do not worry."

Lucius stood and walked to the fireplace, and took a handful of Floo powder. "We will speak more later. I need to ready some things in my home." Lucius turned and entered the fireplace and Flooed home.

* * * * *

As Lucius stepped out of the Floo, he saw his wife Rosmerta standing in front of the large window looking out into the gardens. Noting she did not turn to look at him, he realized something was wrong.

"Ros? Is there something wrong?" he asked as he placed his hand on her shoulder.

She jumped slightly, then turned to look at him as though surprised. "Lucius, I didn't hear you come in," she said, sounding relieved, then embraced him.

He felt her trembling, then drew her away slightly. "What's happened? Why are you trembling so?" he looked into her eyes, and realized she was frightened. He cursed himself as he remembered he had not set the new wards around the perimeter of his home.

"A woman came by this afternoon. She said she was an old acquaintance of yours." A tear slowly ran down her cheek as she spoke. "She said she came to see you the other day, and that she was ready to begin her new life." Rosmerta turned away from Lucius and bowed her head as she cried silently. "Who is she, Lucius? Did you... are you having a relationship with this woman?"

Lucius took hold of his wife's shoulders and turned her to face him. "I'm sorry, I should have told you from the moment she came here."

Rosmerta gasped, then tried to run past him.

Lucius held her firm and looked into her eyes. "No, Ros, it's not like that." He cupped her face with his hands, and smiled. "I love you, only you. It is not what you are thinking. Sit with me and let me explain." Lucius guided his wife to the couch and began telling her the true nature of his relationship with Bellatrix. As he spoke, he could visibly see the change in his wife's demeanor. As quickly as she felt relief, it was all too soon replaced by fear.

"So this is why you told the children about your past." Lucius nodded. "Lucius, this is going to be just as dangerous for you as it is for Severus. If she finds out you are working against her..." Rosmerta's words faded as it truly dawned on her he would be killed if he were found out.

"I know, believe me, I know from first-hand experience what Bella is capable of. But Severus is right. We need to capture her quickly; she cannot be allowed to roam free." He stood and walked to his desk. He then pulled open the top drawer and took out a small piece of parchment, then walked back to Rosmerta and handed it to her. "This is my will."

Rosmerta opened her mouth to protest, only to be stopped by Lucius, "It is necessary. I want you to go to the estate in France and stay there until I send for you. Take this with you and keep it safe. I will not send the children with you because I do not feel they are unsafe. I will take whatever pictures of them are hanging about, so she will not know what they look like."

"Lucius, I'm not going anywhere," she protested.

"You are, and that is the end of it. I will not have you involved in this mess. Bella has already taken it upon herself to show up here unannounced twice. Now, please, pack your things and leave immediately. I will send Draco along with you to make sure the anti-Apparition wards are up and strong. When all this is over, I will send you a note with Odin."

Rosmerta knew that, once Lucius set his mind to something, he would not take no for an answer. It was best to leave him alone; she knew the less he had to worry about her, the more careful he would be. She would leave, and she would wait.

Your Enchanted Husband

She kissed the note and turned to her wardrobe. She took out a small box in which she kept all of Severus' notes written to her throughout their many years together. As she walked out to the study, she heard a sudden commotion in Osiris and Crookshanks' room, then heard their muffled voices.

"Be quiet, will you? I swear, Crooks, sometimes I wonder why you just don't send out Howlers and let the whole world know what we're doing!" hissed Osiris.

"You should talk. Who's the one that almost got us caught last week?" answered Crookshanks in an equally annoyed tone.

"I am allergic to flowers; what did you expect? I sneezed; so what? Would you rather I held it in and have my head explode?" said Osiris, in his own defense.

"It would be an improvement. Now hurry up. Harry said he was going to skip breakfast and go to his class early. We've only ten minutes before he gets there, and I don't want to miss the look on his face," said Crookshanks.

Hermione stood at the doorway of the room with her hands on her hips.

"And just what are you two up to, if I may ask?" she demanded.

Osiris and Crookshanks jumped and looked up at Hermione's towering figure ... at least to them she towered.

"Nothing, nothing at all. Just wanted to get an early start, that's all," assured Crookshanks.

"Really? It sounded like you two were..." she walked into the room and bent down slightly, "up to something," she said as she arched a brow, much like her husband often did.

"That's scary," noted Osiris. *"Good lord, that's really scary. You sounded just like Severus when you did that. You know, they say that when two people are together for so long they begin to take on each other's habits and odd little quirks."*

"You are changing the subject," said Hermione as she straightened up.

"Well, yes, I am, but apparently I'm not doing a very good job of it am I?" Osiris hopped up on Crookshanks' back, and he and the cat pranced out of the room past Hermione.

"Hey, wait a minute. I'm not done with the two of you," she yelled.

"Can't talk now," yelled back Osiris.

"Yes, we're late for an appointment," added Crookshanks.

"Appointment, my arse," muttered Hermione, as she shook her head. Whatever they were up to, she was sure to hear about it from Harry later. She was glad they had left, though. Apart from being troublemakers, Osiris and Crookshanks were notoriously nosy. She continued on to the study and began to write a note to Remus:

Dear Remus:

How are you? It's been ages since we have seen each other, much less talked. I hope all is well with you.

How is the Auror job going? I was very happy when Severus told me Arthur gave you the position. And, I'm sure you are quite pleased with your new partner, as well. Please say hello to Tonks for me.

I'm writing to you to ask a favor. First, I must ask that you not mention any of this to Severus. I am sure you are aware of the fact that Bellatrix Lestrange has escaped from Azkaban and has vowed to kill Severus. I know this woman is cunning, and will stop at nothing.

It is because of her threat that I need your assistance. I'm afraid, Remus. I fear for my husband's life. He is out every night in Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade, making himself a target and trying to tempt her out of the shadows, in the hopes that she comes for him so that he can then capture her.

I know that the Marauder's Map was something you made along with James, Sirius, and that horrible man. I would like to make something similar, which would help me track Severus, in case he disappears.

Again, please let's keep this between you and me. Let me know when I can see you.

Much love,

Hermione

With that, she folded the note and placed it inside her robes pocket. She intended to go to the Owlery between her morning classes and send it off. Osiris was rarely ever asked to deliver mail anymore. But, every once in a while he would happily agree. Of course, since it was Osiris, there was always a price to pay, mostly in the form of chocolate and brandy. Many a night she and Severus found the two passed out after having too much of both.

As it happens, Hermione couldn't get free to send off the note until after classes that Friday.

Remus Lupin was sitting near the fire at Number 12 Grimmauld Place. He had arrived at the home only minutes before. Even though it was Harry's home, Remus still had a room there to use anytime he wished. As he sat alone in the home, his thoughts went back several years to his old friend Sirius Black. Sirius had died at the hands of Bellatrix Lestrange. How Remus wished he could be the one to catch her. Perhaps he would do them all a favor and rid the world of her presence. As he sat pondering the many ways he would kill her, he heard a tapping on the window.

A large eagle owl had perched itself on the windowsill. Remus got up and allowed it to enter, then gently took the note from its leg. He smiled when he saw the note was from Hermione. He gave the owl some bits of bread, then sat down and read the note. Smiling again, he walked to the desk and took a piece of parchment to write a reply:

Hermione:

How wonderful to hear from you. I am fine, as is Tonks. We have both been meaning to come and visit you all; however, if it's not one thing it's another, as you well know.

I understand your fear, and will do my best to help you. Let me know when we can meet, and I will make sure to make the time.

And don't worry, I won't tell anyone about this.

"Raven?" she opened her eyes. "Where are we, what happened?" she asked as she quickly wrapped her arms around his neck.

"I'm not sure. One minute we were walking in Hogsmeade, and the next here we are." He looked around the small room. It was dark, but a small amount of light was coming from a window just above their heads. He felt Odette trembling, then heard her sobbing. He kissed the top of her head and hugged her tightly.

"Don't cry. I won't let anyone hurt you," Raven said, as he heard a movement just outside the door of the cell. They both looked up as the door slowly opened. They cautiously backed up until they were against the wall, where they waited to see the face of their captor.

Bellatrix stepped into the light and looked down at them. Her face was hard and cold. She looked at Raven. He stood to meet her eye to eye. Raven was a tall boy, and would one day be as tall if not taller than his father.

"So, you are the son of the traitor, I gather," she said with a sneer. She looked at him up and down, "Yes, no doubt, you are his." She then looked over to Odette and approached her.

"And aren't you a lovely little thing?" Bellatrix reached out to touch Odette's cheek, when Raven lunged at her.

"Don't you touch her," he yelled as he grabbed her hand. Bellatrix drew her wand and threw Raven across the room with a spell. He cried out as he slid down the wall and fell to the ground.

"Raven!" Odette ran to him and knelt before him.

"How touching." said Bellatrix in contempt, as she laughed behind them. She walked to Odette, then took her chin hard in her hand and turned the young girl to face her. "Care for him all you want, dear. But know this. As soon as I get his father here," Bellatrix looked at Raven, "he's dead!" She released Odette and stomped out of the cell.

"Where does it hurt?" Odette asked, as she helped Raven sit up and moved the hair from his face.

Raven winced as he struggled to sit up. He had hurt his ribs when he hit the wall, and he was sure his ankle was broken or fractured when he fell back down to the ground.

"...I think my ankle's broken," Raven said with an unsteady breath. He leaned back against the wall behind him and closed his eyes. He thought of what his father had said about this woman. Their captor had not told them who she was, but Raven knew that it was Bellatrix Lestrange who had captured him and Odette.

Back at Hogwarts Castle, Kat began to wonder why she had not seen her brother that day. She also noted that Odette was missing. When she asked Vladimir if he had seen his sister, Max ... who had been walking next to them ... decided to add his opinion.

"Odette and Raven are probably in some dark corner snogging or something," Max stated, only to be swatted on the shoulder by his sister, Samara.

"Max, you can be so uncouth sometimes," she said as she shook her head at her brother's lack of manners. The boy rubbed his shoulder and narrowed his eyes at his sister.

"Why is it that honesty is always labeled as bad manners?" Max moved his shirt slightly and looked at his shoulder. "That's going to bruise, thanks to you."

Samara rolled her eyes, and then looked at Kat.

"Maybe they're in the library, or up in the Astronomy Tower. You know that's Raven's favorite spot," Samara said.

Kat nodded. Perhaps she was making too much of a fuss. The last thing her brother needed was his baby sister babying him. She went along her way, and followed Vladimir to the kitchens for a snack.

Back at Malfoy Estate in Wiltshire, Lucius was sitting at his desk writing a letter to Rosmerta. He was interrupted by Zuly, his house elf.

"Begging your pardon, master. A lady to see you," she said.

Lucius looked up and put down his quill.

"Send her in then, and bring us some tea, Zuly," Lucius dismissed Zuly with a wave of his hand, and waited for his visitor to come in. He stood as Bellatrix walked into the study. He wondered what happened that she finally decided to show up. What's more, he wondered why she had, as Harry would say, such a shit-eating grin on her face.

"I've done it. Lucius, I've done it!" she exclaimed.

"You have done what, exactly?" Lucius asked, in as bored a tone as he could muster under the present circumstances, although he inwardly cringed. Just what in heaven's name had she done?

Bellatrix took out a small round pouch, then removed a silver object from it. She handed Lucius a flat mirror. Lucius took it and looked into it. He saw Raven sitting against a wall with a pained look on his face. Lucius looked questioningly at Bellatrix.

"That is the traitor's son," she said with glee.

Lucius felt his legs go numb. It was Raven. He looked in the mirror and noticed someone else moving around. He focused on the other person, but couldn't make them out. The room was dark, and it was hard for him to see.

"There is someone with him," he said.

"Oh yes, that is the icing on the cake," Bellatrix took the mirror from his hands and looked into it herself, "The boy was walking in Hogsmeade with a very pretty young lady. I'm going to keep her. I will need a companion after I kill that worthless piece of pestilence Pettigrew."

Pretty young lady? Lucius felt the blood inside his veins begin to grow cold. He knew very well who the pretty young lady was with Raven. Lucius turned and poured himself a glass of brandy, and gulped it down. He then poured himself another, as well as one for Bellatrix, and turned to her.

"Then we must celebrate your new acquisitions." He toasted with her, all the while cursing her to hell inside his head, "What do you plan on doing with the boy?" he asked, willing his hands not to shake in front of her.

"That is where you come in. I want you to tell Severus I have his boy. I will meet him here tomorrow, and from here we shall take him to the boy. I will make an exchange, him for the boy; it's quite simple, really."

Lucius didn't trust her, but he needed to play it cool, just a little while longer. Bellatrix was insane, and she had his daughter Odette and Raven...who knows where. He resisted the temptation of asking her where they were being kept, since he knew she had no intentions of telling him, at least not yet.

"You can help me torture the boy in front of Severus, before we kill both of them," she smiled and walked towards Lucius. She then leaned close to his ear, "And if you are

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

While the three men were making their way to Harry's rooms, Hermione was leaving the castle. She left her daughter in the library, as she had received a note from Remus answering her request, and asking her to come to Number 12 Grimmauld Place. When she arrived at the Order's old headquarters, she was greeted with a hug and a kiss from her old friend.

"You look wonderful, Hermione," said Remus as he looked at her.

"Thank you, Remus. You aren't looking so bad yourself. I suspect the love of a good woman is at work here, hmm?" she asked, knowing full well his blush was telling her all she needed to know.

He changed the subject and led her into the living room. As they sat and waited for the water in the kitchen to boil for their tea, Remus gathered some papers he had on the coffee table.

"Now, you understand, I helped make the Marauders' Map a very long time ago. But, I believe we can make something very much like it. You really only want to track Severus wherever he is, correct?" asked Remus.

"Yes," Hermione nodded. She reached into the small bag she had brought with her and took out a handkerchief, then handed it to Remus. "He had this with him just last night."

Remus took it in his hands, then spread it out in front of them on top of the table. He stood and walked to the fireplace, grabbed a pinch of soot, then came back and sprinkled it onto the handkerchief.

"I'll need something more personal ... maybe a lock of hair, or a nail clipping. Since this map will be to locate him alone, we will need something to take his role."

Hermione smiled. Suspecting that she might need something more personal, she made sure to take some hair from Severus' brush that morning. She handed the hair to Remus, and he placed it on top of the soot. He folded the piece of cloth over four times, then placed it atop a heavy atlas sitting on his desk. After several spells, and a few waves of the wand, he took hold of the handkerchief and unfolded it. The hair and soot had disappeared. He tapped his wand on the corner of the cloth.

"Reveal, Severus Snape," whispered Remus.

Slowly a pattern began to emerge. The lines and shapes revealed what looked like an aerial view of the Hogwarts grounds; and near the Quidditch pitch, she saw the clear shape of a dark man. It was Severus. Hermione looked at Remus and smiled.

"Remus, it worked!" she shouted as she embraced him. She pulled back and looked down at the object. She could see the dark figure slowly moving towards the castle. "It's amazing. I can't thank you enough, Remus. Knowing I have this makes me feel a little better. I know if...if anything should happen, at least I can get to him."

"I'm glad I was able to help. I wasn't sure I remembered those old spells, but for Severus' sake and yours, I'm glad I did. Would you like some tea?" He stood and made his way to the kitchens. She accepted his offer, and they spent the next hour talking and catching up on things.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

When Hermione returned to Hogwarts, she felt the most calm she had experienced since learning that Bellatrix had escaped. She was humming to herself as she walked down to the dungeons. She briefly wondered why she had not seen her son all day, but then thought he was most likely with his friends, trying to keep from going stir crazy.

Upon opening the door to her and her husband's rooms, she noticed a somber scene. Severus, Lucius, and Harry were all huddled around the coffee table, drinking brandy and not saying a word.

"Who died?" she asked with a chuckle. All three men looked up at her, all with worried expressions on their faces. Her smile quickly faded, "Oh God, what's happened?"

Severus immediately stood and went to her side.

"Hermione, something's happened, love." Severus saw tears now forming in her eyes. *'Dear Merlin, how do I tell her this,* he thought. He took a deep breath and took hold of her shoulders. "Bella has taken Raven and Odette." He felt her body stiffen, then saw tears falling down her cheeks.

"What? How? They were not to leave the castle!" she frantically looked from Severus to Lucius. Lucius rose and walked to her, and Hermione grasped his proffered hand.

"We don't exactly know how she got to them, but Hermione, they are unharmed," Lucius tried to assure her, as he wrapped both his hands around hers. "Bella came to me this afternoon, and I was able to see them through a charmed mirror she had. The children are alive and unharmed." He stressed to her the fact they were still alive and seemingly fine. During their years as friends, they had each grown to love all of their children as though they came from the same place. He knew it was just as hard for her to know his daughter was in the hands of Bellatrix as it was for him.

"Did Bella give you any indication of where they are?" she asked as calmly as she could.

"No," said Severus, "She has requested that Lucius lure me to his home tomorrow." Hermione looked at him with a silent plea in her eyes. "I must, Hermione."

Harry stood and joined the three standing near the door.

"Don't worry, 'Mione. I'll be waiting outside for Bella. I've also contacted Neville, Tonks, and Ron. We'll each stake out parts of the grounds and the front and back entries. If she shows up, we'll be there."

All Hermione could do was nod. She didn't trust her voice, as she was on the verge of tears. As Harry and Lucius said their goodbyes, she took off her cloak, and walked to the couch and sat down. Severus saw the two men out and closed the door, then turned to his wife.

"She means to kill him, doesn't she? She's going to make you watch her kill Raven, and then she will kill you?" Hermione asked quietly. Severus sat down next to her and held her in his arms, not having courage enough to answer her question. It had been decided that evening, to keep what had happened from the rest of the children. They were told that Raven and Odette had been caught trying to leave the castle by Hagrid, and they were being suspended for several days.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

The next day the plans were set in motion. Remus joined the other Aurors at the Malfoy Estate. Neville took the post at the rear of the estate. Remus hid in the forest, as Tonks took the gardens. Ron and Harry hid near the front door and the front gate. Every direction was being watched by one or several of them. There was no way Bellatrix would get in without being seen.

Inside the house, Lucius and Severus sat in the living room. Bellatrix had made it clear to Lucius to have Severus at his home at two o'clock. It was now almost three, and there was still no sign of the woman. This made Lucius nervous. He stood and began to pace, wondering what was keeping his former sister-in-law.

"Bella is never late," said Lucius as he looked at the clock on the mantle. "Something is not right." As Lucius studied the clock, Severus ... trying to keep himself occupied ... reached for a magazine on the coffee table.

"Since when do you read Potions Weekly?" asked Severus. As he reached for the magazine, Lucius turned quickly.

"What? No, Severus, wait!" Lucius cried. It was too late. Severus had disappeared.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

I'll have another chapter up soon. I hope you enjoyed this one.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 of 27

Bella now has what she has always wanted, Severus at her mercy.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks as always to June for her beta work.

Chapter 15

Severus just barely heard Lucius screaming, when he felt the pull of the Portkey take him away. *'Damn my stupidity!'* he thought. He should have known better than to expect Lucius Malfoy to be reading Potions Weekly. Lucius loathed potions; he needed tutoring often while at Hogwarts, and he never liked getting his hands dirty. Lucius would no sooner have a magazine on potions as he would have a magazine on how to run a Fortune 500 company, which Lucius had several of in the Muggle world. How would they ever find him now, Severus wondered.

As he tried to clear his head, he looked around the room he was now in, and immediately began to formulate a plan. There were windows, although they were ten feet above his head. There was no furniture, nor was there a door. *'Plan indeed,'* he thought sourly, then realized his wand was missing. He frantically began to look for it, thinking it must have fallen out of his robes, only to be frozen in his tracks by what happened next.

"Looking for this?" asked Bellatrix, as she now stepped out of the shadows. Severus looked to his left, and saw the image of a woman he had thought long gone from his life, and this world.

"Bella, how good of you to have me," he said as he looked around the room. "I can see your stay in Azkaban did not go to waste. I love what you have done with the place."

She snarled at him and raised her wand. *"Crucio!"* she shouted. "20 years, Severus! 20 years I sat in that cell, biding my time. The only thing keeping me sane was knowing I would some day get out, and kill you."

Bellatrix had caught him unaware, which was his second mistake today. Yet even though Severus was not prepared, he was able to resist her curse well enough. Lucius had informed him that she had been out of contact for several weeks ... no doubt recuperating her strength, which he now felt in her spell. Bellatrix pulled back and walked closer to him. Severus was leaning against the back wall of the room, his breath somewhat labored.

"Your thoughts of me were of no use in keeping your sanity intact. It is obvious you are the same insane bitch I knew 20 years ago," he said.

She pointed her wand at him and yelled out the curse once again. She had held him under for almost half an hour. When she relented Severus started to laugh.

"I assure you, I have withstood this curse from far more powerful wizards. This," his breathing was very labored, "is but an inconvenient itch." Bellatrix walked towards him slowly.

"I told you that I would come for you. I told you that you would pay for betraying our Lord," she smiled as she came closer. "But, before I kill you, Severus, I have a little surprise. She took out a mirror; judging from Lucius' description, Severus guessed it was the same mirror she had shown Lucius the day before. As she held it up in front of Severus' face, he could see his son Raven huddled in a corner, holding Odette in his arms. He looked at Bellatrix and made to lunge at her, only to be stopped.

"Impedimenta!" she yelled, and began laughing hysterically. "Patience, Severus, patience. You shall see your brat in due time." She leaned into him and whispered in his ear, "You shall see me tear his heart out of his body with my bare hands." She then backed away from him and tapped a pattern on the wall next to her. As she walked through it, she released him from the spell.

Severus ran in her direction, only to be met with the hard surface of the wall. He leaned his head into the wall, and wondered how he would get himself and the children out of there alive, when he didn't even have his wand.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Back at the Malfoy Estate, Lucius had informed Harry along with the others what had happened. He had not warded his home after Rosmerta had left, since he felt no need. All of his loved ones were safe from Bella, or so he had thought. It had not occurred to him that the woman might come in and sabotage his own home. He should have known better. Lucius and Harry left Remus and the other's working on tracing the Portkey. It was Lucius' hope that Bella would have been too anxious to get Severus in her hands to cast a non-tracing spell on the Portkey.

It was now up to Lucius and Harry to inform Hermione that her husband had disappeared. They Apparated just outside the Hogwarts grounds and silently walked to the dungeons. When they reached the door to Severus and Hermione's rooms, they stopped and looked at each other. Neither wanted to go inside, both not wanting to tell Hermione that they had just lost Severus.

Harry knocked, then opened the door. As he and Lucius walked in, they saw Hermione sitting on the couch, with Osiris perched on one shoulder and Crookshanks curled on her lap. The three looked up, and immediately knew something had gone wrong.

"Lucius?" Hermione stood slowly. The unasked question lingered for several moments.

Lucius looked down and cleared his throat.

"Bella never showed up. It seems she placed a Portkey in my home and..." Lucius went no further, as he now saw Hermione on the verge of collapsing. He caught her as

Lucius and Harry, along with Osiris and Crookshanks, Apparated to Malfoy Manor to collect Draco. Ginny took the Floo to Hogwarts, to try to keep Hermione calm. Lucius had not wanted to notify Rosmerta at their estate in France, knowing she would be a ball of nerves, and at that moment, that was the last thing he needed.

The five of them Apparated to the edge of the forest overlooking the home where Bellatrix had Severus and, they assumed, the children. Lucius looked around the area, making sure there were no others around.

"I don't think we need to worry about others being around. It is uncharacteristic of Bella to share her toys," Lucius said with a sneer. He looked at Draco, "Concentrate on finding your sister and Raven. When you find them, leave at once and take them back to Hogwarts."

"But Father, you might need my help with Bella," said Draco. He knew of his aunt's violent tastes, and he also knew she had most likely gone mad while at Azkaban. Who knew what she would do to Lucius when she realized he had also betrayed Voldemort.

Lucius shook his head and placed his hand on his son's shoulder and shook his head.

"Do not come looking for me, Draco. What happens to me does not matter," Lucius said. "I have told you what you need to do. Please, son. If...if I should not come back, take care of your sister and brother. And make sure Ros knows how much I have loved her all of these years." With a teary eye, he lightly shoved his son towards the large home. He watched Draco walk along the edge of the forest towards the home. Halfway there, Draco used a cloaking spell and was gone from their sight. Lucius then looked down at Osiris and Crookshanks. "I think you can get a better view of the entire home from those trees over there, towards the east. If anyone should enter or leave, you will see it."

"Both of you, please be careful," said Osiris, then he and Crookshanks were off and running.

Lucius then turned to Harry. "Are you ready, Harry?" he asked.

Harry nodded, "As ready as I'll ever be." They both performed a cloaking spell, then walked towards the home.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Osiris looked down at Crookshanks. *"All right, I'll fly up, and you follow me."* He then flew off of Crookshanks' back and rose into the sky.

"Huh?" Crookshanks looked up and saw Osiris flying in the sky. *"Great, just great!"* As fast as he could, he began to follow the same path on the ground, as Osiris was flying in the sky. As he watched Osiris ahead of him, he began panting. *"Ugh! I...need...to...exercise...more,"* he panted. He managed to reach the location he had seen Lucius pointing at earlier. He looked around for the large black Animagus raven.

"Over here," said Osiris. Crookshanks slowly approached Osiris, while still trying to catch his breath. *"Merlin's hanging left nut, Crooks. What the hell is the matter with you?"*

"Give me a minute, will you? Do cats have strokes? I think I'm having a heart attack right now. Or perhaps and embolism, or some kind of ism."

"You need to exercise more, chubs."

Crookshanks nodded, *"I'll put it on my schedule,"* he said, and then collapsed.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Meanwhile, Harry and Lucius were approaching the home; only to find out their cloaking spells were wearing off.

"Quickly, Harry. Get out of sight. She must have the grounds warded against any kind of cloaking spell," Lucius looked around, "I only hope Draco wasn't seen." Harry nodded, then crouched down and edged his way to some bushes near the house. After Lucius made sure Harry was out of sight, he walked up to the door and knocked. The door opened slowly to reveal Peter Pettigrew. Lucius sneered and walked past him. He knew the man was a coward, so it would be easy to intimidate him.

"Where is she?" Lucius growled.

"Lucius, h...how long has it been?" asked Peter.

Lucius narrowed his eyes and rushed towards the other man, then shoved him against the wall with his cane to Peter's neck. "Where. Is. She? Surely that is a simple enough sentence for you to comprehend, is it not?"

Peter now began to shake. He had always been afraid of Lucius. He knew the blond wizard had limited patience, and so he never wanted to cross him.

"Lucius," called a voice behind him. "How clever you are. You have found me!" Bellatrix stood at the entry to the study, as Lucius eased back from Peter and took off his traveling cloak. He eyed her carefully, noting if she had any blood on her clothes. She did not.

"I waited for you. I thought we were going to do this together, Bella?"

She laughed, "We are. I just wanted a chance to play with him on my own for a bit, that's all. Surely you can't begrudge me that, can you?"

Lucius arched his brow. 'Play?' he thought. He knew very well what Bella's idea of play was.

"And is there any of him left for me?" he asked, trying to sound nonchalant.

"Yes, yes, yes, I have not bruised him too badly. I was planning on coming for you soon anyway. I want to get the boy strung up in Severus' cell, so that he can watch us torture the brat." She smiled and motioned for him to follow.

Lucius looked back at Peter, and then followed Bella.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Draco did indeed get into the house with no problem, although Peter almost caught him. Thanks to the quick reflexes from so many years of playing Quidditch, he managed to avoid the other man. He heard his father coming in, and the short scuffle between him and Peter. He crept into what seemed to be a pantry closet, but turned out to be a door leading to a lower level.

He placed a spell on his shoes so that they would make no sound as he walked. As he reached the bottom of the steps, he heard someone coming towards him. It was dark, and he decided to place himself as close to the wall as possible. The footsteps were coming closer. He wondered if Peter was still upstairs. He listened to the steps, wanting to hear if perhaps it was his father and Bella. 'No,' he thought, *'Bella has several prisoners. She'd be talking father's ear off right about now.'*

Draco moved along the wall towards the footsteps, until he could no longer hear them. After he waited a few moments he moved away from the wall and started walking, but first he needed some light.

"Lumos," he whispered, but almost screamed as he saw a face appear right in front of him.

"Harry. You scared the shit out of me."

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

I promise I'll have another chapter up tomorrow evening. I hope you enjoyed this.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 of 27

The plan is afoot, and things get crazy.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for her help in doing the beta work.

Chapter 17

Harry smiled, "Good to know I can still keep you on your toes, Draco."

"Have you found anybody?" asked Draco.

"No," Harry said, shaking his head. "This place is turning out to be some sort of a maze." They both heard voices coming from around the corner.

"Quickly," whispered Draco, "back this way." He grabbed Harry by the arm, and they both ducked behind the narrow stairway that Draco had just descended from.

"I have him over this way," they heard Bellatrix say, just as she walked by.

"Where is his son?" they heard Lucius ask.

"Just at the other end of the hall, with my soon-to-be protégé," answered Bella. Harry and Draco listened as Bella and Lucius continued to walk further down the dimly lit hallway, until their voices disappeared.

"That's my cue," said Draco. "I'll get them out of here. You be careful, Harry, and please, make sure they both..." Draco choked on his words. He loved his father very much, and Severus was dear to him as well. He did not want them to die at the hands of that mad woman.

"Voldemort didn't kill them, and she won't either. Don't worry. Go get the kids, and do as Lucius says. We'll see you back at Hogwarts." Harry patted him on the shoulder, and then went off in the direction where he had last heard Lucius' and Bellatrix's voices trail off.

Meanwhile, Draco went in the opposite direction. There were many doors along his way, and he looked in every single one. He had begun to lose hope, thinking perhaps Bella had lied to Lucius. But then he reached the second to last door, and found it to be locked. *'This has to be it,'* he thought.

He tried the most obvious action first, and turned the knob. Nothing. He then felt for wards, which he found to be quite sophisticated. He knocked, wanting to make sure he had the right door, as well as wanting to make sure his sister and Raven were still all right.

"Odette, Raven, are you in there?" he asked quietly.

On the other side of the door, Odette lifted her head from Raven's chest. They had been gently curled up together, and had fallen asleep. Raven had spent a difficult night. The day before, he had broken a rib when his body hit the wall, from Bellatrix's spell. His ankle was swollen as well, and had been causing him pain. He had only just fallen asleep as the sun was rising. Odette untangled herself from his arms and moved slowly to the door.

"Draco? Is that you?" Odette asked, hoping it was truly her brother.

He breathed a sigh of relief. "Yes, it's me. Is Raven there with you?"

"He is, but he's hurt and in such awful pain. Please, Draco, can you get us out of here?" she pleaded.

Draco looked around him to make sure no one was approaching.

"I'm working on the wards," he answered. "It might take me a while. Step back, just in case."

Odette moved away and sat back down next to Raven, who had begun to wake up.

"What's happening?" Raven asked weakly, barely able to breathe because of his broken rib.

"It's Draco. He's come to get us out of here," she said, caressing his cheek as she held his head to her chest. Raven was struggling for air. "Hang on, love. We shall be home soon." She kissed his forehead.

After several very long minutes, the door opened slowly. Draco walked inside, the tip of his wand in front of him lighting the way in the slightly dark cell. He saw them huddled in the corner and immediately ran to them. He hugged his sister and kissed her cheek. He looked down at Raven, who had lost consciousness.

"What did she do to him?" Draco asked.

"He was trying to protect me yesterday. That woman cast a spell his way, and he hit the wall very hard. He's got an awful bruise on his side. I think he has a broken rib, and his ankle might be broken as well." She looked at her brother with tears in her eyes.

Draco smiled and brushed the hair from her face.

"Don't worry. Raven Snape comes from very strong stock. He'll be fine. Let's get you two out of here." Draco carefully picked up Raven, trying not to cause him any more pain. Raven moaned and began to stir.

Lucius looked up to see Hermione approaching him with tears in her eyes.

"Thank you!" she said as she hugged him.

"How is Raven?" he asked.

"He's a bit roughed up, but will be fine. Where is Severus? Is he coming?" she asked hopefully as Pansy now rushed into the hospital wing. Pansy had been visiting her parents and found Harry's note upon her arrival.

"Is Harry all right?" Pansy asked as Hermione took her hand.

"They are both fine," Lucius nodded. He looked at Hermione. "Bellatrix had been using the Cruciatus Curse on Severus before I arrived, and then she took turns with us once she found out I had betrayed her." He walked to an empty bed and sat down, he was exhausted. "Severus will need someone to have a look at his injuries before he can Apparate back. She also used a Slicing Hex on him, so he's lost a fair amount of blood."

"I'm going to him," said Hermione, as she rushed out of the room.

~*~*~*~*~

Osiris and Crookshanks had decided to Apparate back to Hogwarts, as they wanted to see Raven. As Severus and Harry sat in silence, Severus remembered Osiris dropping something on the ground.

"Harry, hand me that trinket Osiris dropped."

Harry looked down and picked up the small silver paw, then handed it to Severus.

"It's just Pettigrew's paw. Didn't Voldemort give it to him?" asked Harry.

Severus took the object and closed his eyes.

"Wait, let me think for a moment," Severus said. "I know something of this." He shook his head, trying to clear the sense of confusion and light-headedness from his blood loss. If Lucius had not arrived when he did, Severus more than likely would have been much worse off. While he and Lucius had outwardly laughed at her abilities with the Cruciatus Curse, he considered Bellatrix to be one of the most proficient users of the curse he had ever had the courtesy of meeting.

Severus smiled, "This," he said, holding the paw out to Harry, "I believe may be the cure for Lupin's lycanthrope."

Harry stared at Severus, waiting for an explanation.

"This paw was made from silver coins — silver coins that were made from the Holy Grail. The same grail that one Jesus Christ was said to have drunk from during the Last Supper."

"Those are Muggle beliefs. Is Severus Snape saying he believes in Muggle religion?" said Harry with a smile.

"Whether I believe him to have been the savior of the human race makes no difference. He did exist, and he performed many, what I am told were, miracles," Severus looked at the paw. "The man was a healer. It matters not to me where his power came from; the fact is he had the gift of healing. It was said that if anyone sick drank from the same chalice Jesus drank from in his last days on earth, then that person would be healed. With Hermione's help, I believe we can develop a potion using this silver paw, and cure Lupin."

Harry took the paw from Severus' hand and looked at it. "This Grail, how did Voldemort get hold of it?" asked Harry.

"He did not. The guardians of this relic were the Knights Templar. Back in 1307, the Knights were arrested and eliminated by King Phillip of France, who then seized their properties, including the Grail. It was melted down and made into silver coins. I have no idea how Voldemort came into possession of these coins, but I know they were authentic." Severus heard a pop just off to his right, and looked up. He smiled as he saw Hermione now running towards him.

"Severus!" she yelled as she threw herself into his arms. She held him tightly until she heard him gasp. She then remembered what Lucius had said of his injuries, "Oh, darling, I'm sorry. Where are you hurt?" she asked, not deeply concerned.

"Am I invisible?" asked Harry with a chuckle. Hermione smirked at him.

"Don't worry, Harry," Hermione assured him. "I'm sure Pansy will devour you when she sees you're safe."

"Pansy! Oh, no! I completely forgot," Harry's eyes grew wide. "I left her that note. She must be worried sick. I've got to get to her." He rose and handed the silver paw back to Severus, then looked down at them. "I'll see you two back at Hogwarts." He hurried off.

Hermione looked at Severus and smiled.

"I was so afraid," she said with tears in her eyes. "First Raven, and then you. I don't know what I would have done if I had lost the both of you."

Severus reached his hand out and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "Raven and Odette are fine then?" asked Severus.

"Odette is a bit shaken up, and Raven has a few broken bones. But Poppy said he would be fine by this evening."

"Thank the gods the others got here in time." He made to stand but grew dizzy.

"Sit back for a bit, love. Let me heal you, then we can go home."

"Since when are you a medi-witch?" He looked at her and raised his eyebrow.

"Well, I've never told you this, but during the war, I asked Poppy to teach me some healing spells for some of the hexes I thought would be used the most. I wanted to make sure if you ever needed it of me, I would be able to help you."

"How I wish I had known then, Hermione, how much you truly cared for me."

She threw her head back and laughed. "You would have thought I was a silly little girl with a crush on her evil Potions Professor, and probably have embarrassed me for all my trouble."

It was his turn to laugh. "Wife, you know me so well."

~*~*~*~*~

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. And I hope you liked the addition of the Knights Templar legend. I have always thought it very interesting. And just another little tidbit on that legend. The Knights Templar were done away with by King Phillip of France on in 1307, on Friday, October 13.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 of 27

Raven recovers and finds out his punishment. And Severus and Hermione begin their research for Remus' new potion.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for her beta work.

Chapter 21

After making sure his wounds were closed, and that he would not continue to bleed, Hermione helped Severus to his feet, and they both Apparated to the gates of Hogwarts. Once there, he rested for a few moments before they slowly walked into the castle, making their way to the hospital wing. As soon as Severus saw his son, he felt his strength return. He rushed to the bed and looked at the sleeping Raven.

"My son," he kissed the boy's forehead and looked at him.

Hermione came up behind him and handed him a small bottle of a dark red liquid. "You've lost too much blood, Severus. Drink this," she said.

He took the bottle from her hand, recognizing it as a blood-replenishing potion. He swallowed it quickly.

"Come, he will be asleep for a while. Let Poppy have a look at you," said Hermione, as she took his arm and pulled him from Raven's bedside.

Severus walked to where Lucius and Odette had been sitting, and he smiled down at the young girl.

"I'm glad to see you are all right," Severus said as Odette stood and hugged him. He kissed her on top of the head. "But..."

"But, just why did you two leave the castle?" Lucius chimed in, before Severus could finish. He knew Severus was going to ask the very same question he himself wanted to know.

"I'm sorry, Father. But we were feeling like this was a prison. Raven and I just wanted to be outside for a little while. We didn't mean to worry anyone, honestly." Odette looked at the three adults staring at her. She had sense enough to look ashamed, but she'd hoped she wouldn't be punished from now to her thirtieth birthday.

"What you and Raven did was very foolish, Odette," Lucius said as he took his daughter by the hand and looked into her eyes. "You were specifically told not to leave the castle." She bowed her head, but Lucius took her chin in his hand and made her look at him as he spoke. "This was no game. You were told why we were doing this; we were honest with you, with all of you children. And you betrayed our trust and honesty by defying our orders and almost getting yourselves killed."

Tears were running down the girl's face now. Hermione and Severus moved towards the bed.

"Do you know what Bellatrix wanted you for?" asked Lucius.

"Lucius, she's been through enough," said Hermione, as she sat down with Odette, and then looked to Lucius.

"Hermione, love," Severus said as he stood behind Lucius. "She needs to know the danger they both put themselves in because of their foolishness. They must both know what the consequences of their actions might have been."

Lucius continued. "Odette, we did not risk our lives during the war to have our children killed or made playthings at the hands of people like Bellatrix. We fought to make this world better and safer for our children. There are still people like Bella out there; some have been hiding, others have never been caught and are freely roaming around. We are lucky in that they are few and far between. When we told you to stay inside the castle it was to keep you safe, not to punish you or spoil your fun."

Odette wiped her tears and looked at her father. "When you say plaything, do you mean...she wanted to do things to me? Intimate things?" she asked as she started to blush and shake. It was becoming clear to her now, just what could have happened had her father and uncles not found them in time.

"Yes," Lucius answered simply. He dared not tell her that before Bellatrix took the girl for herself, she had offered Odette to her own father. "But you are safe now. She will never harm anyone again." He placed his hand on her cheek, and leaned forward to kiss her on the forehead.

Hermione wrapped her arm around Odette's shoulder and hugged her tightly.

"Would you like to come home for a bit?" asked Lucius. Odette looked in the direction of Raven's bed. Lucius followed her eyes and smiled.

"Perhaps after a few days have passed, then?" Lucius said. "Your birthday is coming up. I know your mother would like to take you shopping." He stood up from his chair and looked down at her.

"I'll come home next weekend," Odette stood and hugged him tightly. "Maybe Raven can come with me?" she asked as she looked at Severus and Hermione, who looked at each other.

"We shall see," said Severus as he smirked and looked to his sleeping son. "He may be scrubbing cauldrons for the next month."

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

The next morning found Raven waking up to find Kat, Odette, and the rest of the pack surrounding his bed. Kat had her arms crossed over her chest, which made her look just like their father.

"You are so lucky you didn't get yourself killed, Raven Snape. What were you thinking?" she said, throwing her arms in the air.

"Thinking? If he had been thinking, he would have stayed here," said Armando.

"Honestly Rav, that was a pretty dumb thing to do. You both could have been..." Max made a slashing motion across his throat. His sister, Samara, then promptly swatted him on the back of his head. "Ouch! I swear, Samara, if you thump me one more time today I'll turn your hair into pink feathers."

"Max," his sister drawled as she rolled her eyes, "do you always have to be such a wanker? They don't need to be reminded of what could have happened to them after all they've been through."

Raven looked around and noticed someone missing. "Where's Vlad?"

"He's coming," Kat leaned in close to Raven and whispered, "He went into town with Osiris and Crooks to get some sweets at Honeydukes."

"Were your Mum and Dad very upset?" Raven asked Odette.

"Well, I wouldn't say they were pleased," said Odette. "I thought Daddy was going to punish me, but I guess he was so happy I was safe he let me off. I don't think Uncle Severus will be as kind with you."

"You'll be scrubbing cauldrons from now until graduation, I gather," added Kat.

"Bollocks," Raven groaned.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

As the children sat in the hospital wing with Raven, Severus was relaxing on the couch. He had rested for about as long as he would allow himself. Upon his arrival at his rooms, Hermione had told him how they found him. She showed him the handkerchief Remus had enchanted for her, and even showed him how it worked. He was fascinated not only with how it worked, but with the fact that Remus had actually agreed to help.

He scolded himself, though. It had been years since he and Remus had buried the hatchet. He knew that of all the Marauders, Remus was the only one with whom he could have ever gotten along with. He now sat in front of a coffee table covered with books and scrolls, even some papyrus.

Hermione came in from the small kitchen with a tray of tea and biscuits. "Have you found anything?" she asked as she poured him a cup of tea.

"I have a few possibilities we can start with. Some are better than others," he said as he took the tea she offered him, and looked at her. "One thing I am sure about. This potion will either cure Remus or kill him. He must know the risks."

Hermione sat next to him. "Tonks was telling me how sad he's been," she said. "As time goes by, it takes him longer to recover from the change back into a human. The older he gets, the harder it will be on his body. Somehow I get the feeling he will take the risk."

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

I have always thought that of all the Marauders, Remus was the only one who would have possibly befriended Snape had it not been for the other three. In my world, I can easily see Severus and Remus on friendly terms.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 of 27

Remus decides to try the new potion.

All canon characters belong to JKR.

Thanks to June for her help with the beta work.

Chapter 22

Several days had passed since the incident with Bellatrix. The children were back to their routine, and Raven had been scrubbing cauldrons after classes for almost an entire week. Severus had told him he would be doing cauldron duty until the end of the school year, but he planned to mainly let him stew. Another few days and he would consider the lesson learned and allow his son his freedom back.

Hermione went to the Ministry over the weekend and found several parchments with more information on the Holy Grail. Together, she and Severus worked out a formula combining the current Wolfsbane Potion along with the melted down silver paw. As the Wolfsbane was being heated they added two star anise and two drops of adder venom, topped off with one small mistletoe berry. The modified potion simmered for five days on a low fire; then they added two leaves from the stalks of the mistletoe. If the leaves were collected just before the berries formed, they produced a medicinal effect, thus counteracting the poison of the berry and the adder they had placed in several days before. That along with the properties of the paw would certainly help keep the poison levels down. It took two weeks to finish, but in the end they were rewarded with a syrupy silver liquid.

"It looks almost like unicorn blood," commented Hermione, as Severus poured it into the bottle.

"Let us hope it does not have the same effect," Severus said as he put a stopper on the bottle. With a flick of the wand, the workspace was clean and tidy once more. "Shall we?" Severus asked as he held out his hand to his wife.

Hermione nodded and they both walked out the door. They walked hand-in-hand to the gates of Hogwarts, then Apparated into Hogsmeade.

Earlier in the week, Hermione had flooed Remus and asked him to meet her and Severus at the Three Broomsticks. As they approached the meeting place, she and Severus walked for a while in silence, each one wondering what Remus' reaction would be.

"Do you think he will take the risk?" asked Hermione as her eyes looked ahead.

"I would," Severus answered, as he squeezed her hand and looked down at her. "If I had Remus' future ahead of me, I would."

When they arrived outside the Three Broomsticks, they looked at each other and took a deep breath, then walked in. Remus was sitting at a table near the far side of the small restaurant. He waved them over as he saw them enter. Hermione smiled and immediately embraced him. She held him longer than she usually did, which made him wonder if there was something wrong. Once he saw the somber look on Severus' face, he knew something had to be wrong.

"All right, what is it?" Remus asked as he let Hermione go and they all sat down. "You two look like they have just cancelled your subscription to the Potion of the Month Club." He chuckled, hoping it would lighten the mood.

Hermione smiled and looked at Severus, who cleared his throat.

"Remus, we have been working on a new potion for you," Severus announced.

Remus smiled as Severus mentioned new potion. "A new variation of Wolfsbane? Something perhaps a bit easier on the pallet?" he asked hopefully.

"Well, not really," Severus said as he looked at Hermione. "We believe it will cure you from your lycanthropy."

Remus' eyes grew wide. He opened his mouth several times before leaning back and shook his head.

"A cure?" Remus said with wonder. "Are you sure?"

"Somewhat," said Hermione.

Remus looked at her and cocked his head to one side. "And that means what exactly?"

"Well, to put it in plain terms," Severus took the small bottle filled with the silvery liquid and placed it in front of Remus, "this will either cure you, or kill you."

Remus felt a wave of excitement come over him. *'A cure, finally a cure,'* he thought. But, there was a risk. He stared at the bottle. It baffled him how such an unassuming liquid could hold his future inside. He reached a shaky hand towards it and gripped it firmly. He wondered what would happen if he drank it down and it produced the latter effect that Severus had just informed him of. Remus thought of Tonks. They had been together for all these many years, yet he never wanted to burden her with being married to a werewolf. It had only been recently that the wizarding world really began to widely accept people like him, with no questions or prejudices. Then there was the issue of children. He wanted them so badly and so did she, but he could not take the chance any child of his would be born with the beast's genes.

What would happen to Tonks if he were to die? She was a beautiful woman, and still young. She could easily find someone else. But she loved him. She loved Remus so very much, that his death would break her heart. If he died, it would end his torment and pain. He felt so weak, so fragile during those days leading to his change, not to mention how he felt afterwards. As he aged his bones would weaken, and his skin would become so tender that it would hurt to even be touched. The wolf would eventually cause so much havoc on his aging body, that he would most likely die during a change. He would be found half-man, half-beast, dead and alone. What he would give to be able to just live a normal life. He stared at the bottle in his hands. Should he? Would he risk his life for something that even Severus wasn't sure of? He looked up at him and then to Hermione, and set the bottle down and ran his hands through his hair. He sighed heavily and then finally spoke.

"I don't want to do this here. Let's go to Hogwarts." Remus picked up the bottle once more and placed it in his pocket.

Then all three walked silently back to Hogwarts.

When they reached the dungeons, Remus followed Severus and Hermione to their rooms. Once there, they ordered tea and sat around the living room coffee table. Remus took the bottle from his pocket and placed it on the table.

"Remus, would you like to floo Tonks? Maybe she should be here," said Hermione.

Remus shook his head. "No, I don't want her here. If I...well, I don't want her to watch me die. I can't do that to her."

"We don't know that will happen, Remus," Severus said as Hermione looked up at him, taking hold of his hand. "In fact, the more I think about it, the more I believe you will not die. At least, not from this potion. The key ingredient in the potion is silver. I melted down Pettigrew's silver paw..."

Remus held up his hand to stop Severus. "You what? Severus, are you mad? I lost my two best friends in the world because of that bastard. I want no part of him, none!" Remus yelled as he stood and walked towards the door.

"Wait, you need to know more about this paw!" Severus said as he stood and grabbed Remus' arm to hold him back.

Remus stopped and turned his head. He was angry. Knowing the hate he felt for Pettigrew, how could they make the potion to cure him by using anything from that man?

"That silver paw had a very important history, and one which I believe is the key to keeping you alive as this potion runs through your veins," Severus explained. "Please, let us explain it to you. If you still feel the same and wish to leave when we are finished then, we won't try to stop you."

Remus sighed and turned around. He sat once again on the armchair next to the fireplace and listened to Severus and Hermione explain to him the properties of the potion. By the time they had explained it all to him, he was amazed that they could have converted a potion that may have killed him, into something that would save his life. It was that paw, made from those coins, which in turn had been made from the Holy Grail, that would give him the chance to be a normal man once more. Ultimately, the paw had not truly belonged to Pettigrew or Voldemort.

"All right," Remus nodded. "Let's do this, then. How long will it take to know if I'll be okay?" He looked at his two friends sitting on the couch.

"Immediately. We should know as soon as you drink it. I imagine you will be in more than a little pain. It will reverse the effect of the bite you suffered as a child, and reform your werewolf genes back to human ones. Do you wish to take it in private?" asked Severus.

"No," Remus said, shaking his head. "But I'm sorry, Hermione. I would rather you not be here. You understand, don't you?" Remus hoped she would understand that he did not wish to be seen in so much pain by her. Perhaps it was just his manly pride, but if he was going to be in as much pain as Severus made it sound, he would rather not have the embarrassment of a woman watching him cry like a little girl.

"I understand. I think go look for Osiris and Crooks. They've been gone for a while. Merlin knows what havoc they might be causing." She stood and walked to Remus, and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Good luck." She smiled, and then left the two men alone.

"Well, bottoms up, as they say," said Remus. He picked up the bottle, uncorked it, and swallowed it on one gulp. He dropped the bottle as he fell to the floor.

Severus ran and knelt down beside him. "Remus!"

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

I thought I uploaded this yesterday, I'm not sure what happened. I'll post another chapter tomorrow.

We jump ahead five years and see what the gang is up to.

All canon characters belong to JKR

Thanks to June for all of her help and for being my beta.

Chapter 25

Five years later

A stranger would not have guessed that the two men were once the most feared Death Eaters amongst Voldemort's ranks. For Severus Snape, the road had been a long and difficult one. He had spent the better part of his life as a spy. He had once built walls around himself in order to keep from feeling. But one day, almost nineteen years ago, those walls slowly began to crumble. That day was when Hermione Granger came into his life for the second time.

For Lucius Malfoy, the road had not been as difficult. He had always led somewhat of a charmed life, always being able to talk his way out of any situation, especially when he waved money about. When he decided to turn from the path he had chosen as a young man and help the Order defeat the Dark Lord, he found a once lost friendship as Severus helped him along the way. In the moments when Lucius felt he might have made a mistake, Severus was there to reassure him that it was the right thing to do — if not for themselves, then for the future wizards and witches of the world.

And so here they stood — no longer Death Eaters, they were only two proud fathers preparing for their children's wedding. Severus had just finished polishing the cufflinks Hermione had given him for their fifteenth wedding anniversary, and Lucius had just finished making sure there was no lint on his cape.

"Who would have thought all those years ago, that we would be standing here awaiting a day such as this," said Severus.

"I had hoped many times in these last few years that we would," replied Lucius with a smile.

"As have I, Lucius," answered Severus, then he laughed. "I think they knew from the moment they first laid eyes on each other."

Lucius helped Severus on with his robe and patted him on the shoulder.

"I believe you are right, Severus. Come, we need to get to the Great Hall. I gather by now Odette is ready for me to perform my duty." Lucius smiled again and led the way out.

"How do you feel about doing this? I know it is not our custom, but I find that I am looking forward to doing the same thing myself." Severus followed Lucius out of his rooms.

"I will admit, I find it a bit odd," Lucius said as he gave him a sly smile and continued walking. "I feel very out of place with some of the Muggle customs, but I feel a great deal of pride. I am hesitant; it will mean that my little girl will no longer belong to me. She will be looked after by another."

Severus looked at Lucius and noticed tears filling his eyes. "He will take care of her, you know that," reassured Severus.

Lucius nodded, unable to trust his voice. Then they laughed and continued walking along the darkened corridors, slowly moving towards the upper floors.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

While the two men walked towards the Great Hall, Hermione and Rosmerta were in the Room of Requirement, making sure Odette was ready.

"You look lovely, Odette," said Hermione as she finished placing the flowers along the bottom of Odette's wedding gown. "Raven is very lucky."

Rosmerta smiled and looked at her daughter. "She is also very lucky. Raven is such a wonderful young man."

Rosmerta hugged Odette and began to cry, "I can't believe my little girl is getting married."

"Don't cry, Mum, please. You'll make me cry, and I don't want my eyes to be all puffed up," scolded Odette.

Kat came into the room holding a large floral arrangement of dark red roses; they were so dark they almost looked black. "Raven asked me to give these to you."

Odette smiled. These roses had always been her favorite. Ever since the incident all those many years ago with Bellatrix Lestrange, Raven had given her a red rose every day.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

On the first floor, just off the Great Hall, Raven stood in front of a large mirror. Vladimir stood next to him with his arms crossed. Raven looked at him over his shoulder.

"Well, how do I look?" Raven asked.

"Not bad, but you know she'd marry you even if you were wearing one of those Muggle chicken costumes." The younger wizard approached his raven-haired friend and placed a very dark rose on the lapel of his robe, the same place where a buttonhole would be on a Muggle tuxedo.

"So you and Kat?" Raven smirked as he looked down at his friend.

Vladimir smiled and stood back. "You know how your sister is. I can't say no to her. Besides, I get the feeling she might have hexed me if I didn't say yes." They laughed, then looked at each other in the mirror one more time. "Seriously, though. I'm mad about her. I would never feel right being with anyone else. Marrying your sister will be the happiest day of my life. I guess that's how you feel about Odette. ."

Raven nodded, then turned quickly as he heard the door behind him open. Severus came in and smiled. He looked over to Vladimir, "Vlad, may I have a moment with my son?"

Vladimir nodded, then walked out. He knew he needed to be at the Great Hall, getting ready for the wedding to begin.

Severus approached his son. He couldn't believe Raven would soon be married. His little boy had grown into a tall handsome man.

"Well, this is it, then. Are you nervous?" asked Severus.

"Nervous and a bit scared," admitted the young man as he nodded and took a deep breath.

"I know. It's a big step, but it will be worth it, you shall see." Severus smiled and patted his son on the shoulder.

