### Meddling Old Fool

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Summary

After his death, Dumbledore is trapped between the afterlife and the mortal realm. There, he's forced to witness the events leading to Voldemort's demise. Then, he is offered the chance to change the future, returning his soul (and his memories) to his 16 years younger self. Will he succeed in righting the wrongs he's made? And what about the butterfly effect?

Notes

This is my first work so please review. Also note that English is not my first language so I'm likely to spell something wrong. When that happens, let me know and I'll try to fix my errors ;)

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.
The last thing he remembered was the look of anger and sadness in Severus' eyes. He shouldn't have been tasked with that mission, but he was the only one who could do it.

And now he found himself surrounded by a bright, pure light. He couldn't see. So he tried to guess where he was by walking around. Oh well, at least he knew he could walk. Strange really, one would think that in the afterlife you wouldn't need to walk.

"You're not dead." The answer to his thoughts was resonating around him, like an echo inside an empty place of worship.

The voice speaking had an unusual characteristic: it was polyphonic. He could clearly distinguish three different underlying harmonies, each complementary to the others, and wondered if they belonged to the same being.

"And where would I be?" He felt his heart pulsing, but surely that must be a construct of his imagination, for he clearly remembered dying.

"You're between the world of the living and the world of the dead."

"Ah, yes, I thought something similar myself. Who am I talking to, if I may ask?". His curiosity was almost a living thing, straining inside of him, making him dizzy with anticipation. It had been a long time since he felt like this and it left him both disconcerted and intrigued.

"The mortals call me Death."
"The mortals call me Fate."
"The mortals call me Time"

"We are the three sisters."

The Norns. He was wary to approach them, these beings that held in their hands all that ever was and all that ever will; particularly because he had tried, in his foolish youth, to master one of them. The bright light dimmed of a fraction and suddenly Dumbledore could see himself and three silhouettes standing a couple of yards away. He was surprised by their position, it seemed to his ears that they were just inches away.

"Enchanted, Mesdames. May I inquire about the purpose of my presence here?"

"You may."

"Excuse my sister, Death loves sarcasm."

"Oh I don't doubt it, but I feel that she isn't the only one...Am I right, Fate?"

"You're an amusing human. Yes, you are right. You're here to observe how was brought about the fall of the Dark Lord known as Voldemort."

As Fate spoke, a white screen appeared on his left side. It wasn't very big, but not sooner the images began to flash before his eyes, that it enlarged enclosing him at its center.

Tears were streaming on his face, but he was too preoccupied with the scenes taking place around him to notice.

"These things are happening as we speak." The screen turned white again and dissolved into the air.

"A choice now lays ahead of you."

Dumbledore's head snapped up, facing the three sisters.

"Time has offered to take you back the night everything changed, to right your wrongs and save three lives. If you refuse, you'll go in the afterlife to live 'the next great adventure'."

"As you know, foul things happen to wizards that meddle with time, so you'll have to be careful. Mind 'the butterfly effect'. The more things you change, the more the future you were showed becomes uncertain."

"You speak as if I had already decided."

"You have. You're a meddling old fool and you will always be."

"Have I offended you, madam Death?"

"No, but you seem under the impression that I am insulting you. I am not, I'm merely describing you."

"Very well, it seems that you were correct indeed, madam Death. I cannot resist the temptation."

"Now, Time, if you please. Remember, Dumbledore: there is not a "greater good". If you do things right, Death will claim you much later than the first time. Farewell."

"Farewell, Mesdames."

Space around him darkened, pressing heavily on him until he couldn't sense anything other than the absence of stimuli. Pressure increased all around him, squeezing his body. His ribs cracked and punctured one of his lungs. Raspnig, he wondered if he had made the right choice. His kneecaps shattered and he would have fallen if not for the pressure that was simultaneously holding him aloft and killing him. As his shoulders were wrenched out of their sockets, he heard twin pops. Light burst under his eyelids and he knew no more.

Chapter End Notes

Revised as of 10/04/2019
this is really an experimental work and I'd appreciate your feedback. Yes, you who are reading this fic now: your comments make my day! Negative feedback is also appreciated, just be polite about it.
P.s If anyone wants to beta my chapters they can pm me on my ff.net profile (SIRIUSBLACKHEIR) or comment here with their email, and I'll get back at them as soon as I can.

Okay, I've bored you to death already, so on to the story!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next time he became aware of himself he was lying on something rather soft and comfortable. He was so very tired and every bone in his body ached like a thousand Cruciatus had been inflicted upon him.

Honestly, he wasn't that young anymore; he should stop fooling around and pretending to be twenty.

No, that was a lie: he had never stopped feeling like he was twenty, except for that one time and he still remembered her and him and that day of summer when he lost everything.

He shouldn't dwell on it though, the past wasn't in his reach anymore.

The present, on the contrary, was.

It suddenly hit him: the weight of his mission and the memories and the ever-present guilt that made his stomach clench.

He shouldn't be there, but he had been granted the chance to redeem himself and he would be damned if he didn't do everything in his power to become worthy of it.

Now, he only needed to know where he was.

A soft moan escaped his lips, he felt like a herd of centaurs had used him to play "Who kicks harder?". He tried to move but found that he couldn't, so he settled to peer through the eyelids to ascertain his position. He was in Hogwarts' infirmary and Poppy was bustling and huffing around his bed. Why was he in bed?

"Thank Merlin you found him Hagrid, another minute and he would have died of internal bleeding."

Poppy sounded relieved and, by the sounds she was making, her worries hadn't gotten in the way of her ministrations. They never did, she was too professional to allow it.

"I was doing my rounds on the grounds an I found 'im in there and I thought he was dead and I panicked. I should've called for ya sooner but it took me a while". Hagrid was now sobbing uncontrollably and every now and then he blew his nose, sounding like a trumpet. A very loud trumpet.
His head throbbed and pulsed and he was very tempted to go back to sleep, but he couldn't. He had to know which day he had been sent back, then prepare and plan accordingly.

Fate had warned him that the death of the Potters couldn't be prevented, but everything else could be changed, apart from Harry's destiny regarding Riddle. That was between the two of them and nobody would be allowed to interfere.

That didn't mean that Dumbledore wouldn't protect the boy at all costs; he didn't want to bear the pain that came when Harry realized the truth about him. When he realized that his mentor was just a meddling old fool with no regard for people's lives. He cared for the boy like he was his grandson and it was time to act on that emotion, not to hide it behind twinkling eyes and knowing smiles.

Still, he liked the twinkle and he liked to know things before and more in-depth than anybody else. Last time this had been his downfall, as well as the cause of countless deaths, so he knew he had to change. Maybe he could listen more to Minerva. She had been right about many things, chief amongst them her assessment of the Dursleys.

In the background of his thoughts, he was aware that another person had joined the murmured conversation regarding his wellbeing.

"Only Godric knows what possessed him to go on top of Astronomy's tower. I was ever so worried he wouldn't make it, Poppy... He's not as young as he used to be and Merlin knows we need him if we are to win this war."

Minerva was standing at the left side of his bed, frowning, with her lips thinned and her eyes fixed on the bed before her. Her fear for his life shone through her words, reflecting in her less-stern-than-usual demeanor.

Dumbledore realized, for the first time in what felt like forever that they weren't simply loyal to him. They followed his advice because they loved him. When the thought hit him, it came accompanied by a sharp pain in his abdomen.

He gasped and tried to double over, but the bandages covering every centimeter of his body wouldn't allow it.

"Albus!"

In an instant, the mediwitch was at his side and administered a blood replenishing potion and a mild pain reliever. Abruptly as it came, the pain subsided.

It was a pity he couldn't pretend to be asleep any longer, but now he had things to do.

"Good morning, Poppy. How are you?"

"I'm much better now that you're awake, Albus."

"Oh, you flatter me too much, my dear. I haven't blushed this deep since Minerva bought my underwear in my place..."

The mediwitch smiled and went back to her office to retrieve some more potions. Minerva went with her, attempting to pretend that she didn't need to compose herself after the earlier emotional outburst.

"Professor Dumbledore, sir! 'M so glad yer awake, y' know. It was me who found ye... yer body was there and I thought..." The gamekeeper could say no more, sobs were once again shaking his imposing frame.
"Now, now Hagrid, I'm sure that you've done a marvelous job of taking me here, but now I'm well. In fact, I'm going to leave this bed as soon as Poppy comes back. Or maybe sooner."

Dumbledore winked at the half-giant and started to swing his legs over his bed when...

"OH NO, DUMBLEDORE, YOU DON'T!" The matron, her arms full, yelled so much that he was sure his eardrums were going to burst.

"But Poppy, dear...as you can see, now I'm..." He tried to cajole her.

"DON'T YOU * POPPY, DEAR* ME, ALBUS! You may be the Headmaster, but right now you're also my patient and I will not allow you to leave this infirmary until your body is completely recovered. " said the mediwitch, carefully depositing her cargo on his nightstand. A wood basin and a multitude of potion vials joined his glasses, leaving little space for the letters that had been neatly stacked upon it moments before.

"I am completely recovered! " the Headmaster all but whined. Yes, he was pouting, but Merlin be damned if dying didn't allow him to do it.

"Albus." Minerva's voice was surprisingly calm. "You will do as Poppy tells you or you will suffer the consequences at my hand."

Hagrid, meanwhile, had made a beeline for the door and, after another glance at him, slipped away. Albus was actually impressed by the half-giant ability to walk away silently.

"You were found at the bottom of the Astronomy Tower for Merlin's beard, Albus! If not for the quick thinking of Hagrid you would have died!" Minerva's voice must have hit the highest pitch known to mankind because he nearly missed her last words.

So Fate did love her irony. How fitting that the same fall that followed his death the first time around, now represented the beginning of his new life. It made one wonder if the Universe liked to play games with people just to occupy itself...

"What in Godric's name were you doing on the top of that tower? At midnight, no less! How did you fall? " Minerva's inquiries brought him back to the present.

"I'm afraid the details of that night are a bit hazy. I remember I went there because sleep evaded my mind and for a while I sat there, admiring the stars. Then there's nothing, only black. I suppose I finally fell asleep and then I fell from the tower as well."

He chuckled; after all, he had met Death and she wasn't scary, just...Dare he say it? Grumpy.

"There's nothing funny in falling from the Astronomy Tower, Albus! You could have died! You should have died!" How Minerva managed to make him feel like he was a teenager caught out of bed after curfew was anyone's guess because he couldn't come to terms with the fact.

"Don't sound so disappointed with my failure to die, Minerva. I promise, next time, I will put in more effort." Albus smiled pleasantly, his eyes twinkling.

"HOW COULD...WHY...HOW DARE YOU!" Minerva sputtered indignanty, her outrage a roaring inferno.

"Minerva, I must ask you to leave my patient for the time being. You're hindering his recovery. " Madame Pomfrey wasted no time in accompanying the fierce Transfiguration teacher to the door.
"Poppy, surely you can let me stay. I overreacted, yes, but only because Albus was speaking nonsense..." Minerva was trying to walk back to his bedside, but the matron wouldn't be swayed from her decision.

"You must understand that my patient has suffered great trauma, therefore he's not quite himself at the moment. Now, go to dinner or your absence is bound to be noticed, especially given the current state of affairs. " With that, the media-witch ushered McGonagall to the door and closed it behind her.

"Albus what am I to do with you...?" Asked the matron, half-amused and half-exasperated.

"Why, my dear, you could begin by telling me for how long I was ah, dead to the world, as the students say, and what time is it, of course," answered Dumbledore, with his signature eye twinkle. A sigh escaped her lips, but she answered nonetheless.

"You were unconscious for almost three days. Your life has been in danger until this morning, so I haven't slept for the past days. Thank Merlin for the existence of Pepper-Up potions. Today is Halloween and the feast will begin in less than five minutes. If you feel up to it, you can eat something. Don't exaggerate with the sweets and eat plenty of meat. " the matron told him in a clipped tone.

As soon as she said that, the blood in his veins turned to ice. It was this the night that changed everything. It was his mission to change the world for the better and atone for his mistakes, but apparently, Fate wasn't going to help him in any way.

He couldn't remain in bed. He had to save at least one life and in order to do that, he had to embrace his Slytherin side.

Moments later he plastered a smile on his lips and tried to appear moderately tired, ignoring the persistent stabs of pain in his chest. "Since I feel better, you should go and rest now, Poppy. You haven't slept for almost three days, you deserve some sleep."

"I don't think that's a good idea, Albus, you've barely recovered. I want to make sure your life isn't going to be in jeopardy if I leave." She said, frowning.

"Don't worry. I am going to be a model patient. If it makes you feel better, I promise I will eat my dinner and go straight to bed. You can check on me tomorrow morning..."

"Ah, all right! But you better keep that promise or I won't let you out of my sight for the next week."

"And I wouldn't want that, would I?" Albus winked at the media-witch and burrowed further under the blankets to prove his point. Finally, the mediwitch gave in to her need to rest and went away.

Now, he had to plan.

Chapter End Notes

Did anyone catch the hidden pun?
Revised on 10/04/2019
Halloween's Tragedy 1/2

Chapter Notes

I'm really sorry it took me so long to update, but I had to drag my muse kicking and screaming to write this part of the chapter; apparently, she doesn't like Peter at all...thanks for all the lovelies reviews ^.^
I own only the plot and Erbius Addington, the other characters as well as the original storyline belong to J.K.Rowling, who is kind enough to let me play with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He wasn't the only wizard Voldemort had ever feared for no reason, after all... He knew, as the seconds slipped away, that he had to prepare carefully, lest he worsen the outcome.

So many choices were to be made and quickly, for lives depended upon it; so he ignored the pain in his bones and began to move.

First things first, he thought as he silently accioed the Elder Wand and some robes. Now, he was ready; or as ready as his medical condition permitted.

Wasting no time, he immediately dispelled the bandages that covered his whole body and sent his Patronus to Hagrid, telling him to go to Godric's Hollow, find and restrain Sirius Black and wait for him there.

When he had spoken the last word of the message needing to be relied, his familiar appeared beside him in a burst of flames. He hadn't yet figured out how Fawkes seemed to sense his needs and come to his aid uncalled; even so, right now, he was grateful for that ability: he needed all the help he could get.

Fawkes stared at him for a full minute, singing a beautiful melody that lifted his spirit and lessened the keen sting of his wounds, then perched on his shoulder. A wild whirlpool of fire after, the two of them disappeared into the night.

When he reappeared he was in Godric's Hollow, precisely in the small town square, not far from the Potter's, a sudden bout of dizziness swept through his head, forcing him to lean heavily on the monument that dominated the square.

After a few moments, he willed his body to start moving, he couldn't afford to be late; he would NOT witness the same tragedy twice.

Walking briskly toward the house he couldn't fight the cold ice that has settled inside his chest.

When he reached his destination he couldn't help the small tear that escaped his eyes from rolling down to his silvery beard. The house was in ruins, where once was located Harry's nursery now there was a gaping hole. The wall was missing multiple pieces of furniture and parts of the ceiling where the Avada Kedavra had rebounded, wounding the house and scarring its youngest inhabitant for life.

However, not everything would be lost, unlike the last time. He had arrived soon enough to witness Peter trying to get away from the house without attracting attention to himself.
Albus followed him silently into the dark alleys near the main street, until they found themselves in a large, deserted, residential area.

"Peter! Here you are! I've been looking for you... Could you know what happened to the Potters ??"

The young man squeaked in terror, he had been sure not to give his presence away, that much he knew.

*How the heck had Dumbledore found him? Did he know he was the spy? No, he didn't, otherwise he would have already been blasted to pieces, not stopped to chat...*

He turned slowly, his face carefully blank, the only sign of his nervousness was his wringing his hands repeatedly. The game was on.

"Professor, thank Merlin you're here!" He squeaked.

"Yes, regretfully, I know what happened to the Potters... I had a feeling that something would happen tonight so I came to check but I was too late... Sirius had already sold them to the Dark Lord to gain His favour."

"Sirius? Are you sure?"

"Yes! He was their Secret Keeper! Only he could have revealed their address to You-know-Who!"

"When I spoke to him earlier, he seemed maddened with grief by the loss of Lily and James..." that was a lie, but Peter couldn't know.

A false frown creased Dumbledore's forehead and he inclined his head a little to the left, as if contemplating the possibility of Sirius' betrayal.

At this, Peter tensed for a moment. He knew he was threading on thin ice: his next words were crucial.

He desperately needed Dumbledore to believe him, to make Sirius take the fall in his stead.

"Of course he was upset! His Lord has just been vanquished! The apple doesn't fall far from the tree and he was born a Black!"

A perfect blend of pain, regret and rage was painted on his face. He had always been very good at acting. He had to act demure, act stupid and act gullible to make people feel better about themselves. Had to pretend to be loyal to be trusted and yet overlooked, unreprehensible and unremarkable all together.

"I trusted him for all these years, and he has betrayed all of us!"

"Mmmm I wonder if that is the case. I've known there was a spy in the Order for a while, but I would never have suspected a close friend of James" Dumbledore answered him.
"Exactly! Nobody would have! James and Sirius were brothers in all but blood; I guess in the end for Sirius blood tradition won over James' affection..."

Peter smiled triumphally.

_He had made it! Now he needed to get away as far as possible, maybe abroad. He didn't much fancy the chance of encountering one of his fellow Death Eaters: they knew it was him who had told the Dark Lord where to find the baby who had been his downfall and by now he had undoubtedly been pegged as a spy of the Light. In other words he was a dead man walking._

"I fear retribution, professor. I was one of their closest friends, see. I'm afraid they will hunt me down to ask why the Dark Lord has fallen."

Pettigrew's voice was filled with panic, his eyes where darting around, taking in their surroundings with a maniacal gleam.

"I don't doubt they will, alas! I know, however, that you aren't afraid for the reasons you gave me..."

"Headmaster, what?... what do you mean?" Fear shone trough Peter's eyes and he wondered if there was a chance of escaping unscathed. He found none.

"Ah Peter, I'm so disappointed with you... You should have never been privy to the Order's business but James, Sirius and Remus pleaded me to let you in and I acquiesced to their desires..."

"He would have killed me! I was defenceless! What could I do?"

The young man was whimpering and cowering before him.

Albus' magic had flared up, a mist near his body sparking every now and then with unbidden power.

"Alas, Peter you could have fought and died with honor, like others before you: Dorcas Meadows, Mary McDonald. Do you remember her, Peter? Voldemort killed her and yet you allied with him to save your life... You'll live to regret your actions. _Diffindo! _"

Peter's robes where slashed at both of his forearms exposing the skin marred with the fading Mark on one side and unblemished flesh on the other.

"_Accio_" his wand flew in Dumbledore's outstretched hand.

"_Incarcerous!_" Tight ropes coiled around him like snakes restraining him.

After the quick succession of spells he felt his forces waning. Merlin, not now, he just needed a few more seconds....

"Fawkes, bring Peter to my office, then call for help..."
Darkness closed on him and he knew no more.

Chapter End Notes

In the next chapter, our favourite dogfather makes an appearance!
Sirius Black was a lot of things. 

Reckless. *(Yes.)*

Harsh. *(Undoubtedly.)*

Arrogant. *(C'mon, Evans, that's really a blow below the belt! You can't use my name as a synonyme for arrogant!)*

*-Yes, Sirius, I can and I will.)*

But nobody could say he was nothing but loyal to a fault. His Patronus *and* his Animagus forms were a testament to this truth. After all, dogs are the most loyal companions for humans.

So, when he found Peter's house empty and perfectly tidy, well, maybe not perfectly tidy, but as tidy as you could expect from Peter, his growing sense of dread was replaced by fear. *He had to check the Potters, now!*

He took his flying motorcycle and went as fast as he could to Godric's Hollow.

*Please, they couldn't be dead, they couldn't, please. Maybe Peter went to somebody else's house. He would never betray them. If he had been kidnapped with a clever ploy he wouldn't talk, they were his brothers in all but blood. He would rather die than speak...*

Seeing the house was like being punched, hard, in his guts and having the wind forced out of his lungs. He couldn't breathe. He entered the house running, being unable to wait another minute to have his answers. *The kitchen was empty, maybe they had escaped, maybe...*

Something black at the other side of the house, in the living room, attracted his attention. While he was advancing he realized it was a mop of unruly black hair. James' hair. He stopped, paralyzed by guilt and pain, hot white, threatened to engulf hid mind, driving him insane. He had to move, though. He conjured a white sheet and, with a flick of his wrist, gently covered James' body with it.

The distressed cries of an infant reached his ears and a tiny part of him registered that he was flooded with relief. *Harry had lived.*

The sensation was short-lived, however; for when Harry cried, Lily would immediately hush him gently, singing a lullaby and rocking the baby in her arms until he fell asleep. He couldn't hear her singing a soothing tune. *Nothing could have stopped Lily from comforting his child. Nothing, but death.*
He would kill Peter.

He would torture him with the Cruciatius curse within an inch from insanity and then he would kill him, painfully and oh, ever so slowly.

He had escaped from home at sixteen, true, but he was the heir of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black and, as such, he had been groomed from a young age to behave accordingly; tutoring in the Dark Arts included...

When Voldemort had made an attempt to recruit him, everybody had been shocked. He hadn't. Sometimes he wondered if his soul was fated to become as black as his name. Growing up in that household, that result wouldn't be abnormal, no, it would be typical; expected, even.

*It appeared it was time to earn the family name, after all...*

But first he must take care of his godson. He needed to comfort him and be comforted by him. Harry was the only thing he had left of his brother, and Slytherin be damned if he didn't everything in his considerable power to avenge the toddler now in his care. (- *And that's why your middle name is "Arrogant"! -Actually, Evans, my middle name is Orion...*)

Walking up the stairs as quickly as he could, stepping over the debris littering the house, he finally reached the nursery, or, rather, what was left of it.

Lily's body was in front of the crib. She had died to protect her son and, in that moment, Sirius vowed to do the same. She was just out of reach for Harry, who hadn't stopped crying since she had died, probably. The baby's hand was still trying to reach her through the gaps of his crib. Sirius covered her body as he had done for James a few minutes previously, then he picked Harry up.

"Hush Prongslet,
don't cry no more,
now that uncle Padfoot is here,
You won't have to shed another tear,
Dark wizards cannot take you from my arms,
For my love for you won't let you come to harm,
So sleep tight and enjoy your dreams,
And when you'll wake up,
I'll be here with the Marauders,
To show you how to play...
Hush, now Harry James"

The lullaby didn't have the desired effect, but at least Harry had stopped crying.

Sirius remembered when he had come up with those rhymes like it was yesterday...

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Harry had been crying all night long and on and on for the whole morning. James and Lily were barely functioning, moving slowly to make lunch for the Marauders, baby Harry and themselves, like every other Sunday. When he arrived to Godric's Hollow, it was to find two zombies walking around, taking turns at holding a crying baby.

He could never stand Harry crying, not for the noise, but for the knowledge that if he cried he was in pain, or not completely comfortable. So he took him from the high chair and went in the livingroom where he sat on the couch and then proceeded to place Harry on one knee, bouncing him up and down, while making sure he couldn't fall. It usually cheered him up, but that time it didn't.

Then he used plan B. Harry was put on the floor, in a sitting position and Sirius shifted to Padfoot,
It didn't work.

So he took the baby in his arms and started to sing different lullabies. When that failed too, however, he knew he had to employ drastic measures. Those measures consisted on coming up with this lullaby.

After he had sang those lines, baby Harry fell immediately asleep, and from that day on Harry wouldn't go to sleep unless somebody sang him Sirius' lullaby. The only variation Harry didn't mind was the substitution of "uncle Padfoot" with the title and nickname of the person singing the song, other variations where quickly dispelled, as Harry started crying if the lullaby wasn't sang correctly.

Sirius was brought back to the present when Harry tugged his sleeve.

"Unca Pa'foo?" Impossibly green eyes were scrutinizing his very soul, as if trying to find an answer for the question he wanted to ask.

"Yes, Prongslet?"
"Wh'e mama?"

"She has..." his voice broke. Merlin, Sirius, toughen up! "She has gone far away with daddy"
"When back?"
"Never...Harry, never..."

And the pain engulfed him, till everything left was grief, guilt and sadness. He couldn't bear it anymore. He cried until his eyes were dry; he cried until the numbness in his head covered the pain of having his heart feeling like it had been carved out of his chest, having nothing to fill the hole left inside.

Eventually, he calmed down enough to get out of the house that had begun to creak ominously; the danger of remaining there, and risking to be buried under the debris, made apparent by the obvious instability of the structure.

It was in the garden than Hagrid found them. Sirius was standing in front of the house cradling Harry to his chest and didn't register Hagrid 'so arrival until the latter put a hand on his shoulder. He turned slowly to greet the half giant, mindful of Harry who had just gone to sleep.

"Hagrid" Sirius inclined his head briefly.
"Sirius, I'm glad I found ya" answered the giant.
Hagrid glanced at the house.
"Are they...?"
The Marauder couldn't help inhaling sharply. "Yes, they are. Listen, I have a job to do but I can't take Harry with me. I need to make sure he's taken somewhere safe first. Could you take him to Dumbledore?" Sirius was anxious to go, his voice impatient, laced with need and desperation.

"I cannot do that, Sirius. Dumbledore ask'd me to make sure ya were all right. Ya need to stay with 'arry."

"I CAN'T! " The anger inside Sirius abruptly exploded.

"IT'S MY FAULT THEY DIED! I NEED TO AVENGE THEIR DEATHS!" He wanted to shout more, to howl his grief at the uncaring skies, to make them listen to his anguish.

Harry's distressed wailing brought him out of it.

"An' what about little 'arry 'ere? Y'our the only one he's left! He's yer godson, it's yer duty to provide fer 'im!" Hagrid firmness in the face of his anger made Sirius deflate a bit.

"I don't..I can't...I have other things to do, he'll forgive me, I'm sure."

"No he won't. Yer not going nowhere, Sirius Orion Black, D'ya hear me?"

Hagrid grabbed Sirius' arm - the one that wasn't holding Harry- and wouldn't let him go. Sirius was struggling like a wild animal who had been cornered and caged, desperately trying to escape. However, his movements were severely restricted due the fact that he was holding a sleeping baby and that the half giant wouldn't bulge.

At some point Sirius threatened to use his wand to get free, but Hagrid stubbornly refused to release his arm. He was far more resistant than a normal wizard, and he wouldn't be intimidated. Dumbledore had tasked him with this mission and he would succeed. No matter what had to be done. His loyalty to the old wizard was unwavering.

"Are ya done yet? " Hagrid asked after a few minutes of uninterrupted struggle from Sirius' part. That simple question seemed to switch something off inside Sirius and he abruptly stopped moving. He was simply too tired both physically and, most importantly, emotionally to continue.

"Good! I see you've come to yer senses."

"I'm a grown man, Hagrid, for Merlin's pants!" Sirius' anger was still palpable, but he wasn't shouting. He didn't want to awaken his young charge again. It didn't change the fact that he was now in a black mood. He had been denied his revenge...No, not denied...He still intended to haunt Peter; the reckoning had merely been postponed.

"You should have let me go! It was my right!" He muttered a token protest to avoid suspicion.

"Yeah, yeah, y'll thank me later, lad. Now, do ya mind helpin?"

Hagrid was tinkering with a metallic can, muttering things under his breath all the while touching the can with his umbrella. Whatever he was trying to do wasn't giving any results. Sirius took his wand, pointed it towards the can an said "Portus", reactivating the illegal portkey created by Dumbledore.

Apparently, that was how Hagrid had reached Godric's Hollow... Of course he had to use a portkey, Hagrid couldn't apparate to save his life...Well, it was too late now. The rat was sure to be already miles away. His first priority was to take care of Harry, as they would have wanted...
The portkey glowed blue and Sirius hastily reached to touch it.

Two silhouettes disappeared into the night, unseen by the people who, a hundred metres away, were celebrating Halloween.

Chapter End Notes

What do you think about this chapter?
And what happened to Dumbledore?
What about Severus? What do you think he'll do
P.s Shattering Timelines by FiraBloom is really good: you should read it
P.p.s reviews are appreciated
Redemption and its costs 1 / 2

Chapter Notes

Soooo here's the new chapter. In the next you will see Snape!

He was in Hogwarts' infirmary, yet once again. But how did he arrive here? Looking around the infirmary he quickly spotted Fawkes. Ah, so his familiar was responsible for bringing him back (and he had a nagging suspicion that the bird was also to be thanked for his quick recovery). He inclined his head to Fawkes in thanks and the bird thrilled happily.

Merlin's beard, he'd never been hospitalized once in his life, and now that he had been sent back it seemed all he ever did was ending up here... Maybe Fate was joking, when she told him that, if he made things right, Death would claim him later than the first time? But then if she was joking, why did she send him back in time? It couldn't all be an elaborate hoax, could it?

Silently groaning in his head, for the headache he had developed while trying to find how the mind of a supernatural deity worked, Dumbledore started to get out of the bed. Now he knew why Harry was always so reluctant to go to the infirmary and he couldn't blame the boy for always trying to get out of here after he felt well again. After all, he was doing the same thing right now ( and he dearly hoped Poppy wouldn't be around because... well... she had threatened to chain him to his bed... and he didn't really care to test her patience, he had things to do...).

A sudden flash of light made him blink.

"Albus Dumbledore, I don't know what possessed you to do such a foolish thing! And after you had assured me you'd be a model patient!" Madame Pomefrey was angry at him, and, let me tell you, when angered she's a terrifying witch to be around...

Her protective nature reflected on the treatment her patients received: while they were in her care she would protect them from everyone and everything, including themselves...

"Poppy how is he?" An anxious voice was inquiring about his health, once more that day. It was Minerva. The Deputy Headmistress despite her stern and strict countenance had a big heart, and tended to worry about the staff and the students' wellbeing, even if she didn't like them.

"He will recover" said Poppy briefly, busying herself with the administration of the necessary potions: first a Blood-replenishing potion ( his wounds had reopened due to the premature stress he had put on his body ), then some Dittany essence to close said wounds. What she didn't see was Fawkes quietly crying on the bowl containing the Dittany essence.
After a while McGonagall spoke “Sorry, Poppy. I have to go to Albus’ office. His phoenix dropped in with a bound Pettigrew and insisted on me guarding him, if a phoenix can insist, that is. I stunned the man as soon as I saw his Mark but I fear he could wake and escape. I need to ensure the students’ safety first...” before exiting the room, she turned around once more “Kindly update me on his condition, when you come to administer the Draughth of the Living Dead to Pettigrew”.

"I will, but now I need to stabilize Albus" said the matron, while applying some Murtlap essence to help reducing the scarring.

When she was done, she spoke to him in an angry voice:" Albus Dumbledore, if you leave this bed before you're completely recovered, I will personally chain you to it, are we clear?"

He was barely conscious but managed to smile in response. Then Poppy dosed him with a light Dremless-Sleep potion and he stopped clinging to awareness and let himself surrender to unconsciousness.

It was lunchtime, so he doubted the staff would be around, but it never hurt to be careful. He quickly put on the magenta robe, that had been folded neatly beside his bed, and made his way to his office.

The portraits cheered at his passage and a few of them even wanted to know where he had been. He only smiled, amused, without answering; there was a reason Hogwarts' rumor mill was so efficient: the portraits were terribly bored all the time, and, in a school full of teenagers, drama wasn't in shortage, so they occupied themselves with gossip. He didn't doubt that the whole school would be informed of his return from a "business trip" by dinner.

After a short walk he arrived at his office, he found an unexpected, or rather forgotten, letter from none other than Severus Snape, requesting a meeting for that night. To be honest, it had been sixteen years ago for him, so it was no wonder he had momentarily forgotten about the young man, his future most trusted confidant and spy but, above everything, a son to an old fool...

In his first life he had initially seen the man as a pawn to be exploited, only to fully discover the hidden depths of Severus’ heart and soul years later and with many pains: the man wasn't overly prone to pouring his heart out to anyone.

Although, in his defense, it should be said that he had always believed in him, he knew Severus had the capacity to accomplish great feats if given the chance to. This time, however, he would strive to give him something resembling a family, somebody to love. Severus deserved that much from him, at least. So he quickly penned an answer to send him, and gave it to Fawkes.

No sooner had the Phoenix disappeared that footsteps could be heard approaching the door. It was that Minerva entered his office a few moments later.

"Albus, What. Are. You. Doing. Out. Of. Bed?Poppy was worried sick when she couldn't find you in the Hospital Wing, or anywhere else, for the matter."

Ah, again the exasperated "what should I do with you" tone. He honestly marveled at his ex pupil ability to scold him.
In truth, it was half of the reason he had requested her to teach at Hogwarts; the other half was her exceptional talent, of course, but she had always known that, even if she had never bragged about it.

"Ah Minerva, it's wonderful to see you too. Sherbet lemon?". He offered the ever-present bowl of sweets on his desk to her, only to be rebuffed with a curt: "No, thank you, Headmaster".

Oh, she was using his title, now, to make him recall his duties; very clever. He nodded slightly to acknowledge her strategy. She must be either very angry, or the matter of which she desired to speak must be extremely important. Most probably both.

"What troubles you, Minerva?" He said calmly, peering from the top of his half-moon spectacles. "Albus, yesterday night Fawkes appeared in Hogwarts with Pettigrew, bound and with both of his forearms exposed. He was bearing the mark!" The Transfiguration teacher looked most anxious about it, even slightly vulnerable.

Dumbledore sensed her discomfort and her unanswered question lingering in the air. He couldn't do much to comfort her, but he could tell her the truth.

"Yes, I had a sudden revelation yesterday, after I woke up from my comatose state. We've been accusing the wrong people of being the spy, while the culprit stayed safely hidden among us. Pettigrew was the spy. Not Sirius. Not Remus. Peter betrayed the Potters." He let a bit of sadness being perceived when he mentioned the young couple. Minerva understood.

"But why Albus? Why? They loved him!" Minerva didn't want to believe her mentor. She couldn't believe him, because if she did, if she accepted was he was saying as the truth, then she would also have to accept Lily's death. Lily, whom she had always considered as the daughter she hadn't been blessed with. Lily, who reminded her of her youth, with the auburn hairs and a fiery temper. Lily, who worked harder than everybody, to prove that her blood status wasn't a measure of her worth. Lily, always ready to defend those who couldn't defend themselves. Lily who confided with her, when she was upset with James or Severus.

"I'm afraid that Peter never felt loved, nor included and so he sought protection from those more powerful. From Voldemort. Instead, he found nothing more than slavery, misery and pain to welcome him." His voice had an hard edge now, a cutting edge, brought forth from anger, sadness and disgust.

"Is it true, then? Is it true that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is gone? That Harry vanquished him?"...That Lily is dead?

"Yes, yes, it's true. But I fear he will return Minerva, and, when he will, we must be prepared." Sadness mixed with a grim determination filled his words.

Her child was dead. A single tear escaped Minerva's eyes, sliding down her right cheek and darkening a small spot on her robes' collar. However, when she spoke, her voice was firm: "What should we do with Pettigrew, then? He is currently kept unconscious in the hospital wing ".

"Call the aurors and make sure he is detained in the Ministry's cells. Tell Moody he is an illegal rat animagus an has to be guarded 24/7. I don't doubt that in a week the Ministry will have organized the trials for the Death Eaters. Also, the Longbottoms have to remain under Fidelius until the trials start.
Send Kingsley to them."

"I will proceed immediately. Remember that Poppy wants you to go and have a complete check up before tomorrow. If I may be excused, Albus?"

"Of course. Oh, and Minerva?"

"Yes?"

"My condolences for your loss."

"Thank you, Albus. Now, I must go."

The Transfiguration teacher left his office swiftly, to accomplish the tasks she had been given and to mourn the loss of her daughter.

Dumbledore, in the meanwhile, busied himself waiting for nightfall and for his appointment with Severus.
Redemption and its costs pt.2

Chapter Summary

Dumbledore is a well meaning bastard and Severus is almost too tired to care. Almost.

Chapter Notes

Parts of the dialogue between Dumbledore and Snape are taken from "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" all rights belong to J.K.Rowling & Co. I do not owe anything except for the plot.

What do you think of Dumbles' behavior?

Enjoy the chapter!

When nightfall came, it was to find him, the greatest wizard of his age, on a windswept hilltop in Hogsmeade, waiting patiently for Severus. That afternoon he had finally had the chance to sort through his memories of the previous (or should he say next?) sixteen years. Now he needn't to worry anymore of slipping on things he shouldn't have, but, even if he did, well, everyone would attribute it to his being eccentric and almost all-knowing...

Being himself had its perks: he could only imagine if something like this had happened to somebody else, like Sirius, or Severus, or, heavens forbid, to Harry...the boy had already had such a hard life, he wouldn't wish this on him, and yet he knew that if Harry had been presented with the chance of going back, he would have done it. He had a "saving - people thing" and the biggest heart, and Albus would live to make sure his life was going to be better.

He was sure little Harry's life was already better, just by living with Sirius. And Remus. Merlin, he hoped Remus was helping, because Sirius had almost no clue about how to take care of a baby, apart from changing nappies and being a furry pillow...

He should go check them soon, maybe bring along Minerva and, if all went well, even ...

His musings were interrupted by the quiet pop of apparition.

Severus was thinner than the "last" time he saw him, when he had come to plead for Lily's life. His skin was tighter around the eyes, stretched almost painfully on his cheekbones, who had grown more pronounced with lack of food and rest.

He wished he could comfort the man, but he knew that other things needed to be done first, so he only turned around and started walkig towards Hogwarts.

"Follow me, Severus."

Albus was still extremely agile for his age and Severus was still remarkably young, so it was no
surprise they reached his office in ten minutes. Neither man spoke during the walk, and it was only in Dumbledore's office that Severus let his mask shatter.

Making a terrible noise, like a wounded animal, the young man slumped on the chair in front of the Headmaster's desk.

Dumbledore was immediately by his side, placing an hand on his shoulder. Severus' own father had never touched him with such gentleness; in fact he had avoided touching him at all, if not to beat him when he came back drunk from the pub.

It was that small act of comfort that broke Severus' feeble attempt to reign in his emotions, and he started crying silently, his whole body shaking with the cries of anguish and grief he wasn't able to stop.

He cried for a long time, and at a certain point he was sure Dumbledore had rubbed his back soothingly, but when he had regained some control of himself, Dumbledore's had was yet again on his shoulder, leaving him to wonder if he had imagined it or not.

"I thought...you...told me...you were going to...protect her"

"She and James trusted someone they shouldn't have..."

"Rather like you did, Severus..."

"Didn't you ask Lord Voldemort to spare her? To give her to you, as a reward for your services?" Asked Dumbledore, voice laced with barely veiled disappointment and a tip of - entirely faked - disgust.

Severus' breaths were quick and shallow, his lungs wouldn't expand properly.

"Her son survives, however..."

Severus's head abruptly snapped up.

"Her boy lives, Severus. He has his mother's eyes, precisely of the same colour and shape. You remember the shape and colour of Lily's eyes, do you not?"

"Just...STOP!"

Ah, anger...Severus had reached the second stage of grief.

"Gone..Dead..."

"Is this remorse, Severus? " Dumbledore knew he had to make Severus keep talking, otherwise the young man would never begin to recover from his loss

"I wish...I wish I were dead..."

Depression, the fourth stage. But he needed to go through all of them...Only he knew his ex-pupil loathed to be pitied...

"And what good would that be to anyone? It wouldn't bring her back." Said Dumbledore sharply.
"If you truly loved her, then your way forward is clear."

Severus' eyes were clouded with pain, as was his mind, and the words seemed to take a long time to reach him.

"What...what do you mean?"

"You know how and why she died. Make sure it was not in vain. Help me protect Lily's son."

"He does not need protection. The Dark Lord is gone..."

"The Dark Lord will return, and Harry Potter will be in mortal peril when he does."

There was a long silence, only interrupted by Severus' previously erratic breathing slowing down. He was undoubtedly employing Occlumency to do so. At last he answered.

"Very well. Very well. But never...never tell, Dumbledore! This must remain between us! Swear it! I cannot bear...especially Potter's son... I want your word!"

There, bargaining and acceptance, mixed together... Now he had to convince Severus of the foolishness of his request. He hoped the man could be swayed from his resolution, for his own good.

"My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?" Dumbledore sighed, knowing what was coming, while watching Severus' fierce scowl, his face lined with anguish.

"I will never tell..." Snape immediately relaxed.

"...because you will tell him, and his guardian, yourself".

Sometimes one must be cruel to be kind. He knew what would say next would be terribly manipulative, but Severus needed a family, and he would give it to him, even if the man ended up hating him for it.

Severus was bellowing, protesting vehemently about the injustice of it all, when Dumbledore raised his hand, silencing him. That however, didn't prevent Snape from glaring at him, in a remarkable imitation of a Basilisk.

"I will not repeat myself, Severus. I will protect you from the Ministry, but I must insist that you do as I have said. Hate me if you wish, eventually you will see it was for the better."

Severus slumped again on the chair in front of his desk, defeated and wary.

"Now that we have reached an agreement on that front, I would like for you to go to Madame Pomfrey; when you'll fell better, we will discuss your duties as Professor and all of what it entails, including, but not limited to, your potion research and your expected wage" With a twinkle in his eyes Dumbledore observed the man's reaction.

Severus' mood seemed to have improved slightly with his last sentence, and he exited the office without quite succeeding in slamming the door.

Albus only chuckled and went to dinner in the great hall. He knew all the ways in which Severus could communicate his displeasure and his exit only spoke of a mild discomfort.

He hoped the elves had made treacle tart.
Severus was following the pavement outside a muggle city; he didn't remember its name: it was inconsequential.

Everything was, after her death...

He didn't really know why he had agreed to Dumbledore's request, it wasn't as if his life depended on it, right?

Oh, yeah, it did. Bother.

But somehow, he had a feeling the meddling fool was trying to achieve something more than get him hexed.

Because Black would hex him the second he saw him, and Severus thought, in the tiniest corner of his mind, that maybe he deserved it.

No! He didn't! He hadn't done nothing wrong, had he?

Well, apart from getting your bestfriend and love of your life killed, sure, Severus: you didn't do anything wrong...

Shut up! I didn't...I TRIED!

Yes, you tried, and it made all the difference, but it wasn't enough, was it? She's still dead isn't she? And you can't do anything to bring her back, you can only hope to protect her son...

But why can't I do it in secret? Why can't I spy on the Dark Lord and protect the brat from a distance, thus protecting myself?

Because you owe the "brat" his parents, his mother...

The wolf will be there! He will kill me!

He won't and you know it; now, stop behaving like a child and face your punishment!

He found himself in a typical scottish landscape, staring at the door of a small cottage, that would have appeared in ruins to any muggle, and that would be invisible to every wizard who didn't know the Secret of his location.

This time Dumbledore was the Secret Keeper; Voldemort would have to sweat to gain access to Potter...

He was reluctant to knock and, at the moment, felt more inclined to go into hiding than anything. Before he could pull away, giving in to his basic instinct of survival, however, the door opened to reveal none other than Albus Dumbledore himself.

Severus sighed, it would be a long, long day...
"Ah, Severus! Welcome, welcome!" said Dumbledore, his maddening twinkling eyes incredibly bright with suppressed mirth.

Dumbledore was holding baby Harry, who was too busy playing with the man's silvery and incredibly long beard to notice the appearance of a dark stranger. The Headmaster gestured to his left where a living room could be found. It had two sofas, one on each side of the room and a plush armchair situated between the two, directly facing the fireplace.

"I think not." muttered Black from the couch where he sitting next to Lupin. The wolf elbowed Black in the ribs, hard. Severus suppressed a smirk, maybe the wolf wouldn't be so bad, after all...

Lupin stood from the couch, pulling along a very disgruntled Black, and came to greet him, extending his hand.

"Severus, it's a pleasure to have you here" the man said with a small smile.

"I don't know if you'll be so ready to shake my hand once we're done, wolf." Sneered Severus, but nonetheless extended his own hand, for the other to shake.

"Snivellus". Black was already eager to fight and would undoubtedly try to provoke him, but Severus didn't want to give him more reasons to hex him, besides the ones he would be providing in a few moments, so he kept his cold mask in place, answering trough gritted teeth.

"Black".

"Well, now that we're done with the greetings, maybe we could have a cup of tea?"

At Dumbledore's words Lupin hurriedly went to the kitchen to prepare a brew, leaving the three men (and a child) alone with each other.

Severus sat on the couch opposite to the one Black was occupying now again, and an uncomfortable silence descended on the household, only interrupted by the occasional giggling of Harry, who was having the time of his life messing with Dumbledore's beard.

Said wizard after a moment chose to sit right next to him with a wriggling Potter.

Oh, Merlin, why?

Severus hated kids, and he hated this one most of all: the living reminder that Lily had chosen another over him. And he had sworn to protect the brat with his life.

He wanted to throw up.

Unfortunately, throwing up would have been a rather impolite thing to do, so he tried to get up and away from that giggling demon.

Only to be stopped by Dumbledore's hand, barring him to move. So he was forced to endure this torture.

Merlin, why? Why couldn't Black just crucio him for a few minutes and be done with it? why?!

And then the baby, wriggling in the most powerful man of this age lap became very, very quiet and still. Harry had finally noticed him.
Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling at full force. Seriously, if the man's eyes twinkled any harder they would probably appear white instead of their usual deep blue.

Severus wanted to groan, but was stopped by the intensity of Harry's gaze. He felt suddenly nervous under his scrutiny, looking into those green eyes he had loved so much in another woman.

And for a fleeting moment, he thought he could learn to love them again, in her son's face.

Harry was apparently satisfied of what he saw in him, because he stopped staring.

After a moment he looked up at him and extended his arms: a silent demand to be picked up.

He was sure Black had fainted, because he couldn't hear him breathe anymore.

Severus scowled, so young and yet arrogant enough to demand things to strangers, typical of any Potter: he wouldn't coddle the boy. Somebody had to teach him that he didn't own the world, nor everybody in it.

So he turned away and pretended not to notice how the baby's eyes filled with tears nor how his lower lip trembled.

But then several things happened: young Harry cried desperately "Unca Sev! Up!"; Black, who had been in the process of throwing himself at him, for having dared to make his godson cry, collided with Lupin who, was coming in the livingroom with a tea tray.

The two men fell to floor while the teapot and the cups flew towards him, Dumbledore and Harry.

They would surely get burned.

He didn't even think.

He snatched Harry from Dumbledore's lap and turned his back to the teapot, thus protecting the Headmaster and the baby from the scalding water.
“Harry! HARRY!! Are you ok? Answer Uncle Padfoot, Harry!” Sirius was trying to peek at Harry with a concerned look, all the while wriggling to shake off Remus, who had fallen right on top of him.

From Severus’ arms came the elated giggling of Potter, who seemed to find the Potion Master’s robe buttons amusing.

Sirius and Lupin sagged with relief.

Dumbledore and Severus would have found the whole scene very amusing, if it wasn’t for the fact that the latter had just been soaked in very hot water.

Hot water.

Severus snorted.

The water wasn’t simply hot, no. It was almost friggin’ boiling. Why was it always him?

“Oh my god, Severus! Are you all right?” the question came unexpectedly from Lupin, who had freed himself from the jungle of limbs that he and Sirius made, not one minute ago, on the floor. Now, the werewolf was staring at his back, worrying his lower lip.

“Yes, Lupin. Stop worrying; I’m definitely ‘all right’ as you so eloquently put it.” Severus tried to turn around to face him, but winced in pain. His back skin was most likely suffering a burn and he would need to apply a salve as soon as possible.

Dumbledore’s keen eyes caught the fleeting signs of pain he hadn’t been quick enough to mask.

Dammit.

‘Shut your trap, Headmaster, or I swear to Merlin I will slip something in your pumpkin juice. Tried to convey Severus, with a glare to the old man.’ Severus thought loudly, hoping the Headmaster would pick up on it with his legilimency.

Albus’ eyes only twinkled before he spoke.

Severus wanted to groan.

“Severus, my boy, there’s no need to put up a brave...”

“Him? Brave? Seriously??” commented Black from behind them.

“He just saved Harry and the Headmaster from getting injured! Do us a favour and shut your mouth,
Sirius settled down again with a vague expression of guilt.

"...front." Dumbledore went on, ignoring the squabbling duo in the background. "You are amongst friend, after all...I'm sure Sirius has something for burns..." said Dumbledore, with all the fake innocence of a boy caught with his hands in a cookie jar.

"So you are injured, eh Snape? Let me see your back." There was no pity in Sirius' voice, nor disgusted mockery, just ice cold steel. It wasn't a request, it was an order.

"And why would I want to leave my back exposed to you, Black? So you can laugh and point at me like you did in first year? Or so you can stab a slimy Slytherin in the back? No, thank you very much." snarled Severus.

"Even if the second option would be very entertaining, unfortunately no. I am a fully trained Mediwizard and, as such, I need to asses the damage before giving you anything, you sod." Well, Sirius' patience hadn't lasted long, it seemed.

"Where did you study? Or did they gift you the certificate because they pitied the poor, handsome, runaway pureblood?" sneered Severus.

"I apprenticed under Madame Pomfrey, you prick. Now, do you have other oh so very intelligent questions or can we proceed?" bit out Sirius.

"Yes. I have another question. Why did you become a Mediwizard?"

"It's none of your fucking business" answered Sirius heatedly.

Lupin coughed, shifting awkwardly.

Snape smirked.

At least now Severus was in a familiar territory; he would never admit it, but Black's behaviour had unsettled him.

Without replying, Severus carefully put Harry in Dumbledore's lap and, with a flick of his wand, vanished his black long sleeved robe, remaining clad only in his trousers.

Remus gasped, Sirius stuttered.

"... I-It...does-doesn't look so bad, best treat it now though..."

"Yeah... Best treat it now" echoed faintly Lupin.

Severus sighed. If Black was stuttering, his back must be in worse shape than he feared...

Dumbledore, however, was ever attentive and registered their reactions with a pleased smile on his lips (which waned immediately when he realized Harry had been happily chewing his beard...)

Prying gently, he freed his beard and conjured a black dog for Harry to play with.

Sirius choked.
Albus only smiled and conjured a wood stool next to Severus.

"All right, Sniv-Snape, it looks like our whole tea set is embedded in your back. I'm going to remove the shards. Please, sit."

The Potion Master complied.

"Moony, pass the pain-reliever."

Sirius uncorked the vial and passed it to Snape, while Remus inched slowly closer to the Slytherin. Unbeknownst to him, Snape was about to get a double dose of pain reliever, and would risk to fall unconscious once the potion started to work.

"Snape, I need you to take it now."

Severus sniffed briefly the vial to make sure the potion was of good quality. Not finding anything wrong with it, he downed it in one go; after all, the potion wouldn't become less disgusting if he waited.

After a few seconds, his eyes unfocused and he started swaying on the stool. Lupin was less than a metre away and caught him, holding him upright.

"Good, now I will extract the shards, ok?? Moony tighten your grip, he's probably going to trash around."

Chapter End Notes

thaks for the kudos, they keep me writing as much as the reviews. Leave me one and Tell me if you think my story is horrible good bad great or meh
Chapter Summary

Snape comes clean of his sins and Siris has a peculiar reaction.

Chapter Notes

soooo I wrote all of this today because I got 4 kudos and I was hyped up. What do you think of a possible future relationship between Sirius and Severus? in my head both of them are bi; Remus is straight but I could still do a platonic wolfstar. I haven't ruled out those possibilities yet.. comment and let me know!

"Expello corporis alienum. Expello corporis alienum. Expello..."

Sirius chanted the spell over and over again, with his gaze fixed on Snape's back, which, incidentally, would have been a very nice back, had it not been marred by pearl white scars. Sirius was familiar with that type of scars; he had plenty of them himself: a relic of his "loving" mother.

A muffled moan escaped from Snape's mouth each time a shard was removed. Soon, the operation was completed and Snape sagged in Remus' arms. Sirius then proceeded to apply a healing salve on Snape's back, to minimize eventual scarring and accelerate the healing process. Then, he bandaged thoroughly the Potion Master back, who was still semi-unconscious in Remus' arms, and stepped away to clean his hands.

"Moony, I'm done. I think it would be best if you put Snape on the other couch on his belly, to avoid over-exerting his back." Sirius said, heading to the bathroom.

"Ah, sure Pads."

Remus was trying to reach the pocket where he had hastily put his wand, once Severus had drunk the pain reliever, while simultaneously sustaining Severus' dead weight, when the Headmaster coughed.

"Remus, allow me to help. After all Severus shielded me too, and I haven't done anything to help, yet..."

Dumbledore swished his wand and levitated gently Severus on the couch. A couple of minutes passed in complete silence, the only sound coming from Severus, softly breathing on the sofa. Even Harry had stopped giggling and was once again playing with Dumbledore's beard.

Sirius came back and sat next to him on the couch, lifting Harry from the Headmaster lap and placing him on his. Remus sat across them on the armchair, vanishing the stool Dumbledore had previously conjured.

"So..." Sirius began.
"One moment Sirius, if you would. For how long should the pain reliever put Severus to sleep?"

"Oh. Yeah, errr... about fifteen minutes or so since administration? Maybe longer; it depends on his habitual dose." Said Sirius, shrugging.

"I see." Dumbledore's eyes where once again twinkling.

"Now, I believe you wanted to ask me something?"

"Yes we were wondering why..." Lupin was reluctant to ask, but Sirius didn't have his patience and he burst out: " Why the hell did little Harry call Sniv-Snape 'Uncle Sev'?!"

"He's never seen the git before! Why would he call Snivellus 'Sev'???? It doesn't make any fucking sense!"

Sirius was becoming increasingly agitated, so Remus stepped in.

"We wanted to know why Harry seemed to know Severus well and why he would be inclined to ask him for errr.... cuddles..."

Finished Lupin, awkwardly.

"Ah yes, I thought you'd ask... But I believe this concerns all of you; Severus please stop pretending to be asleep." came the amused request of the Headmaster.

"Mmnnmmph" grumbled Snape. "I wasn't pretending, I just woke up. Besides, Black could wake the dead with the racket he was making."

The young man sat up, however; and positioned himself carefully so that his back wasn't touching the sofa. Dumbledore only chuckled.

"Now, boys, you must understand this isn't my story to tell... Severus will you explain?"

"Sirius, Remus don't interrupt him, or I will have to silence you; forcibly if I must. Do you understand?"

Both men hastily nodded, their eyes fixed on the Headmaster.

Severus grimaced.

He had been dreading this moment since he ha been told he must confess his actions to the two men now sitting opposite of him.

"It all began on a rainy day of March, earlier this year. The Dark Lord had told me Dumbledore would be interviewing a potential candidate to teach Divination at Hogwarts. He wanted me to spy on the meeting and then to propose myself for the Potion position. Slughorn was retiring at the end of that year and He needed a spy inside the enemy's lines. I, having recently completed a Potion Mastery in record time, was the better qualified to apply for the position."

So, I went to the Hog's Head to spy on Dumbledore and Trelanwey: the woman bragged to be a direct descendant of the famous seer Cassandra, cursed by the gods to not be believed until the prophecies came true, so my duty was to ascertain wheter or not she had any talent and then report it to the Dark Lord and also to learn from her how to conduct myself in a way that wouldn't arouse suspicion during my own interview. The interview was not going well, however: the woman was obviously a fraud.
Dumbledore had by then lost his patience and had just finished to tell her very politely that, sadly, she didn't meet the requirements for the teaching position, when she fell in trance.

At first, I thought it must be a parlour trick, but when she spoke, her voice was different and had a dreamy note about it that would be impossible to fake. Dumbledore realised it quickly as well and stopped, listening intently.

Then she uttered the first words of a prophecy that would forever change our lives: "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..."

I couldn't hear the rest: the pub's barman caught me eavesdropping and hauled me out forcibly.

I had failed my mission, but I had overheard something valuable, which could spare me the punishment the Dark Lord doled out to the followers who displeased him: sometimes he tortured or killed them himself, but more often than not she would let Bellatrix have her way with them. She liked to play with her victims, like a cat might do with a mouse; the Carrows and the Lestranges often helped her, like the dutiful minions they were...

I reported the prophecy to the Dark Lord upon my return. He declared me worthy of his inner circle: worthy enough to be one of the most trusted servants. For a while, I thought He had forgotten the prophecy, but after a few weeks it became clear he was obsessed by it.

He was constantly trying to decide which, between the Longbottoms and the Potters' children was destined to defy him."

Severus paused to inhale deeply.

"I didn't want to place the Potters in danger and I hated myself because I had betrayed the only one I have ever... called a friend. So I went to Dumbledore and I begged him to protect her.

To protect them all.

I offered to do whatever it took to keep her and her child safe.

I've been spying for the Headmaster since then.

Meanwhile He convinced himself that the Potter child was the one of whom the prophecy spoke.

Although, by then it was too late: the Potters and the Longbottoms had gone into hiding and couldn't be found.

His anger grew each day and we feared his displeasure greatly. One day, a spy came to us. He was the Potter's secret keeper. His identity remained hidden from us.

I'm not proud of what i did, but I begged Him to spare Lily. He agreed to, as a reward for my services.

I was content, until the Dark Lord told me that Lily wasn't so special and that if I had a... preference for readheads I could satisfy my... needs with some respectable pureblood. I lied and said I agreed.

He killed them on Hallow's eve.

I went to Albus in my despair and he said that if I truly loved her, then my path forward was clear: I could help protect her child.
I made an Unbreakable Vow that night, I promised that I would protect Harry with everything I had, even my life."

A tear escaped his eyes as he finished his part of the tale.

"Today I came here because Dumbledore wanted me to 'clean my soul' and I came because I..." know I deserve whatever you will do to me in revenge" owe him my freedom. I'm sorry.

Dumbledore observed the men's reactions.

Lupin only growled.

Sirius was shaking with rage, the only reason he hadn't drawn his wand was because Harry was asleep on his lap.

He gently lifted the child and put him in Remus' arms. Then he stood and walked towards Snape.

"Stand. Up."

The Potion Master stood.

Sirius grabbed him firmly by the shoulders, then brought his knee swiftly to Severus' groin. It collided painfully.

Severus fell on the ground, curling up on the floor. Sirius didn't spare another glance to him and went back to sit on the couch.
"That's it?" asked Severus in a strangled voice.

"Yes." came the terse reply from Lupin.

"You're...nnnh...you're not going to take revenge?"

"What good would it do? Even if we tortured you, James and Lily would still be dead... Besides, if what you said it's true, then you've already paid you penance"

"And you'll be serving your sentence for a lifetime. The only reason I didn't kill you was because Harry could do with more protection" chimed in Black.

"Also, because Harry seems inexplicably fond of you and Sirius and I would never do something to harm him." finished Lupin.

Black was pointedly looking away form Severus, glaring at Dumbledore in the meantime.

Severus got up slowly from the floor and walked gingerly to the couch where Dumbledore was sitting.

"Now, I believe, it's time for my part in this tale. When Severus came to me, confessing his role in the Dark Lord's knowledge of the Prophecy, I let the Potters know what he had done and why. They were angry and shocked at first. Many a rows ensued between them for a few weeks until James forgave you.

He acknowledged that, and I quote, ' Snape was a git, but I was too, and I believe, in the end, I was the worst one. I was wealthy, spoiled, and loved, while he was poor, mistreated and starved for affection; if me and Sirius hadn't tormented him every day for the entirety of our stay at Hogwarts, maybe he would have turned out differently. Maybe He would have gone and claimed the Prince seat in the Wizengamot and his title as the Head of House. Maybe he would have helped us sooner, and more extensively. He was intelligent, and an all right guy, for a git. I'm sorry for how I treated him, but, if we end up dead because of the prophecy, I'm punching him in the nose, when he joins us in the afterlife'.

Lily, for her part, had forgiven you almost at once. They were in hiding, but she wanted to do something to show Severus he had been forgiven. She discussed with James at leght, and, in the end, they made you godfather."
"Whaaaaaat?!?!?!??!!" screamed Sirius. Lupin and Severus were too busy gaping at the Headmaster to wince at the sheer volume of Sirius' voice.

"But...But..." Severus was stuttering, scrambling for words that would not come.

"As you know, in the wizarding world it's common to name three godparents for each child, especially if said child is the heir to a Noble and Ancient House. Sirius was chosen as first godfather, Alice Longbottom as Harry's godmother and a spot had remained vacant. Naming Severus as his secret godfather had great benefits for Harry: Severus will have to reclaim the Headship of House Prince, and, until he has his own heirs, Harry is his magical Heir; besides, Severus' prowess in Potion is well known, and he is bound to teach Harry something; to end with the fact that Harry will have one more person protecting him." Dumbledore's eyes were now twinkling again.

"But I am also Draco Malfoy's godfather" came Severus' feeble objection.

"What is it with people naming this git godfather?!" Sirius asked rhetorically, in an exasperated tone.

Then, he turned around, leveled his gaze on Severus and said: "House Black has primacy on house Malfoy, therefore your loyalty will be first to Harry and then to Draco Malfoy."

The icy, haughty, tone with which he said it reminded Severus strongly of the most influencial Purebloods.

Lupin's head whipped so fast in Sirius' direction that from his neck came a loud 'snap'. "Sirius."

barked Remus.

Sirius ran his left hand between the strands of his silky, shiny, soft-looking hairs and sighed. "Thanks Moony."

Now Severus was curious. What was that?

"So, er... Why is Harry so attached to Severus?" piped up Lupin.

"Of course, of course...Dear me, I had forgotten.

I believe that James called it 'The Greatest Prank To The Marauders Ever (Take that y'all, I win! )' and that Lily meant for it to facilitate Severus' affection towards young Harry, since the boy would already recognize you as his 'uncle' when you two met." Dumbledore's smile was now blinding.

Sirius huffed. " Yes, but HOW?! Harry has never seen the git before!"

"Oh, but he has." said Dumbledore. "In fact, I believe he saw Severus at least five days a week for roughly eight months."

"But I had never seen the boy before today! Surely, Albus, you must be mistaken!"

"I am not so old as to not recognize a clever idea when I see one, at least as of yet. Patience, Severus, I will explain."

"After Lily and James decided to name Severus godfather, they also thought it would be best if Harry could have time to adapt to his presence in his life. To that end, James performed, almost daily, a complex series of self-transfigurations, aimed to replicate Severus' appearance. Lily devised a charm that would change his voice to match Severus' and, after an hour or so of preparation, James could have passed for you. He even studied your mannerism to be more credible. Then, he would
play with Harry, for an hour or so, and would be seen by him interacting in friendly fashion with Lily. It was, on every aspect, an elaborate act, professional, even.

Severus started to speak. "I knew that he would never me alone! Even from his grave..."

Dumbledore raised his hand, silencing the man. "It wasn't intended as a slight to your person, Severus. After all, Lily wouldn't have agreed if that had been James' intent, as you very well know. It was meant to facilitate your bonding with Harry."

"Hmph. If you say so..." Severus reluctantly conceded.

"Now, you have to swear an oath to effectively become Harry's secret godfather."

"So I can refuse?"

"Yes, you could, but I doubt that you want to deny Lily her last peace offering. Moreover, Magic already considers you Harry's godfather, whether you want it or not, so it would be quite irresponsible to refuse your role in young Harry's upbringing. Alas, the ultimate choice is yours to make."

"What if I don't want to share Harry?" asked Sirius.

"You will have to." answered Severus, curling his lips.

"Make me" retorted Sirius.

"Oh, I will." Severus raised his wand...

"Boys! That's enough! Cease your foolishness!" Ordered the Headmaster.

"Very well, Headmaster, young Harry will have another godfather; may I prove to be more competent than the other one."

"Hey! That's me you're talking about!" protested Sirius.

"Obviously."

"Do I need to repeat myself?"

"No, sir. We've understood. Well, I did, at least; you can't say for certain with Black, his brother was always the sharpest of the two..."

"You, mmphmmmmmmphmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm" Black was trying to speak but Remus had put his hand on the other's mouth and was preventing Sirius to speak. "Swear the bloody oath, Severus, and let's get on with it!" said Lupin.

"All right, Lupin, if you insist..."

"I, Severus Tobias Snape, swear on my magic and my life to provide Harry James Potter with everything he should need, in my power to provide, protecting him and guiding him through his life at the best of my abilities. So I swear, so mote it be." A faint golden glow surrounded both the sleeping form of Harry and Severus, linking the two with a thick, golden, ethereal line, that started to fade when Harry woke up a minute later, leaving speechless, in it's wake, two astonished marauders, one Potion master and a thoughtful Headmaster.
Trick or Treat?

Chapter Notes

...sorry for the wait but my life recently sucked...I had a cold and one of my relatives was really ill so I wasn't exactly in the mood to write...

this chapter could seem sort of a filler but it is important for the story, I swear! Another chapter is coming soon!

P.s the fic "The Deceptive waltz " by the_tilly is amazing! go read it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hmmm... That was...unusual." said Dumbledore, scratching his beard. "I will need to research the matter"

"Please, do, Headmaster. I too would like to know what the golden glow meant. As far as I know, the bond between the Godparent and their godchild is supposed to be silvery not golden..." said Severus.

"Yes, Headmaster, would you inform us too, if you were to discover what happened today with Harry?" said Lupin.

"I certainly will my dears, I certainly will. Now, however, duty calls, I'm afraid." said Dumbledore standing up.

"I need to return to Hogwarts."

"Yes, Headmaster, we understand." answered Sirius. "It was great having you over! Feel free to pop in when you like!"

"Ah, Sirius, I most surely will; in the meantime, try not to get up to too much mischief"

The Marauder only grinned in response.

"...or I will have to send Minerva to check on you" finished Dumbledore, smiling.

Sirius could only emit a chocked sound before Remus started howling with laughter. A few seconds after, even Severus snorted before beginning to laugh. The Potion Master was laughing so hard that tears were streaming down his face, and his whole body was shaking. Sirius could only gape more, while Remus, after he recovered from the shock, just started to laugh harder at the look on Padfoot's face.

"Now, I must really take my leave. Take care, boys" said Dumbledore. He opened the door, winked at Harry, and disappeared in the night.

"Ah, Headmaster! Wait for me!" said Severus, who stood up, after he had wiped his tears. He didn't want to stay longer than necessary with those two. The Headmaster, however, was long gone, and Severus' call went unheard by its intended target. Lupin and Black unfortunately did hear him.
"Why, Severus? Are you so eager to be rid of us?" said Remus with a light grin, that indicated he was teasing. "Yes, Severus, have we been bad hosts? Is that why you want to go?" continued Sirius, with a slightly pout.

"Errr... yes. I mean no! I mean..." Severus was now standing awkwardly at the centre of the living room, while the two Marauders were circling him.

"If we've been bad hosts we apologize...It wasn't our intention to offend you" said Lupin with a toothy, and vaguely wolfish, smile. "Yeah, Snape... You should really stay with us tonight" added Sirius.

"After all, the new Godfather spends the first night of his newfound role with his Godchild...And we wouldn't want to break the tradition, would we?" asked Sirius with his best sad puppy-eyed expression.

"N-no!...I mean yes! I mean..." Now Severus was thoroughly confused. What game were they playing at? Was he being threatened? And if so, why hadn't they tortured him before, when he had given them the possibility? Severus clutched his wand more tightly.

"Oh, look at that Padfoot! We're scaring him!" said Lupin, who had noticed Severus' movements. "But we just want to play, don't we, Moony?" Said Sirius.

"Of course, Pads" The pair continued to circle him, like a pack of wolves might do with their prey.

"Hmm...Hey, Snape, what if I give Lupin my wand? Will you stay then?" asked Sirius, with a slightly more friendly smile.

What the hell was going on? Black was being polite? Surely this must be a prank...Only one way to test that theory... "I guess I could stay..." started Severus.

Black whooped. Lupin smiled.

"...but only if you give your wand to me, Black." There. Surely Black would never surrender his wand to him. Not even for a prank...right?

"Hmmm...that's all right, then!" Black smiled and produced his wand, offering it to Severus handle first.

"Wait, what?" Severus looked at the wand, then at Black, then back at the wand that he was being given. He didn't understand.

"Why are you giving me your wand?" asked Severus. The whole thing was very suspicious.

"Because you asked, why else would I?" Now it was Sirius turn to be confused.

"So... you're not gonna prank me?"

"Hell no, Snape! If we wanted to prank you, we would have done it already!" answered Black. "To be fair, Sirius wanted to prank you before... you know... before you saved baby Prongs" said Lupin.

"Baby Prongs?" asked Severus. "Yeah that'd be Harry." Answered Lupin, while gazing softly at the child in question.

"Hey, Moony! You shouldn't have told him! Now he's going to think I've gone soft, just because he saved my Godson...!"
"Well, when Harry is concerned you are soft...." said Lupin.

"Hey! Don't listen to him, Snape. I'm very manly!" said Sirius waggling his eyebrows.

Severus coughed.

"...and quite furry" concluded Lupin with a chuckle.

"Ah ah. Very funny Moony."

"So, Snape, you staying or what? 'Cause I have to say, this position is mighty uncomfortable..." asked Sirius with his arm still extended in Snape's direction.

"Fine. I'm staying." said Severus before delicately taking Sirius' wand and pocketing it swiftly. He was praying this decision was the right one.

"Great!" said Lupin "I'd better prepare dinner in that case!" Lupin took Harry and placed him on the floor before conjuring a charmed snitch that would keep the toddler entertained for while. Of course the snitch was a bit bigger and softer than normal. It also moved much more slowly to allow the kid a chance to grab it.

"Pads don't scare him too much, otherwise Harry might have to with only one Godfather and guess what? It wouldn't be you..."

Sirius huffed. "Yeah, yeah, I get it Moony. I'll be a good boy. Now why don't you go and make dinner, like a good wife?" Severus coughed again.

Remus only said "You wish." Before he sent a stinging hex at Sirius and disappeared in the kitchen. Sirius yelped but didn't gave any other sign of having been hit.

"So...Snape..." Began Sirius, sitting on the couch. "Now that Moldyshorts..." Severus choked. "... is vanquished and all that shit, what are you gonna do?"

"Albus hired me to teach Potions at Hogwarts"

Sirius snorted. "You? Teach? Are you serious?"

"No, I'm Severus."

"...."

Suddenly the cottage became eerily silent.

"OH MY GOD. MOONY! DID YOU HEAR THAT?!"

"Yes, Sirius, I did." said Lupin, standing on the door that connected the living room to the kitchen.

"I request the initialization of protocol M31." Said Sirius excitedly.

"What is protocol M31?" Asked Severus.

"You are not qualified to know the answer." answered the two men in chorus.

"Moony?"

"Denied."
"But why?!?! Did you hear what he said?" whined Sirius.

"Yes, I did. However, a bad pun doesn't fulfill the requirements." Remus shrugged and went back to the kitchen.

"What requirements?" asked again Severus.

"The ones you must fulfill to become a Marauder, of course!"

"What?" spluttered Severus, collapsing on the couch on which Sirius was already seated.

Sirius, sensing his imminent explosion, sent a sound muffling spell Harry's way, so that the child would not get upset because of the sudden noise.

"Why the hell would I want to become a Marauder?!" bellowed Severus " And why the fuck would you want me to?!!" That was the prank they had prepared! He had been right all along!

"Eh, easy Snape!" Sirius raised his hands in the universal sign of surrender. " I just thought, since you're Harry Godfather..."

"Go on..." said Severus, glaring at him. Lupin reappeared in the doorway. "Easy Pads, you're threading on thin ice now..."

"...err...now it was Sirius' turn to squirm uncomfortably. "...that...uhm...you could...uhm..." Sirius was becoming increasingly embarrassed and wouldn't meet Severus' eyes. Remus sighed and came to his rescue.

"What Sirius meant was that, when Harry was born, the Marauders vowed to protect him with their lives, and, since you've already done that you fulfill one of the requirements to become a Marauder.

The others are, in order: that you must have the complete and utter trust of each Marauder; that in turn you must trust them completely; that you must be prepared to take one, or more, for the sake of the team; that you must help your fellow Marauders to... ahem... "score"; that you must be willing to help your fellow Marauders whenever and with whatever they might need; that you must refer to your fellow Marauders by their given nickname, when possible, and that you must have your chosen nickname; finally, there is something else which will remain secret for the time being..."

"If the secret is that you're a werewolf, I already know." said Severus.

"Ehm, about that...I don't think I ever apologized... I was really an arse that day...I'm really sorry you had to go through that, Snape" said Sirius passing a hand through his hair.

"Well, you're still an arse..." Sirius sighed. "...but I suppose I can accept your apology" reluctantly admitted Severus. The smile Sirius gave him was blinding.

"It's not about my lycanthrophy, Severus, but we can't tell you until you agree to become a Marauder..."

"... if you want to, that is." Lupin hurried to add.

"I don't feel I can, at least for now..."

"Of course, we didn't want to pressure you or anything..." said Lupin " this dinner was just to get to know each other better."

"I know we apologized for how we treated you at school, but an apology isn't going to erase years of
rivalry and hater, however stupid we were..." continued the werewolf.

"I appreciate your efforts." Said Severus stiffly

Chapter End Notes

Dear readers and subscribers,
I would very much like to hear your thoughts on a possible Sirius/Severus relationship or would you rather have Severus/Narcissa and Sirius/OC ? Let me know in the comments!
Dumbledore ventured into the night, leaving Severus to fend for himself.

He wasn't overly worried for him, because he had spent almost every night of the past weeks with the two remaining Marauders, making sure they understood their (and his) past faults, as well as how their childhoods had shaped them all. And how Severus needed some light-hearted fun after the darkness he had spent his last years into.

A month had passed from that terrible night, a month which Dumbledore had spent partly recovering from the fall he had had the fortune to experience, in both of his lives, and partly playing the political game. It was hard to pick up the pieces after everything had crumbled under the colossal strain of the war. Everybody wanted him to become Minister, but he had already learnt his lesson, and he had learnt it the hardest way, by dying. He was not capable of wielding power. His destiny was to be the King's advisor, and, before the King came of age, his Steward. Everybody wanted to hear his advice on this or that, but, once he gave it, they never truly listened.

A silvery leopard materialized in front of him and spoke with the voice of his dear friend Alastor: "Albus, come as soon as possible. The Minister has released Yalexy, Malfoy and Rockwood from the holding cells on account of them being 'respectable and upstanding wizarding citizens'." The voice snorted, before continuing: "Upstanding my arse. Gold has changed hands here. I don't want them out after the effort I made to take them alive."

Today had been eventful, and it looked like it was set to become so even more...

Harry Potter had once again done the impossible. He had united three broken and bitter men under the same roof, when, once, they could not stand to be in the same room. Albus had still been wondering what could have been that strange golden thread that had united Severus to Harry, after the former had sworn to protect the latter, when he had received the patronus, but now those thoughts were forgotten, replaced by dread and anger.

He apparated mid-step in the Atrium of the Ministry, almost bumping with a witch. His mask of politeness and joy slid smoothly again into place.

"Ah, my apologies, my dear. I wasn't quite looking while I apparated..."

The woman looked at him wide-eyed for a moment, then her lips stretched in a smile. "Well I'm sure it has happened to everyone at least once, Headmaster, but do not let me detain you."

"Indeed. Well, good day to you, then, Mrs Cattermole." She nodded dumbly and scurried away, not
having heard the hearty chuckle that escaped the Headmaster's lips.

She was, once again, left speechless by the man's attention to the details. She was sure the Headmaster couldn't have known that she was married, and just right of Hogwarts too... Her husband's family hadn't been supportive of their relationship, so the two of them had eloped in September, coming back only in October to present their marriage as a fait accompli.

Mary Cattermole absolutely had to tell her husband of her encounter with Dumbledore. It was exciting. She had never seen the Headmaster outside of Hogwarts, nor very much when she was still a student actually, but she had always admired and respected the man. Not to mention the fact that her friends actually idolized him, and this encounter would put her on the spotlight for a while. Her friend Ivy would be green with envy, and if that wasn't satisfying, she didn't know what it was.

After the brief encounter with the young witch, Albus went deeper into the Ministry. The mask was slipping more and more with each step. He walked swiftly, and his robes were swirling around him in a colourful and casual display of power. Under his well-known polite facade, the anger towards the corrupted ministry workers had reached a boiling point. He would no longer stand aside pretending that all was well. He would demand satisfaction for the victims of Death Eaters, and they'd better provide it, or he would make them remember exactly why they feared the Defeater of Grindelwand.

The ministry workers parted easily ahead of him, in the hallways, to allow him to pass quickly, then closed immediately behind his figure. Some of the curious started to follow him, but gave up almost immediately. Dumbledore was tall, and his long legs were moving as swiftly as they could without running. The average ministry worker didn't have a chance to keep up such a pace, they weren't half as fit as the Headmaster, even if they were decades younger than him. Whereas legs couldn't follow him that quickly, gossip could. And so the news, that the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, was incensed and was heading toward the office of the Minister, spread like fiendyfire.

Unfortunately, the Minister was currently speaking with the head of the DMLE, Bartemious Crouch, and both of them remained unaware of this new development, until Dumbledore magically pushed open the doors of the Minister's office, after having softly apologized to the secretary that had tried to make him wait in the ante-chamber.

"Minister!" thundered Dumbledore.

The two wizards jumped up from their seats, startled. "Y-yye-es C-chief W-wa-warlock?"

While the Minister stood there stuttering, Bartemious Crouch had extracted his wand and was pointing it towards Dumbledore. "Identify yourself immediately! This is a direct order of the Head of the DMLE and if you don't comply, you'll be our guest in Azkaban for the night."

"Ah Barty, I did not anticipate your presence here. No matter. I must speak with the Minister, in private. If you could wait outside for a moment I would be deeply obliged to you." said Dumbledore, now smiling pleasantly.

"I said to identify yourself. I cannot, in good conscience, allow you unrestricted access to the Minister, unless you comply." the Head of the DMLE raised his wand...

"I wouldn't do that, if I were you, Barty. I really wouldn't." With a flick of his wrist, Dumbledore quickly disarmed the wizard, and put his wand in a robe-pocket.
"I am Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore; Order of Merlin, first class; Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and you will not waste my time."

There was a hard hedge in his voice, now, and it was screaming danger at the two other wizards, who swallowed nervously.

"This is preposterous, Albus. Give Barty his wand back, this instant."

There was a sudden discharge of magic coming from Dumbledore, which pushed the men back into the chairs they had been occupying a few minutes ago. The Minister gulped in fear.

"Minister. I am currently not in the mood to be trifled with. Now, I came here to discuss your choices in regard to some of the suspected Death Eaters."

"What about them?" asked Bartemious, irritated.

"The Minister decided to send home a few wizard who had been accused of being Death Eaters before they could be questioned in a proper trial. " answered Dumbledore, gravely.

Crouch couldn't believe his ears. "What have you done, Erbius? What have you done? Do you have any idea of how difficult it was to take them alive? My best Auror lost his leg during one of the raids. His. Entire. Leg. Is. Gone. And now his sacrifice is belittled this way? No. I will not let you do this."

Dumbledore deemed it wise to give Crouch his wand back, now that he knew the man's opinion on the actions taken by the Minister. He handed his his wand back, handle first. Crouch took it and nodded in thanks.

The Minister, however, was obtusely refusing to believe he had done anything wrong.

"I must protest! Yalexy and Rockwood are Ministry employees, and their status of service is impeccable. As for what regards Mr. Malfoy, he is a well-known philanthropist and an esteemed member of the Wizengamot. I see no reason why they should be detained against their will." said the Minister, looking defiantly at the other two.

In that moment a thought struck Dumbledore: "I am destined to be surrounded by idiotic politicians, am I not?".

Meanwhile the Head of th DMLE exploded. "Because they were Marked! That's why. Merlin's beard I swear...." He sat up and bolted from the room, wand in hand, still muttering about "idiots", "ministers" and "incompetent fools". Dumbledore couldn't help but to agree with him.

When the last echo of Crouch's imprecations died, he spoke once more to the Minister.

"Well Erbius, it seems Barty has everything in hand for now. The mistake should be rectified before tomorrow. The trials for the accused Death Eaters will begin as soon as all the suspects are captured. I would advise you not to repeat today's performance any time soon, or I am afraid poor Barty would need to take a harder stance in regard to your meddling. Good night, Minister."

And, as abruptly as he had come, Dumbledore departed, leaving a spluttering Minister behind.
a cookie for the one that spots the quation!
Dumbledore apparated back in Hogsmeade.

He could have gone back to Hogwarts, in his quarters, but he needed to clear his head. Inhaling slowly the cooling air, he gazed at the sky. The sun had already set, but its presence lingered in the bright violet hues visible just above the horizon, refusing to relinquish the world to the darkness of yet another dusk.

*It's in these moments, Dumbledore mused, when Nature displays the most complex wonders of the Universe, that we can truly appreciate the wonder of living. Of drawing another quiet breath. Of simply being. In this awed stillness that lets us be unapologetically ourselves, no matter how small, big, cunning or dumb, inside a splinter of time that stretches to infinity...*

"Dumbledore."

"Mh?"

Albus tore his gaze away from the sky only to find himself eye to eye with piercing blue eyes, similar to his own.

"You are blocking my clients from entering or exiting. Move aside." The barman was already already back at the counter, glaring slightly at him.

The Headmaster blinked. It seemed that his feet had carried him to the Hog's Head and he had apparently been standing on the pub's doorway for a while, looking at the sky, oblivious to the wizards and witches on either side who were waiting for him to move, wishing to get into or away from the pub. But why did none of them think to go through the door sideways?

*Legilimens.*

'One does not simply slip past Albus freaking Dumbledore', after all. Or so the wizard in front of him thought. Well, at least he knew why nobody had said anything to him - and also why Aberforth was the only one who had bothered to.

"Yes, of course. I apologize ladies and gentlewizards for your inconvenience."

It was a bit of an exaggeration, calling most of the costumers 'ladies and gentlewizards', since the majority of them were a bit shady at best or outright criminals at worst, but politeness went a long way to encourage tolerance. He took a step back allowing the disgruntled costumers to pass.

"The next round is on me, Aberforth." And a bit of alcohol could only sweeten the deal.
There was a collective cheer in response that had him quirking a corner of his lips upwards. He made his excuse and started to walk at a leisurely pace towards the castle, humming slightly the new single of the weird sisters "Charmed Life".

A gruff voice interrupted him. "Why?"

He turned around. Aberforth had followed him.

"Pardon?"

"You know what I mean."

"I'm afraid I do not, Aberforth."

"I thought the 'second coming of Merlin' would have caught on by now." He spat.

"What the hell were you doing at my bar just now?"

Ah. *That.* What did his brother mean?

"It was completely unintentional on my part, I assure you. I am deeply sorry for the trouble I gave to you and your patrons. I will never enter the Hog's Head again without forewarning you first. I offer financial compensation for tonight, should the situation warrant it..."

Aberforth interrupted. "Dammit it, Albus. Don't be a fool!"

He waved his wand and erected a privacy ward along a proximity one.

"You have refused to acknowledge me as your brother in public for what? 82 years? I was good enough to be part of your precious Order, good enough to tell you when the darkest characters of our society were readying to strike, but not good enough to be acknowledged as your brother." He said bitterly.

"You never told anybody. Because the Bloody Great Dumbledore is ashamed to have me as a brother. Like you were ashamed of our Father, for avenging Ariana, and of our Mother, for dying and leaving you to deal with yet another member of your family, who was, in your 'holier-than-thou' view, another unwanted burden on your 'brilliant' future."

Aberfort screamed the last part and continued to scream himself hoarse. Years of resentment, anger, bitterness and things left unsaid, battled to be set free.

"I know what you told everybody about me, I've always known that you thought I was nothing more than a half-wit, that 'you aren't actually sure wether Abe knows how to read or not'. Do you have any idea of what it was like for me? Did you know that while you travelled the word, publishing papers on Alchemy under the tutelage of Nicholas Flamel, I took ten N.E.W.T.s? But then you had already took fourteen, and my grades were not as important."

His voice had become sharper and sharper, piercing through Albus' heart.

"And now you finally grow a pair and waltz in my bar, without a care in the world, and you suddenly talk to me as if nothing has happened and we're best fucking pals."

"So I will ask you again and you better answer, or else...."

Albus hung his head in shame.
"What were you doing in my bar, Albus? Look at me!"

When the Headmaster turned his head up towards him Aberforth was shocked. Albus Dumbledore was crying.

Incredulity painted all over his face, Aberforth stepped closer. He couldn't remember his brother crying, ever. He hadn't cried when their father had been sent to Askaban, nor when their mother died; not even at Ariana's funeral. Aberforth knew, because he had been so furious to see his brother impassible even then, that he broke Albus' nose during the ceremony.

"I am so sorry... so sorry. I wished it had been me, you know? I wished I had died instead of her. She was so innocent. Pure. Like you. Before her death, I had been plotting to take over the muggle world; I was becoming dark. I left because I did not want to taint you. You and Ariana didn't deserve it."

"I am sorry. I have regretted her death since it happened. I would have given my life for her's. I tried to. It didn't work. Nicholas found me after that. He told me that I had to live to honor her. And so I did. Everything I've done was for her. Is for her. Please. Believe me." In a broken voice, Albus pleaded.

"I just thought that she wouldn't want us to fight anymore. She hated it, remember? If you want we can try again. I am willing to try."

Silence met his words.

"Consider it, if not for me, at least for her, brother. I will go now."

And the Headmaster apparated back in his quarters; too tired to eat, he went to bed, falling in a fitful rest.

Chapter End Notes

Some of you may think Dumbledore is too "emotional" in this chapter/fanfic; my explanation is that dying with so many regrets -and then getting the chance to do it again, but better- made him more "open". More "human" in a sense. And even if he scorned his brother repeatedly, he always felt guilty for Ariana's death and for leaving his brother alone when he needed him.
A new beginning

Chapter Summary

Severus and the Marauders

Chapter Notes

Hum...hi?
Sorry for the monstrous wait but I've been struggling with my studies an health issues...I cannot promise anything in the way of updates but I'll try a bit harder.
Thanks to everyone who has reviewed/followed/favoured this story while it was on hiatus, you guys made me smile.
Still looking for a beta btw :D

WARNING:(mild?) INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA & HOMOPHOBIC INSULTS

At the "Lions' Den"(yes, that was the name of the cottage, but, since it was owned by Dumbledore and currently inhabited by two Gryffindors, it could have been worse), Severus lay on his newly transfigured bed, beside Harry's crib. It was strange how quickly he had started to call the brat by his given name...maybe he had gone soft, but he still refused to call him with that absurd nickname the other two insisted on using: it reminded him constantly that Potter senior was Harry's father.

He thought he might have hallucinated the entire evening, maybe even the entire afternoon, and that he was going to wake up in a few minutes at Spinner's End, only to discover he would have to go through the events of today again. Surprisingly, he wouldn't mind. The two Marauders had kept an easy flow of uninterrupted banter going all the time during dinner, so he was content to sit back and, for once, observe them without fear of being mocked or embarrassed.

Lupin was a rather good cook, even though he couldn't compare to the Hogwarts' elves, and a good conversation partner, all sharp wit and cautious gentleness. And Sirius. Sirius with cutting remarks and double entendres, who said everything in jest, but not quite. Well, they were puzzling, but he enjoyed a good puzzle. He had been rather shocked by the amount of barely-veiled innuendos the two exchanged and had therefore proceeded to indirectly ask if they were a couple, but they immediately dismissed the idea.

Apparently, their current relationship was strictly platonic, and both were bisexual. Sirius had mainly slept around with girls in his time at Hogwarts, while Remus kept at bay his own admirers for fear of his condition being discovered. With both of them born and raised in the wizarding world, they had never experienced any kind of discrimination because of their sexuality; in the wizarding world, being anything other than straight wasn't a problem.

For Severus this hadn't been the case: his father had always been quite vocal in declaring his disgust for homosexual people and liberally used words such as "fag", "nancyboy" and "poofter" as insults, mainly towards a young Severus and anyone else who wasn't "manly" enough by his standards.
When he had begun to hang around Lily, the insults had somewhat abated: his father taking their friendship as a sign that he was interested in girls, after all.

Severus had thought that too, right up until the beginning of sixth year, when Regulus Black had come to him with a proposition. Even if he was two years younger than him, the boy held such a delicate handsomeness, so different from his Sirius's roguish charm, that had Severus accept his conditions. There weren't any feelings involved in that arrangement, only mutual advantage. Regulus had always known he would have to marry for convenience, and his parents had warned him against "falling in love" with someone, even if they understood the need for lovers, while Severus, already on his path to become a Master Occlumens, had agreed to the relationship for the protection from other purebloods that came from being the lover of the Heir Apparent of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Black.

It was then, that he realized he had only loved Lily, not for whom she was, but rather for what she represented - light-hearted fun, kindness, friendship and a safe heaven from his own problems- and, although he continued to hold her dear, he recognized that his feelings had been platonic, born from their friendship and his desire to escape the grim reality of his unhappy home.

She had had it all: a loving family with doting and supportive parents, good looks and a sweet and kind disposition - which, as she grew up, became at times stubborn, petty and self-righteous- and she had freely shared her happiness with him, so Severus had desperately clung to her, hoping against hope that maybe she could show him how to become better.

And that was why he had sworn to protect his best friend's son. To keep a part of her goodness alive not only in memory, but in the flesh. To atone for his sins and become the person she had always believed he could be, even when he hadn't shared -nor deserved- her faith in himself.

While he lay there brooding, Harry had grown steadily more and more agitated in his sleep. At first his distress was expressed with only a twitch of his tiny hands, but then he began whimpering almost silently. Severus sat up from the bed and took the baby out of the crib, cradling him in his arms. Harry opened his eyes at the unexpected contact and peered up at him with the sort of solemn sadness that only wise and very old people should possess.

"Everything will be all right, Harry. I'm here to protect you" whispered Severus.

He slowly sat down on the bed again, being careful not to jostle his precious burden. His torso pressed firmly against the wall, and his long legs stretched out on the bed. Then, he arranged Harry's limbs so that his head rested on his chest, next to his heart and the rest of his body was safely cocooned in his arms.

"Now, do you know how Polyjuice is made?" looking down at Harry, Severus smiled. "Your mother was very good at potions and often we would challenge each other to brew the best potion we could, the better potion gave the winner bragging rights... I almost always won, but one time she beat me."

"It was the beginning of fifth year and she had asked Slughorn a pass to the restricted section. She was part of his Slug-Club. You see, Slughorn loved to collect people. People who were powerful, intelligent or particularly talented found themselves at his club." Harry was still looking at him, but now, instead of that sadness there was quiet curiosity in his eyes. Severus went on. "And then he would introduce his new club members to the people that could best help them in their current or future endeavours -whom, in turn, were former Slug-Club's members- and reap the benefits of their success, in the form of little gifts and owned favours."

"As a favourite of Slughorn, your mother was given a certain leeway to experiment on her own in
One of the potions laboratory. She would take me with her and we would try to make a new potion together.” Harry was now resting his head on Severus’ shoulder, still looking at him with those impossibly green eyes. “That time, when we tried to brew Polyjuice she insisted on picking the knotgrass at the light of a waxing moon, while I thought it would be better to pick it on the new moon. As I discovered at my expense, picking the knot grass on a new moon greatly destabilises Polyjuice.”

He chuckled silently, a deep rumble shaking his chest. “I continued to turn back and forth from Regulus’ appearance to mine for days, Harry. I stayed in the infirmary for a whole week, until the potion wore off, while Lily laughed so hard at me that she ended up on the floor with tears in her eyes. Of course Slughorn gave her an "O", and I received a pat on the back and the suggestion to wait until the potion wore off” finished Severus with a fond smile quirking his lips.

Then he looked down to find out that Harry had buried his face in the crook of his neck and was soundly asleep. He adjusted his grip on the child and whispered a sticking spell on the arm that held the child. Having secured Harry, he let his eyes close, the fond smile still on his lips.
Dumbledore sat at his desk, old copies of the Daily Prophet strewn about every available surface, pondering the fate of the war and of the society that was slowly rebuilding itself. The war had decimated the already thin population and now only a few thousand remained…Every different edition of the Prophet was open and the articles he had been reviewing had one thing in common, they talked of the aftermath of the war, and what had been done in the following months to secure the remaining Death Eaters to justice.

The Daily Prophet

1st of November 1981

You-Know-Who Has Been Defeated by The Boy-Who-Lived!

On Halloween’s night You-Know-Who went to Godric’s Hollow to destroy a prominent couple that had been a thorn at his side from the beginning of the war: the Potters. Muggleborn Lily Potter, neé Evans, and James Charolus Potter were some of the fiercest fighters to ever oppose the Dark Lord and his Death Eaters. They were known to have held their own against multiple Death Eaters without ever resorting to dark curses, even if James Potter, in his capacity as Auror, had been authorised to use the Unforgivables against the Death Eaters.

The couple had gone into hiding - at the same time as the Longbottoms - under a Fidelius, after having been marked for death by You-Know-Who himself. But they were betrayed by their Secret Keeper, so when the Dark Lord blasted open their front door, they were not prepared. James Potter stood bravely in front of You-Know-who, wandless, to buy her wife and his son time to escape but was quickly killed by an Avada Kedavra. Lily had only time to run up the stairs and place Harry in his cot; she was trying to barricate the door when the Dark Lord blasted the second open. She died trying to protect her son.

At last, the Dark Lord stood over Lily’s body, pointing his wand at Harry James Potter, one year and a half, and spoke for the third time the incantation of the killing curse. The green light sped
towards the infant, colliding with his forehead; but, then, something extraordinary happened: the curse rebounded on its caster, leaving behind only a lightning scar on Harry’s forehead. You-know-Who was defeated, and a new legend was born: the Boy-Who-Lived.

We don’t know with whom the Boy-Who-Lived has been placed yet, but the whispers point towards Hogwarts’s Headmaster and Chief Mugwump of the Wizengamot Albus Wulfric Brian Dumbledore…

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**The Daily Prophet**

3rd of November 1981

*The Potters’ Betrayer Awaits Trial in Azkaban*

Peter Pettigrew, 21, half-blood, former member of Dumbledore’s Order of The Phoenix, at some point of the war turned spy for You-Know-Who. After turning, Pettigrew started passing along vital information regarding Dumbledore’s resistance, ultimately revealing the Secret of the Potter’s location—a two-story cottage in Godric’s Hollow—, previously under Fidelius, that led to the tragic murder of the couple, and the attempted murder The-Boy-Who-Lived. We tried to gather more information for our readers, but we found very little; Pettigrew seemed an altogether unremarkable boy to those that knew him…

“Peter Pettigrew?...Oh! He was a fat little boy, always tagging around after Potter and Black at school” - Madam Rosmerta.

“A pitiful thing that boy, mousy looking and not very bright either: I remember he scraped by his O.W.L.S with only Acceptables, and I’m sure he’d had Potter’s, Black’s and Lupin’s help. Those three were geniuses in their own right. Of course, I was two years ahead of them, but I remember the chaos that followed the four of them everywhere. At some point, they started calling themselves “Marauders” I think, and where one was, you could bet the others were close” - Anonymous witch.

“Pettigrew was always a bit full of wackspurts, but then you can’t expect everybody to wear the bones of a bubbling humindger to repel them, can you? Of course, Mistletoe is to be avoided at all costs for the same reasons…A pity he never listened to my advice” - Mister Lovegood, the publisher of the Quibbler.

“Pettigrew was quite never as much talented as the other three of the group, I’m afraid: while Black had his ragged good looks and wicked sharp wit, Potter his charming attitude and the quidditch captaincy and Lupin his books and a wizard-next-door pleasantness, Pettigrew was always in their shadows, using them as a shield” – Anonymous Gryffindor graduate.

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**The Daily Prophet**
Bellatrix Lestrange, Rodolphus Lestrange, Rabastan Lestrange and Bartemious Crouch Jr. Arrested!

The quartet was arrested last night, while trying to break into Ivy Hall, the Longbottom family manor. Fortunately, the manor was empty, save for the Dowager Madam Longbottom who was startled awake by the manor’s alarm ward. The respectable witch alerted the Aurors with remarkable aplomb, and then, after settling herself on the roof the house, started flinging a barrage of spell at the intruders. By the time the Aurors arrived both Barty Crouch Jr. and Rodolphus Lestrange had been rendered unconscious. Nonetheless the Aurors had trouble subduing Bellatrix Lestrange and Chief Auror Moody lost an eye in the battle while protecting the injured Auror Proudfoot.

The Minister has awarded to Chief Auror Moody the Order of Merlin, Second Class for his selfless act of bravery saying that “Chief Moody’s action are an impeccable example of the selflessness and virtue that guides our Aurors’ sense of justice. We are all extremely glad to the Aurors for their continued effort to protect the community”.

The Head of the Division for Magical Law Enforcement, Bartemious Crouch Sr. couldn’t be reached to comment on his son arrest; his junior assistant Weatherby told the reporters that “Mister Crouch will judge everyone impartially, regardless of familial ties to the accused”.

Auror Frank Longbottom and mediwitch Alice Longbottom, the alleged would-be target of the Death Eaters, along with their infant son Neville Longbottom are still in hiding and there will remain until the Death Eaters’ trials, according to Madam Augusta Longbottom. She will be serving as voting proxy for her son on the Wizengamot until such time when her son will be able to resume his duties.

The Daily Prophet

28th of November 1981

Igor Karkaroff talks; upstanding citizens accused of death Eaters’ activities!

Following yesterday’s interrogation of Igor Karkaroff, former Dark Arts teacher at the Durmstrang Institute, the Aurors arrested many upstanding wizarding citizens. Amongst those arrested are: Heir Lucius Malfoy, Lord Theodore Nott Sr, Lord Corvus Avery and the Count Lorenzo Zabini.

Upon being questioned the accused professed to have been placed under the Imperio by You-Know-Who and thus were not to be held responsible for their alleged crimes.

The Head of the Department for Magical Law Enforcement, Bartemious Crouch Sr., has professed his intent to have the accused trialled nonetheless. The trial date has been provisionally set for the fifteenth of December. The whole affair will be closed to the public, but the press will be allowed in to listen under silencing charms - so as not to inconvenience the Most August Body of the Wizengamot. No cameras will be allowed in the courtroom, but photographers will be allowed to take pictures before the beginning of the trial.
The Death Eaters Will Be Questioned Under Veritaserum Says Head of DMLE Bartemious Crouch Sr.

Tomorrow will officially begin the “Death Eaters Trials”. The Death Eaters, formerly known as the “Knights of Walpurgis” were the ones that - on You-Know-Who’s orders – acted to sow terror and mayhem in the wizarding world. Every accused will stand trial under Veritaserum, in accordance with the harsh policies set up to deal with the capture and confinement of “this plague that besets the lawful citizens of wizarding Britain” – says the Head of the DMLE Bartemious Crouch Sr. His son will be amongst the ones being judged and we can certainly expect things to get interesting during the trials, as none of the accused are being provided the opportunity to speak with a lawyer. According to the members of the Wizengamot it would be superfluous, as the Veritaserum ensures that the person that has been dosed cannot speak but the truth as they perceive it. The Council of Magical Law will listen to the testimony of the accused and the verdicts will be announced only after every accused has had a chance to submit to questioning under Veritaserum.
Albus was, once again, striding towards the lower levels of the Ministry. The steady pace didn't betray his whirling thoughts, but his shadowed eyes might have, if only somebody had been there to see him. The higher Ministry levels, however, were still empty.

He had come remarkably early to inspect the courtroom. There was a chance that somebody would try to escape and, as he had come to learn, the fact that it hadn't happened the last time didn't mean that it couldn't happen here.

He squinted up at the closed doors and drew the Elder wand. As Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, no room was barred to him, and he had the highest security clearance. He wasn't the only one who had it. The responsibility was also possessed by the Head of the D.M.L.E. and the Head of the Unspeakables, among others.

He tapped lightly on the wood and the doors opened, recognizing his magical signature. The darkness ahead swallowed both sound and light, reflecting back only a whispering echo. With a muttered incantation, a glowing orb sprouted from the tip of his wand and started hovering slightly over his head. The chamber appeared undisturbed as he ventured forward, boots clanking against the floor.

The dampening charms on the cuffs attached to the accused chair worked well. The chair itself was a big, ugly, thing, made from roughly hewn, ancient, gray stone. What many didn't know was that it was cut from the same stone of the Stonehenge monoliths, and thus a natural magic suppressant. That was the reason why they had not been able to hide the historical site from the muggles. The stones eventually neutralized every ward, charm, and transfiguration attempted upon them.

Throughout the centuries, druids had used Stonehenge to perform the more delicate rituals: those requiring the purity of the caster, the sacrifice, or the conduit through which the spell worked. After the French came, it became increasingly difficult to use Stonehenge to practice the old ways, so the site gradually fell in disrepair.

With the bright orb of light still hovering over his shoulder, Albus knelt before the chair, and started drawing runic shapes onto the seat. Then, he set aside his wand and pressed the palms of his hands...
over the seat. Silver grey light started flowing from his hands, gleaming and roiling over the stone, sinking into it, leaving the seat apparently unaltered.

Dumbledore straightened with a quiet hum of satisfaction, that quickly became a groan, as his joints protested the rough treatment he had just subjected them to. It had been a while since he had applied his Alchemy knowledge. He wondered how his old mentor was doing, and resolved to send Fawkes over to him and his wife as soon as the trials ended. With a last look over the chamber he walked out and went to the Atrium. The trials would begin soon.

Remus, Severus and Sirius were due to arrive in a hour. The latter two had to serve on the Wizengamot now that they had been recognized as Lords of their Houses. Sirius hadn't been very enthusiastic about it, until he was reminded that he would be working to eliminate the laws that permitted the discrimination of muggleborns and werewolves, and his demeanour became distinctly gleeful.

That gave him enough time to work with Crouch on his son's eventual sentence. He had been looking for a good Defence teacher for a while, and Barty Jr. had been a good instructor even after years in Azkaban and under the Imperious, even if he had gone mad. Of course he wouldn't leave the younger kids with him, but the fifth through seventh years could benefit from having him as a teacher. Remus could assist him and, if necessary, protect the students from Crouch Jr.

He didn't believe the young man had any idea of what Voldemort and his Death Eaters would require of him. To him, Barty had been acting out in such a extreme fashion only to rebel against his father. Maybe the young wizard had hoped that his father would pay him attention if he did something so diametrically opposed to the man's work. Barty hadn't really tried to kill Augusta either, only using Hogwarts' level jinxes. Albus knew very well how much the scars left from childhood could shape people's futures. He would try to see if he could save one more man from his own misguided choices.

A sudden light from one of the fireplaces at the end of the atrium brought him back from his musings. Crouch was already striding towards him, with Weatherby at his heels.

“Good morning, Bartemius, mister Weatherby.”
“M-morning, Head-m-mast
“I'm please to see you already here, Chief Warlock. Punctuality is a virtue too often disregarded.’’
“ I do try, Bartemius. Shall we adjourn to the courtroom?”
“The trials are to take place in courtroom ten, Sir.”
“Thank you, Weatherby.”
“Mister Weatherby, why don't you go ahead and start setting up your things? All that paperwork looks too heavy to carry it around at an old man's pace.”

Weatherby looked hopefully at Crouch, who gave him a curt nod, and then started hurrying to the courtroom.

“What do you want to talk about, Dumbledore?”
“As it happens, I was wondering if you had given any thought to your son's sentence.”
“If you're worried that I will be more lenient with him because of our blood relation, you need not be. I will judge him as impartially as I would judge any other in his position.” Said Crouch, sharply.

“And that's commendable. But wouldn't it be better if the common vixen found you more relatable?” answered Dumbledore, mildly.

“I will not have you making untrue allegations about me, Dumbledore! I am a principled and honourable wizard and no one shall think me corrupt!” retorted Crouch.

“I didn't say anything to the contrary, Bar temi us. But we both know the ordinary wixen will wonder how an upstanding citizen like yourself could raise a Death Eater son.”

“I am not responsible for my son's choices. He has been an adult for two years, and I was too busy to watch him every hour of every day.”

“As you say, he has only been an adult for two years. He could be considered just a boy, still. Everybody knows the youngsters can be foolhardy in their actions. If, after his testimony you were to accept my suggested sentence, I do believe the press will talk favorably about your candidature to Minister of Magic.”

Crouch grinded his teeth in frustration.

“There is no candidature to talk about. Minister Addington has another year of mandate left.”

“Ah, but it's never too early to start preparing, isn't it? And you have been preparing for a very long time, as we both know.”

“Very well. I will take your suggestion under consideration, Dumbledore, but don't believe that this gives you the right to tell me what to do. I am my own wizard.”

“And a fine wizard you are. But wouldn't you rather be remembered as a great one?” Albus said pleasantly.

Crouch didn't answer, and sped up his pace. Albus let Bartemius overtake him, knowing that Crouch had swallowed his suggestions hook, line and sinker, even if the wizard was too proud to admit it.

Chapter End Notes

As always, if you spot any kind of error let me know! Everything is still unbetaed, so things tend to slip through.
Comments give me life!

End Notes

Good? Bad? Meh?
Leave a comment and tell me what you think!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!