

I'll Be There

by livvy6

Severus had his Lily. Alissa had her Severus.

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 18

Severus had his Lily. Alissa had her Severus.

□

Alissa Devon

As long as I'm living

I'll be waiting

as long as I'm breathing

I'll be there

whenever you call me

I'll be waiting

whenever you need me

I'll be there

"I'll Be Waiting" by Lenny Kravitz

She ran swiftly into the fray, dodging a hailstorm of red and green flashes. She jumped and weaved her way through the masses of dead bodies and the screaming wounded. The ear piercing shrieks drowned out everything she could hear, except for the voice in her head pushing her on. She could not care...could not stop.

Finally, her luck ran out. The sky was aflame with the rising sun, blinding her temporarily, but years of intuition and skill did not stop her reflexes from defending herself against her unknown assailants. She worked her way through, shifting from side to side, fighting with a wand in each hand. There were two Death Eaters, snarling and cursing at her, directly in her path.

"Lying bitch!"

"Traitorous whore!"

She took them both on with the ease and fluid motion with which she had been taught long ago. She would *not* stop...she *must* go on and get a Healer...a mediwitch. After threatening to kill the Granger girl, she couldn't let them down now. She was so exhausted, her muscles screamed for rest and relief, but she could not...*must not stop!* She continued battling but knew she was only draining her resources fighting this way.

She focused and then pooled all her energies to the center and blasted the Death Eaters from her. Their bodies exploded, blood falling down upon her like scarlet rain. She turned and ran into the castle and made her way into the Great Hall amidst the groans and cries for help. She stalked past the bloodied arms and hands that reached out towards her billowing robes. She paid them no mind. She saw Madam Pomfrey and grabbed her by the arm.

"Get your kit and come with me," she said calmly.

The mediwitch looked at her as if she were mad.

"Are you wounded, girl? You can talk...you're not so bad. Healers from Mungo's are on their way, you can wait..."

"NO!" she barked as she seized her arm. "You are coming with me. I have someone who is dying, and he needs your help!"

The mediwitch lost her temper and jerked back her arm. "Look around you! THEY ARE ALL DYING!" she screamed.

She furiously turned from the mediwitch and snatched a bag, rifling through the mediwitch's supplies of medicines, potions, and bandages, taking what she needed. She saw Molly Weasley weeping over what looked like a lifeless son. *Well, he is dead. Severus is not!* she thought grimly.

She stalked over and shoved the medical bag into her arms. Molly looked up at the woman as if she were the twin of Bellatrix Lestrange.

"You come with me. You know about mediwizardry, do you not?" she asked curtly.

"Who are you?" she spat at the disturbed-looking woman. A man...her husband, Arthur, from what she recalled, placed a protective arm around her.

"You know me as 'Ivette.' A look of surprise came over their faces. She knew there would be questions, but there was no time. She pointed at Molly. "You come with me...NOW! I have the Granger girl at the Shrieking Shack."

"Oh, no, Hermione! What happened?" Molly cried out.

"Nagini bit her," she lied.

She screamed, and Arthur held her up. "I'm Arthur. I was bitten by that snake once; you'll need a specific type of anti-venin." He was rifling through the bag, murmuring his approval of the contents.

"I'll go to the dungeons. You have your wife at the main gates with the bag. She must be prepared to fight her way back to the Whomping Willow. Death Eaters are about," she warned matter-of-factly.

She stalked off and began racing down to the potions storeroom. She prayed the wards would still be up. If they were down, that would mean Severus was dead and all of this would have been for naught. She reached the door and the wards were mercifully up, but unfortunately far too complex for her to puzzle out.

"Son-of-a-bitch!" she muttered. She backed up and braced herself.

"*REDUCTO MAXIMUS!*" she screamed.

She was blown across the hallway, crashing into the stone wall behind her. She staggered upright, bleeding from the back of her head. She shook it off and stumbled towards the storeroom. The wards were just as difficult. She cursed Severus' damn paranoia! She stood to the side in order to pull the blast out and not destroy any potions inside and repeated her spell, her hand guiding the force outward. The door blasted apart; bits of flying wood crashed everywhere. She shielded herself the best she could, and when the dust settled, she got down to business.

"*ACCIO ANTI-VENIN!*"

Bottles soared towards her, and she deftly caught them, reducing them down to a reasonable size. She dashed her way back towards the main gates and found Molly and Arthur waiting. They were arguing over who was going.

"Shut it! I need someone who can help with healing. I'll do the fighting! Now move your arse!" she growled at Molly. She sized up Arthur. It would not do for the Weasley clan to lose both parents in one day.

She spoke with Arthur. "You stay with your dead. I sincerely hope that you will mourn only one son this day."

She marched out onto the battlefield with Molly at her back. It was an easy trek. The battle had now shifted towards the south, but the road was littered with the dead. Molly weaved her way through. She gasped at how the woman in front of her mindlessly stepped on the dead bodies without a care. She paused at the entrance and pushed Molly through, and they went as fast as they could into the Shack.

Mrs. Weasley screamed and dropped the bag when she saw Snape on the floor. Hermione was covered in his blood.

"Is he alive, girl?" the woman demanded harshly.

"Only just...the Coagulating spell you placed on him just wore off. He needs more help than I can give him!" Hermione said impatiently.

The woman grabbed Molly and threw her down on the floor next to Hermione. Molly began administering the Blood Replenishing Potion and bandaging his wounds. The strange woman started to take out all the bottles of anti-venin. With each bottle, Hermione's eyes grew larger and larger.

"W-what do you expect me to do with all this?" Hermione stammered.

She grabbed the girl by the front of her robes. "Are you not the cleverest witch of your generation? Lord knows I heard enough about what *aimsufferable know-it-all* you are...well, it's time to prove it!" She threw her from her and ordered for her and Molly to get back to work. She conjured a stretcher and waited for them to get him stabilized. She paced the floor in her impatience. The women were muttering to themselves as they worked on Snape. Molly and Hermione were both terrified of the woman. She obviously was a Death Eater; her robes were proof of that!

"Well, Dumbledore told us 'Ivette' was a spy like Professor Snape, and that is why she cares so!" Hermione deduced softly as she swiftly examined all the various bottles of anti-venin.

"Spy, indeed! He turned on the Order the day he murdered Dumbledore!" Molly's voice was becoming louder as she spoke.

The woman had stopped pacing and she hovered over the women in rage. "Oh, shut it, you stupid cow! Don't talk about things of which you have no understanding!" the woman snarled.

"I just don't know how we are going to get him back into the castle safely!" Hermione argued, trying to get the woman to face the matter at hand. "The fighting has been so

fierce!"

Molly was angry, but the woman did not care. "Damn traitor! Why I'm wasting my precious time on this sorry bastard..." she muttered.

The woman reached down, grabbed her, and pulled her face close to hers. She was wild, her black hair drenched in blood, her face streaked with even more of the dried crimson fluid. She looked positively certifiable.

"Listen, you cunt! This man means more to me than anything on this earth, and if he dies because of your ineptitude or your grouching about...wasting time in the process...I *will* kill you!" she threatened.

Hermione pulled Molly back down to work. The young witch's eyes were full of fear and concern for her best friend's mother. They worked furiously and silently, pouring various potions down Snape's gullet while the strange woman, "Ivette," resumed pacing back and forth, her wand spitting flames from the end, she was so overwrought. Finally, Molly put her head to Snape's chest and slightly shook her head. Hermione tore the professor's pants, placed her hand firmly at the femoral artery near his groin, and announced, "There's a pulse, but he needs immediate attention!"

"Let's move him now!" Molly said as she levitated him onto the stretcher.

The woman dashed in from of them and guarded their way, looking back every now and again in concern, entrusting them with the most precious person in her life...her very heart.

The battle had shifted even further towards the south, near the Forest. She led them to the gates, levitating the dead out of their path, where the Healers had arrived and immediately began to work on him.

She grabbed Hermione roughly by her upper arm and said, "My name is Alissa Devon. The only people who even know about my existence are dead or dying: Dumbledore, Moody, and Remus. I don't know if Minerva is alive...but Severus...he worked with me to thwart Tom. I don't give a shite about what anyone says about me being a killer or a Death Eater. However, I **DO** care what people say about HIM. He was no killer. I am the killer. I am the one to be held responsible. Therefore, you can hate me all you want. But don't you **DARE** let him die! Otherwise, I **WILL** hunt you down, and I **WILL** kill you!" Her grip on the young girl was lethal. Hermione was terrified. She truly believed she would.

She walked out of the gates. Hermione called out to her, "Where are you going?"

She yelled back to her as she continued to walk away. "To finish what I started. I need to make sure that bastard dies! Tell Severus I love him."

Then she stalked out back towards the south, back into the fray. Hermione watched her as her cloak and Death Eater weeds billowed in the wind. Her bloodied, black hair was flying madly about her. Hermione had to find McGonagall. She had to know who this woman was and why Professor Snape was so important that she would risk her life and threaten the lives of others for him.

A/N: A thought came to me one day. What if Snape had a girl who was just as in love with him as he was with Lily (or obsessed, however you see it). How would she be? How would that love change her over the years, knowing the one she loved, loved another? Up next: the beginning of it all. Please review!

Seven Years

Chapter 2 of 18

A first-year Gryffindor sees something that will change her life forever.

□

How did I love you?

There was no measuring

Far above this dirty world

Far above everything

In your tower over it

You were clean...

For seven years

I bowed down

To touch the ground

So wholly your devotee

You were

All that I could see

"Seven Years" by Natalie Merchant

October, 1976

Blazes of shimmering red fired out into the night sky. It was near curfew, and a first year stood wide-eyed, mouth gaping open at the sight she saw. She didn't understand why the big boys were fighting. One boy was thin, almost painfully so, but had long black hair that whipped about his face as he whirled and swiveled his body in graceful movements. The other boy had shorter black hair and was tanned. He was built strong and tall and moved with the strength of an athlete. His movements were calculated, just like the other long-haired, pale boy, but without the grace and style that called to the little first-year. She could not stop watching the lithe form of the pallid boy with his lanky black hair. Finally, an older Gryffindor student saw her mesmerized and chided her to get inside. She grabbed the little girl's pale hand and pulled her away from the sight and back into the castle.

"Ella, what was that? Why were those big boys fighting?" the little girl asked later as she slipped her nightgown over her head.

Ella sighed tiredly as she helped her find her sleeves. "They always fight, love. Just stay out of their way. Don't worry. They'll be gone in one more year."

"Who *are* they?" she asked with wide-eyed interest.

Ella brushed out the little girl's long black hair. "Why do you want to know?" she asked, trying to sway her away from the conversation.

"The one boy, I've seen him around. *Everybody* is a'scared of him. But I think it's because he makes mean faces."

Ella smiled in spite of herself. "His name is Severus Snape, and he is a Slytherin. So you don't go sticking your pert nose into his business, young miss. He'll feed you to the pet snakes they have in their common room!" Her eyes grew big in a way to scare the young girl.

"Ohhh! But he has hair like mine." She looked down at her own limp black hair. Black. "It's not easy having black hair, you know," she said sadly.

"Do you feel sorry for him?" asked Ella.

"Well, I keep seeing him duel with the same boy a lot, and sometimes another boy joins in! And that's not fair!" she exclaimed.

"Hmmm. I guess you are right," Ella said matter-of-factly. "But there are a lot of things in this life that aren't fair. What if I told you that sometimes Snape starts the fights?"

"Why would he start a fight with two boys at once?" she asked doubtfully.

"Well, you just said, it isn't two-on-one all the time. Most of the time, it is one-on-one."

"Who's the other boy?"

"James Potter."

"A Gryffindor! He's a seeker!"

"That's right."

"I wonder why they fight so much," she said as she yawned.

"Let's get you in bed!" chided Ella as she helped the girl under her covers.

"Is it wrong to feel bad for Snape?" asked the little girl quietly.

"I don't think it's ever wrong to feel compassion for someone. You just have to learn to keep it in perspective."

Ella smiled at the dark-haired girl as she closed her dark brown eyes. *First years! So innocent and eager to decide what's right and what's wrong!*

The little girl went into the Great Hall for breakfast the next day and kept an eye out for Severus Snape. She was curious about him. He had long, straight, black hair like she had, and he knew how to duel like a grown wizard! She liked that. She wanted to learn how to duel like that, as well. If she knew how to duel, maybe then the boys would stop teasing her and calling her names. She strained her neck down the table and looked at James Potter. He had black hair too, but it wasn't straight. It was always mussy, but he knew how to duel... *No, he's popular*, she thought. *He doesn't understand what it's like to not be liked.*

She decided she was going to watch them and learn what she could about real wizard dueling. She kept her head down but her eyes and ears open. The following week she got her wish.

She was hiding under a tree, where she couldn't be detected easily, when the sixth years came out from class. Sure enough, James Potter and Severus Snape started to argue. Another dark-haired boy got into the mix, and the three of them started to duel. She got up angrily and stalked over to where they were and stood as close as she dared to the fray.

"Oy!" said the one dark-haired boy. "Okay, we've got a first year here. Knock it off, *Snivellus!*"

"And why should I? Isn't she one of your precious Gryffindors? I'm sure with time you'll be teaching her how to hex people behind their backs as well!" Snape snarled.

She walked over towards Snape, and he looked down menacingly at the little girl.

"What?" he barked.

"I didn't think it was fair. I mean there are two of them and only one of you," she said meekly.

At this, the one dark-haired boy doubled over with laughter. "So, Snively, *finally* got a girlfriend?" His dark eyes glittering maliciously as he laughed.

"You are *disgusting*, Black!" he retorted. Then he jerked his head and glowered at the young girl.

"Why do you care, little cub? Go run off with your little Gryffindor friends." He leaned down close to her face. "Don't you know that I eat little Gryffindor girls for my dinner?" he said in a sinister voice.

She squeaked and felt more scared than in her whole life. She glanced at James Potter and his friend. They were looking at the exchange with fascination.

She swallowed and got up her Gryffindor courage and said, "You have long black hair like me. And you're pale like me. It's not easy having black hair and being pale." She felt like an idiot, and he looked at her as if she were one.

She turned around and pointed her wand at her fellow Gryffindors. "I only think it's fair if you're going to duel that you do it fairly," she stated in her bravest voice.

The Gryffindors started to laugh, and Snape growled at her and made his exit quickly. The big boys knelt down and introduced themselves.

"I'm Potter, this here is Black. You are a very brave little witch!" James said condescendingly, but to the young girl it was a compliment, and she felt a surge of pride.

"It's true you know," said Black animatedly. *'Snivellus* does eat little firsties for his dinner. He's a very, very, bad person. You stay away from him," he warned as he shook a finger at her.

The boys took her by her hands and led her back to the castle.

"Whatever possessed you to do what you did?" asked James.

"I don't think it's right. Snape fights alone and you two have each other. Once, I saw another boy with you. Three against one...that's not fair!"

The boys grinned above her head.

"Okay, sweetie," said James. "From now on, it'll be one-on-one. Promise!"

Black stooped down to her height again. "You don't have a little crush on Snivellus, do you?" he asked teasingly.

"Eew! He's a boy!" exclaimed the little girl as she took off running into the castle.

James and Sirius cracked up laughing.

October 1977

The little girl went into her second year even more fascinated by the angry-looking young wizard. She kept on watching the duels between him and James Potter, and true to James' word, there were no more two against one dueling.

The second year knew that the dark young man was not handsome, but when he dueled, he was so elegant and powerful that his physical appearance didn't matter. It made him beautiful to her. He had a presence that pulled her in. James Potter was an excellent duelist himself, but he was so vastly different: virile and masculine in his movements. Snape was fluid in motion, a harnessed power that threatened to release at any moment. They were very well suited dueling partners. It was just a shame they hated each other so much! Together, they could have been a formidable match against anyone...

The little Gryffindor he had strangely acquired was not lost on Snape. He knew she watched him, and he knew she was trying to memorize the patterns and hexes he and Potter used on one another. He saw Potter, Black, Lupin, and Pettigrew talking to her about keeping away, but she was too drawn in. He smirked inwardly at times as he snarled at her outwardly.

One day, he was walking outside when he came upon the young girl. She was alone and by the edge of the Forest. She had her wand, and he could see she was trying to practice dueling movements. He stood still and watched her. She would try to lunge and move in a way that was strangely familiar to him. He frowned. *What on earth?* he thought. Then he chortled. *Well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!* It felt good that she looked up to him, but it was just a little girl curiosity. He had to admire her guts, though, as a Gryffindor to trail him, a Slytherin, and a vile Slytherin at that! Unfortunately, he was not as cautious as he should have been. Another set of beady eyes were watching as well...

"Little cub," Snape called.

She stopped, flashing her wand. He'd scared her!

He came out, and she started blushing. Of course, he had been watching her pitiful attempts at dueling.

"Here, it's like this," he said softly, taking pity on her.

He stood behind her, took her wand hand in his, and the young girl felt a shiver down her spine as he covered her hand in his to poise it correctly. He then stood behind her as he showed her how to plant her feet firmly on the ground. He showed her some basic steps, lunges, and such. She beamed at him.

"Look, if you are going to do something, you should do it correctly!" he snapped. He was unnerved by how she looked at him *Good Lord, she has a crush on me!* he thought exasperatedly.

The next day he was walking across the Quad and saw a group of boys surrounding someone and laughing. He usually did not pay attention to what the younger dunderheads did for entertainment, but he caught a glimpse of black hair, and a feeling of dread came over him. The boys were not allowing whoever was in the middle free. They were jeering and laughing. He came closer and loomed over them. There was the little cub, crying. They were making fun of her, calling her names, telling her she was ugly. She was clutching her books tightly, and her head hung while her shoulders shook from her sobs.

"Having a bit of fun, boys?" he said darkly.

They turned, and when they saw him, they turned white with fear.

"It never ceases to amaze me how Gryffindors can be *sobrave*," he sneered. "It does take so much fortitude for four boys to gang up and humiliate a little girl. Is that what they refer to as 'Gryffindor courage?'"

They stood stock still until he bent down and whispered, "This is the part where you run before I hex you all so badly your mothers won't even recognize your pathetic hides!"

They scrambled to get away and now he was faced with her! He rolled his eyes and produced a handkerchief. She took it gratefully and wiped her eyes.

"T-t-thank y-you," she stammered through her sobs.

"Stop sniveling, girl!" he said harshly. Her tears were starting to annoy him. He thought she would stop crying at the command of his voice, but instead she cried harder. He rolled his eyes again, grabbed her by the crook of her arm, and dragged her into an alcove. He bent down to her level and said, "Stop this now! There is no one here that is going to hurt you. The boys are gone. They were only calling you names for Merlin's sake! Now if they had jinxed or hexed you repeatedly, then I could understand the water works!"

She nodded and got control of her crying. She flung herself onto him and hugged him.

He was deeply touched at the sweetness of her nature. She was a very honest and loving soul. He finally extricated himself from her grasp and looked into her eyes, "You pay them no mind. But if they corner you again, just do this." He showed her a simple, but effective, simple Stinging hex. She looked at him with hero worship. *She has to stop doing that!* he thought as he stood up, scowling at her.

"Get on with you!" he snapped at her. She ran off and he went back to his business. Now if he could only get a certain seventeen-year-old girl to look at him like that, then life may not be so cruel!

Finally, one evening, he had had enough. The girl had been trailing his every move since that day in the Quad. It was getting just ridiculous! He turned around and called her out. She thought she had been clever enough to follow him without being discovered.

"Come out and play, little cub," he crooned softly.

It was an eerie and terrifying call. She decided to come out anyway; he already knew she was there. She just couldn't help it. He was like a mighty force. He was not handsome, but he was powerful. She was drawn to him. Then there had been the day he had put his hand on hers and stood behind her to teach her to duel. The feelings were so intense; she knew she would always want to be in his orbit.

He stood towering above her frowning. "*Obviously*, my earlier threat when we first met did not seem to register. Is there a mental deficiency amongst Gryffindors? Why must you dog my every step, you silly girl? Don't you have enough sense to be terrified of me?"

"I'm not afraid," she said clearly.

"Why not? *Clearly*, everyone else in this castle despises me, *especially* females. What are you, some type of anomaly?" His tone was unmistakably sarcastic.

"I know why girls don't like you," she whispered.

His eyes glared at the impertinent girl, and he stepped up close to tower over her slight form in an attempt to intimidate her. "Oh, really, little cub? Why do girls not like me?"

"Because you have black hair. Boys don't like me either. My hair is long and slick like yours. It's straight, dark, and boys only like lighter hair. I've noticed. Red, blonde, brown, but not black. The girls only like black hair if it's not so straight and if you have a tan to offset it. *And we're pale!*" She glanced around and whispered to him, "The boys tease me. They think I'm part vampire, and it hurts my feelings."

Snape crossed his arms and gave a snort. "You are far too sensitive, little cub. People are cruel and vicious. *on purpose!*" He lifted her chin up with one long white finger. He examined her face, looking at her features. "You'll be pretty one day. Unfortunately, I shall never be handsome. The boys shall stop their teasing about you being a vampiress, and then you'll be glad you have snuck around trying to learn my hexes off of Potter's backside."

Her mouth flew open to retort.

"Silence!" he snapped. "Don't think about lying to me. I don't know what game you are playing, little cub, but it shan't work! Now, why are you so hell-bent on trailing my every move, and don't give me any nonsense about complexions! I want the truth, and if you lie to me, I will find out the truth. I have my ways. I don't care if you are a sniveling second year! I don't trust any Gryffindors!"

"I like how you move when you duel. You are a very good duelist. I liked what you showed me in the Forest. I would very much like to learn how you do what you do. And I wasn't lying before! You stopped those boys from calling me names and rescued me. Besides, when you duel, you move so well, and it *calls* to me," she said earnestly.

There was no need for Legilimency. The little girl was drawn to the dark. A criminal-like smile appeared on his face. A little Gryffindor cub attracted to the dark arts at such a young age. It was very appealing. But, she was just a girl.

He knelt down and looked into her eyes. "If I promise when you are old enough to learn, I will instruct you in how to duel like a proper witch, will you swear to stop following me and also stop watching Potter and I fight?" he asked.

"Why *do* you fight?" she pressed.

Snape shook his head. "That is neither here nor there. Besides, it's none of your business! Now do you and I have a deal?" he asked.

"We-ll," she drew out carefully. "That depends on what 'old enough' is."

He smiled genuinely this time. "A very Slytherin response. I'm impressed, little cub."

He tapped his lips with a finger. "I shall come to you during your sixth year. If you are still interested, then I shall train you. I highly doubt you shall receive any true formal training in this place," he said derisively.

"This is on your word?" she pressed.

"My word is my bond," he said solemnly. "But shall you require an Unbreakable Vow?" he added sarcastically.

"No," she laughed.

"Well, I guess I will see you in four years then," she said sadly.

"What is your name, little cub?"

"Alissa Devon."

A/N: Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant. Please review!

I Am The One

Chapter 3 of 18

Severus Snape begins teaching at Hogwarts and becomes Alissa Devon's lover. He abruptly ends their affair and her reaction is one Snape never expected.

I've seen you cry

into the night

I feel your pain

can I make it right?

I realize

there's no end in sight

yet still I wait

for you to see the light...

"I'll Be Waiting" Lenny Kravitz

September, 1981

"Alissa!" a blonde girl squealed, dashing through the Hogwarts Platform, pushing people aside and weaving her way to her best friend. Her face was flushed and she was out of breath.

"Julia!" Alissa cried as she grasped the young woman's arms. "What is it? You're all flushed!"

Julia was gasping for air. "Slughorn is gone! You *won't* believe who is taking his place this year!"

"Who?" Alissa asked incredulously.

"Severus Snape!"

Alissa's eyes popped open. "No!" Then she recalled the promise he made so long ago that in her sixth year, if she were still interested, he would teach her how to duel. She kept silent and allowed herself to be led, her thoughts racing madly. She had missed him so! It had been terrible coming back for her third year with him gone. She had cried for months until she forced herself to believe what he had promised. He *would* come back to train her. Perhaps by then, she had thought, she would be old enough and pretty enough to capture his attention. It was what she lived on for the next three years.

"I can't believe they've allowed him to teach!" Julia exclaimed. "He has the vilest reputation. Some people claim he is a Death Eater! Even that he works closely with You-Know-Who! You remember when that one Death Eater, Igor...something, named him with a whole slew of them during his testimony at the inquiry a couple of years ago? It was only by Dumbledore's word that he was saved from Azkaban!" she whispered.

Interesting! Alissa thought. "Well, let's see how old Snape has been these past years!" she said jokingly.

Julia was aghast. "I don't know how you can be so flip, Alissa. Sure, we went to school with him, but we were little kids, and he was such *aasty git!* I have seen him...oh! There he is...*Sweet Merlin*, he is positively wretched looking!" she whispered to her friend.

Alissa stared at the figure stationed at the castle gates. He had changed. Not that he was ever was particularly jovial or handsome...but now there was a hardness to his face that had not been there before.

He was tall, taller than she remembered, thin, and had an unforgiving face that was brutal to behold. His eyes were cold and angry, and his face was as pale as death. He looked at the students all as if they were nothing more than vermin. He did not recognize Alissa, per se, just noted her blatant stare as she passed him by, and he narrowed his eyes and glowered at her like she were just any other student. Julia swallowed a scream and took off, dragging Alissa with her.

N.E.W.T. level classes for sixth-year Potions were tense to say the least. It had to be difficult to teach students who could still recall you being a fellow classmate themselves. As Alissa worked on her potion, he came to her and whispered, "Miss Devon, after class, please." Then he strode off to find another Gryffindor to terrorize.

After class, she went into his office. He shut the door, placed his wards, and cast a Silencing Spell.

"I have summoned you here to make good my offer. To a bloody Gryffindor, no less!" He smirked at first, but as he looked more intently on her, his face became much sadder.

"You have grown up, although not completely. What are you, sixteen now?" he asked tiredly.

"In three weeks, I shall be of Legal Wizarding Age," Alissa said happily.

"So, not a little cub anymore?" he said in a heartbreaking tone that struck her right down the middle. He seemed to be sad that she wasn't a little second-year anymore. She felt like she had let him down by growing up. This was not how it was supposed to be! She was an adult now...well, in three weeks, anyway! He was supposed to be attracted to her...she wasn't a baby! She had a woman's body now; she was no longer a little cub!

"I'm looking forward to your helping me learn how to duel like a proper witch should," Alissa shot back.

He sank back into his chair. "Why?" he asked with a sigh.

"I want to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. I know there will be an opening coming up for an apprenticeship at Durmstrang in a couple years, and I want *it badly*." She took a risk and blurted out, "I also know you have some influence amongst the powers that be there. I think I could do far, far, worse than having you as my instructor and mentor," she finished confidently.

His face fixed into a tight look of concentration. He was silent for a long time.

"I noticed a call to the dark that concerned me, Miss Devon. How deep does your interest into Dark Magic go?" he asked finally.

"Only to the point of wanting to contain it as much as it can be contained. One can never eradicate the Dark, just as no one can eradicate the Light. A twisted mind justifies that they need each other. I prefer to think of it as an evil that must be respected, but dealt with aggressively whenever it manifests itself."

"Well said, Miss Devon," Snape replied coolly. "Although I may not completely agree with your belief, you are impassioned and determined. Let us see how well you are able to harness your mind. We shall begin after the Halloween festivities. So much going on at the beginning of the term, you see. I must figure out a plan. You are dismissed."

"Thank you, sir," Alissa replied as she left.

After she left, Snape stared off into the distance after her, his fingers steepled in front of his face. Why couldn't she just stay a child forever*Will she have to be another one I am forced to kill or watch be killed?*

It was Heaven and it was Hell. Alissa wanted to rejoice, but she felt the anguish that was being howled out in the bowels of the castle.

It was October 31st, 1981.

He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was no more.

The Potters were dead. But little Harry Potter lived! He vanquished the Dark Lord!

But Lily was dead.

Alissa went to her room and put on her black dress robes and charmed her hair with her wand to make it fuller and wavy. She planned to go to the dungeons with her eyes blackened and sad. But no jewelry. It would not do. He would be in a desperate way. She wanted him to know she desired to share in his grief. She knew about Lily. She had made it her business to know everything she could about about Severus Snape. She loved him. She'd loved him since that first day when she was a first-year and saw him dueling with Potter and Black...*oh! James!...how could it all end so suddenly?* She dropped her brush and it crashed onto her vanity. She closed her eyes and stifled a cry with her hands. She wanted to bawl her eyes out for the Potters, but she would have to wait. She would cry later. Now, there was an old friend who had lost someone he had loved very much.

She walked boldly to his private quarters and knocked loudly. He must have expected someone else because he wrenched the door open and let loose a torrent of curse words that made her go fairly cross-eyed!

And he had been drinking. Well, not a lot as of yet, but it didn't look like he was stopping anytime soon.

He was silent and let her walk in. She felt his eyes trail over her.

"Why are you here?" he demanded coldly.

"You are in pain. I just want to be here for you. No one should be alone when they are suffering," she answered sadly.

He dropped his glass, letting it shatter on the floor, and stalked towards her. She backed up into the cold stone wall at her back and allowed him to press himself against her.

"How old are you now?" he whispered softly.

"Seventeen," she replied evenly.

"You look so...different," he whispered softly as he leaned in closer to sniff her perfume.

Her breathing stopped and she was overcome by his closeness. She closed her eyes and inhaled unevenly. He shifted slightly towards her face. His black eyes were on her; she could sense it. She felt his breath on her mouth. She swallowed and moistened her lips. Then he withdrew from her.

"Good. You'll come to my bed tonight," he said silkily. He grabbed her hand and led her to his bedroom.

"You've been crying," Alissa said with concern.

"How astute! Ten points to Gryffindor!" he said sardonically.

He pushed her down on his bed and asked roughly, "Why are you here?"

"You're hurting so much. I just want to help in whatever way I can," she answered quietly.

He stood up straight and folded his arms across his chest. "Fine, take off your clothes," he said in a clipped tone.

He looked fairly stunned when she began to do so.

He slowly started to strip off his clothes. "You realize this does not mean a relationship?" he asked.

Alissa nodded. She knew exactly what she was doing.

"You're hurting, you're in pain. Let me be your friend," she said calmly.

That night he took her into his arms and took everything he could take. She gave everything she could give.

He was in a frenzy of need. There was absolutely no rhyme or reason to anything he tried. He would start to approach her in one way and back off. He would try to touch one part of her body and halt before contact. Alissa decided to take control of the situation; he was a terrible mess of jumbled emotions. She slid down on the bed and spread her legs for him.

He gave a startled groan in shock. He looked at her. He had never had a woman before. She tried to act so assured and calm. Her black hair was beautiful. She *had* become a lovely woman. She would help him forget. He closed his damp eyes and focused on the promise of being taken away from the pain and the misery...for a while...

He placed his hands on her knees and slid them slowly up to her hips. He hovered over her and looked at her face. Her eyes were so large and dark, but carried a warmth his own did not. Her smile was beautiful; it was the most perfect smile he had ever seen. Her lips were lovely. He ran the pad of his thumb across them, and she flashed her perfect smile at him. He looked at her breasts. They were not as large as he usually liked, but they were full enough to cup in his hand comfortably with enough weight to entice him. She was so pale; her nipples were almost red in comparison to her translucent skin. He didn't know why. He had never seen nipples as red as hers before, even with all the magazines and pictures of naked witches he had seen over the years, and they had excited him intensely. He felt it must be a sure sign of her lust for him. He felt his way down; her stomach was not as firm as he'd expected. She had a soft underbelly. She was just so soft. He wanted to lie on her and have her wrap herself around him and let him sleep in her warm softness.

He looked at her mound and noticed how unkempt her pubic hair was. She obviously was a virgin with no reason to know a man's desire for upkeep. But secretly, that was something he had been told to want. He actually liked that she was unaltered; it was tangible evidence that she was a woman. But one day she would realize the realities of the adult world, and she would feel ashamed. Knowing that made him sad for her. She was dark-haired and pale, and he could tell she already worked hard to fight against what was by nature a body that had more than its fair share of unwanted hair. He noticed the shadow of a trail from her belly-button to her mound. She was imperfect according to the world's standards. Yet it did not matter. So was he. He traced the line from her navel on down with one long finger, and she winced, trying to wriggle away. He grabbed her hips and held her firmly down. She was blushing and was embarrassed. It created a primal instinct in him to dominate her. She was no girl,

but a mature woman to whom nature had been cruel in a very humiliating way. *That* he was all too familiar with.

He looked into her large dark eyes. They were swimming in tears of humiliation. She felt more exposed than what she had bargained for. She had not bargained for him to pay so close attention to her body, well, at least not *that* part. She felt ashamed and disgusted that he had noticed. He pinned her down with his thighs; her legs slammed against the bed. He looked closer into her face and saw the shadow of excess hair that grew on the sides of her face, by her ears. The tears were streaming down her eyes sideways and into her hair. Her white pale face was blotched with red and pink spots. He couldn't understand why she should still be so upset. It wasn't her fault, and he was not judging her or pushing her away because of it. It was common for women with black hair and pale skin to have this condition. It did not take away from her beauty, not to him. *Besides*, he thought, *she can be anyone for all I care*! All he really wanted was the red-haired, green-eyed girl that made his heart race, but she was dead. All he could do now was bury his nose into her long, soft, thick, black hair and sink his manhood into her tight, unruly core and make the pain stop for a while.

She slid her hand up his arm, to his shoulder, and tangled it into his hair. She pulled him closer and closer until his lips were on hers. He lost himself in the warmth and beauty of her. She felt like satin. And when he slid the tip of his cock into her, *oh!* his mind went completely numb, and all he knew was the warm, liquid, satiny feel of her. She hitched her breath several times as he pushed himself in further and further. He felt her barrier give, and her knees clenched around the sides of his waist. He kissed her and reveled in the virginity he had just taken. His ego felt a surge of pride. His first time with a woman, and she was pure. She chose HIM. When he had finally pushed himself in as far as he could go, when he was completely hidden inside her, he began to shift and thrust. She was clenching him so tightly he could barely move. She was warm, soft, and unyielding. He had to get her to relax. He brushed a finger across a nipple, and she let a moan escape from her. He went one step further and slid his tongue across it slowly, and he felt her walls start to release him as her juices began to flow freely around his aching cock. When he fastened his mouth on it and sucked hard, she cried out in pleasure, and he felt an intense warm gush from her that made him want to scream her name. He didn't think, didn't know what he was doing, except that he was still greedily latched onto her nipple and pounding into her in short, choppy movements until he felt a tightening that made his head want explode and felt his release flow into her.

He had never known a woman, and she had never known a man. It could have been a disastrous event, but she had come for his comfort and not her own. When she arose from his bed, he stared at the blood she left behind on his sheets. She dressed with her back to him, and after she was fully clothed, she gave him a kiss goodnight and left. As she slipped out she whispered, "Call for me if you need me again."

A couple of weeks after the Potters' death, Sirius Black, James' best friend, was arrested. He was reported to have killed a dozen Muggles and murdered another one of his best friends, Peter Pettigrew.

That was a terrible day.

Snape called Alissa to his desk after class, and she met with him again. They sat in front of his fireplace silently. She looked at how angry he was, how bitterly angry. Alissa just could not process the information. It was just all too unreal!

He finally spoke. "Did you see the *Prophet* today?" he asked softly.

"Yes," she whispered. "I thought Sirius was James' best friend and Peter's too! Poor Remus...he must be devastated!"

"I'm sure *Remus* will get along fine without them!" he said with disdain.

There was more to the story, but Alissa had a feeling that was how it was always to be with them. There would always be more to Severus than she could ever hope to know.

"It's sweet poetic justice! The cur hated Slytherin and his pure-blood status, or so he claimed. Even disowned himself from his own brother! And all along he was taking the ever loyal and noble Potter for a ride. If only he had just betrayed him, but he betrayed *her* in the process. I'm just glad he's away where he can rot for his miserable life. That seems to be the only silver lining in this entire nightmare!" Severus seethed.

"I will not take you into my bed this night, Alissa. I would only hurt you. I do not want to expose you to the violence I'm capable of. I can go to a whore for that. I just wanted to take you up on your offer tonight...to be a...*friend*. Do you still want to be my lover?"

His voice was strangled, uncomfortable, like he was over his head and did not know the right questions to ask. But it didn't matter. Alissa didn't know the right answers.

"Yes, of course. Just let me know when you want me here," she whispered. He turned his face back to stare into the fire, and she got up and went back to Gryffindor Tower.

It went on like this for the remainder of the school year. Every couple of days, he would call her up to his desk after her class and ask if she would join him into his private quarters after curfew.

"Why do you do this?" he asked one night as she was dressing herself right after having sex with him. She was not facing him. She never faced him when she dressed.

"You're hurting, you're in pain, and in time, hopefully, the pain will ease. Just know, Severus, that I will always be here whenever you need me. I'm aware of the realities. I'm not living in a fool's paradise. It's just that I've seen you cry, and I felt the pain and the despair inside my heart for you. I just want to help. I'll always be here for you when you need me," she whispered as she finally turned around, dressed to leave. "Whenever you you need me, you call for me, and I'll be there."

The following year was Alissa's final year. At the very start, Severus ended their affair. He said he did not need her anymore. He stood in his office and stood straight and tall. He was determined not to have any dramatics. It had just become too potent and addictive. Her openness and eagerness to please him had led him to desire her pleasure as well, and he had begun to crave watching her orgasm over and over under his touch and taste. And yes, he had tasted her! He knew her body as well as his own. And her taste was equally as addictive as her sweet tight snatch.

He could recall with vivid clarity the first time he had brought her to climax. The look on her face and the straining of her hips underneath him coupled with the moaning of his name made his own release so powerful he had shouted so loud it echoed throughout his chambers. It wasn't love, it wasn't pure, it wasn't even respectful. It was out and out animal lust, and it was an insult to Lily's memory for him to engage in these primal acts when he still dreamt of finally having the chance of making love to her.

Alissa had come in wearing her school robes. She had grown; she was eighteen now. She stood with her face betraying no emotion, and her hair was up. She was all about business and it unnerved him. When he ended their sexual relationship, she nodded and said, "Just remember, I'll always be there if you need my help. All you have to do is call for me." Then she left.

It was surreal. If she was pained, he was never the wiser. She drove through her final year like a torrent. Several times that semester, he felt badly enough to try to attempt speaking with her, but she had an air of tunnel vision that did not have him in her sights. Snape finally decided she had moved on, and he was no longer welcome.

She was a very skilled duelist, according to the latest fuckwit to take the position of Defense teacher. He had heard the rumors in the staffroom about how many times she had bested the moron. He wished he could have taken the time he had spent shagging her and had actually *done something* productive for *her*. Then suddenly, without so much as a whisper, after the Christmas hols, she was gone!

You Were Loved

Chapter 4 of 18

After a twelve year absence, Alissa Devon's name is brought up at an Order meeting, much to Snape's dismay.

□

January, 1983

"Albus, what is this news about Miss Devon?" he asked the Headmaster, barging in his office the first day back.

"Why, Severus, I never knew you cared!" Dumbledore said with a teasing smile.

Snape rolled his eyes. "I attended school with her. I knew her when she was a little first year. She is, according to the staff, one of the best Defense students we've had in quite a while. She practically could teach the blasted class! Why has she left?" he demanded.

Dumbledore resumed reading his magazine absent-mindedly and said, "Miss Devon has been offered an early release to Durmstrang. She will be studying Defense Against the Dark Arts with the Headmaster there. I believe you know him, Severus, Igor Karkaroff?"

Snape turned white as a sheet with potent rage. "Karkaroff! That man is a cretin! He's just been pardoned from Azkaban! She'll be destroyed. That place is literally bursting at the seams with Death Eaters...Death Eaters *he* has recruited!"

Dumbledore looked at the young wizard with confusion.

Snape sighed dramatically. "She's always been drawn to the dark, Albus. *Fuck!* How could you let her go? You should have consulted me!" He leaned over Dumbledore's desk in pain.

"I wouldn't worry too much for Miss Devon, Severus," he replied coolly. She will have gained much experience and wisdom I'm sure before we have to worry about Tom's return."

"You have no idea of when, how long...anything!" Snape accused.

"I do know when a young wizard is getting to be too big for his britches, Severus," said Dumbledore sternly. "Now sit!"

Snape sat down. He did not like the sound of this...not at all!

"I'm going to speak plainly to you, Severus. I know all about your and Miss Devon's relationship. I've kept quiet since you are so very young and have been in so much pain since Lily's death. After all, she was 17 and you were 21 at the time it began. Not a crime, although *ethically*, it is deplorable! I also decided to keep silent because I knew you were students here together, but, Severus, you were hardly equals at the time!"

"But you have made her an equal now. However, Miss Devon has a single-mindedness concerning you that betrays her age. I must admit I am deeply ashamed of your use of her, Severus, when you and I know where you heart truly lies. However, she came to me with this opportunity with enthusiasm. I thought perhaps she was trying to run away from an unhappy love affair gone sour. But, she did not exhibit any signs of being heart-broken. Then when I pointedly asked her..."

Snape looked up at the Headmaster in horror. "Tell me you did not do this!" he begged.

"Severus, my boy, I did. I had to. *Ineeded* to know the truth. I could not have this girl going off into a foreign land, studying such a dangerous field, with a dangerous mentor to boot, without knowing if she were stable in her *mind* to make that decision. What if she had taken this on because she couldn't face you anymore after having been thrown out of your bed? That's hardly a reason to take on a demanding and grueling apprenticeship she'll be undertaking at Durmstrang! But when I asked, she smiled and said that she knew about Lily, that your affair began the night of her death and carried on to the end of the last school year, but that she *had* to go. That in the long-run it would be better for all parties. She said she realized she would never be of any use in the future staying here. She said she did not believe Tom was gone forever, and she has 'much to accomplish.' I was rather impressed."

Snape shook his head in shock. "That girl is a fool!" he hissed. Then he got up and left, slamming the door and his thoughts of Miss Devon behind him *Surely, she is dead, or will be soon.*

Dumbledore let the matter rest. Miss Devon was not to be spoken of again for twelve more years.

June, 1995

The Order of the Phoenix held its meeting at number twelve, Grimmauld Place in London. It was the family home of Sirius Black. The gathering was subdued. Cedric Diggory was dead, and Voldemort was back. Snape sat giving his report of his first meeting with the newly risen Dark Lord. Every member in attendance was entranced by every word he said.

"Of course, the Dark Lord was furious to find out that Karkaroff had vanished. I had the opportunity while Igor was here to learn interesting facts about Durmstrang. As some of you who are a part of the staff at Hogwarts know, Durmstrang does not follow our line of curriculum. The Dark Arts permeate everything the students learn. I would not be surprised at all to see soon among the newest batch of Death Eaters the best and brightest of Durmstrang."

Dumbledore interjected at this point tentatively. "Severus, what of things...what is the state of the school now that Igor is gone? Do we have any friends among the throngs of potential Death Eaters there?"

Fuck! Fuck! Bloody Fuck!

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose and stated cautiously, "As you are aware, Albus, there are many Dark Arts teachers. I recall a passing mention of a younger professor who had done quite well for herself at Durmstrang. She is British. I will see if she turns up or if she is mentioned at any meetings."

"Do you know her name, Severus?" asked Lupin.

Fuck! Fuck! Double Fuck!

"I believe her name to be Alissa Devon."

"Devon," said Sirius searchingly. "Alissa Devon...black-haired, pale, *Gryffindor*!" he slapped his hand on the table and barked a laugh. "You remember her, Remus? That girl was a scrapper!" He turned viciously to Snape and licked his lips.

Remus nodded and kept his head down.

"You remember her, *Snivellus*! She couldn't wait to fight right by your side!" Sirius laughed derisively.

Snape bolted upright, wand out at the ready. Sirius followed in a heartbeat.

"Oh, will the both of you stop this idiocy this instant!" snapped Minerva. "Severus, Sirius, explain yourselves!"

The two enemies warily lowered their wands and sat down.

Sirius' eyes glittered maliciously as he began to speak. "Old Snively here had a little shadow his sixth and seventh year. It was quite touching. She thought it was rather 'rude' of James and I to fight against Snape two-to-one. She was a sight!" He broke out in a broad smile, his eyes shining in remembering his glory days. "She was this tiny little Gryffindor. Long black hair like old Snape minus the grease of course..."

"*Sirius*," Lupin hissed. Snape was ready to blow again if Sirius did not get to his point and soon!

"Well, she was just enthralled by Defense Against the Dark Arts. She loved watching us fight. One day, she jumped out and pointed her wand at us. Sixth years! This little firstie stood next to Snape and just let us have it! After that, we promised we would no longer gang-up on *poor* Snape. So I stepped aside since it was James Snape had the real hard-on for," he said as he grinned malevolently.

Snape bolted up again and hexed Black, sealing his mouth shut. The Order members went into a rage, some against Sirius and some against Snape. Dumbledore calmed them all down and ordered Snape to take off the hex. Once released, Sirius was livid and went to retaliate.

"What's wrong, *Snivellus*? Truth hit too close to home?" Sirius said maliciously.

"That is an interesting choice of words, Black, 'close to home,' since you can not do otherwise!" Snape snarled.

"Fuck you, you slime ball!" Sirius roared.

"Why don't you just sit and behave like a good little puppy?" Snape whispered softly.

"Oh, shut it!" snapped McGonagall in exasperation. "This exhibition is disgraceful, even for you two! So will you both please refrain from acting like a pair of ruddy jackasses!"

Dumbledore waved his hand and both Snape and Sirius' wands soared into his hands.

"I most heartily concur, Minerva! There will be no more of that, *boys*!" he said reprovingly. "Until you can prove to me you can act like the honorable men I know you are both capable of being, these shall stay with me." He patted his front pocket where the wands were safely tucked away. "And, Severus, don't try any Nonverbal Summoning Charms. *I shall know!*" he warned.

Snape glowered at the old wizard.

"Well, all in all, an extremely interesting development. I do recall Miss Devon, as I'm sure you do as well, Minerva," Albus mused.

McGonagall was tight-lipped in fury as she glared at each of the "men" before her. It took her a couple of minutes to regain her composure.

"Yes, Albus. Alissa Devon was an exceptional Defense student from what I had been told. However, she *was not* an exceptional *Tranfiguration* student. But she was a true Gryffindor. Brave, decisive, strong, and knew her own mind. She decided to leave Hogwarts in the end of her first term of her seventh year to take an early apprenticeship at Durmstrang with Karkaroff. She was most excited. I was, as you well know, Albus, extremely concerned for her for obvious reasons. And I had hoped to keep up our correspondence, but I never heard from her again." She continued to glare at her former students.

Kingsley spoke up. "What year was this, Albus?"

"It was the year after Tom fell that the decision was made. She left for Durmstrang in January of 1983 right after the New Year. She was eighteen."

"Wow, twelve years," Bill muttered. "Seems like yesterday."

Everyone looked over at the eldest Weasley Boy. "What? *I* was a firstie in '82. I just remember a very serious dark-haired girl who was in another *universe* as far as I was concerned. She was pretty, in a dark sort of way, but *dead scary*."

"Well, I think that is all we can do for tonight," announced Dumbledore. "Meeting adjourned!"

Snape jumped up from his seat and left in a fury. He was incensed! Nothing good was going to come of this! He recalled Igor bragging about his precious school and telling him about Alissa.

She is very well suited for Durmstrang; always has been. She was a joy to teach. She had already an interesting approach to her dueling style. Much like yours, Severus. She is subtle. The problem is with the boys. She is always dealing with some lovesick boy. I will never take on another woman apprentice. They are too damn mean.

Snape had always wondered what he meant by that.

A/N: Next up, Severus will see Alissa after twelve years. How has she changed? How will Severus react to her showing up at an Order Meeting? Is she to be trusted?

Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant!

I See Everything You Hid

Chapter 5 of 18

Alissa Devon meets with the top members of the Order at Hogwarts. That includes Severus Snape.

□

For seven years

You were so revered

I made offerings of

Anything and everything I had...

"Seven Years" by Natalie Merchant

October, 1995

Lupin, Moody, Minerva, and Snape all sat in the Headmaster's Office. It was an impromptu meeting of the Order...only those privy to the most top secret of information were allowed. It was in the middle of the night. Albus wanted it to be that way. Unfortunately, there was also a rainstorm raging outside. Albus kept looking out the window, his concern about something or someone palpable. The room was illuminated by only the dimmest of lights. Snape huffed in his chair as the silence reigned on them all.

"Albus, is this necessary?" he hissed. "We've been here for fifteen minutes. What the devil is going on?"

"Severus," Albus said softly, raising a hand, "I understand your impatience. Please, our guest is coming from a far off place and under a great deal of pressure. Lives are being risked as we speak. I think we can spare a little inconvenience."

Another five minutes passed. Lupin started pacing. Minerva started tapping her foot. Snape sat fuming in his chair.*This is ridiculous! I have better things to do than wait about here all night for God knows what!*

Just then the door opened and a wet figure came in.

"Oh, thank the heavens!" exclaimed Minerva as she went to look after the wet stranger.

A whirling of cloaks revealed a very tired and weary witch. She wore dark blue robes that only accentuated the dark lines under her dark eyes. Her hair was sopping wet, and she looked ready to drop. Minerva ushered her to a chair by the fire and began to work a drying spell on her hair and clothes.

"Oh, please, Minerva, stop!" she said in a breathless voice. "I'm too far gone for that. Just let me sit by the fire...oh, Headmaster, hello!" She weakly tried to stand, and Dumbledore stood hurriedly while coaxing her to remain seated. She smiled feebly and then said, "Thank you."

Minerva brought over a cup of tea. "This has a wee dram in it," she whispered.

"Ta, Professor," she said, still a bit breathless.

She took a steady drink, her face started to come alive, and a little color crept into her pale cheeks. Her smile was brighter, and she cleared her throat.

"Okay, I think I'm all together now...body and soul intact. We'll see if my mind is still with me as well," she said with a small laugh, flashing her perfect smile.

Albus smiled and turned to the three men awaiting answers.

"Remus Lupin, Alastor Moody, Severus Snape, this is Miss Alissa Devon."

Bloody Fuck!

Moody and Lupin were most cordial while Snape hung back in the shadows. Minerva chided him.

"Severus, is that anyway to greet an old schoolmate?"

"No," he said defensively. "I did not wish to overwhelm Miss Devon while she is still acclimating herself to her surroundings."

Alissa looked at her old lover and said, "Hello, Severus."

"Miss Devon," he said stiffly.

"Please," Dumbledore interjected. "We are all professors, colleagues, contemporaries in at least two cases," he smiled to Lupin and Snape each. "Let us dispense with the formalities. We are here for a very important meeting. Alissa, if you would?"

She took a deep breath and began her tale.

"It was difficult to get away, and I apologize for making you wait, but, um, it could not be avoided. I've been under intense ~~scrutiny~~ since Igor went into hiding."

Severus wondered what "scrutiny" meant.

"Headmaster, is it safe?" she whispered uneasily.

"Yes, Alissa. You may say anything."

"Um, I don't mean to be difficult, but, uh, there seems to be no delicate way of going about this." Her eyes wandered towards Snape.

Moody growled.

"Alastor!" Albus warned.

"Obviously, this woman knows something about old Snape, eh? Maybe your trust, Albus, is a bit overrated in his case."

Snape bolted from his chair. "This is a pointless waste of my time and energy. I shall take my leave now, if *you* don't mind?" he sneered at Alissa.

"Severus, you are not going anywhere, so be still. Alissa, Severus has been working for the Order for many years now. You probably have been in each other's presence and may not have known it," confided Dumbledore.

Moody jumped up, his wand at the ready. "Great Merlin's ghost...she's a *Death Eater*? Albus, what have you done?"

Alissa sat calmly drinking her tea. Apparently, she had prepared herself for such a reaction. Snape was intrigued *She must be a Death Eater. How else would she have survived this long at Durmstrang?*

"Moody, please, you must trust me. Alissa is on our side," insisted the older wizard.

"Do you carry the Dark Mark?" asked Remus

"No," said Alissa softly. "The Dark Lord since his rebirth has chosen discriminately amongst his followers those who shall bear the Dark Mark and those who shall not. I am simply required to be in his presence once a week. At each meeting, the day and time change, and I go from there. One can mingle freely when not so encumbered by being branded, especially a witch."

"Wisely put," added Severus.

Moody looked as if he were about to have kittens. He was not sure about anything and was very edgy about this whole situation. His radar was going insane, and his eye swiveled incessantly about the room.

Alissa stared at Severus for a moment and continued without comment to his input, but with anger in her voice.

Igor's defection, or cowardliness, however you want to put it, placed me in a position of great peril. After all, he trained me, sponsored me, in the hopes of offering me up to the Death Eaters as a peace offering, in hopes of getting back into their good graces. Then, when he had realized the Dark Lord was returning, the moment that we had been working towards for more than a *decade* arrived, he takes off while *here*, leaving me...*buggered*. When Durmstrang was taken over by the Dark Lord's henchmen, I was unceremoniously stripped of my position as professor, taken from the castle, and forcibly returned to Great Britain. The trip was not one to remember. I was a prisoner of war." She stopped and took another sip. Her hands were shaking.

"Minerva, may I please have something stronger?"

The older witch jumped up immediately and went to the decanter.

"Make no mistake, gentlemen. We are at war, no matter what that blowhard, Fudge, says! The Dark Lord is on the move, via his Death Eaters. There will be more disappearances, more deaths, and this time, there will be no quarter shown to anyone, regardless of their blood status or station. He is completely psychotic, even more so than he was before. I don't know this from *personal* experience, but one hears things about 'the good 'ole days.' Furthermore, do not let anyone fool you. The bastard wants to rule the entire Wizarding World, and he wants to rule from Hogwarts, where all the Old Magic will be at his disposal," she said darkly.

"It was you."

Everyone's head snapped towards Snape. His sneer was gone and the real man behind the scowl came out. He looked at everyone and said softly, "Last week, there was a Death Eater...I presumed being punished for some foolhardy indiscretion...I arrived during the middle of it. I thought it was a young recruit, the scream was so *high pitched*," he said sourly. "*It was you?*" he said in disbelief.

"Yes, I've seen you on a number of occasions since my release," Alissa admitted softly.

"Release? What?" Snape was speechless.

"Have you not been listening?" she snapped. "I was punished severely and tortured after Igor left. What did you expect the Dark Lord to do? On *only* Igor's recommendation, I was a Death Eater in training...*Igor's apprentice*! You can see how much that was worth! It was only by sheer force of will and years of hard work that I was able to successfully thwart the *imbeciles* he sent to question and torture me via Occlumency. I am *not* a natural Occlumens. If under his torture, I may break, so I work very hard to stay on the Dark Lord's good side. Unfortunately, these days, who the bloody hell knows which side that is?" she admitted. "You possess a magical eye, sir. Would you please tell the others what you see?" she asked Moody.

She took the drink from Minerva and slammed it back in one gulp at the shock of Minerva and at the respect of every man in the room. She stood and turned her back to them.

"Merlin!" breathed Moody as he examined the back of Alissa's body.

"She has been soundly thrashed," he reported. "There's scarring...extensive all over her entire back. Cat-o-nine tails?" he asked her.

"Among other things," she mumbled as she sat down.

Snape was angry. He wanted to know who did that to her. He wanted to see. All he could recall after so many years was what her body had felt like: creamy satin skin that was only marred by the blushes she could not hide from him by her cavalier demeanor of playing the wanton.

"Severus?" Albus asked.

"Who did this, Alissa?" Snape demanded.

"It's not important, Severus. Suffice it to say that my ability to endure without breaking earned me my seat amongst your fellow compatriots, or shall I say 'ex'-compatriots. My situation is still not secure, but as long as I remain useful, I shall make my way through. If I am to do this, I *MUST* have no backsliding. I must do whatever is required. That means if you hear of deaths, or disappearances, you can be sure I was involved, and you *cannot* contact me! I shall contact Albus, and he shall inform you. However, I cannot promise I'll be consistent. You shall get what I can provide when I am able. Just know I am humane in my killing. That is all I can promise. I will not prolong suffering if it can be helped. Moreover, there can be no contact between me and Severus. Do you understand?" she said tersely to Snape.

"Young woman, I was spying against the Dark Lord long before you even entertained..."

"Right, right!" she interrupted sarcastically. "You possibly have no idea how long I worked and struggled since I was eighteen when I started this whole bloody business! I will not have it ruined now because you want to pull out the yardstick! So I'll save you the bleeding energy. You've got four years ahead of me," she sounded off.

Moody laughed wickedly. He loved seeing Snape get knocked down a peg. It happened so rarely.

"It seems now you have a friend amongst enemies, Severus," replied Dumbledore quietly.

Snape gave a snort and narrowed his eyes, boring them into Alissa's.

Why?

You know why.

No, I still do not understand. Why? Why do you care?

I told you I would be there, and as long as I'm alive and able, I will be there when you need me.

We can never acknowledge each other outside of this group.

I know, Severus.

What is this? Love? Are you going to tell me you have loved me all these years and have pined for my touch?

Is that any different from what you've been doing? At least you are alive. She's dead.

Snape closed the connection between them, turned on his heel, wrenched open the door, and slammed it behind him in furious anger.

Alissa sighed and held her glass out for another re-fill.

A/N: Well, that could have ended better. Up ahead, more conversation after Snape's departure, and the war becomes a reality for the Order. Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant! Please review!

You Were The Only One I've Ever Known

Chapter 6 of 18

The meeting continues after Snape's exit. Later, the war becomes real as people begin to disappear and are murdered. Alissa arrives at Hogwarts with a message from Voldemort and has a heated argument with Snape.

□

She broke your heart

She took your soul

You hurt inside

Because there is a hole

You need some time to be alone

Then you will find what you've always known

I'm the one who really loves you...

I'll Be Waiting by Lenny Kravitz

After Snape's angry exit, Moody and Lupin looked at Alissa with regard.

"You were communicating non-verbally," Moody stated gruffly.

"Yes," Alissa answered matter-of-factly.

"How did you do that?" asked Minerva.

"It is a off-shoot of Legilimency called *Mentis Oratio*," explained Moody. "It means 'Mind Speech'. I assume you being a dark arts professor, you are skilled in both Legilimency and Occlumency?" he asked pointedly.

"I am an adequate Legilimens. I do excel with *Mentis Oratio*, but I am a terrible Occlumens," she admitted.

"That could prove to be very difficult for everyone involved," said Lupin cautiously.

"Quite. I am able to blank out my mind, but that just proves I am adept at hiding potentially important information, thus placing myself into harm's way through torture if discovered. However, I make it a point to never place myself in a position to be Legilimised. I obey the Dark Lord without hesitation, and I never ask questions. So far, I have been able to stay under his radar. I also make sure my lies always are as close to the truth as possible. It is easier that way. But do not fear, I shall continue to work on my Occlumency."

Lupin, who was more in tune with Snape than the Potions master would like to admit, asked delicately, "Is there something we need to know about you and Severus?"

"No," said Alissa honestly. In her mind, it was no one's business she and Severus had been lovers.

Dumbledore intervened. "Alissa and Severus will not be working together; rather they shall be working in Tom's separate circles while garnering information for the Order. Two are better than one, and if one is able to independently corroborate the information of the other, then all the more accurately can we plan to finally thwart Tom."

Moody sat back in his seat and assessed the young Death Eater. "How you survived with Igor Karkaroff all these years is a feat in itself," he said darkly.

Alissa looked into the old Auror's eyes. "It was a challenge on many fronts. But I learned a bit about Defense before I ever set foot in Durmstrang," she offered.

"Who was your teacher?" Lupin asked.

"Severus." She laughed at the reaction of the men in front of her. "Actually, according to Severus, I learned a great deal from his hexes off Potter's backside," she said with a bite to her voice.

Lupin shook his head in disgust. "That sounds like something Severus would say," he said sadly.

"Well, it is neither here nor there," she said, brushing it off. "I was an eager learner and was just smart enough to stay a half-step ahead of Igor. He wanted to make me his *mistress*, but I was able to thwart him at every turn. It was an exhausting five years before I was able to fend for myself without fear. Igor is a very lazy wizard."

"What of Viktor Krum?" asked Dumbledore. "We have always wondered about his true allegiances."

Alissa sighed as she slammed back the rest of her liquor. "Well, I know that Viktor was very interested in your Hermione Granger."

The others nodded in agreement.

Alissa thought for a moment, resting her head on the headrest of her chair. She crossed her legs painfully and tapped her index finger on her armrest.

"Encourage Miss Granger to keep up her correspondence with Mr. Krum. Let me know at the slightest hint of his asking about my whereabouts. If he wants to know where I am, you have cause to worry. If he does not, we may have ourselves a liaison. It will take time to come to a decision if he holds out on asking. As it is, none of you shall be able to contact me, but as I said, I shall contact Albus as I am able. I must remain under the radar of the Ministry and of any other Order Members if this is to work properly."

She stood stiffly and put on her heavy robes, now toasty and dry thanks to Minerva.

"Please encourage Severus to be a bit more cooperative during our next meeting. I realize how difficult his personality is, but when he applies himself, he can be quite charming. Do remind him of that. Good night."

After she had left, the remaining four looked at one another. Minerva narrowed her eyes and said, "Well, Albus, why don't you tell us what the devil is going on with Severus and Alissa?"

"Ah, Minerva, that would not be correct of me. Nor would it be fair to their privacy. For now, let us enjoy the fact we have two spies working for the Order. Perhaps, for now, it is best they do not desire to be in one another's company."

June, 1996

It was becoming a tedious life. Teaching during the day, spying at night. It was pure hell. Alissa Devon had not been seen by any of the Order other than Dumbledore. She had given herself the code name of "Ivette" which meant "yew tree". Only Dumbledore and Snape understood the significance of the yew tree, and it remained a solid alias for Alissa Devon whenever her information was spoken of at Order meetings.

True to her wishes, Severus and Alissa did not see each other for quite a long time. Yet, she was there, the evidences of her expertise always around. Only Dumbledore seemed to know her whereabouts and missions. Yet, Snape had his suspicions. The battle at the Department of Mysteries should have left every single child that followed Potter there dead. He knew she had to have been there, deflecting, sparring, doing whatever she could do to minimize the damage without getting caught by either side. She was truly becoming more of a ghost than a real person anymore. He knew of her exploits through her eyes in her Death Eater mask whenever the Dark Lord permitted him to remain while she gave her reports. He heard the reports, brief as they were, and orders given that were accepted without question. She never dared to look at him while he could freely watch her without suspicion.

When Snape heard Alissa deliver her report of Ms. Vance's assassination and the abduction/murder of Florean Fortescue to the Dark Lord, he was alarmed with the speed and efficiency of her delivery. Snape wondered at times if the Dark Lord had his own personal "Angel of Death" at his beck and call. There were times he swore he saw her among the outskirts of one of the meetings, but being outside of the inner circle, she would never be allowed to venture forward without direct permission from the Dark Lord himself.

The weeks after the battle at the Department of Ministries, when the Prophecy had been destroyed and many Death Eaters, including Lucius Malfoy, were sent to Azkaban, were bloody ones. There were numerous deaths. Witches and Wizards were fleeing the country. Diagon Alley was becoming a shell of its former identity of a warm, busy shopping community. Alissa was a part of the terror being spread. Snape wondered how she was handling all this death and destruction psychologically. Would she crack under the pressure and give up her post? Would she always be trustworthy? Snape had many reservations.

When twelve Muggles died in the Brockdale Bridge accident, Snape knew Alissa had been involved. When Amelia Bones, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement was found brutally murdered, he knew that Alissa had been sent to carry out that specific mission on the claim to spread the rumor that Voldemort himself had committed the murder himself.

But it was the murder of Emmaline Vance that hit the Order the hardest. She had been a part of the Advance Guard with Tonks, Moody, and Kingsley. The Dark Lord demanded an Order member executed to send a message. It had been a choice pressed upon Severus, and it grieved him to do it. He gave the recommendation since the location of her personal residence was on Downing Street. There could be no better message than to have an Order member killed right under the Muggle Prime Minister's nose. The Dark Lord loved it. Alissa and a couple of younger Death Eaters were summoned by Voldemort, and her name was revealed in front of Snape. She received her orders and took her group of Death Eaters with her and killed Vance with alarming speed. The Dark Lord's stock and faith in Miss Devon was climbing. It was going to be more imperative than ever that their past relationship never be revealed.

It had been during the fall of 1995 that Dumbledore first met with the Order and told them of the existence of "Ivette." All the Order knew was that "Ivette" was working deep undercover and was making incredible process with her network of information. In various private meetings with only Lupin, Minerva, Dumbledore, and Snape, Dumbledore continued to give more concrete information about Ollivander being held at Malfoy Manor, confirmation of Draco Malfoy's taking of the Dark Mark, and also a highly classified mission to search for the whereabouts of the old Eastern European wandmaker, Gregorovitch.

"Ivette is becoming increasingly concerned about her search for Gregorovitch. She believes it will be dangerous to apprehend him, for she knows, as we all do, that he does not possess the Elder Wand. Yet, she will go because Tom commands her to do so. She is still under the careful eye of so many. She has reported the same information that Severus brought to us last week about the continued search for the Hallows. We must NEVER allow Tom to know we are nearing the possession of all three until we finally are. Then he will come to us. I fear the worst, though, is inevitable. The Final Battle shall be here at Hogwarts. Plus I believe, just as Miss Devon does, Tom wants to control the Wizarding World from Hogwarts: for this is where he feels the Old Magic is strong enough to protect him. Tom can set up anyone as a Ministry puppet, but it is the Ancient Magic that lives in these walls that calls to him," he said sadly.

"When, Albus?" asked Moody.

"It will not be until at least the end the second term of this coming year. There *will* be an attack, but on a smaller scale. It will not be the Final Battle, yet we must prepare for

this...I shall be working closely with Mr. Potter this year to educate him and try to help him make sense of the chaos that will spring from the outcome of this confrontation!"

July 1st, 1996

Alissa Apparated to the Hogwarts boundary line with a resounding crack that signaled her presence. Her face was gaunt and her hair insanely wild, as were her eyes. She stumbled her way towards the castle and was met by Hagrid, who was out for his nightly patrol. He saw her collapse, collected her, and took her to Madam Pomfrey immediately.

Dumbledore and Snape tore into the infirmary, demanding to know what was going on.

"The woman has been beaten badly. Whipped within an inch of her life, reopening old scars on her back. She has been hung by manacles from a stone wall, no doubt, from the looks of her wrists. She was barely lucid when Hagrid brought her in, stumbling around in the dark after Apparating from Heaven knows where...could have splinched herself!" scolded Poppy.

Snape stayed on and helped Poppy to repair the damage to her back. She had been whipped severely. There was extensive scar tissue on her back, just as Moody had reported seeing. The recent whipping had only exacerbated the older wounds. Snape stayed with her until she regained consciousness.

A dark eye wearily opened, and she groaned as she tried to lift herself up. Snape touched her arm and ordered her back down.

"You have no covering on, Miss Devon. Be still!" he chided.

She laughed weakly.

"Nothing you haven't seen and enjoyed, Severus," she said bitterly.

Snape blushed and shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"I'd rather not reminisce, at this time, if you don't mind," he spat angrily.

"Why are you so angry with me, Severus? As I recall, it was you who ejected me from your bed. Is this pity?" she pressed. *Guilt?*"

Severus closed his eyes and gathered his composure. "Tell me what message you have been sent with, Alissa. You and I both know the Dark Lord does not send damaged people without some verbal warning."

"Too right you are, Severus," she replied wearily. "I think it is best you and I are alone for this one. Because it is quite the earful," she said wryly. "If you would?"

Snape cast a Silencing Spell around them and settled back, waiting for her news.

"I'm growing impatient, Alissa!" he growled.

"Fine!" she ground out painfully. "It's *Pettigrew*. Everyone is scrambling around trying to cover their collective arses. Lucius *sucked* up, if you didn't already know. The Dark Lord has continued raging since so many of his precious Death Eaters had been rounded up and sent to Azkaban. It's selling out time, Severus, and you bloody well know it. If you've got information to save your worthless hide, now is the time to divulge. Pettigrew had such information," she ended ruefully.

"What information?" he breathed.

She looked at him with a knowing look.

"FUCK!" he whispered angrily.

"*Precisely*," Alissa retorted.

"Severus, I'm here to inform you that the Dark Lord is not happy with you. At all! You will be spending the remainder of your summer at Spinner's End, but with the little rat as a house guest. As for me, as soon as I am fit for *work*, I have a job to do," she said cryptically.

Severus looked at her harshly. "Who?" he asked.

"The Dark Lord knows where Igor is. I am to *relieve* him of his existence."

Snape knew why Alissa was being sent. It was to be her very first solo kill. She passed the Dark Lord's test with flying colors as an efficient assassin. But this latest deception could have cost her everything. She had better dispose of Karkaroff efficiently and to the Dark Lord's liking. The realization weighed heavily upon Severus Snape.

Alissa shifted onto her side and covered her breasts with her arm. If she had not been so ill, Snape would have found her beauty to be more than he could bear. She was still a lovely woman, no matter what the Dark Lord had done to her. It was amazing that she was still so sane and focused; women usually could not do the things she had to do without going mad. The only woman he knew who was ever able to do it was Bellatrix, and it took Azkaban to break her. But, now that he thought of it, she never had been completely right in the head.

"Severus, I'm going to be honest with you. You are going to keep doing what is required and so shall I. I warned you before; there will be deaths and disappearances. No matter how bad it gets, know that I shall carry out my duties and support your information. You have lost some footing with the Dark Lord now because of Pettigrew's big mouth, but Lucius' cock-up at the Ministry has lessened the blow. I shall help you to keep your standing, but I can't do it alone. You must trust me and be honest. I need to know what plans the Dark Lord gives you so I can be of assistance."

Severus rubbed his eyes. He finally looked at her with anger and frustration in his eyes.

"You think this will endear you to me?" he hissed. "Do you think I will love you because you will work as a personal assassin for the information I hand over to the Dark Lord? If that's what you think, you are insane!"

Alissa retaliated viciously. "When have I ever, *ever* asked for your love? Have I ever demanded it? You are an ungrateful wretch, you know that? I do what I must for my own-self preservation now. What's ironic is that it seems looking out for your pathetic arse is the only thing that can save mine! So just save your snarky attitude for your students and the whores you frequent. Even in this wretched state, I could hex you into next week, you bloody arrogant tosser!"

He sneered at her. "So, no more declarations of love? Do I dare hope you've been cured of your fixation on me?"

She looked him full in the face and spoke without blinking. "You are so self-absorbed you haven't even realized *have* been there all along since my return from Durmstrang. I've just not bothered to wait for your call. Who do you think stopped the Dark Lord from killing you the night of his rebirth? While you were plotting here with Dumbledore keeping the Dark Lord waiting *two hours* before coming to his side, I was already in Lucius' dungeon being tortured! Why do you think you were let off so easy when it was *here* that Igor 'done a bunk'? Who convinced them all that I had nothing to do with you, and that you and Igor had never worked together to thwart the Dark

Lord from assuming his human form? Or, for that matter, Potter slipping out of his hands! You can just thank your lucky stars it happened to be the truth. I'm not that great of a liar! But I took the beatings anyway...just for good measure!"

"Who do you think took this beating for you tonight?*Me*, that's who! Peter only told the Dark Lord that you and I had a friendship and that I had had a little schoolgirl crush on you. It was only after he ripped my mind open that he saw we had been lovers. Thank God he didn't want to go any further and turned me over to his interrogators! I told the interrogators you wanted to tell the Dark Lord, but I made you take a Wizard's Oath with me long ago to never reveal our relationship because I didn't want Dumbledore to kick me out of school for sleeping with my Potions teacher, and you didn't want to lose your job! I told the Dark Lord I would take your punishment and my own. It was only yet again a stroke of luck that the Dark Lord himself did not interrogate me. I never would have lasted if he had entered my mind like that again. I'm still a pathetic Occlumens!"

He froze in shock. He had not expected all of that. He felt foolish and small, and he hated feeling that way. He hated that she was always so honest and true to her feelings for him. It was true, she had never asked for his love. He recovered his poise and said quietly, averting his gaze from her, "Do you recall the day you came to my office and I spoke to you about the promise I had made about training you in Defense?"

"Yes," she answered, her curiosity piqued.

"I was so sad to see you so eager to take on the Dark Arts. I did not want you to go down the path I did. It seems I am just as helpless to detour you now as I was then."

Finally he turned and fixed his eyes on her. *Why*, Alissa? Why of all the wizards you've known and must have met over the years, why me? I showed you some kindness when you were a child, when I was barely out of my own childhood! *Why?*"

She looked at him so helpless in her condition, her mangled back exposed, and her eyes were so large and full of love, it was almost too much for him to look upon.

"Kindness was hard to come by, Severus. Remember? Boys don't like pale, black-haired girls who look like vampires."

He gave a snort. "And when you grew up? Was it because I was your first?"

"No," she whispered. "It was the moment you stumbled upon me in the Forest when I was twelve. You helped me with the basic dueling steps. You placed your hand over mine and I felt something the instant your hand covered mine that I have never felt before or since, except when I was in your arms."

Severus felt he had been stabbed in the heart. He took a step towards her, knelt down to be level with her face, and traced her jawline with one long finger. "I remember the first time I took you in my bed," he whispered. "I remember thinking after I finally was fully inside you how warm, soft, and unyielding you were. I could barely move. You clenched me so tight within you. You have not changed."

"Can I help it if my heart chose you?"

"You live in this madness, day in and day out, yet you hold on to a moment from when you were twelve and decided that's it? You and I do not have the luxury of such frivolity!"

She laughed. "You are the only person I know who hypocritically would call love as only 'luxurious frivolity,' yet you are no different than I! You still carry a torch for a woman who has been dead these fifteen years. She never told you she loved you or gave her promise of fidelity to you. And you have the audacity to use the involuntary vaginal spasms of a virgin being penetrated for the first time as a metaphor for my feelings for you? Please do not insult me as I lie here bearing the trophies of a job done well in the 'real world' that you and I live in!" she snapped angrily.

He winced at her words. She was ruthless and cutthroat, but no more than he had been.

"You are a Half-Blood, do you know anything about Muggle films?" she asked abruptly.

Snape regained his detachment. "Yes, I've seen some on the telly we had when I was a child," he said impatiently. "I do hope there is a point to this?"

"It's just, I'm reminded of a scene in the film, 'Gone with the Wind.' Have you ever seen it?"

"No," he said even more impatiently.

"I saw it in a 'movie theater.' I loved going to see old Muggle films, and I never forgot watching that one," she said in a far-off voice.

"Well, there is this man and this woman. They both know the world as they know it is falling apart at the seams. He is positive they won't be able to survive all the radical changes that will come once their world is eradicated. He's scared there will be no place for him to fit in it. She isn't considered much, according to the heroine at least. But just before all hell breaks loose and the War begins, she says to this man that she loves, 'No war can come into our world. I'll love you, just as I do know, until I die.'"

"I know you believe it, Severus. No matter what has happened these past fifteen years, nothing has come into the world in which you lived with Lily and destroyed it. Those days are as fresh and perfect in your memory now as if it were just yesterday. Maybe that's because she's not flesh and blood anymore. Nothing can ruin the perfect image you've held onto. But I know you are real and alive, and so am I. And it is what it is. I can't help it, Severus! I just love you, and no war is going to change it. Nothing will change it except if I decide to change it. That is the beauty of love. You can't earn love, you can't buy love, and you can't manipulate love. And I have *never* asked for your love. But is it too much to ask for a little respect?"

The scowl vanished from Severus' face as he looked into her huge dark eyes that were so full of love...for him...and saw the sadness in them. It was all true, and he finally realized how earnest she was in her declaration. He turned quickly on his heel and walked out of the infirmary. The tears began to flow. It was a good thing no one was in the hallway to see him cry.

A/N: Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant, and to all who have reviewed. Please continue to review! I love each and every one!

Up next: More Order meetings and secret missions, plus a juicy lemon for those who were wondering :)

The Constant Upon Which I Set My Life

Alissa continues her pretend search for Gregorovitch. She meets up with Severus and they spend the night together. Severus confides in her that he will be ending his days as a spy.

□

The next day, Severus came to the Infirmary to see Alissa. She was gone. He stood staring at her empty bed for what seemed like forever. Poppy walked slowly towards him.

"Severus?"

He jumped and muttered an apology, quickly departing to find Albus.

"I was expecting you, Severus," Dumbledore said evenly.

"Why is she gone? She was in terrible shape just last night!" Severus exclaimed, his volatile emotions getting the better of him.

Dumbledore looked at Snape through the tops of his half-moon shaped glasses. "I would think you of all people, Severus, would understand the need for our guest to leave as soon as humanly possible."

"Humanly possible? She must have help! Her back was no more than raw meat!" bellowed Snape.

"Our friend has her own resources, not to mention a Master to turn to, now that she has endured her punishment. Surely, wherever Tom is, there she shall find adequate care." Dumbledore peered seriously into the face of his old friend.

"Severus, you must now accept the helplessness *we* all feel when *you* come and go from Tom's presence. The Order waits on pins and needles wondering if you'll be alright, or even if you will ever return! It's now your turn to walk in the other half's shoes."

Dumbledore sat down and gestured Snape to sit as well. "I take it there was a message?"

"Yes," he said numbly. "The Dark Lord knows about our previous relationship."

"And how did this information come about?"

"Pettigrew," Snape spat out angrily.

"Ah, yes. Well, it seems everyone is trading up to save themselves. He certainly saved that juicy tidbit for a while. When are you going to be summoned for your punishment?"

"There won't be one. She...*the idiot girl*...begged to take my punishment. She lied and said she forced me to take a Wizard's Oath not to tell anyone of our affair. However, I am not out of the woods yet. I must return to Spinner's End with the miserable rat and stay under his watchful eye," he said sneered.

"Ah! House arrest," Albus surmised.

"Precisely," Severus said with a glower.

"That puts you out of commission for the time being."

"It certainly does. She will have to be even more cautious, Albus. And she has made it clear that she still is not up to snuff at Occlumency. Having her step higher and higher up in the ranks will place her mind in more jeopardy for infiltration. Not only by the Dark Lord, but by Bellatrix, as well. I don't know how we are going to survive the next two months if I can't be there to avert interest away from her."

"It will be crucial to move now and claim the final Hallow, Severus. I shall retrieve it myself," the older man said decisively.

"You are sure, *absolutely* sure, Albus, that the Resurrection Stone is at that *hovel*?"

"If the information I have worked hard collecting over the years is accurate, and I have no doubt that it is, I shall have it within the week. I have had to work on the various wards and enchantments Tom has erected to protect it from being stolen. They're quite impressive, really, but I have finally worked it all out. Gaining the Stone and ensuring Draco stays on the side of the Light after he rightfully possesses the Elder Wand shall be our only means of flushing Tom out and drawing him to us. I will be instructing Mr. Potter to carry his cloak with him at all times. We must not allow Tom to gain the Hallows, yet we must keep him on the scent. While we wait for the inevitable, I shall prepare a plan to educate our young Mr. Potter on Horcruxes. It is imperative that Harry remain focused on the *Horcruxes*, Severus...not on the *Hallows*. That will be your mission after Tom releases you from your probation: making sure Tom does not possess them. Ivette shall guide you."

"Ironic, isn't it, Albus?" Snape said wryly.

"It certainly is, my boy. It looks as though you are viewing things from the other side of the Looking Glass, as it were. No doubt Sirius would find it all terribly amusing," he said with his usual twinkle.

September, 1996

The Order met in Dumbledore's Office. It was not safe to leave the school unattended now, and a full Order meeting was needed. Far too many deaths and far too many disappearances were dragging the morale of the Order down into the mud. Hermione Granger, although a student, was inducted into the Order due to her recent birthday that gave her status of Legal Wizarding age, plus the Order's interest with her relationship with Viktor Krum.

The meeting was somber. The Order was still mourning the losses of Emmeline Vance and Amelia Bones. Now that the Abbotts had been attacked and Hannah Abbott's mother had been killed, the girl had left the school, regardless of the reassurances by several Order members that the only safe place for all the students would be at Hogwarts.

"Please! Everyone must calm down! If the parents of our students want to take them home, we have no right to stand in their way," Dumbledore stated calmly.

"Now, Miss Granger, do you have anything to report on Mr. Krum?"

"Perhaps, Professor. His correspondence is light-hearted and does not reveal anything of any importance to the Order, which is precisely what bothers me. Each letter is giving me a sinking feeling that he is trying to feel *me* out just as much as I am *him*. I don't see him being for our side. But Muggles have a saying that I think pertains to our predicament: 'Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.'"

The Order members murmured amongst themselves their approval of her wise words.

Snape spoke up. "I did not want to say, since I do not have any solid proof, but a new batch of Death Eaters arrived at the last meeting from Durmstrang. I believe Krum was among them. I unfortunately am not in the position to sort this out, but I am sure that, perhaps, Ivette might?"

Dumbledore nodded. "I do have some news to report about Ivette," he said darkly.

Snape felt his heart jump into his throat and his stomach drop into his shoes. He kept his face blank and waited for the news.

"Ivette has Olivander in custody, although she cannot divulge where he is being held nor why. Fortescue's death has been confirmed by Ivette as well. She said she made it as painless as possible. She also went on her secret mission for Tom, and it was as we planned...unsuccessful. Now, she is going to be sent on yet *another* mission that has some interest bearing on Olivander. As soon as I am able to contact her, I shall ask about Mr. Krum and if he actually is in the country."

He turned sadly towards Hermione. "I am truly sorry that it might come to this, Miss Granger."

Hermione nodded despondently and kept her head down. She was not shocked to hear the news. Deep down, she had always known it was a possibility.

Arthur spoke up. "So, there is something You-Know-Who wants that is connected with wand-making?"

Albus chose his words carefully. "Ivette and I believe he is concerned about the twin cores his and Mr. Potter's wands share. He wants to make certain he can procure a mightier wand that will ensure his victory. This is a part of the mission Ivette is on, and she will do her utmost to thwart any progress towards that end."

Everyone was subdued. Things were looking rather bleak. Plus, Albus had done some sort of damage to his hand, but no one was talking about it...

Christmas, 1996

"Bloody hell, Albus!" Alissa exclaimed as she stepped through the Floo, dusting off her robes, clearly frustrated. "This is getting insane! First, I'm Apparating all over the damn continent doing these *ridiculous* missions that are down-right fruitless and exasperating, now just when I was 'hot' on the trail of Gregorovitch, I was recalled to come and secure the Malfoy Manor because of *Arthur Weasley*! Albus, I don't have the time or the patience for this nonsense! I just spent the better part of my month playing hide and seek with Weasley and that blasted team of his from the Ministry! You know very well if Olivander is discovered, this whole operation will fall apart at the seams! Keep the bloody Ministry away from Lucius!" she fumed.

Dumbledore sighed. He was expecting her anger. "I am sorry for your inconvenience, Alissa. There has been some very suspicious activity on the part of his son, Draco, and just so you know, we just recently had a student attacked with a piece of cursed jewelry."

Alissa was interested in this bit of news and stopped her impending tirade. "Who is handling the object?"

"Severus, of course. He is the Defense teacher this year."

Alissa nodded her head. "Of course, of course. I had forgotten. I need to speak with Severus, then."

"Fine. I'll call him and leave you my office. I'll go see if Minerva has any of those delicious shortbread cookies and tea for me. She loves to spoil me so!"

"Well," Severus said curtly as he walked into the Headmaster's office. "You seem to be doing well. Completely on the mend?"

"Yes, Severus. I'm just fine," Alissa retorted impatiently. "Now, what's this about a cursed object that got a student nearly killed?"

"I am quite capable of handling dark objects, Alissa," He retorted waspishly. "What I do not seem to have under control is Draco Malfoy. He is plotting for the Dark Lord, and he will not confide any information. And yes, before you ask, he *has* been working diligently on *his* Occlumency. His Auntie Bella must be training him. He is becoming very good at thwarting me and my attempts to uncover his *grand scheme*."

Alissa poured herself some tea and then some for Severus, and they sat on the sofa together to continue their discussion. He looked at her curiously.

Alissa could feel his eyes on her, and she raised a hand to him. "Well, don't ask me for help! I'm still as worthless as ever with my own Occlumency! The best I can do these days is just go blank!" She narrowed her eyes as she looked at Severus. "You know the reason behind all of this scheme and cursed objects, don't you?" she pressed.

"I think, *Ivette*, I may know more about what is truly going on than you do, for once." He smirked at her look of annoyance.

"Fine," she sneered. "You may keep your little triumphs. You just keep me informed of any and all pertinent information that has to do with me. I don't want the battle starting while I am off God knows where."

Severus watched her as she sipped her tea absent-mindedly. She looked ragged, as if she had not had a moment's peace in a very long time, and this was her first chance to actually rest. He hated to complicate matters, but he couldn't do it alone anymore. He needed her.

Severus set his cup down and took Alissa's from hers as well. He grasped her hands in his and spoke urgently to her.

"I can't tell you, but there *will* come a time where all my ties with the Order shall be severed irrevocably. You will be my sole comrade when that happens. My spying days shall end, and I will remain with the Dark Lord until the final battle. I fear I shall never be allowed back at Hogwarts. I may need you desperately during that time."

"What are you saying, Severus?" she asked suspiciously as she pulled her hands from his.

He grasped her by her upper arms. "Just believe in me, trust me when everything inside you screams not to. Know that my allegiance will never be with that snake! Promise me, Alissa. Please?"

"Of course, Severus." She smiled at him confidently.

He reached out and grasped her chin, pulled her forward, and kissed her. She responded and kissed back hungrily. They pulled apart after a moment, and she stood up.

"I must go," she said tiredly.

"Why?" he asked, his deep voice barely above a whisper. He kept his head down, his face hidden by his long hair. He reached out for her and caressed her arm. "Please, stay, Alissa."

She turned to him and reached out her hand, gently turning his face towards her. Their eyes connected, and he slowly stood and took her into his arms. He cupped her face with his hands and passionately kissed her. "Come back to my rooms, Alissa. Please stay, just for the night?" he pleaded.

She pulled back to look at him. "What about the war, Severus?"

"No war exists tonight. Not here. Not for us," he said as he captured her mouth again.

They went into the fireplace to Floo to his rooms. Alissa took his hand into her own, and he looked down at her.

"The war never exists when it comes to how I feel for you, Severus," she whispered.

He missed this. He missed her beautiful warmth and passionate craving for him. Why he should be so loved, he would never understand. He watched her as she straddled him and slowly brought them to release. His guilt was horrendous. He had not lived a celibate life; it had been true what she had said. Every once in a while, he took a whore for release. As he entered Alissa the first time this night, it was apparent she had not had a lover since she was seventeen. She was just as incredibly tight and unyielding as her first time had been. She was, for all accounts, a virgin again, but her age and life experience made her a quick learner, and the shyness that was so prominent at seventeen was gone at thirty-two. She was a grown woman who was not ashamed of her desires for him. He ran a hand down from her lips to her breast and then to her soft belly. She was older, her breasts were not as firm as when she was seventeen, and her back had been ravaged by the Dark Lord, but it didn't matter. He had never been a prize...even on his best day. However, he strangely found her lovelier now than she had been ever been. She was all woman, and he was a man. He regretted his selfish youth. She was indeed a treasure. He took great care to not hurt her back. After they made love, he spent time using his own potions and creams to soften the scar tissue as he thoroughly massaged her.

They slept through dinner and woke only very late to make love one more time before succumbing to sleep again. When dawn came, he watched her dress and prepare to leave him again, just as she always had.

"It's not right that you are the one that must leave me," he mused. "It seems everything is backwards these days. Nothing is as it should be." He laid in bed, staring at the ceiling, very deep in thought. "How do you keep going on, Alissa? What keeps you putting yourself out there again and again?"

She flashed her beautiful smile and laughed. "Well, I focus on what is constant and unmovable. Time and tide wait for no man, and ~~no~~ *one* makes the Dark Lord wait. But most importantly, I love you, Severus. It is a constant upon which I set my life." She bent over and kissed him. He stroked her face and kissed her deeply in return.

Then she was gone...

It was a long and dreadful term. The winter seemed endless, but when spring arrived and there was no word from Alissa, Severus could only fear the worst. He went on, trying to watch out for Draco's progress. The yearly Apparition lessons came and went. Ronald Weasley almost got himself killed drinking mead that supposedly had been meant for Dumbledore's consumption. Severus could only shake his head in desperation as he drank himself into a stupor every night. He missed the feel of creamy satin skin and the look of long black hair so much that he began to forget the green eyes that had haunted him for so long.

He wondered if she would actually keep her promise to him about being there when he needed her. He never thought he would ever need her, but he did. It was frightening. He had never seen her abilities, although from what he had heard at Death Eater gatherings, she was a mighty force to be reckoned with. She fought with a ferocity that surpassed even Bellatrix, though without the insanity. She was harnessed, in control of her power, but her weakness, Snape knew and kept close to him, was her inability to grasp the disciplines of Occlumency. It was so vital she learn so she could aid him, but she just did not have the ability. He had to take her as she was. He was still determined to help the Order and to watch over Potter and the children at Hogwarts...once the *deed* was done. He just hoped that the love Alissa professed could withstand what he had vowed to do.

After another meeting with the Dark Lord, he met Dumbledore outside the Apparition point. He was weary and exhausted.

"Severus, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying, Albus, that I'm bloody well tired and want this to be done and over with! I never wanted to agree to this in the first place. Every day the tension becomes more and more unbearable. I just don't want to do this anymore!" he said loudly.

"You are overwrought," assessed Dumbledore. "It's natural to feel apprehensive and nervous. I am aware of how much you risk every day."

"Damn it, Albus! I'm overworked and weary of it all! You're out there doing God knows what, and I'm here playing nursemaid to that arrogant brat!" he seethed.

"You made vows, Severus! You will stick to your word. I understand your need to blow off steam, but do not forget that I took you in when you were destitute. The Order needs you and Draco needs you. So, just do it! And as for my whereabouts and whomever I decide to have accompany me, that is none of your concern! Your concern is to keep making investigations into your house about this necklace business. Have you made any headway?"

"No," Snape answered softly, put off by the ferocity of his normally mild-mannered master. "But you and I both know that Draco is behind all of this. I just can't prove it."

"Then do it!" snapped Dumbledore. "I want you to stop your grousing and get back to your duties."

When they parted ways, Severus could not feel the overwhelming sense that he was just being manipulated and used.

Snape stepped into Grimmauld Place for the latest Order Meeting. He was tired and ready to drop from sheer exhaustion. He came straight from meeting with the Death Eaters. He already knew what the *Daily Prophet* had recently reported: the abduction of Octavius Pepper and the arrest of a young boy, Samuel Baker, who had tried to murder his parents via the Imperius Curse. The Dark Lord had been furious at the Death Eaters who had performed the curse on the young boy.

Severus had stood in the sacred circle around the Throne and had been grateful he had stood on the side nearest the Dark Lord so he could view those who were far back in the room. He had tried to look for Alissa, but it was only when she had been called forward by name and delivered her report that Severus knew for sure she had been alright all this time. He had not looked at her during her report. It would not have done her or himself any favors by drawing attention to themselves. He did, though, listen to her version of the events surrounding the execution of Pepper. The Ministry and the *Daily Prophet* had not uncovered the history between Gregorovitch and Pepper. When Pepper had proved unable to provide information as to the whereabouts of the old wandmaker of Eastern Europe after his mind was drained past the point of recovery, Alissa had executed him and disposed of his body. The Dark Lord had been frustrated about their lack of progress, but what had angered him further had been the second incident executed by Avery and Macnair.

Alissa had been blatant in her intent when she had spoken to the Dark Lord about the incident.

"My Lord, I have worked with these *wizards*," she had sneered, her voice dripping with contempt, "on your orders. I have never shirked, nor have I ever backed away from an assignment. I do feel confident that I have gained a small amount of trust after my old mentor, Igor Karkaroff, and I disappointed you so much. I had a plan, a solid plan, to approach the Baker couple to have them interrogated on their knowledge of Gregorovitch. The three of us *agreed* to the plan, and I was in the process of our preparations when Avery and Macnair went behind my back and approached, not the targets, but *the six-year-old grandson*! My Lord, I cannot tell you how much restraint I placed upon myself to not kill them on sight. However, the Aurors were circling, and we had to leave and secure our position. I do realize you are very angry and ought to be angry with us. I await your punishment, Master."

She had then kissed the hem of the Dark Lord's robe and bowed backwards from the sacred circle.

Avery and Macnair had been given ample time to explain themselves, which they did with all the subtlety of a rabid kneazle! It had been a fearful punishment to behold, and the Dark Lord's vengeance on the two wizards had been awesome. He had then pardoned Alissa and urged her to pick a new group to assist her on her task: finding Gregorovitch *immediately*.

So, the Order Meeting consisted of these facts. "Ivette" was still on the "hunt" with a new group of Death Eaters at her command, though her time was running out. As Snape predicted, her stock was rising and the Dark Lord was becoming more and more impressed with her methods and efficiency in killing. There was so much more he wished he could say: that he was very soon going to have to murder his best friend and father-figure and go into hiding. He wished he could let the others know that he was truly not their enemy, that he was just going deep undercover for their own protection and for the children of Hogwarts. He took much relief in the fact that Alissa was still out there, trying to do her part in holding off the Dark Lord from Gregorovitch until she received the signal from Dumbledore that she could go ahead and locate him. Unfortunately, when she did locate him, he would have to be executed, but such are the fortunes of war.

A/N: Up next: Severus asks Alissa to come back and stay with him. Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant. Please review!

Please Come Home

Chapter 8 of 18

Severus has killed Dumbledore and has now realized how much he needs Alissa.

□

June, 1997

Severus sat in the abandoned castle that was being held as the Dark Lord's lair until the crisis surrounding Dumbledore's assassination quieted. There was a mass celebration with Severus Snape as the honored favorite of the Dark Lord. Narcissa and Draco huddled in the corner away from it all. They were terrified of being killed because Draco had failed in his mission to kill Dumbldore himself. The boy would be punished, as would his father when they could break him out of Azkaban. However, Snape had proven himself to his Master beyond anything Voldemort ever dreamed. If ever was the time to be given a boon, it would be now.

"What shall I give you, Severus? You only have to ask and it shall be given to you. You have proven yourself to be my most loyal servant. You will stand at my right-hand side from now on, my boy. I have never been so pleased with you!"

"My Lord, I have only one desire. I know it is much to ask since it caused a great deal of trouble and strife for you in the past. However, since you ask, I shall go about this the proper way. I ask that you please recall Alissa Devon from her duties for a time that I may enjoy her company. I have been alone for so long now, I truly desire her companionship."

"So, after all this time, the torch has not gone out?"

"No, my Lord, I care for her deeply, and I wish that I may have a season to enjoy her and rest before we attack our enemies."

"So you shall, Severus, so you shall. I will have Yaxley deliver her to you, and you shall have your 'season of rest' during this summer. But only for a month. Starting towards the end of July there shall be duties to perform. Then you shall be Headmaster just as soon as we can topple the ministry and officially take over Hogwarts."

"Thank you, my Lord. I am so very weary. May I please be excused now from the festivities? I am very weak in my body and mind."

"Certainly, Severus, my most trusted servant. You have earned your rest. You shall have your witch very soon."

Not soon enough, Snape thought as he collapsed into his bed. He sighed in relief. At least here he was safe for now, and he would have a month to forget and perhaps enjoy life a little. As he lay there, his mind went over many things. He thought of Alissa and their relationship, of the things she had told him and had done *for* him. He had known for a while now that she was truthful in her love. She really did love him. That was hard to accept. Now, no friends, no home, no one to know what he had sacrificed, he felt as vulnerable as a child. He needed her. He wanted her here with him, but most importantly, he needed to know that she still would still feel the same about him when she found out what he had done. He could not bear to stay here in the enemy's lair without one person who truly cared for him. *At least Alissa will be here. She just can't believe I murdered Albus in cold-blood. She can't hate me. She said that whenever I needed her, she would come to me. Well, Alissa, I need you so desperately, please come home...*

Alissa had been holed up in Latvia when the news came of the Death Eaters breaching Hogwarts. She Apparated back in time to assist the Order, but had no idea of Dumbledore's assassination. After she had seen Snape and the young Malfoy boy escape safely, she returned post haste back to Latvia. Luckily for her, the wizards she was working with were complete idiots! It had taken everything within her to keep her composure when Yaxley told her that Snape had been the one to do it when the Malfoy brat had turned coward. She had sat in that shack of a hideout and listened to the whole sordid story.

Alissa was tired. For days, they had been on yet another "hot" trail to finding Gregorovitch, but the source had ended up a non-starter, of course. It was becoming rather tedious to continue feigning her rage and disappointment. In fact, she was just plain sick and tired of being the lone witch with these pitiful excuses for wizards. She had taken Rabastan and Jugson with her this time, but they were as vicious as Avery and Macnair were inept. She had to watch her back constantly. Rabastan was a foul, lecherous pig, and he had tried on many occasions to bed her. It was only due to her skill as a duelist that kept him from raping her.

Therefore, Yaxley's appearance was just what she needed to break the tension. Honestly, she had no more leads and she was weary. Yaxley told her not to worry; she was being recalled.

"What the devil for?" she had fumed. "I've been on this mission longer than anyone! Why am I now being recalled back to the Dark Lord?"

"Hold on, missy!" he snapped back at her. "I am to escort you back to the Dark Lord as a boon to his new favorite. Severus Snape has asked for you to be his reward."

Rabastan and Jugson howled with laughter.

"Looks like now you'll be working for the Dark Lord on your back!" jeered Rabastan.

She sneered at the wizard. "You're just jealous of the fact I'm *more than willing* to spread my legs for Snape!"

The men were silent now.

"Well, come on then, Yaxley. Let us not keep our hero from his reward and due comforts!" she said as she smiled viciously at the wizards she was leaving behind.

As they reached the old abandoned castle, Alissa could not push away her sense of doom. She recalled Severus telling her that he would come to this point, that all ties to the Order would be cut, and she would be his only lifeline. She imagined all sorts of scenarios, but this? Killing Dumbledore? She wanted to believe in him so much. He swore to her he would never give his allegiance to the snake. Dumbledore had never told her the signal she would receive when she could go ahead and track down Gregorovitch for real. Perhaps it was better this way. She needed to see him, to look into his eyes and know the truth. Maybe he had the answers now. Surely, he would not deceive her.

She walked slowly into the Throne Room and was greeted warmly by the Dark Lord.

"My dear child! How happy I am to see you! I am very disappointed that your searches have given me no more leads to what I most desire, and normally you would have to be punished, but Severus has asked as his reward for ridding me of that meddlesome old fool...*you!*"

He leaned back into his throne and watched for her reaction.

"I am pleased, my Lord. You know Severus is the only man I have ever desired. I am more than happy to oblige him in anyway he requires, as I am more than happy to do your will, Master," she said stoically, trying desperately to hide her nervousness. She wondered how close to death that she might have been if Severus had not asked for her.

"Very well. I have given you and Severus part of the summer. You may stay here or travel elsewhere. All I require is that Severus be available to begin his work for me towards the end of July. I also shall be making him Headmaster once I rid the Ministry of that mangy lion, Scrimgeour."

"Certainly, my Lord. I shall endeavor to help replenish Severus and return him to you happy, healthy, and ready for your plans."

He smiled with a sinister look in his eyes and dismissed her. She went to Severus' room and knocked timidly on the door.

He opened the door a crack, and when he saw her, he scooped her up into his arms and kicked the door closed behind him. He held her close to him and kissed her face, whispering how much he had missed her. Alissa pushed him away, and his eyes flashed in anger.

"What, all these years of panting after me, and once I express my need for you, you push me away?" he growled.

"It's not that, Severus," she answered weakly. "We'll have more than enough time to enjoy one another. I just have to talk to you about Dumbledore."

"You know I can not speak of this here. Know that I need you, and *need to know* you still want me and believe in me."

He looked so sorrowful that she wanted to cry. She sat at his desk and steepled her hands as she considered him. Her hair was tousled from the weather and travel, her eyes were blackened from exhaustion, and she was wearing the most foul Muggle sweater in creation. She felt positively disgusting.

"Severus, I am in desperate need of a bath. I am exhausted, and I must look like the devil himself!"

"No," he replied softly as he took her hand and led her to his lap. "I've never seen you look lovelier. Please, Alissa, I need you." He quickly stripped her and released himself from his trousers. He lay on top of her and entered her swiftly.

He was urgent and passionate. It was so different from the other times they had been together. He laid himself bare and whispered his need for her, his need for her to be with him, to stay by his side, to comfort him. But most of all, his desperate need for her to believe him.

She was far too exhausted to try to orgasm, so she watched as he moaned her name and told her he loved her. She was touched by his fervor and openness. She brushed his hair from his face so she could watch him as he climaxed. It was so exquisite to behold. She sighed a deep sigh of contentment and held him to her. He buried his face into her hair and whispered into her ear, "I was a selfish bastard, Alissa. I used you so terribly when you first came to me. You were so honest and loving, and I used you horribly. I'm so very sorry."

"Hush, let's not speak of these things tonight. Sleep now and rest your mind," she whispered. Soon, they fell into a deep and satisfying sleep.

Severus and Alissa left the snake's lair as soon as they could gather their things and prepare. Severus took her to Muggle Ireland where they spent the month in Dublin, Belfast, and then traveled south to Waterford. They eventually settled in a cottage outside Waterford and rested.

They lived like Muggles, exploring the world through new eyes. They slept when they wanted to sleep, ate when they felt like eating, and spent days lounging in bed, making love and learning about each other.

Severus filled her in on the last days before the battle. He told her about Potter's attack on Draco Malfoy with the Sectumsempra Curse he had created. It was just before the battle at Hogwarts.

He leaned onto his side and looked at her suspiciously.

"Were you there that night?"

She smiled that perfect smile and said, "Of course!"

"Who do you think spelled the entranceway to the tower so that only a person with a Dark Mark could cross it? Of course that also meant I wouldn't be able to, but my work was in the main area. It was extremely difficult to pretend that I was 'helping' when all I really did was keep the children and Order members safe. That Weasley girl, she is one ruthless fighter! She kept on and on after Carrow..."

"Which one?" Severus asked.

"The brother."

Alissa continued. "What angered me the most was that animal, Greyback. I couldn't stop the Weasley girl from getting killed and keep him away from Bill Weasley. He's alright, I hope?"

"As far as I have heard, he will survive, although if he will become a werewolf, only time will tell."

"Severus, it was so maddening. It really gave me a true dose of what life must be like for you every day! I saw in a split second Gibbon cast the Killing Curse at Lupin. I managed to slide Lupin to the side...the curse just barely missed him, and then I took Gibbon down once I isolated him. I managed to absorb some minor injuries. That poor

Longbottom boy took a header on that barrier and busted up his face royally!" She laughed and apologized. "I shouldn't laugh. He's a very brave lad, a true Gryffindor if ever there was one; it's just when he goes, he goes for broke!"

Snape chuckled at her laughter. "I suppose that could have been my outlook on his attempts at potion making. He certainly made sure if he was going to cock up a potion, it was going to be in a big way!"

They laughed and laughed. Until finally Severus told her about his confrontation outside with Potter as he was trying to flee.

"Yes," said Alissa. "I saw it happen; I was Disillusioned. He wanted to kill you. You must be more cautious now than ever. He is confused, and Dumbledore, I fear, did not prepare the boy for the duties and trials that are to come. Ah, well! What can one do? I followed you all the way to the Apparation point and waited for you and Draco to disappear...fucking hippogriff!"

Severus placed a warm hand on her chest just above her cleavage and stroked the satiny skin there. "I needed you but I could not ask," he choked out.

"I know that, Severus, I know..."

The Emerald Isle did not haunt him. His passion for green was being replaced by dark, warm eyes and long, black hair so much like his own. They spoke of confidences and of the secrets over the years. She told him of Igor Karkaroff's attempts at seduction, and he told her of the whores he frequented over the years in his loneliness. He told her more about Lily and how much he had loved her and missed her so desperately, sometimes he could barely breathe. She told him she had always felt that way about him, of the three years at Hogwarts waiting for him to return and then leaving for Durmstrang and feeling a part of her had suddenly died.

He was brushing her long hair, running his hands through it and inhaling her scent as she spoke.

"It never stopped? I never faded in your mind?" he asked quietly.

To this Alissa leaned to face him more directly. "Has it not ever faded for you and Lily?"

He did not want to answer what she already knew. Yet, it did not bother her.

She faced him and leaned in so close they might have kissed.

"Severus had his Lily. Alissa had her Severus."

He was amazed that she was so enthralled by him. It was beyond his understanding that a woman would feel for him what he felt for Lily. But here she was and always had been. She was a fearless warrior who had placed herself in front of him so he would not have to be punished, time and again. He didn't know a lot about love, never had the time or women interested in him for that particular emotion. Yet here she was, the raven-haired henchwoman to the most evil wizard in Britain, and she adored him.

She made him feel handsome. She made him feel capable of anything, as if life could be restarted and the past just a minor inconvenience. The more time he spent alone with her, the more he fell in love with her. It was a feeling he had never believed was real. He had heard people speak of a love that made you feel as if you and your beloved were the only people who existed, but he thought it was just a bunch of codswallop. Yet, here he was, almost forty years old and this dark beauty worshiped and loved him beyond reason. It was true magic...

He started to think of a future for them. He thought if they could survive, they then could marry, have babies of their own, spend the rest of their lives making love and putting down roots for their brood. But then he thought...that life wasn't for them. They were misfits who would never fit in one land or country. It would just be the two of them. He wanted to ask her badly if she would be his wife, but life was so uncertain. What if one of them died? It was more of a possibility than either one wanted to admit, but nonetheless, it was true.

Nothing was spoken about where Alissa would be going after their part of the summer was over. He knew he had to report for a special meeting in the middle of July for a special meeting with the Dark Lord, and then at the end of August he was to return to Hogwarts to take over as Headmaster. How all this would be accomplished, he did not want to know. He assumed Alissa would be one of the Death Eaters to orchestrate the more important assassinations. It had been a relief to tell her about Albus. She had understood the complications behind the Vow and the guilt he had felt over carrying out the murder, even though it was what Albus had wanted. He had cried when she held him as he openly grieved the loss of his friend. He was scared to be so cut off from the Order, but Alissa had sworn she would always be there for him

The evening before he went to meet with the Dark Lord in the middle of July, he had made love to Alissa. They had made love countless times before, but this time had been so sweet and tender she had cried. That had shocked him. He had never seen Alissa cry. She had cried as if her heart was breaking, and she held onto him as if she would never see him again. She had declared her love over and over for him. Severus had been deeply touched by the depth and strength of her feeling for him that he allowed himself to be swept into it.

He was thrusting inside slowly, but forcefully. He watched her throw her head back and moan his name softly.

"I'll never let you go," he whispered into her mouth as he kissed her. "I don't know how, but I promise I will be with you forever."

She looked into his eyes as the tears continued to stream down her face. Her body was shaking, the deliberate force of his movements inside her coupled with the burning in his eyes made her want to believe that perhaps he had finally truly had begun to love her.

He continued to whisper as she began to quiver, her climax roaring over her and taking over.

"I swear I will only give myself to you. I want to be worthy of your love, Alissa. You are so lovely..." he breathed as his own climax started to overtake him.

Alissa watched drowsily as he pumped into her wildly. She watched his face as he shut his eyes and clenched his jaw before he clamped his hands on her, crushing her to him as he growled out his release. As he released her, and shifted off her, he kissed her one more time and murmured, "I love you."

Alissa had looked over and had seen that he was asleep. She was so happy. He really loved her! She had never wanted their time together to end. She had wanted to just stay by his side forever. But, she knew she couldn't. Sleep finally took her over.

When Severus had awakened, she was still in a deep slumber, exhausted from their lovemaking. She looked sated and calm. He was so happy; he thought he would burst from the exhilaration of it. He had to steel himself and raise his Occlumency walls before he met up with Yaxley to go see the Dark Lord in the evening.

A/N: Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant. Please review! Up next: Alissa is sent to track down the Muggle Studies teacher, Charity Burbage.

Role Reversal

Chapter 9 of 18

The abduction of Hogwarts' Muggle Studies professor, Charity Burbage, is carried out by Alissa.

□

Severus was in the sitting room reading when Alissa came down dressed in her Death Eater robes. He immediately stopped, dropped his book onto the arm of his chair, and quickly stood to question her. She raised her hand to silence him.

"Please don't, Severus. I do what I must. You know how this works," she said softly.

Snape nodded his head resignedly. He did indeed, better than most, but that didn't mean he liked it. "Will I see you before I leave to meet the Dark Lord? Or shall I see you there?"

"We shall see one another soon, I'm sure. All I can do is hope and pray that we shall be together before long and be able to spend as much time as we're allowed." Alissa fixed on her mask then, her eyes searching his as the rest of her face was covered. She had a task to perform, and she feared it would be too much for him to accept. He was looking at her curiously. He knew she was holding something back.

"I love you, Alissa," he blurted out to her.

"I love you, Severus," she answered.

That was all that needed to be said. Without a kiss or an embrace, she swept from the house and Apparated without a sound.

Hogsmeade was quiet and lazy this time of the year. There were no students in the summertime so the teachers were able to spend as much free time as they wished. Although new directives had been put in force by the Ministry to ensure the public's safety, one young Hogwarts teacher was not practicing vigilance and was about to meet the beginning of her own end.

She was wandering in the streets, unaware of the Disillusioned person stalking her. She passed by an alleyway and was forcefully pulled in. The Disillusionment Charm came off and Professor Charity Burbage was faced with one of Voldemort's most efficient killers.

Charity recognized the Death Eater weeds immediately and opened her mouth to scream, but Alissa quickly placed a Silencing Spell on her and performed a nonverbal Incarcerous spell to stop her from fighting back. Then in a flash, she Apparated back to Malfoy Manor with her prize.

After delivering the young Muggle Studies teacher to the Dark Lord, she exited, running into a number of Death Eaters on her way out. One of them was Fenrir Greyback, a bloodthirsty monster if there ever was one. She sneered at the evil werewolf and gave a curt nod to Bellatrix and Macnair.

Fenrir tried to block her way, but she brandished her wand and he began to choke.

"You disgust me, Greyback," she spat. "You have absolutely no concept of self-control. You are the most pitiful excuse for a follower of the Dark Lord I've ever met!"

Bellatrix laughed in her scary cackle. "Oh, leave the widdle werewolfie awone!" she teased. "Honestly, Devon, you are so moody sometimes. Don't like to be out of Snape's bed for too long?"

Alissa smiled dryly at the witch and said as she released the werewolf, "No, it's that I detest the practices this animal revels in! I heard what he did to that Montgomery boy. He was just five years old—you sick fuck!" She shrieked the last part at the werewolf as he lay gasping on the floor. "He died because you can't control your bloodlust! Still the whole situation could have been salvaged; he could have been raised by us to be a loyal follower of the Dark Lord!"

"My, my," Bellatrix teased. "You are even starting to sound like old Snape. It looks like he's penetrating you in more ways than one!"

Alissa walked away from them. She loathed the whole lot, but she despised herself even more. She had done the unthinkable. She had handed over a colleague of her love to the Bastard. What would Severus say when he found out tonight? Would he ever be able to love her when he found out what she had done? Perhaps she had now pushed past the limits of his forgiveness...

Alissa waited for Severus at their vacation house outside the city of Waterford after their respective meetings. Alissa nervously paced back and forth across the room. She was terrified. What would Snape say to her after seeing Burbage's murder?

It was very late when he Apparated to the cottage. He walked in and was silent as he removed his Death Eater Robes. Alissa sat on the sofa, still and quiet, but watching him. He paced up and down in front of her, not knowing what to say.

Finally he spoke.

"It was you who did that to her?"

"Yes."

"It begins. The night before Potter's Birthday. July 30th. We attack, then during the Weasley wedding on August 1st, we shall take over the Ministry of Magic. Hogsmeade and Hogwarts will fall under the domain of the Death Eaters. I shall become Headmaster. The Order *will* continue, and you shall assist me as needs arise."

"I cannot be in the open with you?" Alissa asked, her voice shocked and heavily laced with disappointment.

"No, it is far too dangerous. You must not allow yourself to be exposed to anyone who may recognize you with me. I am tainted beyond all hope. Moody, Minerva, Lupin—it's too dangerous. You and I must switch roles. I shall be presenting myself as a true supporter of the Dark Lord while you openly play the role of double agent. Minerva is now the Head of the Order. You will report to her and make the necessary arrangements behind my back. It may come down to only Minerva ever knowing your true identity in the end. We may never have a future, so I would not like to pretend that we can dream of one, or even hope."

"Is that the constant upon which you set your life, Severus?" she asked bitterly.

His eyes flashed at her fiery attitude, fondness overwhelmed him, and he reached out for her. She embraced her lover and let him hold her.

"The constant upon which I set my life is keeping you safe. I have come to love you very much, Alissa. I truly have."

Alissa broke down and cried violently, sobbing into the pliant arms of the man she had loved for so long.

"I know," he murmured. "You thought I would hate you because of Charity, but I too know about the fortunes of war. That is why we must be careful. We have been given one more week, and then we must part. Please let me love you, Alissa."

She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs about his waist. He carried her into their bedroom, quietly shutting the door behind them. This was where they could shut out the war and the world. It was just they two, trying to live a lifetime in one week...

A/N: I know, a short chapter. However, it was essential to show how vulnerable Alissa still is. She has a deep fear that her work for Voldemort will eventually tear them apart, that somehow she'll go too far and he won't love her anymore. Gosh, that sounds like a certain Potions master I've read about! ;)

Next: The Ministry falls and Death Eaters crash the wedding of Bill and Fleur. Alissa is in charge of the interrogation. How will she ensure Hermione's escape and let Potter know the Burrow is no longer safe?

Changing of the Guard

Chapter 10 of 18

Alissa and Minerva meet for a conversation. Bill and Fleur's wedding is ruined by the presence of Death Eaters. Alissa interrogates the Weasleys and helps Arthur to get word to Harry. Unfortunately, they have no idea that she is helping them.

□

Alissa met with Minerva two days before Harry Potter's transfer to the Burrow. They had much to discuss, but mostly, Minerva wanted to expound on her vitriol against Severus Snape.

"How do you live with it, Alissa?" she seethed. "You worked with him, even were lovers once...rumor has it. How can you live with such a betrayal? Aren't you afraid of Severus revealing your true loyalties to *him*?"

Alissa rubbed her forehead. "Minerva, I've seen things that were so horrible in my thirty years on this earth, honestly, nothing can truly shock me anymore. I've seen too much death, too much backstabbing amongst friends and comrades...all the worst of humanity. But I want to urge you to remember what Dumbledore always said, 'Not everything is what it seems.'"

The old witch looked exhausted. There was so much to do, and the Order had fallen into shambles. Grief and pain were so strong and palpable that it all seemed unreal. But the courageous Scottish lady would not let it overcome her. There were decisions to be made.

Alissa hated breaking the news to her, but she had no other alternative. "I can't be a part of the transfer, Minerva. There are more than enough Order members to do this. And besides, my just showing up, not being known by anyone, will only throw around suspicion and doubt, not to mention risking my cover! Focusing on the overall mission is paramount. At any rate, I don't know how I can be protecting Potter and trying to help Tom kill him at the same time!"

"I understand," the other woman answered stiffly. "What are we going to do now?" Her huge eyes were so lost, so full of questions, Alissa wished she could just blurt out everything, but she would never believe it, even if she did tell her.

"I have Gregorovitch to find, and unfortunately I will have to execute him." Alissa shook her head. "It's all such waste. I must kill a man just because he once owned that thrice damned wand! And he isn't even the one who has it now!" she exclaimed and then damned herself for spilling that piece of information.

"Why all the running around then?" Minerva asked suspiciously.

"Because I have to wait for Potter to understand. I must wait for all the Horcruxes to be found and then lure the snake here. Here, Minerva ~~Here~~ is where the Final Battle shall be. I don't know how much contact I will have with you. You may not hear from me often, but know that I do understand what is happening and what shall happen." She reached over and grasped the older witch's hand in a gesture of comfort.

She almost stopped herself, but she needed at least one person in the Order to be aware and prepared.

"Minerva, the ministry will fall and this school..." she looked around the office as she said the words, "will fall to Tom. The school shall go on, although restrictions will be enforced. The Muggleborns will be forced out and must be hidden. They will all be made to register with the new regime. They will not be coming back to Hogwarts. Dark times, my friend. Dark times are coming. But we will prevail. We will!" she said adamantly.

"You are positive the ministry will fall?" the older witch asked incredulously.

"A *coup d'état*, Minerva. The wheels are in motion and have been for a while. But don't lose heart. I am still working for the Order and shall do my best to help you."

She embraced the older witch and stood to depart. "Minerva, there will be things you will hear; there will be things I must do, but please ~~always~~ways remember my allegiance will always be to Dumbledore and this school."

"Goodbye."

Alissa was at the Manor when the Dark Lord and the Death Eaters returned from the attack on Potter. The Dark Lord was enraged, and he quickly raced down to the dungeons. Alissa closed her eyes. Ollivander. Of course the bloody wand would not work! When would Potter get the damn Horcruxes and end this madness?

Severus was slumped in a chair, his face exhausted and grim. The ear-piercing screams started to emanate from the dungeons. He was dirty from the battle and exhausted. Alissa approached him and opened the connection between them.

What happened, Severus?

Potter is safe, for now. Moody is dead. I tried to stop George Weasley from being killed, but I failed. I hit him in the head and blew his ear off. I don't know if he's alive or dead. Mundungus Fletcher disappeared, that bloody coward!

Come, let me clean you up. Perhaps the Dark Lord will let us have the month before the term begins.

No, Alissa, remember, the attack on the ministry. One week and Tom will own the ministry and Hogwarts, just as he has always wanted. Besides, you have to go get that blasted wand-maker. He had better stop torturing Ollivander or there shall be no one to make the caliber of wands witches and wizards need. That bastard is completely psychotic!

I warned you!

Severus wrapped his arm around Alissa, and together they walked up to his room.

"Let's both have a bath. I think I deserve some extra special attention," he said slyly.

"Always, my love," she replied. "Always."

They sat relaxing in the tub. In no time, Alissa was straddling Severus after giving him a thorough scrubbing. They kissed and enjoyed the nearness of each other. Finally, Severus spoke of the latest news.

"Thicknesse has been placed under the Imperius Curse. He will be replacing Scrimgeour once the Dark Lord makes his move," he informed her.

Alissa closed her eyes, "Thicknesse! Damn, I can't keep track of all these people!"

Severus smirked as he tickled her pert nose with his own. "Well, *mydear*, after you disposed of Madame Bones, Pius Thicknesse became the Head of the Magical Law Enforcement Squad. Now, he has been chosen to be the new Minister of Magic when we...oh, my apologies...*you* assassinate Scrimgeour," he said with dripping sarcasm.

"Such cheek!" Alissa teased as she smacked him on the chest. "I shall have to punish you for that, Headmaster Snape. Now that you are the Headmaster, shall be the only one to dispense punishments upon you," she said huskily as she went to capture his mouth with her own. "Well, at least punishments that you will enjoy," she added darkly.

"Mmmm," he replied. He broke the kiss and said wistfully, "If it were not for the fact Scrimgeour is the most odious wretch in the Wizarding world, I'd actually feel bad for his death."

"Who placed Thicknesse under the Imperius?"

"Yaxley."

Alissa snorted in derision. Then she flashed her perfect smile and changed the subject. "Are you ready, Headmaster, to take your post?"

He raised an eyebrow. "No, I am not! I am not looking forward to all the happy horseshit that comes with the job, although it does have its rewards and honors. I am not looking forward to having the majority of my staff wishing for my death. As it is, I shall have to employ a house-elf to taste all my food before I eat it! But, what is worse is being parted from you. Promise me you will be cautious!" he demanded.

"I promise," she whispered as she began to move seductively around his semi-erect penis. Soon he was groaning and she felt the hot stiffness against her core. She sighed as she slid over him and welcomed him inside. Soon the war was lost to them again. All the roles and deceptions, the fears and the potential losses, all was forgotten...

A week later, when all the good and noble were celebrating the wedding of a young and brave Wizarding couple, Minister Scrimgeour sat in seclusion, awaiting the moment for Lord Voldemort to make his move. When the fighting outside his office began, he was prepared. He was faced with a black-haired witch who was obviously the leader of the group. He braced himself for the torture to come, but she refused to allow it. Before the others could disobey her, he was dead.

Immediately after Scrimgeour's death, Alissa and her band of Death Eaters Apparated to the Burrow. She took the time to hold the group back far enough and cast a Disillusionment spell around them. She called Draco forward and had him point out the people he knew. She only knew the Order members by name, but not by face. She needed to know who was who so she could stave off any deaths. She wished she could have had longer. Draco had only gotten as far as Granger, the Weasley twins, his parents, Molly and Arthur, Tonks, Lupin (whom she already knew)...but just then a Patronus came bounding into the middle of the reception and announced the ministry had fallen, and Scrimgeour had been assassinated. There was no time to lose. They pounced upon the crowd, and the Death Eaters were furious to find Potter nowhere among the number. The Aurors put up a good fight, and Alissa made sure the Granger girl escaped. She was, according to Severus, the cleverest witch Hogwarts had seen in decades and was the brains behind all of Potter's success, even if she was, in his opinion, an insufferable-know-it-all! She was also the youngest Order member. So Granger was priority number one, after Potter, of course.

After the wedding party was sequestered and most of the guests had escaped, Alissa had the family taken inside the house, and she gave her orders to the others before going to face the Weasleys.

"Right then, we are here to search the house so leave nothing unexamined. The blood traitors are to be questioned, but NO TORTURE! Try to use ~~persuasion~~. Remember that these are the people closest to Potter."

The orders were to then to splinter off into groups of twos and threes and interrogate anyone they knew now to be a part of the Order who could bring Potter to the Dark Lord. The first thing was to get Draco out of the area, so she dispatched his group of three immediately. Alissa stayed to oversee the search and interrogation of the Burrow and its residents. She had the family rounded up, and they all sat cramped in their main room while Alissa stood in the background. She kept her mask and hood on at all times and did not speak to the family, only in whispered tones to the Death Eaters when it was absolutely imperative. Lupin was staying with the Weasleys as well, and she could not risk being seen by him. She got a good look at the Weasley clan and knew they were in the Order. She hated that she had to do this to them but it could not be helped.

As the house was torn apart upstairs and down, Avery and Rodolphus took care of the interrogations. Alissa leaned over and whispered in Avery's ear that she wanted the interrogations to be done separately, in different rooms, so they might be able to catch someone in a lie. She would stay with the others as they took turns interrogating. In truth, though, she wanted to make sure one of them was able to make sure a message was sent to the Granger girl to find Potter and stay put.

A young new recruit, Madison, came down with Pearson, another green recruit, to report to Alissa.

"We saw the Weasley boy in bed. He looks really bad off. Didn't want to get too close, but he's definitely ill," said Madison.

Alissa nodded and told them in mumbled tones to go Apparate to Grimmauld Place and keep watch over the comings and goings there *Can't have anyone who has any wits about them taking that post. The Granger girl may be hiding out there this minute!* she thought.

Once they Disapparated, Avery took Lupin into one room and Rodolphus took Ginny into another. As he walked past with the young woman, Alissa pointed her wand at him and whispered "*Legilimens*." She easily saw his intent to torture Potter's girlfriend into submission, and if she did not comply, he would rape her. She used a very dark and ancient spell on him that translated into his mind what she would do to him if he harmed the girl. His eyes grew wide with fear, and she released him when she felt he had understood her point. Verbal threats against men like Rodolphus Lestrage did nothing to deter them. Force of skill and displays of power worked best.

Finally, when she was alone with the remainder of the family, she averted her eyes, turned away from them, and allowed them to whisper and send covert signals nonverbally to each other. She watched them without their knowing. Once, she stepped into the adjoining room while she watched secretly through a mirror. She saw as quick as lightening, Arthur Weasley send his Patronus. *Good*, she thought. *Perhaps the Potter boy can get a head start!*

She walked back into the sitting room and sat in a chair in the farthest corner possible. One by one, each member of the family and few remaining guests were interrogated. It was a long and weary night.

She had been ordered by the Dark Lord before they left the manor to dispatch other groups to Order members' homes once the Burrow had been secured. Later, she would learn that Diggle's house had been set on fire, and the Tonks family was put through the Cruciatus Curse. It was all beyond her. There was no choice for her any more. The Dark Lord and all his Death Eaters (which was now not a huge difference between ministry workers and those who bore the Dark Mark!) had the entire ministry's wealth of information at their disposal. Protective charms were breached and all the Order members outed. Lists of pure-bloods, half-bloods, and Mudbloods were made. Nothing was sacred. She was not even privy to all the orders the Dark Lord was handing out. That frustrated her to no end, for now she could not help those who might be saved!

After an exhausting night that proved to be a waste, Alissa and her band were brought before the Dark Lord again. She was given praise for her execution of Scrimgeour, but he was very displeased with Dolohov and Rowle, as they had let Potter, the Mudblood Granger, and the Blood Traitor, Weasley, escape. Apparently, there had been a skirmish at a café on Tottencourt Road. Potter had been there at the wedding, just in a Polyjuiced form. Also, the Weasley boy was with them. Potter had started to regain his natural form, the fighting ensued, and they had been bested by the Trio. Again, Alissa had evaded punishment for not discovering Potter at the wedding, nor discovering the fake Ronald Weasley at the Burrow. She felt a huge wave of relief wash over her. She felt she had endured enough for a lifetime already. Yet, she had to watch the two Death Eaters meet their fates.

The Dark Lord put Dolohov through his punishment himself, as he had years of faithfulness behind him. But unfortunately, Rowle did not. Alissa was stone-faced as she watched as the young Draco Malfoy was placed under the Imperius Curse and then tortured Rowle with the Cruciatus Curse for what seemed like forever. Finally, after an eternity, Draco ended it by killing him. Nagini slithered towards the body, and Alissa felt her mind disassociate from the scene.

After they all were dismissed, she climbed wearily to her room, and when she opened the door, she burst into tears to find Severus waiting for her there. He reached out for her, and she collapsed into his arms, losing herself in his voluminous robes. She felt so safe with him that she never wanted to leave his embrace! They held onto each other for as long as they could. For tomorrow, she would be gone to finally face Gregorovitch, and Snape would be returning back to Hogwarts to settle in as the new Headmaster of the Wizarding school.

A/N: I know according to canon that Rowle is not killed here, but I took the liberty of changing it anyway.

Up Next: Gregorovitch is found and executed. Voldemort and Severus have an enlightening conversation and some lemons for y'all!:) Please review!

Gregorovitch

Chapter 11 of 18

Alissa and Severus spend time together after her mission to find the elusive Gregorovitch comes to its conclusion.

□

A/N: So you know, the later part of this chapter contains SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIAL. It is all consensual, so no worries of abuse! However, if this bothers you, you may want to not read it. It is at the end of this chapter.

What an unmitigated disaster! She could have throttled Jugson for his ineptitude! Not only did his information lead them to the wrong house, but then she had to watch as the Dark Lord killed the nice German family who had claimed they didn't know where Gregorovitch was. Alissa would have just let them go, but unfortunately, she wasn't in charge! Nevertheless, when they did finally catch up to the retired wand maker, Alissa levitated him upside down with magical ropes as the Dark Lord interrogated him about the Elder Wand.

He looked every bit the part of Father Christmas with his white beard and plump belly. He begged fearsomely for his life and swore he no longer had the Elder Wand, claiming that it had been stolen years ago.

"*Who was the thief? Do not lie to Lord Voldemort!*" the Dark Lord said coldly.

"*PLEASE...I beg you, I don't know...he was young...he stole it from me!*" he cried out in terror.

Then the Dark Lord, skilled in the art of Legilimency, easily entered his mind and saw all he needed. He nodded to Alissa, and she stepped up and performed the Killing Curse on him. They Apparated back to the manor, and the Dark Lord gathered his inner circle of trusted servants and relayed to them what he had seen in Gregorovitch's mind.

Alissa was dismissed as the Dark Lord summoned his inner circle. It would have bothered anyone else to have been shunned from the inner circle after all the hard work she had done, but Alissa had no such aspirations. She didn't want to experience him rooting around in her mind ever again!

Severus came back to her bedroom late and relayed what the Dark Lord had told him. It had been the infamous Grindelwald that the Dark Lord had seen in Gregorovitch's mind. He did not tell Alissa all of the conversation. It was just as well. Her Occlumency skills were weak at best, and it did nothing to aid her cause to know things that could only get her killed. Or himself, for that matter. He decided to go for a walk to organize his thoughts and replay the conversation in his mind as Alissa took a long hot bath after her lengthy journey. It had been a disturbing conversation...

"I saw the young Grindelwald. All this time, he was safely tucked away in that prison! I shall be taking my leave again. Severus will be in charge of Hogwarts. Yaxley, Rebastan, Rodolphus, Bellatrix, I will need you to stay on top of the Ministry, to make sure they are taking care of the Mudbloods. I shall be taking our Miss Devon with me. I must say, Severus, she was very well trained by Igor. It was probably the only capable assignment he ever carried out."

"My Lord?" Severus asked, feigning confusion.

"Igor worked tirelessly after his release from Azkaban to ingratiate himself back into the good graces of my followers. He told Macnair of a young woman who was extremely skilled in Defense and had a pull towards the Dark. Igor, imbecile that he was, couldn't get past what his dick wanted...not that he ever succeeded, the stupid fool! She was, from what I had been told, a very impressive warrior. Her skill, finesse, fluid of motion... all exquisite. Once I gained my human form and met the woman, I watched a sampling of her work before torturing her for her mentor's treachery. I had to make sure she was not going to turn on me as her master had."

"But what I found to be interesting was that she reminded me of you, Severus. Her style of dueling, her demeanor, she was very cold and detached. She had nothing, no one to turn to, so she swore her life to mine...to serve me without question and she has done an acceptable job for as young as she is, and being a sane female, she lacks bloodlust. She unfortunately will never be a Bellatrix, but she is efficient, where Bella tends to draw out matters. It does become a bit tiresome after a while. I did some simple calculations when Pettigrew told me of your relationship with her when she was but a child. I knew you must have bedded her, as well, as Pettigrew deduced from his inept brain that she had imprinted herself upon you. I, of course, entered her mind and found that I was right."

"Severus, she is dedicated to you, and that makes her extremely valuable to me. She will kill for you, and I am most pleased that she has such singleness of mind. You are my most trusted ally, and that makes her my slave. She did not let me down with Gregorovitch. She deserves a boon before she accompanies me to Nurmangard. It would be nice if you would give her some comfort and pleasure before she accompanies me again. So, take a day from your duties. Have that old harridan, McGonagall, take over for a day or two."

Severus was elated. "As you wish, my Lord. After all, she deserves an ample reward for her faithfulness. I shall endeavor to continue to make her most agreeable to your will, my Lord."

The gift of a boon usually was for the one granted to ask, but the Dark Lord had already calculated a plan in his mind for Alissa. Snape was sure. The Dark Lord was by nature not a giving master. He was not kind for the sake of kindness...no, he had a plan. He just wondered if he would find out in time. He also prayed Alissa would be kept safe.

So, it was only after the death of one of the greatest wand makers of Europe that Alissa could finally relax and consider the Dark Lord's next move. She could only hope Potter and his little band were moving along with their hunt for the Horcruxes. It was just coming down to a race, and not a fair race at that! She had to keep her horses back and urge Potter's along. Sometimes she just wanted to scream at Dumbledore. He had not explained his mission thoroughly enough to the young boy.

She was deep in thought in her silk robe after a nice soak going over her thoughts when Severus finally came in. She sighed deeply with contentment. He was the only person to whom she could confide her fears, the only one who would understand. She liked to think he felt the same way.

She was terrified to go to Nurmengard with the Dark Lord to interrogate Grindelwald. She didn't even know when it would be, only that she would be going when the Dark Lord summoned her. She climbed into his lap, and they wrapped their arms around each other, remaining silent about her fears while Severus told her of the goings on at the school.

"The school has become a shell of what it once was!" he fumed. "Hogwarts could boast its superior standing to the whole of the Wizarding world. Now, it has become a castle of horrors," he finished with a whisper.

She opened their connection, afraid of being overheard.

What is really going on there?

The bloody Carrows! Brother and sister...they teach Dark Arts and Muggle Studies. The class used to be "Defense Against the Dark Arts," now it's just "Dark Arts."

Sounds like Durmstrang.

I'm sure! But what is the most disturbing is that the students are forced to use the Unforgiveables upon one another. Also, the Cruciatus Curse has become the standard punishment for rule-breakers. I detest it! I detest child torture; at least an adult has a fully developed brain to psychologically withstand the consequences and process what has happened to them. But a child, who has yet to grow into their magic, it can only serve to disrupt and permanently harm the magic growing and changing within them!

There must be a great deal of it going around.

You have no idea! His eyes grew hollow and deadened as he continued There is a small faction of "rebels" at the school. Neville Longbottom, a boy I never in my wildest dreams thought would be a leader, has led this ragtag group to subvert and hinder the Carrows at every turn. They had beaten him and the other sixth and seventh year Gryffindor students, plus a couple of Ravensclaws and a group of Hufflepuffs that have joined the rebellion. They kept the name they used under Umbridge's regime..."Dumbledore's Army"...damn fools! They make my job harder, but at least they keep some hope alive.

What exactly have they done?

Longbottom, Ginny Weasley, and Luna Lovegood, the daughter of that idiot, Xeno Lovegood, the owner of the Quibbler, lead the group of dissenters. Weasley and Longbottom broke into my office in an attempt to steal Godric Gryffindor's Sword! They were caught, and it quickly became a precarious situation as to how to go about punishing them. It was very difficult to handle their punishment, but I got them detention with our Gamekeeper, Hagrid, who loves Potter like he were his own, so I knew they would be in good hands. It was considered "soft", but I have a promise to keep to Dumbledore that I would watch over the children. To do that and keep my cover as a true Death Eater is extremely trying. I only hope they realize that it was only because of their blood status as pure-bloods that kept them from further harm. If they had been half-bloods, I shudder to even think!

His lover watched silently as he tried to relax. He was overtaxed and weary. So many times Alissa had wished she could be there with him, to comfort him, to make love to him. She missed his touch so badly it hurt. The bond they had created over the summer had truly knitted their souls together. She could feel his longing for her, and she was positive he could feel her need for him. Every night, she prayed that the next day would be one more that brought her closer to being with her love without the Dark Lord looming over their shoulder.

Now he was here, and she went limp in his arms as he carried her to his bed and made love to her. She was so exhausted, but could not stop her body from responding to his kisses and touches. He caressed her body with his, letting all his fears, doubts, and anger wash away as he lost himself in the sensations only this one woman could provide, and they gently came together.

She let exhaustion overtake her soon afterward. He watched her sleep, and when she awoke, he had dinner waiting for her. She sat naked in their bed and devoured her food. She then confided to Severus her fears about the upcoming trip to Nurmengard.

"I'm so scared he will try Legilimency on me...I have tried and tried, Severus. But I cannot master Occlumency. I just can't!"

"Well, you had better start creating some false memories, for if he invades your mind, all will be for naught!" he said coldly.

She suddenly lost her appetite. She pushed the tray away, and her face fell into a dark look of dread.

Severus took the tray from her and joined her on the bed, wrapping them both in his robes. He held her and spoke quietly. "You keep doing what he asks, and you will have nothing to fear. Absolute obedience. Without question, without hesitation. He has more on his mind than wondering what is rattling around in yours. He knows how much you love me, how dedicated you are. He feels secure. So, keep your head down, your pretty mouth shut, and do not fear. All will be well. After this, there will be no more of these ridiculous jaunts around Europe," he said reassuringly.

She smiled that perfect smile up at him and said seductively, "I know of one sure fire way to keep my mouth occupied,"

He raised an eyebrow, and she drew up on her hands and knees, backing down towards his cock. His eyes followed her red-tipped nipples, now brushing against the rough fabric of his trousers. She moaned in pleasure and quickly released his erection from his pants. He watched as she took him into her sweet mouth, and he could not stop himself from pumping his hips up into her. She tried to use her hands, but he grabbed them and held them firmly down.

"No, my sweet, you use that lovely mouth of yours, like the good little slut you are," he growled lustfully.

She complied and teased him mercilessly as he groaned out his pleasure.

"I want to come on your face," he said darkly. He flipped her over and knelt over her chest, his cock jaunting heavily in front of her face. He held her head and fucked her perfect mouth.

"Sweet Merlin, you are better than any whore I've ever had! My God, you are amazing. I want to fill you with my cum until you choke on it!"

She loved it when he went wild and spoke filthy words to her. He finally climaxed and spurted his seed over her face and neck. He fell backwards, and she turned over and cast a simple "Tergeo" cleansing charm on her face and neck. As she did, she flashed her arse to him, and he grabbed her hips and dragged her towards him, her legs spread above his lap. He tested the wetness between her legs and found her dripping with need. He plunged his fingers deep inside and found that heavenly spot that made her lose all decorum and control. He stroked her sensuously as she bucked and screamed. He rose up and wrapped his arm around her waist, pinning her back to his chest. He slid his hand upwards to capture one hardened nipple between his thumb and forefinger as he pumped his fingers into her core. She shrieked and convulsed over and over. He wasn't going to let her rest until he was hard again, and then he would take her how he had always wanted. *She loves the dark? Well, by God, she will have it!* he thought evilly.

When he finally become hard again, he flipped her over and pounded into her as she screamed and cried. He was hurting her, but there was pleasure in the pain as he grabbed her thighs, lifted her up, and began pounding into her cervix. She gushed a torrent of juices around him, and she began to whimper his name. He finally released into her with a mighty roar that surely reverberated throughout the entire manor. He collapsed onto her, and they slept hard, sated, and in complete peace.

A/N: Continued thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant, and to all who review! Parts of this chapter were taken from JKR's *Deathly Hallows*. Many thanks to Ms. Rowling for her work!

Paying the Fiddler

Chapter 12 of 18

Alissa leads the mission to abduct Luna Lovegood from the Hogwarts Express. Severus tells Alissa important information about the "Golden Trio" that may be of use in the future.

□

Christmas, 1997

As winter approached, Alissa heard more news about the problems Hogwarts was having with their new Headmaster. All unofficial gatherings of students were disbanded; certain students were even forbidden to go to Hogsmeade. Nevertheless, the mutiny hummed along quietly, never fully dying out. The group known as "Dumbledore's Army", or the D.A., was still gathering secretly.

Severus came back to the manor to get away from the school for a few days. He was brought before the Dark Lord and reported on the activities of the dissenters. The Dark Lord was not happy. He had control over the Ministry and *The Daily Prophet*, but this moronic bumbler, Xeno Lovegood, who for years ran a rag of a magazine called *The Quibbler*, was printing out information the Dark Lord wanted kept quiet. Something was going to have to be done. Severus knew what that meant. ~~Alissa~~.

The Hogwarts Express went along its journey as it had for so many years, bringing Hogwarts students back and forth from London to the highlands of Scotland. There had been few incidences over the years, the worst most likely being when the Dementors of Azkaban halted the train to search for Sirius Black at the start of Harry Potter's third year. Well, all that changed when the Express took its journey back to London for the Christmas hols.

Alissa Apparated onto the train, wearing her Death Eater weeds, with the Lestrage brothers directly behind her.

She immediately saw a group of first-years who started screaming and scrambling into the various cars to get out of their way. The din caught the attention of the older

students, and Alissa immediately recognized Ginny Weasley and Neville Longbottom in the group running down the walkway opposite them.

Ginny yelled, "*Stupefy!*"

Alissa was already prepared with a nonverbal "*Protego*."

The rebound from Alissa's Shield Charm knocked many students backward. Another group came forward, trying to defend their territory. But they were no match for Alissa or the Lestrage brothers.

She let the Lestranges loose on them and grabbed the Weasley girl from off the floor. She was bleeding heavily from her head. She grabbed her handkerchief and held it to the girl's wound.

"Where is Luna Lovegood?" she demanded harshly.

"Nowhere. I won't tell you anything!" Ginny growled back at her.

"Fine," Alissa snapped. "I shall find her myself." She grabbed the girl by the hair and yanked her up. She dragged Ginny from car to car as she screamed and students shrunk back in terror from the sight. The youngest Weasley tried to wrench out of her grasp, but Alissa only gripped harder. She finally came to the correct car and threw Ginny onto the floor, sealing the room shut. Luna sat still and serenely in her seat. She was not going to fight. Alissa had a great deal of respect for her steady head. Ginny tried to attack her again, and Alissa performed a Petrificus Totalis Hex on her, grabbed the Lovegood girl, and Apparated back to Malfoy Manor.

Alissa and Severus spent a couple of days together in the warm seclusion of her bed, rarely leaving the room, and just enjoying the warmth of each other's arms. It was all happening so fast now. He had not been pleased with how the Lovegood abduction played out. They had a horrible row over it, and Alissa told him he should have been grateful she had not performed the Cruciatus Curse on the Weasley girl.

Severus looked at her in disgust. "What has happened to you? Now you are condoning Unforgiveables against children!"

She stood up to him and said, "Firstly, that girl is no child. She is a woman and, if you haven't forgotten, she was Harry Potter's girlfriend. A woman faced with a potential threat towards the man she loves will do anything she must to protect him! Secondly, if she had the ability, she would have killed me. It was in her eyes. So, I think I demonstrated a great deal of restraint by not hurting her anymore than I had to!"

Severus sat down at his desk, wearily, unable to process the things she was telling him. This was an area with which he was not familiar. This was the type of primitive magic that was very powerful amongst only witches. It was the kind of ancient magic that saved Potter from the Dark Lord...the desire to protect the one a person loved most that led Lily to conjure such powerful magic that she had shattered the Dark Lord with its intensity. For such a powerful force to be directed to protect him was scary, but somewhat humbling. He knew Alissa loved him, but until this moment, he had not realized the depths to which she would go in order to protect him.

Alissa saw the conflict behind his black eyes, and she interrupted his thoughts softly, "I do not condone what the Carrows are doing at the school. I do not believe in taking unfair advantage against an opponent who is no match. These children had no ability to harness the magic needed to cast nonverbals in a time of crisis. But that Weasley girl, she has been saved by my hand more times than I can count. If it had not been for me, she would have been tortured, beaten, raped, and murdered. That is the depth of her willingness to fight for Potter. I, for one, cannot wait to fight *with* her, not against her."

Severus let out a breath. "Well, at least I know you are not *completely* insane. Just enough for this job," he said sarcastically, now in control of his emotions.

"The job of loving you and keeping you safe," Alissa said saucily as she exited his office through the Floo.

"Cheeky witch!" he snarled.

On New Years' Eve, word reached Severus that the Dark Lord, as Nagini, had failed to obtain Potter through the husk of Bathilda Babcock, a Godric's Hollow resident and author. Apparently, the Granger girl blew apart a great deal of the house in attempts to save Potter from Nagini's death grip. Severus spoke incessantly about the Trio he had once taught over the past year so much, Alissa felt as though she knew them intimately. That New Years', she and Severus sat curled up in his bedroom at Hogwarts, wrapped up in a warm blanket, in front of a toasty fire. All had been going well, and the evening was perfect for romance and making love. Then, suddenly, his Mark burned, and they hurriedly dressed and Flooed directly into Malfoy Manor.

She was going to wait outside when the Dark Lord caught sight of her and told her to come and join them. The news was shocking to Severus and Alissa but for different reasons.

"What now, my Lord, can I do to serve you?" Alissa said after a minute of silence.

"My dear child, you have been such a faithful servant. I will soon let you know of my plans. Until then, stay close. You may stay here or spend time with Severus as you wish, just know I may be calling you at a moment's notice."

They left the Dark Lord and went back to Hogwarts. As they went through the Floo into the Headmaster's office, Alissa felt a tremendous feeling of guilt. Was she doing enough? She had not contacted the Order in weeks. But she did not want to upset anyone with false hopes and shaky information. If only he would get on with things!

She slipped back into her nightgown and whined to Severus, "Why is he taking so damned long to go to Nurmengard?"

"Because Nurmengard is in a country that is not under the power of the Dark Lord. He has to find a way to infiltrate. I wouldn't worry about it, honestly. I don't think you will be joining him on that particular mission. The Dark Lord does not give boons on a whim, nor does he allow his henchmen freedom to roam about for no apparent reason. There is a reason he wants you here, Alissa. It just so happens we get to enjoy one another during the wait. But know this: he knows we are lovers and are taking the time you are here to pleasure ourselves. However, one day, Alissa, you will have to pay the fiddler. We dance so very well together," he whispered as he took her into his arms and kissed her.

The next days were again full of talk about the latest development on the progress, or lack thereof, on the Potter mission.

"Weasley is a strategist. From what I've been told, there is no one who can best him in Wizards's Chess. He is very loyal, but academically, as smart as a rock. However, he is a true soldier, the kind I would not mind by my side in battle. He is brave and fearless, but reckless. He takes incredible risks and does not care for the cost to himself. If he lives to see the end of the war, I shall be shocked," Severus said cruelly.

"Obviously, you have no use for Gryffindor courage?" she asked haughtily.

"Only if it is tempered with a bit of Slytherin. You used to be such a little cub, but then you went into the Serpent's nest and have become more of an anomaly than I first took you for. You are now definitely a cross-breed!" He smirked at his own comment.

Alissa shook her head at the smug bastard in bed with her. If she were a cross-breed, then so was he...for no true Slytherin would ever, ever do the work he did, or place their life in mortal peril for someone else, especially for someone not of their own.

Severus became uncomfortable with her gaze upon him. He started to feel uncovered and vulnerable, so he continued, "Miss Hermione Granger is the brains of the outfit.

She is a powerful witch whose intellect has only been matched or surpassed by perhaps three or five witches and wizards in the last one hundred years. She is truly the most clever and intelligent witch of her generation. Now, that being said, she is the most annoying little chit I have ever met! She is an insufferable know-it-all that cannot stop from trying to prove herself over and over for her teachers. She is an insecure girl, I believe, because she is so bookish. Nevertheless, she has a fascinating mind. If you ever find yourself in dire straits and need a solution, she would be the one to go to. Insufferable, but she has the brains to back it up."

"Now, Potter, he is the most fortunate child in creation for having these two friends. They have saved his worthless hide time and again...as have I. The boy is fool-hardy, reactionary, and average at best. One thing I will say, although grudgingly, is that he is brave. Very brave and has proved it time and again over the years."

"So, our Miss Granger blew up Bathilda's house to save Potter? Well, this just makes a person want to rejoice!" he spat venomously. "What in the name of all that is holy was he doing out there? This is no time for a family reunion, or to cry over graves of people long dead!" he stopped talking at that point, his fury almost overtaking him.

Alissa watched as he paced up and down, running his hands through his hair. He was mumbling something about fools who wear their hearts on their sleeves. He was becoming increasingly stressed as the months slowly moved along. Alissa hated what it was doing to Severus. When was the nightmare to end?

A/N: Thanks again to my wonderful beta, MadBrilliant! Please review!

Up Next: The Death Eaters face Voldemort's wrath for allowing his prisoners to escape. Severus and Alissa are separated for a time and have an argument once they are together again.

The Moment Of Retribution

Chapter 13 of 18

Voldemort goes to Nurmengard alone. However, upon his return there is hell to pay when it is discovered his prisoners have escaped the dungeon. Alissa learns of the real reason for her freedom to come and go between Maloy Manor and Hogwarts.

□

News came of Xeno Lovegood trying to sell out Potter and his friends in exchange for Luna's return. *Damn fool!* Alissa thought. She was being sent out every week on raids, but her heart wasn't in it. Muggle killing was not sport for her, as it was for the others. She focused more on working alone and trying to find lost Muggle-borns or blood traitors on the run. She kept hidden but managed to steer some free from where a group of Snatchers might be lying in wait.

The weeks moved slowly as the tension mounted. More and more Death Eaters were getting out of hand. The Malfoys were barely seen anymore. It was as if they were terrified of their own house. Plus, the various times of torture in the dungeons did not help the level of tension that was building.

Alissa was far too busy working on arresting Muggle-borns and blood traitors to see Severus much. She had never felt so far apart from him as she did during these weeks since the Christmas hols. The night they received news of Potter's narrow escape from the Bagshot home was the last time they had together.

More reports of death were trickling in. Rumors of Potter's demise abounded, and the Dark Lord did not want them to be quashed. He wanted hope to be destroyed at every turn. Whether it was real or imaginary didn't matter. And now that the *the Quibbler* was out of circulation, no one could openly defy the Dark Lord. Alissa knew about *Potterwatch*, as everyone did, but until those involved could be caught and arrested, nothing could be done.

Finally, the Dark Lord called Alissa in for a meeting at the beginning of March to give her the news she had been waiting for.

"I will be going to visit an infamous Dark Wizard," he said quietly. "The problem is that there is no conceivable way he still has the wand I desire. So, I must be persuasive and press upon his mind the importance of everything he knows about the Elder Wand. You shall not accompany me. I have another task for you, my dear. But it will have to wait until after I return from Nurmengard. Bellatrix and Greyback will be in charge of Headquarters here. Please make sure he understands the importance of our guests in the dungeons remain with us. I would be most displeased if they were all to be gone upon my return. Please make sure Bellatrix understands the message as well. You, my dear, are to go return to Hogwarts. I want you to see Severus and also pay your respects to Dumbledore's grave. I shall contact Severus to let you know of our next move. We must act quickly now. I have been feeling disturbing visions and losses. Potter has been hunting down my most prized possessions. I must have that wand so I can finally crush him and then obtain eternal dominance and power."

Alissa would have been more relieved if he had laughed madly like an insane person. Instead, his high pitched voice grew softer and softer until it was a whisper at the end.

Alissa packed up and Flooed her way inside the Headmaster's Office. She did not know where Severus was, but it was no matter. Eventually, he would be here. She went into the adjoining room, which was his bedroom, and made herself at home. She slipped under the covers and fell into a comforting sleep. It was so relaxing and peaceful. There was nothing to fear here.

She must have slept for hours, when she finally opened her eyes and saw Severus watching her sleep from across the room.

"Hello, love."

"I have news from the Dark Lord," he said stiffly.

"Yes?" Alissa asked reluctantly, not really wanting to know the message.

"He was finally able after all this time to penetrate through the walls of Nurmengard. The damn fool was like a skeleton and *attempted to lie* to the Dark Lord...said he never had it. Then he told the Dark Lord he would never understand about the Hallows!" Severus actually chuckled at the news. "I can't believe he had the bollocks to do that! But of course it cost him his life. The infamous Grindelwald is dead. Unfortunately, the Dark Lord genial mood was short-lived. He was incensed beyond all reason upon his return." He grew silent and morose. Alissa sensed dread.

"What happened?"

"When Dark Lord has returned from Nurmengard Prison, Bellatrix and Greyback were caught unawares. They had failed to keep their charges under control. Potter had

been captured along with Granger and Weasley, but *miraculously* escaped with Ollivander, Miss Lovegood, Mr. Thomas, a former Muggle-born student of mine, and some bloody goblin they were holding captive in the dungeon! However, on a happier note, Pettigrew is dead!" he said dryly as he poured himself a drink and saluted her.

"What is it?" she asked quietly. There was something else he was not saying.

"Remember when I told you all of this was not for free? That you would sometime have to pay the fiddler?" he asked darkly.

"Yes," she answered fearfully.

"The time has arrived. He has now fit all the pieces together. It's time to retrieve the Elder Wand from Dumbledore's grave, and you and I shall be assisting him. He thinks we don't know his plot to desecrate the grave...that he is alone in his plan, but we have been waiting for this moment. As disgusting and as treacherous as it sounds, we must allow him to get the wand. It must be done. Your order is to guard from afar, patrol the edge of the Forest. Many Potter supporters are hiding out there, or in the mountains, like Hagrid. You will go out first, wait, and I shall be with him. You should see us flying down to the Castle's overlook. Watch, and then when you see me walk down to the castle, know that all is well. He will then be joining me at the castle to talk about our next move against the Order. Make sure he safely enters the castle and then come in yourself and meet us in my office. Remember, you and I are not to know about this. Keep your mind blank, like you said you can do well. Be silent and stand off to the side. He will be too excited to even think about asking you anything," Severus reassured her.

"Are you certain?" she asked skeptically as he sat down next to her.

"There is only one good thing about serving a megalomaniac, Alissa. They are notoriously self-absorbed," he said wryly.

"So all this time, you knew that he just wanted me to become familiar with the terrain, so I could be his look-out."

"Precisely. You are one of his henchwomen, after all. Surely you don't mind being used, do you?" he asked with mock surprise.

"Rather!" she said sarcastically. "After all I've had to do, if this is paying the fiddler, well, I think he got the wrong end of the deal. I don't care about his Elder Wand obsession. It is no match for love," she declared, taking his hand in hers and holding it gently in her lap.

Alissa closed her eyes wearily. Then they flew open in panic. "But Potter...he's not ready! He still hasn't gotten to all the Horcruxes! We would have known by now! This can't be happening! What are we going to do, Severus?"

"What we must. You have to keep in mind that the Horcruxes are Potter's business and the Hallows are ours. But first things first. The punishments must be meted out," he said grimly.

It was not a blessed day to be at the Malfoy Manor. When the Dark Lord returned from Nurmengard and found out his prisoners had all escaped, his wrath was terrifying. All the inhabitants were under orders to stay house bound, especially now that Potter and his two friends had Bella's and Draco's wand. The word was sent out that Potter may try to use Bella's wand. Another piece of the puzzle fell into Severus and Alissa's lap: the location of another Horcrux. The Dark Lord had not meant for it to slip out, but he did and it drove Alissa crazy wondering if Potter knew about the Horcrux resting in Gringott's Bank.

The Dark Lord wanted all his closest followers to be present for the punishment of the Malfoys, Bellatrix, and Greyback. Alissa stood numbly as Bellatrix screamed under the effects of the Cruciatus. It did not bother her one iota to watch either Bellatrix or Greyback suffer. What did bother her was Draco's punishment. How long would this poor boy be used because his father was an inept Death Eater? Lucius' punishment was to watch his wife and son being tortured.

She looked into the sad eyes of the younger Malfoy. It was apparent that if he could, he would leave this house of hate and never return. After the moment of retribution had passed, and they all were dismissed, Alissa and Severus talked about Draco and his years at Hogwarts.

"I don't feel as sorry for him as you do, Alissa, but I can see how you can feel so strongly about how ill-treated he is," Severus started.

"You see, from the very first day he came to Hogwarts, he was so very smug and proud to be in Slytherin house...not that it's wrong to have house pride...it's just that Draco fancied himself some kind of Slytherin Lord. He reigned over his little court of followers and taunted Potter and his friends at every turn. He was so proud when he took the Dark Mark!" Severus spat derisively. "He was so puffed up with hubris that he actually believed the Dark Lord wanted him to succeed. That the Dark Lord had given him a chance to prove himself and redeem his father in the Dark Lord's eyes. He actually believed that it was a legitimate task: to kill Dumbledore, the most powerful Wizard of our age."

"So, no, Alissa, I find it very hard to feel sorry for the boy. I tried for a year to help him, to aid him, but he accused me of wanting to 'steal his glory.'" At this, Severus laughed bitterly.

"Draco could have been so much more, then?" Alissa prompted.

Severus looked at her with sad eyes that were so full of disappointment that she wanted to cry. "He had the skill and the ability and the money to do...to become anything! Anything! And this is what he traded it all in for!" He tore the sleeve of his left arm up to show his Mark. Anger radiated from him. He was trembling with it.

"What is it?" she asked softly.

"Waste. I hate waste. That's all his family has done: waste everything! I came from nothing, had nothing, but these people had the world at their feet, and now look at us. All in the same hell. That was why I was so concerned for you. You had this yearning, this calling towards the dark arts that I didn't want you falling into. I remember you coming into my office that first time. You were so excited I was going to start training you. When you left, all I could think of was 'Will she be just another one I'll have to kill?' I was so furious when you left for Durmstrang. I thought it was suicide: a silly girl's pout because she lost her toy..."

He stopped talking abruptly. "I apologize, that was unfair."

Alissa stopped walking. It had hurt to hear that, but it was what was in his heart. It was what he really felt at the time.

"I was devastated, Severus. I could not bear it. It took all my energies to stay focused and stoic so you wouldn't know how much you had hurt me," she admitted.

"I shall never understand, why me, of all men?"

"Why *her* of all women?"

Severus looked away from her. Alissa could still see his jaw clench and his breathing became a bit ragged.

"I watched her for so long; I didn't know how to even approach her! She was so fearless. I was so young...she was the most wonderful sight. She was beautiful," he whispered lovingly.

Alissa took the opportunity to face him. She walked over to him and looked up into his sad face. He looked down at her, her perfect smile, her thick black hair playing in the breeze around her pale face. Then, as she spoke, she took his hands in hers.

"I was young, he was so fearless. I watched him for so long; I didn't know how to approach him. He was the most wonderful sight. When I watched him duel, he was beautiful."

"Well, at least you aren't going to lie and say I was 'handsome,'" he replied sharply.

"I think you are uncomfortable with someone feeling for you what you felt for her. It's easier when you are the adorer and not the object. You can control things if you are the aggressor, perhaps?" she questioned.

He stiffened and pulled away from her. "In my experience, it has been quite the opposite! When you are the one who loves the most, you are at the mercies of the one you love!" he said angrily.

"Yes, I agree," said Alissa. "That can be of one way of seeing things. But you have now been 'through the looking glass' as it were. You have had the fortune to see things from both sides. Now you tell me, Severus, which is more difficult? Being the lover or being the loved?"

"I do not wish to continue this conversation," he said abruptly. Then he turned on his heel and walked away from her.

A/N: Oh, no! Severus is in a snit! Well, up next, the race to the end. Final punishments are meted out and time apart for Severus and Alissa before the final battle. Thanks again to my beta, MadBrilliant, and to those who review!

A Sad Silence

Chapter 14 of 18

Voldemort punishes those who allowed his prisoners to escape. Snape and Alissa suffer over the rift in their relationship.

□

Severus Apparated back to the castle without Alissa. He didn't know if she would come back or not*At least she has to come back when the Dark Lord comes for the Elder Wand!* he thought smugly. Her comment about the 'looking-glass' bothered him.*Didn't Albus say something about that as well? Oh, yes, it was when Alissa said I had to stay at Spinner's End with that blasted rat for the summer!*

He thought about how Albus was so terribly amused at his squirming. He, the one to go and do for the Order, now had to sit and let others go. Yes, he had certainly experienced life 'through the looking-glass!' He just did not know what Alissa wanted from him! Did she want him to love her like her loved Lily? Impossible! There could be no one who would take her place. Never! Why did it matter? He loved Alissa. He knew he did. It was just different from his love for Lily. Could she understand?

He walked back from his meeting with the Dark Lord to the castle. He had not seen Alissa anywhere around the grounds, but he could feel her. He would see her soon. Soon.

It was as he said it would be. The Dark Lord was like a child with a shiny new penny. He was *gleeful*. It was disturbing. Whenever the Dark Lord was happy, that meant unhappiness for those around him. He saw Alissa's dark figure in the shadows of the room. She was silent and her mind was blank. As the Dark Lord prattled on and on, oblivious to the world except his joy at for his secret acquisition, Severus played the dutiful servant, but deep in his mind there was so much doubt. He wished he could explain to Alissa what he desperately wanted her to know: that he loved her and his love for her was unique. Not better or worse than what he felt for Lily because she wasn't Lily. She was Alissa, and he loved her just for being herself. But how could he tell her so she would understand? When would he get another chance to be alone with her? He glanced her way a couple times. She was unhappy. And there was nothing he could do about it.

For a fortnight, all was eerily quiet. The Dark Lord's new wand was now the topic of all conversation. He was ready to meet the whelp, Potter, and finish him off. Even his anger and rage towards the Malfoys, Bellatrix, and Greyback had receded. All was going according to plan. The strategy of the final battle was underway. Alissa was mercifully absent from these planning sessions, and she didn't want to know any more than she had to. There was still much to do. There were more Muggle-borns to watch out for and capture and more loyalists to Potter to hunt down and arrest. Alissa was actually happy to get some distance from Severus. She felt she might have pushed him too far. Lily was a tender subject, after all.

She was working on a new lead to finally discovering Hagrid's hide-out when word came to her that she and the Death Eaters with her were all needed back at the manor. The Dark Lord had news, and the messenger warned them that he was furious. When Alissa arrived, there was a great milling about the anti-chamber outside the Throne Room. The tension was thick and she looked to see if Severus was there. She finally saw his form. He was tense and pensive, so she did not approach him.

The door opened to the Throne Room and there stood a goblin. He was scared witless. Alissa hung back, not wanting to be too near the Dark Lord. He was in a right state. Even from the back of the room, Alissa could see the rage and ire etched on his hideous face.

He spoke. "I want you all to listen to what this *goblin* has to say," he spat angrily.

The goblin opened his mouth, but was so scared; the words couldn't form on his tongue.

"*Spit it out!*" the Dark Lord shrieked.

A number of witches and wizards alike jumped at the Dark Lord's outburst.

"The Lestrage vault was broken into," he said hurriedly.

The red eyes in the Dark Lord's face burned like a raging fire.

"IT CANNOT BE!" he screamed. The awesome fury was terrible to behold. "*Say it again!*" he murmured. "Say it again!"

"M-my Lord," stammered the goblin, "m-my Lord... we t-ried t-to st-stop them... Im-impostors, my Lord... broke broke into the into the Lestranges' v-vault..."

"Impostors? What impostors? Who were they?"

"It was... it was... t-the P-Potter b-boy and t-two accomplices..."

Alissa closed her eyes and shook her head slightly. There would be bloodshed this day!

"*And they took?*" he said. There was a tremor in his voice. It sounded like fear.

The goblin winced as he whispered, "A... a s-small golden c-cup, m-my Lord..."

A scream of horror tore from the Dark Lord as the information processed through his mind. He became increasingly enraged as if he could not believe the words he had heard. He turned on the goblin with the Elder Wand, slashing it through the air, and struck him down...dead. As his body fell onto the side and his face of death was shown to the assembly, cries of terror rang out. The Dark Lord's anger was far from extinguished. As he began striking down his Death Eaters, the living witches and wizards ran for their lives. Malfoy and Bellatrix pushed people behind them to get out faster. Alissa and Severus, who had wisely hung back, were the first to exit into the anti-chamber. The screams and the crashes of items struck down by the Dark Lord's wand echoed in their ears.

Finally, his wrath contained, he called out for Severus and Alissa to come back into the Throne Room. They made their way through the debris and dead bodies to kneel before him. For a long time, they knelt as he paced. Alone in his thoughts, he walked back and forth in front of them

This is it, Alissa thought. He's going to kill us now.

She waited for what seemed like an eternity before the Dark Lord inhaled a deep breath and sat on his Throne. He was furious, but contained.

"Severus, I need you to return to Hogwarts. Harry Potter will be coming. He will be coming and you must be ready for him. When he arrives, the final battle will begin and I shall finally destroy him." His face was twisted in rage and in strangely perverse joy.

"Alissa, I shall need your assistance in readying our army. We must gather all of our allies and make known the need to be prepared at a moment's call."

He was silent for a minute and then said softly, "Leave."

They walked out and they went to the Apparition point. Severus looked at her longingly.

"I have to get back to the castle," he whispered.

"I have to get back to my post," she replied.

The tension between them was thick. There was so much to say, but where to start? Alissa felt like a damn fool for pushing him into talking about Lily. Severus felt guilty for not just taking her into his arms and confessing all his thoughts to her. He didn't, however, know where to begin.

She finally turned, walked away, and Disapparated.

Severus felt he had completely lost his very last chance at happiness.

Alissa Apparated to Hogsmeade to tell the regiment of Death Eaters there be on the look-out for Harry Potter. She would be looking out as well, to make sure when he arrived, he would be able to make his escape. That is, if he chose to come through Hogsmeade at all!

When it began, it was simple enough. The area he Apparated into was only being patrolled by six Death Eaters. Alissa ran up the street when she heard the racket.

"We know you're there, Potter! There is no getting away! We'll find you!" said Pearson.

They started arguing amongst themselves about getting the Dementors to find him and give him the Kiss.

Alissa spoke up, "Look, you lot, the Dark Lord wants Potter dead by his own hand but only his!

Macnair spoke up, "But the Dementors won't kill him, just take his soul! The Dark Lord wants his life, not his soul!"

They began to call for Dementors.

Shit, shit, shit! Alissa thought. She could not argue with them without casting suspicion on herself. As the Dementors glided by, suddenly a Patronus jumped out of nowhere! A stag! Potter's Patronus!

FUCK! Alissa screamed in her head. The Death Eaters were on it like a threstral on raw meat. As the Dementors made their exit, the Death Eaters were yelling, calling, knowing Potter was there. Suddenly, a Caterwauling Charm rang out in the night at the Hog's Head. They ran to the front of the establishment, and Macnair began a heated argument with the proprietor, Aberforth Dumbledore.

"A stag! You idiot..."*Expecto Patronum!*" A goat erupted from the old man's wand and vanished out of sight.

"That's not what I saw!" yelled Macnair at him.

Back and forth they went and Alissa smiled underneath her mask. Aberforth was a damn good liar! She knew he had safely ensconced Potter and his friends within his tavern. If anyone in Hogsmeade would know how to get Potter safely into Hogwarts, it would be Aberforth. She could leave now, knowing the trio was in good hands.

A/N: Large portions of this chapter were taken directly from JKR's *Deathly Hallows*. Thanks to Ms. Rowling for her superb writing. Thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant, and to all who review!

A Touch of Bildungsroman

Severus tells Alissa to leave just before the battle is to start. She leaves him and comes to a realization. She will do what she believes is right, whether or not Severus approves. She is now her own witch.

□

The silence and darkness were deafening. There was nothing Alissa could do until the Dark Lord summoned her. As she watched from the overlook, she could feel the castle being readied for the coming battle. It was so late, and she was so tired, but Severus was in that castle, and that was where she wanted to be.

If only she carried the Dark Mark! Then she would be able to know the communication going back and forth from one Death Eater to the next. She finally sat in the grass, waiting in the cool night air when suddenly, she saw Severus flying from the castle. He landed a few yards from her, and while he was descending, she ran to him.

"Impressive," Alissa said coolly as she faced him.

"It has begun," Severus said, ignoring her comment. "Has the Dark Lord told you anything of his plans?"

"No, she replied. "I went to Hogsmeade and informed the dispatch there of the coming battle. While I was there, Potter and his friends arrived and were nearly captured. Aberforth took them in."

"Well, that doesn't matter," he said in a low tone. "Potter is in Hogwarts. He is with the other professors, and the Carrows have been incapacitated...for now."

"And now?" she urged.

"We wait for the Dark Lord," he said simply. "We have no other recourse. The Aurors will be arriving. Minerva and the other professors will be putting battlements and barricades in place. I had to run off like a bloody coward, so I could stay and save the whelp later! I detest this skulking about!" he seethed.

"Will the students stay and fight?" she asked

He sighed and looked out to the castle. "More than likely. Minerva will not allow the underage students to stay, they will have to be evacuated. But the older of age students will stay. Mostly Gryffindors, then Hufflepuffs, maybe a couple of Ravenclaws."

"Do you expect any Slytherins to stay?" she pressed.

He snorted. "I shall probably be required to lead them into battle!" he said resentfully.

She laid down on the grass without a reply.

"What are you doing?" he snapped at her.

"I might as well get some kip, and if not, at least some time off my feet. If I'm going into battle, I might as well rest up for it," she said matter-of-factly.

Severus lay next to her and nestled back in the cold grass. They snuggled up close together and looked up into the night sky.

"You should leave," he whispered, not looking at her.

"Whatever for?" she asked, looking at his profile.

He turned to her and looked at her. He reached a hand to stroke her face. He leaned over to her and kissed her.

"I don't want anything bad to happen to you. It'll be over soon; you don't have the Mark. He can't find you. Besides, he'll be dead soon enough, and you'll be free. Why risk your life?"

"Spoken like a true Slytherin!" she joked sarcastically.

"I thought we agreed we were both half-breeds," he joked sarcastically in return.

She laughed and kissed him back. They both lay on their sides, stroking the other's face.

"I won't leave you, Severus. I can't. I promised I would always be here when you needed me. You need me still. I love you so very much!" She showered kisses all over his face.

He grabbed the back of her neck and held her from him. "What if I said that your being here is a distraction, that it would help me more if I knew you were away from all this? Would you leave?"

Alissa sat up.

"You're serious, aren't you?" she asked with disbelief.

Severus looked away from her. "Just go, Alissa. There can't be an 'us' anymore. This time tomorrow I'll be dead, and I don't want you to see that. Just go far away and forget all this, forget me."

Alissa stood up and looked at the wizard. Her life with him went by in flashes: watching him call her "little cub", the promise to teach her to duel, the first touch, the first class with him as her teacher, the first time they made love, him telling her it was over, seeing him after so many years, talking with him in the infirmary, making love to him again after so many years, coming back from the Weasley wedding and walking through her bedroom door to find him there...

She was silent as she turned from him and walked off. *Surely he will stop me. Surely he will tell me to stay...* she thought over and over again. But he did not. She Apparated back to Hogsmeade, went into an abandoned alley and cried.

It seemed Alissa stayed in that dank alley for ages before she started to hear running and the sounds of Apparating. She put on her hood and mask. She walked slowly out of the alley and grabbed the first Death Eater she could find.

"What is it?"

"The Dark Lord. We are all Apparating to the overlook!" He broke from her and Apparated.

Alissa didn't need to think twice. She would go back. After all, she still had her duty for the Order. If Severus didn't like it, too bad. She wasn't about to give up who she

was. She was a warrior, and God knew, Potter and the Aurors would need all the help they could get! The time had come leave all of the childhood dreams and fantasies behind. Whatever came her way, life or death, for either her or Severus, somethings were larger than themselves and what was convenient for them. *God, I'm starting to sound like Dumbledore with his 'Greater Good' bullshit!* No, it wasn't about the 'Greater Good,' it was just about what was right. Somethings were just right or wrong. No matter if it inconvenienced her or not. She would not turn back now. She had a duty, her own duty to help the Order. That had nothing to do with Severus Snape. She could finally stand on her own for herself and not for him. She had come into her own...and damn the consequences!

She Apparated to the overlook just in time to hear the Dark Lord cast the Sonorous charm on his voice so that all of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade would hear him

"I know you are preparing to fight. Your efforts are futile. You cannot fight me. I do not want to kill you. I have great respect for the teachers of Hogwarts. I do not want to spill magical blood."

His resounding voice carried on as Alissa and the army of Death Eaters stood in their ranks. As she listened, Alissa readied herself. She put on her gloves and flexed her hands.

"Give me Harry Potter and none shall be harmed. Give me Harry Potter, and I shall leave the school untouched. Give me Harry Potter and you shall be rewarded. You have until midnight."

Hollow promises, Alissa thought.

The Dark Lord turned to his army and called out for Alissa, Mulciber, and Rabastan. She stepped forward and strode up to him. She could feel the anger and rage radiate from Severus, but the Dark Lord could not. She was relieved. The Dark Lord could not love, and all of Severus' rage stemmed from the depth of love he had for her. She focused on the Dark Lord.

"We have 30 minutes until the deadline. They will not hand the boy to me without a fight. Mulciber, send a contingent to the Forbidden Forest and get the acromantulas. Rabastan, send another contingent to bring the giants. Alissa, you shall bring the first wave down to the castle gates. If I must, I shall raze it to the ground and build it up again more powerful and stronger than before.

"Fenrir!" he bellowed.

Alissa gathered her troops to prepare for the first strike. Fenrir Greyback bounded off to gather the werewolves. She went back to the Dark Lord's side and waited. She tried to steal a glance at Severus, but he was not going to return the look. She mixed her mind on what was ahead and waited for the signal. At a quarter to midnight, the Dark Lord ordered Alissa to take the first wave down to the castle gates. It was going to be a slaughter. Already, Aurors and students alike were guarding the main entrance. Alissa waited in the sideline as a good leader should. It would not do for her to be killed outright in the first minutes of battle.

She heard the booming voice of the Dark Lord scream, "*NOW!*"

The battle had begun.

A/N: Voldemort's speech was taken directly from JKR's *Deathly Hallows*. Thanks to Ms. Rowling for her wonderful work! Also, huge thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant, who has taken time from her hectic life to fix all my grammatical errors! Lastly, much love to all who read and review!

Up next: The final battle. We will have now come round to where we started at the beginning. Will Alissa be able to save Severus after he is attacked?

The Trap

Chapter 16 of 18

The Final battle rages. Alissa makes her true allegiance known. She follows Lucius Malfoy into the Shrieking Shack and witnesses the attack on Severus.

□

Alissa dashed off further to the side as the Death Eaters and Aurors clashed in front of the gates. She wielded her wand to deflect Unforgiveables and shielded herself from harm. Wave after wave came with the giants and acromantulas in the distance. She found herself in an intense, heated battle with one of the Weasley boys. He was quite skilled and his eyes were full of fun. Then when the battle heated up and there was little chance to be found out, she sent out a Tripping jinx and threw herself on him. They scrambled to an alcove just inside the walls, and she pinned him down as she ripped off her mask. The boy tried to gain the upper hand, unimpressed or not caring that she wasn't a man. Finally, she got her wand to his throat.

"Listen!" she hissed. "Are you an Order member?"

"Liked I'd bloody tell you, you bitch!" he swore.

Flames of red, green, and purple soared past them. She pushed herself flatter on top of him and pulled his robes so they were face to face.

"Cor! If Molly could hear you now, she'd have your hide!" she whispered at him.

"What the...?" he began.

"Listen, I'm on your side. Your parents know all about me. Minerva, Remus, even Moody knew me. I'm no ruddy Death Eater!" She rolled them over to the wall and pushed them up. She flung the mask far from her and said, "You have to get more help! That snake bastard has giants and the acromantulas from the Forbidden Forest coming. He doesn't care. He'll raze this castle to the ground if he has to..."

Another blast came from the main gate. Rumbblings could be heard from inside the school.

"Go! Go!" she screamed at him. She watched as he dashed inside and then made her way in as well. She screamed as a wall buckled and came crashing in. A giant was coming through and destroying everything in his path. She found a pocket of fierce fighting as the Death Eaters poured into the castle. She braced herself and made the leap into defection, finally letting her true loyalties finally be known. She saw Aberforth yell his praise to the young Weasley girl as she hexed the Death Eaters on the floor

underneath her. Alissa fought as she climbed up the stairs, killing as many Death Eaters as she could. Her presence was quite disconcerting for the young girl. Yet, they fought side by side until Bellatrix Lestrange saw her.

"You fucking blood traitor!" she screamed. She took her wand and slashed it through the air.

A hundred arrows flew straight at Alissa. She shielded herself and screamed '*Confrigo!*'

The arrows blasted into fire and rained down on the Death Eaters below. They ran for their lives. When they got a substantial distance way, Ginny grabbed her and pointed her wand to her face.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"An Order member!" the older woman shrieked.

"With Death Eater robes on?" the youngest Weasley challenged.

"What, you think Snape was the only spy in your camp?" she sounded back.

A blast blew them across the hall and into a stone wall.

"Oh, *shite!*" the red-head said.

"Are you okay?" Alissa asked as she crawled to her.

"Yeah, just got the wind knocked out of me, is all."

Alissa looked out at the dust and rubble and then went to make her escape.

"Where are you going?" the girl cried out after her as she grabbed her arm.

"I can't stay here all day," Alissa chuckled. "More to do, more to do! You are a worthy opponent, you know," she said as another blast shattered above them. "I told Snape you were a real spitfire on the Express that day!"

She saw a group of Death Eaters coming up the stairs. Ginny jumped up in front of Alissa and screamed, '*REDUCTO!*'

The staircase blew apart, sending the Death Eaters to their demises below. The two women dropped back to the floor as spells flew over their heads.

"It was you that took Luna?" she asked incredulously.

"Sorry," Alissa said with a smile and flew away in a blur of white to the ground. She saw acromantulas closing in as she fought and battled. She jumped around, so it would be difficult to be recognized. But Bellatrix knew, and that meant the Dark Lord had to know by now. She was standing in another alcove looking out for Remus Lupin when he recognized some of the spells blasting in front of him were not by his own hand. He turned and saw Alissa. He stopped, stunned with disbelief.

"Remus!" she screamed as a Death Eater sent a curse his way. She shielded him, and the two of them battled side by side.

"What the devil is going on here?" he yelled happily. "Haven't seen you in years!"

"Well, I figured it was about time I showed up to save your sorry arse!" she joked.

"Don't tell me you've been in the serpent's lair this whole time?" he gasped as he fought.

"Oh yes," she retorted. "And not alone, Remus. Snape is still on our side!"

Another huge blast erupted from nowhere and they were thrown back. Alissa slid under the main staircase, while Remus struggled on the stairs. A Death Eater closed in, and as he went to cast the Killing curse, Alissa cursed him. His insides exploded out of him and he fell over dead. Blood and tissue rained down over them. Alissa grabbed Remus and pulled him back under the staircase. He was wounded, but not mortally. He had a bad superficial gash on his forehead, but his legs were mangled, and he was having difficulty breathing.

"I think I've got some broken ribs," he gasped painfully. "That was a particularly nasty bit of dark magic, Alissa!" he tried to say light-heartedly.

Alissa got him cleaned off as much as she could, mopping off the blood and intestines with the bottom of her Death Eater weeds. "Well," she said wryly, "one does what one can. I suppose I could have been less *dramatic*, but I certainly scared off the others now, didn't I?"

"Too right you are," he replied as he winced, trying to get up again.

"Remus, stay here!" Alissa ordered. "Lie back down!" She stripped off her slip underneath her robes and used it to pillow his head. She softly caressed his cheek. "Just relax, stay here until it is safe to come out. I'll let someone know to come get you when it's safe." She turned to get up and back into the fighting, but Remus grabbed her arm.

"No! My wife, Dora! I have-have to find her!" he said deliriously.

"I'll find her!" Alissa said. "Just stay here. What does she look like?"

"A Metamorphmagus," he whispered. He struggled to say more but failed.

She shushed him. "Okay, okay, Remus. I'll find her. You stay here out of sight!"

"Please!" he begged, grabbing her arm. His hazel eyes were full of fear and pain. "We have a son, please!" he said with a rasping voice.

"I'll find her Remus, I promise!" she said firmly.

Then she dashed back out into the fray.

She ran out of the gates to find the fighting was starting to retreat from the main castle entrance. Instead, the battle had shifted to the sides. Spiders, giants, dementors, Aurors, students, and professors were fighting with all their strength. Alissa ran her hand through her hair. How was she to find a Metamorphmagus named "Dora" in all this mess? She saw the Weasley girl again and made her way to her as she fought with a group of fellow students. They were trying to subdue an acromantula...and they were losing. Alissa pushed her way to the front and screamed for them to get back. She conjured a ball of fire and hurled it at the giant monster. The blaze was awesome as the overgrown spider screamed and writhed on the ground. She levitated the blazing animal and hurled it towards a fearsome giant that was hell-bent on destroying an entire side of the castle. Aurors and Death Eaters alike raced to the scene of the burning pyre of spider and giant.

Alissa turned and faced Ginny. "I need to find Dora, Remus' wife!" she screamed above the din.

Ginny shrieked as a wall of stone came crashing towards them. She grabbed Alissa and the others with her, and they dashed out of the way of the crash. They all fell to the ground coughing and sputtering as the cloud of dust settled around them.

"Tonks is dead!" Ginny coughed out as she recovered.

"Tonks?" Alissa asked, confused by the name.

"Remus calls her Dora, but to us, her name is 'Tonks,'" she yelled in reply.

"MOVE!" a boy screamed suddenly.

The entire face of the castle wall was crashing down. Alissa had to get back to Remus, she had to-to. *what the hell?*

She saw Lucius Malfoy enter the Whomping Willow. She had a bad feeling about it and was compelled to follow. She fought and struggled towards the entranceway and deftly followed the exhausted man. She knew better than to attempt a cloaking charm around the Dark Lord, so she remained back, hid, and waited.

After a while, Lucius had found a place for himself in a dark corner. Silence reigned as the Dark Lord sat immersed in his own thoughts as he twirled the Elder Wand between his scaly fingers.

"Please, my Lord," he spoke brokenly. "My son..." he began.

The Dark Lord cut him off impatiently. "If your son is dead, Lucius, it is not my fault. He did not come and join me like the rest of the Slytherins. Perhaps he has decided to befriend Harry Potter?"

"No! Never!" Lucius whispered hoarsely.

The Dark Lord murmured something softly in reply that Alissa could not hear or understand. She strained her ears to listen but could not make out the rest of the exchange. Finally, the Dark Lord spoke clearly.

"Go fetch Snape."

"Snape, m-my Lord?"

"Yes, there is a...service...I require from him. Go."

Alissa watched cautiously as the man retreated from the shack. She looked back at the Dark Lord. He was speaking to his snake, lovingly and softly. Nagini was encased in a magical box. Protected...but why? Alissa waited for what seemed like an eternity.

Severus came into the Shack, filthy and dirt streaked from the battle.

"My Lord," he bowed gracefully.

"Snape, have you a report for me?"

"My Lord, their resistance is crumbling..."

"...and is doing so without your help. Skilled wizard though you *are*, Severus, I do not think you will make much difference now. We are almost there... almost!"

There was a hitch in Severus' breath. Alissa could feel it. She sensed danger. So did he.

"Let me bring Potter to you," he begged.

Severus! Get the hell out of there! Alissa screamed silently in her head.

"I know I can find him, my Lord," he added.

"I have a problem, Severus," the Dark Lord said softly.

Severus, get the bloody hell out!

"My Lord?"

"Why doesn't it work for me, Snape?"

Oh my God! It's a trap! It's a trap! she screamed internally, opening the connection between them.

Alissa could see his back stiffen. He could hear her!

"My...my Lord?" Severus asked ignorantly. He was obviously trying to buy time.

The Dark Lord was explaining his problem with the Elder Wand. He started pacing around the room as he spoke to his most trusted servant.

"I have thought long and hard, Severus... Do you know why I've called you back from the battle?"

Oh my God! Oh my God! Severus, he's going to kill you! Get the hell out of there! she screamed.

"No, my Lord, but I beg you will let me return. Let me find Potter." His voice was becoming desperate. Alissa's wand was itching in her hand. This was not happening!

Back and forth they spoke. Severus was becoming increasingly nervous while the Dark Lord became increasingly predatory. To Alissa, it was like watching a lion waiting to pounce on a gazelle.

Alissa wished she could see Severus' face. He was not responding to her as she screamed at him repeatedly to get the hell out of there.

"I sought this wand, Severus. The Elder Wand, the Wand of Destiny, the Deathstick..."

Why is he making a speech? Alissa thought nervously. *What is he doing? What can this possibly achieve?*

"You are a clever man, after all, Severus. You have been a good and faithful servant, and I regret what must happen."

No! Severus, run! Her thoughts drowned out everything else said. She wanted to jump out and save him, to kill the Dark Lord, to stop what was happening in front of her eyes. She couldn't stop it! She willed her feet to stay firm.

"I must master the wand, Severus. Master the wand, and I master Potter at last."

It was so simple. So cut and dry. Then a horrible rattle came out of the Dark Lord's mouth.

Alissa screamed. She couldn't hold in her terror anymore. Nagini broke free from her cage and attacked Severus' neck. The enormous snake's gruesome fangs sank into his alabaster skin. Alissa shrieked and screamed along with him. She grasped onto the rotting wood in front of her, swaddled in the weeds of a Death Eater as she cried and shook terribly.

"I regret it," the Dark Lord said coldly.

Nagini was placed back into her protective cage, and he swept out of the room. Alissa was petrified. He was going to see her, she knew it! Then she remembered what Severus had said to her, *"One good thing about working for a megalomaniac, they are notoriously self-absorbed."* And true enough, he slithered by her without ever knowing she had been so near the entire time.

She was about to jump out to help Severus when she saw Potter and the Granger girl hovering over him. She watched as the girl conjured up a bottle, and she heard the rasping whispers from her lover to the boy. They looked into each other's eyes and then Severus' hand slipped away.

The booming voice of the Dark Lord rang out.

"You have fought, valiantly. Lord Voldemort knows how to value bravery."

Sod off, you snake-snogging son-of-a-bitch! she thought.

"You have sustained heavy losses. If you continue to resist me, you will all die, one by one. I do not wish this to happen. Every drop of magical blood spilled is a loss and a waste."

Oh, but you didn't give a shite about spilling Severus' magical blood, did you?

Potter made haste, but the girl, she looked back, one last time, and then they disappeared.

Alissa scrambled from her hiding place.

"Severus! *Severus!* Don't leave me, you ruddy bastard! Impossible, insufferable..."

She had only the simplest understandings of mediwizardry. She put a Coagulating Spell on him to stop the flow of blood, and she took her wand and said *Enervate!*

He woke gasping and choking. She rummaged through his pockets and found a small bottle of dittany and a phial of sorts. She poured the dittany on his wound, and he grabbed it out of her hands. He greedily drank it all down and fell back.

"You stupid, *stupid*, man!" she raged. "What the hell did you think you were doing? Why did you not talk to me? I love you, you insufferable bastard!"

His eyes were shining and she kissed his thin, chalky lips delicately. Then she grabbed his wand and stuck it in her pocket. She bunched up his cloak, pillowed his head with it, and jumped to her feet. He reached his shaking hand out to her, and she yelled at him to be still.

"You stay here! I'm going to get you help, and so help me God, if you try moving from that spot, I'll kick your arse, you ruddy jackass!"

She squeezed through and went to make her way back to the castle. The morning sun was just peaking through the trees of the forest, occasionally blinding her way as the battle continued to rage around her. She was going back to the castle. The blow-hard had droned on, trying to inflame Potter and rattle his supporters. *Bastard!* she thought. Then she remembered Severus telling her,

"If you ever find yourself in a crisis and need a solution, she would be the one to get. Insufferable, but she has the brains to back it up."

She headed inside the main gates amongst the wounded and dying. She scanned the room for the Granger girl. She saw her with Miss Weasley. She was comforting her. She discreetly walked up to them.

The Weasley girl was crying while the Granger girl was trying to calm her. They both looked up to her and she said, "You two, come with me," she ordered. The Granger girl was wide-eyed in terror.

"It's alright, Hermione," Ginny whispered. "She's an Order member."

They went out into the main hallway and Alissa took them to Remus. Amazingly, he was still holding on.

"Ginny, see to him," she ordered. Then she dropped her voice to a whisper. "Don't tell him about *her* yet."

Ginny nodded, and Alissa grabbed the other girl by the arm and quick-marched her out and back to the Willow. Once safely inside the entrance, she made her threat.

"You get your arse back in there and tend to the Headmaster!"

"B-but he's dead!" she sputtered.

"He is *not*, you fool girl! I placed a Coagulating Spell on him along with some dittany he had in his pocket. Now, move! If he dies, *will* you," she whispered viciously and then she threw the girl from her. "RUN!" she screamed.

The girl jumped on her feet and speed off.

Alissa squared her shoulders to get back to the great Hall. She would need a Mediwitch and supplies. She had her wand in one hand and Severus' in the other. She walked out into the battle, for it had not stopped, even though the Dark Lord had given an hours' reprieve. Vengeance was to be meted out. She knew that beyond a doubt when she was faced by two fellow Death Eaters.

"Lying bitch!"

"Traitorous whore!"

A/N: We are now back at the the beginning. We are rapidly coming to the end. A couple more chapters are left. I do hope you enjoyed this. Please review! As always, much thanks to my beta, MadBrilliant. Also, large portions of this chapter were taken directly from J.K. Rowling's *Deathly Hallows*. Thanks to Ms. Rowling for her work!

Remembering

Chapter 17 of 18

Alissa waits as the Healers tend to Severus. As she looks at his supine form, memories of the past come rushing back to her with painful clarity.

□

She made her way out to the forest where she instinctively knew the fighting had shifted. She found the lair of the acromantulas and saw Yaxley and Dolohov. She crept around the perimeter and listened for signs of any skirmishing. All was still. Too still. It was eerie.

A green flash and a hate-filled “Avada Kedavra” came from inside the acromantulas’ lair. Yaxley and Dolohov rushed in and Alissa followed them slowly and cautiously.

She saw the sneer on the Dark Lord’s face as he said in a mocking tone, “The Boy who Lived.” There on the ground was Harry Potter’s dead body.

She saw Bellatrix catch her eye and she sidled closer to the Dark Lord. Alissa knew it was just a matter of time before she was found out.

“My Lord... *my Lord*,” she crooned.

“That will do!” Voldemort snapped.

Alissa didn’t need anyone to tell her this was the opportune moment to make her escape. Potter was dead. She could do no more. She had to get back to Severus and get them away as soon as possible.

She had retreated back to the castle, the battle still raged somewhere in the distance, but Alissa could have cared less. Potter was dead, but she hadn’t the heart to tell anyone anything about it. All she cared about was Severus. The Healers were working on him, trying to save his life. She knelt on the floor and grasped one of his legs. The memories were flooding back into her mind as she watched the Healers’ noble efforts.

“Ella, what was that? Why are those big boys fighting?”

“The one boy, I’ve seen him around. Everybody is a’scared of him. But I think it’s because he makes mean faces.”

The tears slid down her face as the others dashed around her. The real world was moving, but hers was in stasis. She could not and did not want to envision a world without him in it.

Perhaps she had not been able to break away as she hoped she could.

“Little cub,” Snape called.

“Here, it’s like this,” he said softly, taking pity on her.

He stood behind her, took her wand hand in his, and the young girl felt a shiver down her spine as he covered her hand in his to pose it correctly. He then stood behind her as he showed her how to plant her feet firmly on the ground. He showed her some basic steps, lunges and such. She beamed at him.

“Look, if you are going to do something, you should do it correctly!”

She knew then at twelve what she knew now at 36. There would never be another. He would be the only one she would ever love. She couldn’t help it. She couldn’t break away and move past him. She had tried so hard, but she didn’t really want to. She sobbed as she held onto him.

“Why do you do this?” he asked one night as she was dressing herself right after having sex with him. She was not facing him. She never faced him when she dressed.

“Just remember, I’ll always be there if you need my help. All you have to do is call for me.”

Finally he turned and fixed his eyes on her. “Why, Alissa? Why of all the wizards you’ve known and must have met over the years, why me? I showed you some kindness when you were a child. When I was barely out of my own childhood! Why?”

She recalled his promises, the love he claimed to feel for her. She had to believe he meant it and would always mean it. A Healer disrupted her thoughts.

“Miss, the Headmaster is weak, he is stable for now, but I cannot promise anything. We’re moving him out of the way; the battle isn’t over. I assume you’ll stay with him?”

“Of course,” she muttered.

They moved him into an empty classroom where some others were being held, out of the way of danger. She conjured a chair and sat next to his hovering stretcher. He was mercifully unconscious, but Alissa was still so afraid. She began to remember again.

“I’ll never let you go,” he whispered into her mouth as he kissed her. “I don’t know how, but I promise I will be with you forever.”

“I swear I will only give myself to you. I want to be worthy of your love, Alissa. You are so lovely...”

“I love you, Alissa,” he blurted out to her.

“I love you, Severus,” she answered.

She pulled his hand to her and kissed it over and over, rubbing it against her cheek, trying to feel him, wanting to know if he knew she was there, if he knew how much she loved him. She regretted their last true intimate moments had been so hurtful, so sad...

"I shall never understand why me, of all men?"

"Why her, of all women?"

Severus looked away from her. Alissa could still see his jaw clench, and his breathing was a bit ragged.

"I watched her for so long; I didn't know how to even approach her! She was so fearless. I was so young—she was the most wonderful sight. She was beautiful," he whispered lovingly.

Alissa took the opportunity to face him. She walked over to him and looked up into his sad face. He looked down at her, her perfect smile, her thick black hair playing in the breeze around her pale face. Then she spoke as she took his hands in hers.

"I was young, he was so fearless. I watched him for so long; I didn't know how to approach him. He was the most wonderful sight. When I watched him duel, he was beautiful."

"Just go, Alissa. There can't be an 'us' anymore. This time tomorrow, I'll be dead, and I don't want you to see that. Just go far away and forget all this. Forget me."

Alissa must have fallen asleep. It was so quiet, except for an occasional sob or pitiful shriek of disbelief from the mourners outside in the Great Hall. She was awakened by sounds of the battle closing in. She jumped to her feet, her wand out, ready to fight to the death if she had to. The doors burst open and the Healers were rushing inside.

The Healers announced hurriedly that they were evacuating all the patients to St. Mungo's. The battle was now raging inside the castle.

"What is going on?" she demanded as the Healers and Mediwitches bustled around her.

"Potter is alive! He and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named are fighting in the Great Hall!" one person said happily.

Alissa was frozen on the spot she stood, unable to move. Potter was alive! Then she cleared her head.

"I'm coming with him!" she told the orderlies that were moving Severus' stretcher.

"No!" said a Healer abruptly. "We have far too much on our hands than to coddle family members. You can arrive after we've evacuated the injured! Let's go!" he barked at the orderlies.

"Wait!" she said. She bent over his pale face and kissed him. "I love you," she whispered.

Then they took him away.

She stumbled to a nearby wall and slid down to the floor, crying as if she were coming apart at the seams. She had no one. No one knew of her. No one! She screamed and ripped off the hated Death Eater weeds and threw them aside.

Minerva!

Minerva and Remus! They knew her! They knew all about her! She made her way in her torn dress into the Great Hall. As she entered, she saw the Killing Curse blast from Potter's wand, and the Dark Lord fell. She backed up against the wall for strength and covered her mouth with her hand in astonishment. *It is finished! Dear God, it's finally over!*

A/N: Well, we are finally reaching the end. The next chapter will tell about the fates of our couple and others who have survived. Please review! Huge thanks for my beta, MadBrilliant.

A Beautiful Beginning

Chapter 18 of 18

The story ends for our couple and the outcomes of other couples as well.

□

She stayed rooted to the spot as the bustle of people celebrating ran past her. She saw Minerva, her normally tidy hair all down her shoulders. She felt her way up the wall and slowly made her way to her.

"Minerva?" she asked timidly.

"Alissa!" the older woman screamed. She flung her arms around the young witch and cried. The others near her were buzzing with questions.

Alissa ignored the crowd. "Remus, is he?" She couldn't finish. She knew she had let him down. She had chosen Severus over him. If he were dead, it would be on her hands.

"Here," Minerva said as she led her towards the Weasleys. Molly's eyes were huge as she experienced the rush of so many conflicting emotions. Alissa came to her and held out her hand.

"Molly, I apologize for my rudeness. Fear does strange things to people," she said tiredly.

"Oh, my dear, I agree. I do agree!" She embraced her and asked about Severus. Then she turned her eyes back down to her dead son.

"Oh, Molly!" Alissa exclaimed as she looked into the dead face of Fred Weasley.

"What is it?" Arthur said.

Alissa tenderly stroked the hair and face of Fred's dead body. "H-he was the first person I spoke to when I escaped from the ranks during the battle. I fought him, a-and then I toppled him. I just wanted him safe inside the castle to warn them that the Death Eaters were coming in such full force. I thought I was saving his life!" She sobbed as Arthur and Molly held her.

The reality of the situation came crashing back to her, and she broke free, separating herself from them. "You don't understand! I ruined so much for everyone. The things I did!"

"You deliberately ignored us so I could send my Patronus!" Arthur blurted out.

"That was you?" Ginny interjected. "What did you do to that Death Eater before he took me in the other room? His hands were shaking when you pointed your wand at him!"

Alissa looked straight at her and spoke plainly. "I performed Legilimency on him. He was going to rape you in order to get you to tell him about Potter. I let him know what I would do to him if he touched one hair on your head."

"What about Snape? All of what Harry said was true?" asked another Weasley boy with horn-rimmed glasses.

"Yes. Severus and I have been working against Voldemort since after the Triwizard Tournament. All this time we were spies. The Order knew me as "Ivette." There were a few gasps in the crowd.

"Poor Snape," Ginny said sadly.

"Snape is at St. Mungo's," Alissa said proudly. "No small thanks to Molly, Hermione, and the Healers.

Minerva gave a scream of delight, and the others were gasping, laughing, and crying all at the same time.

"Remus?" Alissa asked Minerva again and all became solemn as their eyes turned to where he was on the ground weeping.

"He's here with Hermione," she said sadly. "He'll be fine, but his wife, Nymphadora, was killed."

Alissa knelt down and faced Remus. He was stroking the cheek of a small woman. Hermione was next to him, trying to give him comfort. Tears were streaming down his face.

"I'm so sorry, Remus," she whispered. "I looked, but she was already gone."

He nodded and buried his face into her hair. Hermione knelt, and placed her cheek on his back and held him. She was crying as well.

It was six months after the final battle when life started to have something of a sense of normalcy. The castle had been re-built, it was Christmastime, classes were going to resume in the New Year, and all the survivors could join together to celebrate the fall of Voldemort.

Many changes had taken place during the past months. Ron Weasley and Luna Lovegood were engaged while Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley had married along with Remus Lupin and Hermione Granger.

Theirs had been the most touching love story of all. Remus had been deep in mourning for his wife and trying to care for his infant son at the same time. Hermione had moved in with him and his mother-in-law, Andromeda Tonks, to help out.

Andromeda had seen the potential between the two. Lupin was older, but he had been older than her daughter as well, and Hermione was even more mature than her Nymphadora had ever been.

It was a friendship that had been pushed along by Andromeda and Molly Weasley...with no quarter shown to the embarrassed couple by either Ginny or Luna. It had played out like a comedy of errors, and with a little smile here with an accidental bumping of Hermione towards Lupin by Ginny, and a shove of Lupin towards Hermione by Harry resulted in a kiss that had changed everything. They married two months later.

It took time for Severus to heal, but when he woke up in the hospital, Alissa was there, smiling her perfect smile at him.

"I'm sorry," he had whispered. "I do love you. I do."

"I know," she had whispered in return.

"No," he had insisted. "I loved Lily for so long. But my love for her is not like my love for you. I was a boy when I loved her. When I loved you...when I loved you, I was a man. Can you forgive me for pushing you away?"

"I assume you'll never do it again?" she had asked questioningly with her arms folded across her chest.

"Never," he had answered. "I hope you will allow me to rectify my wrongs, Miss Devon," he said with mock seriousness.

"And what would that entail exactly?"

"Well, you promise to never stop following me, *never* leave me alone...I promise I will marry you," he had said silkily.

Alissa had barked a laugh. "What is that? On the premise when 'I'm old enough?'" she had teased.

He had smiled while he looked at her white hand in his pale one.

"Tell me, would you really have hexed Potter and Black that day when you were just a little firstie if I had not of walked off?" he had asked as he continued looking at their entwined hands.

"Yes," she had answered proudly.

He then leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips.

"You have the most perfect smile I've ever seen," he had whispered softly. "I want to wake up to that smile for the rest of my life."

"I would be more than happy to oblige you," she had whispered against his lips.

Alissa and Severus had married in November amidst all the well wishes of the Wizarding world. As they had posed for their picture in the *Daily Prophet*, Severus had turned to her and had murmured, "After all, we vampire-types have to stick together!"

Alissa had fallen apart laughing. Her tinkling laughter rang aloud and clear. The sight of his bride's laughter and smile on her beautiful face had made the stoic wizard smile in his own right. It had been a most handsome picture of the dark couple.

They danced at the celebration and could now, to the delight of admirers everywhere, tell their story-the whole story of their relationship and their involvement in bringing down Voldemort.

They took a break from dancing and drank some champagne as they strolled in the winter night.

"Have I told you how devastating you look tonight?" he said in a low tone as he pulled her to him.

"Yes," she answered with a wide smile as she snuggled to him. "But I don't think I shall ever tire of it since it has been so few and far between you've been able to see me looking so posh!"

"What are my chances of getting you out of that dress robe early tonight?" he whispered seductively in her ear.

"I'd say your chances are very good," she answered as she kissed him passionately.

He lifted her up slightly by her backside and ground his erection against her. She moaned her approval, and he cupped one breast, kneading it in his hand. They broke apart and started for their trek back to his private entrance into the dungeons.

"What shall we do now?" Severus asked Alissa as they strolled. She looked into the windows of the Great Hall, the couples, the laughter the happy futures and plans. Most would stay near. Many would take up teaching positions and/or apprenticeships.

She smiled as she contemplated the joys and triumphs so many of them would experience.

"I think we all are going to be just fine, Mr. Snape," she said as faced her lover.

She sidled up to him and said as she slid an arm around his neck.

"You and I aren't like them, Severus. We never have been. We won't ever settle down into a country or obey geographical boundaries. We are travelers, adventurers, risk takers, not the 'settling down type'. You and I will just go off and make our fortunes as they come."

"Interesting," he said silkily as he closed in the gap and kissed her.

They walked on a bit towards his private entrance into his dungeons and said, "Was that another speech from your Muggle movie?"

"Gone with the Wind?" she asked. "No, but I did take it from the book's sequel."

"Ah-ha," he said with a smirk on his face. "Come, Mrs. Snape, I think this is going to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

She gasped, her mouth-wide open.

"What?" he asked mock defensively. "I told you I watched movies on the telly when I was a boy!"

The sound of Alissa's carefree laughter echoing through the dungeons was soon joined by deep chuckles. The harmony of their voices was complete perfection.

A/N: Well, I hope you enjoyed the ride! My wonderful beta, MadBrilliant, and I will be working on a fic set in this universe that goes into detail about Remus and Hermione's courtship and marriage. So, stay tuned for that if you like that ship! Much love and thanks to all who have continued to stick with this story and who have sent so many encouraging reviews along the way.

Thank you all so much!

Livvy

P.S. The sequel to *Gone With The Wind* that is quoted (roughly) is Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett*. It is a wonderful read, BTW! Also, Snape's quote at the end about "...the beginning of a beautiful friendship," is from none other than *Casablanca*, which was Humphrey Bogart's famous line. I have to give credit to the wonderful writers who came up with such incredible words that never cease to inspire!