

Destiny

by potteresque_ire

Written for the Truth Or Dare Challenge during Potter Place Chat; prompts from Dracontia: *ambiguous, centaur, shitfaced*. Told in Firenze's perspective, this scene took place after Severus Snape had learned about his last assignment from Dumbledore.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Firenze knew he shouldn't be here. He should have returned to his kin among the Forest, to his haven isolated from the woes in this world where battle cries and mournful wails were mere sighs against the rustling of leaves, where scorching blazes and blinding curses faded to shadows against the stars singing their words of wisdom in the horizon.

Yet here he stood, in the shards of silence that had once reigned this nightly hour in the Great Hall. His hands cradled a tumbler of Firewhiskey, the amber spirit surging as he swirled the glass, its crystalline warmth clinging onto the walls like the lingering train of sixteen years of fragile peace.

Suffering would soon descend once more among the wizardkind. The stars had spoken of it, but they had never been so ambiguous about the outcome. They had whispered of a power that would crumble at its own infliction, of a hero who would fall only to rise again.

And in between the Light and the Dark, they pointed to a sliver of grey that held the balance – a lone existence in the crevice between good and evil, volatile yet strong enough to temporarily fend the forces before they collapsed upon it; a hardened soul, impenetrable, yet void of the very essence required for its sustenance.

The shadow beside him groaned and stirred in its drunken slumber, startling Firenze from his thoughts. The Potions master had been found at the edge of the Forest where a band of students, who had found him in a Muggle bar earlier in the evening, were binding him against a tree, mocking his intoxication with vulgarities and invectives.

What was the term again? Yes, *shitfaced*.

Firenze shook his head sadly and studied carefully the man known as Severus Snape. Moonlight cascaded through the window, caressing the pallid skin as it shrouded the black robe with a gentle glow. The starched collar was, for once, unbuttoned, revealing an Adam's apple that fluttered ever so slightly at every breath, delicate beneath skin marked by feathers of age lines.

He was human, after all. His coldness betrayed a life devoid of warmth, his steely demeanor a necessary shield for one who had been his own, sole defender.

At that moment, Firenze understood. He saw the destiny that had befallen on the shoulders before him, on lean muscles always taut in daylight to carry the burden of the past. For once, he wanted to curse the heavens, for its injustice, for its cruelty.

He downed the Firewhiskey, blaming his tears on the suffocating heat that chased down his throat as his hooves once again echoed against the hard wooden floors.

He was a centaur. It was not his place to question, or to interfere.

It was his fate to step away.

So he did. As the oak doors closed behind him, Firenze realized that despite his kind had yearned for knowledge about this world, it had long since elected to abandon it.

In doing so, it had committed the utmost betrayal; in doing so, it had proven itself to be a beast, bestowed with intelligence but not the humanity that ultimately made a man.

Darkness fell upon him, blinding him with the unknown.

He could never study the stars again.

~ *Finis*