

The New Headmaster

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Headmaster Snape's first day at Hogwarts.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Lucius Malfoy noticed he was slouching again. He straightened his spine and forced his shoulders back. A house-elf working near his feet cringed at the sudden movement. Lucius sneered down his nose at it.

A whole pack of the creatures swarmed the room, but he wasn't allowed to abuse any of them. These were Hogwarts house-elves, and they now answered to his friend, Severus Snape, the new Headmaster of Hogwarts. Severus directed the elves in packing up the detritus left by the previous Headmaster. More elves crowded through the door, moving in Snape's possessions which had been stuffed in a dungeon store room after his flight over a month ago. The victim of that incident appeared to be asleep in his portrait on the wall behind the desk.

Severus was crouched behind that desk, pulling open drawers and emptying their contents into a large box by his side. Lucius wondered if his friend was pleased with his new position. It wasn't always easy to tell.

"Are you planning to decorate with those atrocities from your Potions office?" Lucius asked.

Severus smirked. "Do you think they'd do a better job in this office towards encouraging proper behaviour?"

"Draco hated them," Lucius said.

"Draco had no reason to fear them."

What was left unsaid were all the other things the Malfoys had to fear now that they were out of favour.

Severus muttered an oath into the depths of the bottom desk drawer. He reached deep inside the drawer which clearly had been expanded. His arms seemed to extend below the level of the floor.

"Narcissa sends her regards," Lucius finally said.

Severus grunted and pulled from the depths a dusty paper bag on which the crumpled label of Honeydukes could be seen. He unrolled the top and peered inside. With a look of disgust, he crushed the bag back down and dropped it in the bin beside the desk. Several other Honeydukes bags had already suffered the same fate.

"How is she coping?" Severus asked. He aimed his wand into the drawer and muttered *Scourgify*."

"For the most part she remains in our rooms. We've moved Draco back into the nursery next door and given his far superior room to Dolohov."

"Does Dolohov find his view of the rose gardens soothing?" Snape asked.

"I haven't asked," Lucius said shortly.

"And what about you, Lucius?" Severus continued. "How's your back?"

"I still have trouble with muscle tightness. Of all the things Azkaban destroyed, I miss my posture the most," he joked. "The beds are simply criminal."

Severus smiled in a show of appreciation for Lucius' humour. He understood Lucius' need to make light of his stay in prison.

"This afternoon I should have some free time to make some more of your ointment. I can owl it to you after dinner."

"Can you do something about the smell? Narcissa complains she can't abide to be near me and has ruined her skin trying to wash it off her hands."

They shared a knowing grin. "I suppose I could substitute eucalyptus for the menthol and add a little spearmint." Severus replied. "It won't be as effective," he warned. "You'll need to have Narcissa apply more, and more often."

"Narcissa takes her wifely duties very seriously. I'm sure it won't be a problem."

At least, not with a silencing spell on the nursery door, Lucius added silently.

"I'll make a double batch then, shall I?" Severus asked.

"As long as it will keep," Lucius agreed.

"Of course it will," Severus replied. "Now, if you don't mind, the sooner this office is sorted, the sooner I can start your ointment."

Lucius gave his regards and swept from the Headmaster's office. The house-elves fell silent and still, watching Severus who had followed Lucius to the door. They all listened until the circular stairs ground to a halt.

The silence was broken by elf voices and portrait voices, clamouring for Severus' attention.

"Silence!" he barked and peered out the door to make certain Lucius was truly gone.

"Phineas, when was the last time you visited your other portrait?" he asked the former Headmaster.

"Three days ago, and there was nothing," Phineas replied.

"Go now and check again. Don't let anyone see you, but stay long enough to be certain."

Phineas nodded and left his frame.

"Everard, I want you to spend some time at the ministry. Visit as many portraits as you can and listen to what people are saying."

Everard also left without speaking.

Severus directed his attention to the remaining portraits. "Do I need to reiterate the confidentiality of the Headmaster's office?" he asked.

A chorus of offended voices replied, "Of course not!" and "Don't be ridiculous!"

"So help me Merlin, if anyone breathes a word to the likes of Sir Cadogan, turpentine will be the least of your worries," he snarled.

More protestations came from the portraits as he turned his gaze down to the elves clustered around his legs.

"Mindy," he singled out an older elf who was trying to urge her charges back to work. "Make sure all of this makes it into storage safely, then assemble all the elves in the main kitchen. There are more changes coming to Hogwarts, and I want to make certain everyone is prepared. I'll be down in an hour."

Mindy shooed the younger elves back to their task, and they rushed back to the boxes.

Severus returned to the desk and gave the portrait on the wall behind it a glance before sitting down. He glimpsed a cracked eyelid on the painted face before turning his back to the wall. Silently he waited for the elves to leave.

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