



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The Third Year

## Part 1

*Like the two years before, Harry and Wednesday's third year stood out from the preceding eighteen years Severus had taught.*

*The third year was often the time when puberty started to bloom among the students. It was the start of a long and awkward process as children became adults.*

*As far as he was concerned, Harry and Wednesday were past that – they were already adults, only in children's bodies. He was interested to see how the new emotions and chemicals surging through their bodies would affect them.*

*His friendship with the two adult-children had grown, as had his self-knowledge.*

*It was liberating, and that liberation, made the price of his decision worth it.*

*In his recollection, the year was exceptional, beginning earlier than any other as well.*

---

Severus Snape was bored.

He had enjoyed his annual holiday - a week in Bordeaux.

He'd planned his next year of lessons.

He'd caught up on his journals, and even written a few articles for Potions Monthly.

He'd dined with Narcissa a few times, which had been enjoyable. With Lucius in jail, he was able to spend some quality time with her.

And yet he was bored. He wanted to be back at Hogwarts, teaching – which was a first for him. Normally, he was quite happy to be as far away from the school, and the children it contained, as possible.

There was a knocking on his window, and as he opened it, an owl entered. He removed the message attached to its foot, and smiled faintly.

If anything was going to show how much things had changed, this was it.

He stood abruptly, thanking the owl – who flew off with a hoot. He grabbed some Floo powder and threw it into the fire. “The Burrow,” he called, as he stepped in.

He emerged into the cosy living room of Molly and Arthur Weasley, and absently cast a spell to clean off the residue powder and dust that had attached itself to him.

The youngest male Weasley wandered into the living room, a piece of pie in one hand and a drink in the other. He looked at Snape, and squealed like a small girl as he dropped his food and drink.

Snape sighed and cast a spell to clean up the mess the boy had just made. Molly bustled into see what the fuss was.

“Ronald!” she scolded. “Is this how I taught you to greet guests?”

“But Mum,” Ron whined, “it's Snape, he's evil!”

“Bedroom, now!” Molly roared.

Ron paled and ran out of the room.

“My apologies, Professor,” Molly said, embarrassed.

“Not at all, Molly,” he replied, “and please, call me Severus.”

“Thank you,” Molly said, her eyes wide in surprise. “What brings you to our home?”

“An interesting letter I received from Ginny and Hermione,” he admitted. “It caught me during an impulsive moment, and I acted without forethought.”

“Oh,” Molly said with a smile. “They did say that they might owl you. They're due back any second, would you like a cup of coffee while you wait?”

“Please,” he said, which was how he came to be sitting at a kitchen table, enjoying a conversation with Molly Weasley. Another thing that he never thought that he would end up doing. By mutual silent consent, they avoided the topic of her male children, and spoke about Ginny instead.

Molly had been delighted by her grades, and held Harry in the highest of regard because of it. She also gave scant regard to Ron and Percy's protestations that he was evil. When pushed, she admitted that he might be a bit on the dark side, but that didn't make him a bad person.

The door to the kitchen opened and Ginny and Hermione traipsed in.

"Professor Snape," Hermione cried excitedly. "You came."

"Indeed."

Molly laughed under her breath.

"Great," Ginny said, "we're set up in my bedroom. Come on."

"As delighted as I am at your invitation, Miss Weasley," he said dryly, "a student's bedroom is not the place for a Professor to be found."

He noticed Molly nodding approvingly out of the corner of his eyes.

"Oh," Ginny said, "I didn't think of that," she admitted. "I just have to have somewhere quiet we can work and where Ron won't try and ruin it."

"We had to cast wards," Hermione added disgustedly.

"And you managed to avoid the Ministry sanctions on under-age magic?"

Hermione and Ginny both blushed as they nodded.

"Excellent," he praised, "a good Slytherin will always find a way around nonsensical laws. Perhaps, if Molly doesn't mind, we can set up an area in the garden that will be safe, and where we may be seen at all times."

"Absolutely, Severus," Molly said. "I've seen their research, and while it's beyond me, it's for a good cause."

"We'll start bringing it down," Ginny said, bouncing excitedly. "Come on, Hermione." The two girls rushed off.

Molly placed a plate with a piece of apple pie in front of him. "You'll stay for dinner?"

He was about to decline, when Molly continued, "The chances of you getting away from my girls *before* dinner is slim to none." She grinned, "and perhaps it will help show certain members of my family who take after my Great Aunt that you are not the devil."

"Why Molly," he said gently, "how ever will my reputation survive?"

Molly laughed. "Eat up," she ordered. "And don't think that the parents of your students haven't noticed that their marks are rising."

He smiled faintly, and ate the apple pie. As all the world knew, Molly Weasley made an exemplary apple pie.

The girls made quite a few trips through the kitchen, carrying potions equipment and books, as well as a large table.

They both appeared back in front of him, large smiles on their faces. Fortunately, he had finished his pie.

"Molly, would you care to accompany us for a few minutes?"

She nodded and set down the tea-towel she was holding. Outside, in one corner of a garden, next to a large shed was a perfectly functional Potions laboratory. He allowed an amused look on to his face; leave it to Hermione to do the proper research.

"First," he said, "we need a roof." He cast a spell that created a transparent roof above the area. He tethered the floating roof to the shed, canting it at a slight angle so that any rain would drain off. "I expect that you will be able to provide your own heating."

"Yes, Professor," Hermione said confidently.

"Now," he continued, "we need a way to secure this place. Ginny, what is the best spell to use when you want something protected and invisible from others?"

She frowned and looked thoughtful. He could see that Hermione knew, but was refraining from waving her hand like an overeager swot. "The Fidelius?" she asked.

"Excellent," he nodded. "Indeed, the Fidelius charm, an immensely complex spell involving the magical concealment of a secret inside a single, living soul. The information is hidden inside the chosen person, or Secret-Keeper, and is henceforth impossible to find -- unless, of course, the Secret-Keeper chooses to divulge it. This is not a spell to be used lightly, and I do not want you experimenting with it, unless you have an adult or Harry and Wednesday present."

"Yes, Professor."

He waved his wand in the proscribed square, and said the short incantation. He set himself as the secret keeper. Before their eyes, the laboratory vanished.

"The Potions Laboratory is in Molly Weasley's garden," he said quietly to the girls, including Molly, so that she would always be able to see that he was acting properly. The open air laboratory reappeared.

"Thank you," Molly said.

He nodded at her, and smiled at the two excited children.

"I'll leave you to it," Molly announced, "dinner doesn't cook itself." She bumbled off cheerily, as they walked inside the now-invisible area.

He took one of the stools and looked at the two of them. "So," he started, "why am I here?"

Hermione and Ginny looked at each other. "As we said in the letter," Hermione said, "We're stuck in our potions research."

He nodded.

"You see," Ginny said, "you mentioned that there was a Basilisk potion that would let someone transcend their body, so we started looking for it."

"And we found it," Hermione continued, "and it seemed like a great thing to do for Harry's birthday. Pugs mentioned that, because of the whole Christmas malarkey, that everyone in the clan does their best to make up for it on Harry's birthday – as much as he might protest.

"So we thought it would be great to do him and Wednesday the potion."

"But," Ginny said, "we got to a point and realised we've not got a clue what these instructions actually mean."

"And after discussing it, we hoped that you'd help, and then we could share giving the present," Hermione finished.

He looked at the two of them for a moment, smiling internally at their hopeful expressions. He also hid his pride. He had looked at the potion himself, and knew how fiendishly difficult it was.

"It looks like," he said slowly, "that we have a lot of work to do."

The two girls cheered.

"Why don't you show me where you are up to?" he suggested.

The next few hours past quickly as they explained the steps they had taken and where they were.

Again, he was impressed, as well as enthusiastic. There was nothing like a complicated potion to make him happy, and this one was certainly that. Over two hundred ingredients – he decided not to ask where they had obtained some of them, which were not only exceedingly rare, but also on several restricted lists – and a contradictory brewing process that was fraught with pitfalls.

"Dinner," Molly's voice floated across the garden.

He stood. Hermione looked surprised, "But..."

"A mistake due to hunger can ruin a whole afternoon's work," he said in his 'lecture' voice.

They nodded and followed him through to the kitchen. Arthur was already seated at the table.

"Welcome, Professor" he said cheerfully to Severus.

"Thank you," he replied formally, as he took a seat. Hermione and Ginny sat next to him.

"Had a good afternoon, Gin-gin?"

"Brilliant," she said excitedly. "Professor Snape's going to help us with Harry's present."

"Good," Arthur said, "and Ron, we've discussed your opinions before, we will not be discussing them again in front of our guests, so kindly keep them to yourself."

Snape hadn't even noticed Ron enter the room, and he was mildly impressed with the calm way in which Arthur had handled a potential situation.

The door burst open and the twins bounded in. They paused as they spotted the tall potions-master at the table, before they shrugged and sat at the table. "Professor Snape," George said, "would you mind us picking your brains for a second?"

Internally he sighed. "If the outcome isn't to be used on me, or was perhaps used on another austere head-of-house, then perhaps a hypothetical question might be answered as such."

They blinked at him, then each other, before they smiled wildly. "Deal," they agreed. "We've got a sweet that we're working on that will mimic the effect of a Boggart when people look in the mirror. It will only be a minor version and give people a bit of a scare. It's supposed to wear off after the first time it happens."

"The problem," George continued, "is that the potion part of the sweet only lasts for five minutes, before the base sweet becomes useless – and it doesn't even taste good."

"Have you tried adding Allspice?"

They looked at each other. "Never heard of it?" Fred admitted.

It's a Muggle spice," Hermione said softly.

"Correct," he agreed. "It is the dried unripe fruit of the *Pimenta dioica* plant. I've used the plant before, but it was always so much work to get the useful pieces out, that it has never been used widely. You can imagine my surprise when I found it on a rare foray into a Muggle grocery. I picked up more from a Supermarket than I have from some of my longstanding suppliers.

"I wrote an article about it, and I expect that a lot of people will be examining other Muggle spices to see what they can do for us."

Arthur's eyes were alight with interest. "You went shopping in the Muggle world?" he asked. "Did they have an electrical cash registrar?"

Snape nodded faintly. Molly placed a heaping plate in front of him, before she served the others. "Right, no more shop-talk at the table," she ordered as she sat down. "And Arthur, don't badger our guest."

As the conversation moved on to more general things – politics, sport and the like, he found that he was actually enjoying himself.

Severus Snape enjoying dinner with the Weasleys – well, most of them – he had come a long, long way in two short years.

After dinner, he made his excuses and left, promising the girls that he would arrive back tomorrow to continue their work.

Both girls grinned, before they hugged him and dashed off.

Their hug rested on his mind for a long time.

It had been spontaneous, and natural. He could not remember the last time he had been hugged by anyone. It made him question even more what he had given up, and that made him wonder what it would be like to have children of his own one day.

The problem with that, of course, was that there was only one woman alive who he could see himself wanting to have children with.

And she was married to Lucius Malfoy, and already had a son. Well, almost a son, anyway.

He sighed, and reached for his books. He wanted to make sure that he knew the next step for the potion they were making.

Thereafter he was a frequent visitor to the hidden potions laboratory, and he could always rely on the fact that Hermione and Ginny would be there before him, hard at work on one of the sub-potions that it needed.

He had never worked with assistants before, and found that not only did things go smoothly, it was pleasant to have someone to talk to during the periods when there was nothing to do.

He ate with the Weasley family frequently, and found himself starting to like Arthur and Molly – even if he did have to make it very clear that he was not interested in Molly's match-making. The woman seemed to have more female friends his age than Poppy Pomfrey – and he'd been avoiding her for years.

Ron and Percy seemed to detest him as much as ever, which didn't surprise him at all. Percy was too in love with himself, and Ron had formed an opinion and refused to see that he might actually be wrong – and the more people badgered him, the more he dug his heels in.

But on the second last day of July, the potion was finished. It sat in a vial in front of them. It had passed every test he could think of. There was one test he refused to do – and that was actually take it.

The three of them were silent for a long while as they stared at the purple liquid.

"You are coming with us tomorrow, aren't you?" Hermione asked.

"I'm sorry?"

Ginny grinned and handed him a piece of paper.

The paper was thick, and written in exquisite calligraphy, was an invitation for him to attend Harry's birthday party.

"If you say no," Hermione said, "we are under instructions to pester you until you say 'yes', and if that fails, we're to tell Morticia who will have a word with you."

He play-acted a large wince. "I'll come," he agreed.

"Brilliant," Ginny cheered. "That way we can all see the effects of our potion."

"I will see you in the morning," he said, as he walked to edge of the wards and Apparated away. The letter made it clear that he would be staying for a couple of days, so he did some washing and tidied his cottage, before he packed a small bag that was far bigger on the inside than the outside.

He really hoped that they'd allow him to look into their library.

That night, he used some dreamless-sleep potion to provide a good night's sleep, and arrived at the Weasley's at two minutes to eleven, bang on time.

Hermione and Ginny were waiting for him in the living room; both of them had suitcases next to them.

"They're already shrunk," Ginny said excitedly. "We promised we'd bring a few things."

Hermione nodded in agreement. "Some of it took a lot of space," she added.

"I can't wait," Ginny was bouncing in excitement.

"Severus," Molly greeted him warmly as she walked into the living room. "Hermione and Ginny are going to stay there for the rest of the summer. Arthur and I are taking Percy, the twins, and Ron to Egypt, to see Bill."

He nodded. "I hope you have a good time."

"I'm sure we will." The clock started to chime. "Be good," she said to Ginny and Hermione.

Hermione held out a small ring and grabbed her suitcase. Ginny did the same. He took a hold, and a second later, they were thrown into space.

It was the longest trip he had ever taken by Portkey, and he shuddered to think of the cost of an international Portkey – either financially or magically. They were not easy to create.

They arrived in a large garden. The sun was just rising, showing that it was still early in this part of America. He remembered that they were five hours behind England, so it was just six in the morning here.

Ginny was looking around with great fervour, and he found himself doing the same. As Hermione had described the year before, the gothic mansion stood tall, reaching into the sky in front of them.

"Good morning," Morticia said, her smooth voice cutting through the early morning. "Ginevra, Severus, welcome to our house."

"Thank you, Mrs Addams," Ginny said, curtsying.

Morticia smiled at her. "Hermione, take Ginevra up to your room. And Ginevra, please call me Morticia."

"Yes, Morticia," Ginny and Hermione said together.

"It is good to see you again, Hermione."

"Thanks."

"Leave your luggage, Lurch will deal with it."

"Come on, Ginny," Hermione called, grabbing the girls hand. The two ran off.

"Don't forget to wake Pugsley; the hose is in the cupboard." Morticia called after them.

The girls laughed and vanished into the door.

"Hermione and Ginevra tell me that your help was invaluable with Harry's present. Thank you, Severus."

"You're welcome," he said formally, a little surprised. "Although you should know that Ginevra prefers Ginny."

Morticia's face lightened slightly. "Thank you. We all participated, some of the ingredients were difficult to obtain."

"I didn't ask," he said. "Although I was very curious to know where they had come from, some of those ingredients haven't been seen in centuries."

"Not by shop-keepers, no," she agreed. "Our clan is very wide-spread."

"May I ask a slightly impertinent question?"

"You may," Morticia said, as she focused entirely on him.

It felt like she was examining his soul as the overwhelming pressure of her full attention and personality was bearing down on him. He realised this was how Hermione had felt in the first year, only Morticia was a stronger witch than her daughter.

"Why have you not dealt with Voldemort? You know that he will not be able to leave Harry alone, and well, you appear quite capable of dealing with him?"

The pressure vanished. "A good question," Morticia said approvingly. "If we fought Harry and Wednesday's battles for them, they would grow up spoiled and overly reliant on us. That is not how we do things. The problem is a serious one, but they have been aware of it for many years, and have plans with how to deal with it.

"If they fail, then Gomez and I will mourn our children, and then we will deal with Voldemort. We hope that does not happen, but it is the price we pay for raising children who will rule the Addams clan in the future."

Severus thought about Draco, and the way that Lucius had always fought his son's battles for him.

“Thank you,” he said.

“You are welcome, Severus. Lurch will show you to your room.” He turned and almost jumped out of his skin at the sight of the seven foot tall butler standing next to him. He hadn’t heard or sensed Lurch’s arrival.

He followed Lurch through the house, it seemed vaguely familiar from Hermione’s description of it, and she was right – the shabbiness was a lived-in feeling that complemented the house.

His room was painted dark green, and looked very new. The bed was just as he liked it, and his clothes were all set up – although exactly how that had been done when he’d seen Lurch carrying his suitcases and dropping them inside the doorway as he arrived, he had no idea.

There was a knock on his door, and as he opened it, Pugsley, Hermione and Ginny walked in.

Pugsley was wearing a dark brown suit. The two girls had changed and were both wearing dresses. Ginny’s was light green, while Hermione’s was periwinkle blue. Both of them had had their hair styled – Hermione’s animated mop was smooth for a change.

“You look nice,” he said.

The three children beamed at him. “I thought I’d come and let you know a little of what to expect,” Pugsley said. “Today is the one day of the year that Wednesday acts like a girl.”

He raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“She will be guarded at the party around other people, of course, but until then, you will see her smiling, dressing in something other than her normal black and white clothes, and generally having a good time. She does it because she knows it will force Harry to be more open, and have a good time himself.”

Severus blinked.

“Yeah,” Ginny said, shaking her head. “It surprised me as well. Mum and Dad always told me that a marriage was full of compromises. Harry acts like he does the rest of the year because that is how Wednesday is, so on Harry’s birthday, Wednesday acts differently for him.”

“Anyway,” Pugsley interrupted. “At the party this afternoon, most, if not all, of our family will be there, and if you need a calming potion, I’ve got one here.”

“No, thank you.”

“Because you’ve been at Death Eater meetings?” Pugsley asked. “You won’t get tortured here. Well, not much anyway, and especially not if you don’t ask for it. Anyway, it’s time for presents. Just remember not to react to Wends.”

With his agreement given, they traipsed downstairs and into a large living room, where Morticia and Gomez were waiting.

“Professor Snape,” Gomez greeted him. Despite the early morning time, he had a large brandy snifter in one hand, and a cigar in the other. “Brandy, cigar?”

“No, thank you,” he replied. “And please, my name is Severus.” He looked at the kids. “You too, for the duration.”

Pugsley nodded.

“Take a seat, Thing, be a chap.”

The disembodied hand snapped his fingers, creating four more chairs. Severus sat down in one, next to Hermione and Gomez. Thing sat back on the arm of Gomez’s chair, and took one of the cigars, which he quickly lit.

“Here they come,” Pugsley said excitedly.

Down the stairs, Wednesday came, leading a blindfolded Harry. She smiled brightly at him, and Snape was glad that he had been forewarned.

As Ron had noted the year before, Wednesday *was* gorgeous. Dressed in a green and black sheath smock dress and a pair of dark blue jeans, she had her long black hair loose and hanging straight down her back. She was barefoot, and even had her toenails painted pink. In the few weeks since he had last seen her, puberty had somehow managed to do an amazing job in such a short amount of time, and he wondered how much further she had to go before she had her fully-adult form.

He almost smiled to himself. Harry had inherited his biological father’s luck in attracting beautiful women. Fortunately, Harry didn’t seem to have received anything else from James Potter.

It was Wednesday’s face that gave him the most surprise. The smile she had on looked natural, and her eyes were shining brightly with pleasure.

He was surprised, but he shouldn’t have been.

If Harry could mask his natural emotions for so long, without dropping cover, how could he have doubted that Wednesday would not be able to assume natural expressions – at least for a day?

She bounced over to the main armchair, and pushed Harry into it, before she straddled him. Her actions were smooth and graceful; they showed none of the nervousness that most girls her age would have shown. She was every thing that a woman secure in her own sexuality would be. Narcissa would have been hard-pressed to do it better.

She kissed Harry tenderly as she removed his blindfold. Severus glanced at Gomez and Morticia, who both looked amused.

"Ginny, Hermione, Professor Snape," Harry said happily as Wednesday pulled back. "It's great that you could make it."

"Thank you for inviting me," he replied. "And for the duration, it's Severus, or Sev."

Harry and Wednesday grinned at him.

"Presents!" Pugsley yelled cheerfully. "Me first!"

Wednesday slid off Harry and curled up by his legs, leaning against him.

Pugsley dashed over to a corner and grabbed a parcel. He dragged it over to Harry.

Harry bounced out of the chair, kneeling next to Wednesday and started to rip off the paper. Without pause, he held out his hand mid-rip and Wednesday placed a knife in his hand.

It was another display of the synchronicity that existed between the two of them. Wednesday had drawn the knife so that it was ready the exact second that Harry needed it.

Harry ripped open the box and chucked the knife high into the air, back to Wednesday. It arched and spun toward her, and she caught it by the blade. She waved her hands and it vanished.

"Pugsley," Harry said in a stunned voice.

"Every clan-leader needs one," Pugsley said. "Most of the family helped me make it."

Harry pulled out a large black ball; it was about the size of a football and appeared to be made out of obsidian. "Pugsley," Harry called into the ball.

Pugsley's smiling face appeared inside it.

"It was an idea I had after reading *Lord of the Rings*," Pugsley said happily. "Sauron was an idiot, and making globes radiate evil is just puerile, but the idea was a good one. The people who helped are in a list on the inside. It will work globally, and it is encrypted, so that anyone trying to listen in will just hear the weather – and even that will be wrong."

"Brilliant present, Pugsley," Harry said, as he rolled it next to him.

Pugsley was beaming with pleasure, and Wednesday was looking proudly at her brother.

Thing jumped to the floor next, and walked over to Harry. He snapped his fingers, and a wrapped present appeared.

Harry ripped it open. "A thousand and one ways to make someone suffer, Volume 4," he read out. "Thanks Thing, that's the one I'm missing." He held up his hand, and Thing jumped up and high-fived him.

Morticia clapped her hands and a long thin present appeared. She handed it to Harry.

He unwrapped it, revealing a Firebolt broom. "All right!" Harry yelled, jumping up and exuberantly hugging Morticia and then Gomez.

"Cool broom," Pugsley said admiringly.

"You fly?" Severus asked in surprise.

Harry nodded.

"Would you consider Quidditch?" he asked hopefully.

Wednesday laughed. "Can you see *us* on a team?" she asked in amusement.

Severus sighed, "Just once I'd like to beat the Gryffindors."

"Don't be greedy," Harry chided. "We already get you the House cup."

"I'm a Slytherin," Snape retorted, "I'm allowed to be greedy!"

Harry stuck his tongue out at him in response.

"Our turn," Ginny announced. "With help from most of your family in gathering the ingredients, Severus, Hermione and I have spent the last few weeks working together. The result?"

Hermione moved forward and offered them the vial. It was a deep purple liquid. He looked at it curiously.

"The Potion of Transcending Life," Severus said softly. "It will free your consciousness from your mind. I warn you, not many have taken this and retained their sanity."

"That's okay," Pugsley called, "Harry and Wends haven't been sane for years!"

Wednesday swayed slightly, and her knife appeared, embedded in Pugsley's chair next to his ear.

"Missed," Pugsley taunted as he chucked it back.

"Only because it's 'be-nice' day," she replied as she caught the knife easily.

"Children," Morticia murmured, "do think of the furniture."

"Sorry Mom," they said in unison.

"Thank you, Hermione, Ginny, Severus," Harry said, examining the potion. "We'll take it tomorrow."

"Yay!" Wednesday cheered.

"So, one last present," Pugsley prodded.

"Ahh," Wednesday agreed. She stood gracefully and looked over her shoulder at Harry. She slid her hands around her back, and a rope snaked up her legs, binding her hands together. "Perhaps the present is me," she purred.

Harry grinned at her. "A present beyond price," he said solemnly. "However I think that some people would be upset if I was to unwrap you now."

Wednesday giggled as Pugsley gagged.

This time it was a knife from Harry that narrowly missed Pugsley's ear. Harry followed it up with a summoning charm and a repairing charm.

"Thank you," Morticia whispered.

Wednesday dashed out of the room, her hands freeing themselves, and returned a minute later with a small package wrapped in dark blue paper.

She sat on Harry's knees, her feet by his hips, facing him, as he opened it. Unlike with the other presents, Harry didn't rip at this one. He carefully un-wrapped the gift, his eyes never leaving Wednesday's.

He looked down and slowly opened the box. Inside was an elegant gold watch. Harry picked it up and passed it to Wednesday, before he held up his left arm.

Wednesday solemnly placed it on his wrist. They sat there for a few seconds, just looking into each others eyes.

"Why don't you two go and get changed," Gomez suggested, not showing his usual exuberance. "The guests will be arriving soon."

Harry's hands went to Wednesday's bum, and as he stood, he lifted her with him, she wrapped her legs around his waist. She placed her head on his shoulder, as he carried her out.

As soon as they were out of earshot, Ginny sighed. "What did I miss this time?"

Severus found himself grateful that she had asked first.

"Yeah," Pugsley said looking at his parents. "A watch? Last time she got him that gorgeous sword; the time before that it was the Assassin's Ring."

Morticia smiled proudly. "Exactly," she agreed.

Pugsley looked blank.

Gomez stood abruptly, an excited expression appearing on his face. "Guests," he said, and vanished.

Morticia smiled fondly at the space that had held her husband. "Yes, Pugsley, this is the first time that Wednesday has got him a present that isn't designed to kill or maim."

"Oooo," Pugsley said. "No wonder he was touched!"

"Indeed," Morticia agreed. "Shall we make our way down to the Ballroom?"

Hermione and Ginny looked at each other, and pulled out flasks of a potion. They downed them and placed the flasks on the table.

"Calming potion?" he asked.

They grinned and nodded at him. He looked at Pugsley who shrugged, before his eyes darkened a little. "Shall we?"

The Ballroom was full. Full of what, Snape wasn't quite sure, now how they had all arrived. From the two headed lady, to the giant Hairball that Albus had described, the room was a Pure Blood's nightmare. A Veela chatted happily with a Vampire and a Goblin, while a couple of hairy children played games with what looked like a baby Nundu, but probably wasn't. Or maybe that was 'hopefully wasn't'.

"Severus."

He turned, and blinked. "Remus?"

Remus was supposed to be doing something for Albus. Remus was supposed to be upset about life in general, and grateful for what Albus was doing for him.

Remus was not supposed to be looking fit and well and be present at Harry's birthday party. Somehow, though, he wasn't surprised. The fact that Remus was a Werewolf would not bother anyone here.

He reached down and tried to drag up his hatred from all the years ago, but it was an effort, and to be honest, he really couldn't be bothered anymore.

He had better things to do with his life.

Remus nodded and stood next to him. "I'm teaching at Hogwarts this coming year," he announced.

"You'll be needing Wolfsbane then?"

Remus looked surprised. "Thank you, but the Addams have prepared a ready supply."

Snape nodded.

"Severus," Remus started.

"Don't," he replied, knowing what the werewolf was going to say. "Let the past stay where it is."

Remus looked shocked, and he mentally added one point to his column. "Neither of us acted our best in those days, however, if Black shows up at any stage, I retain the right to prank him left, right and centre."

"Noted," Remus nodded, now looking amused.

Morticia arrived in front of them. "Remus, Severus," she said politely. "Dance with me, Severus." It should have been a question, but it was a command.

Severus Snape did not dance. Severus Snape could not dance. Which was why he was surprised to find himself moving around the dance floor with Morticia Addams. There were a few other people dancing, not minding the fact that it was still early.

"Some of them are on different time zones," Morticia explained. "But enough about my family. Talk."

Severus sighed. He could feel Morticia's power work on him, and he didn't fight it. "Remus is here, and looking in good condition. If there is going to be any family in the world that would accept a werewolf, it would be this one.

"I have no wish to have Harry disappointed in me, and as he seems to have made it a personal project in the last two years to force me to grow up, I thought I'd act like it."

"Good," Morticia said approvingly. She spun away, leaving him dancing with the woman with two heads. It was a struggle for him to keep his eyes from the impressive cleavage they shared.

As the music ended, Severus found himself back next to Remus, as the lights dimmed.

"Albus doesn't have a clue, does he," Snape said quietly.

"Nope."

"I hear that the house Dumbledore left Harry in was not fit for a prince."

"It wasn't fit for a dog."

Snape sighed. "Do you have any idea how hard I worked to keep my prejudices?"

Remus laughed softly. "The longer you hang around, the less you'll be able to keep them."

"I've made friends with Molly Weasley," Snape admitted.

"Really?"

"Oh yes, quite a nice person really, now that Harry has introduced the concept of grey into her life."

Remus laughed again. "I've been here three years," he admitted. "I've got a place down the road, and Gomez and Morticia are nothing but

accommodating hosts.”

“And Albus has invited you back?”

Remus nodded. “He hopes I’ll be a positive influence on Harry.”

“And?”

“Not a chance. Harry and Wednesday are their own people, always have been, always will be.”

A spotlight highlighted the door, and Harry and Wednesday entered, pausing in the light.

“Thirteen didn’t look like that when I was that age,” Snape whispered.

“Tell me about it, you didn’t know them when they nine – do you know how bad it is for your ego to get into a philosophical debate with a nine year old... and lose?”

Snape looked at them. Harry had changed, and was wearing a pair of black trousers and black shoes, with a simple white shirt.

Wednesday had changed into a pure brilliant white dress that hugged her body, confirming his earlier belief that she was well on the way to her adult form. Her hair was still down, and she still had the happy smile on her face. She was wearing a hint of make-up, as her face had a healthy tan to it, and her lips sparkled. Her legs were bare, and she had white high heels on, with sufficient lift to make her almost the same height as Harry.

“Looks like an angel,” Remus muttered, “and has the heart and soul of a killer.” He sighed, “and yet I find myself envious of them, I remember when he was born, and yet here I am, single, and there he is, with a girl who – if you ignore the slight fact that she’s nearly as psychotic as Voldemort – is intelligent, powerful, and utterly devoted to him.”

“I think that love advice from a thirteen year old would be as difficult to accept as the aforementioned philosophical discussion.”

Harry and Wednesday moved to the side of the dance floor, where – in orderly fashion – the guests walked over to wish him happy birthday. It was only because Severus happened to be looking that he saw what happened when someone tried to push in place. It wasn’t much... it was just a flash of Wednesday’s eyes, but the person seemed to quickly remember a prior appointment.

“She banned me from going after the Dursleys,” Remus said in a conversational matter.

“You’re not the first person to mention that, Pugsley was rather peeved as well.”

“Severus,” Remus said, and took a deep breath. “James asked me to tell you that he was sorry for some of the stuff he pulled. Not all of it, but some of it.”

“So, you’ve talked to them as well?” It was a rhetorical question, as he contemplated what Remus had said. He would never have accepted a full apology, as there was no way that James would ever have given one. However, an apology for the more outrageous and bullying things that James had done, maybe he could accept that. Now. A few years ago he would have laughed.

He nodded at Remus. “Accepted.”

Remus smiled at him. “Do I want to know what the potion you developed with the two girls does?”

He accepted the conversation change. “It will free their minds. From there, I really don’t know. Most people go insane after taking it.”

Remus laughed under his breath. “Which is, of course, why they are so excited by it.”

The vampire that he had seen earlier suddenly materialised in front of them. “Rumour has it that intelligent conversation can be found in this corner.”

Severus pointed at Remus. “Talk to him, I’m just the comic relief,” he said with a straight face.

Remus choked. “Severus, you made a joke!”

He smiled thinly, nodding his head in a hint of a bow. “Severus Snape - contrary to Remus and friends assertions, not a vampire.”

“Remus Lupin, Werewolf,” Remus said.

The vampire looked at him strangely. “Marcus,” he introduced himself. “Vampire for more years than I care to remember. Were you born a werewolf?”

“No, I was bitten when I was young.”

“Then what on earth were your parents doing naming you that!?”

Remus opened his mouth and then shut it again. Snape laughed under his breath. “Prescience?” he suggested.

“Indeed,” Marcus murmured. “Do you think if I called a child of mine, Princess Angel, that would work?”

“Probably not,” Snape replied, “I’ll bet it only works for negative connotations – which is a good thing, as it’s hard enough to remember children’s

names each year as it is, without having half of them named Minister.”

“Two jokes, Severus?” Remus chided.

“I have a few years to make up for,” he shrugged. “Is it rude to ask a Vampire how old he is?”

“Nope.”

“How old are you?”

Marcus laughed. “You’ve learnt Morticia’s lesson on asking direct questions. I’m a shade over two hundred years old.”

“And how did you meet the Morticia and Gomez?”

Marcus looked faintly embarrassed. “I tried to bite Morticia. I didn’t know she was a witch, or who the Addams were. She smacked me on the nose like a bad puppy, and when I attacked her, Gomez put a sword through my stomach. I listened most attentively when they told me to change my ways.”

“I’ll bet,” Remus agreed.

“A couple of decades later, we became friends. Gomez and I got very drunk after Wednesday was born.” He smiled. “Morticia told us to go away and get out her hair before she gave birth. That was a good weekend; we ended up in Cairo, where we were arrested for being terrorists. Gomez defended us with a hangover, and before we knew it, we’d been deported to Africa, where we met up with a nomadic tribe, who challenged Gomez to an ancient hunting competition.

“Gomez accepted, as long as he could have another drink before hand. They were planning on killing us when we lost, so they were happy to let Gomez have some of their local hooch – I could feel the damn thing rot my liver, and I’m immortal!

“Anyway, it was a spear throwing contest. They went first, and hit a target over a hundred metres away. Gomez stumbled over, picked up one, threw it, fell flat on his face, rolled over, sat up, and started to steer the spear with his hands, after a few loops he banged it into the bulls-eye, and then demanded the right of victor.

“The African’s were already calling him a witch-doctor, and demanded to know what he wanted.”

“More drink?” Remus asked.

“Exactly, we cleared them out, before Morticia summoned us home. Gomez went from toasted to sober in around about three seconds, grabbed me, and transferred us home. And scared around a hundred years off of my life in the process. We arrived back, straight into their bedroom.

“Morticia was lying in bed, looking immaculate, with Wednesday in her arms.

“Gomez dropped to his knees beside the bed, and just said, ‘Tish, she’s as beautiful as her mother.’ Smooth tongued bastard showed just why he got Morticia in that moment. She, of course, just smiled. As for Wednesday, well, I just looked at her and knew she was special. After all, how many babies give you chills just by looking at them?”

“Marcus old boy,” Gomez said as he dropped into the conversation. “You’re not boring our guests with old stories are you?”

“Absolutely,” he replied. “I get so few chances to describe you legless.”

Gomez looked horrified. “Me?” he demanded regally. “Stick around after the party,” he whispered conspiratorially. “Tish got me some Peruvian Ice Brandy that I’ve been killing to share. You two, too.” He winked at them, and wandered away.

“Goody,” Marcus said cheerfully. “I think it’s our turn to go and see the guests of honour.”

Severus followed Remus and Marcus over to the young couple. As they arrived, Marcus launched a punch at Harry. He moved so fast that all Snape saw was a blur.

Another blur launched forward, catching the punch, and twisting Marcus’s arm into a painful looking position.

“Marcus,” Wednesday sighed.

Marcus pouted. “I’m a two hundred year old vampire; it’s bad for my reputation to be unable to welcome a new teenager with a punch.”

“You have no reputation, you git,” Harry responded cheerfully.

“If you could persuade your intended to let me go, I do have a present.”

“Harry would like your arm,” Wednesday teased, “that would make a fine present, he could use it as a lamp holder.”

“Sorry, but I’m attached to it,” Marcus replied.

Harry groaned, as Wednesday’s knife seemed to spin into her hand. Severus recognised it as the knife that Harry had given her for Christmas.

“Something I can rectify,” Wednesday offered sweetly.

"I've not seen that knife before," Marcus pointed out, looking unconcerned about the precarious position he was in, nor the playful look in Wednesday's eyes.

"I only use it at special occasions." Wednesday sighed. "It better be a good present," she said grumpily as she released his arm.

Marcus stood and grinned at them both. "It is good to see you," he said seriously. "I heard about what happened at school."

"Did you try the Basilisk soup Grandmama made?" Harry asked.

"I did, it was delightful." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small golden cup with two handles, and a Badger inscribed on the side.

"You are so lucky," Wednesday sighed, as Harry grinned and hugged the vampire.

"Thank you," Harry said.

Marcus smirked at Remus and Severus. "All you have to do is do as you're told, and provide presents of unspeakable evil, and you can get away with murder." He gulped. "To a point," he finished calmly, despite Wednesday holding a knife against his throat.

"Arrogant bloody vampires," Wednesday sighed.

"Bloody?" Marcus asked. "English swearwords now? What ever next, tea and crumpets with the Queen?"

Wednesday giggled. "Maybe," she allowed. "But only because I like Harry rubbing off on me."

"That," Marcus said, "sounded disgusting, and I'm going to pretend that it was completely innocent."

"If that lets you sleep at night," Wednesday purred.

"Evil child," Marcus sighed.

"Thank you."

"I make that Wednesday firmly in the lead," Harry interrupted.

"I can make a come-back," Marcus pleaded.

"Sorry, you've lost this round."

"Fine," Marcus groaned. "I'll be back on top soon." He spun dramatically, and walked off, his head held high, his cape streaming behind him.

"You know, he does the cape thing better than you do," Harry said to Severus.

Severus smiled faintly. "Many years more practice."

"True. Hey Remus."

"Do I want to know about the Cup?"

"Yep."

"Am I going to know?"

"Nope."

"Thought not. Happy birthday, kiddo."

"Thanks, Wolfie."

"Many happy returns, Harry," Severus added.

"We're glad you came," Harry said with a smile. "Although I hear that Miranda and Mirande like you."

"The two-headed ladies?"

"With the big cleavage," Wednesday added. "Nice people," she said encouragingly.

"I had enough of that from Molly," he complained. "Look, there's only one woman I'm interested in."

Harry studied him hard for a few moments. "Blonde, Brunette or Red-head?"

"Blonde."

"Hmmm," Harry mused. Suddenly his expression cleared. "Really? The breeding result didn't put you off?"

"Subtle," he grunted. "I blame the father."

Harry frowned. "This changes things. We'll do what we can to keep her out of it."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Severus sighed. "But thank you."

Harry nodded and pulled Wednesday into a hug. She hooked a leg around his and pulled herself closer, and closed her eyes as he whispered into her ear.

Her eyes opened suddenly, and Snape actually saw the light vanish from them, and her normal look re-appear. He was starting to realize that her power was different than her mother's, as he felt her examine and judge him. He tried to look away, but couldn't. He knew it wasn't magic keeping him in place, but he didn't know what it was. Slowly, she nodded, and the light re-appeared.

He shuddered deeply as the two broke the hug.

"Relax," Harry grinned, "It's a party – we'll tell the twins that you're off the market."

"Thank you," he croaked, and walked off with Remus.

"Here," Marcus said, handing him a drink. "You passed."

Snape took the drink and drained it in one go. Marcus filled it again. Snape drained it again, before releasing his breath slowly.

"You okay?" Remus asked.

"What is she?"

"Wednesday Addams," Marcus replied dryly. "A teenage witch still discovering her inherited and inherent abilities? Or perhaps, you could call her the ultimate outcome of the biggest genetic experiment in history?"

"But Pugsley..."

"Pugsley is a more normal child," Marcus explained. "He was never destined to rule the Addams clan; there was a chance that Wednesday was, so Morticia and Gomez did what they had to do, to ensure that she could."

"What does that mean?" Remus asked.

Marcus smiled. "I'm a vampire, I kill people for food. Melissa," he pointed at the Veela, "is part Succubus. We're all like this. We follow the rules, and the rules include the notion that the strongest is in charge."

"But what about Harry?" Remus asked, now looking concerned.

Marcus sighed. "Everyone knows that Wednesday is a strong witch. Everyone in the family has felt her power, has felt her ruthlessness. And everyone knows that she has willingly given herself to Harry."

"Wednesday would be a fine leader. So why have we accepted Harry? We've never seen him fight. We've never seen him kill. We've never even seen him lose his temper. We have very little idea of his skill, or his power."

"All we know is that he can dance, that he has been through things that made even Wednesday scream, and that Wednesday follows him. We've all thought of challenging him, even though that means going through Wednesday, but," and he sighed again. "I've tried. I got him alone. He knew what I was there for. He told me to go for it. And I couldn't."

"Why?" Severus asked.

"Fucked if I knew at the time," Marcus said with a roll of his eyes. "Later, I realised I'd lost before I met him. I let him choose the time and the place without realizing it. He knew my weaknesses and had plans for them. And I understood then, what Gomez, Morticia and Pugsley already knew – that Harry doesn't need to do anything, he arranges others to do it for him."

"Which leaves one question: what if he was truly alone?"

"And?" Severus asked.

"No one knows," Marcus said, pouting. "He'll either make Wednesday look like a summer's breeze, or he'll be dead."

"But you suspect the former," Remus offered.

"I'd agree," Snape said slowly. "But you're right; all I've ever actually seen is Harry throw a sword. The rest has been hinted at, but never actually shown. Apart from the intelligence, naturally."

Marcus nodded. "Welcome to the Addams Family."

"You three are talking like a Witch's Coven," Fester said as he ambled up to them. "Not talking about the birthday boy are you?"

"Aye," Marcus agreed.

"You still on about that?" Fester said with a roll of his overly-large eyes. He paused and turned. "Melissa's getting ready," he smirked.

Marcus spun around and grinned. In one corner of the room, the Veela drained three glasses of something suspiciously dark red, before she marched up to Harry and Wednesday.

Fester giggled.

In the background, a soft tune started to play. It was a simple short, slightly banal tune that repeated itself endlessly.

Harry and Wednesday both adopted bright smiles as the blonde woman approached them. The Veela started to look more and more nervous, and she started to glow slightly. She was incredibly beautiful, with her long blonde hair swaying in the wind and the way her blue dress hugged her body intimately.

"Keep a hold of yourself," Marcus ordered. "Think about someone you care about, not the Veela. Watch, but don't let yourself go."

Severus nodded, and wrestled control of his mind back to himself. It was not quite Occlumency, but he quickly got the hang of ignoring the effects of the Veela.

The tune seemed to increase in volume, just a little.

Remus exhaled next to him, "Damn."

Marcus smiled faintly. "Poor Melissa."

Harry was standing dead-still, a small smile on his lips and an amused cast to his face. Wednesday's eyes were shining brightly, and she reached out, touching the Veela on the cheek, stroking it softly.

The Veela moaned and dropped to her knees, as Wednesday leaned in and kissed her on the lips. Harry moved forward after Wednesday and hugged the Veela gently. He stroked her hair, before he kissed her as well, matching the tenderness that Wednesday had shown.

Harry and Wednesday turned, held hands, and walked away, leaving the Veela on her knees, her head bowed, tears running down her face.

"Such is the price of defeat," Marcus said softly. He grinned suddenly, "but at least she'll be up for a bit of consoling later from a handsome Vampire."

"What is that damn tune?" Snape growled, as the music seemed to get louder.

Marcus and Fester turned to him and frowned, before looks of fear appeared on their faces. "Gomez!" Fester called.

Gomez appeared a cigar in one hand. He had changed and was now wearing a dinner jacket with an extravagant red cravat. "Enjoying the party old boy?"

"Listen," Fester said.

Gomez looked confused. "Oh my," he said. "If I may suggest stepping back a place or two."

Severus followed the advice exactly, moving backward with Remus. "Any idea what is going on?"

"Not a clue," Remus whispered back. "I'm glad I took the calming potion earlier."

Severus winced.

A deep black shadow seemed to emanate from the corner of the room they had been standing in. The guests moved to the sides as well.

Harry and Wednesday strolled into the middle of the dance floor. Gomez looked at them, before he stepped to one side.

From the darkness a bell tolled and a man walked out. He was tall and graceful, wearing a leather cowl, with six open wounds on his chest. Severus looked up, at the newcomer's face, and wished he hadn't.

The man had a faint grid tattooed on his head, and a metal pin hammered into his skull at each intersection.

Wednesday and Harry both went down on one knee.

He walked forward and stopped before Harry and Wednesday. "Happy Birthday," he whispered.

Harry lowered his head respectfully. "Thank you, Captain Spenser."

"A name from a past long gone," the guest murmured. "I am referred to as Pinhead these days."

"My apologies."

Pinhead started to walk around the two. "Such fear," he whispered. "And yet such control. And from children, no less." He stopped in front of them again.

"I thought you needed to be summoned," Wednesday pointed out.

"A common belief," Pinhead agreed without answering the question.

"Can I offer you a drink?" Harry asked.

From nowhere, two rusty chains flew toward Harry at an incredible speed. Wednesday moved, standing and grabbing the chains before they could hit Harry. Blood poured from her hands as she struggled against them. Two more flew forward, for Harry to grab them. Like Wednesday, his hands started to bleed profusely.

"Not a drinker then?" Harry asked calmly, despite his struggles.

The chains vanished, and Wednesday stared at her blood-spotted dress distastefully. The still-dripping blood from her hands was forming a pool by her feet.

"You ruined my dress," Wednesday hissed at Pinhead.

Harry reached out and lightly touched the dress, causing the material to become blood-red in colour. She shook her hands, and they stopped bleeding.

Pinhead looked at the two teenagers solemnly. "Did you learn my lesson?" he asked.

Harry smiled. "There are only two ways to deal with pain. To go mad or to accept that pleasure and pain are the same thing."

"You have sent me an unusual present," Pinhead said, abruptly changing the subject. "Curious on two fronts, no one's sent me a present before, and certainly not an incomplete one."

Harry shrugged. "We're working on making it a complete present. It's a bit of a challenge."

Pinhead smiled. "If you fail, it will be you that I come for."

"If we fail, we'll be in need of a holiday," Harry replied evenly.

"An everlasting holiday," Pinhead noted calmly.

Wednesday stared at him, tilting her head. "Perhaps," she agreed.

"Such a challenge," Pinhead said as he slowly walked around the stationary teenagers again. "Belief forged in fires hotter than hell, backed by a will that seems familiar. Would you succeed or would you fail?" he asked himself. "I have time. I have nothing but time."

He stood back in front of them. "My apologies, what is a birthday without a gift?" he asked rhetorically. A light appeared in his hand. It was incredibly bright, bathing the room. Slowly the light seemed to shrink, until all that was left was a silver chain with an inverted cross as a pendant.

He passed it to Harry. "For your intended."

"My thanks," Harry said, bowing once more. He turned and moved to Wednesday, placing the necklace around her neck.

"I hope this makes up for the dress," Pinhead said absently. "I can not decide if I want you to succeed or to fail in the task I set you." He turned, and started to walk back into the darkness. He paused and looked at Morticia and Gomez. They met his eyes equally. "You have raised good children," he said, before he slowly walked into the darkness. The irrepressible tune rose to a crescendo, before it vanished completely.

Severus turned his head and looked at Harry and Wednesday. They had dropped to their knees and were holding each other tightly, shaking.

"What the hell was that!?" Remus almost shouted.

"The Angel of Suffering," Fester said, his voice deadly serious. "I thought he was a fairy tale that mother told Gomez and I to amuse us at night."

Gomez and Morticia moved to the children. "You did well," Morticia said gently.

Harry cradled Wednesday against him. "He attacked on the wrong day," Harry protested angrily. "Wednesday was trying to be nice."

"I know," Morticia replied, as she knelt and started to stroke Wednesday's back.

"Harry," Gomez said softly, "how do you know Elliott?"

"We met him when we dealt with my problem," Harry whispered. "As part of our journey, we ended in his domain. We paid for our intrusion."

"You should have told us," Gomez said.

Harry shrugged. "It was not something we particularly wanted to think about again."

Wednesday raised her head; she looked lost and upset. But her face slowly blanked, and she looked at Harry. She focused fully on Harry, her hands going to his cheeks. "You were so strong," she whispered proudly, "but now you can relax, my love."

He nodded and seemed to slump, before he buried his face in her neck. Wednesday held him tightly, and started to whisper in his ear. The room was silent as everyone watched the four people in the middle of the floor.

When Harry raised his head, there were two tear tracks running down his face. Wednesday gently kissed each one, before she waved her hand and his face cleared.

"Red looks better on you," he said, smiling as he stood, a little unsteadily.

"Looks good off of me too," she answered with a happy grin.

Harry laughed, and pulled her close. He waved his hand and some music started, and together, they started to dance. Morticia and Gomez did the same, twirling around the dance floor.

"I wish," Severus said, after a few moments thought, "that I had accepted the potion this morning."

"You didn't take it?" Marcus asked, sounding impressed.

"I was a Death Eater."

"Don't you find the taste goes after a while?" Fester asked curiously. "I've tried a few dead humans, and they taste pretty awful once the freshness has gone."

Remus laughed, and even Snape had to smile. "It was the name of Voldemort's followers," he explained. "We didn't actually eat dead people."

"Oh, my bad," Fester said cheerfully. "Pugsley!"

Pugsley approached them with two very pale girls trailing behind them. "Hermione, Ginny, this is Marcus, and Remus Lupin," he said in a short-hand introduction. "Uncle Fester, who was that man, and why did he scare the pants off me?"

"Hermione, Ginny," Severus said gently. "Why don't we sit down and talk about this?"

The two girls nodded silently, as they all moved over to a one of a series of tables the other side of the dance floor.

"I'm not sure if I'm the right person," Fester said apologetically, "I'm not the head of the family." He turned and walked into the dance floor, and started to dance with Morticia, freeing Gomez to walk over.

"My apologies," Gomez said as he sat down, a new cigar appearing in his hand. "I quite forgot we had young guests. I'm sure you have a thousand questions."

"Who was he?" Hermione blurted.

"Captain Elliot Spenser, we met him around five decades ago when he was searching."

"Searching for what?" Severus asked.

"Experience, would be the best word," he mused. "He'd done rather badly in the war, watched a lot of people die, and during that time he lost his belief in everything – including God. He filled the void with pleasure, drink, drugs, sex, but eventually reached the plateau."

"The plateau is a dangerous place for a human, the only way is down. Elliot wasn't quite a human though, a distant relative of ours, he delved into the occult, going deeper and deeper, before well, he became a Cenobite."

"Cenobite, in the modern tongue, means member of a religious order, in the olden tongue it was a little more than that, but the concept is hard to describe. He is the leader of the Cenobites – or maybe Pope would be a better word – and now lives outside of our time. He is immortal and lives for the experience." Gomez looked at Hermione and Ginny, who had wide-eyed looks of fear on their faces.

"I'm sorry," Gomez whispered, "you're too young for this," he waved his hand abruptly, and the two children went very still. "The memory of the last few hours is not one you need to remember," he said, his voice having a strange hypnotic power behind it. "It will remain with you, but you will never want to access it again, and slowly it will fade to the depths of your mind, never to be seen again. Now, you will sleep for a while, and when you wake, you will enjoy the party."

"Thanks, Dad," Pugsley said, as Hermione and Ginny fell asleep.

"Do you need it as well?" Gomez asked.

Pugsley shook his head. "I am an Addams," he said proudly. "But I'll talk to Mom later."

"That's my boy," Gomez said and rubbed Pugsley's hair. "Anyway," Gomez continued, "Elliott is powerful, far more powerful than any human can be, he has lived for eternity, and honestly, I expected him to claim Harry and Wednesday. Although it was only a few years ago that we met him for us, for him, it was an eternity ago."

"You would have stopped him?" Marcus half stated, half asked.

"Morticia and I would have tried," he agreed, "and we would have failed. We are from this dimension; he has no constraints and can call forth a power of a demonic dimension. Those chains that they grabbed he has complete control over. He allowed them to grab them, and he has many

more under his control. He was testing them.”

“Why?” Severus asked.

Gomez looked worried. “I don’t know. I dislike that my children were under his control, although there is nothing I can do about it. I will talk to them about playing games with him, because he never loses.” Gomez shook himself, and then a small smile appeared on his head. “My children stood up to the Black Pope,” he said proudly, “they are going to bring the Addams clan into a new future.” He paused. “If they live.”

“They will,” Pugsley said confidently. “They have to.”

“Absolutely, now, if you’ll excuse me, more guests have arrived!”

“Is it always like this?” Severus asked.

“No,” Marcus said, “and let’s hope that the rest of the party is simpler.”

It was.

If you ignored the creatures that were guests, and you ignored some of the strange customs, the rest of the day was simply a birthday party. Harry and Wednesday danced a lot, and had a good time. Hermione and Ginny, when they awoke, were back to being un-damaged children, and each girl danced with Harry a few times; Pugsley danced with Wednesday once.

Severus spent the rest of the day talking with Marcus and Remus, as well as some of the other guests who wandered up to them, and even danced a few times with Morticia, the twins, and Melissa. He also had a highly entertaining conversation with Nicholas Flamel, who promised that he would answer any of Severus’ questions over the next few years.

That night, he collapsed onto his bed and spent a few hours staring at the ceiling going through the events of the day. Despite everything, he was pleased he had attended the party.

He took some dreamless sleep potion, just in case, and fell asleep.

The next morning, he arrived for breakfast to find only Morticia in the kitchen. She was reading a paper. “Good morning, Severus.”

“Good morning,” he replied as he settled down.

She passed him a paper, and he smiled – it was the Daily Prophet.

The next to arrive for breakfast were Harry and Wednesday. He greeted them, and tried to hide his surprise at Wednesday. She was dressed in a similar black and white outfit that Hermione had described the year before. Her hair was back in her standard immaculate pigtails, but it was her body that truly surprised him. It seemed to have regressed several years.

“Wednesday,” Morticia said without looking up, “have you lost weight?”

Wednesday sat next to Harry. “Yesterday was Harry’s day, so he got a preview of coming attractions,” she replied. “Good morning, Professor Snape.”

He smiled faintly at her. He accepted the message that things were going back to normal today. “Good morning Wednesday, Harry.”

“Are you going to be free this morning?” Harry asked politely. “We’d like to take the potion you made for us.”

“Of course,” he replied. “You don’t want to wait a few days after yesterday?”

“No,” Harry replied. “Yesterday has gone.”

Snape nodded, and the conversation moved on. Hermione, Ginny and Pugsley joined them next, before Gomez and Thing appeared. Grandmama was the last, and she immediately started cooking.

Breakfast was... something. He wasn’t sure what was in the broth, but it was certainly tasty and filled him up like nothing else ever had.

“Where are we going to do this?” Hermione asked eagerly as they finished.

Harry looked at Wednesday. “My bedroom,” he decided.

Severus smiled faintly. “That’s perhaps not the most appropriate place,” he said, “a Professor should never be found in a student’s bedroom.”

Wednesday rolled her eyes. “That rule is for other people,” she said flatly. “If you tried to touch me like that, you’d be dead. You want to live, so you won’t do that, therefore you are perfectly safe in our bedroom.”

“And,” Harry said, looking faintly amused, “if you tried to touch me like that, Wednesday would get very upset.”

“Children,” Morticia chided, “stop playing.”

“Sorry, Mom,” Harry and Wednesday said together.

"Come and see your father and me when you're done," Morticia said. "We will want to hear all about it. Gomez has work today, or we'd be there as well."

"I do?" Gomez asked, "how disappointing. What am I doing?"

"You've been appointed to defend that nasty Mr Jackson."

"Of course," Gomez cried. He bounded to his feet, "I'll be back later," he said as he vanished.

"Grandmama and I will remove the guests who have overstayed their welcome," Morticia announced. "Severus, Marcus said that he'd pop by later to finish your discussion."

"Thank you."

"Come on then," Wednesday said, as they walked back toward the bedrooms, and then up another flight of stairs. They turned right, and entered a bedroom.

The room was huge, far larger than his guest room. In the far left corner a fully featured potions laboratory had several test tubes bubbling. Spoons were stirring themselves in an intricate pattern.

In the far right corner was a small library area. Two bookcases that reached the ceiling dominated the corner, with two arm chairs next to them.

To his left was a doorway that led to what appeared to be a bathroom. He could see the tiles and a towel-rail. Harry's bed was to the right. It was a large bed, but wasn't a four-poster.

"What happens?" Harry asked, as he pulled out his wand and conjured four chairs.

"All we know is that it lasts for half an hour," Severus said slowly, "and that most recorded attempts have noted that the people who imbibed the potion were insane when they woke up. You only need a mouthful."

Harry nodded, as he lifted the beaker from a cabinet in the potions area. Wednesday climbed onto Harry's bed, on the right hand side. Harry moved next to her, and took a deep sip, before he passed the beaker to Wednesday and rested so that he was flat on his back.

Pugsley walked around to the side of the bed, and took the beaker from Wednesday after she had taken a drink. The girl relaxed back on the bed and clasped her hands over her chest.

"They look dead," Ginny whispered as two teenagers on the bed suddenly stiffened, then didn't move at all.

"There is nothing we can do now, but wait," Severus replied.



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The Third Year

## Part 2

“Professor,” Hermione said, “why don’t we learn how to enchant objects to stir for us?”

“How would you enchant it to brew the Draught of Living Death?”

“I don’t know,” she replied, looking embarrassed.

“Precisely,” he agreed. “You have to know what to enchant the object to do, before you can do it. You learn automation tools in the seventh year, when you have a better understanding of how potions work.”

“That makes sense,” Ginny added. “Any idea what Harry’s brewing?”

Severus wandered over to the area and had a careful look. “Well, that’s Polyjuice potion,” he noted, “but I have no idea what this one is.” He itched to analyse it, but knew from long experience how that could ruin the whole thing. There was an open book, and he walked over to it. “Strange,” he muttered to himself, “what would they need a soul destroying potion for?”

“Well, take a seat,” Pugsley called from the library area. “I didn’t even know Harry had some of these books.”

Severus nodded, and fetched a potions book from the library, before he returned to the seats that Harry had created. It didn’t feel right to sit in the chairs that were obviously Harry and Wednesday’s.

Twenty seven minutes later, Hermione said, “About a minute.”

“How do you do that?” Ginny asked.

Hermione looked blankly at her. “I have a watch…”

“Oh,” Ginny said, blushing slightly.

Wednesday was the first to move. She opened her eyes, but didn’t seem to be able to move. With a slight groan, she forced her muscles into action, not much, but enough so that she could roll over and be against Harry.

Harry moved next, a single arm moving to pull her closer.

Snape could see both of their faces, and how expressive they were, and yet they hadn’t changed since he had first seen them two years ago. What had changed was his ability to read what they were thinking.

Slowly, they started to move more freely, and they sat up. They both rested against the headboard, sitting close enough so that their sides were touching all the way along their bodies, their arms around each other.

“Well?” Pugsley demanded.

Wednesday smiled faintly. “Tell them,” she whispered.

“We started in this room,” Harry said in a voice that was barely a whisper. “We could see ourselves, and we could see that our bodies were just shells. So we went, up, speed was irrelevant as we had no mass. We were pure thought. We stopped and looked down on the planet, but it wasn’t enough.

“We moved away, slowing for the planets, and then speeding up again. We tried to find a limit to how far we could go, but we couldn’t, we were imagination itself.

“We paused, when our solar system was barely a blink of an eye and looked around. Everywhere we looked was beautiful, colours you can’t believe, sights never before seen, we could hear the sounds of the cosmos.

“But it wasn’t enough, and we knew that there wasn’t much time, so we flew, faster and faster, through our galaxy, through the next, doubling in speed every minute. We flew through solar systems like they were dust, galaxies like they were cardboard boxes.

“And the more we saw, the more we felt it. The more we felt what the price was. The knowledge we held was too much, too big, and it demanded payment. It demanded our sanity. But we didn’t slow down, we knew we were running out of time, so we kept going, kept viewing the next horizon.

“Until we stopped, or maybe we didn’t, the price was demanded. The universes stood before us and demanded we pay, they were horrible, they were incomprehensible, indescribable, they were creation and destruction, life and death, trillions of planets making up billions of galaxies making hundreds of millions of universes, and we could see it all. We stared infinity in the face, and it demanded our sanity.”

“What happened?” Pugsley asked softly.

“We spat in its eye and returned,” Harry said calmly. “Our sanity is our own.”

“Yeah!” Pugsley cheered.

"That is our goal," Wednesday said. "We have seen eternity, and we want to see it again."

"But not with a time limit. We need to free our souls from our bodies, and allow us to travel anywhere."

"And you'll take us with you?" Hermione pleaded.

"The whole clan," Harry promised. "The whole clan."

---

*His time at the Addams family was one that he would remember for the rest of his life. He also gained a small insight that, while he may be his own man, that there was no problem with being part of an organisation. It was good to be part of something bigger, grander. Something that seemed eternal.*

*And so, he'd set himself a new goal, acceptance into the Addams clan.*

*He had been happy to be back home, if only for a few days before he was due at Hogwarts. While he sat on the bank of a lake, he had the opportunity to think about one last conversation he'd had with Harry.*

---

Severus sat on the balcony overlooking the graveyard that separated the Addams family estate from the next one.

Down below, Fester, Pugsley, Hermione and Ginny were playing a game of Cowboys and Indians, with real crossbows. They were all wearing authentic outfits, and seemed to be having a great time.

Gomez was at work, and Morticia was knitting in the kitchen with Grandmama. It seemed a rather prosaic hobby for someone so strong, but she enjoyed it.

Harry and Wednesday were in their rooms, and he had no idea where Thing was.

"Good afternoon, Professor."

Severus looked up, "Harry," he greeted the other person in surprise.

Harry took a seat near him and looked at the people playing. "Nice, isn't it."

"Quite," he replied.

"I wonder what it would be like, sometimes; to be normal."

"Overrated," Snape sighed. "At times, at other, it's the most amazing feeling of freedom."

"You had a few moments?"

"One or two," he agreed.

"Freedom," Harry said softly. "I have freedom, and yet I don't."

"Oh?" Severus got the impression that Harry just wanted to talk, so he didn't say much.

"I can do anything I want, and yet I can't, because I have more important things to worry about."

"The Addams clan."

Harry looked at him strangely, "No, Wednesday."

"She needs worrying about?" he asked in surprise.

"Wednesday and I match. We are broken children."

"Broken? I don't think I've met two less broken people."

"Thank you," Harry said with a slight smile. "A palatable lie, if nothing else. We weren't always like this, getting rid of the scar without killing me was damaging. Pinhead was not the only dark thing we met on our journey."

Severus didn't think that there was anything he could say to that.

"I try not to feel guilty, because it was Wednesday's decision to join me. But, at times it is hard. They saved me, and because of me, their daughter became more broken. And that's why, you know."

"Why what?"

Why I'm focused on her. I helped break her, so now I'll mend her. The girl you saw on my birthday, the funny, beautiful, charming, deadly girl, that's the real Wednesday. And each year, she becomes more like that, and less like the way she acts at the moment."

Harry smiled as Fester tripped, and the three kids piled on top of him. "Wednesday has been trained since birth to be the new Clan leader. As soon as I came here, I joined – I never wanted to be weak again. I've been weak once."

"At the Dursleys?"

Harry nodded. "Never again," he said softly. "Trust is a strange thing. It took me two seconds to trust Wednesday, and several years to trust others. And as much as I changed with Wednesday, she changed with me. She made the decision as soon as we met, but didn't tell me until later."

Severus frowned, that wasn't what Wednesday had described to Hermione.

"Not about our relationship," Harry said, an amused tone in his voice. "About the clan leader. She wanted me to have it. Me, Harry Potter, abused orphan – nobody. She didn't tell me, she asked me. She gave me the choice, and offered her support.

"I couldn't believe it, here was this beautiful child, offering me everything, and all I had to do was promise to look after her in return. I swore on everything that mattered to me, and it was the best decision I made. So now, I sit with a world-wide clan in front of me, the most amazing girl in the world beside me, with a goal that is out of this world.

"I owe the Addams a thousand times more than I can ever pay them back. And I owe Wednesday much more."

"You don't seem as broken," Snape said softly.

"That's not a question," Harry said with a quick grin. "But I am more broken, and less broken. I was used to pain before I got here – mental pain as well as physical. Wednesday is an Addams, physical pain is never an issue with them; they learn to control what they feel from a very young age. Mental pain, that is different. So I was able to get through my ordeal slightly easier. As such, I appear less broken, even though my morals are not what they once were. Death is not something that scares me, either my own or anyone else's.

"But I do have a weakness – Wednesday. And that is why I am telling you this."

Snape couldn't move, didn't want to move. There was a strange power from Harry, not one of magic, but as effective.

"If anything happens to her, I will burn this world before I meet her again."

The threat was soft, quiet, and carried the force of a hurricane. The laughter from down below drifted up to them.

"I will help," Snape said, "for a price."

Harry looked amused.

"Entry."

Harry nodded. "Granted, provisionally."

Snape smiled and looked down. Evidentially it was as simple as that. He was now a provisional member of the Addams family clan.

The door to the balcony opened again, and Wednesday walked out. While she was back in her long black and grey dress, she had foregone her normal black tights, and was barefoot. Her toes were free of polish.

She curled up next to Harry and looked down. She didn't say anything, nor did Harry. They just sat there and watched people play as the sun slowly started to set.

---

*Hogwarts was a home away from home. For many years he had been through a love-hate relationship with it.*

*These days it was much more love. He was happy teaching, and was starting to do a much better job of it.*

*His apartment was larger than his cottage, and he had a private potions laboratory.*

*And with his good mood, he started the year as positive as he could remember being.*

---

"Did you have a nice holiday?" Severus asked Minerva as they walked toward the Headmaster's office.

"I did," Minerva said, she was looking a little shifty, as if she knew something he didn't. "Portugal, this year."

"How lovely," Severus replied, opening the door for her with a flourish.

She smiled at him and almost ran into the room. He followed her at a more sedate pace. They were the last to arrive.

"Ahh, Minerva, Severus," Albus said, his eyes twinkling. "I was just about to introduce our new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor."

"Oh?" he asked silkily. He could feel the tension in the room.

"Yes, Remus Lupin."

Remus walked slowly forward from the back of the room, where he had been hidden by the shadows. His clothes were dishevelled and threadbare, and he looked tired.

"Werewolf," Snape hissed.

"Vampire," Remus hissed back as he approached.

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling brighter, as the other staff members edged backward. "I'm sure you two can work together," the headmaster said softly.

Severus sneered at the Headmaster, before he moved over to Remus. "You look like shit."

Remus rolled his eyes. "Damn international Portkey people lost my luggage; this was all I had that was clean."

Severus winced as he clapped Remus on the back cheerfully. "I've got some stuff that might fit you," he said, "pop by after the meeting and we'll get you sorted until those fools find your luggage."

"Thanks, Sev. You're looking more relaxed."

"I had a few days to think," he agreed as he took a seat next to Remus. "I talked to Nick, and he seems to think that my ideas about the Wolfsbane have promise. We're going to work on it this year."

"Well, I'm happy to volunteer for testing," Remus replied cheerfully.

Snape looked up, the rest of the Professors were staring at them, as if they couldn't quite mentally process what had just happened. Even Professor Dumbledore was looking nonplussed.

"Shall we get started?" he asked smoothly.

"Err, yes," Minerva said slowly. "The first order of business is the Head boy and girl."

"Just give it to Harry and Wednesday," Severus said, only slightly serious.

"They're third years," Minerva pointed out with a roll of her eyes. "Penelope Clearwater is the leading candidate for Head girl."

"No objections from me," Severus said. Pomona and Filius agreed, and then Albus did as well.

"The leading Head boy candidate is Percy Weasley."

Pomona and Filius both looked to Severus. He mentally rolled his eyes; it looks like he was designated spokesman. "If you'd asked me at the end of last year," he said silkily, "I'd have agreed completely. I dislike the boy intensely. Putting him in the Head boy position would pretty much guarantee that he ends the year either dead or beyond help." He paused to let his statement sink in, before continuing, "However, as I like Molly and Arthur, I'll say 'absolutely not'. We need a Head boy who is open minded and has the ability to think on his feet. What we do *not* need is a brown nosing rule-follower who'll try everything he can to get in Harry and Wednesday's face."

"But his standing..." Minerva said weakly.

"The boy might take the opportunity to grow," Albus interjected. "It could be good for him."

Severus turned and stared at Dumbledore. "The school is not here for your entertainment," he said coldly, "Nor is it a personal fiefdom, where games are played for your amusement. If you want Weasley dead, just say so, and I'll poison him tomorrow and save us all the bother."

There were several gulps from around the table. And one mostly hidden snigger from Remus. "Pomona, who's your best male Hufflepuff?"

"Jack Stroper," she replied instantly.

"Tall boy, good at duelling?"

She nodded.

"He'll do."

Again, the other professors gaped at him. "What?" he sneered, "my senior Slytherin would be Marcus, and we're not having a Head boy who had to do a year twice."

"I'm happy with him," Filius added. "Minerva?"

"He does have good grades," she admitted. "And perhaps we should let it be known that personality and leadership skills are just as important as good marks and following the rules."

"Good," Severus said before the headmaster could interrupt. "What's next on the agenda?"

Severus sat next to Remus at the Professor's table as the students started to wander in.

"Nervous?" he asked Remus.

"A little," Remus replied.

"Don't be. They're not bad kids, and with your personality you'll be fine. What are you going to do about the club Harry and Wednesday run?"

"Very little, I'll concentrate on the traditional curriculum, and let them deal with the skills you'll need if Death Eaters actually attacked. If I was to teach a student to use the bone breaking curse on someone's genitals like Wednesday did last year, I'd be lynched."

Severus laughed softly.

As the year before, all the returning students were in their seats before Harry and Wednesday arrived and took their places.

"You can't tell, can you," Remus whispered.

"What they did over the summer?" Snape replied. "Not at all. The other kids have no idea at all, it's almost scary."

"Indeed," Remus agreed. "Percy's not happy."

The prat of a Weasley was glaring at Harry and Wednesday, and further down, the boar was matching him. "Some things don't change."

"Don't be too hard on them," Remus suggested. "Ron's got issues with being the youngest male, and after the first year he then had to watch his sister make friends with his enemy, and join the house of 'evil'. And Percy still thinks that the answers to life are found in a rule book."

"Those are not excuses for closed mindedness," Severus replied.

"True," Remus agreed, "but they are kids, they'll grow out of it."

Snape grumbled, but didn't disagree. The first-years entered, and the Hat sung another of his songs. Severus never paid too much attention to them. He really didn't need advice from decrepit haberdashery.

He applauded politely as Remus was introduced, and hid a smile as the biggest cheers came from Hermione, Ginny and Pugsley.

Remus stood and bowed, as Dumbledore gave his next speech in the rotation, and the feast started.

Severus poked his food with his fork.

"Missing Grandmama's broth?"

"Yeah," he admitted.

"You're not the only one."

Snape looked at his Slytherins, to find that Harry was speaking to Hermione and Ginny, before Ginny said something and smiled happily. Harry nodded and went back to pushing his food around a plate. Ginny was talking animatedly to Hermione, who pulled a quill and a piece of parchment out of her pocket, and they started to write.

"A galleon says that Ginny's just volunteered to cook," Severus said softly.

"Never mind that," Remus replied, "concentrate that Slytherin nature of yours on getting us some of it."

Severus laughed softly. As the meal finished, Jack and Penelope stood and headed toward the Slytherin table.

Severus climbed to his feet and walked over so that he could listen in. Remus was a second behind him.

"Hi, Harry, Wednesday," Penelope said.

"Penelope, Jack," Harry replied solemnly. "Congratulations."

"Thank you. We know that you had a good relationship with Jacob and Miranda last year, and we hope that can continue this year."

Harry nodded.

"Are you planning on keeping the club going?" Jack asked.

"Professor Lupin is a competent professor," Harry replied.

"I might be," Remus said, as he walked forward, "however, I'm going to be teaching the curriculum, there is plenty to explore outside that."

Wednesday tilted her head at Remus. "Will you pay the price?" she asked.

Remus rolled his eyes. "Why don't you just ask me?"

Wednesday looked innocent, "because then we might owe you, we prefer to be in credit."

"What is the price?"

"Private lessons, for whatever we want to learn."

"Deal."

Harry looked back at Jack and Penelope and nodded. "Hermione, Ginny and Pugsley will organise the times with you. Tell everyone to send home for any family weapons they might like, we're going to teach some more hand-to-hand stuff this year."

"Cool," Jack said excitedly.

Wednesday looked at Remus for a second, and then at the two Head students. She raised her hand and a dome of silence appeared – separating them from the rest of the student body. "Professor Lupin is a werewolf."

Remus went white.

Penelope and Jack looked at each other, then at the Harry and Wednesday, before finishing on Professor Lupin. Penelope frowned, and then said, "Werewolves are dark creatures, but we've been learning that Dark doesn't mean evil, and besides, we've been told that by the Ministry, so it's possibly not true. It doesn't matter, as long as you can teach."

"Yeah," Jack added.

"Thank you," Remus replied.

Wednesday nodded. "See, it wasn't that difficult, was it?"

"I've had many years of people's responses," Remus replied.

"Idiot's responses," Wednesday said dismissively. "Secrets always come out at the worst time, now you can control how it will be disseminated."

"Thank you," Remus said.

Harry and Wednesday nodded. Harry cancelled the spell Wednesday had created and they walked off slowly.

Penelope watched them go and then turned to Pugsley, Hermione and Ginny.

"We can meet up tomorrow," Pugsley suggested, "after we have our schedules."

"Thanks," Penelope said, and then sighed as Percy walked over.

"Penelope," he said.

"Percy," she replied formally.

Jack rolled his eyes.

"So, Jack," Ginny said, as she hopped up and walked over to the Head boy. "What's it like being the Head boy?" Her voice was flirtatious, despite her age, and she held herself confidently.

"It's good," Jack said warily, looking at Ginny.

Ginny preened at him, and reached out to lightly stroke the badge. "It does look shiny," she said huskily, as she stepped into his personal space, and used her sleeve to polish it.

"Ginevra!" Percy choked.

"Go away, Percy," Ginny purred, "and let the Head boy and I have a chat. You should never interrupt the Head boy, he deserves our respect, and we should do *everything* he says, right? No matter what that might be, right?"

Percy went white, and then red, and then white again. Hermione sniggered at him, and he looked offended, before he turned on his heel and stormed away.

Ginny giggled and sat back down again. "Sorry," she apologised to Jack, "but I'm actually not interested in you at all – you're far too old for me, and I'm too young to be interested in anything to do with sex apart from gaining knowledge in a strictly academic sense, but I *do* enjoy playing with my *darling* brother."

Jack slowly started to laugh. "If you were a few years older," he muttered regretfully.

She smiled innocently at him. "If you ever want to see someone do that properly, watch Morticia. She's amazing." Ginny turned to Penelope, "congrats on getting Head girl, Pen, you deserve it."

"Thanks Gin-gin," Penelope replied with a grin. "We're still friends, right?"

"Of course," Ginny said eagerly, "I'm not going to blame you for coming to your senses. Besides," she added with another grin, "there are plenty of other, more open-minded, boys in the school."

"I'll see you tomorrow," Penelope said as she put her arm through Jack's and led him away.

"You're going to make a fine Addams," Pugsley said.

Ginny smiled happily, "That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me." With a happy bounce in her step, she walked out of the Great Hall.

Hermione laughed softly. "She also spent some time with Melissa."

"Common room, you two," Snape ordered with a slight smile, and watched as Hermione and Pugsley walked off.

"Is it always this much fun?" Remus asked.

"Occasionally," Snape admitted. He looked at his watch. "Want to come for a walk while I do my rounds?"

"Why not," Remus replied.

---

*As was par for course, the rest of the year did not go smoothly. But, it certainly wasn't boring. His attitude about how bad things could be might have been changed by discovering that Pinhead existed.*

*It taught him that nothing should be taken at face value, that there was no knowledge that could not be changed, and perhaps more importantly, just because something hadn't been done before, didn't mean it couldn't be done.*

*Albus had continued to be a puzzle, and as Snape put more pieces into it, he did not like the picture that was forming. Albus almost seemed to resent the friendship between him and Remus.*

---

"Enter," he called. The door to his office opened, and Daphne Greengrass walked in.

"Can we talk?" she asked.

"As Head of House or as your godfather?"

"Godfather, please."

"Take a seat, Daph," he said, nodding toward to chairs next to his bookcase. "Drink?"

"Please."

He clapped his hands and ordered a tray of tea, before he sat opposite her.

"What can I do for you?" he asked as he poured the tea into two cups and passed her one.

She sighed and curled up in the chair. "The balance of power has been shifting since Harry and Wednesday turned up. The older students who are into the pure blood stuff are leaving, and the moderates are in charge."

He nodded.

"But that's just the school. It's changing out there, but no one knows. And you're part of it."

"I am?" he asked, neither agreeing nor denying.

"You spent some time with them, and you've changed. You're happier, but are a bit sneakier."

He allowed a hint of a smile to appear on his face.

"And you don't answer unless someone asks you a direct question," she added.

"As interesting as this is," he said softly, "what is it that you want?"

---

And you're a lot more direct. How do I get in?"

"Get into where?"

"Harry and Wednesday are *not* children," she stated. "They do things with magic that I would have sworn was impossible. And they are dragging Pugsley, Hermione and Ginny behind them. Ginny is the top student in her year, and Pugsley and Hermione are behind Harry and Wednesday in ours.

"No one in Slytherin doubts where the power is, and as they grow, it's going to become harder to enter. I need to get into the group *now* to have any sort of influence when they explode out of Hogwarts."

Severus nodded slowly. "All true," he agreed. "And yet, I would advise against it."

"Why?"

"Because they do not accept prejudice, they do not accept any thought that is not your own, and they welcome creatures. I had a most enjoyable evening talking to a werewolf and a two hundred year old vampire."

Daphne nodded. "And if I don't particularly care if someone is a vampire, a Muggle or anything else?"

"That's a good start."

"I could try seducing Harry."

Severus looked at his God-daughter and sighed. "Aren't you a little young for that?"

"I meant in a few years time," she said weakly.

"Do you think it would work?"

Daphne tilted her head slightly and grinned. "Possibly, I'm going to be very good looking."

"As your godfather, I'd advise you to drop that idea."

"Because?"

"I met a rather nice lady by the name of Melissa over the holidays. I thought she was a full Veela, when actually she was part Veela-part Succubus, so you can imagine how attractive she is."

Daphne wrinkled her nose and nodded.

"I found out later that she tried something with Harry in the past. She failed, and now, she is in love with him, and knows that she will never have him. She tries to avoid him, but can't at his birthday. And every year, they put her under the worst torture possible – they're nice to her. And that is the Addams clan, leadership challengers are encouraged, but you better be prepared to pay the price when you lose.

"I take it you saw Ginny's playing with Jack after dinner?"

Daphne nodded.

"A lot of that came from Morticia. Don't think that just because she doesn't flaunt it, that Wednesday can't be even more devastating."

Daphne nodded slowly. "And I doubt I could beat Wednesday in a fight anyway."

"You couldn't," Severus replied. "She has been trained all her life. She has killed already, and will kill again, and she has no compunctions about it. While you were still toddling around, she was being taught how to throw a knife."

Daphne nodded. "I expected as much. But I still want it. How do I do it?"

"You've talked to Pugsley?"

Daphne shook her head. "I don't want to go in that way, I want in at the top level."

Severus smiled, "If you can accept that your nightmares will pale into comparison with what you will see with them; then there is a very simple way to try."

"And that is?"

"Ask Wednesday. She'll give you an answer."

Daphne nodded slowly. "Thanks."

"How's your mother?"

"She's good, wondered why you weren't around as much this year."

"And Astoria?"

"The little bitch is still obsessed with marrying Malfoy. I seem to have failed to inform her of his little problem," she replied, a visible smirk on her face.

Before Severus could answer, his internal Floo activated. "Everyone turn on the Wireless," Pomona said. The Floo closed almost instantly.

Severus waved his wand, and his Wireless burst into life.

*"... had Chadwick reporting for the Wizard Wireless Network, earlier today, there was a daring escape from Azkaban, Ministry Officials are blaming He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, although insisting that he has not returned to a fully corporeal state.*

*"Convicted criminal Lucius Malfoy, along with the infamous Sirius Black and Bellatrix Lestrangle had all escaped. Black and his cousin, Lestrangle, were both prominent Death Eaters during the war, and it is expected that they will be after Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, and defeater of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named all those years ago.*

*"Minister Fudge has promised strong and decisive leadership, and we will see his actions tomorrow.*

*"This is Chad Chadwick, for the Wizard Wireless Network. We now return you to your scheduled programme."*

Severus flicked his wand at the radio and it fell silent. He looked at Daphne, who had a thoughtful look on her face.

"If Black expects to get to Harry, he's going to have a problem."

"Especially as he's completely innocent," Severus added.

"What!"

Severus smiled faintly. "I suspect that not everything is what it seems," he predicted. "And that things are going to be interesting around here. Again."

Daphne looked at him and grumbled, "And this is why I need to be in – I hate not knowing what is going on."

"Get used to it," he replied.

Daphne grinned and rolled her eyes at him. "I'll see you later."

"Don't be a stranger."

"You know," Daphne said as she stopped at his door. "You're a lot more likeable these days."

"Get," he ordered, hiding the smile on his face.

Daphne poked her tongue out at him and left.

---

The next morning Severus found out exactly what "strong and decisive" leadership was.

Dementors.

In Hogwarts.

And just he felt that the decisions in this school couldn't get any worse, they did. What sort of idiots would allow soul-suckers into a school?

Apparently the idiots named Albus Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge.

"Explain, once more," he said in the meeting, "just what good Dementors that were unable to keep these people in prison, are going to be for us?"

"They will be able to capture them," Fudge blustered.

"Right," Severus agreed. "Albus, you are accepting this?"

"He has no choice," Fudge replied, "I am in charge of security."

"Excellent," Severus said silkily, "I'll ensure that you get all the credit."

Fudge looked suspicious, as Snape spun dramatically, raising his arm at the right moment so that his cloak would stream behind him as he walked out. It was a technique he'd learned from Marcus.

He walked down into the Slytherin Common Room. Most of his house was gathered around a Wireless, listening to a report on the Dementors.

"Sir," Adrian Pucey said, "this is ridiculous."

Agreed," he said sourly. "Unfortunately, the Minister insists."

"But Malfoy, LeStrange and Black escaped from them," Adrian continued.

"A point I made," Severus sighed. "I will be informing the press of his response."

"Professor," Pugsley said, from where he was sat with Hermione and Ginny, "What's the problem with them?"

"For normal people, Pugsley, they tend to have a devastating effect."

"Oh," Pugsley said and frowned. "Can you mimic the effects?"

"I can," Severus replied slowly.

"If you do so, then maybe we'll be able to see if we can deal with it," Ginny suggested. "Fear of the unknown is often worse than fear of a fact."

Severus nodded and pulled out his wand. He cast the spell on himself.

Screams rendered the air, as students turned away from him.

He cancelled it immediately, before he clapped his hands, and ordered chocolate from the house-elf that appeared – a lot of it.

Ginny and Hermione were shivering as they tried to control their emotions, Pugsley looked faintly surprised. "That's a memory I don't want to think about," he muttered. "What did you two remember?"

"I don't know," Hermione whispered. "It was bad, but it's gone now."

"Yeah," Ginny added. "I was terrified, but now I'm not."

"Bugger," Pugsley said as he took some of the chocolate.

"Problem?" Harry asked as he walked into the Common Room from his bedroom. Wednesday was beside him.

Pugsley said something rapidly in a language that Snape didn't understand.

Harry replied in the same language.

Pugsley talked for another minute, his tone and body language pleading.

Harry nodded. "Call for a meeting in thirty minutes, in the Great Hall. Advise everyone to bring anyone who wants to learn, we'll have an open meeting."

"Thanks," Pugsley said, as Harry and Wednesday walked out of the door.

Everyone turned to look at Pugsley, who was grinning. "They're gonna teach us how to fight 'em," he cheered.

There was a feeling of relief that swept through the room.

"Ginny, you've got the Gryffindors, Hermione, the Ravenclaws, I'll do the Hufflepuffs."

"And I'll mention it to the Professors," Severus added in amusement. "I'm sure some of them will need a refresher course."

"Cool," Pugsley grinned. "Everyone else who wants to learn, twenty-eight minutes in the Great Hall."

Without exception, every single student turned up – even the Weasleys. Most of the Professors were standing around the edges of the crowd. Albus Dumbledore was a noticeable absentee.

"Professor Lupin," Harry called. "What is a Dementor?" He was standing on a raised platform where the Professors' table usually sat.

"Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles feel their presence, though they can't see them. Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling and every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself...soul-less and evil. You will be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life."

A lot of the students went very pale at this.

"And this," Harry said, barely audibly, "is what the Minister sees fit to guard us with. It would be better for all concerned, if Wednesday and I had a picnic and waited for them to come to us. But as our request has been denied, we'll continue."

"Dementors are alive. There is one rule in life that we know. Everything dies. Nothing is immortal. We've just not discovered how to kill them yet, but we are working on it."

"Everyone has to have a hobby," Pugsley called, breaking the tension neatly.

In the meantime, there is a way to fight the effects, and that is, Hermione?”

“The Patronus charm,” Hermione replied instantly.

Harry nodded.

“Indeed, the Patronus charm. The charm gives form to your most positive emotions. These positive emotions are the antithesis of everything that is a Dementor.

“We will teach you how to cast this charm, and you will be able to do it in your sleep after we have finished.”

“Isn't it supposed to be difficult?” A fifth year asked.

“No,” Wednesday replied flatly. “Unless your name is Fudge, in which case, it would be impossible. For any competent Wizard or Witch, it is easily achievable.”

From the side, Ron Weasley opened his mouth, only to be hit by eight curses from nearby students.

“Wednesday,” Harry said softly, “please demonstrate.”

“Expecto Patronum,” she called, her voice not changing in the slightest. From her wand, a bright silver light appeared; it coalesced into a glowing white Nundu, that prowled around, looking for a Dementor. It sniffed the air suddenly, and took off, straight through a wall.

“Are you going to cancel it?” Severus asked.

Harry looked at him. “Why?”

Severus laughed under his breath.

“The incantation itself is easy,” Harry continued. “But the hard bit is calling up a positive memory. Magic is about belief, and the belief in a positive memory will help ensure that you are successful.” He looked at the students in front of him. “You,” he said, pointing at a second year Hufflepuff.

“Me?” she squeaked.

“I'm not going to harm you,” Harry said, “come up here.”

The girl took a deep breath and walked forward.

“Twenty points to Hufflepuff,” Severus murmured under his breath.

Harry crouched down on one knee, and put his hand on the girl's cheek. She smiled tentatively at him.

“Megan, you remember the incantation?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“Cast it!”

“Expecto Patronum!” The silver light exploded from her wand, and contrary to what Severus would have believed possible, a silver horse quickly took shape.

“I did it,” she gasped. The horse faded away as she cancelled the spell.

“Can you do it again, without my help?” Harry asked.

She nodded firmly and cast the spell again.

Harry smiled faintly at her. “Good girl.”

“Thanks,” she whispered as she bounced off the stage and back to her friends, who crowded around her, patting her on the back and generally congratulating her.

Harry looked at Pugsley and said something in the same language they had used earlier. Pugsley nodded, whispered something to Hermione and Ginny, and joined them on the platform.

“Form three lines,” Harry said, “one at a time, from each line come on the stage and perform the charm.”

The first up was a Ravenclaw first year boy, who shivered as Wednesday touched his cheek, but sure enough, a few seconds later and a shout, a silver fox appeared.

Ginny and Hermione cheered loudly – a cheer that was quickly taken up by the others. The cheering continued as the students performed the charm. From the strongest to the weakest, all it took was the touch to the face, and the charm was produced.

The atmosphere in the Great Hall was electric, everyone was in a great mood, and that, perhaps, helped some of the weaker children.

Even Longbottom performed an adequate charm.

Both Ron and Percy Weasley switched queues to avoid Harry and Wednesday. Eventually, Hermione and Ginny were the last students to have a go, and they went to Harry and Wednesday. Pugsley was on his knees, breathing hard and looking absolutely shattered.

Two shouts, and two more animals appeared, before fading away.

“Remember,” Harry said quietly, “and you will be able to cast that every time.”

“Okay everyone, Common Rooms,” Snape called, before he decided to try a joke. “It’s the professors’ turn, and we don’t want to look bad if we fail after you all did so well. Prefects, make sure that no one goes missing, we’ll be checking later.”

There were more than a few surprised looks, and a fair amount of laughter as the students poured out, talking and joking with each other.

The doors slammed shut, leaving the five students and the Professors.

Harry and Wednesday were now looking even more expressionless than normal. Snape was positive that this was because they were utterly exhausted.

“That was impossible,” Remus stated.

Harry sighed. “Clearly it wasn’t.”

“Harry, most adults struggle to perform that charm – it’s not even taught at Hogwarts!”

“They did it,” Wednesday pointed out. “Therefore, it is not impossible.”

“I’ve never managed to do it,” Severus interrupted the nascent argument before it could explode. He walked up to Harry, choosing him rather than Wednesday for more reasons than he wanted to go into.

Irma Prince walked up to Wednesday.

Harry touched him on the cheek, and all of sudden he remembered something from his childhood. He was sitting on a couch, studying, when Lily Evans sat beside him, and they talked all night.

“Cast the charm.”

“Expecto Patronum,” he whispered. He felt a rush on his magic, and that his magic was somehow supported. From his wand came the bright silver light that quickly formed into a large bear.

He let it vanish and stared at Harry. “Explain.”

“I plucked your happiest memory from your mind and bolstered your magic,” Harry said softly. “It’s not quite Legilimency, as I can’t see what you were thinking of, but it’s close enough to be illegal. Now that your magic knows how to cast the charm, you’ll be able to do it now.”

“You’ve each cast over three hundred charms?” Filius asked in shock.

“Helped,” Harry corrected. “Is there anyone else?”

“I can cast it,” Filius said. The other remaining professors agreed.

There was a knock on the door, before it slowly opened and Kingsley Shacklebolt entered diffidently.

The Auror wandered around the Hall, looking at the walls and suits of armour.

“Mr Shacklebolt?” Minerva asked.

“Hmm?” he replied.

“Can we help you?”

Kingsley reached up and used the sleeve of his robe to polish a plaque. “Oh, the Minister sent me,” he said casually.

“And what did he want?”

“For me to give a message,” Kingsley said, as he sat on a chair and took his shoe off.

“And what,” Minerva said icily, “is this message?”

Kingsley yawned, and then stretched. He put his shoe back on. “He asked if the owner of the Nundu Patronus would please cancel the spell as it’s scaring the Dementors.”

Severus couldn’t help sniggering to himself.

And I'll give that message shortly. Do you know whose it is?"

"Miss Addams," Minerva replied. "You can give the message to her immediately, however, before you do, how is your mother?"

Kingsley smiled broadly. "She's doing grand. Grand. She asks about you."

"I must go and visit her soon."

"She still makes that cake you like."

"It goes straight to my hips, but it is worth it."

Kingsley sighed and stood. He wandered over to Wednesday. "The Minister of Magic hereby demands that you stop the Patronus spell forthwith," he recited in a bored voice.

"Okay," Wednesday agreed.

"Thank you. I shall report back to his Fudgeness immediately. I'd hate for him to be any more inconvenienced."

"Could you ask him a question for us?" Harry asked.

"But of course," Kingsley said, dropping the bored tone.

"If you could ask in front of a journalist, that would be better," Harry added. "Just ask him how the Dementors are supposed to protect the school if a charm by one student can frighten them away?"

Kingsley smirked. "I know just the journalist," he agreed. "Well, I'm on duty, so I'll see you all later." He wandered out slowly.

Harry took Wednesday's hand. "We're going to eat, then sleep for a few days, please excuse us from lessons."

"Of course," Severus replied, as Harry and Wednesday lead Pugsley, Ginny and Hermione out of the Great Hall. Hermione and Ginny were practically carrying Pugsley.

The doors slammed shut. Severus sat down on the edge of the platform.

Remus conjured a chair and sat near him. The other Professors soon joined them. For a few minutes there was silence, as everyone was lost in their own thoughts.

"Expecto Patronus," Severus said quietly. His bear appeared as before. "I had the Dark Mark," he continued, "and I've never found a happy enough memory to successfully cast that charm. Harry was correct, my magic knows how to produce one now, and it's as easy as a levitation spell."

"That's just not possible," Minerva said in disbelief.

"That's what I just said," Remus added.

"It leads to the question of what else could be taught like that?" Filius wondered.

"It leads to the question of how the bloody hell did they give me some power?" Severus said, "never mind the teaching. Harry supplanted my magic with some of his own. That's not supposed to be possible either."

"Actually," Irma Prince interrupted. "We have some books on power-sharing. They've over a thousand years old and written in Latin. They went through them last year."

Minerva sighed. "I was wrong, Severus," she said. "I am glad they are here. One hundred points each to Harry, Wednesday and Pugsley for successfully teaching a difficult charm to all the students and challenging my assumptions."

"Thank you," Severus replied, a little shocked.

"We'll still beat you at Quidditch," Minerva replied with a small smile.

"Only because they won't play," Snape pouted. "They told me not to be greedy."

Minerva smiled. "This is a weight off of my shoulders. I am pleased that the students will not have any problems with those Dementors."

"Yes," Pomona agreed. "My Hufflepuffs were very despondent before Pugsley dropped in and told everyone that Harry and Wednesday were going to teach anyone who wanted to know how to fight them. The faith my children have in those two is amazing."

"When it comes to killing things," Filius said lightly, "it's accepted that they'll know how to do it. No one likes feeling helpless and this knowledge will ensure that the Dementors have a limited effect."

"It's a publicity stunt," Aurora Sinistra said with a sniff. "I don't exactly feel safer knowing they are outside the school gates."

"None of us do," Remus agreed.

"I wouldn't worry too much," Severus said. "For those that don't know, Black is innocent. Lucius is hardly worth worrying about, he's a politician more than a fighter, and Bellatrix is about as sane as Albus is these days."

"Black, if he comes looking for Harry, it will be to help him. Lucius will try to kill Fudge, and that just leaves Bellatrix – and frankly, I wish she'd just attack so that Wednesday can kill her and we can get on with more important things."

Most of the Professors nodded along with him.

Severus climbed to his feet. "I'm going to go and see if they are still awake, if they are, I'm going to move them to the Slytherin Head boy and girl rooms. If they are going to sleep for a few days, then I want them feeling safe."

Remus got to his feet and accompanied him out. "I've never seen so many shell-shocked adults before."

"And you're not?"

"Not really," Remus replied. "Did you notice that yet again, we didn't see Harry do anything?"

"Except boost my magic."

"True, but I'll bet it's a relatively simple spell."

Snape nodded. "Probably."

"Damn it, just once I want that boy to show what he can do."

Severus laughed softly and entered the Slytherin Common Room. Harry, Wednesday, Pugsley, Hermione and Ginny were sat around one of the tables, three of them eating.

He walked over to the table. "Harry, Wednesday, Pugsley, I'm going to allow you to use the Head boy and girl's rooms while you recuperate. They are protected so that only people you allow in can enter."

"Thank you," Harry replied.

Severus clapped his hands, and ordered the House elves that appeared to move Harry, Wednesday and Pugsley's stuff.

Harry stretched and looked at Hermione, "take notes."

"Yes, Harry."

Snape met Harry's eyes for a second, and he could see just how exhausted the boy was. But it didn't show in how he walked to the far side of the Common Room. The doors opened, and the three of them entered.

He decided not to ask how the two rooms were split between three people.

---

*The next morning, the Daily Prophet showed that at least some of the kids had Owled home, as it was full of the fact that all the students now knew the Patronus charm.*

*Anonymous sources from Hogwarts recounted the whole thing in detail. It appeared that someone at the Prophet had worked out what charm had been used, and was demanding to know why such a useful charm was forbidden.*

*The charm did exactly what Harry had said – it brought the most positive memory to the foreground, and as that was the hardest part of the Patronus charm, it was of great benefit.*

*The reporter finished the piece with the opinion that the Ministry didn't want people to know it, so that they could use Dementors as a threat – a sign of a regime completely out of control.*

*Fudge's denials were on the second page, along with Kingsley's questions. It wasn't a good day for the Minister.*

*The students were all in a good mood, even Ron and Percy were keeping any negative thoughts to themselves.*

*Hermione and Ginny fielded a lot of questions and accepted grateful thanks. Pugsley returned a day before Harry and Wednesday, but as he explained later, it was more so that he could be the public face, so that Harry and Wednesday wouldn't have to deal with people they didn't want to.*

*Harry and Wednesday had helped because Hermione and Ginny remembered Pinhead when they felt the effects of a Dementor, and because Pugsley had asked on behalf of the rest of the school.*

*Their motivations for saying 'yes' to the rest of the school remained unclear.*

*The rest of that year was pleasantly unsurprising. He started his private lessons with Harry and Wednesday, and discovered that rather than*

*him teaching them, it was three people working together on a research project.*

*He hadn't had so much fun in years.*

*His work with Nicholas Flamel gave him several avenues to follow for an improved Wolfsbane.*

*Every Tuesday he spent the evening with the other students, watching Harry and Wednesday teach how to fight with weapons and spells. Harry never demonstrated himself, beyond showing how to hold a blade perfectly.*

*Christmas came and went, and while it was difficult for him to overcome the feeling that he shouldn't give presents to a couple of students, he ended up giving in and passed his journals to them, so that they could learn everything he knew.*

*Wednesday accepted the present with a grateful thanks, and in return, he got the newest self-stirring cauldron. A present he was ecstatic about.*

*It was after Easter that things started to happen again, when he had let down his guard a little.*



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The Third Year

## Part 3

Severus entered the Slytherin Common Room to pass on a message to the Second years, when he felt a slight breeze brush past him.

He looked over at Harry and Wednesday. They were standing next to Pugsley, Ginny and Hermione, next to a few wooden chairs and a large cauldron. There was a fire under the cauldron.

Behind Wednesday, a shape suddenly materialised and lunged at her.

Harry's hand shot out, catching the attacker's arm. He twisted it violently, throwing the assailant to the floor, while kicking a nearby wooden chair violently. The chair splintered, parts of it flying in to the air.

Harry grabbed one of the large pieces and rammed it down, stopping just above the chest of the figure on the floor.

"Marcus," Harry sighed.

Marcus grinned. "I got you to do something!" he said happily.

"Nothing that Snape hasn't already seen," Wednesday replied, an amused tone in her voice.

"Why are you here?" Harry asked.

"Could you let me up?"

"No. I've yet to decide the punishment for breaking my rule."

"I've attacked Wednesday before," Marcus pouted.

"The other rule."

"Oh, that one."

"Talk."

"Lucius Malfoy tried to break into the Ministry of Magic's Department of Mysteries last night. He was trying to enter the Prophecy room."

"Hmm," Harry said, as he stood and repaired the chair.

Marcus seemed to flow to his feet.

Severus walked over. "Marcus."

"Severus."

"Any ideas?" Harry asked.

Snape winced. "I'd forgotten about that. There was a prophecy made with your name in it."

"The one you told Voldemort about that made him attack James and Lily."

It took all of Severus' self control not to either blush or gape. He nodded, extremely embarrassed.

"It might be more important than I thought," Harry mused.

Marcus frowned and sniffed. "That smell is familiar."

"It should be," Wednesday muttered.

"It's Grandmama's secret recipe!" he said. "How did you get hold of it?"

"We didn't," Wednesday replied. "It's been passed on to Ginny."

"No fair," Marcus pouted. "Can I have some?" he asked as he reached forward.

Ginny smacked his hands with her ladle. "No!" she said firmly. "Bad Vampire."

Marcus pouted again, and then looked surprised as there were a couple of screams of terror from the other children. "Oh please," he sniffed derisively, "It's obvious I work for Harry and Wednesday, and I'm hardly going to just walk in like this while they are here and kill you, am I?"

The students who had screamed had the grace to look embarrassed.

"Unless Harry wants me to," Marcus finished hopefully.

"Everyone's being wonderfully open-minded recently," Harry said dryly.

"I never get any fun."

The door to the Common Room opened, and Albus, Minerva, and a couple of Aurors dashed in, wands at the ready.

"There's a Vampire in Hogwarts," Minerva called

"Freeze," One of the Aurors shouted, pointing his wand at Snape.

"Imbecile," Snape snarled, trying hard to ignore Pugsley giggling quietly.

"That's Snape, you idiot," the other Auror said.

"It's good to see that the legendary security of Hogwarts is still protecting the sanctity of Hogwarts. Why, several minutes after a vampire has made his way to one of the Common rooms, and had time for a chat, the Headmaster, Deputy, an Auror and an idiot show up," Harry noted. "Fortunately, this Vampire happens to be working for me. Marcus, disarm the Aurors."

Marcus blurred, and when he reappeared, he had two wands in his hand.

The Aurors blanched.

Harry shook his head pityingly. Wednesday waved her wand, sending a messenger Patronus.

"Harry," Albus started.

"Headmaster," Harry interrupted. "We were just talking about you. Exactly what is the content of the prophecy you heard from Professor Trelawney about me?"

Albus froze. "That is not information I can share," he eventually said. "Perhaps when you're older."

"Ooo," Marcus said, "bad move. Harry and Wednesday work on trust, and you're blowing any trust you might have out the window."

"Shush, Marcus," Wednesday said.

Harry was looking directly into Dumbledore's eyes, Dumbledore wasn't looking away.

After thirty seconds, Harry sighed and looked away. "You willingly withhold information from me," he stated. "That is not something I can accept."

"It is for the best," Albus replied sadly.

"We've been here for over two and a half years and you still have no idea, do you," Wednesday said. "You still think we will eventually act however you dreamed?"

"This is the last time I will say this," Pugsley said, his eyes were dark, his voice harsh. "We are Addams."

Kingsley interrupted before Albus could respond by bursting into the Common Room. "I swear that I need to install some brooms by the gate so I don't have to run. I'm positive that the distance is getting longer.

"Collins, would you care to explain just why a Vampire is holding your wand?"

"He took them, sir," Collins replied.

"Oh," Kingsley replied. "That's alright then. As long as our wands are taken away from us, we should always just stand around looking really useless. It impresses people to no end. But at least you have your back up wand, right?"

Collins looked down and shook his head.

"My office, both of you," Kingsley ordered, his voice turning harsh.

The two Aurors turned and marched out.

"Harry," Kingsley continued, "you do know that there's a vampire standing next to you?"

"Marcus, Kingsley," Harry said. "Kingsley, Marcus."

"Hi," Marcus said, giving a small wave.

"Don't I know you?" Kingsley asked.

Marcus shrugged.

"You're the one who stopped me falling off of that bridge when I was chasing Malfoy."

Marcus wrinkled his nose. "Harry said you were a good cop. He dislikes incompetence."

"Auror," Hermione corrected absently. "'Cop` is an Americanism."

"I *am* an American," Marcus pointed.

"And an Armenian, an African, an Australian," Pugsley started to list.

"Yes, thank you," Marcus replied frostily. "I've been around a bit."

"So I hear," Wednesday murmured.

"Stop that!"

Wednesday allowed a tiny expression of amusement to flicker over her face.

"Enough," Minerva said. "I was under the impression that Vampires could not enter Hogwarts."

"True," Marcus agreed cheerfully. "I'm glad we got that sorted."

Minerva glared at him, utilising the glare that Snape had last seen her use when the Weasleys had turned her hair Slytherin green.

"Damn, she's hot," Marcus said admiringly, in an audible whisper to Harry. "I'll bet she fucks like a demented mink."

Minerva went white, and then red, and then white again, as everyone looked on in absolute shock.

"Marcus," Pugsley said slowly, "you are possibly the bravest man I've ever met."

"What?" Marcus asked.

Minerva suddenly growled and pulled out her wand. She yanked several hairs from Albus's beard and transfigured them in to a stake. "Come here," she ordered in a terrifyingly quiet voice.

"Run," Pugsley advised.

Marcus grinned and vanished.

Minerva sniffed, and stabbed out. A piece of Marcus' cloak appeared in her hands. She turned and started to run out, the Common Room door closing behind her.

Pugsley dropped to his knees and started to laugh, hard. He was quickly joined by, Ginny and Hermione – even Harry and Wednesday smiled, as the other students broke into laughter as well.

Kingsley was rolling on the floor, clutching his stomach.

Albus's eyes were twinkling in amusement, but he was rubbing his chin where he had several hairs forcibly removed.

"We've yet to ascertain why there is a Vampire in my school," Albus pointed out.

"And we've yet to discover the contents of the prophecy you know about me," Harry replied, his amusement fading like the mist on a summer's day.

"The safety of the students is paramount," Albus replied.

"Which is why you hid the Philosopher's stone here?" Daphne asked from a group of children. "And why you hired a professor possessed by Voldemort, tried to send us to our deaths, allowed Umbridge to torture a couple of us, and didn't close the school when there was a Basilisk running around, and why you did nothing to protect us from the Dementors?"

"Miss Greengrass," Albus said warningly.

Snape hid a smile; that tone of voice never worked on his Goddaughter. He suspected that Daphne was using this opportunity to score a few points for herself.

Daphne rolled her eyes at him. "The only person with the problem with the Vampire seems to be you," she retorted. "Just because he's a dark creature doesn't make him evil!"

"Kingsley," Albus started.

"Don't look at me," Kingsley replied. "Any man brave enough to say *that* to Professor McGonagall is far too much of a man for me – even if he is a Vampire. Harry, he's cool, right?"

"I wouldn't say cool," Pugsley muttered.

Harry snorted in amusement. "He is."

Thought so,” Kingsley said. “I don’t suppose you could persuade him to pop by and see me some time? I think some of the Aurors need some more training.”

Harry nodded. “I’m going to lend him to Remus first; he broke my rule about coming here.”

“Which was?” Kingsley asked.

“Don’t,” Wednesday replied bluntly.

Kingsley sniggered. “Well, send him over when you get the chance.”

Harry nodded, and Kingsley nodded to the Headmaster, “Albus,” he said, as he wandered out, leaving the old man on his own.

Albus sighed and followed him out the door.

“I think I’ll go and talk to him,” Snape said softly.

“Try it,” Harry advised. “People who can’t change are useless to us.”

Snape decided he really didn’t want to know what that meant, and followed the Headmaster into his office. To try and cheer Dumbledore up, he even accepted a lemon drop.

They really were foul.

“What are you playing at, Albus?”

The Headmaster sighed. “I no longer know,” he confessed. “This is not how it is supposed to be, and I find myself unable to catch-up like I used to.”

“Stop playing,” Severus advised. “Harry and Wednesday are countering you the same way that they are dealing with the Ministry, by making everything public. Any manipulation on your part is heard by everyone, and they are decided that you are wrong.”

“They don’t know the whole story,” Albus protested.

“Exactly,” Severus agreed. “They only have the information from one side. And because of that, you are losing. Students are openly discussing when you are going to retire.”

“Retire?” Albus asked, looking completely shocked.

“Indeed,” Severus said as gently as he could. “Your meddling and playing is making people think that you are senile – and your refusal to treat Harry and Wednesday differently is backing that up.”

“They are children!”

“No, they’re not,” Severus growled. “They have been through more things than you can imagine, seen things you can not believe, that I can not believe and I was there! They are adults trapped in children’s bodies.”

Albus shook his head, “I have to, I have to do what is for the best.”

“Albus,” Snape said, as he stood. “I’m begging you to change your ways, I have seen how they deal with people who block them, and you do not deserve that – yet.”

“I think I will be fine,” Albus replied frostily.

Severus sighed. “Lucius Malfoy was found at the Ministry, looking for a prophecy last night,” he said, before nodding at Albus sadly, and made his way out of the room. It wasn’t the first time he had tried, but it was surely going to be the last. That was also the last piece of information he would give him.

He made his way toward his office, planning on calling it a night.

“Uncle Sev!”

Severus paused and turned. “Daphne?” He asked, wondering exactly why his goddaughter had called him that.

Daphne cast a reasonably good privacy spell. He smiled faintly and doubled its effectiveness. “Harry’s decided that he wants to know what is in that prophecy,” she said rapidly. “They’re going to the Ministry to get it.”

“And you want me to stop it?” he asked curiously.

“No, I want you to come so I can tag along!”

“They’re going to break into the Ministry,” he pointed out. “Hardly something your mother would approve of me helping.”

Daphne smiled innocently and batted her eyelids at him. “I won’t tell her if you don’t,” she said. “You aren’t planning on letting them go alone, are you?”

"You will do exactly what you are told," he said as he gave in. "You don't, and you will see why I have the reputation I do at this school, and being my goddaughter will not save you, understood?"

Daphne paled and nodded.

"Let's go," he said. "Where are they?"

"Stealing the invisible horses."

"The Thestrals?"

Daphne nodded.

"Follow me." He strode out, disabling the wards that stopped students from exiting, and walked toward the paddock where they were kept.

Marcus and Harry were the only people not on Thestrals. Pugsley had Hermione behind him, and she was holding on to him tightly. Wednesday had Ginny.

Harry looked at the two of them. "You are vouching for her?"

"I am," he replied.

"Don't let me down," Harry said in a low voice.

Snape swallowed and nodded.

Harry clicked his fingers and a Thestral walked over to them.

He took a few steps forward and slid on to the creature, before holding a hand down to Daphne. She grinned and pulled on his arm as she jumped.

Harry turned and jumped onto the back of the biggest Thestral. It reared back dramatically, before expanding its wings and taking off in one go.

Marcus smiled and vanished.

Wednesday and Pugsley gave identical yells, and their horses took off after the Alpha Thestral. A second later, his own Thestral followed – with no prodding from him.

"Uncle Sev," Daphne called. "What did Harry mean by that?"

He turned his head. "It means that if you do anything wrong, I'll pay the price."

"I won't let you down," she swore.

"If I thought you would, you wouldn't be here."

Daphne responded by hugging him and going quiet. He cast a warming charm on them, and settled in for a long ride. He'd not been on the back of a horse for a long time, and hoped he had a decent potion to deal with the effects.

The Thestral's speed was incredible as they flew over the country side. Up ahead, he could see that while Hermione wasn't enjoying it, Ginny was loving it. She had her hands in the air, and she was yelling.

Wednesday had a faint smile on her face, and was making her Thestral to swerve all over the place. Pugsley had a faintly resigned air to him as he kept his horse straight and level.

In the front, Harry seemed to be having a conversation, possibly with Marcus.

After a while, Harry swooped down, and they flew along a river. The river quickly expanded as they entered London, and it wasn't long before they landed near the Telephone box.

Marcus appeared next to them, as they dismounted. Harry said something to the lead Thestral, and they took off into the air.

"Ready?" Wednesday asked.

As everyone nodded, they all crammed into the telephone booth, apart from Marcus, who had vanished again.

"Useful trick, that," Daphne muttered.

"Indeed," Pugsley agreed.

Severus punched the numbers for the entry, and they soon descended.

Marcus reappeared at the bottom, as they entered the Atrium. "This way," he said cheerfully in a whisper.

"Does it strike anyone else how easy it is to break into here?" Daphne asked.

"There should be a guard," Harry said calmly. "He's currently unconscious."

"The advantage of having a vampire on the staff," Marcus added.

"I'll shut up now," Daphne said.

"Wise move," Pugsley muttered.

"Silence the lift," Harry ordered, as they entered.

Pugsley nodded and cast a charm, and the doors slid shut in absolute silence. Wednesday pressed the button for the Department of Mysteries, and they quickly descended.

They emerged into a circular room with doors at each side. As they shut the door behind them the room seemed to blur.

"Cute," Wednesday noted. "Hermione?"

Hermione shook herself and then pointed to the right.

"Good," Wednesday praised.

Hermione smiled massively and looked pleased. He could see Daphne looking confused.

"There's a charm that randomises the door," he whispered to her. "Wednesday was seeing if Hermione's been keeping up on her mental protection."

They entered a huge room with thousands of clocks. All types of clocks, from Grandfather to carriage clocks. At the far end of the room was a towering crystal bell jar, that gave off a dancing diamond bright light.

Harry walked off slowly, before he stopped. "Silence," he whispered.

Up ahead, they heard something fall, before there was a scream of terror followed by a hissing noise.

Harry started to run, Wednesday loping beside him. They turned a corner to find a wide corridor. Further down, a giant snake reared over a fallen person. "Nagini," he said.

Harry hissed something loudly as they moved nearer the snake. Nagini hissed something back, only for Wednesday to cast a cutting curse at it.

Nagini ducked and slithered away.

Harry dropped to his knees and slid, stopping next to the man.

"Dad!" Ginny cried.

Harry sighed and cast a healing charm, followed by a freezing charm. "Ginny, he's been bitten. I've frozen him, and stopped the poison temporarily. He'll need proper treatment, when we've finished."

Ginny lightly touched her father's face. "Thank you," she said gratefully to Harry.

"Split up, find the snake," Harry ordered.

They all took different directions, and spread out. Daphne started down one corridor, but he grabbed her shoulder. "We stick together," he ordered. "Nagini is Voldemort's snake."

Daphne gulped and nodded.

As silently as they could, their wands at the ready, they started down. The light was annoying inconsistent, making shadows into fake-snakes.

"Diffindo," Daphne chanted, only to hit a shadow and slice a large hole into the marble floor.

"Easy," Snape advised.

From under one of the shelves, a shape launched itself at them, moving faster than he thought possible.

He barely had time to cast a shield spell, as Daphne managed to hit it with another Diffindo. It was a glancing spell, but it was enough to slow the snake down a little.

"Well done."

She smiled.

The Snake reared back to strike again, when it jerked forward. It thrashed, throwing off its assailant. Wednesday landed like a cat, and jumped forward, her knife flashing in the diamond light.

Nagini made a strange hissing sound, like air escaping from a balloon, as she collapsed down, her throat cut.

Wednesday wipe her blade on the snake and nodded. "Good shot," she said to Daphne.

"You get all the fun," Marcus complained, as everyone else arrived.

"I do," Wednesday agreed.

Harry moved over to the dead snake and took a vial out of his pocket. He dumped the contents on Nagini's head, and nodded as it started to smoke.

"Let's keep moving," he ordered.

The next room was cold, much colder than the previous, and was dominated by row after row of huge shelves, each with hundreds of small dusty glass orbs.

"Point me, Harry Potter Prophecy," Harry muttered. His wand spun before pointing down the aisle.

Harry started to run, Wednesday again loping beside him, her wand in one hand, and her knife in the other.

They stopped by number ninety-three, and Harry moved down the aisle slowly, until he peered up. Wednesday climbed up the shelves and grabbed a dusty globe. She chucked it to Harry as he caught it, a drawling voice spoke.

"Very good, Potter. Now turn around, nice and slowly, and give that to me."

Whatever Lucius expected to happen, it probably wasn't what did – Wednesday's knife flying through the air at him.

Lucius jumped to the side, and slammed into one of the shelves. Other black shapes emerged. "Potty," one of the Death Eaters said in a baby voice. "Give us the prophecy, we need to know what it says."

"Bellatrix Lestrange," Harry said in a cold voice. "I'm glad you're here, I needed a present for Wednesday. Your slow death and the symphonies of agonies you will sing will become legend."

Bellatrix gaped at him, as Wednesday gently kissed Harry on the cheek. "Thank you," Wednesday said gratefully. She looked up. "Come here," she said, her voice suddenly acquiring an underlay of power.

Bellatrix's eyes went blank as she took several steps forward.

"Bellatrix," Malfoy snapped.

Bellatrix shook her head and paused.

"Snape," Malfoy sneered. "Our Lord will make you pay for your betrayal."

"Your lord will be dead long before then," Harry said, his voice still cold. "Snape is one of us now."

Snape nodded in agreement. He was a born follower, and he was okay with that now. He preferred following the Clan leader to the Dark Lord or the Light Lord.

"Hmm," Harry said, "twelve of you, eight of us. There's only one thing to do at a time like this."

"Surrender," Malfoy suggested, raising his wand again.

"Not even close," Harry replied. "Kill them all."

Out of nowhere, Marcus appeared and ripped open the throat of the nearest Death Eater. Blood spurted into the air, landing on Malfoy, who flinched back.

"A vampire!" one of the other death eaters – a Lestrange if he recognised the voice correctly – shouted.

"Diffindo!" Bellatrix shouted. Harry swayed calmly, only for the shelf behind them to be hit. The spell must have caught something important, as the top half of the shelves teetered backward, before collapsing into the next row of shelves, starting a chain reaction like dominoes.

"Run," Harry ordered. "Back to the door."

Together they sprinted, Ginny and Pugsley in the lead, Harry and Wednesday at the back. They were launching curses as they ran, each of them as dark as the ones the Death Eaters were casting.

"Alohomora," Snape yelled, opening the door long before they could get there. They skidded through the doorway, and into the room with all the clocks.

"Colloportus," Harry said, locking the door behind them. "Ginny, pick up your father, Pugsley, you help her. In the next room, you go to the left, second door. There's a large water tank in there. If any of the Death Eaters come after you, destroy it and enjoy what happens."

“Yes, Harry,” Pugsley agreed. His eyes were shining darkly.

“Pugsley,” Harry called. “Don’t forget what we’re doing here.”

“I won’t, clan leader,” Pugsley said formally.

“Good.” Harry replied. He looked at everyone else. “You lot are with us. We’re going right, first door.”

“Good idea,” Marcus agreed.

“You have blood on your chin,” Hermione pointed out.

“Sorry,” he apologised, wiping his chin with his robe.

They entered the main room with all the doors in it, and split into the two groups.

He followed Harry and Wednesday into a much larger room, with a huge gateway standing in the middle. There was a strange whispering in the background.

“Ignore the whispering,” Harry said, “it’s just the dead.”

“Just the dead,” Daphne muttered sarcastically.

Harry moved over to them. “They’ll be here shortly. When you start to fight, fight, none of this weak cursing business. No stunners, no stupefy spells, use the blackest curses you know – apart from on Bellatrix and Malfoy, they are not to be touched – understood?”

“Yes, clan leader,” Severus replied automatically.

There was a whooshing sound, and Harry dived to the right, rolling smoothly, and as he came to his feet he launched a vicious blood-boiling curse. As the Death Eater died, his mask fell off, revealing the face of Dolohov.

“You’re not supposed to kill him!” another Death Eater – Nott, by the sounds of it – yelled.

“Kill them all!” Harry ordered.

There was a huge volley of curses; that was quickly returned by the Death Eaters. Snape pushed Daphne to one side, and returned some of his own. He knew how the Death Eaters fought, he had been one for long enough.

The two Death Eaters turned to him, ignoring Daphne. The first curse she cast decapitated the nearest, and as the Death Eater looked at his colleague, Snape’s own curses ended his.

Daphne paled dramatically and looked at her wand. She stood stock still, in complete shock at what she had done.

Harry appeared beside her, and grabbed her face, forcing her to look into his eyes. Almost impossible, his Goddaughter paled even more. Wednesday appeared behind them, creating a shield with one hand, while firing curses with her wand in her other.

Colour returned with a flood into Daphne’s face and she nodded firmly at Harry.

Harry turned without a word, and took over the shield. Wednesday grinned happily and launched herself forward. She twisted, spinning in the air, her knife appearing in her hand as she stabbed the first Death Eater she came across, before back-flipping over another curse and landing by the feet of another. She ducked and span, her foot lashing out, knocking the Death Eater to the floor. As he fell, she buried her knife deep into his heart.

Snape looked around, to see that there were only two Death Eaters left.

Bellatrix had lost her mask, and was looking almost sane in her shock. Wednesday ran toward her, as Harry aimed a curse at Malfoy’s leg. It hit, causing Malfoy to fall to the floor.

Bellatrix screamed in rage, and vanished.

“Throw up an anti-apparition ward,” Harry ordered.

Snape did as he was told. He tried to ignore the cheerful vampire playing with his food in the corner. Hermione was pale, but had a triumphant look on her face. There was a dead body by her feet, the missing head was several yards away.

Harry walked over to Lucius, who was snarling with pain. He looked down for a moment, before looking directly at Snape.

Harry held out his hand to Wednesday. Wednesday moved and looked into Harry’s eyes for a long moment, studying him.

Harry met her eyes equally, with no expression. Almost reluctantly, she handed him a knife. Snape noticed it wasn’t her normal one; it was a dull blade that looked like it came from the walls of the Slytherin dungeon.

Harry knelt, and with no visible hesitation thrust the knife into Lucius Malfoy’s heart. Lucius exhaled once, before his eyes rolled into the back of his head.

"It's over," Harry said quietly. "Let's get out of here."

"Bellatrix got away," Daphne pointed out.

"Yes," Harry said with a small smile. "She did, didn't she? Hermione?"

Hermione walked over to them.

Harry stood and hugged her, before he kissed her, firmly. "Welcome to the clan, friend," he intoned solemnly, before releasing her.

Wednesday moved forward next, and kissed her as well. "Welcome to the clan, friend," she echoed.

Hermione's face lit up like never before. "Thank you," she whispered, in a profoundly awed voice. "Thank you."

"You are an Addams now," Harry stated.

"I am," she agreed proudly.

"And the clan expands again," Marcus said softly. "Welcome, Hermione." He kissed her as well.

Hermione grinned at him.

"We will speak with you later about the death," Harry said softly.

Hermione nodded and opened the door to the exit.

"I was expecting Black to turn up," Severus said, as they headed toward the room with Pugsley, Ginny and Arthur in it. They left behind Lucius body, the dagger still embedded in his heart.

"He's not due home from Belgium for another month," Harry said absently.

Snape almost stumbled. "Did Black escape from prison late last year?"

"Of course not," Wednesday snorted. "He's been out for seven years."

Severus laughed, not as surprised as he should have been.

Harry knocked on the door, a short rap, followed by a series of longer ones. The door opened, and Pugsley and Ginny walked out, followed by a floating Arthur Weasley.

Behind them, the floor was wet and there was a body covered in strange substance that looked like a brain.

"Don't even threaten her family," Pugsley advised with a grin. "She hit him with a nasty bat-bogey hex and waited until he smacked into the glass before breaking it."

Ginny smiled innocently. "Family is everything."

Wednesday moved forward and lightly hugged her. "Good work," she praised.

Ginny's smile seemed to go up a notch in brilliance.

"Marcus, take Arthur back to Hogwarts. We'll be there shortly."

"Will do," Marcus said, with a casual salute.

"Oh, Marcus," Harry called.

The vampire half-turned.

"You did well."

Marcus grinned, showing his blood stained fangs, and vanished with the frozen Arthur Weasley.

"Let's get moving," Harry ordered.

The flight back to Hogwarts was somewhat anti-climatic. The ease in which they left the Ministry of Magic was disturbing in its own right.

They arrived back at Hogwarts and went straight to the infirmary. Marcus was lounging on a bed, ignoring the glares he was receiving from Minerva. Albus and Molly were sat each side of Arthur, who had some colour to his cheeks but wasn't awake.

Molly looked up as they entered, and stormed to her feet. She marched around the bed and approached them. Her hands were itching, but she managed to stop before she reached Harry. She looked around desperately, and grabbed the nearest child – which happened to be Pugsley. She hugged him tightly, while looked directly at Harry. "Thank you," she whispered. "Thank you for saving my husband."

Harry inclined his head gracefully.

Molly released Pugsley, who had an amused look on his face. "Thanks," she whispered to him, before turning and grabbing Ginny.

Ginny was soon struggling slightly against the huge hug of her mother.

"Are you okay?"

Ginny nodded and took several deep breaths, before she grinned. "Yup."

"You're all grown up," Molly said sadly.

"Not quite, Mum," Ginny replied. "I've got a few more years yet."

Molly smiled and released her; she retook her seat as Arthur started to stir.

"Out the way," Poppy ordered as she bustled in. She scanned Arthur with her wand, before passing him a potion.

Arthur drank it weakly, before he sat up and looked around. Colour returned to his face, and he started to look a lot better.

"It wasn't a delusion then; my daughter and her friends really did rescue me from a giant snake at the Ministry," he said as he looked around the room.

"What were you doing there?" Harry asked.

"Albus asked me to check out a prophecy."

"On your own?" Wednesday asked coldly.

Arthur nodded warily.

"No friend of an Addams ever stands alone," Pugsley growled, staring at the Headmaster.

"You knew Death Eaters were poking around," Harry said softly. "We do not accept that."

"Excuse me," Molly said softly, "but what prophecy?"

Harry reached into his pocket. "This one," he said, holding the small orb thoughtfully.

"Harry," Albus called.

Harry ignored him and dropped it to the floor, where it smashed. The wavering voice of Sybil Trelawney echoed around the room.

*"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..."*

"That's it?" Pugsley asked. "Harry has to kill Voldemort? But we knew that already. What a waste of an evening."

Albus gaped at him.

"It wasn't a total waste, Pugs, at least we killed some Death Eaters," Wednesday muttered.

"I'm glad Mr Weasley is all right," Harry said to Molly. "Stay here tonight, and you can talk to Ginny in the morning. We'll have a chat about what happened today before we go to sleep."

"I'll catch some sleep here," Marcus added. "Unless Minnie has a better idea."

'Minnie' seemed to have a much better idea, one that involved Marcus and a wooden stake through his heart.

"Night," Harry replied, and they trooped out.

"Daphne," Harry said, as they walked toward the dungeon, "you did well."

"Thank you," Daphne replied, smiling brightly. "And thanks, for what you did."

He nodded.

"Come with me," Severus said to Daphne, as they separated.

"Severus?"

Snape turned to look at Marcus.

Marcus punched him in the nose, he felt the cartilage break. Marcus reached up and pulled on his nose, until it cracked again. "You're welcome," the Vampire said cheerfully, as he vanished after casting a spell at his nose that eliminated the pain.

Severus stumbled into his room, followed by a smirking Daphne, and collapsed into a chair. For now, he decided to ignore the sucker-punch, until he could pin Marcus down, and extract an apology out of him, using nothing more than a pair of pliers and a couple of pain enhancement potions.

He poured two glasses of fire whiskey, and concentrated on something slightly more important than revenge. "How are you feeling?"

"Considering that I killed someone less than an hour ago?" she asked. "Pretty damn good."

"Oh?"

She curled up on the chair and sipped the whiskey. She coughed as she swallowed, but took another swallow anyway.

"Harry did that mind-thingy you do."

"Legilimency?"

"Yeah, that one. He went straight into my brain, and talked to me. Made me see that it was them or me, and I'd much rather it was them. It seemed like we talked for hours." She looked at him and sighed. "I have to talk to Wednesday now. I've been putting it off."

"Be honest," he advised.

She nodded and finished off the drink. "Now that you're happy that I'm mentally okay, can I go to bed?"

"Get," he ordered, pointing at the door.

She grinned and moved over to hug him. "Thanks," she said, before she went out. She paused in the doorway. "Your nose does look better now," she added cheekily.

Severus moved over to the mirror and looked at himself. He blinked several times, his nose looked normal. The hook he'd endured all his life was completely gone.

As he lay in bed that night, Severus thought about the last thing that had happened. He was trying to work out just why Harry had killed Lucius.

The answer came to him just before sleep.

Harry had done it for him – so that he would have a chance with Narcissa.

He groaned as he realised that was why also Marcus had engineered his nasal reconstruction. He wasn't going to say thank you, he'd just settle for some lighter revenge than he had originally planned.

The morning arrived far too early for his liking. The charm on his radio turned it on at six-fifteen, and he reluctantly rolled out of bed and into the shower.

Clean, he dressed and made his way toward the common room. He rounded a corner, to find Daphne sitting on the floor, leaning against a wall with a distant look on her face.

"Daph?" he asked gently.

She smiled up at him and stood. "We're wanted in the Headmaster's office," she told him. "Harry told me not to wake you early, so I waited. I didn't mind, it gave me a chance to think."

"You talked to Wednesday?"

She nodded. "Yeah. Wednesday told me the price. Uncle Sev?"

"Yes?" he asked, absently creating a privacy spell around them.

"Why have you encouraged me to join?"

He sighed. "Because I think the positives outweigh the negatives. You have potential, Daphne, and I'd hate to see it wasted. With them, you'll never be ordinary. You'll never settle for a life that's just a husband, two kids, and a dull job. You might be scared, you might feel fear, and you might feel pleasure like you can't imagine, but you will live. You will live life to the full."

Daphne nodded slowly. "Wednesday said something, that there is no difference between good and evil, between pleasure and pain. All are experiences and experiences are what count."

He smiled faintly. "That sounds like her," he agreed.

"I'm scared," she said. "I'm thirteen years old, and yet I can see two paths in front of me. I can see the white picket fence and the husband. And I can see another path that is dark and mysterious."

"Part of me wants to go the easy route. Part of me doesn't want to make this decision now. But I know that if I don't, it will never be the same."

Joining them is as much of my courage as it is of everything else, and that is different.” She took a deep breath, and then released it.

“Why did you join the Death Eaters? Why did you keep going back, when Voldemort would torture you? You never truly agreed with his goals, did you?”

Severus paused, and moved them into the nearest classroom so that they could sit. He perched on the edge of the desk and looked down at her.

“Voldemort, when he was younger, was a lot like Harry. Charismatic, when he wanted to be, deadly, powerful, and they both have this aura around them. Last night, I did exactly what Harry told me to – we all did, even Marcus who’s over two hundred years old, and we did it because we knew he was the leader. They both have a deep desire and a drive. But where as Voldemort has hate driving him, Harry has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge driving him.

“But the biggest thing they share is the understanding of pain. Pain is glorious, Daphne. It touches you like nothing else. The Cruciatus curse is such pure agony that it transcends itself and it becomes pleasure. And I started to crave it, as much as I hated what I was doing and what I had become, I was addicted to the pain.

“I assuaged my conscience by reporting to Dumbledore, but he couldn’t understand the agony and the ecstasy that was my life.

“And then Voldemort tried to kill Harry, and I hated Harry for surviving. My link to the experience was gone. I had to go without, cold turkey, and I hated it with a passion. I hated Harry even more for taking Voldemort away from me.

“It took me a while, but I eventually got over it.

“And now, I have chosen another master, one who rules differently, one who offers me more and less. Harry will never use the curse on me; he will never make me beg. He will demand that I follow his rules, and he will show me things that I want to see, that I need to see.

“I gave up on a normal life long ago, even now, when my clan leader killed for me, the woman I want is not normal, I know she understands this. I know that if I succeed, she will accompany me.

“Daphne, I was a little flippant before, and I assure you that I will not think less of you if you chose the light path. In a way, it takes more courage to go down that route. I will still love you. This has to be your decision, and you have to make it with your heart and your soul, you must embrace it with everything you have.”

“Thank you, uncle Sev,” Daphne said softly. “That helps.”

He smiled at her and held out his arms.

She hugged him tightly. “Come on,” she said as she broke the hug. “We don’t want to keep them waiting any more.”

He followed her out of the class room and to Albus’ office. The room had been expanded and there was a large table in the middle. Harry and Wednesday sat comfortably at one end, Pugsley and Hermione flanking them. Ginny was next, opposite her was her mother. Daphne sat next to Ginny, and he sat between her and Filius, opposite Minerva. Marcus was next to her, completing the table. Albus sat as head.

“Why are we here?” Harry asked.

“To discuss last night,” Albus replied, his eyes twinkling.

Harry sighed. “I don’t know what there is left to discuss, but we’ll answer a few questions. I don’t intend on missing breakfast.”

Albus frowned. “Why did you go to the Ministry last night?”

“I was under the impression that the prophecy was important. A mistake I won’t make again.”

“It is important,” Albus said.

“Really?” Harry asked dryly. “I’ve yet to see a single prophecy worth the globe it is stored in.”

Albus looked blankly at him, and then tried a different track. “Did you have to kill the Death Eaters?”

“No,” Harry replied.

“Then why did you?”

“What else would we do with them? Arrest them so they can escape again?”

“Yes, no – we could have dealt with them.”

“How, by letting them bribe their way to freedom or by handing them to your pet soul-suckers?” Harry asked. “The soul-suckers who have a marked preference for untainted souls and dislike tainted souls?”

“But this is a ridiculous conversation. Those Death Eaters chose their fate when they attacked us. They will never attack us again.”

Albus frowned at them.

“What about Bellatrix LeStrange?”

“It’s just Bellatrix no-last-name now,” Harry said. “With her husband dead, the marriage contract is broken, and she loses the name. She has been expelled from the House of Black, so she is nameless.”

Minerva opened her mouth, and shut it again.

“As we all know,” Harry continued, “Voldemort is still a spirit. He needs to regain a human form before we can kill him. That means he needs someone vaguely competent enough to fulfil the requirements.

“Bellatrix will do anything to return him. It was far easier for us to just let her do all the work, than try and do it ourselves.”

“You let the Death Eater go so she could resurrect Voldemort so that you can kill Voldemort properly?” Snape asked to clarify.

Harry nodded.

“Damn,” Marcus whispered. “And some wonder why I follow you.”

“You like the view from behind?” Wednesday suggested.

“Great,” Marcus muttered, “she kills a few people and she’s in a great mood the next day.”

Wednesday nodded.

“Harry, there is going to be an investigation about this,” Albus said, “I won’t be able to protect you.”

Harry looked at him blankly. “We would really appreciate it if you didn’t try to interfere,” he said bluntly. “We do not want, or need, your protection.” He stood. “Breakfast,” he said to the others and walked out, Wednesday by his side.

“You really like putting your beak into things that don’t concern you, don’t you?” Marcus said to Albus. “They’ve been planning for this for years, and they don’t believe in second chances. You’d do well to remember that.”

“I’ve warned you,” Snape said softly. “Stop playing, you won’t win. Too many people have been co-opted to their side.”

“Even you?”

“Absolutely,” Snape said as he walked out. He wanted breakfast as well.

In the Great Hall, Molly and Arthur were talking to Percy, Fred, George, and Ron. Ron and Percy looked at each other, as Molly finished speaking, before they turned and walked over to the Slytherin table.

They stopped behind Harry and Wednesday, who turned to look at them.

“Harry, Wednesday,” Ron said, a little stiffly. “Thank you for saving my father last night and I apologise for my behaviour.”

“Yes,” Percy said. “Thank you for what you did.”

Harry and Wednesday looked at the two of them for a long minute.

“You weren’t told to do that,” Harry eventually said. “Independent thought.”

“Perhaps,” Wednesday said, “there is hope for you after all.”

“You are welcome,” Harry replied formally.

Percy and Ron both half-bowed, before they walked back to their parents. Harry looked at Ginny, who grinned, and dashed after them – giving both her brothers a big hug.

Ron and Percy looked a lot happier after that, and Ginny moved over to the Gryffindor table for breakfast.

For the first time, Harry and Wednesday ate everything put in front of them.

Albus and Minerva joined them for lunch, and Marcus wandered in and sat in Ginny’s vacated place.

Severus looked up; he could almost see the rumours about what had happened the night before spread from the Gryffindor table and around the room. He suspected that the way and the reason Harry had killed Lucius was not part of that rumour.

He ate his breakfast, the exertions of the night before ensuring he had a large appetite, and had just finished when the doors opened.

He looked up. Cornelius Fudge, an assistant, two Aurors and a Dementor entered the hall.

There was a strange whooshing sound as the entire school drew their wands and pointed them at the Dementor.

The Dementor stood stock still, hardly emanating any of its usual miasmas of fear.

Fudge looked surprised, and then frowned.

Albus frowned and stood, his spread his hands and the children were magically moved away from the Dementor, creating a circle in the middle of the Great Hall.

Severus smiled faintly, that was a move that would win him back some supporters.

“Cornelius,” Dumbledore said, his voice harsh, “Exactly why have you seen fit to break our agreement and bring a Dementor into the school?”

“Now, see here, Dumbledore,” Fudge blustered. “I’m here on much more important business.”

“Do tell,” Albus invited him.

“Last night,” Fudge said, “somebody broke into the Ministry of Magic, and killed Lucius Malfoy!”

Fudge looked like he expected something to happen with the name. What he got was largely indifference.

“Mr Malfoy was an important member of the Ministry!” Fudge added.

“I don’t remember being able to vote for him,” Severus said. “Please explain his importance.”

“He was my advisor,” Fudge said, “and I am Minister for Magic.”

“And?”

“And your position isn’t as secure as you might think,” Fudge retorted. “The killer,” he continued in a rush, “made one fatal mistake. They left behind the murder weapon.”

“Did you check his arm for the Dark Mark?” Severus asked curiously.

Fudge looked insulted. “How dare you bad-mouth the name of a great man!” Again, he continued in a rush. “And Felix, here, recognised the knife as something he had seen in the Slytherin Common Room. Whose knife is it?” He pulled a transparent bag from his pocket, and held it up.

Harry whispered something to Pugsley, who looked shocked for a moment. Harry said something else sharply and Pugsley jerked back before nodding.

“It’s mine,” Wednesday announced, as she walked forward with Harry.

Fudge smiled triumphantly. “I thought as much,” he crowed.

Pugsley started to talk to people next to him, who all immediately turned and passed his message on.

“You are in trouble, young Miss, and don’t think your age will save you!”

“I hardly think it’s a problem,” Harry said with a completely out-of-character supercilious sneer, “you’ve not got the evidence to do anything, and besides, as soon as her father gets here, he’ll own the Ministry by the time he’s finished.

“Face it, fat-boy, you’ve already lost and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

The message reached the Gryffindors, and a shocked look appeared on Molly’s face. Ginny leaned over and started to whisper to her mother.

Molly nodded and sat back, glaring at Fudge.

“Oh, I have plenty of evidence,” Fudge retorted slyly. “Including a survivor and several destroyed rooms in the Department of Mysteries.”

Harry affected an over-blown sneer; the expression was totally out of place on his face, but it looked like Fudge, the assistant and the Aurors believed it.

“Your survivor can’t even remember his own name,” Harry replied. “You’ll have Wednesday in custody for less than a few hours before we get her out with an official apology for you. And then, just for kicks, I’m gonna give an interview with every little secret we’ve found out about you.

“You’re going down pudgy, and you’re going to lose your mansion.”

Pugsley was trying to meet Severus’ eyes, so Snape looked at him, and then tried a tendril of Legilimency.

*“Don’t interfere, no matter what... don’t interfere, no matter what...”*

Severus nodded, and whispered the message along the Professor’s table.

“You forget who you are dealing with,” Fudge said, his bowler hat in his hands. “I am still Minister, and my word goes.”

“Your word is useless,” Harry replied. “And we’ll humiliate you later!”

“I am Minister!” Fudge screamed, going red.

“Bite me.”

“How dare you,” the assistant added, and moved forward to slap Harry.

Wednesday caught his arm, twisted it to lock it, and then smashed her hand into his elbow. There was a vicious crack that echoed around the room, as Wednesday finished by kicking the assistant in the face, knocking him into unconsciousness.

“Attempted assault on a minor?” Harry sneered. “Bad move, Fudgey.”

Fudge pulled out his wand, and pointed it at Wednesday. “You make one word, and she’s dead,” he blustered. “Grab him.”

The two Aurors ran forward and took a hold of Harry, who made some pitiful movements to try and get free.

“You,” Fudge screamed at the Dementor. “Kiss her!”

“No!” Harry cried, as Wednesday swayed on her feet.

Dumbledore shot to his feet, but before he could say anything, he was hit by four silent stunners – from Ginny, Hermione, Pugsley, and Daphne. He collapsed back into his chair silently.

“Not so tough now, are you,” Fudge crowed. “Never forget that I am Minister, and that I am in charge.” He kept his wand on Wednesday as he moved behind her. “Move!”

Wednesday half stumbled in fear as she moved toward the gliding dementor.

“No!” Harry cried in desperation.

A lot of the students were looking at Pugsley, who slowly put his wand away, his face expressionless.

“Severus,” Minerva whispered.

“I don’t know what is going on,” he replied. “They do; let it play out. Harry left that knife there last night for a reason!”

Minerva swallowed and went quiet.

Ginny was practically sitting on her mother, keeping her from interfering.

“Watch,” Fudge yelled. “Watch what happens when you cross the Minister.”

The pull of the Dementor started in earnest – some of the students started to moan. The Dementor pulled back his hood as he leaned down. There seemed to be a strange sucking effect, pulling Wednesday’s face toward it.

Harry was still struggling ineffectively.

The Dementor clamped its lips over Wednesday’s mouth. Gasps of horror and disbelief echoed around the Hall.

Only something strange happened.

Wednesday’s necklace, the inverted silver cross, started to glow. At the same time, her right hand went behind her back, and pulled out the knife Harry had given her for Christmas the year before. She twirled it in her fingers, before jamming it into the Dementor’s chest.

The Dementor broke the Kiss, and its head flew back as it screamed. Wednesday pulled her hand back and rammed it forward again.

The Dementor wailed loudly, before it collapsed to the floor.

Wednesday kicked it firmly, before she turned to face Harry. “See,” she said, “I *can* kill them!” Her expression slowly changed, to one of abject revulsion as she wiped her lips with her sleeve, “Ewww, gross!”

Harry was standing still; the two Aurors who had been holding him were unconscious – or dead – on the floor.

Fudge was staring at them in shock and horror.

“Cornelius Fudge,” Harry said, his supercilious act completely gone. “You are an enemy of the Addams. The rest of your short life will be spent in torment.”

“All right,” Marcus cheered.

“You can’t,” Fudge shouted, “I’m the Minister. She should be soul-less!”

Harry’s expression didn’t change. “You attempted to murder my intended. The punishment is death. You may go.”

Marcus vanished from where he was sat, and appeared next to Fudge – his fangs out, who took one look at him, squealed, and fainted.

“Harry,” Severus called, “how did you know the necklace would save Wednesday?”

Harry moved over to Wednesday, and conjured a handkerchief. With incredible tenderness he cleaned her face.

"I didn't," he replied. "I was as surprised as you were when it kicked in."

"Then how..." Severus asked.

Wednesday looked at him. "You know the answer. Hermione told you the story."

Severus frowned in thought. Part of a conversation flew through his mind.

*"I want your soul, Wednesday, and I want you to give it to me."*

*"It's mine, though."*

*"Not any more. I'll take it for safe keeping, and store it with my own."*

He collapsed back and shook his head in absolute amazement.

Wednesday smiled her brief little smile.

"Harry," Marcus called, he was now by the door.

Harry turned.

"The Dementors are coming."

"How many?" Harry asked.

Marcus smiled slightly. "All of them."

In times past, everyone would have looked toward Albus for leadership. Not in this time. Everyone, with the sole exception of Albus, looked toward Harry and Wednesday.

"Expecto Patronum," Harry and Wednesday called. Wednesday's Nundu shot out of her wand like it had exploded from a canon, and ran straight outside.

Harry's Patronus, a giant dragon, seemed to hover in the air for a second, its wings spread wide, before it flew straight up through the ceiling.

As everyone watched, Harry turned to Wednesday and gently raised his right hand, holding her chin so that she was looking into his eyes.

Everyone looked at Pugsley, who tilted his head, before he suddenly started to beam excitedly. "Please, please," he whispered, almost vibrating.

"What?" Hermione asked, barely audibly.

"I think he's removing her blocks!"

"Blocks?" Hermione asked.

"Why are you whispering?" Marcus asked. "Those two are so deep you could drain a fish-wife in front of them and they wouldn't notice."

"What's going on?" Ginny asked.

"A few years ago, Wends got a little trigger happy..." Pugsley started.

"A little trigger happy?" Marcus demanded. "She broke my left leg, both my arms and my nose!"

"You're a vampire, you don't count," Pugsley retorted with a grin. "Anyway, they agreed that Harry would put some blocks on her, and in return, he'd make sure that she was looked after."

"He's removing those blocks."

Harry stepped back slightly, his hands dropping to his sides, before he reached up and slowly undid Wednesday's robes. With a sort of ritual calmness, he moved behind her and helped her out of them. He placed them neatly on the floor, and moved around to her front again.

Wednesday held out her hands to the side as Harry undid the buttons of her shirt. As before, he moved around and helped her out of the shirt, leaving her in a white camisole.

A lot of the boys were now paying extremely close attention.

Harry pulled out his wand and stepped back, and to the disappointment of more of the students than expected, he transfigured her skirt and camisole into a short, simple form-fitting dress. Underneath the skirt, a pair of skin-tight shorts peeked out of the bottom.

Wednesday moved her hands out to the side again, as Harry pulled his wand out. He whispered something under his breath, and his hands started to glow. With his wand back in his pocket, he placed his hands on Wednesday's left shoulder, and drew them down her arm.

As he moved, Wednesday's arm glowed the same golden colour, before it faded.

Harry repeated the action on her right arm, before he ran his hands down her side, and then her front.

He knelt on one knee, and slid his hands under her dress, running his hands down each of her legs. Still kneeling, he grabbed his wand and transfigured her shoes into hiking boots.

He stood and stepped in, doing her back. Wednesday hefted her knife in her left hand, before she threw it, high into the air.

The knife twisted in the air, seeming to hover for a second, before gravity took its course and it fell down.

With her eyes firmly on Harry, she held out her arm, and allowed the sharp blade of the knife to land on it.

There was a small chinking sound, and the knife bounced off.

Harry's right hand flew out, and he caught the knife, handing it back to her.

Wednesday's face was the most alive Snape had seen it, like Pugsley, she was practically vibrating with excitement.

Severus smiled slightly, when he was a boy, he had read stories about how the fair maiden would help the hero with his armour, before he went out to battle. The ritual before them was the same thing, with a twist. Harry was preparing Wednesday for a fight.

Exactly why, he wasn't sure, with over a thousand people capable of the Patronus spell on hand, they could easily deal with the Dementors.

Harry turned and walked toward the doors. They opened before him, as Wednesday bounced along behind him.

There was a pause, before Pugsley and Marcus managed to beat everyone else out of the Hall, as all the students followed them.

Snape grumbled to himself as he had to wait to get out on to the front of the school. When he did, and pushed to the front, Harry and Wednesday were standing on their own, watching the Dementors – who had stopped a few hundred metres away and were milling around.

Harry's Patronus had forced the floating Dementor's down to the ground, and Wednesday's was corralling them.

"Wednesday," Harry said. He waved his wand, and a box appeared in his hand. He opened it, and withdrew a sword. He offered it to Wednesday, who drew the slightly curved blade from its scabbard.

"Yes, my love?"

"Kill them – kill them all."

Wednesday handed Harry her wand. He held it in his left hand, and started to direct the two Patronuses.

Wednesday started to lope toward the Dementors. They turned to face her, their arms out, beckoning her closer.

She jumped as she arrived, catching the first Dementor in the face. As it fell to the ground, she stabbed it with her knife.

The Dementor wailed, before it went still.

Wednesday smiled.

There was a pause.

And she attacked again. Like a whirling dervish, she tore through the Dementors, her hands and feet almost as deadly as her two flashing blades. Dementors fell before her and to the side as she jumped and span.

Three of them caught her, dragging her to the floor, but they exploded into the air a second later. Harry smiled faintly and directed his dragon. It opened its mouth and bit the first Dementor in half.

Wednesday caught the other two with her sword as they landed, decapitating one, and splitting the other in twain.

"Beautiful and deadly," Remus said softly. "Such grace combined with such ability to kill."

"Makes you glad she's on our side," Severus said back with a small smirk.

"She's not, not really."

"On our side?" Severus asked.

"Yeah. She's on Harry's side. It's not much of a difference, but she will be his clan-enforcer. Harry would never touch one of us, but she would, if it was needed."

"I dunno," Marcus said – Snape hadn't heard him arrive – "family and the clan mean everything to her, I think. The people who would get her attention that way wouldn't be worthy of being in the clan."

The dark-haired girl launched a crescent kick that knocked one Dementor onto its back, while stabbing out with her knife. She reversed her sword and stabbed it backward, catching one of them who was trying to grab her from behind.

“Hmm,” Marcus said. “Harry, can I borrow one of them?”

He nodded.

Marcus blurred and appeared in front of a Dementor. It turned to face him, and he twisted, jumping half way through and launching his foot out. The Dementor flew back into its fellows, and Marcus returned.

“They’re strong,” he said calmly. “Close to Vampire or Werewolf strength. If I’d hit a human like that, they’d be in two pieces. So, Remus, how come you think they can’t be killed?”

“Erm, human arrogance?” he suggested. “The fact that normal people can’t get close to them because of their soul-sucking affect?”

Marcus nodded. “I wonder if she’s had her fun yet. If you’ll excuse me…” He walked over to Harry.

“Clan leader, may I join in.”

Harry didn’t take his eyes from Wednesday. “Yes,” he eventually decided.

“Woo hoo!” Marcus shouted, and blurred. His progress through the Dementors was marked by an explosion of black cloaks.

“Harry,” Pugsley called. The boy was sitting on his pet canon.

“Where does he keep that?” Remus muttered.

Harry took a step to one side so that he could keep an eye on Wednesday.

“Daph had an idea,” he continued. “Hermione, Ginny, Fred and George helped work it out. He pointed to his feet, where there were four glowing cannon-balls. “Patronus cannon balls,” he explained.

“Go for it”

“Alright!” Pugsley cheered as he jumped off the canon.

He picked up one of the balls and shoved it down the front of the canon. He touched his wand to the wick, and it started to sizzle.

“Fire in the hole!” Harry yelled.

Wednesday didn’t stop moving, as Pugsley’s canon boomed. The ball shot through several Dementors, killing them instantly.

“Pugsley,” Harry called.

“Yes, clan leader?”

“You need shrapnel.”

“I love him,” Pugsley said to the others. “Ideas?”

The students gathered around the remaining canon balls.

Wednesday was still flowing from one movement to the next, a wide and happy smile on her face. Marcus was in full flow as well, and the Dementors on the floor seemed to be about half of the total.

“I keep expecting her to start singing,” Remus mumbled.

“Kingsley’s here, with Amelia,” Snape said, as he watched the two, accompanied by a whole squad of Aurors staring in disbelief.

“Amelia Bones?” Remus asked.

“Head of Law Enforcement. If you’ll excuse me.” He started to jog over to her, being sure not to get between Harry and his control of the two Patronus.

“Sev,” Kingsley said. “You normally know what’s going on.”

Severus smiled faintly.

“What happened to Fudge? Why is Wednesday killing all the Dementors? How is Wednesday killing said soul-suckers? Where’s Dumbledore? Did Harry talk to Marcus about letting me borrow him? Oh, and did you have to destroy all those pretty baubles last night?”

“Which order would you like the answers?” Snape asked dryly.

“Any, as long as we get something,” Amelia replied sternly.

"Well, Fudge turned up this morning, rather upset that we killed Lucius last night. Harry pointed out that Lucius was a Death Eater, and taunted Fudge a few times. Fudge's assistant tried to hit Harry – Wednesday objected strenuously, Fudge objected to the objection, and ordered Wednesday kissed."

Amelia hissed. "I don't even know where to start with that. Killing Death Eaters is not actually illegal at the moment. Killing a member of an illegal terrorist organisation is still rewarded with a thousand galleons. Fudge does not have the power to unilaterally order someone's death!"

"I note," Kingsley said, "that Wednesday still appears to have her soul, as well as a really bad attitude about Dementors."

"Well, it seems that Harry wanted this reaction from Fudge, and they let Wednesday be kissed. While she was being kissed, Wednesday stabbed it with her knife a few times, and then pointed out that it could be killed. If you can ignore the effect they have on you, and the fact that they're about as strong as Vampire or Werewolf, then they can be killed like any other creature."

"Wednesday, Marcus," Harry roared. "Hit the deck!"

In the middle of the Dementors, Wednesday dived forward. There was another boom from Pugsley's canon, but this time, the canon ball exploded, sending glowing white shards everywhere, cutting down and wounding many more than last time.

Wednesday jumped to her feet, the sword whirling as she stabbed three more Dementors in quick succession.

"Anyway," Severus continued, "Harry did something to two of your Aurors, he objects to being touched, doubly so when someone is trying to kill his intended, and then he sentenced Fudge to death by making him an enemy of the clan."

"Albus, I think he's still in the Great Hall, we all came out to watch the show."

"Down!"

Pugsley's canon boomed again, with a similar effect to last time.

"No, I don't think Harry's talked to Marcus yet – and Marcus is a bit busy killing Dementors at the moment."

"And as for your baubles, that was Bellatrix, not us."

"What were you doing there?" Amelia asked.

"There was a prophecy that Harry wanted to know the contents of. Dumbledore seemed to deem it important."

"Was it?"

"Not really, it just said that Harry had to kill Voldemort – something he seemed to already know."

Amelia shook her head. "We're here to arrest Fudge," she said. "And to try and find where all the Dementors went. Not that it matters. We know the Addams clan got to Umbridge, but we don't know how, and I suspect we won't have a Dementor problem to worry about shortly."

She looked at the carnage Wednesday was creating, and smiled faintly. "Which is a good thing," she added. "We'll talk about your adventures last night at a later date."

"And I want a word with my colleagues," Kingsley added. "We don't appreciate ad-hoc justice. Do you think Harry would ask Wednesday to stop killing them?"

"No," Snape replied, and then turned as something caught his attention.

"Harry," a group of students, led by Penelope approached the dark-haired wizard. "Can we try a spell on them? Percy remembered reading about it, and fetched the spell from the library. We've all played with it a little, so we can cast it together using those power-sharing spells you taught us the Patronus with. It won't hurt Wednesday, although we don't know about Marcus."

"Marcus, fall back," Harry roared.

"Kingsley," Marcus said as he appeared in front of them, his cloak in tatters. "You look like a man who knows a good tailor. I'm in need of a new cloak."

"I do," Kingsley agreed. "This is my boss, Amelia."

"Charmed," Marcus said with a flourishing bow.

"Wednesday, close your eyes," Harry shouted.

"Expecto Illumini!" a group of Seventh year students called.

A burst of pure white light swept the field, and when it vanished, over half of the remaining Dementors were on the floor. It only left around thirty, who were still mindlessly closing in on Wednesday.

"If you'll excuse me," Marcus said, "I've not had a fight like this in ... well, ever!"

The students who had cast the spell were on their knees, breathing heavily.

Pugsley, Hermione, Ginny and Daphne had been joined by all the Weasleys, and they were all sitting on the grass, watching and talking.

“Kingsley, if you were ordered to arrest Wednesday or Harry, what would you do?” Amelia asked.

“I’d get right on it,” Kingsley said blandly. “And I’d even ask them nicely to come with me.”

“And if they said no?”

“I’d quite definitely tell you that and let you handle it, while I reported in sick.”

Amelia chuckled. “I can’t see any Auror with intelligence deliberately try and antagonise a girl who can do that.”

“Damn right,” Kingsley agreed. “And never mind Marcus helping us train; I’ll ask her.”

“Can Harry fight like that?” Amelia asked.

“Wouldn’t we like to know?” Snape muttered rhetorically to himself. “We don’t know.”

With one final keening wail, the last Dementor fell.

Wednesday stood in the middle, surrounded by dead creatures. In one hand, her sword dripped black ichor, in her other, her knife gleaming brightly.

Her long hair was wild around her face, and her eyes glowed with power and happiness.

She flicked her hands, and both weapons vanished. She ran her fingers through her long and loose hair, before she bounced over to Harry.

“Proud of me?” she asked.

Harry moved toward her, catching her as she jumped at him and wrapped her legs around his waist.

“More than you can believe,” he said solemnly.

“Tired now,” she announced.

“I know, my love. I know.”

The two Patronuses faded from view, and Marcus walked around the field, checking that the Dementors were dead.

“Everyone inside,” Harry ordered. He slid Wednesday around so that he had an arm under her knees and his other around her shoulders, and carried her into Hogwarts.

“Did he mean us as well?” Amelia asked.

Severus paused, and looked at Kingsley who had also started to walk. “Yes, he did.”

“Thought so,” Amelia muttered, and motioned to the Aurors. They traipsed in after the students.

In the Great Hall, Albus was sat in his position at the Great Hall, an extremely thoughtful look on his face.

The children retook their seats at each of the house tables, around the new circular space.

Kingsley moved forward and checked the two Aurors. “Thanks,” he said to Harry. “They’ll learn or no longer be Aurors.”

Harry nodded.

Amelia Bones walked over to the unconscious Fudge, but before she could say anything, a familiar tune started from the side of the Great Hall.

Harry tensed for a second, before he turned. “Kingsley, Severus, with the exception of Pugsley, Wednesday and me, put everyone under the age of nineteen to sleep,” he whispered.

Kingsley blinked.

“I think we can do it in one spell,” Snape said to the Auror. “If Amelia will help.”

Amelia had gone completely white. She beckoned the other Aurors closer, and ordered them to help put the students to sleep.

“On three,” Severus said, “One, two... three!”

Around the Hall, the students fell asleep. Wednesday cast a spell to catch Daphne and Hermione as Pugsley caught Ginny. They floated the three to one side.

“What is going on?” Albus demanded.

Amelia turned to her Aurors. “All of you get out of this circle. Do not react, no matter what happens. That is an order, understood?”

“Amelia?” Kingsley asked in shock.

“She’s a wise woman,” Marcus said. “I’m going to go hide.”

Kingsley gulped and followed the Aurors out.

The remaining professors hurried to their seats.

A solemn bell tolled, and part of the Hall descended into darkness.

From the impenetrable darkness a familiar figure appeared.

The Aurors raised their wands.

“Put your wands down, you idiots,” Amelia hissed.

Harry put Wednesday down, and they both knelt down on one knee.

Pugsley moved near Marcus, who put an arm around him.

“Hogwarts,” Pinhead said as he looked around incuriously.

Wednesday and Harry didn’t move.

“Stand,” Pinhead ordered.

They stood and looked at him calmly.

As he had before, Pinhead started to pace around them. “You have completed your task,” he announced. “Congratulations.”

“Our thanks,” Harry replied formally.

Pinhead stopped as he stared at the unconscious form of the Minister of Magic. “Awake.”

Fudge slowly started to move, before he shook his head and climbed to his feet. He spotted Harry and Wednesday.

“You assaulted me,” the Minister shouted. “You’ll suffer for this!”

“Suffer?” Pinhead asked.

Fudge sneered as he turned to the voice, before he paled dramatically. He fell on his behind, and started to scramble away.

A single chain flew out of the darkness and rushed past Fudge’s left ear, before it smashed into the floor.

Cornelius froze.

“What do you know of suffering?” Pinhead demanded. “What do you know of pain and sacrifice?”

Fudge didn’t seem to be able to reply.

“An eternity ago, I was a distant cousin to those that you threaten, like a small child threatening a dragon. In your ignorance and arrogance you assume power you do not possess.

“By ancient Compact, I can cause no harm to you humans, unless summoned. I was not summoned.”

Fudge started to look relieved.

“And yet,” Pinhead continued, “all Compact’s have loopholes. You are an enemy of the Addams. I claim kinship to the Addams. Shall we see if that is enough?”

Fudge shook his head negatively, hard.

Pinhead smirked. Four chains rushed out of the darkness. Fudge screamed in agony as they ripped into his body. They lifted him in to the air.

“Stop,” Dumbledore ordered.

Harry and Wednesday moved, each turning and firing a curse at the Headmaster. Albus tried to shield from both – and succeeded, but could do nothing about Marcus punching him in the back of the head.

“Pity,” Pinhead murmured. “Attacking me is another loophole.” He lowered the chains so that Fudge was eye to eye to him. “I’ll see you later,” he promised, and the Minister of Magic vanished into the darkness. His scream echoed around the corner before it was cut off with a devastating

finality.

As if nothing had happened, Pinhead continued his circling of Harry and Wednesday. "Our deal is done," he announced. "I release my claims to you in return for those that escaped my dominion."

"The souls they stole?" Harry asked.

"Some have stayed; others have gone to their rightful destination. The choice was theirs, as it should have been from the start."

"Our thanks."

"It was the deal," Pinhead said, waving his hand. In it, a small, intricately patterned silver box appeared. He gave it to Harry. "You have given me another gift today, and will soon complete the original gift. You may call on me."

Harry and Wednesday kneeled in front of him again, their heads bowed.

Pinhead stopped in front of them. A slow smile appeared on his face, it was a smile of mockery and cynicism; not aimed at the children before him, but aimed at others.

He moved his hands slowly, in the form of an inverted cross. "My blessing; may the light and the dark show you the way to your goals."

Harry and Wednesday glowed briefly, and Pinhead turned and walked away.

"Pinhead," Harry called.

Pinhead paused and turned.

Harry held out Wednesday's necklace.

Pinhead smiled faintly. "It has more properties than keeping a soul," he said. "And it was a gift; one should never rescind a gift."

The darkness vanished with him, as the music stopped.

One of the Aurors turned and vomited.

Wednesday moved into Harry's embrace, as Harry put the cube Pinhead had left into his pocket.

"He is not a myth then," Amelia said softly.

"No, the Dark Pope is not a myth," Harry agreed formally.

"Harry," Albus started.

"Shut the hell up, Albus," Amelia ordered without looking away from Harry and Wednesday. "I am..."

"Amelia Bones, head of Magical Law Enforcement, and one of the few competent officials in the Ministry."

"I was also a member of the Department of Mysteries for far too many years, which is where I heard rumours about Pinhead." Amelia conjured a two person sofa and a single chair for herself. "You look like you're about to collapse."

Harry sat with Wednesday, who sat over his lap, her head on his shoulder. "Controlling two Patronuses is difficult, and obviously, Wednesday was a little busy."

Amelia nodded. "May I ask how you met *him*?"

"When Voldemort tried to kill me, he left behind a fragment of his soul inside me. Morticia found a way to remove it without killing me, but it sent us on a journey. Part of that journey sent us to the Dark Pope's domain. He was still quite new back then, and had still recognised the name of Captain Spenser.

"After a few years in his company and his control, we managed to negotiate our freedom, calling on the bonds of family. In return for his escaped souls – the Dementors – we would have our freedom."

Amelia nodded slowly. "You spent a few years with him?"

Harry nodded, as Wednesday curled up tighter against him. "They are not memories we enjoy."

"How did you keep your sanity?"

"Some would say we didn't," Harry replied.

Amelia smiled. "My niece has given me many reports on you."

"Susan," Harry said. "A competent and open-minded witch. She is a credit to the Hufflepuff house."

Amelia inclined her head. "Thank you. I believe that we will say that Fudge has vanished."

"Which is the truth," Harry agreed.

"As for last night," Amelia said slowly, "we have enough dead Death Eaters to blame the whole thing on them. This I will do, on one condition. That next time you want some information, try asking first."

"We did."

Amelia turned and glared at Dumbledore. "I promise I will answer any question you have."

Harry nodded slowly. "We will ask you first, next time."

Amelia smiled at him. "Well, our business here is done. I have prison guards to hire, and some Aurors to counsel. It was nice meeting you, Harry, Wednesday."

"Likewise," Harry replied. He stood, lifting Wednesday as he did, and looked at the Professors. "Sev, Pugs, Marcus, stay and answer the questions, then wake the kids."

"Yes, clan leader," Pugsley replied.

Harry walked out with Wednesday. They were soon followed by Amelia, the Aurors (including the two under arrest and Fudge's still unconscious assistant).

"If you think that we're standing here and answering you like it's some sort of review board, you're wrong," Severus stated firmly. "If you want answers you can come and sit on our level."

He created several seats for himself, Pugsley and Marcus, and waited.

Minerva was the first person on the floor, and she conjured an arm chair for herself. The other professors soon followed, including Albus.

Molly moved over from the Gryffindor table. She had tear tracks running down her cheeks, and a strange look in her eyes. Severus winced internally, he hadn't realised she had seen all of that.

Pugsley moved over and hugged her. She hugged him back tightly. When she had regained her self control, she released him and tousled his hair. "Thanks, Pugs."

He grinned at her and retook his seat.

"Questions?" Severus asked.

"Is it true?" Molly asked. "That they spent years with... with that!"

"Yeah," Pugsley said. "We knew something happened, but not that they'd visited him!"

"Who was he?" Minerva asked.

"A demon," Pugsley said with a shrug. "Or rather, a human who became a demon. Mom and Dad know more about him, but basically he's the one who taught them the advanced lessons on pain and pleasure being interchangeable. It's something that I've always known, just not to their level. Like in the first year, when we walked through Sev's magical fire. It didn't bother them at all – me, I thought it bloody awful. Having seen *him* though, I'm quite glad I've not been through it."

"He's powerful then?" Minerva asked.

"Minnie," Marcus said, shaking his head. "If Albus hadn't been stopped you'd be looking for a new Headmaster about now. He's the Black Pope, he rules Hell."

Albus frowned. "And what was he doing in my school?"

"Are you sure it's not time for him to retire?" Marcus asked Severus.

Severus smiled faintly.

"That is a good point," Molly said. "If even *I* can change, why exactly are you not doing so?"

Albus looked surprised as he looked at the Weasley Matriarch.

"You seem determined to treat them as normal students, when they are clearly not!"

"They are still children!"

"Bollocks," Molly said, to the complete shock of some people. "Is your hearing going?"

"My hearing is fine," Albus replied icily.

"Then you heard them say that they spent years in Hell?"

Albus nodded.

"And that was part of their journey," she continued.

He nodded again.

"Then they are not children!"

"Actually," Marcus added cheerfully, "from what I've gleaned from listening to them talk over the past few years, I reckon they're around twenty-two."

Everyone turned to stare at the vampire.

"Which sucks for them, because they're going through puberty as adults – not something that I think anyone would wish to experience."

"Quite," Pomona muttered.

"I think, Albus, that I will give you next year to improve," Molly said firmly. "If not, then I will be speaking to the Governors about requesting your retirement, and I will not be the only parent doing so."

"Indeed," Pugsley said softly. He sat up straighter. "On behalf of the Addams, I state that we will follow Molly Weasley's lead in this matter."

Molly looked surprised, before she smiled at Pugsley. "Thank you."

Pugsley grinned at her and slumped back down.

"I will try," Albus said with a long sigh.

"Do so," Molly said. "Now, I suggest that we wake the children and tell them a version of the truth."

"Like what, Molly?"

"That they were put to sleep for their own good and that Fudge has gone missing."

Pugsley nodded. "I can get them to accept that."

"Really?" Minerva asked doubtfully. "I've found that avoiding telling the truth like that only leads to more questions."

"Yeah, I can." He looked at the teachers. "And if any of you need to talk about what you've seen today, I'll ask Harry nicely for you."

"Thank you, Pugsley," Molly said. "I have seen something today I can scarcely believe, but in a way, I have found it reassuring."

"Molly?" Minerva asked.

Molly smiled faintly. "Do you really think that Voldemort is going to be much of a threat to two people who have lived through years with the Dark Pope of Hell?"

"Tomorrow, that may console me," Minerva said softly. "Tonight, I will be requesting Dreamless Sleep potion."

There was a general murmur of assent.

Pugsley stood and stretched. "Still, it doesn't take away from the best thing that happened today. We got to see Wednesday go all out!"

"She was amazing," Molly agreed. "So graceful and so deadly."

"She's been training all her life," Pugsley said proudly.

"As has Harry," Marcus added dourly.

"Marcus?" Remus asked hopefully.

"I'm under a bloody spell," he groused. "And they've got me using that word as well! As soon as the training finishes, I forget if Harry participated or if he just sat there."

"Excuse me?" Molly asked.

"Long running argument," Pugsley said. "They don't know if Harry can actually fight and is as powerful as Wednesday or if he is just a gifted leader who gets us to do what is needed."

"He's powerful," Minerva said, "we've all felt his magic when he's angry."

"The swirling thingy he does?" Pugsley asked.

Exactly, like last year, the morning after Dolores Umbridge marked Wednesday," Minerva said, offering an example.

"Oh, yeah," Pugsley said. "He did radiate power then."

"Really?" Marcus asked eagerly.

"Of course, you can mimic that effect with a spell," he added with a grin.

"What!"

"Yeah." Pugsley pulled out his wand and cast a spell. He started to radiate a deep and intense magic that swirled around him. He cancelled the spell and grinned. "Fun, isn't it. Of course, I dunno if Harry used it or not."

As one, every teacher turned to look at Dumbledore, who blushed and looked down.

"Anyway," Pugsley said, "let's wake everyone up and I'll do the explaining."

"Pugsley?" Minerva asked.

"Trust me," he said.

Snape stood and vanished his chair. "Min, will you help me with the waking spell?"

"Of course."

The professors all stood and removed their chairs, and re-took their seats. Together, Minerva and Severus woke the children, before retaking their seats, leaving Pugsley in the middle.

As it was a magically induced sleep, everyone woke pretty much instantly.

"What the hell?" Ron was the first to ask.

"Language, Ronald," Molly snapped.

"Sorry, Mum."

Pugsley smiled slightly. "As you've no doubt all noticed, Madame Bones and the Aurors have vanished, as has the Minister, the two other Aurors and that stupid assistant. And you're now wondering exactly why you were put asleep to miss the cool stuff, right?"

There was a lot of nodding.

"Well, basically the only person who I have ever seen scare Mom and Dad popped in to have a talk with Harry and Wednesday. If you look at the faces of your professors, you'll understand just how bad it was. Harry ordered you to be put asleep so that you wouldn't have nightmares about it.

"Hermione, Ginny, you actually met him last summer, he is the one you saw when the Dementors came near you."

"Oh, crap," Ginny whispered, going white. Molly didn't say anything about her child's language this time.

"Dad helped you hide the memories so that you'll never access them again."

"Thank Merlin," Hermione said devoutly. "I have never been as scared as when I felt like I remembered him."

"Yeah, me neither," Pugsley said. "I'd strongly advise not trying to find out what happened, and if you do, don't expect any of us to help you. You make your own decisions. As for me." He took a deep breath. "I'm going to go and cry on Harry and Wednesday's shoulder, then take some sleep potion, and dream about my sister beating the crap out of all those Dementors and try and forget what just happened!"

He walked out slowly, and was quickly surrounded by Hermione and Ginny, with Daphne walking behind them.

"It's been an interesting morning," Severus said as he walked into the middle where Pugsley had been standing. "Some of our long-held beliefs have been challenged, and your Head of Houses will be happy to talk to any of you about what has happened today.

"Lessons are cancelled; please go to your Common Rooms."

---

*The rest of the school year was back to normal. Rumours spread about what had happened when the children were asleep. None of them came close.*

*Some of the students wanted to try and find out what had happened, but that quickly failed, as most people took Pugsley's words to heart.*

*Daphne accepted the price that Wednesday demanded. Snape never asked what it was, nor did he care. Daphne was happier than he remembered, as she was now part of the group. The group dynamics had changed slightly with her addition.*

*Harry and Wednesday were still connected to Pugsley first and foremost; he was their first lieutenant, joined by blood as well as belief. Hermione was connected to Pugsley and Harry and Wednesday in equal amounts, while Ginny was still mainly connected to Pugsley.*

*Daphne was connected directly to Harry and Wednesday, but not as closely as Pugsley.*

*Severus himself was connected in a similar way, but he suspected they had already decided his long term role, they just hadn't told him yet. He was in the same orbit as Remus and Marcus, and probably Sirius Black.*

*And as Black was definitely back, he had prepared a few (hundred) pranks. Just in case.*

*Harry and Wednesday had appeared back in school a few days after the End of the Dementors. And it was with tentative smiles, although no thawing of attitudes.*

*The press had gone completely nuts over what had happened, and were calling for Harry and Wednesday to receive the Order of Merlin. The search for Fudge was half-hearted, until Amelia announced that he had been found, drowned in a small puddle of magical sand.*

*No one seemed surprised.*

*The lack of Dementors was treated as an excuse for a party, and the hunt for Fudge's successor began.*

*It was only when Sirius Black was decreed innocent, and turned up at several high-profile parties, that Severus began to dread the unfounded idea of what the Addams Family might have in store for Black.*

*As always, there was time for him to receive his instructions before the end of the school year.*

---

He looked up as there was a knock on his door. "Come."

Harry and Wednesday walked in and sat opposite his desk. Their whole demeanour screamed 'formal'.

"Drink?"

"No, thank you," Harry replied.

"What can I do for you?"

"Remus will not be coming back next year," Harry announced. "We need him with Sirius."

Snape nodded slowly.

"Marcus will still be floating around."

"And me?"

"After your holiday, sort out your personal life. We will expect you at the Mansion within three weeks, with Narcissa. The end game is close at hand, and we will be prepared."

"Okay." He recognised an order when one was given to him.

Harry relaxed, and Wednesday smiled faintly. "We'll have that drink now."

Severus smiled and pulled out his bottle of Fire Whiskey. He poured three glasses and handed two to his guests.

He suspected that he had switched roles now, and no longer was he working for them, he was now their confidant.

"You've been happier recently."

"Severus," Wednesday chided lightly. "That's an observation, not a question."

He raised his glass to her in a mock salute. "So, why are you two suddenly doing the facial equivalent of the can-can in the Great Hall while half-naked and covered in whipped cream?"

Wednesday suddenly paled causing Harry to look at her.

"I just got the image of Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall doing all that."

Severus shuddered. "Okay, bad analogy," he agreed. "Let us never mention it again. But my question stands. I've seen actual smiles and even the odd frown."

"We're free," Harry said softly.

"Ahh, from Pinhead?"

Harry nodded. "We've lived for four years knowing that if we couldn't find a way to kill the Dementors we'd end up back with him."

"Which you don't want?"

"No."

"When he came to your birthday, you didn't seem that worried."

Wednesday smiled a sad little smile. "When you've felt your muscles be cut away from your bones with barbed wire, and had every one of your vertebrae shattered one after the other by someone's fist, and felt pain that makes the Cruciatus feel like a stubbed toe. When you've screamed so hard that your vocal chords have snapped, and when you can no longer tell the difference between what feels good and what feels bad, then you will be within a distance of what we experienced at his, and his disciples' hand."

Harry gently took Wednesday's hand. "I've seen what the Death Eaters have done, and they are rank amateurs compared to true connoisseurs of experience."

Wednesday nodded in agreement. "They have no idea what true pain is, or what true pleasure is. They are contemptible. When we came back from his domain, I wasn't quite here."

"Sure you were," Harry said.

She smiled softly at him. "I wasn't," she said softly. "Like Harry said, I was broken; I couldn't handle the thought of going back."

"Neither could I. It was too much for us."

The two of them went silent for a few minutes.

"So what changed?"

Wednesday smiled at Harry again. "Harry did. He is the strongest person I have ever met, and I always knew the only man for me would be the one stronger than Dad."

Harry blushed faintly.

"One morning, before I put my mask on, he looked me in the eye, and told me that this was ridiculous."

Harry's blush faded.

"And I'll never forget the words he said next. 'If we go back, and if he takes us, then we will survive, we will learn, and then we will take over. We will rule, not him.'" Wednesday was looking at Harry with pride. "And that was enough."

They stood and walked to the door.

"I don't understand," he called after them.

Wednesday went through the door. Harry paused and turned to look at him.

"It wasn't the pain that we hated," he whispered.

"It was being out of control."