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# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The Second Year

## Part 1

*It was at the end of Potter's first year that Severus finally admitted that the Harry Potter before him was not the son of James Potter, and with that realization, when all was said and done, he really had no problem with the boy.*

*Or with any other member of the Addams family.*

*It had taken a lot of thought, but as he had reviewed the previous year, he had come to realise that his fear, while genuine, was unwarranted. They had no interest in him. Well, unless he did something incredibly stupid, and put himself in the firing line.*

*He was not the sort of person who couldn't see which side of the bread was buttered. He was quite convinced that they would destroy Voldemort, and that consequently he would live an unexpectedly long time – if he could manage to stay out of their way.*

*The very fact that the boy was clearly not the son of his hated enemy made this decision eminently palatable.*

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“Severus.”

“Narcissa,” he replied silkily. “It has been a long time.”

“Indeed, it has,” she agreed. “Can we talk, I mean alone, somewhere?”

“Alone?” he asked mockingly. “That would be hardly be proper, would it? What would Lucius think?”

Narcissa frowned at him. “I hope you aren't suggesting anything inappropriate? I merely wish to discuss a vexing issue with you. It is regarding Draco.”

“Ahh,” Snape said slowly. He nodded, and together they walked into a tea shop, taking a small room at the back.

“What is the matter?” he asked.

Narcissa, now that she was in private, looked worried. “Draco refuses to return to Hogwarts.”

“Because?” Snape prompted.

“He fears for his life! That Potter boy and Addams girl are out to get him!”

Snape sighed. “Did he tell you that?”

She nodded.

Severus shook his head. “You do know that I was disappointed with him, last year? Why, he spent most of the year acting like a Gryffindor.”

“Severus!” Narcissa said, shocked.

“He was rash, foolhardy, arrogant, and refused to learn from his mistakes. Tell me where the Slytherin is in that?”

“But...” Narcissa said, before she trailed off.

“Indeed,” Severus murmured, taking a sip of tea. “Now that everyone knows that the Dark Lord is alive and in spirit form, would Lucius taunt him? Would Lucius order him around?”

“Of course not!” Narcissa replied. “My husband is nothing but loyal to the Dark Lord.”

“But what about years ago, when our Lord was starting up, when he was a little more open. Would he have done it then? When he was merely Voldemort, selling his vision for a glorious future to us all?”

“Of course not,” Narcissa said again. “Where are you going with this?”

“Why not?” Severus asked. “He wasn't as well known as he was now, why didn't Lucius try and take charge? And don't answer immediately; think about it for a second.”

Narcissa nodded. She took a sip of her own tea. “Because we knew,” she eventually said. “We knew he was the one. We knew his power, his ruthlessness. We didn't need to see it, it was just there.”

“Quite,” Severus agreed. He took another sip of the tea, and then looked at Narcissa directly. “Harry Potter and Wednesday Addams possess a similar aura of certainty, only more so.”

Narcissa paled.

"Oh yes," Severus agreed. "The seventh years had been looking forward to the favours they could gain by currying favour with your son. And Draco knew it. And he approached things with the sensitivity of a house-elf in a library."

"Others in Slytherin were looking forward to getting some revenge on Potter for the fall of our Dark Lord."

"But they did nothing."

"Why? Because they recognised from the start that Potter and Addams were dangerous. It was nothing obvious, well, not until Draco tried to order Addams to do something. It was ridiculous. Potter broke Draco's arm, affixed him to the table with a knife, and you know what they did then?"

Narcissa shook her head.

"They danced."

"What?"

"They danced, waltzed around the Common Room, as if nothing had happened."

Narcissa shuddered.

"Draco is a spoiled oik," Snape said. "And instead of finding out what Potter and Addams wanted, he tried to wrest control from them. He was outclassed at every level, and was treated as an irrelevance by them."

"So what can we do?"

Snape sighed. "You can try to find a way to increase his power, his intelligence, his attitude and his ability."

Narcissa sighed. "Power?"

"Did you know that Addams clan believes in inter-breeding?"

Narcissa wrinkled her nose in distaste.

"And," Severus continued, "Wednesday Addams believes that it would be 'nice' of her to kill all the Purebloods."

Narcissa blinked. "Excuse me?"

"She believes that Purebloods are a dying breed, and that it would be nice to put them out of their misery." He had to phrase the beliefs carefully; he had no wish to allow his own blood status to be common knowledge. "And having seen her parents' mastery of wandless magic, the way they can Apparate through the strongest of wards, and the casual way in which they incapacitated Lucius, I find it difficult to disagree with them."

Narcissa looked pale, but she didn't say anything as she spent a few minutes in silent contemplation.

"What do Potter and Addams want?"

"To push back the boundaries of Magic. The Dark Lord gave up the extent of his own research, in return for the Philosopher's Stone. He was then betrayed," Snape said, but he paused and looked at Narcissa directly. "It was the most Slytherin thing I have ever seen. Everyone, Dumbledore, the Dark Lord, me, believed they had handed over the real thing, until the bomb exploded."

"That is but one example of the things they can do. I do not know when, but I know for a certainty that there will be a battle between them and the Dark Lord."

Narcissa was breathing heavily, before she took a very deep breath, and regained her composure. "Severus," she said, "I need your help with Draco."

"What do you want, Narcissa?"

"Would you look after him, see he comes to no harm?"

He nodded. "If he follows my instructions, I will do so."

"Swear," Narcissa said. "If you are there to protect him... he would return to school. Severus, will you swear it? Will you make the Unbreakable Vow?"

Severus frowned, and then nodded. "We need one more person, do we not?"

Narcissa nodded. "Will you come to my house, later?"

Snape nodded. "Tonight?"

Narcissa nodded. "For dinner."

He stood, and bowed. "Until tonight."

He turned and walked out the door, almost willing to smile. He would be owed a huge debt for this, one he would definitely call in later.

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*He had indeed sworn, although with the single proviso that Draco did what he was told. Narcissa had agreed to that, unaware that Snape's simple advice would be for Draco to keep his stupid head down, and out of their way. He knew, without a doubt, that Potter and Addams would ignore him, if he did.*

*Still, he did find himself looking forward to the arrival of Potter and Addams.*

*Why?*

*Because of yet another of Albus Dumbledore's great decisions: the hiring of Gilderoy Lockhart.*

*A decision that was close to the decision to hide the Philosopher's Stone in Hogwarts on the scale of stupidity.*

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Severus Snape sat, as he did at the start of every year, scowling as the students entered the Great Hall.

He found himself looking forward to the start of the term, which wasn't something he was used to experiencing.

The difference, this year, was the anticipation of the entertainment he had from the person sitting near him, and how certain students were going to react to him.

He'd bet his meagre pension that Wednesday Addams would not join in the crowd fawning over Lockhart.

The doors swung open and the students entered. As always, they were making far too much noise. He nodded to some of his Slytherins, and watched curiously as the second years started to enter. Weasley arrived, along with Longbottom and Finnegan, closely followed by Granger. The fact that Potter and the Addamses were not with her, suggested that they had not been on the train.

Granger paused and looked at the Gryffindor table before she took a deep breath and walked over to the Slytherin table. She sat, four seats from the end of the second years' section, a blank look on her face.

Severus sighed softly and wondered if the Hat would allow for re-Sorting. It was testament to the effect that Harry and Wednesday had on his House that no one complained out loud, although there were more than a few dark looks. Draco, who looked appalled, at least had the good sense to keep his mouth shut.

The doors closed, and he could hear the faint noise of Minerva dealing with the new first years. The Hat was on the stool, waiting to Sort the students.

The doors creaked open again, and in the doorway stood the very students he had been thinking about.

Pugsley was grinning wildly, and he threw a wave at a few people as he dashed over to Hermione, sitting next to her.

Harry and Wednesday, moving at a much slower pace, made their way to their seats. As always, they were dressed immaculately. They had both grown over the summer – not much, but enough to be noticeable, but everything else about them was the same, from the closeness of each step that they took, to the inhuman calm that they displayed.

"Harry Potter, eh," Lockhart said excitedly. "I'll bet he can't wait to meet me."

"Quite," Severus purred. "In fact, I believe that young Miss Addams is a big fan of yours."

"Aren't they all?" Lockhart asked, throwing his head back dramatically.

"Oh, indeed," Snape murmured, "indeed."

The doors opened again and the young ones trooped in. Unlike last year, there was no one that really stood out. He watched the Sorting, applauding the Slytherins and playing his normal game of predicting which House a student would be sent to.

He was normally in the high nineties.

The final person to be sorted was yet another Weasley. A Gryffindor, obviously, as all her bloody siblings were or had been.

"Slytherin," the Hat yelled.

The Hall went silent, as the now incredibly pale girl blinked, and took the Hat off her head.

"Ginevra Weasley!" the biggest prat on Team Weasley yelled in horror.

Ginevra, somehow, went even paler. All the Weasleys were looking on in a curious mixture of shock, anger, horror.

The red-haired girl gulped and slowly moved toward the Slytherin table.

Severus found his eyes glancing ahead, to see what Wednesday and Potter thought about this.

As always, their facial expressions weren't betraying anything about what they were actually thinking, before Wednesday smiled faintly. She didn't even look at Harry as she whispered to Pugsley.

Pugsley blinked in surprise, and nodded. He whispered to Hermione, and they both moved up, creating a space on their table.

Ginny's eyes went wide, before she gulped again, and moved to the space that had been opened up for her.

"You can't..." the biggest bore of the Weasley's started.

"Quiet," Harry whispered in his impossible voice. "The Sorting is over."

Ron went silent, although his face was red.

Snape turned, to see Dumbledore looking as surprised as everyone else. With a twinkle, the surprise was gone, and the Headmaster was on his feet, giving his normal speech. Albus actually only had seven speeches, one for each year, and he rotated through them. This was year three in the cycle.

"Albus," Severus said after everyone had eaten. "Has there ever been anyone re-Sorted before?"

"Miss Granger?" Albus asked.

Snape nodded.

"Why don't we invite her to my office, and we'll see if she wants to switch, and what the Hat says," Albus said. "Minerva, as well, obviously."

Snape nodded and waited until everyone was dismissed. "Miss Granger," he said quietly as he approached the second year's section of the table. "Will you please accompany me to the Headmaster's office?"

She nodded calmly, her eyes not showing any fear, and Severus almost smiled. He had her. She was no longer a Gryffindor. And she would help ensure that it was the Slytherin House that won the Cup again this year.

Hermione didn't ask any questions as she followed him into Albus' office. Minerva and Albus were already waiting for them; the Hat was resting on one side of the table. "Take a seat," Albus said cheerfully.

Hermione sat down, as he took his place to the left of Albus. She was looking at them all calmly.

"Did you have a good summer, Miss Granger?" Albus asked.

She smiled.

"I did."

"Excellent," Albus said, his eyes twinkling. He was radiating the 'trust-me' vibe that usually had the children talking their hind legs off. "Did you go anywhere nice on holiday?"

"I did, thank you," she said politely.

There was a few seconds of silence, as Albus waited for her to expand, and in which Hermione didn't flinch.

"Miss Granger," Severus started, already bored with Albus' attempts to get her to talk. "We couldn't help but notice that you sat at the Slytherin table this evening."

She nodded in agreement.

"We called you here to discuss with you, and with the Hat, the idea of you being re-Sorted."

"That would be nice," Hermione said enthusiastically. "Can we do that?"

"Do you really want to leave Gryffindor?" Minerva asked sadly.

"Definitely," Hermione replied. "Loyalty is something that is earned, not given, and the Gryffindors have done nothing to earn it from me."

Minerva winced, while Snape hid his smile. "Slytherin isn't noted for being the most tolerant," she tried.

"And Gryffindors are?" Hermione demanded. "I will be perfectly safe in Slytherin, thank you very much."

"May I ask where you went this summer?" Albus asked suddenly.

Hermione smiled. "I was told that you'd ask that question," she said softly. "And they were right." She paused, and looked each professor in the eye, one at a time. "I spent two weeks in America, in New Jersey to be precise."

“At the Mansion on Cemetery Ridge,” Albus finished.

“Exactly.”

Severus sighed. “Are you going to tell us what happened?” he asked, “or are we going to play games for a while?”

“I would like to be in Slytherin,” Hermione replied primly.

The Hat suddenly snorted. “She’s a Slytherin now,” he said. “If she wants to change, that’s fine by me. All she has to do is ask, and she’s done that.”

“You don’t want to sit on her head?” Minerva asked.

“Haven’t you been paying attention, woman?” the Hat demanded. “She’s already blackmailing you, waiting until you grant her request before she tells her story, if that’s not a Slytherin attitude, I don’t know what is.”

“Thank you,” Hermione said, before Minerva could say anything else. Severus clapped his hands, and ordered the house-elf that appeared to move Hermione’s things.

“Now,” Hermione said, “as to my summer…”

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Hermione pushed her trolley through the gates at the airport. She was aware that she was looking around like a crazy person, but this had been the first time that she had ever travelled to America, and the first time that she had travelled alone, and in First Class as well.

She hadn’t expected to be here, but it had been a week and a half after she had arrived home, when she had already done her homework, and was starting to get bored, that her mother had received a phone call.

“Hermione,” her mother had said. “How would you like to go to America?”

“To visit Pugsley?” she had gasped.

Her mother smiled. “I’ve just had an extremely pleasant conversation with his mother, Morticia, and she has invited you to stay for a few weeks, returning just prior to when your Father and I have booked our holidays.”

“May I go?” she begged.

“I’ve already told Morticia yes.” She frowned, “I don’t feel truly comfortable with the fact that they are paying,” she confessed, “but Morticia was very insistent. She’s going to sort everything out.”

True to her word, the plane tickets had been delivered by courier the next day, with her flight two days later. Her father had been suitably impressed as well, and not just with the efficiency, but with the fact that a Wizarding family knew how the real world worked so well.

She was pulled out of her daze by a gigantic man appearing next to her. “Miss Granger?” he intoned slowly.

Hermione swallowed the urge to faint, scream, or run back to England. “Lurch?” she asked.

He seemed to be smiling, although her eyesight wasn’t quite good enough to see that high. With no effort at all he picked up the trolley and walked away. She followed him, half smiling. He was exactly as Pugsley had described.

Outside, an ancient hearse was waiting for them. Despite its age, it was immaculate. Lurch placed her bags in the back, and then tossed the trolley carelessly into the path of a Porsche 911. The car screeched to a halt, but any protest the driver might have been made was instantly quelled after a look at Lurch. Lurch ignored all this as he opened the door for her.

She slid in the front seat and did her seat belt up. As quickly as she could, she pulled a small potion bottle from her pocket, and downed it. It was a calming potion, and she was incredibly grateful for the suggestion as Lurch started to drive. Without it, she would have been screaming, as Lurch seemed to pay scant regard to anything else on the road, yet never manage to actually hit anything – several small animals having lucky escapes.

They arrived, in what was probably record time, outside a huge mansion that looked somewhat dilapidated. It was incredibly gothic, with a huge tower dominating the skyline. The gates creaked open, and Lurch drove them up to the entrance.

The door opened and Pugsley jumped out and ran down the stairs. “Hermione!”

“Pugsley,” she cried happily, giving him the quickest of hugs.

“Yes,” he said, “I’ve done my homework.”

“I wasn’t *going* to ask,” she protested.

“Yet,” he added.

She grinned and shrugged.

"Thanks Lurch," Pugsley shouted as he grabbed her hand and moved her inside. She didn't get to see if Lurch made any response. Inside was curious; despite the decay, it had a lived in feel that was very pleasant. It was as if the decrepit nature of the property added to the feeling, rather than ruined it.

"Harry and Wends are busy," the boy continued, rolling his eyes, "and Uncle Fester's off hunting with the Yeti again."

"Pugsley, let the poor girl speak," Morticia said as she glided into the hallway. "Welcome to our home, Hermione."

"Thank you," Hermione squeaked, a little intimidated by the incredibly graceful woman. "And thank you for having me."

"It is truly our pleasure," Morticia replied. "Harry mentioned that finding intelligent people in England seemed to be a slight issue."

Hermione blushed.

"Would you like a snack before dinner?"

"I can wait, thank you," she replied. "I'm not as jetlagged as I expected."

Morticia nodded. "We'll have a potion ready for you at dinner that will deal with any jetlag you do have. Pugsley, why don't you show Hermione to her room and then give her a quick tour of the house?"

"Okay, Mom," Pugsley said and grabbed Hermione's hand again. "Come on, you're up here." She allowed herself to be pulled up two flights of stairs and across a landing. Pugsley paused and pointed at another staircase. "Up there, and to the left, is Harry's room. Wednesday's is to the right. Do *not* go up there without invitation. They value their privacy."

Hermione nodded and gulped.

"And in here," Pugsley continued, "is your room."

Unlike the rest of the house, this room looked to be brand new. The wall paper was a pastel yellow, and there was a matching bed spread. To the right, two large wardrobes bracketed a chest of drawers, with a door to the left that appeared to lead to a bathroom. "Mom knows that you're normal," Pugsley said, "so she made sure you'd be comfortable."

"I didn't expect this, she didn't need to go to any trouble for me," Hermione protested.

Pugsley shrugged. "You're our guest, and our responsibility," he explained. "Our clan take that sort of thing very seriously."

Hermione noticed that her suitcases were already unpacked.

"Did you bring your wand?"

She nodded. "Even though I can't use it, I don't like being away from it."

"Why can't you use it?" Pugsley asked, as they moved out of her room and back down the corridor.

Hermione blinked at him. "We're not allowed to! The Ministry says..."

"Hermione," a new voice sighed. "What did we teach you about rules?"

She turned, to see Harry and Wednesday standing together on the bottom step, looking at her. Wednesday was wearing a grey and white patterned dress with white cuffs and collars. As always, her hair was immaculately braided. Harry was wearing a white shirt and pinstripe black trousers, along with shiny black shoes.

"That they are more advisory than actual dictates?"

Harry smiled faintly. "Close enough."

"So I can do spells here?"

He nodded. "You're in America now, a slightly more civilised country. Why, they've even had fresh ideas in the last century."

Hermione giggled.

"Welcome to our house," Wednesday said formally.

"Thank you."

"We'll see you at dinner," Harry said, and the two turned and walked back upstairs.

"That was nice of them," Pugsley said in surprise. "They don't normally come out of their rooms during the day."

The tour of the house ended in a large kitchen. There was an old woman hunched over a cauldron, stirring it with a ladle, at the far side of a large wooden table. The woman looked up and smiled. "Hello, dearie."

“Grandmama,” Pugsley said, “This is Hermione.”

“Welcome, I’m Grandmama,” Grandmama said. “Are you about ready to eat?”

Hermione nodded.

Grandmama smiled and turned, a match sparking to life in her hand. She touched it to a cannon that Hermione hadn’t noticed, and after a brief hissing, the cannon boomed, sending a ball crashing through the window. There was a pause, and then someone’s voice yelled, “Addams!”

Grandmama smirked and winked at Hermione. “Judge Snyder. He doesn’t like us.”

“Come on,” Pugsley said, leading her to the table. “That was the signal for the others.”

Morticia was the first to join them, sitting at the foot of the table. Harry and Wednesday arrived next and sat near Morticia. Thing was next, and he sat next to Hermione.

“Pugsley, your friend arrived,” the excited voice of Gomez Addams announced. “How very delighted we are to meet you again, Hermione – you don’t mind me calling you that, do you?”

“Of course not, Mr Addams,” she replied.

Gomez whirled around. “Dad?” he asked. “I’m sorry about Mom, it was an accident! I didn’t know the gun was loaded with silver!”

“She meant you, dear,” Morticia pointed out.

“Me? How remarkable,” he marvelled. “Gomez, that’s my name. That, or ‘Dad,’ but in your case, I’m pretty sure I wasn’t in England twelve-thirteen years ago.”

“You weren’t,” Morticia agreed. “Grandmama, is the food ready?”

“Why yes,” the old woman replied happily, “it is.” She pulled out two plates first, each bearing a cheeseburger and chips, putting one in front of Hermione and the other in front of Pugsley. She moved back, and returned with a small steaming cauldron. Using a solid silver ladle, she doled out heaping bowls for everyone else.

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Hermione paused and looked up. “May I have a drink please?”

“Of course,” Albus replied, clapping his hands. A variety of drinks appeared in front of Hermione.

“What were *they* eating?” Minerva asked.

“Their usual food,” Hermione replied. “It’s not the sort of thing you want spelled out, but Pugsley had asked everyone to be on their best behaviour for me, which was why I had somewhat normal food.” She smiled faintly. “The burger was a little rarer than I would normally eat, but after the effort they’d been through to try and be, well, *normal* for me, it was the least I could do in return.”

She smiled, “I knew what to expect, of course, which was why I was still under the effects of the calming potion. The issue of the food was soon dealt with. Pugsley asked Harry and Wednesday for help, and they came up with a potion that allowed me to eat their food. I will never look at vegetarians the same way,” she finished.

Severus tried very hard not to ask, but gave in. “What was the potion?”

Hermione looked at him. “I’m afraid that I don’t know. It did taste of raspberries though, and was delicious.”

Severus frowned, he couldn’t think of anything off the top of his head that would meet those parameters and taste at all palatable, much less fruity. He made a mental note to ask the Addams children about it later.

“It’s getting late,” Hermione said, “could we continue this story another day?”

“Yes,” Severus said. “The password to your common room is ‘Destiny’.”

Hermione nodded. “Good night,” she said, as she slipped out the door.

“Knock that smug grin of your face, Severus,” Minerva said with a sigh.

“Me?” Severus asked. “Just because I’m going to win, again.”

“We’ll still beat you at Quidditch,” Minerva muttered.

Severus sneered at her, hating to admit that she had a point.

“Children,” Albus said softly. “Stop it.”



Minerva turned and poked her tongue out at Albus. "What do you think about Ginevra?"

"She didn't seem a bit surprised," Snape said. "I wonder if she just wanted to get away from her brothers. A Weasley with common sense; whatever next?"

Minerva sighed. "I can't say I blame her. They certainly are characters. But, I'm dreading what Molly is going to say when she finds out."

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Severus arrived for breakfast the next morning earlier than normal; he wanted to ensure that if anything was to happen, he wouldn't miss it.

The younger children had already been in bed by the time he had checked on the dungeon. His sixth-year prefect had reported that Hermione and Ginny – as she preferred to be called – had settled in. Ginny was accepted as she was, after all, a well-known pure-blood, even if the family was poor, and Hermione was known by all to be under the protection of Potter and Wednesday.

Wednesday and Potter turned up first, and glided to their places. Pugsley and Hermione were next, accompanied by the female Weasley.

As before, she sat between Pugsley and Wednesday. Severus decided to try and find out what was going on there as soon as possible.

Ron and Percy were the next noticeable arrivals, and they both glared at Ginny. The twins bounded in shortly afterwards, without the glares. More than anything, they looked confused and it didn't look like they'd slept well.

Breakfast itself passed slowly, and Severus noted that Potter and Wednesday didn't exactly eat as much as they pushed food around their plates.

He was starting to think that nothing was going to happen, when the owls started to fly in. The two irritating Weasleys were looking up, and their expressions told him that his entertainment was about to occur.

A grey owl suddenly dived from the ceiling, heading uncontrollably toward the Slytherin table. As it was about to splash down into a jug of milk, Potter's hand shot out and caught it.

"Errol," Ginny said quietly.

The owl shook himself and dropped a bright red envelope that was smoking slightly in front of Ginny – who recoiled backward.

"What is that?" Wednesday asked curiously.

"It's... it's a Howler," Ginny muttered.

"What's a Howler?" Pugsley asked, looking down the table.

"It's a nasty letter sent to tell someone off," Daphne answered. "Parents use it to tell children off, as it magnifies the voice of the sender for effect. If you don't open it quickly, it will explode."

"Who's it from?" Harry asked.

"M-m-mum," Ginny said.

"Is this about you joining Slytherin?"

"Probably."

As was becoming the norm, most of the school was trying to see what was going on, and was listening in. Most wondering how they would deal with the Howler.

Harry touched Wednesday's hand, and she smiled faintly. She twirled her fork in her fingers a time or two, and suddenly stabbed the Howler.

The Howler whimpered briefly, flapped one last time, and went still.

"Thank you," Ginny said, a small smile appearing on her face.

"Pugsley," Wednesday ordered, "make sure she's all right."

"Will do," Pugsley said cheerfully, as Harry and Wednesday stood and walked out.

Ginny looked across at Pugsley, looking confused. Snape moved from his seat, as the sound levels raised, so he could continue to listen in.

"Why?" she asked him.

Pugsley looked at her thoughtfully. "Your brothers have a long track record of irritating Wednesday," he eventually said. "And you chose Slytherin."

Ginny gasped, "How did you know that!?"

Pugsley laughed. "Harry said so last night. Independent thought pleases them, and Wends knows that your brothers are likely to do something stupid." He grinned suddenly. "But really, the only reason she's doing anything is because it will piss off your brothers."

Ginny suddenly laughed.

"But," Pugsley continued, his eyes suddenly going dark, "lose your crush, and lose it quickly," he whispered intently. "If Wednesday ever seriously considers you a rival, you'll end up as Merpeople food before you can think."

Ginny gulped. "But... ."

"Harry is not the guy in your stories," Pugsley continued inexorably, "he grew up an Addams."

Ginny nodded slowly. "He is nothing like them," she agreed. She took a deep breath. "It's not gonna be easy," she muttered.

"Of course it's not," Pugsley grinned, his eyes returning to life. "But if you ever do feel like it's difficult, I'll get Wends to have a few words with you."

Ginny's face turned a remarkable shade of pale, before she shook herself. "What about this?" she said, indicating the Howler.

"We don't take that sort of thing lying down," Pugsley decided. "Come and find me after classes."

Severus walked slowly up the table, handing out the timetables. Without a word, he handed Harry and Wednesday's to Pugsley.

"Thanks, Professor," Pugsley said happily. "Cool, Defence first as well."

Snape smiled faintly and continued up the table. As soon as he finished, he rushed to his office. He'd switched with Lockhart so that Gryffindor and Slytherin would have Defence first – and he'd have a free period to watch.

It hadn't been difficult, not when he'd mentioned that Potter was in that class.

In his office, he pulled out the Invisibility Cloak that Dumbledore had asked him to give Potter. And he would...after he'd used it himself.

With a quick spell to mute any sound he might make, he made his way to the Defence classroom and stood at the back, in the corner.

Wednesday and Potter arrived and sat at the front and waited silently, and Snape took the opportunity to examine them. Even alone, they didn't let their masks drop; they didn't act any different at all.

Wednesday turned slowly and stared directly at him, before she raised a single eyebrow. She turned back to the front, dismissing him.

He felt his heart beating faster, he had no idea how she knew he was there, or why she didn't seem concerned about it.

He took a deep breath and tried to relax as the other students entered the classroom. Weasley and Finnegan both glared at Potter and Wednesday, before they took seats at the back, close to where he was standing.

Granger arrived next, with Pugsley, and they sat at the desk next to Potter and Wednesday. Harry turned to Pugsley, and with a look and a flick of his eyes, Pugsley turned and looked at him as well. He shrugged, and turned back to the front.

As the students walked in, most of them got their books out. The four people at the front were conspicuous in their lack of books.

Gilderoy Lockhart bounced into the room like a demented ferret on Pepper-Up potion. He cleared his throat loudly and silence fell. He reached forward, picked up Neville Longbottom's copy of *Travels with Trolls*, and held it up to show his own, winking portrait on the front.

"Me," he said, pointing at it and winking as well. "Gilderoy Lockhart, Order of Merlin, Third Class, Honorary Member of the Dark Force Defence League, and five-time winner of Witch Weekly's Most-Charming-Smile Award - but I don't talk about that. I didn't get rid of the Bandon Banshee by smiling at her!"

He waited for them to laugh; a few people smiled weakly. "I see you've all bought a complete set of my books - well done. I thought we'd start today with a little quiz. Nothing to worry about, it's just to check how well you've read them, how much you've taken in."

When he had handed out the test papers he returned to the front of the class and said, "You have thirty minutes - start - now!"

Most of the children picked up their quills and started to write. Snape suddenly realised he was in the wrong position, and silently walked to the front so he could see Harry and Wednesday's faces.

Hermione picked up a quill, but Pugsley reached out and lightly tapped her hand. She stopped writing.

For a second, she looked torn, before she took a deep breath and she tried to cover her emotions. Snape was impressed; she was already learning that authority figures had the disconcerting habit of being all too fallible, a life lesson that was vital to a proper Slytherin upbringing.

Gilderoy moved in front of Harry and Wednesday. "Is there a problem?" he asked. "I know, you're so in awe of me that you can't even move. It happens. How about I give you an autograph?"

Harry looked at him thoughtfully. "Mr Lockhart," he said slowly. It wasn't lost on Snape that he hadn't addressed him as Professor. "You claim to have vanquished the Wagga Wagga Werewolf."

"Indeed I did," Lockhart said excitedly. "Quite a fight that one put up."

"The Wagga Wagga Werewolf was defeated on June the 15th, in 1987, correct?"

"Excellent," Lockhart praised. "Reading my books so closely, simply outstanding. You are a big fan."

"A remarkable achievement," Harry said softly. "Considering that you were at the Ministry of Magic, receiving your Order of Merlin, third class, on that particular day."

Lockhart gulped. "What?"

"Please, Mr Lockhart," Wednesday said, "are you going to teach us the art of being in two places at once? I can see it being very useful."

"A publishing error," Lockhart said. "Easily enough done."

"Really?" Harry asked. "And yet eye-witness accounts have the dates down exactly." Harry's voice suddenly seemed to go colder than ice. "Especially as those accounts tell of a story of heroism and refusal to give up. As the warlock fought the werewolf for hours, before vanquishing him – not with a fake charm, but with a silver spoon from a table in a restaurant."

"And what we found most intriguing is how this warlock seemed to be under a memory charm."

Lockhart started to stutter.

"Harry," Wednesday said, putting her hand on Harry's arm. She turned and smiled tentatively at Lockhart. The smile looked completely out of place, and anyone with half a brain would have spotted the look of anticipation in her eyes. "I'm sure there's an explanation."

Snape smiled delightedly. He could see the trap being laid.

Lockhart, it seemed, didn't even have half a brain. "Yes," he agreed. "Of course there is."

"And the Professor can prove it, later today," she continued. "We'll have a duel, just me against him, and when he beats me, you'll see that it was all a mistake."

The trap was baited.

"Capital idea, ten points to Slytherin," Lockhart cried.

The trap was shut. Lockhart was caught. He just didn't know it.

Harry turned to Wednesday, a deeply suspicious look on face. "Fine," he said. "If he wins this evening, I'll retract my statement and complete the quiz." He stood, "Until later." He walked out, Wednesday, Pugsley and Hermione accompanying him.

Snape followed them.

"Can you arrange for a duelling platform this evening?" Harry asked.

Snape sighed, removing the cloak. "I will."

Pugsley grinned at him. "And perhaps you could ask Professor Flitwick to Adjudicate. Old rules, naturally."

"First blood," Snape said to himself. "As you're out of class, library, the lot of you."

"Yes, Professor," Harry said, and turned.

"Potter," Snape called. He handed him the invisibility cloak. "This is yours. I believe it was your father's."

"*Gomez* never had an invisibility cloak," Harry replied evenly. "And reliance on a tool can lead to overconfidence."

Snape nodded thoughtfully. "It will be in my office if you ever need it."

Harry nodded, and the four of them walked off in silence.

He watched them go. He hadn't expected Harry's instant dismissal of James Potter as his father, and while it pleased him, it made him wonder just what had happened to Harry.

With a shrug, he went to arrange this evening's duel, before he had to start teaching. He almost skipped down the corridor. The evening's entertainment was going to be wonderful. A duel by the old rules, between a second-year and a Professor, and soon, the Professor was going to be humiliated and gone.

---

Rumours of the duel had swept through the school, and Albus had tried to cancel it, but Gilderoy had insisted it go ahead, so that he might clear the smirch on his honour. He was already making excuses for Harry, saying that the boy was just jealous of his better looks and bigger fame.

Snape had agreed completely, silencing anyone who had tried to warn Lockhart.

And now he had a prime seat, and was eagerly looking forward to the battle.

Hogwarts was split along three lines. Those for Gilderoy (mainly twittering girls), those that had been taught by him (who all seemed to detest him), and the rest of the school.

The Professors' table had been moved back around twenty feet, to allow for a duelling platform to be raised a few feet in front of them.

Wednesday and Harry walked in, and straight up to the platform. There was no communication between the two as they stood ready.

Flitwick called for attention. "Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the first official duel at Hogwarts for fifteen years. This is a duel under the old rules. The match continues until first blood, or a duellist is unable to continue."

"All spells are permissible, with the exception of those that are Unforgivable.

"To my right, fighting for his honour, Professor Gilderoy Lockhart."

Lockhart was dressing in perfect duelling robes. His head was bare, allowing his long blonde locks to fall down his shoulders dramatically. He waved to the crowd, and stood in a heroic pose.

"To my left, the challenger, Wednesday Addams."

Before anyone could cheer, Harry turned and looked at the other students. There were a few swallowed cheers. Filius raised the shields that would protect the onlookers from stray spells, and stop anyone else interfering. It left only the four of them inside.

Harry stepped back from the platform, not a single sign from him to Wednesday. Not even a last second wish of luck. The faith that showed was as remarkable as it was terrifying.

Gilderoy moved into a flowing bow, with a lot of hand waving and superfluous movements. Wednesday rolled her eyes and simply nodded at him.

Lockhart moved into position, raising his wand like a sword between them.

"Err, Miss Addams, you'll need your wand," Lockhart said.

Wednesday looked at him, and then at Flitwick.

"Three," Flitwick started, "two, one."

Lockhart moved his wand above his head. "*Expelliarmus!*" he cried. There was a dazzling flash of scarlet light that smacked straight into Wednesday.

Lockhart raised his arms in victory, and turned to the crowd.

"Err, Professor," Flitwick called. "The duel?"

Lockhart turned, and stumbled backward to see Wednesday standing where she had been before, not a hair out of place. He gaped at her.

"*Expelliarmus* is used to disarm an opponent," Wednesday said softly. "I have no weapon, so the spell is nothing more than a mild stunner. A two-year-old could ignore the effects."

Lockhart flushed, and then cast a banishing curse at her. Wednesday stepped to one side, showing all the care one might take when walking through the park. The spell flew past her and smacked into the shield.

"Always anticipate where your opponent will be," she lectured, her voice no louder. "You've given me a fair chance now; perhaps you should just finish this."

Lockhart puffed up his chest, and launched several curses at Wednesday, who almost seemed to glide as she moved from one spot to the next, each step appearing planned a thousand years before.

Lockhart didn't wait this time, launching more curses, each one in a more desperate voice than the last.

Wednesday avoided them all with the same grace, then her wand appeared in her hand in a blink. "*Avis*," she whispered.

The birds appeared like they had been shot out of a canon, and before Lockhart could react, they hit him straight in the face. One bird's beak caught him, just a scratch, that instantly started to bleed.

"Defeated by a twelve-year-old girl with an *Avis* spell," Wednesday said with a shake of her head. Harry joined her on the podium. "You really *are* a complete fraud." She turned her back on him in contempt.

It was Pugsley who started to laugh, closely followed by Hermione and most of the other students.

Lockhart's face was mottled in rage, his good looks vanishing. Snape knew he was about to do something.

"*Diffindo!*" Lockhart yelled, his wand pointed at Wednesday's back.

Harry pushed Wednesday out of the way, and then crumpled to the ground. The Great Hall went silent. Wednesday knelt next to him, touching his back. Her hand came up covered in blood.

"Pugsley," she called, her voice like ice. There was the sound of a thousand people gulping at once, as she turned towards Lockhart. Her eyes, always so dark, dominated her face, they seemed impossibly large. Snape couldn't take his eyes from her, as she marched toward Lockhart.

"S-s-stay away from me," he yelled, launching more curses at her, most of them dark.

Wednesday batted them away without hesitation, when she was close, her lips moved, and a bludgeoning curse flew out of her wand, catching Lockhart in the left knee. He screamed, dropping to the floor, and clutching at his destroyed knee. Wednesday didn't stop as she methodically blasted his right knee, then went on to destroy both his elbows.

Lockhart was screaming in absolute agony, while begging for mercy.

"No one touches Harry but me," Wednesday said softly, as she dipped her wand and cast one last blasting curse. This one caught Lockhart in the crotch, and he screamed before passing out.

Snape blinked, and Wednesday was already back with Harry. Pugsley had somehow got through the protective barrier, and was holding Harry's head up so that he could see what was going on.

Filius seemed to shake himself, before he lowered the shields. Poppy Pomfrey ran over to Harry to check him out. She studiously ignored the unconscious Lockhart.

"In the back," she mumbled, as she started to cast diagnostic charms on him. "Such a coward's way out, never would have expected it. I guess he really was a fraud."

Some of the children looked pale but a lot of them were nodding in agreement.

"Filius," Professor Dumbledore called, "why didn't you stop it?"

"Old rules, Albus," Professor Flitwick said. "He knew them, he broke them, and now he has paid the consequences."

"We need to get Harry to the Infirmary," Poppy said.

Without a word, Wednesday stood and raised her hand. Harry lifted into the air. She moved so that she was cradling his head – with a gentleness and caring that seemed out of place from her – before they vanished.

"They're waiting," Pugsley pointed out.

Poppy blinked and sprinted out of the hall.

Severus walked over to Lockhart and sighed. He pulled out a healing potion from his pocket and forced it down Lockhart's throat.

"So, how long have you been making up the stories in your books?" he asked.

"Oh, they're true stories," Lockhart replied dreamily as he woke up, and the pain relief kicked in. "I stole them from other people and then Obliviated them so that no one would know."

"I think it's best you rest," Snape said. It was perhaps unfair of him to mix some Veritaserum with a healing potion, but then, he wasn't known for being fair.

Snape stood and absently knocked Lockhart back into unconsciousness, before he levitated the fraud's battered body and wandered toward the infirmary.

He was nice – he didn't even let Lockhart's head bounce against every single stair. Just every other one.

---

That night, Snape finished his rounds and decided to see how Potter was doing. The boy was awake and was reading, his wand propped up on the bedside table, like a lamp.

"Professor," he said, closing the book and looking at him attentively.

"You don't sleep, do you?"

"Two or three hours a night are all that is needed," Harry agreed. "Wends is getting a few more books for us."

Snape pulled up a chair.

"Was that what you came to discuss?" Harry asked.

"You confuse me," Snape said slowly. "You claim Gomez Addams as your father."

Harry nodded.

"But you keep the Potter name."

A necessary affectation," Harry agreed. "It's so tiresome to fill in all the correct paperwork when you marry someone with the same name. I'll take the Addams name when we get married."

Snape looked at him, and while he couldn't believe he was about to do this, he had to. "James and Lily were your parents, though."

"Blood-wise, they were," Harry agreed. "And if they hadn't died, I would have grown up a Potter, and would never have met Gomez, Morticia, Pugsley, and more importantly, Wednesday."

"Your mother died for you."

Harry turned his head slightly, and Snape got the impression that Potter was amused. "Morticia is still alive."

"Lily," Snape said, rolling his eyes.

"How do you know that?" Harry asked, his eyes suddenly shining brightly.

Snape had the distinctly uncomfortable feeling that he had just lost control of this conversation. "It was her protection that saved you."

"How remarkable," Harry replied. "And from where did that idea originate?"

"Professor Dumbledore."

"Ahh," Harry said slowly.

Snape sighed. He knew Potter wanted him to ask the next question, and he couldn't help it. "Do you know differently?"

Harry nodded. Once. Briefly.

"How?" Snape asked.

Harry smiled slowly. "I asked her."

"Asked who?"

"Lily Potter."

Snape recoiled.

"Grandmama is quite skilled at Necromancy," Harry whispered intently. "She called forth their spirits when I was six. We had a good chat."

Harry shifted to one side, and a few seconds later, Wednesday walked around the corner and climbed into the bed next to him. "Professor," she greeted him.

"Wednesday," he said back.

"It was an interesting conversation," Harry continued. "We talked about life and death, and what had happened that night. It gave me a new perspective on a few things. At the end of the conversation, James and Lily thanked Gomez and Morticia for what they were doing for me."

"Grandmama calls them back quite a lot," Wednesday added, as she opened the first book.

"Indeed," Harry agreed. "Useful people, really, but then, death has a habit of doing that to you."

"How did you end up with Morticia and Gomez?" Snape asked.

"I think," Harry said slowly, "that I will answer that when you have made your decision."

"My decision?" Snape asked.

Harry slid an arm around Wednesday and pulled her a little closer.

"Ask me again when you have decided whom you follow, and if they are the right people."

Snape nodded slowly as he stood and walked out. He absently rubbed the symbol of his following, and wondered if he should tell Albus what he had learned.

He turned, and then paused.

It occurred to him that Harry's warning had not just been about Voldemort, but about Dumbledore as well.

He returned to his room. He had a lot to think about.

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*The papers were full of The Lockhart Scandal the next day. A record number of Howlers arrived at Hogwarts aimed at him, and the Aurors turned up shortly afterward to arrest him.*

*He was taken to St Mungo's and kept in protective custody. It seems that no one liked a faker, even one with a charming smile.*

*The next night, Snape was back in Dumbledore's office.*

---

Snape sat in his normal position, next to Albus, restraining the urge to roll his eyes. Molly Weasley was ranting and raving in front of him, demanding that her 'darling child' be removed from the evil Slytherins. She was waving around a piece of parchment that she claimed her daughter had sent her.

Minerva, Filius and Pomona were sitting the other side of Albus, and were keeping out of the conversation.

"Why don't we ask Ginny to come up here," Albus eventually offered, as Molly took another deep breath, and was about to launch into her fourth diatribe.

Molly nodded sharply, and settled back down. Albus clapped his hands, and asked a house-elf to fetch the girl.

A few minutes of silence that was probably uncomfortable for some in the room, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in, Ginny," Albus called.

The door opened, not slowly as Severus was used to seeing, as students tried to delay the inevitable, but confidently.

And the reason for the confidence was soon revealed. Ginny hadn't come alone. In that moment, Snape knew that the girl really was a Slytherin. There was nothing wrong with having friends in high places, and using them as needed.

Harry walked in first, Ginny next to him. He nodded to her to take the seat, and he stood behind her silently.

"Harry?" Albus asked.

"If we're going to have a kangaroo court, then Miss Weasley at least deserves representation," Harry replied smoothly, causing Albus to flush slightly.

Snape looked at Molly, who was staring at her daughter in horror.

"Well?" Harry prompted. "You are interrupting our homework time. If all you want to do is stare at her, then a photo will do the same job."

Snape hid a smile. Molly stormed to her feet, and opened her mouth.

"I do so hope that you're not going to shout," Harry said silkily. "It accomplishes nothing, apart from irritating me. And if that's the case, we will leave."

Molly's face went bright red.

"Sit," Harry ordered. "Prepare your topics in a rational and intelligent manner."

Molly slumped down on to the couch, and reached out for a cup of tea. Her hands were shaking.

"Good," Harry said. "Now, you obviously have an issue to discuss, what is it?"

Molly looked completely nonplussed. She was used to instant obedience and using her voice to get what she wanted. With both of those being removed from her, she was left with just logic.

"Slytherins are evil."

Sadly, her logic was somewhat lacking.

"As are Gryffindors, Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs," Harry agreed.

Molly gaped at him.

"Why, you do know that one of your sons bullied another student so badly last year that she contemplated suicide? And that your twins tried to prank half the school, but botched the potion, and if it had been used, it would have killed close to a hundred students?"

Severus carefully schooled his face. He hadn't been aware of that fact.

"Why," Harry continued, his voice still low and cold, "you yourself harboured a known criminal and Death Eater for years."

"What?" The question came from Albus, Molly, Minerva, Filius, and Pomona.

"How long do rats live?"

"Three years," Severus replied.

How long was 'Scabbers' a part of your family?"

"Eight or nine years," Ginny answered softly, "all my life."

"And not once did you think that was suspicious?" Harry asked. "Not once did you think, 'hmm, I wonder why this rat is living long past its death due date?' Not once did you wonder, 'Could it be an Animagus?'"

Albus jerked forward.

"A rat Animagus?" Harry asked, "surely not. Not one of you have ever met a rat Animagus, have you?"

"Pettigrew's dead," Albus stated.

Harry looked up at him. "He is," he agreed. He smiled suddenly. "Now."

"I don't understand," Molly said.

"No," Harry agreed. "Are we done here?"

"I'm afraid not, Harry," Albus said slowly. "What happened to Pettigrew?"

"I gave him to Wednesday."

"I meant before that," Albus said.

"You mean after Peter Pettigrew, secret Death Eater, framed Sirius Black?" Harry asked.

"Yes!"

"He went into hiding at the Weasleys'," Harry said.

Snape had to stop himself from laughing. Harry's ability to say absolutely nothing was incredible.

"And?" Albus asked.

"And, I gave him to Wednesday," Harry finished.

"What's going on?" Molly asked plaintively.

"Harry, will you please give a detailed answer!"

"Is there any problem with Ginny being in Slytherin?"

"No," Albus snapped. "What happened with Pettigrew?"

Harry lightly touched Ginny on the shoulder. "Go back to the common room. Ask Hermione to give you the book Wednesday gave her."

Ginny nodded and grinned at him. She nodded to the rest of the room and scampered out.

Harry walked over to the table and helped himself to a cup of tea. He sat in the chair she had vacated, folded his legs so that his right ankle was above his left knee, and both hands were in front of him, holding the cup. If you ignored his size and his youthful looks, he was the picture book definition of an English man in complete and utter control of his situation.

It seemed that despite his American upbringing, there were some things that he had kept from his English heritage.

Harry took an unhurried sip of the tea.

Snape looked around the room. Molly was still looking bewildered at the composed young man, and Albus seemed struggling not to lose his temper. Minerva, Filius, and Pomona had fascinated looks on their faces as they watched this orchestrated drama.

"You do know that Pettigrew framed Sirius, as Pettigrew was James and Lily's Secret Keeper, correct?"

"No!" Molly gasped.

Harry's eyes were locked on to Dumbledore's, as he waited for an answer.

"No," Albus agreed.

Harry unfolded his legs. He placed the teacup on the table, and nodded to Severus. "I do not talk with liars," he said, and walked toward the door.

"Wait," Albus shouted. "I was aware."

"Albus," Minerva said in horror; she was the first to react.

Albus sighed deeply. "I was aware that Pettigrew was the Potters' Secret Keeper. I just had no proof at all."



“No,” Harry agreed, as he re-took his seat.

“After Pettigrew cut off his finger, he set off the blast and vanished down a sewer. He went underground for a few months, eating trash, before he decided he’d wait for Voldemort to return. In order to be comfortable, he decided to become someone’s pet, and the last place anyone would look was the Weasleys’.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Albus asked.

Harry tilted his head. “Why should I?”

“So we could do something about it!”

Harry smiled faintly. “And you’ve been so wonderfully successful to this point,” he agreed without a hint of sarcasm.

“We could have used Pettigrew to get Sirius Black out of jail,” Albus protested.

Harry sighed softly. “Is there anything else?”

“This potion of the twins’?” Snape asked slowly. “What was it?”

“They were doing a love potion, and added asphodel instead of powdered Ashwinder eggs.”

Snape recoiled in horror. “Idiots,” he seethed.

“Severus,” Filius asked, “what would that do?”

“It would send every one who ingested it mad with lust, and they would continue in that state until they died.” He tried to keep a tight rein on his temper, but it wasn’t working. “A hun…”

“No,” Harry interrupted, “they have learnt their lesson and they won’t do it again.”

Snape looked at Harry; the boy’s green eyes were cold and dark, and he shuddered. “Agreed.”

Harry turned to Molly. “Your childish views of good and evil need revision. I believe that hypocrisy is one of the greatest evils. Your daughter chose Slytherin for a variety of reasons, some of them based on fallacies. Yet she made a choice because that was what she felt was the best for her. Independent thought should always be encouraged, unless your goal is to end up following orders you do not believe in, because you have pledged to ignore your own intellect.

“Rather than sending childish shouting letters, you would have been better off asking just why your daughter dared to try something you have been mindlessly calling evil for most of her life.

“Ginny will be perfectly safe in Slytherin, more so than in Gryffindor. At least in Slytherin, they don’t pretend to be something they are clearly not.”

He stood, nodded to the Professors and walked out, closing the door behind him.

Molly seemed to collapse into herself.

Snape smiled to himself. He’d never seen so many stunned faces in one place before.

“Molly,” Albus started.

Molly looked up and stared at Albus. Her eyes were different than how they had been before. “He is going to defeat the Dark Lord when he gets a human form, isn’t he?”

“He is,” Snape replied.

“I’m sorry for taking up your time,” she said quietly. “I’ll be leaving now.” She stood and walked out of the office.

“Twenty points to Slytherin for Harry doing the impossible and introducing shades of grey into Molly Weasley’s life,” Snape said softly.

“Albus, if you knew about Pettigrew, why didn’t you push for Sirius to be given a trial?”

Albus sighed, and Snape smiled. The headmaster was going to be in for a long night – it wasn’t going to be easy to get out of this one.

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*There hadn’t been much of a let-up before the next event occurred. But this one had been different, if only for reminding people that Harry and Wednesday were still human, and as such, capable of erring.*

*As enlightening as it was, it had also given him a faint concern. He wasn’t quite sure what that concern actually was at the moment, but it was there, nagging at the edge of his consciousness.*



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The Second Year

## Part 2

"The Minister appointed me himself," the woman before them simpered in an irritatingly high pitched tone. "After your previous choices proved so unsuccessful."

"How fortunate for us," Albus responded.

"Of course, I will put an end to the silly rumours regarding the return of the Dark Lord," she continued.

There was a few moments silence, while everyone looked at Albus, who didn't seem to be doing anything.

"Is that official policy?" Severus eventually asked.

"Of course."

"Excellent," Snape agreed. "I'll inform the Prophet personally. After all, if you are calling every professor here a liar, as well as several Aurors, and even Nicholas Flamel, then we ought to be able to disagree with you."

The fat woman gaped at him.

Snape sneered back at her, ignoring the startled looks he was getting from Albus. He was Severus Snape, and he was going to go forward his own way.

"Excuse me, it sounds like you're implying that I am lying," she said, going bright red. "I am the Minister's representative."

"You are trying to intimidate me by telling me that you have no power and influence of your own, all you can wield is that which your superior enjoys until he is removed?" Snape asked silkily, quoting Wednesday Addams as much as he could.

"You will pay for this," Umbridge stated.

"Then you will make it quick, and permanent," Snape replied. "Because if you don't, if you fail in any sense, I will make your worst terrors come to life."

Dolores glared at him, before storming out.

"Severus?" Minerva asked, a look of shock on her face.

He turned to her. "Minerva?"

"What..." she said, trailing off.

Snape smiled faintly. "It occurs to me that we are supposed to protect our students from this sort of thing."

"That wasn't what I meant," Minerva said. "Since when do you take proactive steps?"

Snape looked at Albus. "Someone has to," he said, and walked out.

Sadly, he wasn't able to see the first lesson she gave to Harry and Wednesday, but learned that they had done nothing at all. Umbridge had made them study from books, after trying unsuccessfully to provoke them.

He guessed it was because they disliked using their wands anyway, and book learning was as good as anything for them.

Snape spent most of his free time trying to work out why he had stood up for others. It wasn't the sort of person he had been for longer than he could remember, and he wasn't sure if he liked it.

Admittedly, he had enjoyed the front page headline of the next day's *Prophet*, and the Howler that Umbridge had received from Fudge, of all people.

It was this independent thought thing. He'd followed – first Voldemort and then Albus – since he was sixteen, and he wasn't used to the idea of going his own way, and wasn't sure what that way actually was.

It was confusing.

There was a knock on his door, and as he looked up, his goddaughter, Daphne Greengrass, entered. "You might want to pay attention, Uncle Sev. Rumour has it that a lot of senior students are looking for Pugsley, and they're about to find him."

"Thank you," he said, nodding to her. He stood, and followed her toward one of the classrooms. As she was about to enter, he touched Daphne's shoulder and stopped her. "Be a Slytherin," he told her. "Find out what is happening first."

She nodded, and he cast a notice-me-not spell on them both. They entered the room silently.

Pugsley was sitting on a table, kicking his legs, talking to Hermione and Ginny. Pugsley looked up for a second and raised his eyebrows at Snape and Daphne.

The other door opened, and Daphne was proved right, as a group of senior students, containing members of all four houses, entered the room. Ginny and Hermione instantly looked worried. Pugsley didn't.

"What's up?" he asked casually.

"We want a word," Marcus Flint grunted.

"You can have several, if it will mean a full sentence," Pugsley offered.

"Marcus," Jacob Handerson, the current Head boy groaned. "Will you please not do the talking for us, at least until you can string several thoughts into coherent sentences."

Marcus scowled.

Pugsley looked amused. "What can I do you for?"

"Wednesday defeated Lockhart," Jacob said. "She looked pretty good doing it."

Pugsley snorted. "Lockhart wasn't a challenge," he pointed out. "Wends didn't even break sweat."

"So she's better than that?" Jacob asked.

Pugsley nodded, not going into any details.

"What about Potter?" Miranda Richards, the current Head girl, asked.

"What about him?"

"Is she better than him?"

Pugsley laughed softly. "Why?"

"We've got our N.E.W.T.s coming up shortly, and we're going to fail Defence if we don't get any extra classes. We asked Dumbledore, but he wouldn't help. So we figured we'd try the only other people who don't care what Dumbledore or the Ministry think."

"And you've come to me first because you're likely to be hexed asking them directly?" Pugsley asked.

"Yeah," Jacob said.

"Have you considered the price?" Pugsley asked.

"It won't be money, right?" Miranda asked.

Pugsley smiled. "Correct," he agreed cheerfully. "They might do it, but they won't do it if they're just going to have to kill you later. So you'll have to agree never to use it against them – and that pretty much means not joining Voldemort or the Death Eaters."

There was nowhere near as many flinches at the name as Snape expected.

"Agreed," Miranda said. "Some of us might have joined before, but that is more to do with a large dislike of the way the Ministry and other parts of society are run, and the acknowledgment that change can be a good thing. Of course, some of us are also evil little bastards."

Pugsley smiled. "Killing innocents and terrorism is pointless. Inflicting your views by such crude violence and coercion shows a lack of clarity of thought and abject stupidity. There are other ways of inflicting change."

"So will you ask?" Miranda asked.

"I will," Pugsley agreed. "I'm not guaranteeing anything. They might dismiss it out of hand." He looked around the students. "They might say yes, because it could be amusing, and they're usually bored out of their minds here. If it wasn't for Uncle Nicholas giving them research to do, they'd probably start blowing things up." His manic grin appeared. "I thought about hiding their instructions. Sure, they'd hurt me, but the damage they'd do would be glorious."

Snape found himself gulping along with the students. Almost before he could blink, the grin was gone, and Pugsley was walking out of the door.

Snape followed, cancelling the spell on Daphne.

"You don't need those charms," Pugsley said to him, his manner chatty. "Harry said that we're not to worry about you while you're making your decision."

"Oh," Snape said, not quite sure how he should react to that.

Pugsley opened the door to another classroom, which was a surprise for Snape, as he hadn't realised just how many students appeared to use

them.

“Hey guys,” Pugsley said as he jumped onto the table in front of them. “Got a request for you?”

“Oh?”

“Half the students here need some help with their Defence, and they aren’t getting it from Takes-Umbridge-at-everything.”

“And?” Wednesday asked.

“They asked me to ask you if you’ll give them some training. After Wends kicked Lockhart’s ass, they kinda figured you’d be the one.”

Harry looked thoughtful.

“I told them that the price would be signing something to never use it against you – which is basically not joining Voldemort when he gets his body back.”

“What do you think, Professor?” Harry asked.

Snape frowned. “They need help,” he admitted. “I want the job myself, but I’ve not got the time this year, and Umbridge is still trying to cause problems.”

“Find us a place to do it so we can keep it secret for now,” Harry said to Pugsley. “Put your head together with Hermione and Ginny to come up with something they can sign. Leave the cursing to us.”

“Thanks, Harry,” Pugsley said as he dashed out.

Snape looked at Harry and Wednesday, but they were already back studying.

Rather than trying subterfuge, he asked Pugsley straight out where the first meeting was going to be, and made sure that he was there. It was being held in a large hall that he didn’t know existed.

It seemed that rumours of the new club had permeated the entire school. Most of the senior students were there, as were most of the second, third and fourth years. In fact, the only people from the second year who weren’t there were Weasley, Finnegan and Thomas. Percy Weasley was absent, as well, although the twins were there.

Draco hadn’t turned up either. Snape made a mental note later to remind him not to get involved. Daphne was there, although she looked conflicted.

Harry moved to the front and sighed. “There are too many of you,” he said bluntly. “Any professor is going to wonder where most of the school is. We’ll split into three year groups; when one group is training, the other two groups will be responsible for fielding queries about what is going on. Hermione and Pugsley have the contract for you to sign. It states that you will never use what we teach you against us, nor will you discuss what happens with anyone who doesn’t know about these meetings. We encourage you to break it, as we want to see the effects of our curse.”

There were a few half smiles on the faces of some of the students, but none of the faces of those who were well acquainted with the Addamses.

“We’ll do the oldest group first, as they have N.E.W.T.s coming up. Please sign the form before we proceed. Oh, and anyone who doesn’t want to sign, we will Oblivate you before you leave.”

Harry turned and walked over to the door, along with Wednesday. Snape made a decision, and signed the document as well. He was a more than accomplished dueller, but knew that if he didn’t sign, he wouldn’t be allowed to watch.

He scowled at the students, and returned to the back of the classroom while Pugsley and Hermione sorted out the year groups.

There were a few Oblivations as well, and one broken bone. Adrian Pucey made the mistake of rushing them. Wednesday gave a demonstration of just why she was being asked to help teach people five years older than her.

Harry looked around at the small group and nodded. He picked out five students, including the Head Boy and Head Girl, and ordered them into a circle. Wednesday walked into the middle of it. “Defend yourselves,” Harry ordered.

Almost before he had finished speaking, Miranda was unconscious and a vicious curse was heading toward Jacob, who barely managed to raise a shield.

Snape whistled under his breath. Wednesday had the hallmark of every great duellist, she wasn’t hurried. In the middle of four students, all bigger than her, all older than her, she looked completely at ease, as if she was... He couldn’t finish the analogy, because he wasn’t sure what she did for pleasure.

It was another minute before Jacob fell to the floor. Complete silence dominated the room, as Wednesday moved next to Harry. Harry looked at the fallen students for a moment, then nodded to Pugsley, who quickly revived them.

“Good,” Harry said. “We will expect any one of you to be able to defeat five adequate students by the end of the year. We’ll start with the basics. Pair up. The one on the right will launch tickler curses at the other, the other has to dodge.”

What followed was an interesting lesson, as Harry and Wednesday walked around, giving pointers on how to read body language and wand position to anticipate where an opponent was going to curse.

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Breakfast the next morning was a normal affair, at least before Dolores Umbridge arrived. She had a smug grin on her face as she marched over to the Slytherin table.

“Running a club without permission?” she sneered. “Detention. You,” she pointed at Wednesday, “tonight. You tomorrow,” she finished with Harry. “And the club is cancelled.”

Wednesday stared at her for a long moment, her eyes dark. Harry lightly touched her hand and she subsided. She looked at Harry, who nodded.

“Activate,” Wednesday said softly.

From further up the table, Charles Warrington, a Slytherin Chaser suddenly grabbed his throat and pitched out of his seat.

“Stop it,” Umbridge demanded, as Charles started to roll on the floor, huge boils appearing on his face.

“We can’t,” Harry said, his face unmoved. “He signed a contract, he broke it. Ancient rules require that he pay the price: death. Some time in the next few days. Until then, he’ll just suffer.”

“Professor Dumbledore,” Umbridge called, looking at him desperately.

“Harry, please,” Dumbledore said.

“I will cancel the spell,” Harry offered, “if you tell me how.”

Dumbledore blinked at him.

“He was aware of the contents of the contract; he signed the contract of his own free will. He broke the contract, well aware that we were within our rights to invoke the punishment clause. How do you now break this contract?”

Dumbledore sighed deeply. Madam Pomfrey rushed over to the boy and knocked him out. She quickly took him out of the room. “I’ll do what I can,” she promised.

“There will be a full investigation,” Dumbledore announced.

Most of the students were looking on in horror, as they suddenly understood that one of their colleagues was about to die.

“Which I shall lead,” Umbridge added.

“You cannot,” Harry said. “You are implicated.”

“Harry is correct,” Dumbledore agreed. “I will contact the Ministry personally. I’m sure that Veritaserum will get all the answers.”

Umbridge scowled at Harry and Wednesday. “Don’t forget the detention.”

Snape spent the day answering questions. The use of Veritaserum was not yet required, so he was able to lie with impunity, even to Albus.

He had no worries about anyone finding out his lies, Wednesday and Harry would have prepared for this event.

Umbridge, Harry and Wednesday were not going to be interviewed until the next day. Dumbledore and some people for the Ministry held several hour-long assemblies as they explained the dangers of magical contracts to students.

Several Ministry specialists were called in, but they couldn’t do anything about the curse.

Warrington’s parents were out of the country, and owls had been dispatched to bring them home.

The next morning, the Ministry officials were at breakfast in the Great Hall, along with a couple of Aurors – Kingsley Shacklebolt one of them.

Harry was already at breakfast, without Wednesday change, when Wednesday walked in. She had a slightly amused cast to her face, that didn’t bode well for a calm and even breakfast.

She sat next to Harry, and as normal, they started breakfast. Around them, everyone continued as normal.

“What is that?!”

It wasn’t the words themselves, it was the voice. It was shocked, it was emotional. It was nothing like anything anyone had heard from Harry since he had started at Hogwarts.

“She,” Wednesday said, the slight amused cast of her face not changing, “forced me to use something that wrote with my blood.”

A feeling of deep and dark magic that swirled around the room. Pugsley paled and inched away from Harry slowly.

Harry took a deep breath, and then seemed to wrestle some inhuman control from somewhere deep inside him. He spread his arms and a deep bell tolled solemnly.

The doors to the Great Hall crashed open, and a huge figure appeared that caused screams to ring around the Hall. "You rang?"

"Get Morticia and Gomez here, now, Lurch," Harry ordered. Lurch nodded and vanished.

Harry started to pace, his face moving slightly. He was still radiating intense magic, and seemed to want to lash out. No one moved in the Hall, no one even said anything, not wanting to draw his attention onto them. Snape looked down the Professors' table; Umbridge was frozen in fear. She seemed to realise that if she did anything, she would be the target he would lash out at. The Aurors were showing more sense than he had expected, and were quietly erecting shields in front of themselves.

In the doorway, Morticia and Gomez appeared. Morticia paused, as she felt the swirling magic, and rushed forward, enveloping Harry in a hug.

It was only as she did, that Snape realised that Harry was still only twelve years old. Despite his inhuman calm, his power, and his ability to talk and act as an adult, he wasn't even a teenager yet.

The magic started to die down as Harry clung onto Morticia.

"Harry," Gomez said, his voice seemed dark and foreboding. "What is going on?"

"She," Harry said, pointing to Umbridge, "used a Blood Quill on Wednesday."

Gomez drew himself up to his full height. With a strange power behind his voice, he demanded, "Is this true?"

Umbridge was nodding before the question had finished.

"You are an enemy of the Addams," Morticia said quietly. "The rest of your short life will be spent in torment. Dumbledore, this is not what we expected. We hereby withdraw our children from Hogwarts."

"No," Dumbledore protested. "You can't! What about Voldemort?"

"What about him?" Gomez asked. "He is your concern, not ours."

"But Harry..." Dumbledore started.

"Not our problem," Gomez reiterated.

"Please," Dumbledore begged. "Umbridge will be punished; she will be in Azkaban by this evening."

"Why should *she* have a holiday?" Morticia demanded. "You add insult to injury!"

Pugsley groaned. "Mom," he said, "There are some cool people over here, really."

Morticia looked at Pugsley.

Pugsley looked at Harry, who was still visibly struggling with his temper. "How could you?" he cried, only the question wasn't aimed at Umbridge. It was aimed at Wednesday.

Her own face seemed to its calmness as she looked, bewildered, at Harry.

"How could you let her mark you! You're mine, mine, mine alone," he shouted.

Wednesday shook her head, confused.

"You don't get it," Harry screamed, as he broke from Morticia's arms, and ran out of the Hall.

"Wh-what?" Wednesday asked.

"Oh crap," Pugsley said. "You screwed up, Wends."

"What!?"

"Harry wasn't mad at Umbridge," Pugsley explained, "he's mad at you. That's why he called for Mom and Dad, and didn't just kill the bitch."

"But why?" Wednesday asked.

"You let her *scar* you," Pugsley explained. "You're too strong to have been forced into it. You must have *let* her do it – and that meant that you allowed it."

Wednesday nodded slowly, but she didn't seem to have got Pugsley's point yet.

Pugsley sighed. "How would you feel if someone scarred Harry?"

"No one would dare," she said automatically, "Harry's mine!"

"Precisely, and Harry feels the same way. When you let someone else mark you, you just said that you didn't belong to Harry."

Wednesday, always a pale girl, suddenly lost every single remaining hint of colour.

"You're gonna have to apologise," Pugsley said to her.

"Apologise?" Wednesday asked, as if she didn't understand the word.

"Say you're sorry," Pugsley explained.

"But I've never apologised before; I don't know how."

"If you don't, you'll lose him."

"Pugsley's right, dear," Morticia said. "You're an Addams, remember that."

Wednesday's back stiffened, and she nodded. She stood and walked out of the room. When she got to the doors she paused, and turned. "If I lose Harry over this, your suffering will make Prometheus seem like an ordinary child's fairytale."

Umbridge fainted.

Morticia dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief. "Their first fight," she said fondly. "Gomez."

"Yes, dear?"

"Hide the swords."

Gomez nodded and vanished.

"So, Harry wasn't upset about the fact that she used the Quill, but that Wednesday allowed her?" Ginny asked quietly.

"Yeah," Pugsley agreed. "It's the principle of the matter, not the use of the Blood Quill itself."

"Do they hurt?"

"Yes," Morticia said. "Pugsley, have you made another friend?"

"Yeah, Mom, this is Ginevra. Ginevra, this is Mom. Wends told me to look after her."

"Hi, Mrs Addams," Ginny said.

"Call me Morticia, dear," Morticia said as she glided over. "Why was that, Pugsley?"

"She showed some independent thought."

"Another one? How remarkable. Now, do you want to leave school or not?"

"Nah, I don't think Harry or Wends will either, when they calm down. Sure, they're bored, but they'd be bored anywhere, and we had taken steps to rectify that. The thing behind all of this is that they," Pugsley pointed at the teachers, "hired another idiot to teach Defence, so some of the senior students asked me to ask Harry and Wends to teach them. Umbridge found out, as one of the boys broke the contract, and gave Wends detention."

"How is the boy?"

"Dying."

Morticia laughed softly. "That does sound like my Harry," she said fondly. "I'll pop up later and let him live. Harry would hate the paperwork."

"That'd be great, Mom," Pugsley said. "Let me tell you what's been happening the last few weeks."

Around fifteen minutes later, Gomez wandered back into the Great Hall. "I saw something," he said excitedly. "It was one of the Old Curses. Wonderful, it was. Boils, warts, everywhere, even on the inside of the windpipe so he couldn't breathe."

"Did you stop it?" Morticia asked.

"I did," he admitted with a sheepish look. "So much paperwork when a child dies. Not like it used to be," he finished with a sigh.

"Good," Morticia said. "Of course, we won't stop the next curse," she added cheerfully.

She turned to the Headmaster. "You were going to explain why you allow your Professors to torture students. Harry and Wednesday can look after themselves, but I can see that she has done it to others." She pointed to Seamus, who blushed and nodded.



"We will deal with it," Albus promised.

"You've got a habit of saying that and not following through," Morticia said. "I think we'll stay for a bit longer this time. Gomez..."

"I've already informed the press," he announced. "Do you think that Violet's recovered from last time?"

"Maybe," Morticia said with a slight smile. "Now, why don't you Aurors take that nasty thing into custody? If she's still here when Harry or Wednesday gets back, they may be upset."

"Oh," Kingsley said, scratching his head. "We'll leave her then, less problems for the court that way."

"Kingsley!" Albus protested.

Kingsley rolled his eyes. "Fine, I'll grab her; we'll put her somewhere safe." He wandered over to her, and cast a spell. As he walked away, she followed, dragged along the floor.

"Aren't there any classes this morning?" Morticia asked. "Because if not, I'm sure that we can have fun together."

"No," Albus said, "there are classes today. Will Charles be joining them?"

"Is Charles the one they cursed?" Gomez asked.

"Yes."

"He'll be fine by the end of the week," Gomez said with an uncaring shrug. "Pugsley, why don't you and your friends show us around Hogwarts. I'm sure that you can afford to miss class."

"Sounds great, Dad," Pugsley agreed. He pulled Hermione and Ginny out of their chairs and they walked off.

Snape found it slightly disturbing that he hoped that Harry and Wednesday would soon get back to normal.

After a day full of classes, he headed back to the Great Hall for dinner, only to be greeted by an ever-growing group of children.

"What's going on?" he barked.

"The door's locked, sir," Miranda said.

Snape was about to give a scathing reply, when he stopped. He took a deep breath. "You've tried an unlocking charm?"

Miranda looked a little startled before she nodded. "I have, professor."

"I'll just try one as well," he said, "as I think I'm a bit more powerful than you are. *Alohomora!*" As he expected, the spell had no effect at all.

"Are we going to have a picnic?" Gomez's voice reached over the crowd. "That sounds like fun, we could roast some centaurs."

"Pigs, dad, they roast pigs over here."

"Really?"

"The door is locked," Snape said to Gomez and Morticia, as the children moved out of their way.

Morticia looked at it. "And it's staying locked," she agreed. "I've not seen that charm in many years."

"Wednesday," Gomez said proudly. "It's got all her little tricks as well. Why look, if you tried two opening spells in a row it will reach out and pull you in, then suffocate you slowly for a month. Beautiful."

Snape gulped.

"Well, we'd better check that they've not killed each other," Morticia said with a sigh, and waved her hand. A circle on the door became partially transparent, revealing the inside.

There was some shuffling, as everyone tried to see through the porthole.

The Great Hall was dark, apart from a pool of light in the middle. In the middle of the light was a knee-high table, and two zabutons. Harry was kneeling on one of the zabutons. He was wearing what appeared to be a grey hakama over a black kimono.

Wednesday moved into the light, carrying a tray. She was wearing a white and blue kimono, but her hair was down and around her shoulders. Her eyes, normally so cold, were warm and soft.

"Crikey," the youngest Weasley boy said in shocked voice, "she's gorgeous."

"Of course she is," Morticia replied. "She's an Addams."

Wednesday knelt down next to Harry, and Morticia cancelled the spell.

"All right! Way to go Wends!" Pugsley shouted happily as he danced on the spot. He grinned up at his parents. "Absolutely typical though, a simple apology isn't good enough for her. Noooo, she has to start with a tea-ceremony."

"Start with?" Hermione asked.

"Yeah," Pugsley said, "I guess we're going to have to have a picnic. We're not going to get near that Hall for hours. The tea ceremony will be just the start, as that will show Harry how much an honoured guest she believes him to be. Harry will understand the significance of that, and then when they've finished, she'll say something provocative, and they'll fight for a bit, and then Wednesday will apologise properly, and Harry will apologise back, and they'll talk all evening and life will be great again tomorrow." Pugsley looked at Gomez. "You did get their ritual swords, right?"

Gomez gulped.

"Gomez," Morticia sighed reproachfully. "Well, it's too late now. If they cut something off, they'll just have to re-attach it themselves. Right, children, everyone outside. Gomez, Pugsley, do something about the dratted English weather." She snapped her fingers and the huge man appeared. "Lurch, be a dear and inform the house-elves we'll be eating outside."

Lurch nodded and vanished.

As Morticia strolled outside, Snape fell into step next to her. "About the last thing I expected to see was a Japanese tea ceremony."

Morticia turned and looked at him. "That was a statement," she pointed out. "If you want to ask something, please do."

Snape smiled slightly. "I would not expect a twelve year old to know the Japanese tea ceremony. Where did Wednesday learn it?"

"Better," Morticia said. "One of Gomez's cousins is Japanese. Harry and Wednesday spent some time with him a few years ago."

"Harry's outfit, from what I could see, appeared to be something a Samurai would wear. Was it?"

"Yes."

They stepped out of Hogwarts, and Snape struggled not to gape. Further down the path it was raining, but a giant magical canvas covered the whole area where the children were sitting, and that was blocking the rain and adding some sunshine. Some of the students had removed their robes and were doing what they could to reveal enough skin and remain decent – so that they could get some sun-bathing in.

Pugsley, Gomez, Hermione and Ginny were sat in a circle, laughing and joking. Morticia smiled fondly and walked over to them. Gomez and Pugsley instantly shifted so that she could join in, and she sat down elegantly, somehow managing to make sitting on the grass look like she was receiving royalty for dinner.

Snape wandered over toward the other members of staff as they emerged from Hogwarts, looking a little bewildered. He was a little surprised at some of the greetings he got from the students. While not overly friendly, they were at least pleasant. He nodded at the students involved – even if they were Gryffindors.

"Severus, what's going on?" Minerva asked.

"Morticia and Gomez have arranged a picnic," he replied. "Wednesday's borrowed the Great Hall so she can apologise to Harry personally."

Minerva frowned.

"It's the least we can do," Snape pointed out. "We didn't even notice that our students were being tortured. Have you spoken to Finnegan?"

"No need," Albus said as he joined them. "Gomez spoke to him, and his parents. He's going to be receiving a hefty settlement from the Ministry. Umbridge and Fudge are going to be slaughtered in the press tomorrow. Gomez has a habit of talking to the press first and the Ministry second."

"He understands how this country works then," Filius asked as he wandered up. He was wearing shorts and a t-shirt, and had a knotted handkerchief on his head, as a makeshift sun hat. "Capital weather here."

"Fortunately, she didn't do any of my Ravenclaws. Or any Hufflepuffs. It seems that it was only Seamus and Wednesday."

"Which is two students too many," Snape muttered.

"Indeed," Albus agreed.

"We're going to have to have a long talk soon, Albus," Minerva said firmly. "Your decisions are becoming irrational. And that either means that you're hiding something from us, or you're incompetent. I hope it's the former, and not the latter."

Dumbledore winced visibly.

"If it is sheep that you want following you, then I would suggest going to the countryside and finding some small woolly creatures. Something Harry said struck a deep chord inside me, and I will not stand by and watch anything else happen to our students when I can do something about it, even if that means going against you," Minerva added.

"Would you accept that I've made some mistakes recently, over a misguided belief, and that I will endeavour to not repeat them?"

Snape looked at Dumbledore for a long moment. "For now," he said, letting him off the hook. "But if it happens again, then I won't."

"Agreed," Filius said.

They all turned at the sound of Morticia's voice. "It is time to eat; the elves will be bringing out round tables, so if you can all sit in circles, in groups of twelve please." She looked around, "oh, and none of this silly sitting with your House only business."

The students muttered, but did as they were told and shortly afterward, the elves appeared with their tables covered in food.

"All right," one of the Patils yelled, "Indian food!"

"And Greek," someone else added.

"Thanks, Mrs Addams," another called out.

She smiled at them, and then sat down in front of their table.

"Professors be sitting?" a nervous house elf asked.

"Of course," Albus agreed, and dropped down. Snape sat as well, as did Minerva and Filius. A table for them appeared, covered in foods from many regions of the world.

"Lovely," Filius enthused. "Who knew the house-elves could make such a wonderful variety of foods?"

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*Harry and Wednesday emerged the next morning, their clothing immaculate and their disagreement behind them.*

*Everything was back to normal, as was proven when the youngest male Weasley made a comment about Wednesday's looks. Harry was the first to react.*

*The Weasley was probably still hiding under his bed, gibbering like a baboon.*

*Fudge had barely managed to cling on to his job, but only by getting Umbridge to take the fall. Sadly, the very Howler that had amused Snape so much had been the very thing that had saved him.*

*Umbridge herself was found dead in her cell a few weeks later. The official report said heart attack, but the look of abject terror frozen on her face painted a very different story. Rumours that all sorts of creatures had visited her were roundly denied by the Ministry.*

*The professors had agreed to share the role of Defence Against the Dark Arts professor until a new one could be found.*

*Snape had actually found that when offered it, he didn't want it. His potions were where his true love lay.*

*Christmas had been the source of some amusement. Harry and Wednesday had decided to stay so that they could meet up with Uncle Nicholas – Nicholas Flamel – and the others had decided to as well.*

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Snape walked into the Slytherin Common room. He normally made a habit of greeting the students who stayed Christmas morning, and today was no exception.

The five children were still in bed and the Common room was silent. Well, it was for at least fifteen seconds, before a yell split the air.

"Christmas! All right!" Pugsley bounded out of the second year boys dorm room. "Morning Professor," he said gleefully. "Merry Christmas."

"And a Happy Christmas to you too, Pugsley," Snape replied.

"Come on you guys, wake up!" Pugsley yelled at ear-shattering volume. "Presents!"

Severus smiled faintly.

"Don't just stand there," Pugsley scolded him. "Sit, it's Christmas."

"I know what day it is," he replied.

Pugsley rolled his eyes. "Good, then sit down or you won't receive your presents."

"My presents?" he asked.

"It's Christmas," Pugsley said for the third time. "Now sit, and have some of Grandmama's Christmas brew." He handed him a steaming goblet and Snape gave in.

He took a sip, and was surprised at the rich raspberry taste. "This is really nice."

"Grandmama will be pleased," Pugsley said, before he turned. "If you're not down here in two minutes I'm gonna start setting things on fire."

"Damn it, Pugsley," Hermione swore as she walked down the stairs, "it's too early." She looked, "Oh, sorry Professor."

"As I've been advised, it is Christmas, Miss Granger."

She grinned at him and walked over to a chair next to Pugsley. She was wearing a long nightgown with a dressing gown over it, and thick purple socks on her feet.

Ginny was the next to arrive, as she bounced down the stairs. She was dressed similarly to Hermione, although her clothes looked older and more worn – and a little threadbare in places.

"Where's Harry and Wednesday?" Ginny asked, as she yawned hugely.

"Coming, I hope," Pugsley said.

"You're not going to threaten them?" Snape teased.

"Are you kidding?" Pugsley gasped, although his eyes were playful. "I still remember the 'is there a God?' game we used to play." He paused. "No, there isn't, by the way."

"Good morning," Wednesday said, as she emerged from her room. It was no surprise at all that she was dressed completely in her normal unrelieved black.

"Wends," Pugsley whined. "It's Christmas!"

Wednesday sighed, and pulled a small green ornament from her pocket, and tied it into her hair.

"Thank you!"

"Morning," Harry said as he walked down. He was dressed in a similar outfit to the one that Hermione had described from her visit. "Professor Snape."

"Harry."

"Come on, Harry," Pugsley pleaded, bouncing in his chair.

Harry smiled at him. "Have you been bad?"

"Very!"

He nodded, and then moved over to the tree. His wand appeared in his hand, and he whispered a spell. Below the tree, a huge pile of presents appeared.

"Yay!" Pugsley yelled.

Harry sat cross legged on the floor. He picked a parcel at random. "Professor Snape," he said, and chucked the parcel.

Snape caught it.

"Go on," Pugsley said.

Snape carefully unwrapped the present. It was a small black book. He opened it and gasped, it was written in Harry's handwriting, and the first potion was the one that they had used for Hermione and, he suddenly realised, himself a few minutes ago. The card with it said that it was from Wednesday.

"Most of them are translated, from Voldemort's research," Harry explained.

"Thank you, very much, Wednesday" he said, flicking through it eagerly.

She nodded at him.

"Ginevra Molly Weasley," Harry said next, throwing a larger package at the girl.

She caught it, although it knocked her back. She ripped through the paper with abandon, and then squealed. She jumped up and removed her gown, heaving it toward the fireplace, and put the new one on. It was a bit big for her, but looked incredibly soft.

"Thank you," she said, as she bounded over to Harry and kissed him on the cheek, and then did the same for Wednesday.

Wednesday looked slightly stunned by show of affection and lightly touched her cheek, before she smiled a little. "You're welcome," she said.

"Pugsley Uno Addams," Harry called next, throwing a heavy circular package at him.

Pugsley caught it and opened it. "Woohoo! Thanks, Wends," he said. He showed it to the others, who looked blank.

"What is it?" Ginny asked.

"It's an English 'stop' sign," Hermione answered.

"I removed it from a busy junction," Wednesday added. "Five car crash."

Pugsley bounced over and hugged his sister exuberantly. "Harry always gets me educational presents," he said to others, "Wends gets me the fun ones. I've been collecting these for years."

"Wednesday Friday Addams," Harry called, and passed her a smaller package.

Wednesday took the package and carefully opened it. Inside was a walnut box. She opened that carefully and gasped.

"Oh, Harry," she whispered. She reached in and lifted out a beautiful silver Celtic dagger. The blade gleamed in the candlelight. Snape could see the intricate silverwork from his chair.

Wednesday placed the blade back in the box, and then stood. She walked in front of Harry and knelt down in front of him. Very gently, she leaned forward and kissed him.

"Thank you," she whispered.

He smiled at her and lightly caressed her cheek. They stayed like that for a few seconds, before the moment was broken, and life continued.

"Hermione Jane Granger," Harry said, using his wand to float a package over to her.

She ripped into the parcel as eagerly as Pugsley had, and squealed with joy at the books contained within. A piece of paper fell out, and she gasped.

Harry shrugged. "You'll need it to understand the books."

"But this must cost a fortune," she blurted.

"Hermione," Pugsley scolded. "Don't be rude!"

"Sorry," she blushed. "It's just that, private lessons in Greek..."

"Next time," Pugsley advised, "try just saying thanks."

She nodded, before she got up and walked over to Wednesday, who was now sitting next to Harry. She hugged her, before hugging Harry as well.

"Hmm, Severus Snape," Harry said, looking at a piece of paper. He stood, and walked over, holding it in his left hand.

Severus reached out with his right to take it, as he did, Harry slid forward and grabbed his arm tightly. Before he could say anything, pure and unbelievable pain erupted through him. Worse than the Cruciatus, worse than anything he had received from Voldemort, it was the single purest experience of his life.

He could hear screaming, and presumed that he was making the noise.

He couldn't move, couldn't break the contact, couldn't do anything but collapse where he was and do anything to keep his sanity.

With a suddenness that was almost as painful as the experience it was over. Wednesday pointed her wand at him, and before he knew it, he was sitting up, as he had been before, as if the whole thing hadn't happened.

Only the memory of the pain assured him that it had happened.

"What?" he asked, before stopping, unable to say anything else.

Harry was back with the presents. "That was my present to you. Merry Christmas."

Snape looked at him blankly, then he looked at his arm. He blinked. His Dark Mark was gone! He could hardly believe it. His connection to the Dark Lord had been shattered. "Thank you," he whispered.

"What do we have here?" Harry asked, "another one for Pugsley." He threw it at the boy.

Pugsley ripped into it with glee. "What's this?" he asked.

"Gillyweed," Harry replied. "I figured that as you miss Aristotle, you might want to go and have a chat with the giant squid."

"Brilliant," he breathed. "Thanks, Harry."

"Of course," Harry said, a hint of a smile on his face. "You're going to have to study to work out how to use it."

Pugsley grinned at him and nodded.

The present giving went on for sometime, with presents for all the kids from all over the world – apart from Harry, who didn't seem to get any.

Snape watched, slowly coming to terms with how his life had been turned upside down. He had no idea how Harry had removed the mark, and didn't really want to know – nor did he ever want to go through that again. He smiled to himself. After all these years, he was free to make his own decision once more.

And he suspected that had been Harry's true gift; a genuine choice.

"It's time for breakfast," Harry announced, when everyone had finished. "Tidy your presents away for now."

"Okay, Harry," Pugsley agreed, as Harry started to help Wednesday. It was no surprise at all that Harry was able to walk into the girl's room.

"Pugsley," Snape said quietly, "Harry didn't..."

"Hermione, Ginny, can you tidy my stuff away please?" Pugsley interrupted. "Let's go for a walk, professor."

Snape nodded and they walked out of the door.

"We got Harry when he was five," Pugsley said quietly, as they wandered around the school. "And they had already damaged him."

"They?"

"The Dursleys," Pugsley said with such hate and loathing that Snape recoiled.

"They mucked up him in some ways that still show today. Christmas is special to Harry, because he can use it to say thank you. To us, for rescuing him from that shit-hole. Never mind that he's paid us back a billion times, and made all of our lives infinitely better; he still feels gratitude for the very simple thing we did.

"And that is how Christmas has become. Harry says thank you in his own way, and rejects any presents we give him."

"What happened to the Dursleys?" Snape asked.

"Nothing," Pugsley growled. "Yet. We were going to make them an enemy of the family, but Wednesday got there first. She called dibs."

Snape blinked.

"When she's a little older, Wednesday is going to pay them a visit," Pugsley said, his eyes turning dark. "And she is going to show them the number one rule in life."

"Which is?" Snape asked quietly, almost dreading the answer.

"You do not fuck with the Addams clan!"

Suddenly Pugsley's mood was gone, and the bright happy kid was back. "So, breakfast?"

Severus nodded, and they turned toward the Great Hall.

"Of course," Pugsley said, "if you wanted to say thank you, you could always give Wends a present – say, advanced Potions lessons, and invite her to bring Harry."

"Good idea," Snape agreed, as they entered the Hall. Harry and Wednesday were already seated at the single table, next to Hermione and Ginny – who hadn't changed out of her new robe.

"Good morning," Albus said cheerfully. "Merry Christmas."

"It is," Snape agreed as he sat down. "Did you get what you desired?"

"Alas, no," Albus replied. "But I did receive a lot of very nice books."

Breakfast appeared before them, and they started to eat, when the doors opened, and Molly and Arthur Weasley appeared.

"Mum? Dad?" Ginny asked.

"Can we have a word?" Molly asked softly.

Ginny looked at Harry, before she took a deep breath and nodded.

Harry looked at Pugsley, and jerked his head.

Pugsley nodded and followed Ginny, stopping just out of earshot.

"That's her mother," Minerva pointed out. "She's safe with her."

"Ginny is Pugsley's friend," Harry replied. "Friendship is an important duty. No friend of an Addams ever stands alone."

Wednesday nodded in agreement.

Ginny suddenly smiled and embraced her parents. Molly said something, and Ginny frowned, and then beckoned Pugsley over.

Harry sighed softly, and Wednesday lightly patted his arm. "Pugsley will make her understand," she said.

He nodded.

She scooted a bit closer to him and leaned against him.

Snape figured that they were letting their guard down a little because it was Christmas.

Eventually, Pugsley won whatever argument they were having, and the Weasley's walked over with him.

"Harry," Molly said, "I wanted to thank you for looking after Ginny."

"Pugsley did all the work," Harry replied.

Molly smiled at him a little. "And for pointing out a few home truths to me."

Harry inclined his head. "You're welcome."

"So, I wanted to give Wednesday, Pugsley and Hermione presents," she continued, as she passed out packages.

"Thank you," Harry said politely. Wednesday reached out and took the proffered parcel, and paused as Pugsley tore into his.

"All right," Pugsley said happily, as he pulled out a green sweater with a big P on it. He pulled it on immediately. "Thanks, Mrs W."

She laughed. "You're welcome; Fred and George told me how you were all looking after Ginny."

Hermione and Wednesday opened theirs, and both pulled them on. The image of Wednesday in an over-sized bright green sweater with a W on it, was one Snape was going to take to his grave, but he had the common sense not to allow any of his amusement to show. Some of the other professors seemed to be having a problem doing the same.

"Well, we've got a tribe to look after," Molly said, "so we'll leave you to it. Ginny, some of your brothers might pop by later."

"Okay, mum," Ginny said happily.

Molly and Arthur hugged her one more time, before they left. As soon as the door shut, Ginny turned to Wednesday. "Thanks for that."

Wednesday shrugged. "Family is everything," she said making the jumper disappear.

Harry looked at her thoughtfully for a second, and then snapped his finger. A school owl appeared, and took the note that Harry dashed off.

Wednesday looked at him quizzically, but Harry just smiled and looked at his watch.

A few minutes later, the owl re-appeared and dropped a note by Harry.

He scanned it quickly, and then stood and moved over to Pugsley, but instead of talking to him, he turned, pulled out his wand, and whispered, "*Crucio*."

Wednesday's eyes suddenly started to shine as she gripped the table tightly.

"Harry!" Minerva called, but Harry ignored her. He kept it for a minute, before he cancelled the spell.

Wednesday continued to shudder for a moment, before she relaxed. She shot a genuine smile at Harry, and as he sat back down, she cuddled into him.

"What was that for?" Minerva demanded.

"For not destroying Mrs Weasley's jumper," Pugsley said, as Harry was completely focused on Wednesday. "Harry arranged with Kingsley over the summer that if he was going to cast that spell, he'd let him know first."

"But it was a present."

"Sure," Pugsley agreed, "and can you think of anyone in the world, apart from Harry, less suited to wearing a bright green jumper? Besides, it's Christmas!"

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*The next day, the faint openness that Harry and Wednesday had displayed was gone, and everything was back to normal at Hogwarts.*

*He had offered Wednesday the extra lessons, and she had agreed to take them from the next school year – when they had finished their project for Nicholas Flamel.*

*She didn't volunteer what the project was and he didn't ask.*

*And so he'd settled down, hoping for a quiet rest of the year.*

*A forlorn hope.*

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"Severus," Minerva called. "Have you seen your projected scores for this term?"

He looked up, "No?"

"The best results you've ever had," she said excitedly. "What *have* you been doing?"

He winced. "Teaching them?"

Minerva laughed. "You should keep it up. Come on, it's time for dinner."

He nodded and swirled his cloak dramatically.

"You're not going to be able to keep it up," Minerva teased. "Why, some children actually saw you give a hint of a smile the other day."

Snape rolled his eyes at her. "I am still myself," he said.

"Only nicer," Minerva said as she opened the door for him.

They walked in and sat down. The food today was Russian, and while it looked somewhat unusual, it tasted wonderful. The house-elves seemed to have been inspired by Lurch and were proving that they could cook anything they set their minds to.

He'd noticed that Harry and Wednesday had even started to eat some of the food.

The door burst open, and Jacob ran in, and straight over to the Slytherin table. "Come quick," he gasped. "Something's happened."

Wednesday and Harry stared at him, and he blushed furiously. "Sorry," he said. "It's just that, well, when anything weird happens, you two can normally recognize it and deal with it faster than the professors, so I kinda just decided to bypass them and get you involved from the start."

"We are not here to put out all the fires," Harry said softly. "That is the Professors' job."

"But aren't you curious about what would make Jacob risk dismemberment?" Pugsley asked.

Wednesday reached out and punched him. He grinned at her irrepressibly.

"Fine," Wednesday said. She stood abruptly and headed toward the doors, Harry besides her.

Severus looked at Minerva and Albus and they quickly followed. There was a crowd gathered around, and they parted as Harry and Wednesday walked toward them.

In the middle of the group, was a weeping Argus Filch, and on the wall, dangling from her tail, was his cat, Mrs Norris. On the wall was a message.

*"The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the Heir, Beware!"*

Harry reached out and lightly touched Argus' shoulder.

"It's you," the caretaker said. "You'll find them, won't you, please."

Snape used every piece of control he had gained from being in the Dark Lord's presence not to gape. Filch hated everyone.

Wednesday gently eased the damnable cat down. "The person who did this will suffer," she promised flatly.

Argus nodded.

"It was probably them that did it," the youngest Weasley boy shouted.

"Weasley," Jacob said before anyone else could say anything. "Does Percival have custody of the male family brain today? Have you been paying attention to anything that goes on in this school, or have you just spent your entire time insulting the Addams for being *dark*?"

"Before you go spreading yet more illiterate rumours, let me point out that first, everyone knows that Wednesday *likes* animals. She may dislike humans, and with people like you around, I can hardly blame her, but she would never hurt an animal.

"Secondly, this whole thing reeks of a juvenile mindset. A petrified cat and a spooky message? If Harry or Wednesday wanted any of us dead, we'd be dead – none of this mucking around and pretending.

"So will you please do everyone not in Gryffindor a favour and shut the hell up!" Jacob turned his back on the Weasley.

"So you don't know everything that goes on in the school?" Harry asked Dumbledore.



Sadly, no.”

“Well, it explains a lot of things,” Harry agreed. “What is the Chamber of Secrets?” he asked, indicating the writing on the wall.

“It’s rumoured to be something built by Salazar,” Hermione said. “And it can only be opened by his heir to purge the school of Mudbloods.”

“Blood Purists,” Harry sighed in disgust. “Where is it?”

“No one knows. It’s mentioned several times in ‘A Very Slytherin History’, but the author had no idea where it is located.”

“Typical. My advice is to close the school.”

There was a loud uproar.

“Harry?” Dumbledore yelled, quietening everyone else. “Why, might I ask, do you think that is necessary.”

“For the last few weeks, we’ve been hearing something. I’ve just realised that it must have been a snake. A snake that can petrify? Hermione, name a snake that can petrify.”

“A Basilisk,” she responded instantly. “Although, they normally kill.”

“Quite,” Harry agreed.

“I can’t close the school, Harry.”

“Why not?” Ginny asked. “If we’re all in danger of being killed?”

“How do you know it’s a snake?” Ron yelled.

“We’ll deal with this,” Fred said, as he and his brother appeared next to Ron. One stamped on Ron’s foot, and as he opened his mouth, the other shoved what looked like a sweet into it. Ron suddenly turned into a small mouse.

George picked it up and put it in his pocket. “It’s that time of the month,” he explained. “You know how wizards can get.”

There were quite a few sniggers around.

“Come on, Harry,” Pugsley said, “if we close the school now and everything gets mucked up, and you’ll never know if your defence lessons worked.”

“Weak,” Wednesday sniffed.

“Damn it,” Pugsley sighed. “I’m working off the top of my head here. Help?” he said to Hermione and Ginny.

“A Basilisk can be used in some potions from Ancient Egypt that can force the user to transcend life, they can free their consciousness from their earthly form.” Snape blurted. “And if the Ministry gets involved, we’ll never have access to some of the core ingredients.”

Harry and Wednesday turned and stared at him.

He gulped but didn’t look away.

Wednesday touched Harry on the arm, and he turned and looked at her. He sighed. “Professor Sprout, Longbottom, go and start raising some Mandrakes. Fred, George, go and see if Hagrid can get hold of any cockerels easily. If not, work on something like the Canary Creams prototypes you’ve been working on.”

“Yes, Harry,” Fred said, as they turned and started to run. Neville went pale, but gulped and nodded as he looked at Professor Sprout. They hurried away.

“Hermione, grab as many students as you want. Your job is to come up with something that will mute the effects of the Basilisk glare.”

“Okay,” she said eagerly.

“Everyone else. Library. I want the whole thing combed for clues to where this Chamber is.” Harry sighed softly. “When we find it, you all have a decision to make. Whether to come into the Chamber or stay out of the way. No one can make that decision for you, and there is no correct decision. If you decide to come, do so for the right reasons.”

In silence, he turned and walked off with Wednesday.

“Well,” Pugsley said. “You heard him, get to work everyone. You want to keep Hogwarts open, then you can work for it. Don’t expect them to do all the work for you.”

Which was how Severus found himself in the Library, reading through a book so musty it caused him to want to sneeze every five minutes. And to make matters worse, he was at a table with a bunch of Hufflepuffs.

“Professor Flitwick,” Hermione called. “Can we have your help please. We’ve found something.”

At least someone had.

"Ohhh," one of the children at his table said. "Last time the Chamber was opened, Hagrid got expelled."

Snape blinked. "Why?"

"For murder," she gasped.

"Hagrid is as capable of murder as I am of being a ballerina," Snape said flatly. Some of the Hufflepuffs giggled at that and nodded in agreement. "Who was he accused of killing?"

"Myrtle Underdunk Terwilliger."

"Headmaster," Snape called. "Do you remember what happened with Myrtle Terwilliger?"

"Oh, yes," Albus replied as he walked over. "Terrible. Shocking. She was murdered at Hogwarts. I believe she now haunts a girl's bathroom."

"Moaning Myrtle?" the Hufflepuff asked.

"Indeed," Albus replied. "She was found stiff as a board in the bathroom."

Snape sighed. One of these days his control was going to snap and he was going to punch Albus. "Harry," he called. "I think we're on to something."

Harry and Wednesday walked over.

Snape nodded at the Hufflepuff. "She found out that the last time the Chamber opened, Moaning Myrtle was killed."

"Good work, Hannah," Harry said. He snapped his fingers, and the Bloody Baron appeared. "Fetch Myrtle please."

The Baron bowed and vanished.

Hermione dashed up to them. "I think we've got it. Enchanted sun glasses. Protects you from harmful UV rays, allows you to go out in the brightest of sunlight without squinting, and protects from magical glares of aggressive oversized serpents."

Harry tilted his head and looked at her. He flicked his eyes to Wednesday for a moment, before he reached out and touched her shoulder. "Well done, Hermione."

Hermione looked like she had just been given access to every book ever written, and a Time-Turner to read them all. The smile on her face was almost blinding in its brilliance. It made Snape realise that she didn't actually show her teeth much during the normal course of things.

The moment was broken as the Baron appeared with a crying girl. Myrtle was short and dumpy, with an appalling complexion for a ghost, and lank hair.

"You've called me here to embarrass me," she wailed.

"Quiet," Wednesday hissed at the ghost. However, she was a little loud, and everyone in earshot instantly went silent.

"How did you die? Without wailing," Wednesday demanded.

She looked terrified of Wednesday. "I was in the bathroom. I was crying, because Olive Hornby had been teasing me about my glasses. The door was locked, and I was crying, and then I heard somebody come in. They said something funny. A different language, I think it must have been. Anyway, what really got me was that it was a boy speaking. So I unlocked the door, to tell him to go and use his own toilet, and then -"

Myrtle swelled importantly, her face shining. "I died."

"How?" said Harry.

"No idea," said Myrtle in hushed tones. "I just remember seeing a pair of great, big, yellow eyes. My whole body sort of seized up, and then I was floating away ..."

"Harry," Fred called as he ran in. "Bad news."

"Which is?"

"First, Hagrid's not got any cockerels. There's some sort of shortage of them at the moment. Secondly, changing the Canary Creams is going to take at least a day."

"So?"

"And finally," he finished. "There's a new message on the doors to the Great Hall. It says that a student has been taken in to the Chamber, where his bones will lie for ever."

"Who's missing?" Pugsley asked as he looked around.

“Draco,” Pansy Parkinson squealed.

It was only because Snape happened to be looking directly at Wednesday that he caught the wince that flickered across her face.

Snape sighed. It had to be him, didn't it? Why couldn't the idiot boy have just done what he was told?

“Harry,” Snape said. “As annoying, irritating and useless as he appears, Narcissa is a good friend of mine. I'd appreciate your help in getting him back immediately.”

Harry looked at him for a long moment, and then nodded. “Myrtle, where, exactly, did you hear this strange language?”

“It was near the sink in my bathroom.”

“Thank you, you've been of use.”

The ghost looked dreamily at Harry, but vanished as Wednesday glared at her.

“Pugsley, meet us in the bathroom,” Harry eventually said after a few seconds of thought.

“All right!” Pugsley cheered and dashed out of the library.

“Choice time,” Harry said, facing the students. “I'd advise you to stay here, your work is done.”

“I'm going,” Jacob said firmly. “I'm the Head boy – this is my responsibility.”

“It is the Professors' responsibility,” Wednesday said softly.

Jacob shrugged. He conjured a pair of sunglasses and handed them to Hermione.

“Children,” Dumbledore said. “I can't let you...”

“For the most powerful Wizard in the world,” Miranda said, “you seem pretty useless.”

Albus looked hurt at the accusation.

“We're going as well,” Fred and George said cheerfully. The agreement was taken up by a lot of other students. Snape recognised them all from Harry and Wednesday's Defence club.

Albus tried to say something, but he was ignored as students started conjuring sunglasses and heading toward the students who knew the charms.

“Harry,” Albus said, “I don't think that it is safe.”

“It isn't,” Harry agreed. “Hiding people from danger does not help them. Danger should be faced straight on and the experience used.”

“They could die.”

“So could we all,” Harry agreed. “And yet you don't seem concerned about Wednesday and I.”

Harry turned and walked out, Wednesday beside him. Ginny appeared next to Snape and grinned at him. “Here,” she said, offering him a pair of pink-rimmed sunglasses.

“Thank you,” he replied, tapping the sunglasses with his wand. They turned black. He then followed Harry and Wednesday, not noticing that the sunglasses had changed colour back to pink again.

They were waiting next to a sink, looking slightly bored, as he entered, and he then had to wait for everyone else.

There was a disturbance, as Pugsley bounced his way through the oncoming crowd. He was carrying a box that he dropped next to Harry and Wednesday. He opened it and pulled out a couple of sticks of dynamite that he put in his pocket. He then reached in and pulled out a couple of swords that he tossed to Harry and Wednesday.

“Harry?” Pugsley asked.

Harry nodded. “I've got a recipe we can give to Grandmama.”

“Yay!”

Hermione started to laugh.

“What's funny?” Ginny asked.

“The Addams family motto is ‘*Sic gorgiamus allos subjectatos nunc*.’” Snape frowned before he realised it wasn't real Latin. He smirked and nodded.

“What does that mean?” Fred asked.

"We gladly feast on those that would subdue us," Wednesday whispered. Harry turned to the sink and hissed.

"Parseltongue," Minerva said in surprise.

"Somehow," Jacob said, "I'm not surprised."

The tap on the sink glowed with a brilliant white light and started to spin. The sink then proceeded to sink right out of sight, leaving a large pipe exposed. Harry shrugged and jumped into it, feet first.

Hermione took a couple of steps forward, and then smiled.

Wednesday nodded at her and jumped in after him.

"What was that?" George shouted.

"Please keep your voice down when we're trying to sneak up on a Basilisk," Hermione hissed through clenched teeth. She then grinned before she turned and jumped into the pipe.

Pugsley grinned happily. "Another few years and she'll be a true Addams," he said proudly.

Ginny moved next and dived into the hole.

"Her too," he mused. "Harry's expanding the clan. Well, can't let them get too far ahead, they'll have all the fun." He too turned and dived into the pipe.

Snape smiled tightly. He walked over to the pipe and took a deep breath.

"Professor Snape," Albus called.

He looked at the headmaster.

"Are you sure this is wise?"

Snape sighed. "With Harry and Wednesday down there, I doubt anything is stupid enough to attack them." He jumped into the pipe, and slid down on his back.

He would never, ever, admit to anyone, that it was a lot of fun. The pipe seemed to go down for miles, and he could sense other pipes swishing by, all smaller than this one.

He landed on the damp floor with a slight thud. Out of courtesy, he created a cushioning charm for anyone else who came down. To the right was a large pile of slime. Harry and Wednesday, as always, were completely immaculate, leaving him to presume that they'd cleaned the pipe on the way down.

Pugsley, Ginny and Hermione had their wands out, and had cast Lumos spells to illuminate the area.

"Finally," Pugsley said excitedly. He was sitting on the barrel of a small cannon on wheels. "I'm allowed to blow things up," he explained with visible glee.

"Let's go," Harry said.

"The others are coming," Snape called.

Harry nodded, before he glanced at Pugsley.

"I know," Pugsley said cheerfully. "I'll make sure that they don't think that you've changed or anything."

He nodded and stood back as hundreds of students started to arrive.

"Line up," Harry ordered. "Wands out, seniors to the front. Remember what we taught you."

The students lined up in a way that immediately made Snape slightly jealous, as he'd never managed to get them to obey him so completely.

Albus, Minerva and Filius moved to the front.

"We're going to keep the Lumos charms to a minimum," Harry said, "no point in letting the world know we're coming."

They started to walk down a corridor, Snape trying very hard not to think about what he was standing on. The sounds of disgust from the children gave credence to that idea.

"Check out the snake-skin," Pugsley's voice said, "just imagine what we can do with that later. Do you think that Aunt Perenelle would like a snake-skin purse?"

"Good idea," Harry said casually. "We'll harvest it later."

Their little talk was somehow reassuring, as it allowed Snape to ignore the size of the very large snake skin they were moving past.

They arrived at a large door; twin snakes decorated it, with emeralds for eyes. "They would make Morticia a lovely gift," Harry said regretfully, before he hissed something in Parseltongue. The serpents parted as the wall cracked open, the halves sliding out of sight.

A strangely blurred black haired figure was leaning over a seemingly lifeless Draco Malfoy. It looked up and turned to face Harry and Wednesday, ignoring the rest of the crowd.

"So," Wednesday asked. "Who are you?"

"Wednesday Addams," the teenage boy, "A girl evil enough to be one of my devoted followers."

A knife flashed through the air, cutting straight through the boy, who jumped backward in surprise.

"A spirit," Pugsley sighed.

The spirit looked slightly rattled that his taunting had been met with immediate violence.

"Who are you?" Harry asked. His voice had the same strange power in it that Gomez had used on Umbridge.

"Tom Riddle," the figured replied, before he shook himself. "Your cheap tricks won't work on me."

"They already have," Harry pointed out.

"Tom," Albus said, "what *have* you done?"

"Dumbledore," Tom sneered. "I have become what you helped make me. I am Tom Marvolo Riddle." He wrote the letters in flames, and then rearranged them dramatically, to spell out "I Am Lord Voldemort."

"Cute," Harry sighed. "And now everyone here," he said, pointing to the students behind him, "knows that you're a half-blood. As anyone who has seen the Head Boy list can find out for themselves."

Tom reared back, and then dropped to the floor as Pugsley fired his cannon at him. The cannonball blasted through the spirit and into a wall, exploding with a shower of shrapnel.

"Stop doing that," Riddle demanded. "You should bow before me."

"There is only one person an Addams bows before, and you are not he," Harry replied, while Pugsley was busy reloading his canon.

"Then die, all of you," Riddle hissed. He called out, summoning something in the same hissing tongue Harry had used earlier. The huge statue of Salazar Slytherin started to move. The mouth opened wide, and then wider, making a huge black hole. From the hole, something slithered into sight.

"Glasses on," Harry ordered, and Snape fumbled, before putting on the pink-rimmed glasses that Ginny had given him. "On my command, everyone cast *Stupefy* at the snake."

Snape drew his wand and grasped it tightly. He raised it and waited. The snake rolled toward them, he could hear it against the floor.

In one smooth move, Harry drew his sword, reversed his grip, and threw it at the Basilisk. It smashed into the huge snake, causing it to rear back in pain.

"Now!"

"*Stupefy*," Snape yelled. The noise was deafening as over five hundred spells were cast at the same time. The Basilisk, as immune to normal magic as any creature, had no defence against so much power, and it toppled over.

Pugsley lit the fuse on his canon, and it exploded, the cannonball ripping into the snake, sending large chunks of snake into the air. He followed it up by running over to the Snake and placing his dynamite into the hole he had just created. He ran back, arriving just as the dynamite exploded, blowing the snake into two parts.

Wednesday drew her sword and ran forward; she jumped on to the snake's body, and ran up, until she was standing on its head. She spun her sword, grasped the hilt with both hands, and shoved the blade down into the Basilisk's brain.

It shuddered a few times and collapsed, dead.

Wednesday jumped down, and retrieved Harry's sword, before she walked calmly back to him.

"*Crucio*," Riddle yelled, his wand pointing at Harry.

Harry blinked in surprise. "It *is* quite interesting from this side," he said to Wednesday.

She wandered in front of him and took the curse. "It's better when you do it," Wednesday commented. "This one feels all icky."

"Yeah," Harry agreed. "So, why Malfoy?" he asked Riddle.

Riddle was now looking scared as he pointed his wand at everyone.

"Malfoy, that idiot child. Whining brat, I would never want him as a follower. He talked to me, all year, about how much he hated you, how life wasn't fair, how he should be leading. I listened, became his friend, and then I took over. Every entry he wrote in the diary allowed me to get stronger."

"And then you had to rush when we realised that it was a Basilisk," Pugsley said. He was now sitting astride the cannon, swinging his legs cheerfully.

Riddle sneered.

"I can't believe that people followed you," Harry sighed. "Did they have no sense at all?"

"What do you mean?" Riddle hissed.

"You've just told us that your power comes from the diary," Harry pointed out. "You are a liar, a hypocrite, a bully, a coward, and worse than all of that, you're an idiot."

"*Avada Kedavra*," Riddle yelled.

Wednesday's sword flashed, catching the curse before it could hit Harry.

"Do you wanna try the Imperius next?" Pugsley asked.

"*Imperio*," Riddle shouted, this time pointing at Pugsley.

"I am a zombie," Pugsley said, raising his hand and climbing off the cannon. "Must eat brains."

"Oh no," Hermione cried dramatically. "Pugsley!"

"Mmm, big brain," Pugsley intoned as he shuffled forward toward her.

"That's just favouritism," Ginny complained playfully.

"Other brain next," Pugsley offered.

Ginny pouted. "I'm always second."

"Stop it," Riddle shouted.

"Aww," Pugsley complained. "It was gonna be fun!"

Snape couldn't help smiling. Tom Riddle was the Dark Lord, but he couldn't see it anymore. Voldemort was used to fighting rational human beings and using tactics to scare them. The Addamses simply didn't scare, and worse, had completely irrational reactions to everything he did.

Their strategy for dealing with the Basilisk had been brilliant, and had suddenly revealed why Harry had wanted everyone to be there. It was an incredibly Slytherin thing to do.

"So, you killed Myrtle?" Harry asked.

"Obviously," Riddle snapped.

"Good, I think a confession in front of everyone will be enough to get Hagrid his wand back. I do so hate miscarriages of justice," Harry mused with a look at Dumbledore.

Wednesday, who appeared to be in a really good mood, actually skipped playfully across to the diary.

"Stay away from that!" Riddle shouted.

"This?" Wednesday asked as she picked it up. "*Dear Diary*," she read in a lilting tone. "*No one likes me, everyone hates me. I should be ruling these people. They should be grateful for everything I can do!*"

Snape rolled his eyes.

"*Draco*," she continued, using a different voice, "*of course you should. And when the Dark Lord returns, you will be able to gain your rightful place.*"

"*You're right, Tom*," she changed voices back to the first. "*Then I'll show them all. I can have who I want then, as slaves, right?*"

"*Anyone.*"

"*I'll have Daphne first, and then that filthy Mudblood. And then...*" Wednesday trailed off. She took a few steps forward and kicked the unconscious form of Draco Malfoy between the legs. Then, for good measure, she cast a couple of curses at him.

Returning to the voice that she used to impersonate Riddle, she continued, “*They will all be your. Just do as I say, and everything will come true. You’ll have all the power. Just relax and let me work through you.*”

“*Of course. I am relaxing, and then you’ll kill Potter like I asked.*”

Wednesday sighed. “Remarkably sophisticated,” she noted. “Promising power and girls. Still, the Eunuch will never have to worry about that now.”

Snape winced, as did most of the men in the room.

“No one touches me, but Harry,” she continued in a cold voice. She flicked her thumb against her forefinger and a flame appeared.

“What are you doing!?” Riddle demanded.

Wednesday moved the flame to the book, and it slowly started to catch fire.

“Nooooo!”

“Bye, Tom,” Harry said. “Keep an eye out for the rest of you that will follow soon.”

There was a puff of black smoke, and the book vanished.

Draco started to moan, “Daphne,” he murmured, his hips moving in a disturbing manner.

“Wakey wakey,” Wednesday said gently.

“Ten more minutes, mum,” Draco replied.

“Malfoy, awake,” Harry ordered abruptly.

“Potter,” Malfoy squeaked. “What am I doing here?” He looked around, and paled at the sight of the Basilisk. “But you’re supposed to be dead,” he complained.

“Draco, what was the one thing I told you to do?” Snape demanded.

“Stay away from Harry and Wednesday.”

Snape sighed. “And can you explain how, exactly, asking someone to kill one so you could rape the other is anywhere close to following that command?”

Draco flushed. “My father is Lucius Malfoy. The Dark Lord’s top Death Eater,” he yelled. “I should rule!”

Snape took a step forward and slapped Draco with the back of his hand, as hard as he could. It was the only thing he could think of to save his life, as Wednesday had drawn her sword and was approaching him intently.

“You hit me,” Draco gasped from the floor.

“And he won’t be the last,” Daphne promised icily. “I tried to be your friend because everyone else didn’t care about you, and this is how you betray me! Voldemort and my family can go fuck themselves - I’m with Harry and Wednesday.”

“Daph,” Draco cried.

“Don’t call me that you filthy pig,” Daphne ordered.

“So,” Pugsley interrupted. “The Basilisk is dead, we’ve found a cool place to have our meetings, Hogwarts is safe again, and as soon as Nev and Professor Pomfrey get the Mandrakes ready, Mrs Norris will be back to normal. You know what this calls for?”

“Pugsley?” Albus asked.

“A party!”

The roar of approval from the gathered students who had been watching was deafening.

“I quite agree,” Albus said cheerfully. “Everyone back to the Great Hall.”

Snape picked Draco up by the ear and dragged him, as the others started to cast spells to allow them back up the pipe. Minerva and Filius put their heads together, and came up with a series of spells that reversed the gravity and allowed everyone to slide up.

It was almost as much fun as sliding down.

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*The next day the papers had been full of the adventures. The recap was remarkably precise in what had happened. Hannah, the Hufflepuff, had been praised, as had the students who had helped Hermione find the charm that had protected them.*

*There were even some pictures of Harry and Wednesday taunting Tom Riddle – a/k/a He Who Must Not Be Named. The irony of them literally naming him next to that title amused Snape no end. Tom's life story was on Page five, showing everyone that he was a half-blood.*

*Lucius Malfoy was arrested (again) and this time he did not escape. A house-elf accidentally revealed that Lucius hid a lot of illegal items under the floor in his drawing room.*

*To Lucius' great regret, he was not able to bribe his way out of trouble. His son's very public admittance had Lucius in a rage, but there was nothing he could do about it.*

*Narcissa had been upset, but even she could see that her son was an idiot. She had done the only thing she could think of. She had arranged for him to be transferred to Beauxbatons the following year.*

*Madame Maxime had been given a complete dossier on the boy. She wasn't worried; Draco hadn't been himself since he had been castrated.*

*Harry and Wednesday had not attended the celebration party, preferring instead to get back to their own research. And true to his word, Pugsley ensured that no one bothered them.*

*The school itself was a lot happier place. The Houses didn't seem to matter as much, apart from on the Quidditch pitch, where Gryffindor still won.*

*At least Slytherin continued to win the House Cup.*

*And so Snape was looking forward to the holidays, and looking forward to the private lessons he would have with Harry and Wednesday next year.*

*But there was always time for one more piece of amusement on the second to last day of school.*

*Fred and George had tried to persuade the boorish Weasley and the irritating Weasley to keep their bigoted opinions to themselves – even going as far as explaining that Harry and Wednesday were far preferable to any other wizard in Hogwarts.*

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"Sit down, brothers," Fred said.

"Fred," Percy replied, standing up.

"That wasn't a request," George said, popping up behind them and removing their wands.

"Sit," Fred added, pointing his wand at them.

"You two," George continued, "seem to have an irrational hatred of Harry and Wednesday, and it's going to get you killed. As prattish and irritating as you both are, you are still siblings."

"Quite," Fred agreed. "So, what's your problem?"

"They're dark!" Ron exploded.

"Oh for Merlin's sake," George complained. "Are you still on this?"

"Why aren't you on 'that'?" Ron demanded. "They've got our sister!"

"Our happy little sister who's popular, friendly, and brilliant for helping with pranks?" Fred asked. "The one who's getting great marks in all her classes? That sister?"

"Yes!"

"I think your point was just an inch beyond his grasp," George pointed out with a sigh.

"How can you defend them. They staked you out on the Quidditch pitch, starkers."

"Because we deserved it," Fred said softly. "We screwed up a prank, and we could have killed people. Harry and Wednesday made their feelings very clear. But you know what? If it had been anyone else they would have held it against us. Not them – they acted, and then forgot about it. No grudges, no nothing.

"They stopped us getting expelled, and even told Mum in such a way that she didn't shout at us. She just gave us some books on potions and told us to study harder."

"To get back to our point," Fred said, returning, "the world is not black and white, light and dark. Despite what Dumbledore appears to think. They believe in a lot of things, and there are a lot of similarities with us."

"Not with me," Ron snarled.

"No," George agreed. "But with those Weasleys with a brain, there are. They are loyal to their family, they never let friends down, they believe in



direct action when someone threatens them, and after they've acted, they forgive."

"Which sounds just like us," Fred continued. "We've used potions that are 'dark' in our pranks. Turning someone into a canary is hardly light magic, is it? Forced transfiguration. So what if it's harmless and only last for a few minutes, it's still dark."

Ron growled, "They're just doing things so that they can take over from the Dark Lord."

"Bloody hell," Fred sighed. "Do you think Mum dropped him on his head as a baby?"

"That's possibly the most ridiculous thing you've said yet! They have no desire to rule, all they want is to be left alone to push their magic beyond the limits of your imagination. That's obvious to anyone."

"It's not fair," Ron complained.

"What isn't?"

"We were supposed to get the Philosopher's Stone. Not them. We were the ones that did all the research!"

"You, Finnegan and Longbottom?"

Ron nodded eagerly.

"Against a Devil's Snare, a room full of flying keys, a giant chess set, a troll, a logic test, an enchanted mirror and Voldemort?"

"Don't say that!"

"Voldemort?" Fred asked. "We refuse to be scared of a name. And answer the question!"

"Yes!"

"You are deluded," George stated, shaking his head in disbelief. "You didn't even get past Fluffy!"

"We would have eventually!" he winged. "It wasn't our fault that the damn thing didn't fall asleep like Hagrid said it would."

"And how were you planning on getting past the Devil's Snare?"

"We would have thought of something."

"Right," Fred said in disbelief. "You've been so good at thinking on your feet so far."

"So, you're jealous of Harry. Idiomatic, but understandable."

"I am not jealous!" Ron complained.

"Right," Fred agreed. "So, what's your problem, Percy?"

"They have no respect for authority, and treat Professor Dumbledore with a scandalous disrespect."

"Ahh," George said. "So they ignore you and chatter with Dumbledore," he translated. "We can ignore the first one, we ignore you all the time."

Percy's back stiffened. "I am a Prefect."

"And they don't care," Fred agreed. "Neither do we, actually. Respect is earned, not given by a shiny badge. Oh, and they don't seem to have a problem with Jacob and Miranda."

Percy sniffed.

"I've had enough," George said. "Let them do what they want. We tried."

"That we did, brother mine," Fred agreed. "Ron, grow up. Harry doesn't care about you, and probably never will. But if you continue to irritate him, Wednesday might decide you're worthy of her attention, and we'll be down one brother. Percy, grow up. As everyone else has learnt this year, authority figures are also fallible, and the only way forward is to stand on your own two damn feet and make your own decisions, without falling back on anyone else."

The twins looked at each other.

"Now if you'll excuse us, we're late for the Defence club."

The two turned and stalked out of the classroom. "Twenty points to Gryffindor," Snape murmured. "For being foolish Gryffindors and at least trying the impossible."

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*And so he had prepared for his summer. A weeks holiday in Bordeaux was the first on his list, and then he was planning on looking through his*

*curriculum.*

*He had actually enjoyed teaching this year, and now that he had, it was a matter of personal pride that he got better results than the other Professors.*

*With some time to actually think, he realised that they had never followed up what had happened to Hermione over the summer, nor had they enquired as to what Harry and Wednesday had achieved with the Flamels.*

*He was giving very serious thought to seeing if he could get in contact with the Addams parents and find out for himself.*

*He always liked a challenge.*