La Liberté de Breen à Vivre (Breen’s Freedom to Live)

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by Accio_Kilt (tari_calaelen), Calanor

Summary

After Harry rids the Wizarding World of Voldemort, his dreams of having a happy life of his own are dashed when the Ministry decides he's too dangerous to remain free. Harry escapes to start a new life, under a new identity unknown to everyone in the UK. He settles into his new life, begins a family and all seems well... but is it?

Notes

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Author’s Note: Accio_Kilt was previously know under the pen name of: morganlefay1958. Much thanks to the creative mind of my creative co-conspirator and co-author, calanor,
without whose encouragement, this fic wouldn’t be nearly as good. She is the lost sister I didn’t know I had. This is the only story I have written that was complete in my head and my fingers almost couldn't type fast enough to get it written! I wish they were all this easy.

English is my first language and I have done my best to accurately translate the other languages used in this story as well as the roll of gaelic. If you don't agree, you are welcome to offer assistance in corrections, otherwise we can agree to disagree. I'll not have a repeat of certain past reviewers... thank you.

Notice: I appreciate constructive criticism, but if you flame, you will be blocked.

Beta: Calanor, who keeps me on track. All remaining mistakes are my own.

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Final Edit: 2016
In the months that followed after the defeat of Tom Riddle, Harry Potter felt restless and listless. He had no direction in his life. What was he suppose to do now that he had done what the Wizarding world expected of him?

He was seventeen years old and lost; parents long dead, godfather lost to him behind the Veil, Cedric, his first secret crush, forever young in his heart—and also dead at the wand of the now thankfully dead Dark Lord.

It was ironic that Voldemort chose Halloween of his Seventh year to attempt to bring about the downfall of Harry Potter. ‘The bane of his existence would be no more the evil Snake-faced half-man had declared as he stood in the Great Hall. The Student population and the Staff were crowded behind him, under the aim of Death Eater wands. Harry faced him, but not alone. He was flanked by his closest friends; Ron, Hermione, Draco and Neville.

Albus Dumbledore lay on the ground, dead or alive, no one knew. He had collapsed when the wards fell, allowing Voldemort and his followers to enter the grounds of Hogwarts. Then moments later, the Great Hall.

The Dark Lord had taunted Harry as he always did when they came face-to-face. But this time, Harry had reached his limit. He was human after all, and being one of the most powerful wizards of the age, he was going to put an end to everyone’s torment.

When the air around Harry began to swirl and pick up speed, some seemed to have the good sense to back away. As Tom's taunts continued, Harry’s temper and anger rose, as did the level of power in the room. Harry reached out with his hand and squeezed, stopping Voldemort’s words, causing him to grab at his own throat and gasp for air.

"You've taken everything from me. My Parents. Sirius. Cedric. Now Dumbledore—the closest thing I ever had to a grandparent. My childhood. What more do you want?! Oh Right, my life. Kill ME ,
and take over the world. Sounds like a plan!" Harry squeezed his fist harder. "But not today; or any other day. Today. I Take. Back. My. Life. And you--you bloody bastard, can just roast in the deepest pits of Hell!!"

He closed his eyes and concentrated his magic, reaching out. With his other hand, he waved it toward an area immediately behind his enemy, but, in front of the innocents, and yelled, "OPEN!"

A slit appeared out of thin air and, grew till it looked like an open door with nothing but sucking darkness looking back out. Harry blinked, as he remembered pulling his arm around and using his magic... to lift and hurl Tom Riddle towards the open portal, watching with glee as he disappeared into the darkness.

He didn't remember much after that.... as he collapsed from magical exhaustion. He woke three days later, alone, in one of the private rooms in the Hospital Wing. He didn't know how long he lay there alone waiting for someone to come, but when Madam Pomfrey came rushing in with her usual brisk self, he let out a sigh of relief. Moments later; Ron, Hermione, along with Draco and Neville, came rushing in behind her.

"Merlin, Harry, you're finally awake!!" Ron said as he rushed up to the bed.

He listened as they told of him of the post-war happenings around Hogwarts and the Wizarding World. Classes had been canceled until the following week, the World outside the castle was celebrating the second, and final, downfall of Voldemort, and the Ministry was demanding that Harry Potter be delivered to them for questioning.

Albus Dumbledore refused to let them anywhere near Harry. It was Percy Weasley who came to them, only hours after the defeat, warning them of Fudge's plans to commit Harry to St. Mungo's psychiatric ward to keep him quiet. In the six weeks since the final battle, Harry had been kept isolated from the other students of Hogwarts, for his own safety. Especially, since Fudge had Aurors sneaking around the school, waiting for the first opportunity to nab the hero.

In his isolation, all Harry did was think about his life now; his future, that he thought he wouldn’t have. He had done what they wanted, now what was he suppose to do? Being an Auror was out of the question now. He didn't feel the need to work for a corrupt Ministry or to chase down dark wizards. He’d had more than his fill of death and killing.

Now it was the Christmas Hols, and the Ministry of Magic deemed it necessary that all the students of Hogwarts were to return home so the newly erected wards could be tested. When Harry accepted Molly and Arthur's invitation to come to the Burrow, he felt the first bit of happiness in a very long
time. He would be with family; until the Ministry stepped in.

Somehow they found out where he was going. Fudge informed them that unless he had permission from his guardians, he could not go with the Weasley's. Umbridge in all of her putrid pink glory laughed at him when he read the missive from the Ministry.

Harry wasn't a fool. He knew that Fudge would have someone waiting at the train station, or at Privet Drive, but at the moment, he really didn't have a care. He was just tired of all the fighting and arguing. He wanted the peace that was to have come with the madman's death.

But it wouldn't happen. They just kept fighting and arguing.

Harry leaned against the window of his train compartment and watched the countryside rush by. Neville was sitting across from him, reading a book quietly, when loud voices penetrated the solitude.

"After the Christmas Break, I'll use the Lust Potion, then towards the end of the school year, a Fertility Potion. It's perfect. Harry Potter will be mine--him and his fortune. I'll be the new Lady Potter by summer's end."

"What about the pregnancy? You can't attend school pregnant."

"I'll be rich enough for tutors, Harry won't want to be far away from me anyhow, so we'll both need them as they won't let married students attend Hogwarts."

"Ginny, that's awful sneaky of you, doing that to your brother's best friend. What will your family think?"

"They've always thought of Harry as a member of the family. When they find out we're dating, Mum will be ecstatic." Smug laughter followed.

Harry closed his eyes. "Nev?"

"Yes, Harry." Neville was still stunned from overhearing one of their trusted housemates say and
plan out such deviousness. "Dray said that there is a door to Gringott's on the platform."

"Yes. Opens right into the front lobby."

"Show me. My relatives are always late picking me up. It won't be any different this time."

"Sure Harry." He hesitated, "You could always come home with me, to Gran’s."

"Fudge informed me I had to return to my relatives because I didn’t have their permission to stay anywhere else. Dumbledore tried, but he was road-blocked at every turn. I don't want any trouble for you or your Gran with the Ministry over me, Neville."

Neville nodded in understanding.

It was hours later when the Express pulled into the Platform. Parents and guardians were waiting. He felt a twinge in the vicinity of where his heart used to be. No one would ever be waiting on him.

Never.

Harry followed Neville under his invisibility cloak to the doorway. A pat on the other boy's back, and he slipped through the old stone doorway to the other side.

No one ever saw Harry Potter again after that day.

His friends and those he called family, received gifts for Christmas, and a note that only said he would see them on the platform after the Holidays. Gringott’s only response to inquiries was that Mr. Potter withdrew a large amount of currency and left.

The Dursleys were questioned, and replied that they didn't even attempt to retrieve him from the station because the Minister of Magic had paid them to sign over custody of Harry to the Ministry.

They searched everywhere including his friend's homes, checking anyone who would or could hide the young man. But he was never found. Hermione and Ron were devastated, but they knew in their
hearts that Harry was no longer happy. Somehow Molly Weasley learned of the overheard conversation on the train, and Ginny’s plan to steal and control Harry’s future. She was immediately placed under restrictions, both at home and at school. Arthur Weasley researched and cast ancient spells on his wayward daughter. ‘Claudere Castitas’ to lock her female purity and maintain her virginity, and ‘Naturo Adversioun’ to prevent any instances of intimacy involving her to occur. To her family, she was a pariah worse than Percy, who had redeemed himself to the family by helping Harry when he could.

Molly cried herself to sleep, every night over the loss of Harry, the adopted son of her heart. She prayed to the Goddesses that they would keep him safe until he could come home, and she could hold him in her arms again.

Harry left the country via a Goblin Transport two weeks after the New Year. He wanted out of England, not that he could stay with the Ministry looking for him. He left letters for those he loved, to read after he was away from the country. The Goblins, namely Barikor, helped him set up a new name somewhere else.

He conjured a world map in his temporary rooms, and his destination was chosen by the random toss of a dart, which happened to land on the French coast, in Bretagne.

In Bretagne, he would continue his education with tutors, both Muggle and Magical, while deciding what to do with his life. He stayed in a family cottage, in the Finist’ere Region, he’d inherited from his parents.

After the first month, Harry found himself at his wits end. He didn't mind the studying, but he was used to doing something more. He had taken to exploring the countryside. While out one afternoon, he found himself watching a small herd of wild horses run over a hillside.

The thundering of the hooves, their manes flying in the wind, as they ran full tilt.

It was a freedom he’d only known when he flew on his broom; but this was a new freedom. He remembered how it felt when he rode Buckbeak and the Thestrals.

Alive.
Would this be different? He had never ridden a horse. He’d only watched as his cousin Dudley, had ridden a pony at a local carnival, when they were children.

Watching the herd, Harry knew what he wanted. He wanted to feel the power of the horse under him. The muscles move and the hooves pound the earth as they raced against the wind, and the sounds of thunder behind them. He craved the freedom of racing the wind.

Harry didn't notice the man come up behind him until he cleared his throat. "Beautiful, aren't they?"

Harry looked from the man to the disappearing horses, and back again to the man sitting atop his own mount. He was sitting astride a tall graceful white horse. Harry studied him for a moment, taking in his relaxed yet graceful posture. He looked to be about fifty-ish, with close cut silver hair, his beard and mustache cut close to his face. His eyes were the same color as the sky, surrounded by small lines that showed he smiled more than he frowned. Lightly tanned, it was obvious he enjoyed the outdoors. His build was solid and he sat tall in the saddle, dressed in well tailored but modest clothing, which looked well cared for. Everything about him spoke quietly of financial comfort. He was definitely on the opposite end of the scale from the Malfoys when it came to show of wealth. Lucius would have been mortified.

Leaning forward patting the fine animal on the neck, he smiled at Harry. "She’s quite the beauty isn’t she? Luath is my best girl. She’s been wi' me for many years, havn’t ye girl?" The mare tossed her head and nickered.

"Luath? Isn’t that Gaelic?" Harry asked, reaching up to let the mare nibble at his palm, tasting the salt in his skin. He'd spent quite a bit of time with his Head of House during the war.

Aye. ‘Luath’ is Scottish Gaelic for ‘swift.’ An’ tha' she is.” The older man studied him for a moment. "You're a long way from home youn' man."

Harry turned back to the fence. "I have no home. Never have."

The older man dismounted, leaving Luath to graze untethered. "Home is a relative word. But you Mr. Potter, ” Harry gasped, "wi' find tha' home is no' necessarily a physical place, but one where ye place yer heart—for wi'out love, an' those ye care for, it would just be a place. Nothing more.” He studied the back of the young man, the tense set of his shoulders, and decided this was a young man that had been hurt much in his life. Well, he’d best start with an introduction.
“The name’s Iain Pa’l MacLeod, but the French here, call me John-Paul.” He held out his hand and waited for Harry to turn to him.

Harry turned to face the tall man as he leaned on the fence next to him, seeing McLeod’s hand, he took it. “Pleasure to meet you, Mr. McLeod. How did you know it was me?”

“Ahh tha’.” The older man sighed. "Ah was once an Auror in England, an' fought again' Grindlewald. Ah was hit wi' a dark curse leavin' me wi' almost no magic. Ah canna see through glamours an' soothe beasts."

Harry gasped. "I'm--sorry."

"Don' be lad. Ah worked past me anger an' th' pain long ago. I've learned ta live wi'out it. An' wha' Ah still have... well it helps me wi' the horses." He laughed then. “Besides, the wife wields a mean wand when she takes her mind ta it.”

Harry laughed, then his expression became serious again. "Don't you miss it?"

“Aye, sometimes. Me Ailey has a wicked nasty wood’n spoon sometimes. Ah’d like ta vanish it.” John-Paul's eyes were twinkling madly with humor.

Harry had sudden visions of Mum Weasley wielding her spoon at the twins. He smiled, but his insides ached-- feelings of emptiness inside, of never seeing his friends again. “I know what you mean. I knew someone that was like a Mum, and she had a spoon of her own.”

“Aye. Most do. It’s in their breedin’ once they’ve married an’ ha' bairns.” MacLeod chuckled, his voice deep and melodic. The sound put Harry in mind of a certain Potions Master he once knew.

"So tell me, Mr. Potter, wha brings ye ta France?"

"Actually, I go by the name, Breen--Breen Evans. Now that my life is finally my own, I wanted a new beginning."

"Understandable. Well it's a pleasure ta make yer acquaintance, Mr. Breen Evans." MacLeod smiled
"Sounds like a fine name. A new beginnin'? Ah know all ab'ut new beginnin's."

He turned and retrieved the dangling reins of his mount, before facing Breen again. “Ma throat's a bit dry it seems, would ye care ta join me fer a pint?” He swung effortlessly into the saddle, and waited, his hand out, “Ye can ride wi' me, since it appears ye walked.”

Harry smiled. “I'd like that.” He looked to the man and then behind him. It was time to move forward and to new beginnings. "Sure. I'm up for a pint." He grabbed the offered hand; using his Quidditch reflexes, and found himself sitting astride the huge animal behind his neighbor, first new friend, and the first step to a new unknown future.

Chapter 2

They arrived in the courtyard of a large old country house surrounded by gardens filled with vegetables, fruit trees, berry bushes and an enormous amount of colorful flowers. The building itself was almost covered in climbing ivy and trellises of climbing flowers. Two huge farm cats sat comfortably on the stoop, only sparing them a casual look as they dismounted and entered the house. Iain stopped in the mudroom to remove his riding boots and slip his feet into a pair of well-worn house shoes. He smiled back at Breen, opening a cabinet near the floor, and motioning at several clean pairs of soft house shoes in the same style. Evidently they were for the use of guests. Breen nodded his head in thanks, slipped off his boots and chose a pair of the house shoes close to his size. Slipping them on, he was surprised at how comfortable they were. Iain chuckled at the expression on his face and gestured for him to precede him into the house proper.

As Breen passed through the door, he entered into the large manor kitchen. His first impression was coziness, despite it's size. The cabinets were a warm worn golden wood, as were the floors below his feet. They were obviously the originals, and had been lovingly cared for and polished many times. The two exterior walls held long large windows above the pristine stone counters. Many panes of sparkling glass, framed in curtains of a pale floral fabric. There was a huge iron rack suspended from the ceiling over the huge stove and a brick oven resided in the wall next to it. In a corner of the room hung a rack holding a multitude of herbs and flowers in different stages of drying. A large modern refrigerator sat in an alcove on one of the interior walls, next to a magical cold box. But the dominant item in the room had to be the eight by four foot tongue in groove table, accompanying benches tucked underneath. On one end sat a huge vase of fresh flowers, In the center sat two huge baskets of fresh fruit and vegetables, evidently that day's harvest. He could smell bread baking and he couldn't help inhaling deeply. A melodic laugh reached his ears and he looked across the kitchen to see a willowy redhead woman; a kerchief tied around her hair, keeping it in
She wore a white muslin apron over her clothing and she was up to her elbows in flour as she kneaded more bread dough in a deep oblong wooden bowl on the table. Around the bowl sat several containers and smaller bowls of ingredients. Her eyes danced when she saw her husband and she smiled at both of them.

"Aye, Iain. Back so soon? Ah see ye brought home an'ther stray..." She turned and winked at Breen. "Will et be tea or a pint then?" She wiped her hands on a clean towel and turned toward one of the cabinets behind her and waited for her husband's reply.

"Two pints me luv, then." He pulled out the bench on the opposite side of the table, with his foot and gestured for Breen to sit.

He slid onto the bench, moving over far enough to make room for his host, who slid in next to him. Two large heavy pint glasses appeared in front of them, filled with dark ale and a dense head of tan foam. John-Paul picked his up and took a deep drink, before setting the glass back down. Licking his lips and making a satisfied sound, he turned to Breen with a smile.

"Drink up now. 'Tis the best buckwheat ale ye'll ev'r taste. Made by me own darlin's fam'ly."

Breen lifted the glass and took a deep drink, and hummed in pleasure at the full flavor. "This is wonderful!"

"Ah t'ank ye kin' ser. 'Tis the pride o' me fam'ly fer cent'ries." Looking at her husband, she raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms. "Whar's ye mann'rs Iain Pa'l MacLeod?"

Breen looked up at Mrs. MacLeod, and felt his cheeks warm. It was almost as if he were back at the Burrow and looking at a slimmer, less worn version of Molly Weasley. Only, Arthur wouldn't have been chuckling the way his host was.

"Sorry, me love. Ha' ta wet me whistle first." He turned to Breen and gave him a wink, as he placed a large hand on the young man's shoulder. "Breen, this es me life-long love, Aileen Lilith McLoed. This es Mist'r Breen Evans, Ailey. He per'chased tha property over tha hills--the auld Aurelien estate."

Aileen inclined her head in greeting and smiled warmly at the young man. She felt a sense of melancholy from him, like a lost pup. It was an unusual feeling from one so young. He must have suffered much in his young life, for he couldn't even be past his second decade yet. "Pleas'd ta make
yer acquaintance, Mr. Evans. Aer home es yer home, an' aer door es always open fer ye. Now, wou'd ye both be wantin' a bite?"

She turned and opened the brick oven with one hand while grabbing a large wooden paddle with the other. She slid the paddle into the oven, pulling it back with a large round golden loaf sitting atop it, which she quickly slid onto the table before returning to the oven to retrieve three more. Breen inhaled deeply again, as the delicious scent of fresh-baked bread became almost overwhelming in the large room. His mouth began to water, and he swallowed, looking up to see her looking at him out of the corner of her eye, with a small grin on her face. After laying the paddle on the table, she sprinkled it liberally with cornmeal, then laid a fresh risen round of dough onto it. After placing that loaf into the oven, she repeated the same process with three more, including the one she had been kneading when they walked in.

Wiping her hands again, she walked to the cold box and removed a large covered platter and a smaller covered plate. Walking back around the table, she set them down, then returned for several small ceramic jars, which she levitated behind her. They settled themselves beside the plates as she laid a large cutting board on the table, along with a couple of very sharp knives. She levitated tomatoes, an onion, and a large bunch of leaf lettuce from one of the baskets, into the huge stone sink. After washing the tomatoes and lettuce, and peeling the onion, she placed them back on the cutting board, waving her wand to set one of the knives to slicing and chopping, while she place a long knife to one of the cooled loaves on the table.

"Iain, pour Mr. Evans an' other pint. Och! Where's ye mann'rs, mahn!?"

As Breen pushed his glass over to be refilled with the dark brew, he smiled at his hostess. "Please call me Breen, Mrs. MacLoed."

"Only if ye call me Aileen, Breen. Now, will ye ha' one sandwich aer two then?" She laid thick slices of the dense aromatic bread on two plates, and uncovered the platter and smaller plate, revealing a variety of sliced meats and cheeses. The small jars of condiments and savory spreads moved to sit in front of the men, as Aileen piled the requested meats and cheeses onto the bread, followed by slices of tomato, onion and lettuce leaves. The plates and two linen napkins settled themselves in front of the men. As they added what they wanted to the sandwiches from the small jars, she opened another cabinet and retrieved a large butter cake, and a bowl of fresh fruit, placing them on the table with small paring knives, a cake server, forks and smaller plates. The last thing she added to the table was a large bowl of homemade crisps.

Breen's eyes were large, as he eyed the sandwich in front of him then the large spread she had added to the table, before seating herself across the table and pouring a smaller glass of the ale for herself. It was as if he were back at the Weasley's, sitting at the table surrounded by redheads. He almost expected to see the twins come bounding in through the door.
"Where ye be, Breen? Yer gaze was afar off." Iain asked, clapping him on the shoulder.

Breen jumped, and shook his head, coming back to himself. Both of his hosts were watching him with amused expressions. "Sorry, for a moment there, it almost felt as if I were back at the Weasley's. That's the family that sort of took me in as an adopted son, while I was in school. Aunt Molly would always feed us until we'd bust, at a huge table like this one in a large homey kitchen. I almost expect the twins to coming running in the door at any moment. Molly and Arthur have seven children, and they all have red hair, like yours, Aileen."

"Ah can tell ye care fer them v'ry much, Breen. Aet comes through in yer voice, when ye speak o' them."

"They're the only real family I have ever known..." Breen replied, his voice tight.

"Ailey, my love, do ye hav' any o' tha' special preserves ye wer' makin'?" Iain sensed thier young guest didn't want to talk about his past, and Iain was familiar with the Potter history.

"Aye! An' some o' tha ones Ah did the week b'fore too." Her face lit up. "Ah'll fix ye a basket ta take back wi' ye! Some o' ma bread and some fresh vegetables. An' Ah b'lieve there aer some sausages an' slabs o' bacon as well."

"I thank you, but it isn't necessary. I have basics in my pantry--"

"Och! Ah'll hav' none o' tha' now! We take care o' aer own here. Tha' Goddess ha' been good ta us this year. It 'tis aer custom ta share the extra. Send ye home wi' a bit o' baked and cooked loving 'tis. Me bairns aer all grown an' gone now." She set her glass in the sink and walked around the table to stand next to Breen, her hands on her slender hips.

"Don' argue wi' the woman, lad. Ye won' win." Iain was chuckling at the sight of his wife eyeing the young man, as he looked wide-eyed at her.

"I guess not. It's like having Aunt Molly standing there." He shivered a bit at the surprising familiarity of the situation. "Thank you. I will accept your shared bounty with much gratitude, and will enjoy it very much."
"Tha's better." She said with a nod of finality that said she knew she would win the argument. Iain chucked louder at his wife's familiar behavior. She went back around to her seat, and pulled the butter cake to her. Slicing two large pieces, she laid them on small plate and plunked them down in front of the men, with a fork balanced on the edge. "There ye go."

She sliced a tiny piece for herself and sat down, summoning a small pot of tea and a cup. After filling her cup, she took a small bite of the cake and looked up at them across the table. Iain had already eaten half of his cake, but Breen was looking down at his with a frustrated look.

"Tis only a kouign --a butter cake. It won' bite ye. Eat up now." She watched him for a moment. "Wha's troublin' ye, lad?"

He looked slowly up at her, with a sheepish grin. "I'm going to weigh an additional stone by the time I leave here..."

"By Merlin, Breen! Di' ye think we'd make ye walk home? Nay, Ah've a comfortable pull cart we can take ta get ye home. Ol' Taranis needs ta stretch 'is legs a bit. Now, eat tha' cake. 'Tis bloody good."

Breen dug into the soft rich cake with gusto, even though he was almost full already. While he ate, they shared tea, and chatted into the late afternoon. They told him about Brittany, or Bretagne as the French called it; the local countryside and towns, the food, the drink, the people--both magical and Muggle, local crops and livestock, the fishing, the climates, and the festivals. Breen told them a little about himself--just a basic background. He told them how he came to purchase his properties, and that he had planned to do a bit of gentleman farming. He suspected Iain knew quite a bit about him, but Aileen didn't. When she asked certain questions, Iain steered the conversation to a new topic. It was a very pleasant visit and he found he was enjoying himself immensely.

As they chatted, Aileen got up and put away the food, including the loaves of bread she had put in to bake after they arrived. She conjured a huge basket, and as she went along, she wrapped up packages of the meat, cheeses, cake, and a couple loaves of the bread. She added jars and crocks of preserves, condiments, fresh fruit and vegetables, sweet butter, and a couple tins of loose tea. Going to the pantry, she brought out sausages, bacon, lamb shank, and bags of cracked grain for porridge. Lastly, she added several bottles each of the buckwheat ale, chouchen, a honeyed mead, and the local lambig, or distilled cider.

She sealed the basket, casting several cushioning and featherweight charms on the basket, then smiled at Breen. "This shou'd keep ye fer a few days 'till ye can get to market properly." She looked at Iain, as she removed her apron and exchanged it for a clean one. "Gather 'im two jugs o' fresh milk an' the basket of eggs in the mudroom, b'fore ye go, eh Luv?"
"Aye, my love. Ah will. Come along, Breen, an' we'll get ye home 'fore dark." Iain rose from the table, and turned to kiss his wife's cheek. "Ah'll be back as soon as I get Breen settled ta home."

"It was a pleas're ta meet ye, Breen. Don' be a strang'r. Aer door es always open." She hugged him and pressed her cheek to his. He inhaled the scent around her. A delicate floral, intermingled with the scent of rising yeast and fresh bread, and the fresh breezes of outdoors. It was comforting—reminded him of Aunt Molly.

"It was my pleasure. Thank you for your hospitality. Perhaps, after I've settled in fully, you both will honor me with a visit." Breen smiled warmly at Aileen as he 'Levitated' the huge basket out the door.

They changed back into their boots, and exited the house. Iain motioned for Breen to wait by the stoop with the basket, and he disappeared into the stable. Exiting a few minutes later, he was driving a small cart, pulled by a handsome roan Breton gelding. Iain pulled up beside Breen and stopped.

"Climb abo'rd. Ol' Taranis has a smooth gait. T'will be a comfortable ride back ta yer home."

Breen climbed up and sat next to Iain after settling the large basket in the back of the cart, which also contained two huge jugs of milk, a basket of eggs, and what appeared to be a small jug of cream. Aileen rushed up to the cart and handed him a huge bouquet of flowers from her gardens, wrapped in a cotton cloth and charmed to stay fresh.

"Ev'ry home needs flowers ta give it a bit o' colour."

"Thank you, again. Good afternoon, Aileen."

She stood, watching and waving as they rode over the hill and out of sight.

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Chapter 3
Breen led the bay gelding out to the paddock and released him, closing the gate and watching him run along the fence. He'd been working with Iain for almost a year now, learning horse husbandry. Of course, Ailey made sure he spent time in the kitchen and the gardens with her as well. He enjoyed the lessons, since his only good memories of being with the Dursleys was the cooking and gardening. He never had much chance to do a lot of baking, so baking day was always his favorite.

He grabbed his shirt off the railing and wiped his face with it, before tucking a corner of it into his back pocket. That was the fourth horse he had worked with today and he was parched. Hoping Ailey had a pitcher of lambig out, he headed for the house. Kicking his boots off in the mudroom, he padded into the kitchen in his socks, looking around for the slender redhead that kept the house and staff running smoothly. Seeing the chilled pitcher of distilled cider sitting on the table, next to several clean glasses, he smiled and poured himself a glass. After draining the glass in four swallows, he refilled it and drained that one as well. He set the glass down as he wiped his mouth with the back of his other hand.

"Ah see ye been workin' ha'rd, Breen. Go ae'sy an tha' cider now. Ef yer still thersty ha' some water from tha spring." Ailey pulled a stoneware jug from the cooler and set it on the table next to Breen's glass. "Thar ye go."

"Thank you, Ailey. Training the horses gets to be hot work this time of the year." He reached for the pitcher and filled his glass with the sweet clear water. Lifting the glass, he drained it and set it down. Looking around the kitchen, he inhaled deeply. "Something smells wonderful! What are we having for supper?"

Ailey smiled at the toned young man, his torso damp with sweat from working outside all day. He always seemed to be hungry. He ate well, but never stuffed himself like some of the other stable staff did. When he ate, he seemed to savor every bite, as if it would be his last for a very long time. It made her wonder, and one day, she would ask him about that.

"Well, Ah thought ye and tha others wou'd enjoy some sausage and ham galettes. Ah also hav' some steamed artichokes, cooked potatoes, peas and onions, fresh tomatoes, and cider and spring water ta drink." His eyes lit as she listed the evening's menu. "Off wi' ye an' get cleaned up. Ah've a few things ta finish here." She made a shooing motion at him, and he hastened off to the spare room and bath.

They'd offered it for his use when he didn't want to travel back home and have to return. He kept a
few necessities there for when he needed them. They had in a way adopted him and Ailey had made it her personal job to 'mother' him. Secretly, he enjoyed it, but he kept his demeanor subdued, because she wasn't yet quite as over-exuberant as Aunt Molly, and he didn't want to risk that changing.

He missed everyone from England. He often wondered, late at night, how everyone was. How did they do on their own NEWTS? Did Hermione get into the University she wanted? Did Neville get his Herbology apprenticeship? Did Ron go into Auror training....or change his mind? And Draco.... what had he decided to do with his life...now that he was free? It had been painful to leave his friends behind, and those who considered him family, in order to find some peace and control in his life for the very first time.

He knew Aunt Molly was upset. She had to have been. And Remus; his dear adopted Godfather, how had he taken his disappearance? He sighed sadly, as he finished toweling himself off and reached for the clean denims laying on the bed. As he dressed, he wondered how he could let them know he was fine, without giving away his location and losing his newly gained privacy.

Maybe he could have some small items delivered by owl, anonymously, to a few people, those he could trust to not come looking for him. Lemon drops to Albus... mixed with some of his favorite wizarding candy, Ice Mice. A small teapot he'd seen in the village for Molly. It had a pattern of Morning Glories painted on it---she had told him once that those were her favorite. He'd seen a crystal statue of a merwoman in the glass shop. Neville would like that. And Severus would enjoy a small box of those champagne truffles that Ailey's friend makes for the farmer's market.

Ailey watched Breen as he reentered the kitchen. She was currently preparing the vegetable for cooking, then she would prepare a fresh salad. The young man looked distracted as he sat down at the huge table, across from where she was working. He watched as she set the artichokes on the stove to cook, then poured the fresh cleaned baby peas and pearl onions into a casserole dish, before adding fresh butter and herbs to them.

As she worked, laying small dollops of fresh butter over the top of the vegetables, then sprinkled several freshly chopped herbs over, she watched Breen from beneath lowered lashes. "Wha's troubl'in' ye, Breen?"

Breen looked up at her, struggling with himself as to whether he wanted to bother her with his troubles or not.

She watched him quietly, as she continued to prepare dishes for their meal, letting him open up on his own.
"It's nothing, Ailey, really." He sighed as he grabbed a stray peapod and twiddled it between his fingers.

"Ye can talk ta me, if ye need ta, Breen. Ye aer fam'ly aft'r all." She put the last dish in the oven and turned to wash her hands, before casting a spell to clean her work area on the table.

Sitting down at the table, she summoned the glass jug of lemonade and two small glasses. She filled both glasses and pushed one across the table to him. Then she folded her hands, and waited, an open expression on her face.

He looked up at her from where he'd been staring at the peapod between his fingers, several emotions passing through his eyes. His voice was just loud enough that if she hadn't been sitting across from him, she wouldn't have heard him. "I'm lonely, Ailey."

She had been watching him over the last several months, noticing his mood becoming more melancholy, when he didn't think anyone was watching him. It's not as if he kept to himself. No, he socialized a bit with her and Iain, and the other workers on their staff, and he did go to the occasional gathering in town, or to the pub. His youthful good looks had drawn much attention, from both wizards and witches alike, though she knew his preferences gravitated to his own gender, something perfectly acceptable in the Wizarding World. The owner of the Pale Rooster Pub had a nephew that had developed quite a crush on Breen. He'd dated the young man a few times, and they were friends. Breen had even dated a few others in their community, but no one seemed to be a match for him.

"I miss my friends...yet, I dare not let any of them know where I am."

"Would it be a problem after all this time?" Breen had since sat down with Iain and Ailey so he could explain some of his history to her, and a few things that Iain didn't know. He'd chosen to leave certain, more unpleasant, information out.

"Yes, well meaning as they are... there are still some in the Wizarding World who would still be looking for me. I can't chance losing my freedom and my privacy. My friends would never knowingly reveal my location, but there are those who would watch and follow. I know they have to be worried. Especially, Aunt Molly."

"Ah see...hmmm...paer'haps thar's a way ta let then know ye are well, wi' out givin' it aw'y."
"That's what I had been thinking while I was cleaning up, earlier. I could send anonymous gifts by owl to certain ones...Albus... Aunt Molly...things only they would recognize."

"Do ye hav' anythin' in mind?"

"Yes, I saw a teapot in town, Aunt Molly would love, and things for the others as well. Oh, and can you ask Phina if she could make some of those truffles? Severus would love them."

"Aye, Ah can when we go ta town on tha morrow." She grinned at his surprised expression. "Do ye think Ah would pass up a chance ta shop fer gifts? Nah. Tha house an' tha harses can do wi'out us fer one day."

"I still don't know how you do that without speaking with Iain first."

"Hav'nt ye laern't by now, aef Ah want somethin' enough, Ah hav' me ways." She winked.

Breen burst out laughing, and shook his head at the mischievous look in the lithe woman's eyes. He wasn't going to ask. He had his suspicions and he could feel his cheeks warming at the thought. Ailey laughed when she noticed his expression.

"Aer ye goin' out wi' tha boys tonight ta tha pub?"

"I don't know. Belus will be there. I've spoken with him and he understands why I can't pursue a relationship with him, but it hurts to see the puppy dog look in his eyes, when he sees me. He is a wonderful person and there are others who are interested in him."

"Aye, Ah agree." She looked at him, studying his face. "Now, tell me wha' else is troublin' ye."

"I have no idea what you are talking about." He tried to show his best innocent face.

"Thar's som'thin' else, Breen Evans. Ah know thar is, an' ye'll be tellin' me soon en'uph." She spoke as she rose to check the dishes cooking in the oven. "Will ye set tha table fer me, then. These aer al'most done."
He rose and went to the cabinets to retrieve the dishes and silverware, secure in the belonging he felt when he was in the McLeod's home.

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Chapter 4

Iain had agreed the anonymous gifts were a splendid idea and a perfect solution to Breen's problem, as Ailey explained it after their evening meal. Breen had decided to join the boys at the pub for a couple hours, before returning home, since they would be heading to town bright and early the next morning. Ailey had contacted Fhina about the chocolates, and the woman had been more than happy to make a few dozen for Breen.

Now, they had just left the confectioner's shop, with the chocolates for Severus, and the box of Ice Mice, which Breen shrunken and put in his robe pocket with the other packages he had. He'd decided to send a gift certificate to Moine, for Flourish and Blott's since they had a sister store here, and he had picked up a Snitch for Ron, and had it inscribed with 'Best Mate,' and a small picture of a butterfly above the 'e'. The shop had included a nice little stand with a sticking spell to display it on. When he'd shown Ailey the crystal merwoman he wanted for Nev, she had complimented him on his good taste. He decided to just include a note with it, since the bookstore didn't currently have the book on Gillyweed.

"Wha' else do ye need ta get, Breen?" Ailey asked, as they walked down the street and she waved at a friend from the sewing group she attended.

He pulled a small list from his other pocket and scratched off the snitch and the chocolates with his wand. "All I have left is the teapot for Aunt Molly, and a nice self-inking quill set for Remus."

"Bedwyr and Grannus' shop es jus' doon a bit, tha' way." She pointed down three storefronts from where they currently were.
They hurried and entered the large shop, through a heavy door, ringing a little bell that alerted it's proprietor's to their presence. Aed Bedwyr emerged from the back room behind the counter, a huge smile breaking across his face when he saw who'd entered the shop.

"Och! Aileen MacLoed! 'Tis good ta see ye." He took her offered hand. "Iain es well, Ah trust?"

When she nodded, he turned to look at Breen. "Wel'cm' ta ma shop, Mr. Evans, es it? Wha' can Ah be aid'n ye wi' today?"

Breen smiled at the young man, who was only a few years older than himself. Aed ran the shop now that his Da was ill and Mr. Grannus was on extended holiday. He pointed to a display of fine china, indicating a particular shelf. "I'd like the teapot with the Morning Glories design if you still have it. It's a gift and will be sent by owl out of the country."

Ailey strolled over to look at some leather-bound journals, while Breen conducted his business. Aed turned and examined his display, as he rubbed a finger against his chin. It gave Breen a few minutes to get a better look at the man.

Aed Bedwyr was tall, about a half-head taller than Breen himself, who was a bit on the short side. He was slender, with a creamy complexion and deep chestnut brown hair, that hung halfway down his back. He had chiseled features, high cheekbones, and the most startling eyes Breen had ever seen. They were such a dark brown, they were almost black. When Aed looked at him, it was all he could do not to shiver. He was attracted to Aed, but he didn't understand why. He shook it off when the man disappeared into the back room.

Emerging a few minutes later, he gave Breen a pleased smile as he set a small box on the counter. "Ah had only one left in tha back. Tha artist only made ten of tha design, so ye w're lucky et was mis-shelved."

Breen smiled, relieved that he would be able to get the gift he wanted for Aunt Molly. He could almost picture the smile on her face when she opened it and realized it was from him. Then she would cry and cry, until everyone asked what was wrong. She would tell them 'nothing' and ask who was hungry, as she headed into the kitchen to cook. Not even Arthur would argue, knowing to wait until she was willing to say, which in this case, she wouldn't.

"-- anythin' else ye be needin', Mr. Evans?"
"Oh, sorry, yes. I'd like a self-inking quill set. A really nice one, if you have it. Another gift, going to the same place."

Aed showed him a half-dozen of their best ones. Harry immediately eliminated the ones made with silver, finally settling on a set in wood and gold, with beautiful mottled feathers. There was a hand-carved wooden storage box—the lid bore the picture of a wolf baying at a full moon, as it's cub sat between it's legs. He smiled when he saw the picture. It reminded him of how Remus had always called him his cub.

Ailey had picked out a nice soft hide journal in a russet red, and placed it on the counter. Breen thought Iain would like it. Aed took their payment and wrapped the gifts quickly, adding special cushioning charms to Breen's to protect them when he sent them. Breen and Ailey thanked Aed and left the shop as Breen shrunk and pocketed those packages.

"I'm famished. Let's get a bite." Breen's stomach growled in agreement and they both laughed, as they headed to the local crêperie.

They sat down with heavy glasses of chouchen, the local honeyed mead, while they waited for their order. They had found a small table in the corner, near the back windows, overlooking the cliffs toward the sea. Only about half the tables were currently occupied, and there was a low pleasant hum of conversation around them. They had been greeted warmly when they arrived, but everyone here respected privacy, so they were not bothered once they sat.

They sat quietly, Ailey looking out the window enjoying the view while Breen looked across the room. It was nice to get off their feet after traipsing all over the town for three hours. Ailey had finished all her shopping for the week, so she was very pleased. They sipped their mead, enjoying each other's company.

They both turned as their food was set before them on the table. In front of each of them sat a deep crockery bowl of Soupe à l'Oignon, the smell of the delicate pink onions wafting up. Between their bowls a plate of Galettes de Sarrasin was placed, still warm. Breen smiled. He'd become very partial to the buckwheat galettes or crepes in the last year.

"Thank you, Bradan, this looks and smells heavenly." Ailey commented as they picked up their spoons.

The young man smiled and bowed and hurried back to the kitchen. Breen reached for a galette and tore it into pieces before dropping them into his bowl, pushing them down with his spoon, so they soaked up some of the broth. Spooning up a piece covered with bits of cooked onion, he placed it in
his mouth, humming in delight as the flavors slid over his taste buds. Ailey shook her head and took a taste of hers. She hummed as well.

Looking up after a few bites, Ailey noticed Breen had stopped eating, his spoon still in his hand, as he gazed across the room. Turning, she followed his gaze to the occupants of another table. It was one of the Antaine daughters, with her children. She evidently just had her babe since she was holding a newborn, while her four-year-old son, sat next to her at the table in a raised child's chair. She had just unwrapped the infant and was resting him or her against her shoulder as she rubbed the small back, resting her cheek against the tiny head.

She turned slowly and studied Breen's face, and was surprised at what she saw. She went back to her meal, keeping an eye on the young man. After a couple of minutes, he went back to eating, but continued to look across the room, watching the mother and her children. By the time they finished eating, the mother and children had left, after only having a drink and light snack. Bradan came back and efficiently cleared their table, and left them fresh glasses of mead, before disappearing again.

"Breen?"

"Yes, Ailey?" He answered quietly, the children still on his mind.

"Ah ask'd ye yest'rday what else was ailin' ye. Now, will ye tell me... please. Ah wan' ta help ye." She reached across and patted the hand he didn't have wrapped around his glass of mead.

He looked at the delicately strong hand against his, then up to the friendly eyes he'd come to trust. She was as close to a mum as he would have here. He took a shaky breathe and sighed.

"Breen, child... and aye, Ah'm ol' en'ugh ta be yer mum... tell me. Ah see yer pain." She watched him look at her as he struggled internally. Gentling her voice even more, she spoke again. "Ah saw ye watchin' the Antaine girl and her wee bairns."

His eyes widened briefly, as he hadn't been aware she'd noticed his attention had been elsewhere. Feeling his cheeks warm, he dropped his gaze to the table. "I finally figured out what the hole inside of me is... I want a family, Ailey. Babies... children. My own. I crave that even more than I feel the need for a companion... a soulmate. I didn't put it all together until I watched her holding her baby as she helped her son."

"Aet all showed in yer face, dear. Plain as tha nose on yer face."
Pain shown in Breen's face as he looked at Ailey. "I'm not attracted to witches... and I can't adopt. I'd have to deal with the Ministry... the last thing I want, now that I have my privacy."

"Don' worry yerself ab'ut it. Things hav' a way of workin' themselves out. When ye're ready, t'will all fall inta' place."

"I hope so. I've never had a family that was really mine."

She dropped enough money on the table to cover their meal, plus a generous tip for Bradan, and stood. "'Tis time ta be gettin' home now. Ah need ta pick beans fer our supper."

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Chapter 5

One year later....September of 2000

Albus Dumbledore was sitting at his desk, once more listening to Cornelius Fudge go on and on about how they would find Harry Potter, bring him back to England. Making sure he wasn't hurting other good wizards. Or trying to set himself up as the next rising Dark Lord.

Albus was utterly bored. The annoying man could go on and on all day just listening to the sound of his own voice. Albus stifles a yawn as he sits back in his chair. He and the Order had been trying for the past three years to get Fudge removed from office. But they hadn't exposed all the Dark Lord sympathizers hidden in the Ministry ranks yet. Until that was done, they would have difficulty unseating Fudge. Just more post-war cleanup that had to be done.

Albus also hoped when they'd finally gotten rid of Fudge that Harry could finally come home. The older man reached for another sweet. This time Harry had sent him chocolate-covered Gummi
Bears. When he had received the first package of lemon drops, he'd been shocked to find a few Ice Mice mixed in. He'd sat there for several minutes, just staring into the box, stunned, not sure if he was imagining the Ice Mice or the message they conveyed. He'd felt tears on his cheeks when he'd finally come back to himself, so overjoyed to know Harry was fine and thinking of him.

He smiled as he remembered earlier, when Fudge had first entered his office and reached for the bowl of sweets and Albus moved them from his reach. He was not sharing his special candy, especially with that incompetent wizard!

While Cornelius continued to drone on and on, Albus thought of the other things that had been delivered. Molly had a beautiful teapot and now matching tea cups and saucers. Every couple of months various Teas and biscuits were delivered in brightly-painted tins that were now proudly displayed all over the Weasley kitchen. And always about that time, she would fire call and they would have tea sharing his new sweets and her serving them from her favorite new teapot.

He had spoken with Remus Lupin only the week before and the young man had mentioned receiving a beautiful boxed quill set, soon followed by a box of handmade monogrammed parchment. He'd suspected that they had come from Harry and wanted to know if Albus had heard from his godson. This opened further discussion and soon Remus was joining them for tea as well. Things continued in this tact over the subsequent years, until Severus, Hermione, Ron, and Neville had all become part of the clandestine teas. Gifts continued to arrive in a sporadic pattern but it was enough to fuel the groups' happiness at knowing Harry was well. They often sat and mused about what he could be doing with his hard-earned freedom, as the seasons changed and the months passed. They moved on with their lives, working and occasionally the singles in the group dated. And all the while, his secret remained fiercely guarded among them.

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Chapter 6

It was late September of 2001, and Breen found himself sitting in a large airy office of a mediwitch by the name of Renee’ Igerne’. She was in charge of the local Wizarding clinic, and she specialized in Wizarding pregnancies; both in witches and wizards. It had been Yule of the previous year, when he had finally sat down with his friends and pseudo-parents, Iain and Ailey, to discuss where to take his life next. All the work had been done on his home and property. He had run out of projects to distract him from those things that truly bothered him. Even breaking the horses no longer helped. It was then that Ailey gently explained about the wizard pregnancies that were possible, and how their
local clinic had gained a respected reputation in regards to that particular field of healer medicine. Ailey had known Renee' since she'd been an apprentice, and trusted her implicitly, to help Breen and to also guard his privacy. After lengthy discussion and a few weeks of contemplation, Ailey and Iain had accompanied Breen to the *Clinique de Fertilité* in Brest, to be magically matched with a donor. It hadn't taken long. The strong magical signature of one particular donor had drawn him like a '*Summoning Spell*'. The description of the donor was what he was hoping for--tall, muscular but slender, black hair and eyes, pale complexion, highly intelligent and educated, and in good health.

There had been the physical exam and tests, followed by the *Hermaphrodite Potion*, and the pain and discomfort while it changed and added to his body so he could carry a child. He'd been very thankful to learn he would not develop breasts, though his chest would still become tender. Next, there had been the two sessions of implantations, three months apart, that sadly, had not taken because the magical womb had to further adjust to his powerful magic. Finally, after the third attempt, two weeks ago, he'd started sicking up a week later and now, here he sat, waiting.

He'd thought that day--the day of the magical testing, he'd been nervous, but now realized as he waited for Medwitch Igerne', that nervousness had been nothing. Ailey had accompanied him and now sat next to him, placing a calming hand on his arm, as his other hand rubbed subconsciously back and forth over his lower abdomen. For the moment his stomach was, thankfully, behaving itself.

In a rush as usual, light green robes flapping, Renee' came flying into the room. All smiles and talking a mile a minute. A chart in one hand and her wand in the other. "Oh, Breen! I hope everything is well with you."

Ailey spoke up before Breen could open his mouth. "He's been sick ev'ry mornin' an' cravin' gellato , an' an odd combination o' pickles an' meat, all week."

"Really. Hmmm. I have just the recipe at home for you to make for him then Ailey dear. It's a lovely German dish I encountered in my travels. I'll owl you a copy this evening." She dropped the files on her desk, amid everything else, and dropped casually into the well-worn chair behind it. She kicked off her Birkenstock's and flexed her toes before folding her hands on the desk, smiling across at her current patient and his friend.

"How's your sleep?"

"Och, he's been restless." Ailey answered before Breen could open his mouth.

Breen looked from Ailey to Renee'. 
"And when have you been sick the most?"

"In the morning, but the last two days in the afternoon. Had me Iain send 'im after the morning training to rest a bit."

Breen looked at his friend before opening his mouth, but she asked before he could, "Is there anything he can take for the nausea?"

"Yes, what she asked," he said smirking.

Renee chuckled, "Well let’s do a scan first to confirm you are pregnant, Breen."

Breen looked to Ailey before moving from his chair, much to Renee's amusement. Ailey looked back and forth between her two friends and gave a disgusted sigh.

"Och! Get on wi' ye! Go! Go! Ah need to know if Ah'll ha' a wee bairn to spoil!" She waved her hands at Breen, to get moving.

Renee stood up, and motioned him toward the small exam bed in the room. After he settled himself, pulled up his shirt and unbuttoned the top button of his denims, pushing them down slightly, she began waving her wand with a flourish, chanting under her breath, over his abdomen. Watching and waiting with baited breath, Ailey wrung her hands in anticipation as Breen chewed his lower lip. Breen's abdomen slowly began to glow, the light rising and coalescing into the tiny shape of an infant, immediately above his skin. The light was white for a few moments before it began to change to pink.

"Looks to be a lass, Breen Evans."

Breen, overwhelmed by emotion, reached out with shaking fingers to touch the magical form of his daughter. Emotion clogged his throat, as tears welled in his eyes.

His Daughter.
He was finally going to have a family of his own. He would no longer have to be alone in life. He wouldn't have to share with anyone. She would be a part of him, as he had been a part of his parents. But he would be there to help her grow up. There was no longer a Dark Lord to take him from her—or her future siblings, as the madman had taken her grandparents.

"Lily," he whispered as the magic tickled his fingertips. "Eileen Lily, my daughter... I will love and cherish you, and never leave you."

Ailey sniffled, tears on her cheeks as she watched Breen, coming to the realization he was going to be a parent.

The following months were interesting, to say the least. A pregnant Breen was a roller coaster of emotions—up one minute and down the next. It took six weeks for the nausea to finally dissipate. Then he had orders from Renee' that he could no longer ride. At two months along, when he was almost kicked in the stomach, his participation in the training was stopped completely. He didn't need to work, since he was wealthy in his own right, but he needed to work, to keep his sanity. Being idle was something foreign to him.

That was about the time Ailey dragged him into the kitchen to spend his days with her. One of the new hands they'd recently hired, had made a comment about Breen not pulling his weight around the farm. He hadn't bothered to ask if there was a reason. The young man was met with an irate and fuming Ailey before Iain had a chance to put his two Knuts into the problem. The other handlers and trainers, who were very familiar with how hard he'd always worked, didn't even have a chance to defend Breen.

The man was let go, and never returned to the farm. One redhead witch on a tear was just too much for him to handle. In the meantime, Ailey kept Breen busy and up to his elbows, literally, in flour, yeast, sugar, and several other baking ingredients as she taught him to make every type of bread and pastry she knew. Then she began to teach him to cook the traditional Breton dishes he had come to love. He found he had a love for the kitchen and began to look forward to their days spent together as teacher and pupil. There were very few failures and Ailey was impressed with his innate culinary touch. The staff wasn't complaining either, since they had the pleasure of eating everything he made. Conversely, they had to work harder to keep additional weight gain away, so more was accomplished despite Breen's absence. This in turn, made Breen feel better, since in a way, he was still contributing.
He took to walking around the property every morning before breakfast and after supper in the evenings. *Blaan* and *Ruadh*, his *Bretagne* Bassets, gifts from Iain and Ailey, always accompanied him, as if it were their duty to escort Breen, as he stopped along the way to talk to the men and women who worked his lands. He would stop at the paddocks to pet and talk to his half-dozen horses. He missed riding and working with them and they seemed to sense it, always nickering at him and greeting him when he reached the fences. He always had a pocketful of fruit and vegetables for his constant hunger, so he always had a tidbit to share with each of them.

He'd purchased a nice covered carriage that he could drive to Iain's, when he was to spend the day helping Ailey, or to drive into town when the need arose. He found he enjoyed the gentle rocking as they traveled down the roads. He'd even managed to find some wonderfully heavy and warm lap blankets to use in the cold weather. They and his heavy winter robes, were a wonderful substitute for *Warming Charms*.

He found he had to do more things the Muggle way, since his daughter's magic was interfering with his own. Imagine his surprise when he tried to spell several pans of raised dough from the table to the proofing oven, and they shot into the oven, slamming against the back wall, throwing all the dough from the pans. The look of shock on his face was so comical that Ailey nearly dropped the trays of rolls she'd been holding. She laughed so hard, tears were streaking her face, when Iain walked in and asked what was so funny.

"What is happening to my magic?" Breen asked as he sat down on one of the benches and watched Ailey salvage the bread dough. Luckily, it would be fine. She spelled it back into the pans and centered them in the oven, closing the door and setting a *Timer Spell*.

Ailey wiped her hands, and poured three cups of tea before sitting down at the table, across from Breen. Iain slid in beside her. "Ah wi' call Renee' ta check, but Ah'm sure tha' yer daughter's magic es mos' likely interferin' wi' yours."

"Bloody hell..." Breen's hand went to his mouth, as he stared at Ailey with wide eyes. "Sorry, that was rude of me."

"Don' worry yerself 'bout et. 'Tis und'rstandable. Finish yer tea an' I wi' call tha clinic." She rose and went into the other room. Breen reached down and spread his hand across the small swell of his abdomen.

Sure enough, Breen's magic was totally thrown out of kilter by his daughter's budding magical signature. He tried different things under Renee's watchful eye before they determined that if he did spells wandlessly, he had far less explosive results. He still had to exercise caution and cast with far less intent, but it did allow him to do most spells--most of the time.
The first time a spell went awry at home, Dobby told him that from now on, Master Breen should let Dobby do the spells for him. He decided to do things the Muggle way when it was practical, to save himself the worry. For once, he was thankful for the things he had learned while living at the Dursley’s. And, he didn't want Dobby popping up constantly, startling him, every time he tried to do something.

The days passed quickly, and everyone watched Breen as the pregnancy manifested itself in his appearance. His skin took on a glow and much to his chagrin, his hair started growing faster than it had previously. It wasn't long before his hair brushed just past his shoulders. His appetite kept him nibbling all day long. Both Ailey and Dobby kept a large assortment of finger foods available at both homes for him. For the first time, he looked genuinely filled out. It also wasn't unusual to find him sitting somewhere, sound asleep. He would sit to rest for a moment and just drop off. It became a habit to keep an eye out for him if he hadn't been seen for a while.

The only real problem he had, besides an aching back and sore feet, was an increase in his libido. He felt odd about dating, now that he was pregnant, though it didn't faze anyone in their Wizarding community. The young men he'd spent time with since he had been in Bretagne, still found him very attractive and desirable, unfazed by the gentle swell of his child. Ailey and Renee' both encouraged him to date, spending time with those men he felt comfortable with and had an understanding that he wasn't seeking a relationship, but just companionship and shared physical enjoyment.

After some unsure and slightly embarrassing evenings, Breen finally settled for the company of three local young wizards with whom he felt comfortable. They all knew each other and that he was spending time with each of them, but they were Breen's friends. They all had sisters, or cousins, and even one or two brothers who had gone through pregnancy and the accompanying libido issues, and they just wanted to help. After all, what were friends for?

The Yule Season was a very merry time at the MacLoed's and at Breen’s, especially when Ailey took Breen to shop for gifts, and things for the baby, so Iain, the hands, and some of their mutual friends could sneak over to Breen's place and decorate it for Yule and the Solstice Celebration. When Ailey and Breen had returned, later that evening in the carriage to drop off his purchases, Breen had been totally stunned. Dobby had been bouncing by the door, beside himself with excitement knowing how happy this would make Master Breen.

The outside had been draped in the traditional boughs and natural decorations. Candles filled the windows, and as he walked in the door and passed through several of the rooms, it was apparent they had lavishly decorated every room. There was even a lavishly decorated Yule tree in his library, the bottom of it surrounded with gaily wrapped gifts. Everyone had been totally unprepared for a sobbing Breen, tears coursing down his rosy cheeks as he stared at his home festooned with boughs and garlands of evergreen and all the other items appropriate for the Pagan time of year. He reached out and touched one of its branches, so overcome that he turned and wrapped his arms around Ailey, sobbing into her shoulder.
They all started casting worried looks at each other, until Ailey shook her head at them as she wrapped her arms around him, rubbing his back and shushing him. When he had finally slowed to hiccuping sniffles, she had pulled her handkerchief, seated him in his favorite chair and wiped his face, as she sat on the arm next to him. Dobby stood waiting with a warm mug of cocoa for him, with just a bit of 'Calming Draught' added.

"I-I'm s-sorry everyone. Bloody hormones! This is just all so wonderful! I can't even begin to thank all of you. You have no idea how much this means to me." He smiled a watery smile at them, his lower lip still trembling a bit. "Every one of you have become very special to me and have helped me to finally feel I have a true home here."

"We all love ye, Breen. You aer one o' us now." Ailey spoke as she leaned down and kissed the top of his head.

Bright smiles and words of support and encouragement were offered, all relieved they had done the right thing. Ailey hustled everyone out, sending them off to finish the decorating at the MacLoed Estates, since she had a huge celebration planned and there would be a houseful the following week for the Solstice.

Breen and Dobby joined Ailey during the days leading up to the Solstice, helping her prepare all the traditional dishes and several additional favorites for the celebrations. Dobby had never see his friend happier and he beamed at Ailey and Iain when he could catch their eye. More than once, Ailey found small gifts left on their hearth, and wondered where they had come from.

The New Year came and went, as Breen grew bigger, his hair grew faster, and his moods continued to fluctuate. Everyone seemed to run interference because they never knew whether he would lose his temper or burst into tears. One of Ailey and Iain's nieces stumbled accidentally onto the perfect way to calm a distraught Breen. She asked him one day, if she could brush his hair. After ten minutes, his eyelids began to droop and he was falling asleep. It was now a daily ritual, both morning and night, no matter whether he was sleeping at home, or staying at the MacLeods. Something Ailey insisted on more frequently as he moved farther into his pregnancy.

When Breen couldn't stand anymore for any length of time, Ailey would have him in a chair with his feet propped up. She would find things for him to do that he could accomplish while seated. She also encouraged him to read, and Iain liked to play chess. Breen surprised himself when he realized how much he had actually retained from all the games he'd played with Ron over the years.

During the last month of the pregnancy, Ailey had insisted Breen stay at the Macleod's farm until he gave birth.
Ailey went on a rant that lasted three days when he'd begun having pains in his lower back, and didn't tell anyone. Iain had to take her aside and remind her to calm herself. Breen had enough to deal with without having his mother figure going over the edge. Feeling guilty, she made some of Breen's favorite hot cocoa and biscuits and went to apologize.

Later that night, Ailey and Iain were awakened when Blaan and Ruadh landed in the middle of their bed, barking up a storm. Grabbing their robes, they bolted down the hall to Breen's room, dogs on their heels to find him standing in the middle of the room, his hand pressed against his belly, and his sleep shirt soaked through. Wide green eyes looked at them, a look of slight fear in them.

"Et looks like yer daughter has decided ta make her app'rence, Breen." She walked swiftly across the room and pulled a fresh nightshirt from the bureau and tossed it to Iain. "Help him change, Luv, an' get 'im comfortable in tha bed, while Ah call Renee'. " Then she was gone.

"T'will be fine, son. Come, let's get ye cleaned up now." Iain helped Breen to the bath and helped him wash and change, while Dobby who'd appeared suddenly, vanished the wet on the floor and placed extra bedding on the bed for Breen.

Iain and Dobby had just finished getting Breen situated back in bed, when Renee' and one of her assistants, Brid, came bustling into the room, followed by Ailey with an armful of towels and bedding. Renee' set her bag on the chair near the bed and kicked off her Birkenstocks, shoving them under the chair. She preferred to work home births barefoot. She wore loose trousers and a sleeveless tunic. Sitting on the edge of the bed, she smiled at Breen as she laid the back of her hand against his cheek then moved to lay her hand against the swell of his belly.

"It's the best night of the year for a birth, Breen. Beltane! What a blessing! I hope you're ready. There's no turning back now!" She patted his hand and rose. "Let's have a look and a spell."

Iain leaned down and kissed Breen's forehead and patted his arm. "Ah'll be waiting in tha study if ye need anythin'." He kissed Ailey and left, taking the dogs with him and closing the door behind them. Renee' turned to Breen and smiled, her eyes full of warmth and understanding.

"Now, I know we discussed what will happen and all the possibilities and expectations--at great length, but I will not be surprised if you still have questions. Please, don't hesitate to ask. OK?"

"Well, let's have a look and see where you are presently, then I will be better able to answer that question." She raised her wand. "Try to hold still now."

Ailey sat next to Breen on the bed, holding his hand, as they watched the magic flow over him into a configuration only Renee' and Brid understood. Brid peered over Renee's shoulder at the results and shared an approving look with the medi-midwife.

"Is everything as it should be, Renee'?", Breen asked as he rubbed his belly, feeling it get hard.

"Be patient. I would like to feel the baby first." She replied as she laid her warm hands on his belly, feeling strategically over it, trying to sense the outline of the babe. "Hmmm. Your body is gearing up for the work it will have to do. The tightness you feel--the hardness of your belly--is all normal." She watched his face. "Just remember to breath through them. Start now, while they are mild, and it will be easier later, when they are much stronger."

"I will go and get some ice chips for you to suck on." Ailey rose and left the room.

"Now I need to cast a few more low-level spells on you. It will help your comfort level a bit later on. When was the last time you ate or drank anything?"

"I had some juice and some bread and soft cheese before bed--about four hours ago. Just a little."

"This shan't take long then." She waved her wand over his abdomen and down over his pelvic area.

Breen's eyes widened and he gasped as a a cold tingling traveled quickly through his bowels and bladder, leaving him feeling exceptionally empty. As the sensation dissipated, he could prevent himself from shuddering.

Renee' and Brid both chuckled. Brid patted his leg. "Ev'ryone ha' tha' reaction, laddie. Don' feel embar'ssed. Now, 'tis only one more an' we'll leave ye be fer a spell."

Brid pulled the covers the rest of the way from his body. She helped him sit up, then helped him remove the floor-length nightshirt Iain had helped him into. When he gave her a confused look, she smiled and explained. Ah know thes' long gowns aer roomy an' comf'rtable, but they wi' be
cumbersome later an' hamper movement. Thes shorter one wi' be much better, especially when ye reach tha point wher' ye wi' want nothin' touchin' ye below tha waist."

Wide green eyes stared at her, as Breen paled, causing her to chuckle and pat his shoulder in comfort. She pulled the covers over his lower body as she lifted the nightshirt up and over his head. She shook out a dark blue thigh-length gown with tiny Velcro closures down the front. It was a Muggle invention that Renee' had discovered was perfect for their uses. Buttons, zippers, snaps, and hooks all irritated the hypersensitive skin of the laboring parent. Magic had to be kept low-level and at a minimum. Yes, Muggles did have some ingenious ideas. She waited while he held his belly and closed his eyes, breathing deeply, until his muscles relaxed again.

Ailey bustled back in with a tray as Brid settled Breen, gowned again, back against the pillows and pulled the covers back up over him. She set the tray on the bedside table, spooning up some of the ice chips and feeding them to Breen.

"If necessary, we will have you walk a little later if you don't move along as you should. Now, I want you to try to sleep as much as you can and save your energy for later, when you will need it. If you need anything, the Monitoring Spell will pick up on your desire and summon us." She lowered the lighting in the room, as Brid moved about on the other side of the room setting up everything they will need later. "Any questions, Breen?"

He shook his head, then closed his eyes, trying to clear his mind so he could fall asleep. Dobby popped quietly into the room and settled down by the end of Breen's bed. Ailey, Renee', and Brid exited the room, pulling the door closed silently behind them.

He reached down and splayed his hands around the sides of his belly, feeling for his daughter, as she lay quietly awaiting her emergence into his life. He whispered quietly, not aware that Dobby was in the room if he was needed. "I can hardly wait to hold you, Eileen. My baby girl--my daughter. It will be rough for both of us in the next several hours, but the thought of holding you in my arms will help me get through it." He sighed and settled down against the pillows again.

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"You're doing very well, Breen!" Renee' stepped around the bed. "Brid, help me get him settled in the birthing chair."

Breen was on his knees on a pillow next to the bed, leaned against the edge of the bed, as Ailey rubbed a fist over his lower back. He whined as another contraction overtook him, and Ailey kneeling behind him, changed to rubbing with the heel of her hand as she talked him through it,
reminding him to breath and try not to tense his muscles.

Ailey had braided his hair earlier to keep it out of his face. It now was damp around his face, and his skin flushed. The top several closures of his gown had been undone, and Brid had removed the sleeves long ago. The sun had peeked over the horizon over three hours ago. Several hours into full labor, Breen was just now beginning to vocalize. The women were amazed at his tolerance for pain. Obviously, they were unaware of his experiences with curses at the Dark Lord's hand.

Ailey stood and stepped back as Brid and Renee' flanked Breen. They reached down and started to lift him to his feet. They made it halfway to the chair, when Breen dropped to a crouch and let out a grunting growl through clenched teeth.

"Well it seems we have timed your move to the birthing chair perfectly." Renee' gave his arm a reassuring squeeze and they helped him to start moving again.

As they reached the chair, he crouched again, and grunted. "N-need to P-Push!!"

"We know, Laddie. We'll get ye situated an' ye can push as ye need ta do, till ye see yer wee bairn." Brid offered, mopping his face with a cool flannel, as they waited for the contraction to pass.

Ailey positioned herself behind the chair as they settled Breen into it. He leaned back into the well-worn piece of furniture, the position feeling, somehow, right to him. Ailey wiped his face and neck with the cool flannel again.

"There, child. Now, let yer body lead ye. Et knows wha' ta do." She whispered to him. Seeing his jaw working and knowing another contraction was beginning, she wiped his face again. "Tuck yer chin, dear, an' go wi' it."

It was as if he were under 'Imperious'. He remembered Renee' explaining this and discussing Ailey's experiences with her, but he wasn't prepared for this. He looked up at Renee' seated in front of him, with panic in his eyes. It was all he could do, in the midst of the pain and the overwhelming urge to bear down.

Reaching up to rub his knee, she gave him a look of encouragement. "I know. One is never quite prepared for the power of it. It is the way of it. Don't fight it. Everything will be fine. We are here for you. Just remember to relax completely between contractions. We wouldn't want you to suffer a muscle spasm."
He barely had time to nod before he was tucking his chin and grunting as he bore down, Renee' counting to ten, to help him focus. Ailey continued to wipe his face, stroke his hair, and whisper words of encouragement. Dobby popped into the study briefly to let Iain know that it wouldn't be long now and Master Breen would have the babe. Iain thanked him and went to wake the others. They would want to know as soon as Miss Eileen made her appearance.

Soon, the study was full of people, some still tucking in shirts and buttoning buttons. Dobby provided tea and sandwiches, and everyone chatted quietly, anticipation filling the air. Everyone had watched Breen's transformation as the pregnancy had taken his body and changed it over the months, giving him a healthy glow. Children were a great blessing and they knew how important this one was to Breen.

In Breen's room, things were beginning to move more quickly. Breen, not wanting anything touching him, had pulled his gown the rest of the way open, revealing that it wouldn't be long now. His male bits had receded into his lower abdomen as expected, in preparation for the baby's arrival. The contractions were back-to-back now, with just enough time between for him to catch his breath. He was tiring; thirsty, and hungry; just wanting this to be over, so he could hold his daughter and rest. His head lolled to the side.

"There'll be none of that now, Breen. Come now, push hard on the next one. I can see she has your black hair." Renee's voice was excited. Every birth was like the first she'd attended, never tiring of the specialness of it.

Encouraged, he took a deep breath and tucked his chin as the next contraction began.

"NGAAHHHHHHHHHHH!! Bloody Hell!"

In the study, everyone looked up, suddenly silent as Breen's voice filled the manor. Iain chuckled and nodded as he filled his pipe. "Aye, t'won' be long now. Ailey said much tha same thin' right a'fore our bairns met tha world."

A couple of the men, married themselves, nodded in agreement, as the tea and sandwiches made the circuit of the room again.

"Only one more, Breen, luv. An' ye can hol' yer daught'r!" Ailey's eyes were bright.
He took one final breath and pushed for all he was worth, feeling his daughter finally slip from his body. His head dropped back and rested against Ailey's chest, as she wiped his face. He was trying to catch his breath when a tiny wail rent the air. Eileen! His daughter! He looked down as the babe was laid on his bare chest, held there by Brid, since Breen was still shaky from the adrenaline rush. Tears welled in his eyes and he kissed her small dark head as his emotions overcame him.

"Hello, Eileen Lily Alexandra. Welcome to the world. I love you."

In the Hogwart's dungeons, Severus Snape relaxed in his quarters, finally having a Saturday he didn't have to spend giving detention, or marking papers. Tonight was Beltane, and he would be participating in the celebrations. He'd been reading a favorite novel—a well-worn volume he'd enjoyed many times before, and a glass of wine, when he'd dozed off in the early afternoon. He jerked suddenly awake when the cry of a tiny baby rent the air. Confused, he immediately arose and investigated his quarters, but finding nothing. He settled back in his chair, and picked up his book again. He went back to reading but in the back of his mind, he sensed something important had occurred.

Albus sat in his office, fiddling with a bit of last-minute paperwork needing doing before the end of the month. He didn't want the worry of it to spoil the celebrations that night. There was a sudden glow emanating from one of the bookshelves. Fawkes, who'd been sound asleep on his perch, came suddenly awake and began to trill.

"What is it, my friend?" Albus asked as he rose and moved to the book case, taking down the *Hogwarts Book of Students* from the shelf. Laying it on the desk, he opened it and it fell to the most recent page, letters still glowing at the bottom of the page.

_Eileen Lily Alexandra Evans, born May 1st, in the year 2002_

_Hogwarts 2013 - 2020_

_Parents: Breen Jamison Evans and ____________________

"Splendid! A child of the Beltane. Rather curious though, don't you think Fawkes, that the Mother's name is unreadable?" Albus stroked Fawkes' chest feathers, as the phoenix stood on the desk next to the huge tome. "Ah, well, the magic of the book is very old and has it's own ways. It will show the Mother's name when the time is right."
Fawkes trilled in agreement, his golden eyes whirling.

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Ailey held the bedroom door open so Iain and the staff could peek from the hallway. Breen lay in bed, finally asleep, baby Eileen curled up on his chest, her fist in her mouth, and his hand splayed across her back; covers tucked around them both. Even from the doorway they could see she had his dark hair though no one was sure if it would be as wild as Breen's. Ailey let each look briefly then shoo'd them all away, before closing the door. Turning to Iain, she laid her head on his chest, as he wrapped his arms around her.

"He did well, me Luv. Ah was so proud o' him--as if he were ma own." Ailey's voice was both full of emotion and weary at the same time.

"Well, ’e can rest now. Ah think ye could do wi' a bit of a kip, yerself, m'dear."

As she yawned, Iain let her off to their room. Brid and Dobby sat quietly in Breen's room, lightly dozing, ever present, in case they were needed. Outside, everyone got to work, moving about and trying to keep the level of noise down a bit so as not to disturb Breen and little Eileen.

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Chapter 7

That night, Ailey and Iain had the honor as Eileen's godparents, to present her at the beginning of the Solstice festivities, and receive a blessing before she was returned to her Da's waiting arms. Renee' had already secured the assistance of one of the local witches who was still lactating. She'd born twins several months before, and still had a surplus of milk she was happy to extract for Eileen. Her eldest daughter, Miri had delivered a basket of spell preserved bottles that evening. Ailey had gently warmed one with a spell before bringing it to Breen, who was reclined against the pillows, talking quietly to his daughter.

When Ailey sat on the bed and held out the small bottle, he pulled the tip of his pinkie from Eileen's mouth, and replaced it with the soft nipple of the feeding bottle. He smiled up at Ailey when Eileen
immediately latched onto the nipple and proceeded to suck hungrily.

"Aye, she's a smart one. Laern's quick she does."

"She is beautiful, isn't she, Ailey?" Breen asked, his face still weary, but his eyes were happy.

"Tha' she is. Has yer dark hair, but her skin es paler than yer's. An' she's ta hav' dark eyes too."

"How can you tell?" He asked as he watched Eileen, hoping she would open her eyes, if only briefly.

"Ah jus' know. Al'ays hav'.'" She winked at him as she ran a light fingertip over the tiny foot peeking out of the pink blanket.

The tiny foot suddenly disappeared and Eileen squirmed, before tucking back in to finish her bottle.

"She's so tiny, but her grip is so strong."

Ailey watched Breen study his daughter, running a fingertip down her cheek and over her tiny fist. He was totally taken by her already. This wee lass was going to have her Da wrapped around her little finger in no time flat.

"I have this ache inside--as if my heart has swelled."

"Tha's love, child. Yer love grows more fer each bairn ye hav'."

"I've never had a family of my own--not that I can really remember. Could this be how my Mum felt when she held me?" His voice was quiet as he spoke.

Her heart went out to him. "Ah know she did. Ah'm sure she loved ye v'ry much. Ah know Ah love ye now as if ye were me own bairn." She leaned over and kissed he forehead.
He looked into her eyes, his own brimming with tears. "Thank you. I love you too, Ailey."

"Hmm... Should Ah be jealous?" A deep voice spoke from the doorway. They both looked up to see a grinning Iain standing there.

"Nay, Luv. 'Tis a love of mother an' son. Me 'eart wi' al'ays be yers."

"Nay, Luv. 'Tis a love of mother an' son. Me 'eart wi' al'ays be yers." She leaned back to kiss her husband as he sat behind her on the bed.

"Och! Ah know. Breen, ye're like a son ta me too. An another gran'babe fer ye ta spoil me Ailey!"

She swatted his arm playfully, as Breen watched, amused. Och! Iain MacLoed, as if ye aern't guilty yerself!"

Iain chuckled, the deep merry sound making Eileen turn her head toward him. Finally full and sated, she had lost her interest in the bottle and was curling toward the warmth of her Da's body, in preparation for sleep. Ailey showed him how to hold her and pat her back to release any air bubbles that might be in her tummy. Once that was done, Ailey changed her then placed her back in Breen's arms.

"Ye shou'd sleep when she sleeps. Take yer rest when ye can." She tucked the covers around them, as Breen held his daughter close and closed his eyes. She lowered the lights, then turned to where Dobby had been sitting quietly.

"Please fetch me if he is needin' anythin', aye, Dobby?"

"Yes, Madam MacLoed. Dobby will watch over Master Breen and the little Mistress. Dobby will take care of them, and summon Madam if she is needed. Madam and Master MacLoed must sleep now. It is very late and the celebrations are quieting. Winky will come in the morning to take Dobby's place."

"We thank ye, Dobby."

Iain put his arm around his wife and guided her out into the hall and to their rooms to retire for the night. Quiet, except for the occasional voice singing in Gaelic, settled over the manor and lands, as
they all slept, Solstice fires burned low.

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Late June, 2008

Severus sat in the Wizarding club for gentlemen outside of Edinburgh, Scotland. His eyes always lingering on the dark haired men. He often thought of Harry Potter at times like these. What might have been. Harry was known to date both sides of the fence during school, when he did chose to date. And remembered he had dated that older man from America, the auror who had come to help with the war and train Harry at the behest of his Grandmum Poppy.

From the moment Severus saw them dating, he knew that looks weren't at the top of Harry's list for those he dated. The young man by the name of Craig Pomphrey, had a jagged scar that ran down the right side of his face he received from a confrontation with a feral werewolf that had gone mad when his mate was killed. He wasn't infected but had developed tendencies of the wolf in his personality.

He often heard others in the Order question why he was dating someone like that. Ginny Weasley insulted the young man quite often as well; to his face and behind his back. The Twin Terrors, so-named by Death Eaters early in the war, avenged the young man, spectacularly, by turning their sister into a hag for 24 hours.

Now the chit was a young widow. She'd been married off to a older Pureblood from India who died four years into the marriage, leaving the young woman very wealthy. Rumors had it that the man died from mysterious circumstances. Not that anyone was going to check into the death.

Other rumors circulated that the Chit was searching for Harry Potter. They hadn't found him in ten years, what made her think that she can find him now? It's obvious he doesn't want to be found, especially by her. He'd heard the rumors of her little plot. No Slytherin blood in that one.

It was moments like this, that he wondered if he would have had a chance with the Potter heir. In the last year he'd been at the school, he'd begun to grow into a quite attractive and introspective young man. Severus hated to admit that he could no longer equate the young man with his arrogant and obnoxious sire.

There was an awareness and maturity that James Potter never had.... never achieved in his own short
life. Harry had grown up too fast and too soon.

Severus wondered now, how the young man had turned out. How he would look and what was he doing with his life now? He had many hidden talents and before he left, he told all those in hearing distance that he would never become an Auror in the corrupted Ministry.

Everyone had moved on into their lives after the war. Some had made changes that were more surprising than others. Ron Weasley had finally admitted his attraction to Victor Krum, which had surprised everyone—the two had eloped, earning them quite the lecture from Molly. But, not as surprised as everyone had been when Miss Granger, Mr. Longbottom, and his godson had announced they were in a committed triad relationship.

Then, there was the last pairing he ever expected; Remus Lupin had taken up with Lucius Malfoy after the war. The Malfoy Patriarch had become sullen after the death of his wife in the Final Battle, at the Dark Lord's hands. No one could get through his grief, until one day when Remus sat down with him at one of the local pubs where he'd been sitting in a dark corner trying to drown his sorrows. Within a couple months, they were seen everywhere together. Now they were planning to bond. It still amazed him.

Molly Weasley was the biggest surprise. One year ago, when Arthur was leaving for work, she said she had business there herself. By the end of the day she had convinced the new Minister of Magic to start a new department. One meant to find all Magical children, Muggleborn and Half-blood, even orphans, such as Harry Potter had been. Checking that they were being properly cared for. If not, then to go to appropriate lengths to have them removed from the abusive environment, placing them in good magical homes or an large group home for magical children. No one would grow up like Tom Riddle or Harry Potter ever again if she had anything to say about it.

The Weasley Twins' business endeavors had exploded—figuratively of course. They now had ten shops and a very busy owl-order business. They had also been on the Most Eligible Young Wizards list for the last three years running. If Charlie and Bill had been in Britain, they would have been on the list too, since no lucky witch had yet to capture their hearts. Percy, on the other hand, had fallen head-over-heels in love with Luna Lovegood.

Albus Dumbledore was still Headmaster but his duties were skimmed down to almost nothing. Minerva, and Neville Longbottom-Granger-Malfoy held a great deal of the duties, of Deputy Headmaster as well as the Head of Hufflepuff. It had been determined that making the Deputy position into two instead of one, allowed the Headmaster more freedom. Spitting the Deputy duties equally, allowing more time for Minerva and Neville to handle their many duties to their classes as well as their Houses, and handle any emergencies that may arise.

Hermione had taken over as Professor of History of Magic, as well as revising *Hogwarts: A History*. 
She was most definitely in her element. Draco had approached him five years ago and requested a Potions Mastery Apprenticeship. He would be a more than acceptable replacement when Severus decided to retire.

Just last week, Molly had them all over for High Tea to share a basket of goods that she was sure had come from Harry. Scones, biscuits, galettes, butter cookies and butter cakes. There had also been jars of preserves and jams, and a large box of hand-dipped chocolates. Remus and he had to watch themselves with the chocolates. Sinful little bastards! It was as if he knew they all gathered together and would enjoy his gifts. They chatted animatedly, wondering what Harry could be up to now. This gift had been so different from previous ones—so...domestic. Maybe he had opened a bakery. Molly told them of how Harry had explained learning to cook at a very early age, forced to do everything for his relatives. Maybe he had finally found a positive outlet for those skills? He’d mentioned to her a time or two that he would have liked to learn to bake.

They discussed possible locations where he could be living. Most of the items in the basket were not especially unique except maybe the galettes, but even the house elves had served them a time or two at Hogwarts, for the Bretons in the student body.

"These galettes are homemade, I'm sure of it." Molly commented, as she refilled everyone's cups from the teapot Harry had sent her years before.

"Why do you say that?" Poppy asked, slathering more of the jam across a piece of scone before taking a bite. She hummed in delight.

"I don't know how to explain it. I...just know. I've been baking for years, and I can still tell the difference between baked goods from the finest bakery and that made in the home kitchen with love. The magic of it--is just--different."

"Your reasoning has merit, Molly." Severus looked thoughtful as he spoke.

"Why thank you, Severus!" Molly smiled and offered him the plate of chocolates. He selected a dark chocolate one with a red swirl on top of it.

"The gifts let us know he is fine, but I would like to know more than that, for my own piece of mind." Remus commented.

Lucius reached over and patted his arm, in understanding. Remus smiled at him as he laid his hand
over Lucius'. Not knowing was a terrible thing when it involved someone you love. There were quiet murmurs of assent around the table.

"If we put our heads together, I'm sure we could figure out where he is." Hermione's eyes were bright. She loved a mystery.

"That's our girl. Ever up for a mystery and a challenge." Neville grinned at Dray who sat on the other side of Hermione.

"What do you propose, Hermione?" Severus asked, his tone conveying genuine interest.

Hermione sat up straighter in her chair, thinking for a moment before speaking. "Well...we are all aware of what each of us has received over the years from Harry. It's obvious that they were all carefully chosen, with the recipient in mind. But, I've been thinking...something else that stands out--at least in my mind--is that all the gifts are of the finest quality. They are not the type that would have been mass produced...even in the Muggle world."

The room was quiet for several minutes while everyone contemplated her words. The only sounds were those of spoons against china, and cups clinking against saucers. Lucius cleared his throat, gaining him everyone's attention.

"You definitely are a bright witch, Hermione." She nodded her thanks. "She makes a valid point. The items are all most likely crafted by local artisans. And even the food items seem to have come from small bakeries and local shops. That is apparent in the personalized nature of the packaging. Enough of us have traveled and experienced many places, that we should be able to pool our knowledge and make an educated deduction as to where Harry may be."

Just then the door opened. "Did someone say Harry? Is he here?"

Everyone looked up, shocked to see Ginevra Weasley--now the wealthy widowed Madam Ishani Daeva Chandubhai Unmesh. No longer the tomboyish girl from her days at Hogwarts, Ginevra had been quickly bonded to an older wizard from an honorable Pureblood family in India. Molly and Arthur felt the change of situation and the formal lifestyle would help their daughter grow up and forget the foolish manipulative scheming of her youth. Sadly, the marriage only lasted four years before her husband died suddenly. There had been an investigation, but that had ended abruptly with a ruling of natural causes, since he had died in his sleep. She had acted appropriately as the grieving widow, so suspicion had not been directed her way. Standing before them now, was an elegant woman, dressed in elaborately embroidered robes styled after the accepted Indian dress, and very ornately carved gold and gemstone jewelry. She also wore a small gem between her brows.
Quickly composing herself, Molly put a smile on her face and moved quickly across the kitchen to greet her daughter. The others exchanged surreptitious glances amongst themselves and at the bounty spread across the large table, as Molly turned her daughter and hugged her tightly, looking over her shoulder at Albus, a look of surprise and entreaty in her eyes. Evidently the young woman had told no one, including her mother, of her impending return to Britain.

"Oh Ginny dear! What a surprise! Why didn't you owl your father and I that you were coming?"

"Merlin! It's been so long since I have been called that! It sounds so foreign." She pulled away from her mother and turned to face the table and it's occupants. "What do we have here? Quite a large--and varied--group of guests for tea, Mother. What is the occasion?"

Luna looked up from the parchment she'd been scratching away on with her quill, "Oh hello, Ginny." She tilted her head, "Does that red jewel on your forehead really keep away the Emerald Screw-Horned Indian Beetles?"

Ginny frowned as she looked down at the flighty woman. "Some people haven't changed a bit." Turning her back to Luna, she addressed the rest of the group, looking pointedly at the Malfoy's. "So what is the big occasion? A reunion of the Order--with a few additional outcasts?"

"It's just a gathering of friends for tea, dear. We keep in touch now that the war is over." Molly interjected, trying to head off the inevitable.

"An odd complement of friends in my opinion." She surveyed the parchments and books scattered amongst the food and drink on the large table. "It appears to be more of a strategy meeting than a social occasion." She sniffed, as she removed the fine silk wrap from her shoulders.

Lucius took on an air of snobbery, "IF you really need to know, Madam Unmesh, Remus and I are planning our bonding."

"And, If I recall, Lord Malfoy, the Weasley's and the Malfoy's have always been bitter enemies."
"People do change, dear. The war saw to that." Molly bustled over with a fresh cup and saucer, urging her daughter to take a seat. "Come now, sit and have a cup of tea. We still have a few more arrangements to discuss before we are finished. Then I know Ron and I would just love to hear how things have been for you, and what has brought you so unexpectedly back home."

She seated herself at the far end of the table from everyone else, not that it put her that far from any of the large gathering. Setting her small bag down, she sent her wrap to hang neatly on the clothing hooks by the door.

"Yes, do tell, Gin. What could possibly cause you to lower yourself to return to our shabby broken-down hovel of a family home?" Ron asked, a bitter tone in his voice.

He quickly threw an apologetic look to his mother, who looked pained in return. She remained silent knowing how much her son had been hurt by the disappearance of his best friend. The fact that it had been caused by his own sister had driven the pain that much deeper. She'd found out later from Neville that he'd heard Ron crying in the night more than once at Hogwarts. The two boys had become closer friends to help them fill the void. Of course, Hermione's presence had helped as well. She could forgive her son this transgression since she too felt daily pain at the loss of her adopted son. Looking to her daughter, she waited with the rest for her response.

"Can't I come home to visit family, Ron?"

"Why? Why now? In nine years you never even indicated an interest in coming home. Not even after your husband mysteriously died. Now, all of a sudden, you appear at the door with no warning. Forgive me, Gin, but you've never done anything without a motive."

Ron sat back in his chair, arms folded tightly across his chest, as he glared at her and waited for her reply. Severus sat quietly, keeping his face neutral while internally cheering the young man on for his surprising show of nerves. Remus was rubbing Lucius' back as he whispered in his ear trying to calm the aristocrat down. Neville had arisen to retrieve more napkins and a pitcher of iced water. Luna listened intently as she continued to write notes on her parchment. Hermione and Draco both looked extremely irritated, barely holding back their words. Albus twirled a bit of his beard between his fingers as he sat back and watched the events unfold. Someone had to remain calm after all. The young witch still had not learned after all these years.

"I had responsibilities to Chandubhai and his family. Now that the time of mourning has passed, I was able to leave India and come home. Especially since I was unable to give him another heir."
She pulled a finely embroidered silk handkerchief from her bodice and dabbed at her eyes, as she
looked appropriately saddened by the mention of her late husband. She reached up to pat at her hair,
allowing the light to catch the ornate rings and hand adornments she wore. Ron and Draco rolled
their eyes and Hermione shook her head, unimpressed. Remus drew Lucius' attention away by
asking him to pass the chocolates and galettes. Seeing she was getting nowhere, she took a different
tack.

"I think I will forgo the tea, Mum. Do you mind if I lay down? I'm feeling quite tired." She rose
slowly, appearing to sway a bit.

Molly rushed over to her side, taking her arm. "Of course, dear. Your room is still upstairs."

Ginny made a show of moving slowly toward the stair, ascending them to disappear into her room,
closing the door loud enough to be heard downstairs. The tension in the room immediately eased a
bit. Molly dropped into the chair next to Albus and Severus pushed a cup and saucer in front of her
that Albus filled with a wand-wave at the china teapot.

"Oh my. Why do I have such a bad feeling about this. I must fire-call Arthur. He will need to
know before he returns home---and the other boys..." Molly pressed her handkerchief to her face.
"This does not bode well. Ginevra walking in the door, just as we were speaking of..." She looked
up toward the stairs then lowered her voice. "Harry."

"Since we don't know where he is, there is very little chance she will be able to locate him and cause
him any more pain." Albus popped a lemon twist in his mouth.

"Nevertheless, we would be doing Mr. Potter--Harry, a disservice if we didn't do everything possible
to keep Madam Unmesh from acquiring any information that could assist her in locating him, and
disturbing his peace and happiness." Severus took a sip of his tea.

"I agree. He has had more than his share of unhappiness and torment, and not nearly enough
happiness. I, for one, do not want that disturbed." Remus growled.

"I'm to meet Viktor in Diagon Alley. We'll stop by the shop and let the twins know she's back."
Ron rose from his seat. "We've an appointment with the healer this afternoon."

Molly's eyes lit as she looked at her youngest son. Ron smiled at the look in her eyes and he held his
hand up before she could voice her hopes. "I'll owl you as soon as we know, Mum."

He leaned down and hugged and kissed her soundly and waved goodbye to everyone as he exited the kitchen. Albus looked at her with mirth in his eyes. That woman was never happier than when she had babies and children to fuss over. He reached over and patted her hand.

"I do believe that we have a bonding to finish planning, Molly."

"Nev, did you order those flowers that Dad wanted?" Draco leaned across Hermione and plucked a chocolate from the plate and proceeded to offer it to her.

She took a bite and smiled at him as he popped the other half in his mouth. "What colors did you finally decide on, Lucius?"

"Hermione dear, I've told you to call me Father. I will be, after all." He smirked at her as Remus rolled his eyes and laughed.

"We'll be planning your bonding next." Molly looked from Hermione, to Draco, then to Neville as he sat down on the other side of Hermione.

"Yes, Dray I ordered the flowers. They will be here in time." Neville rolled his eyes and kissed Hermione's cheek.

Upstairs, Ginny closed the door to her room very quietly. She hadn't learned anything of use, but if these people knew anything about Harry and where he was, she would find out. She'd finally gotten rid of that old goat. Now, with the fortune she had, she could finally find him and become Mrs. Potter.

Luna glanced up briefly toward the stairs before writing down the menu choices Lucius was dictating to her.
"Congratulations, Breen, it's twins this time--both boys, according to the spell." Renee announced with a huge grin as they both stared at the two magical forms of the tiny babies hovering above Breen's abdomen.

He looked up at the forms if his newest children and smiled. "Ailey is going to be totally impossible this time, you realize."

Renee just laughed as she pocketed her wand. "Up with you now. I need to give you your potions and your work restrictions."

Breen groaned as he fixed his clothes and hopped off the table to settle himself back into the chair in front of her desk. "So what is it to be this time?" He was thinking of all the downtime he would be having with being pregnant with twins.

Then it really hit him. "Twins," he whispered. Renee smirked at him before waving her wand at the door.

"Come in Ailey."

The older woman entered the office and perched on the end of the chair next to Breen's, her eyes bright with anticipation. "Aye, 'tis a lass or a laddy this time, Renee?"

"Twins," Breen whispered. "It's two of everything. Double terrible twos. Two boys going two different directions. Two boys to potty train..."
"Aye! An' twice tha lovin' ta give an' receive, child! Och! Twins! Tha Goddess ha' looked on ye fav'ribly agin'!" Ailey stood and pulled Breen to his feet, and proceeded to kiss both his cheeks and hug him tightly.

"My restrictions, Renee'? What are the possible problems?" Breen asked as he and Ailey sat back down in front of the Medi-witch's desk.

"Well, the work with the horses must stop immediately this time." She held up a hand to forestall the protests she knew were forming on Breen's lips. "I understand that there are several foals in the stables this year. I don't see a problem with you working with them while they are still relatively small. But, you will have someone with you when they begin to become more active. I will reevaluate each time you come to see me. We must take even greater care this time, Breen. Twins in a Wizard pregnancy are very tricky--so you must take extra care this time. Follow the same diet and exercise regimen you had with Eileen."

Breen rubbed his stomach. Two. Twins. "Well, Ailey, what is left to learn to do in your kitchen? It seems I might have a lot of time on my hands in the coming months."

"Hmmm... Ah don' know if tha staff can work any harder, ef we start makin' tha pastries an' tha chocolates." She winked at him then at Renee'. "Maybe Ah'll show ye how ta make tha preserves an' tha relishes tha' ev'ryone likes so well. Or, Ah could always teach ye how ta knit..."

Breen smiled, then his eyes teared up, remembering Hermione sitting in the Gryffindor common room knitting little hats to help free the house elves of Hogwarts, and Molly knitting Weasley sweaters. He really missed his friends. Ron and Hermione should be Godparent's parents to his children. Albus, Min and Poppy with Molly and Arthur, grandparents and Aunts.

"Breen. Breen, where'd you go? You seemed very far away suddenly." Renee' looked at him, amused.

"Sorry. Just remembering something from my old life. A couple of rare happy memories." He wiped at his eyes.

"Well, Breen Evans, you are about to add more good memories. Little Eileen will be joyous to hear she's going to be a big sister to not one, but two boys."
He laughed when he thought about his rambunctious daughter and her reaction when he'd told her that morning why he was going to see the healer. "Oh yes, she'll be very happy to have siblings." He looked over at his pseudo Mother, "How about we stop in the Marketplace at that new bookstore and look for some new cookbooks?"

"Aye, we can see what Monsieur Antain has fer maternity robes fer ye. Ye're auld ones wi' nay fit ye fer long this time."

He dropped forward and hid his face against his knees and moaned. He'd felt huge with Eileen and couldn't even begin to fathom what it was going to be like this time. He'd been so glad to see his feet again after having Eileen. Ailey reached over and rubbed his back, knowing he was overwhelmed with new changes in his life again. But, she knew he would come through it just fine once it all sunk in.

"Get ye're potions, Breen and let's be off. Eileen an' Iain'il be waitin' fer tha news."

As they exited her office, Renee' called after them, "Make sure he behaves, Ailey."

Breen was sitting beside Ailey as they rode back to the farm from the market and his healer visit. Ailey had found both a German and an Italian cookbook. He was lost in his thoughts, still struggling with the fact that he was going to have two more children--sons--in less than a year. Dobby and Winky would have to prepare two more rooms, and change things a bit in the nursery. He'd have to give up his coffee again, one of his guilty pleasures.

At the market Breen was hit with cravings. One of the new food stalls had pizza and his mouth began watering. Luckily, he found several recipes for it in one of the new cookbooks. Then he had to have the Greek olives and wheel of bleu cheese. At the bakery, Madam Wolfe had just set out a fresh batch of baklava and apple strudel. She was happy to wrap up a dozen of each for him. This was not going to be good. He was going to be as big as a house at the rate he was going. Ailey just stood back and watched, chuckling at him. She let him buy what he craved, but between her and Dobby, his diet would be balanced; the goodies and rich items doled out carefully.

Carrying two wee ones was going to have a serious impact on the young man's hormones and his emotions. Breen was bound to bounce from one end of the spectrum to the other quickly. They would need to warn the other workers around the farm. Everyone would have to step lightly until
they determined how he would handle this pregnancy. Ailey chuckled.

"Don't start Ailey. I'm going to get fat and everyone will make fun of me. I'm already starting to have strange cravings."

"Ah, my dear Breen. We need to start a new album. The coming months will be interesting to say the least. Of course we need to sit down and make plans. Such as you're staying here and letting your foreman take over the operations of your estate, for you until after the babes are born."

She just shook her head as she wrapped an arm around his shoulders. "Child, Ah will make sure t'ha' ye have yer treats without ruinin' yer diet. Dobby wi' help me. Otherwise, Renee' wi' ha' ma head an' yers. Now, is thar anythin' else ye be wantin'?"

Breen gave her a sheepish look. "Some chocolate-dipped berries, maybe?"

She laughed aloud, thanked the bakery mistress and steered him out onto the cobble walk toward the local chocolatier. They exited the shop a half hour later, with a large white box filled with an assortment of dipped fruit and filled cordials, they had picked out together. It was close to lunchtime and they needed to get back to the manor. She cast a 'Notificiatus', letting Iain know they were on their way home. Luckily, she had prepared all the food for lunch that morning. It just needed to be set out. They would arrive home just as everyone would be sitting down to eat.

Breen stopped suddenly, an orange cordial halfway to his mouth. "I'll need two names this time."

"Aye. An' ye hav' at leas' eight months ta choose them. Thar's nay rush ye know."

"I guess I need to get the book out again, don't I? I want them to have names that tell the world that they are the children of the Boy-Who-Lived. Like Eileen. She will be able to stand on her own."

"A strong-willed child she is... wi' a heart full o' love. Et helps she has a Da tha' loves her so much."

Breen smiled, thinking of his little Eileen, following everyone around, and asking questions constantly. She seemed to have an unending thirst for knowledge. He'd been amazed when she'd picked up the measuring cups and spoons at age three, and was helping him and Ailey in the kitchen. Then there'd been the times Renee' had come to each of the manors to treat the occasional
injury or illness. She'd been right there to watch the healer mix impromptu remedies. She would most likely excel in Potions when she finally attended school. Her talent and interest had to have come from her grandmother because it certainly hadn't come from him!

"Yes, I do love her very much, and Eileen is going to be beside herself with excitement when I tell her she is going to be big sister to two babies instead of just one."

"Aye. Et jus' may take her attention away from tha harses. T'would be good ta see her be a lass fer a bit."

"What has she been up to now, Ailey?"

"When tha healer came ta check tha mares an' foals, she was ri' thar at tha man's heels. By tha third animal, she was handin' him tha correct instruments an' potions. Her grasp o' potions es startlin'."

"I know. It had to have come from my Mum, or maybe from her father, because it definitely was not from me!"

"Didn't tha biography o' tha don'r parent state he was highly intelligent an' worked en tha sciences?"

"Actually, yes. I had forgotten about that. It is promising for her then...and for the boys as well."

They came up and over the last hill, passing through the gates to the MacLoed lands. About ten minutes later, they were pulling up in the rear courtyard by the kitchen entry. One of the young men ran out and took hold of the horse while another Levitated their purchases into the house. Breen and Ailey barely made it into the kitchen before a small dark-haired ball of energy wrapped itself around Breen's legs.

"Da! Da! Wha' did Miss Nee say?! Wha' she say?! Are ye gonna hav' a babe?!” Eileen bounced up and down as she hugged Breen around the waist.

"Now me Lil' Flower, ye need ta let yer Da sit an' catch his breath. Come sit wi' Seanair an' giv' yer Da a chance ta sit.” Iain had come up behind Eileen and gently extracted her from her Da's person, taking her back to the table to sit between him and one of the older horse handlers. Eileen stuck out her lip and frowned but she was quiet as she watched Da and Seanmhair Ailey seat themselves to either side of her and Seanair Iain. She waited while they laid their napkins across their laps, and
through thanking the Goddess for their meal. She held her tongue, barely, through everyone filling their plates, but, when everyone, except her, picked up their forks to begin eating, she couldn't stand it anymore.

"Da! Wha' di' Miss Nee say!?" She whined in exasperation.

Breen finally broke into laughter, followed by everyone else around the table. Eileen folded her arms across her chest and glared at her Da, then at everyone else.

Finally catching his breath, he put his fork down and looked around the table. "I am sorry, Eileen. But you do need to learn some patience. I do indeed have news to share."

Eileen's eyes grew wide and her arms unfolded. She placed her hands on the edge of the table and leaned forward, listening intently, as was everyone else around the huge table. Ailey winked at Iain and gave him a knowing smile that made him grin.

"We' get on wi' it, Laddie! Don' let tha food get col'!!" Old Seamus growled from his corner with a grin.

"Es et an'ther lassie aer a wee laddie this time?" Corann asked, as he put two galettes on the edge of his plate.

"Boy." Breen answered, and before he could finish, the room was filled with whoops and loud declarations of congratulations and good will. Hands reached around to pat his arms or clap him on the back. Eileen squealed and stood on the bench to hug him around the neck.

He hugged her back and grasped her face between his hands, looking into her black eyes. He turned her head and whispered in her ear. When her eyes went wide and her jaw dropped, the room went silent as everyone waited to see what had caused such a reaction in the small girl.

"OH DA!!!" Eileen yelled, and proceeded to bounce up and down as she hugged her Da tightly and peppered his face with kisses.

"Come now! Tell tha rest o' us. Don' be keepin' tha news ta yerself!" Old Seamus leaned forward and eyed both Breen and his bouncing daughter.
"Sit Eileen." Breen admonished, helping her sit. "Would you like to tell them? Or shall I?"

Eileen's grin was so wide it was almost ear-to-ear. "Da's goin' ta ha' TWINS!! BOYS!!"

Mouths dropped all around the table. One could have heard a hen clucking in the barn. Breen's cheeks pinked a bit as everyone stared in shocked silence, but it was still obvious he was very happy about the news. Then suddenly the room erupted in joyous sounds once again, with much arm-patting and back-clapping. He even got a kiss and hug from the little witch, Mabelle, who comes twice a week to help Ailey clean.

Micah started laughing. "Two more mini-Breen's following us around the paddocks."

"Unca' MICAH!!" Eileen shook her finger at the big man with the white blond hair.

"What Short Round? You're still my best gal and the owner of my heart. Who else would marry this old cowpoke?" Micah had come from the Colonies across the Pond. His southern twang was sweet, and caressed the local witches of Bretagne. Everyone laughed, as Eileen's eyes softened and she blew him a kiss. He caught it and patted it against his cheek, clutching his chest as if his heart had been taken.

"I'm your only gal, Unca' Micah. All those huss--silly witches--that follow you aroun' at tha market should remember tha'." She nodded her head once in affirmation and proceeded to dig into her stew.

"Eileen Lily Alexandra! Wha' hav' Ah tol' ye ab'ut sayin' tha' word? Y'ung ladies shouldn't say such thangs an' repeat everythin' ye hear." Ailey scolded before Breen could even open his mouth.

"Sorry Seanmhair." She looked up from her plate, eyes on her Da. "But Da, you call Miss Ula from the market a dizty bint!"

Breen groaned. "I knew that would come back to bite me. Nevertheless, Eileen it isn't proper to say such things. Now eat your stew."

There were several chuckles around the table as everyone followed suit and conversation soon turned to other topics.
Chapter 9

Late October/Early November 2008

Breen sat by one of the open windows in the library, enjoying the cool breeze and the smell of the light rain outside. The book he had been reading, lay forgotten in his lap as he stared out the window, his hand gently rubbing up and down over the swell of his sons.

"Would Master Breen like some herbal tea? Winky has some nice chamomile or raspberry lemon balm."

Breen blinked, as he came back to himself and looked down at the tiny female house elf. "Chamomile will be fine, Winky. Thank you."

"Would Master like some lemon biscuits with his tea perhaps?"

Breen opened his mouth to refuse when he felt a double flip in his belly, causing him to gasp. He rubbed at the raised spot as Winky watched, her eyes bright with excitement.

"It seems the boys have made their wishes known. I will have two biscuits--one for each." He looked down at his belly as he added the last bit, giving the bump a pat hoping it was their bums.

Winky disappeared with a pop, just as Dobby appeared next to his chair. He waited while Winky returned with a steaming cup of tea and a small plate holding the two lemon biscuits. Breen carefully picked up the steaming cup and blew across the surface of the tea.

"Master Breen, Dobby needs to know where you would like the furniture placed in the nursery."

"I'll leave that up to you and Winky. Just make sure the rocker is back by the window, please."
"Yes! Dobby will make sure, Master Breen. Young Masters must have fresh air while they is being rocked!"

"I know you will, Dobby." He dipped one of the biscuits in his tea and took a bite. "If I doze off, please wake me when Ailey arrives. She's bringing the new linens and bedding for the nursery and the children's rooms."

"Dobby will bring Miss Ailey to Master Breen as soon as she arrives."

"Thank you Dobby. You're a good friend."

"Oh, Master Breen, sir. Dobby is honored to serve sir!"

Breen smiled down at the exuberant elf. His enthusiasm hadn't dimmed even an iota since the day they'd met. The independent outspoken house elf had appointed himself Harry Potter's guardian, caregiver, and number one supporter. When he'd realized that Harry was not returning to Hogwarts, he'd somehow found Harry in his new life as Breen Evans. There he stayed, along with Winky, to continue his self-appointed duties of caring for the hero, and now, his home and children.

"Off with you now, Dobby. Let me rest." Breen admonished him gently. The adoration still embarrassed him a bit after all these years.

Dobby smiled and nodded as he snapped his fingers, and was gone. Breen sighed and sipped at his tea as he went back to staring out at the landscape. The rain had passed and the sky was beginning to clear. He felt the babies gently roll across his middle and he smiled as he cupped a hand around the swell that was his boys. He thought about the huge basket of goodies he and Ailey had put together, in June, the week he'd found out he was expecting again. They had baked, and made preserves, jams, jellies, and even dipped some chocolates. He wondered how they'd liked everything.

He could picture Remus drooling over the chocolates, and Albus savoring the lemon twists. Homemade breads and jams were always a favorite with everyone. Did Ron still have that horrendous appetite? Did Auntie Molly still fuss over everyone as if they were still children? And Severus... had he finally mellowed with his new freedom, and his status as one of the honored heroes of the war?

Finishing his tea, he set the cup aside and laid his head back against the soft upholstery of the chair.
He hadn't thought of the Potion's Master in quite a while. The last time, he'd come to mind, oddly, had been when he was pregnant with Eileen; and now, as he sat here again pregnant. Strange that he would come to mind at such times. Still, he wondered how the snarky man was doing. He yawned wide, as his eyes drooped. Winky appeared a few minutes later, to place a cotton throw over him and close the window against the early October chill.

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Ginny had left the Burrow, the morning after she'd arrived, making the excuse that she had to see her solicitor to sign papers for a large manor she had purchased in Exeter. It hadn't been a complete falsehood. She had after all, purchased said manor, but it had been done months before she'd set foot in the Burrow. She'd already been notified that her belongings had arrived from Mumbai, and her new home was ready for occupancy.

She conjured a small magical mirror to check her makeup and jewel, while she waited for a business associate to arrive. She banished the mirror and sat back, pulling the silk wrap forward to better hide her face. The Golden Ramayana, was an exclusive restaurant her late husband had invested heavily in. His position in Wizarding Society, and in turn, hers as his wife, had gained her entry into the wealthiest and most elite of the Wizarding social circles.

She looked toward the windows, that showed the cold October sky, as she shivered, no longer accustomed to the cool damp climate of her childhood home. Shoppers moved nonchalantly along the street bearing bags and packages from the finest Wizarding shops and boutiques in England. When she finished this little meeting, she planned to spend the rest of the afternoon availing herself of all King Midas Square had to offer. The shadow of a newcomer fell across her table as she carefully sipped from a hot cup of Masala chai.

"You should be more cautious of strangers when you are alone, Madam Unmesh."

Pulling her wand out from below the table, she laid it next to her cup. "And you, Mr. Delaney, could very well be a eunuch right now." She glared up at the Irishman. "Sit! Before you draw attention to us!" She hissed, waving a hand at the other chair.

A waiter hurried over and placed a cup of dark aromatic Karu coffee in from of the ex-Auror as he slid into his seat.

"I took the liberty of ordering for you. I remembered you enjoy your coffee dark, and strong." She quipped.
"Just like my women." He replied, casting her a sly look.

Ignoring the innuendo, she got immediately to the reason for their meeting. Pulling several papers from her small bag, she slid them across the table towards him. "I want you to find him." She whispered.

He flipped through them, before looking back up at her as if she'd suddenly gone mad. He dropped the clippings and photos on the table and cast a 'Privacy Spell.'

"You want me to find Harry Potter?! The man disappeared over ten years ago! No one's been able to find him. Not even the Ministry!" He ran his fingers through his auburn hair.

"Well, considering they would be the last people he'd want finding him, that's no surprise." She snapped sarcastically.

"Still. What makes you think I can find him?" He sat back, cup cradled between his fingers and watched the wealthy widow sitting across the table from him, and remembered the feel of her milky soft skin beneath his fingertips.

Ginny sighed in exasperation. "Because Feichin, you have no scruples about bending the rules, or skirting the law when you are on the hunt. And... because, you will have something none of the others have." There was a gleam in her eyes.

He raised an eyebrow in inquiry, but remained silent as he sipped his coffee. She took a leisurely drink of her chai before speaking again.

"I am an extremely wealthy woman, Feichin, with connections in high places. Would you like to retire early, never having to work a day in your life again? I can--and will--make that possible, when you find him for me."

Feichin looked intrigued. "Why do you want to find him? What do you want with a Half-Blood, even if he was the Wizarding World's Chosen One?" He asked with a sneer of distaste.

She rolled her eyes, thinking that after being raised with six brothers, she should no longer be
amazed by the cluelessness of the male gender.

"My reasons are none of your concern. Earning your payment should be your focus. I chose you because I believe you can find him. Are you interested or not?"

He drained his cup and set it on the table, scooping up the clippings and pictures, he stuffed them in an inner pocket of his robes. Taking that as an affirmative, she pulled a scroll and a small book from her bag. He unrolled the parchment and read the contract before signing. She signed as well, handing him his copy as hers disappeared to her solicitor's office. She tapped the book with her wand returning it to it's original size. Sliding the thick journal across the table, she gave him a warning look.

"This is everything I have concerning him. It is for Your. Eyes. Only ."

Flipping through the text and picture-filled pages, stuffed with clippings and mementos, he commented dryly. "A bit obsessed, aren't we?"

Her gaze became deadly as she laid her hand on her wand, her voice cold as ice. "As I said before, my reasons are none of your concern!"

Taking the veiled threat for what it was, he shrunk the journal and pocketed it as he stood. "I will owl you weekly--unless I have more information. Good Day, Madam Unmesh."

She nodded, glad to be rid of him. He cancelled the Privacy Spell and left. She muttered to herself, as she dropped a few galleons on the table and walked out. Maybe spending several hundred galleons would lighten her mood.

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Chapter 10

The bonding ceremony had been beautiful in the Autumn warmth. Lucius had, months before, sold the property that held the remains of Malfoy Manor, as well as the one hundred acres surrounding it. He'd taken the payment he'd received, and he and Remus had found a quaint country manor farther from London, surrounded by green rolling hills and lust forests.
The Weasley’s, Neville, Dray, Hermione, Severus, Albus, and Viktor, had all helped to decorate the back gardens for the ceremony. Arches of willow were placed at the four corners, heavily adorned with boughs, berries, vines, leaves, branches, and flowers of the season. An altar, and an arch for the couple to stand under, had also been set up. Molly had insisted on preparing all of the food, as well as the honey cakes for the ceremony. Severus had surprised everyone by providing the mead for both the ceremony and the subsequent celebration; brewed by his own hand from a recipe passed down the generations of his family.

Unlike past Malfoy family events, it was a small, intimate, family-oriented celebration--something that Lucius, and until recently, Dray, had never experienced. The bonding ceremony, presided over by Albus, had been emotional for all, but more-so for the couple, being elated to finally have found their soulmates.

The celebration had continued through the night, even after the couple slipped away to the bonding bed. Severus had seen to it there would be no pranking by the twins to spoil the memories of the event.

Once they settled into their new home, Lucius withdrew from public and political circles, happy to manage his and Remus' many investments, and raise horses. Remus began writing full-time, submitting papers to highly regarded journals on Dark Arts theory, progressive magic, and transfiguration theory. He’d finally begun to pen his first book-- an in-depth, accurate, and very personal study of Lycanthropy and it's history, living with it and the management of it. Lucius had encouraged him to write it, even funding the work.

Hermione, Neville, and Dray continued to reside in their expansive quarters at Hogwarts. They visited family and friends when busy schedules permitted, and spent time together whenever they could manage it--even if it was only fifteen minutes. Albus usually had a hand in manipulating their schedules. It gave him great joy to see those around him, happy and in love. Happy staff made for a happy school, and in turn, happy students.

Viktor had burst into the Burrow's kitchen one afternoon in September, dragging a rather green-looking Ron. After settling Ron in a chair at the table, he shook a shocked Arthur’s hand then swept a stunned Molly up in his arms, spinning in a circle, as he hugged her and cried, "Bunică Molly! Bunic Arthur!"

Arthur sent a confused look at his son, who was shaking his head and smiling weakly at the antics of his mate. Ron smiled at his dad.

"Grandmother and Grandfather, Dad.” He explained as he swallowed a few times, his face paling a
"Grand--" Arthur's eyes widened. "Molly! Molly! We're going to be grandparents again!!"

Needless to say, by evening, the Burrow was full of celebrating Weasley's--real and honorary.

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Ginny had chosen not to attend the bonding and had been strangely absent at the Burrow in subsequent months, despite the news of the baby girl Ron and Viktor were expecting. This enabled the usual bustling and familiar routine to reestablish itself in the cozy ramshackled home. The mystery packages continued to arrive and the monthly teas were resumed. Though Ginny was still considered to be a threat to Harry's happiness, she was no longer the main topic of discussion. It wasn't as if they didn't hear about her.

Her name had been in the social pages of the Daily Prophet for weeks. The only day she hadn't been prominently displayed on some Pureblood's arm was the day of the Malfoy/Lupin bonding.

Pansy Worthington, nee Parkinson, had made contact with the wealthy widow upon finding out the she had returned to England. The Unmesh's were one of the oldest Pureblood families in the Wizarding World. The Weasley chit had made a good choice in husbands. Or her parents had. It would do her well to cultivate a friendship with the redhead.

Having Ginny's married name and money floating amongst their ranks would do well to bring the majority of the Purebloods back to where they were before the last great war. Associating with Voldemort and his minions had done nothing positive for Pureblood status. The Purebloods of England had been tarnished by the war with Voldemort but, were still a strong force to reckon with. Most of the old families still looked down on Muggleborn and Half-bloods as dirty bloods, which didn't help them, but, some old habits took time to break. Now, for once, being from a Pureblood family that had always been considered 'blood traitors', would work in Ginny's favor. The Wizarding World wanted to put the ugliness of Voldemort, his Death Eaters, and the War behind them. She could make this work to her advantage, and Pansy planned to be by her side when it did.

Inclusion in the most exclusive circles of the creme' de la creme' of elite Wizarding Society, and all those Galleons, or whatever they called them in India, that Ginny would need help spending. Pansy was flush with excitement at the mere thought. She had to pen an invitation to Ginny immediately, beginning with afternoon tea. This would take careful planning. She smiled to herself as she mused over how to word the missive.
Severus' life now was easy and without complaint. He had his potions to research. Since Draco had taken over the practical part of his Potions classes and he no longer had to deal with those who did not understand or appreciate the fine art of Potion-making.

He spent some of his time with Lucius and Remus at their manor, relaxing, delegating his Head of House duties to Draco on the weekends. Sometimes, all he did was ride and explore the countryside, gathering fresh ingredients for his potions research projects. He hadn't felt this good in years.

It was long-awaited freedom that gave him a new lease on life; even though, sometimes, he felt something missing. He was now able to sleep peacefully and uninterrupted through the nights. Something he relished very much.

Currently, it was the middle of the night, and Severus was curled up in his bed, sound asleep, deep in the dungeons of Hogwarts. Burrowed comfortably down in the decadent and comfortable bedding of the huge four-poster, his breathing was deep and even as he began to dream, his eyes moving to and fro, beneath their lids.

"Papa!"

Severus whirled around at the shout. Two little boys about four years of age came barreling over the nearby hill. He stares at them in amazement as they approach him. They are dark like him, their eyes and hair, and his fair skin. They are slender, but that's where the similarity ends. They don't have his prominent nose, or his slender face. He should know them, but...

"Where hav' ye been, Papa?"

"Da is waitin' fer us. Ye pr'mised us a picnic!"

"Com' n Papa! Seanair a'ready saddled tha harses!"

They each grabbed a hand and pulled him toward the hill they had so recently crested. Just as they crested the hill this time, right before he could see what was on the other side, the dream faded to
Dark eyes opened at the sound of wards going off on his door, "Oh bloody hell!" Severus opened his eyes, and lay there, trying to remember everything he could of the dream. This was the second time this week. The dreams had become more regular lately, after their erratic beginnings five years ago, when he'd dreamt of a little girl with dark hair and eyes.

The wards sounded again making Severus sit up on his comfortable warm bed. Growling, he grabbed his robe and slid off the bed. He slipped his feet into his fuzzy slippers—atrocious things, but they were a gift from Albus—complete with an anti-transfiguration spell. He made his way through his quarters to the door. Making sure his robe was securely belted, he opened the door ready to glare at whomever was disturbing his sleep—and his dream—at this infernal hour.

Minerva smiled grimly as she waited for Severus to answer his door. The four hooligans were standing behind her. She looked up when the door finally swung open. "Severus."

"Minerva? What brings you to my door at this hour?" He blinked a couple times then noticed the students hovering nervously behind the Deputy Headmistress—Slytherin students. He frowned at them then returned he gaze to Minerva, with a more neutral expression.

"Mr. Gains and Mr. Rolando were caught out with two of my own Second Years, having a bit of fun well past curfew."

"Really. And what, pray tell, would that be, that required rule-breaking?"

"It seems that all four are Animagi."

Severus’ eyebrows rose, then he closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He expected this when Harry Potter and his friends were here. Surprisingly, this was one talent they hadn't manifested with, during their time as students. Now they had four Second Years with the ability. Just when he'd thought no one could surpass the Marauder's antics, or the adventures of the Golden Trio... He cut off the thought as Minerva stepped aside so he could see all four boys.

He fixed the students with a pointed gaze. "What in Merlin’s name, possessed the four of you to attempt such advanced magic without supervision? I am sure Professor McGonagall has stressed most thoroughly, the dangers of such folly."
"Well, Sir, we heard stories of four friends who became *Animagi* to help their friend who was a werewolf." Mr. Gains, bravely--or maybe foolishly--stepped forward as he offered to speak for the group.

"Are any of you a werewolf?"

"No, Sir."

"Then why?"

"W-Well, Sir... Professor..." Mr. Gains began, then looked back at the other boys, unsure whether to reveal what he knew.

Minerva made an impatient noise, "Speak up now. It is the middle of the night after all."

Severus looked up and down the corridor, then to Minerva. "Let us step inside where it is more private."

He stepped back giving them room to pass, following the last boy in and closing the door behind him. Both professors herded the boys to the sofa and urged them to sit, then stood in front of them and waited. The boys shuffled nervously.

"As you were about to say, Mr. Gains?" Minerva prompted.

"B-Billy, it's alright. I'll tell them." One of the Gryffindors offered, as he put his hand on Gains' arm.

Mr. Kinney looked up at the professors, "My brother is a werewolf. He has to spend his nights locked up and I want to be with him. He's only eight years old. I have the book on *Animagi* and my friends decided they would help me in my quest."

Mr. Rolando feeling heartened, stood as well. "That's not all. I was already able to shift before I came to Hogwarts. My parents don't even know."
Minerva gasped, and Severus raised an eyebrow.

"That particular magic is not even covered until Seventh Year, Severus!"

"As I am well aware, Minerva." Turning, he addressed the boys. "Until further notice, you will not transform unless it is under the supervision of Professor McGonagall or myself. Is that understood?"

Four heads nodded together.

"Albus will have to be informed."

"I will leave that delightful task to you, then." A slight smirk touched his lips as he saw the frown she gave him. "I do believe detention is in order for these rule-breakers."

"Hmmm. You have that conference this weekend." Minerva nodded. "I have plans that require me to leave Hogwarts this weekend as well."

Four young faces looked hopeful that they might escape detention with either of the Heads of House, only to fall into disappointment and dismay at Severus' next words.

"But, I do recall Mr. Filch mentioning the scheduled fall cleaning of the castle, and the need of assistance, should there be any students awarded detention."

Looking at the expressions of the boys, Severus smiled a satisfied smile. "Maybe you will think carefully before again breaking rules or taking foolish chances in the future. Mr. Filch, I think, will be very happy of your assistance. Please see that you do not disappoint him. Professor McGonagall and I will know. You will report to him, tomorrow night, after the evening meal and each night until he no longer has need of your assistance."

Minerva nodded her agreement. "I do believe that is satisfactory, Severus." Turning to the boys, she cleared her throat. "While what you did was noble...it was very dangerous. Remember that! I will schedule tutoring time with all of you after I have spoken with the Headmaster. Now. Off with the lot of you to your beds! Do not dawdle!"
One boy lagged behind, "Professors?"

"Yes, Mr. Kinney?" Severus asked.

"Please don't tell anyone about my brother. He was only four years old when he was bitten. I can't stand to lose him." He hesitated. "Da said the Ministry will take him away, if they knew."

Minerva's eyes softened, as she remembered another young boy. "Your secret is safe with us, Mr. Kinney. Now off with you."

As the door closed behind him, she turned to Severus. "Perhaps I should contact Remus. His first-hand knowledge and assistance could be very helpful."

"I think you are right. I will owl him in the morning." Severus stifled a yawn. "Someone will need to speak to the boy's family."

Minerva reached for the door. "I'm sorry your sleep was interrupted Severus. Let me go so you can get back to it. Good night, Severus."

"Good night." He replied as she closed the door behind her, before heading back to his bed.

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Remus was in the garden the next morning, writing, when the owl came. Lucius was nearby, wrapped in a fleece throw and sleeping on a chaise lounge in the mid-afternoon light. The bird landed on the table beside his parchment and stuck out its leg.

"Hello Artemus. How are you today?" He spoke to the bird as he freed the scroll from its leg and gave it an owl treat. "There's water in the fountain. Help yourself."

He watched the large black owl fly to the fountain and perch on its edge, before he unrolled the
scroll and began to read the message.

"What's Severus have to say today, Remus, Love?"

Remus pulled his glasses off and looked over to his partner who was stretched out in lounge pants, tee shirt and barefoot. Lucius never failed to humble him or leave him breathless. He was a beautiful man and he was all his! Bringing his thoughts back to the matter at hand, he sighed.

"Not good news I'm afraid. I have to go to Hogwarts. It seems one of the Second Years has a younger brother who is a werewolf. The student and three of his friends evidently have mastered the *Animagi* transformations so the young man will not be alone during his transformations. It seems they heard stories of former Hogwarts students who had done the same for a fellow student." Remus looked at Lucius, a look of sadness in his eyes.

Lucius rose from the chaise and approached Remus, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder as he scanned the parchment in Remus' hand. "I'm so sorry, Love. You would be the perfect person to speak to the boy and his family."

"I will do what I can. Albus is willing to make the same arrangements for the boy that he did for me." He rolled the scroll back up and gathered his writing materials. "I may as well go now, rather than later. Would you accompany me?"

"Of course, I will." Lucius summoned the fleece throw from the chaise. "I think I will wear the blue, and you should wear the dove grey robes."

Remus rolled his eyes and grinned, before they entered the house, together, to shower and dress.

Tbc...

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Breen's dogs **

http://www.thebreedsofdogs.com/FAUVES_DE_BRETAGNE.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basset_Fauve_de_Bretagne
Breen leaned forward and rubbed his knuckles hard against the small of his back, trying to release the aching tightness. The weight of the twins was beginning to have a physical effect on his body. He wiggled around on the large well-worn kitchen chair Ailey had *Accio'd* for him, complete with a thick cushion on the seat. As he moved, the twins resituated themselves, releasing a bit of the strain on his back and allowed him a bit more breathing room. It was hell when they decided to stretch against his diaphragm. Taking a slow deep breath, he blew it out and tried to relax as he waved his hand again, casting the spell to finish peeling the potatoes that he and Ailey were canning for the coming winter.

Ailey watched all this quietly, out of the corner of her eye, as she continued to sort the bay leaves, and mince parsley, shallots, and garlic for the potatoes. She remembered well carrying her own children and Breen's time carrying Eileen. This time would be much harder on the young man. Twins were hard on a witch, but they were rare and even harder when carried by a wizard. Even one as healthy and fit as Breen.

Wiping her hands clean on a towel, she moved behind Breen's chair and flicked her wand, canceling the spell. He turned and looked at her, a confused questioning expression on his face. She smiled down at him as she pocketed her wand, and pulled the chair back a bit from the table.

"Ah see tha wee bairns aer giv'n ye some discomf't."

Placing her hands on his shoulders, she pushed him gentle forward, so he was resting against the table. Reaching down past the short back of the chair and cast a localized warming spell, before digging her fists into Breen's lower back and massaging the knotted muscles. Breen let out a groan.
of appreciation, as he felt the tightness dissipate under the skilled hands and magic of this woman he had come to see as a Mum.

"Ooohhh... that feels splendid!" Breen dropped his head back down. "What was that spell? It feels like there's a Muggle heating pad on my back."

"Ah, 'tis a wee spell tha' Brid show'd me a long time 'go. 'Tis quite handy. Ah'll shew ye lat'r tha wand movem'nts." She stood back up, gentling pulling him back into the chair as she did. "Thar now. Bett'r?"

"Much! Thank you, Ailey. Sometimes I don't know what I would do--without you... and Iain." He cast the spell and started on the potatoes again, as he spoke.

Ailey sat down at the table next to Breen, "Tha fates waere no good ta ye in yer e'rly life, but things hav' a way o' balancin' out.... tha Goddess, she makes sure."

"She blessed me, that day I met Iain. And then you and my children. The staff here, and the people in town. I never thought I would live past Voldemort. That my life would end that day, with his."

"Tha Goddess ha' plans, Breen. Thar es somethin' more fer ye, maybe nae savin' tha worl', but thar's more ta yer life yet. Much more." She laid her hand over his and tipped his chin up with the other hand, so she could looking into his eyes. "She kno's wha' ye' hav' lost, an' she wi' giv' back ta ye threefol'."

"I sometimes wonder what my Mum and Dad would have thought of me having children like this. Alone. With no mate around."

"Ah believ' tha' they wou'd applaud yer ability ta keep goin' an' nae give up."

Breen was quiet for a few moments as they continued to work with the potatoes. "Someday, I want to return to Britain and my friends. Not to stay, but to see them again. Let them know, in person, that I'm alright. I'm fine, and I have gone on with my life."

"Tha's a fin' idea, Breen. Ah wou'd love ta meet yer friends as well. An' thas Sev'rus Snape an' Remus Lupin, whom ye seem ta send ah great deal o' chocolat' to." Ailey smiled, mischief in her gaze.
Breen’s cheeks pinked slightly, and he smiled as he thought of his godfather and his obsession with chocolate. Severus even enjoyed chocolate occasionally; he seemed to have a sophisticated palate as well. When he chose the items he sent in the packages, it was like a game to him, trying to select totally different things each time.

"Well, Remus--my godfather--has a passion for chocolate that is greater than anyone else I know."

"An' thes Molly Weas'ly.... an' Arthur as well."

"Yes. I miss them all very much. Especially Hermione and Ron... and Neville. Molly gave me my first hug."

"An' this Sev'rus? He mus' hav' left a lastin' impression?"

"He's a well-known and respected Potions Master. He made a mistake when he was younger, and spent a good deal of his adult life making up for it. He was training me, helping me learn to use my magic fully; honing my skills so I could defeat Voldemort."

Ailey pushed the last filled jar toward the others waiting for their turn on the huge stove. "He sou'ds lik' ah good mahn ta me. Yer voice changes when ye speak o’ im. Did ye fancy im, Breen?"

He sat there for a few minutes, watching the potato spin in the air as magic peeled it neatly, letting his thoughts wander back to the last six months before the war ended. He’d been working very hard training with Severus, when he wasn’t in class or studying. Quidditch and any social life had fallen by the wayside, glaringly unimportant considering what he was ultimately training for. As time passed, Severus’ attitude toward him had tempered, evidently finally seeing him as himself and not a younger embodiment of James, his arrogant and spoiled father. He started catching the older man watching him, studying him, at odd moments, with odd expressions on his face. Too preoccupied with trying to keep up with classes and assignments and trying to absorb and master all his additional training, he had just shrugged it off. He thought back now, to what he remembered of his sessions with the Potions Master and how the man had changed. In the private atmosphere, he seemed to relax a bit, which softened a bit of the hardness in his features. The all-encompassing black robes were abandoned as being too restrictive. Without them, he seemed...more human.

Breen looked up. "The last part of the war was so crazy, fast-paced, and full, I just hadn't really noticed. But now, that I think back on the memories... if there had been time... I may have consciously..."

Breen looked a bit stunned when he realized that Ailey was probably correct. He would have to think on this a bit more. He studied her face for a moment, as he came to a decision. "Ailey, when you carried your children, did you find yourself thinking of people you once knew? Those that you hadn't seen in some time?"

Ailey set the next batch of potatoes to processing on the stove, wiped her hands clean, and sat across the table from him. She summoned the pitcher of lemonade and two ice-filled glasses. Filling both, she passed one to Breen, as the last potato fell peeled and quartered into the bowl. Breen canceled the spell and reached for his glass, and took a long drink, while Ailey watched, her hands wrapped around her own glass.

"Who ha' ye been think'n eff, yer Potions Mast'r, pahrhaps?" She asked quietly.

She watched as a flush crept over his face that had nothing to do with either his pregnancy or with the heat in the large kitchen. Taking a drink, she smiled into her glass, giving him time to gather his thoughts.

"Yes--but, it seems to be more prominent when I am pregnant. I do think of him at other times, but it's usually in the context of all the people I care about. That I left behind. I wonder how they are all doing now that there is peace." He brushed a few loose wavy strands of hair out of his face, tucking them behind his ears. "Both times now, during the pregnancies, he alone invades my thoughts. Usually when I am alone, resting. Or just contemplating. Nothing specific prompts it."

"Ha' ye dreamt 'o 'im yet?" She asked, as she thought.

"No. Not yet anyway."

"Ye said once tha' ye craved bairns more than a mate. Tha' dinna mean ye don' yearm faer one." She was quiet for a moment, studying Breen. "Wou'd this Sev'rus be ahh accpt'ble Papa?"

Breen startled, caught unawares by the question. "I-I don't know. He was raised with Pureblood ideals, though he is more open-minded than some. His professional and personal demeanors are different--the personal one isn't seen by many..."
"But, ye ha' seen it, tho?" She asked in a soft voice, as she watched the faraway look in his eyes as he continued to speak.

"Yes. He's not a--demonstrative--person, but if one knows him well enough, he does care... especially for those important to him. He is intelligent, analytical, not too prone to emotion--except when he is angry. Not something you want to be the focus of. But the other emotions... he tends to mask to most of the world. He clearly takes his responsibility of protecting the students seriously. No matter how much they think he hates them." He smiled to himself at that. "Even I hated him for the first five-and-a-half years, until I started working one-on-one with him."

"He reads enormous amounts of books, and has several interests. Conversations with him are never boring. Though he enjoys a good debate almost too much. Potions are his passion. I never quite grasped them well, but towards the end, I'd help him brew potions for the war effort. I loved to watch him. He has the most elegant hands."

Ailey smiled knowingly to herself. Yes, her 'son' held a special place in his heart for this man--this Potions Master. She rose slowly so as not to startle Breen from the thoughts he was still lost in. Everyone deserved to savor pleasant memories, even if he didn't realize he was in love. She summoned the huge bowl of potatoes from in front of him and proceeded to prepare the last batch of jars for processing. When she turned around ten minutes later, Breen's head was cradled on his folded arms on the table and he was snoring softly. Iain entered the kitchen at that moment, she shushed him and pointed. His face morphed into a soft-hearted smile as he looked at the sleeping young man. Another head popped up over his shoulder to look and see why the Master had stopped. Micah, the big cowboy grinned when he saw Breen.

"Boss, you want me to carry him to his room?" Micah asked, his deep voice a low rumble, his gaze sliding from Iain's face to Ailey's.

"Aye, Micah. Gen'ly now." Iain stepped aside as Ailey spoke.

"Wouldn't think of doin' it any other way, Ma'am. I'll handle him like a newborn foal. He and them babes he's carryin' are special." Micah leaned down and carefully scooped Breen into his arms, cradling him gently as he maneuvered down the hall to settle Breen into his bed. Iain and Ailey watched Dobby appear and follow Micah into Breen's room.

When Micah reappeared in the kitchen, Ailey and Iain were sitting opposite each other at the table, with fresh glasses of ice and another pitcher of the lemonade and one of chilled water. Micah climbed over the bench and plopped down next to Iain. Ailey picked up a glass and filled it with lemonade before sliding it over to him. Just then a few more of the hands shuffled noisily into the
kitchen, and went suddenly quiet when Ailey glared at them.

Micah turned around. "Hush yer mouths! Breen's catchin' a wink."

Apologies were mumbled as they gathered around the table, filling glasses and quenching their thirst. Ailey summoned a platter of sandwiches to the center of the table, and the men helped themselves. The group sat at one end of the table, talking quietly as they ate, leaving Iain, Ailey, and Micah to their own conversation at the other end.

"Things aren't the same in the paddocks without Breen. He adds something somehow, that makes the work... easier." Micah commented absently as he turned his glass on the table. "Everyone seems to get along better."

"Aye, unless ye count tha' time when Breen was carry'n Eileen." Iain looked at Ailey as he spoke, causing Micah to look up wide-eyed at Ailey, who was frowning at her husband.

"Aye! An' 'e's nay workin' fer us now es 'e?" She said with a nod, before looking at Micah and smiling. "Drink yer lemonade now, Micah dear."

Iain shook his head and chuckled. "Breen seems ta take solace en workin' wi' tha' harses. Et calms 'im, an' Ah think ye boys feel tha'."

"Yep, he does that. It still gets me a bit bewildered how such a lil' bit can do so much work. It's tirin' to just watch him!"

"Aye. A haerd work'r tha' one." Ailey glanced over to all the jars of potatoes cooling on the counters by the windows. "He dinnae talk o' his chil'lhood, an' of'en Ah wonder..."

"He rambles some at times, when the boys are workin'. I gather his years as a youngin' weren't so happy, but somehow he's managed to make good on it." Micah flicked his gaze back and forth between his employers.

"Tha' 'e has." Iain answered. He knew a bit more than the others, but that was Breen's business, and he wouldn't betray a confidence.
"It's surprisin' though, he's still alone, seeing as how he'd be a blue-ribbon catch at the fair. If'n I swung that way, I'd snap him up in a heartbeat!" Micah suddenly clamped his hand over his mouth as the color rose in his cheeks. His gaze flicked quickly to the group at the other end of the table, before it slid back to Ailey.

Iain wrapped an arm around his shoulders and patted his arm in comfort, as he chuckled under his breath, his eyes dancing with mirth. Ailey was smiling, amused, but understanding the big man's mortification.

Iain's voice rumbled low, so only Micah and Ailey could hear him. "There, there, me boy. 'Tis naught ta be asham'd eff. Ye dinnae need ta be attract'd ta yer own kin' ta appreciate 'is qualities, now. Ah'm sure tha' Breen'd be flatter'd ta ken ye think tha' highly o' 'im."

Ailey nodded in agreement. "Aye, Ah'd be surprised ef none 'o tha boys shared yer feelin's as well."

She exchanged a knowing look with her husband. They had discussed in the past what they'd noticed amongst the other hands, after Breen started working with them. He appealed to both the men and the few women that had worked on the estate. But Breen had always been wary of pursuing relationships with those he worked with.

"Yes'sir, Breen's finer than frog's hair." Micah smiled as Ailey and Iain chuckled. They'd become accustomed to his odd colloquialisms, and now understood the majority of them.

"What about my hair?" The sleepy voice stopped the chatter in the room as everyone turned to see a newly awakened Breen, standing in the doorway, one hand rubbing his belly, while the other was attempting to smooth his mussed hair. Breen was blinking as he looked around the room to see who had spoken.

Micah's face paled and he rose quickly from the table. "Git along you lazy hounds! We need to be gittin' on the stick!"

The huge blond was out the door before the other's had risen, draining their glasses. They moved out of the kitchen, thanking Ailey for the snack as they went. She smiled and called after them to take care as they worked. Once the door clicked shut, Ailey and Iain burst into laughter, as a very confused Breen looked on.
Madam Ginevra Unmesh, rich widow and socialite, stood at the balcony doors of her plush private suite, in her Exeter manor, looking out over the huge gardens, lost in her thoughts. She’d had the Goblin’s transfer Chandubhai’s money to her vault in Diagon Alley—the money he’d left her. His family hadn’t been pleased but his will had held up in the Indian courts. She’d ingratiated herself back into British Pureblood Society, despite the annoying Worthington bint. Retaining her married name had allowed her to distance herself from her upbringing in a pitifully poor family, their Pureblood status notwithstanding.

Her calendar for the next six months was full, as she worked her way into the Ministry, gaining valuable contacts. And they’d thought Percy had been power-hungry. That was, until it had come out, he’d been a spy for the Light, and it had all been an act. The poor sod worked happily with their father now—another disgrace in her eyes. The manor was fully furnished now, with only the most beautiful and expensive items she could find. It was too bad Narcissa Malfoy was dead, and her husband had lowered his standards to take up with that... beast. She would have loved to see them both green with envy.

Turning gracefully in her silk lounging robes, she entered her ‘dressing room’, which was in fact, a large eighteen by twenty foot room, containing her entire wardrobe, filling three walls—from floor to ceiling. The fourth wall was a huge dressing table against a floor-to-ceiling wall of mirrors. An enormous crystal chandelier hung from the center of the vaulted ceiling. Rich colorful Persian carpet covered the floor. The table was covered with crystal dishes and bottles containing cosmetics, perfumes, oils, lotions and an assortment of the finest brushes and puffs. Flanking the antique dressing table were two ornately carved, four-foot-tall jewelry cabinets; both full. She could wear a different set of jewelry each day and never repeat one for an entire year. It was much the same with her clothing. She’d loathed wearing the hand-me-downs and the horrid jumpers her mother had made, during her childhood years. Well, she had remedied that problem long ago; burning everything after arriving in Mumbai, and seen the wardrobe her husband had given her as a bonding gift.

She walked slowly along one wall, trailing a hand over the fine fabrics, as she tried to decide what to wear today. She did have appointments to attend. Her hand settled on a teal blue silk Salwar Kameez suit and matching dupatta, both with intricate beading. Pulling the hangar from the rod, she Levitated it to a display hook and studied it, as a satisfied smile crossed her face. Yes, elegant enough but not too fancy; and the color would flatter her hair. As she moved to open one of the jewelry cabinets, she called for her personal house elves.

"Neepti! Jaya!"

Two dainty caramel-skinned elves immediately appeared, both dressed in small silk sari’s, gold earrings adorning their ears. Ginny loathed the idea of naked elves.
"Yes, Madam Unmesh, how may we serve you." Neepti asked as both elves bowed slightly.

"Jaya, run my bath. And don't forget the fragrant oils!" Jaya nodded and disappeared with a pop. Ginny shuffled through the contents of the top drawer of rings. "Neepti, find the jewelry that matches that outfit, then gather my papers and bag. I have appointments today."

Neepti nodded. "Would Madam like Neepti to fix her hair with the jewels as well?"

"I will think about it as I bathe, and call you if I desire it." She waved at the elf as she walked out of the room, dismissing her. She didn't need to turn around to know her wishes were being carried out. The elves knew the consequences if they didn't do exactly as they were told. Which is why all her house elves had come with her, from the household in Mumbai. They were much better trained and well-behaved than the ones here.

After allowing Jaya to put her hair up, she slid into the hot fragrant water with a deep moan of pleasure. Lit candles floated above the deep wide tub and music played quietly, as she laid back, a glass of chilled pomegranate juice at her elbow. She had a meeting with that irritating Irishman, Feichin Delaney, again. As much as she despised him, he was the best Wizarding Investigator in the field. She'd received his recent report and needed to discuss it with him before she paid his current bill. She'd hoped for more information than it contained, though the man had made some progress. She became lost in her thoughts as she relaxed, trying to come up with more ways they could track her Harry down. Maybe it was time she spent more time with her darling mother. She smiled evilly as she slid down farther into the hot water. Nothing was below her, if it meant she would, finally, attain her goals. It was time she became Madam Unmesh-Potter. Between his fame and their combined wealth, the Potter's would rise to the pinnacle of Wizarding Pureblood Society.

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Chapter 12

Severus had just finished purchasing the special-order potions ingredients for his current research project. As he exited the Apothecary, he almost collided with Ronald Weasley-Krum--a somewhat rounder and rosier Ronald Weasley-Krum, currently enjoying a Blood Pop. Severus caught the youngest Weasley male to keep him from falling, at the same time he noticed Victor Krum-Weasley and Molly Weasley, supporting Ron from behind. Ron suddenly realized who had a hold of him and paled.

"S-Severus! I'm so sorry!" He stuttered, as he surveyed his former professor, to see if he'd done any harm.
"Ronald. Calm down. Please." Severus reached up to grasp the pregnant young man's face and tilt it up so their eyes met. "No harm has been done. I should apologize to you. Right now, I believe, I am the quicker on my feet." Seeing Ron visibly relax and nod, he turned his attention to the other two. "Good afternoon, Molly. Victor."

"Severus."

"Professor."

"Just Severus, Victor. As I have told you before, please."

Victor nodded in agreement, as they moved as a group away from the entrance to the Apothecary. "As you wish, Severus."

"What brings you out today?" Severus asked, studying the changes in Ron since they'd last seen each other.

"The healer prescribed a lotion for Ron. He cannot stop itching and it has turned into a rash in some places." Molly offered, as she lightly slapped Ron's hand away when he started to scratch his arm.

Victor reached around Ron and took his hand, rubbing his husband's back with the other. Severus held out his hand toward Molly.

"May I?"

Molly handed him the Apothecary slip from the healer. He studied it for a bit. "Molly, I keep this on hand. It is a commonly prescribed lotion for several different skin conditions. But I believe my altered formula will work better for Ron. And I will provide you with an oil to add to his bath that will also help escalate the healing and alleviate the dry skin and itching."

"That is very kind of you, Severus. How much do we owe you?" Victor asked, as he squeezed Ron's hand to keep him from protesting.
"I will attach an invoice when I owl the items to you. As soon as I arrived back home. The cost will cover my ingredients to replace both lotion and oil." He turned to Ron. "I can personalize the scent. Would you prefer sandalwood, sage, lemon verbena, or peppermint?

Ron looked surprised as he looked from Severus to Victor. "Which would you prefer, Luv?"

"Sandalwood, please."

Ron turned back to Severus. "Sandalwood."

"Very well. My owl will deliver them to you this afternoon. Was there anything that you need, Molly?"

"Well, I am getting a bit low on the Joint-Ease Balm. The cold damp weather has been awful on my joints." She replied, as she absent-mindedly massaged her wrist.

"I just happened to finish a batch of that two days ago. I'll have Archimedes deliver a jar to you today as well. Same price as usual Molly." His expression was calm, but his eyes held a bit of humor.

Molly laughed. "One jar of pepper jam and one jar of brambleberry conserve, it is, Severus! They'll be too big for Penny, so I will send them back with Archimedes."

"Of course." Severus' lips quirked as he tried to stop the smile tugging at his lips. They were in public after all.

It had been a running joke between them ever since Molly had received Penny as a gift from Ron and Victor, after Errol had finally passed on. She was a miniature owl, like Pigwidgeon, but luckily not quite as excitable as Ron's owl. Severus was forever asking her when she was going to get a 'real owl.' She would just laugh and pretend she didn't hear him. They did have a large barn owl at the Burrow, but he was very moody and was only used when absolutely necessary. Penny would get offended if she was passed up for a delivery, but wasn't bothered if something was sent with an owl that had just delivered something to the Burrow. She was a spoiled little thing that preferred Molly's shoulder over her own perch.

Ron let out an undignified squeak, as his free hand went to his belly. Molly and Victor looked
worried. Severus stepped aside allowing Molly to move to Ron's side, as Ron pulled the Blood Pop out of his mouth.

"Are you alright, Ronnie?"

"S'fine, Mum. She's kicked me is all. Not used to it yet." Molly nodded and smiled. "Wanna feel her, Severus? It really is wicked."

"I'm not sure--"

"Go ahead, sir. It's really amazing, feeling her move. I can't describe it." Victor smiled, reached out and grasped Severus' wrist, guiding his hand onto the swell of his husband's belly, laying it against a small protrusion there. "Now, wait."

The four of them stood there, outside on the walk, not moving, as other shoppers passed them unnoticed. Ron didn't squeak this time, but Severus face shown a startled and amazed expression as the baby pushed out with a heel before rolling against his hand. Victor and Molly both watched him with knowing smiles, as Ron grinned at his reaction.

"Wicked isn't it?" Ron asked, before popping the candy-on-a-stick, back in his mouth.

Severus pulled his hand away, stroking the palm with the fingers of his other hand. "Indeed. It must feel even more--'wicked'--to you."

"Yeah. Except when she's laying on my bladder, that is--like she is now. Shouldn't have had that large glass of juice, Mum. Now I need the loo--again." Ron rolled his eyes and sighed.

"We'd best leave you then, Severus. It was nice to see you again. It's almost time for another tea. I will send Penny."

"I will be waiting patiently, Molly. Good day to all of you." He watched them head down the street toward one of the restaurants, before he turned and headed on to his next stop.
Chapter 13

"You've finished reading the chapters I've assigned you?" Remus asked, pulling his glasses off and perching them atop his head.

The young boy nodded eagerly, as he clutched the large book to his chest, bouncing in anticipation. Remus smiled warmly at him.

"Very well, then. Your teacher tells me that you are doing well in your lessons. I believe that has earned you some time on your broom."

"Yes!"

He chuckled to himself as the child turned and bolted for the door, "Take Dobbins with you, and stay inside the gardens!" He called after the boy.

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He and Lucius had gone, as Minerva requested, to first speak to the boy’s older brother Bryan, then that evening to speak to the Kinney’s about their son Sean. Remus was well-known to most because of his part in the Order and in the War. The parents had been overwhelmed and not aware of the changing laws regarding Werefolk. They believed that the Ministry would still take the boy away. A poor family, they'd not been able to afford decent Wolfsbane Potion. Unable to make decent headway with the boy, even with a spelled parchment from Albus, promising the same arrangements that had been made for Remus, they were at an impasse. That was, until Lucius approached the father and made several offers.

Within a week, the family had been moved to a cottage near the Lupin-Malfoy lands. The father was a talented carver, despite no formal education. The mother had a gift for baking and making pastries. They were both now employed in Remus and Lucius’ household. Remus had used his contacts to push through the paperwork to become the boy’s legal guardian, in the event something happened to his family, he would have a home. Lucius set up a small investment portfolio for the parents, having the Goblin's set aside a small percentage of each of their pay packets. He went through their finances for them and helped them to work out arrangements for their debts with the ultimate goal of being financially secure. He moderated contracts so the Kinney’s could sell their wares to shops in the local town and in Hogsmeade. Lucius contacted Severus to brew the Wolfsbane Potion for the boy, and Remus set up personal tutoring he would do with the boy on a
regular basis. The parents would join him for a few hours once a week so he could discuss Sean and take care of any misinformation they had. He was an understanding ear, if they just needed to talk. Minerva made sure all was covered with Bryan at school. Poppy even made a personal visit to examine the boy, heal what she could and prescribe necessary treatments and dietary adjustments.

The family as a whole, was much happier, and so were Remus and Lucius. They enjoyed having the child in their home; Remus, never having children of his own, and Lucius, never fathering any more after Draco. It was an unexpected pleasure they both savored. Lucius liked the warm feeling he experienced from helping others in need, and felt prompted to see if there were other ways he could help. He and Remus discussed it at length more than once. They agreed because of his poor choices in the past, he would have their solicitors set up a company and he would do everything anonymously. No longer wanting recognition, he just wanted to help and make amends for past bad choices.

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Lucius entered the room, smirking. "I would guess Sean finished his reading?"

"Yes, he did."

"The Hols will be here soon, and Bryan will be home from Hogwarts." Lucius sat on the edge of the desk next to where Remus sat. "Any plans?"

"Nothing specific. I thought I would talk to the boys, and Devon and Sarah. See if there is anything specific the boys would like to learn. If they want to just tire themselves out playing, that is acceptable too."

Lucius reached out and caressed his bonded's face, his eyes softening. "You would have made an exceptional Papa, Remi."

"Ah, well, it was unattainable after Greyback did his damage." Remus sighed, turning to kiss Lucius' palm. "Besides, I have a son, soon to be three and a daughter--once the inseparable three finally bond. I just wish Harry were here. I miss him so much."

Lucius moved from the edge of the desk and sat in Remus' lap, his legs draped over the arm, his arms wrapped around Remus’ neck. "We could always adopt, if you really want children. There are still so many orphans from the War that need homes and families. And we will find Harry. As a matter
of fact, I received an owl from Molly today. There's been another package, and tea is on Sunday. I know Severus has some ideas to share."

"Really?" Remus looked less crestfallen.

"Really. Now, I believe you need some further cheering, but it must be done the old-fashioned way to be truly effective--no charms." With that, Lucius leaned down and captured Remus' lips in a possessive kiss and proceeded to thoroughly eradicate all negative thoughts from his bonded's mind.

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Molly smiled and greeted everyone with a kiss and a hug as they arrived. Arthur was ensconce at the Ministry again, catching up on paperwork. Molly had kissed him soundly and sent him off that morning with a picnic basket of food, and told him she would see him late evening. She assured him to not worry, since she had cleaning and knitting to do. Knowing her beloved, he would get lost in his work and there was no chance he would come home early.

Once everyone had arrived and settled around the table, Molly waved her wand and the table was suddenly full. The cherished tea set held the place of honor in the center, surrounded by plates and bowls of the wonderful foods from the newest mystery package. Everyone's eyes were wide as they surveyed everything. Each package was always different.

Luna lazily waved her wand and a cup of tea, saucer, napkin and teaspoon settled in front of each guest. The cream, sugar, lemon, and honey all made the circuit around the table. Once all cups of tea were prepared, all eyes settled on their hostess.

"So, what treats have we received this time, Molly?" Albus asked, as he stroked his beard.

Molly unrolled the parchment that had accompanied the items, and began to read down the list as she indicated each dish on the table.

" Crémet Nantais , a soft cheese. Hand-churned sweet butter with seaweed and sea salt, a prune and rum Far. An assortment of Berlingot Nantais candies. Three different types of Pâté , all flavored with different wines and port. Pain au lait, a bread to be eaten with the Pâté. "

She paused for a moment, trying to decipher something on the list. Finally, she showed the list to
Albus, pointing at the name. He whispered to her and she nodded, taking back the parchment.

"It seems our Harry has branched out a bit." She pointed to the plate closest to her. "Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte, a German fruit torte. An assortment of Berliner, a type of German doughnut. They have jam fillings. Springerle Pfeffernuesse and Lebkuchen, both traditional holiday cookies in Germany. And last, but not least, a Stollen."

"No chocolate?" Remus asked, causing a few chuckles around the table.

"Oh! I am sorry, Remus." She waved her wand and summoned a colorful tin from the counter behind her. "Here you go, dear. Open that up and pass it around. Let me see." She scanned the list again. "Those would be Marzipan, hand-dipped in dark chocolate."

Remus pried the tin open and his eyes widened and he emitted a groan as the scent of the chocolate assailed his nose. Lucius snorted, Severus rolled his eyes, and everyone else started to laugh.

"Now, you share those Remus. Harry knows you love chocolate, but he sent enough for everyone." Molly gave him 'the eye', as she spoke.

Ron's eyes widened. "Oi! Better listen Remus. She waves a wicked wand when she gets that look."

"Yes, Molly." He replied, as he popped one into his mouth, set another on his saucer, and passed the tin.

Lucius took two, placing one of them next to the one on Remus' saucer, leaned in and kissed his cheek. Remus smiled at him and noticed the mirth in the pale eyes as his love tried desperately to keep a straight face, as he passed the tin to Severus.

"Everything looks absolutely wonderful!" Hermione exclaimed, as everyone reached for one of the serving dishes or plates. "Oh, I wish we knew where Harry is. Will we ever figure it out?"

"I do believe if we put our minds and our resources together, Hermione, we will be able to solve the mystery of where he has built his new life." Severus answered confidently, as he helped himself to some of the Pâté and Pain au lait.
Luna had a faraway look in her eyes, as she stirred sugar and cream into her tea. "Harry doesn't want the Wizarding World in general to find him, but, I think he wants us to find him--those whom he cares for." She focused on Severus. "And those who care for him, of course."

"Oi! Viktor! What are you doing?!" Ron yelped, as Viktor plucked a raspberry *Berliner* from his fingers, and replaced it with a slice of Molly's warm bread covered liberally with some of the *Crémet Nantais* cheese. Severus breathed a sigh of relief that all attention had been diverted from him.

"Ron-- *Meu Dragoste*, you must eat good for *Elisabeta*." Viktor coaxed, as his husband scowled at him and eyed the doughnut that had been placed on the far side of Viktor's plate.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Ronald, you are no longer playing Quidditch five days a week. It wouldn't hurt you--or *Elisabeta*--to try to eat well for a change. At least, until the end of your pregnancy. You do realize, that too much sugar is not good for the baby, will keep her, and you, up all night. In turn, the lack of sleep will--"

"Fine! Enough 'Moine! Blimey, she's in lecture mode again!" Ron huffed as he picked up the bread and took a large bite.

Laughter burst out around the table. Viktor placed some sliced fruit on Ron's plate, as he leaned in and whispered in his husband's ear. The fury disappeared from Ron's face and his cheeks flushed deep pink as he smiled to himself. Viktor kissed his cheek before returning his attention to his own plate.

"Remus, how is Sean faring with his lessons?" Albus asked.

Remus took a sip of his tea and wiped his mouth before answering. "He's doing quite well, actually. The last few full moons have been easier on him, thanks greatly to Severus' new formulation of the *Wolfbane Potion*.

Remus smiled at the Potions Master, as Lucius nodded in agreement. The corner of Severus' mouth quirked up at the compliment.

"Some minor adjustments to the potion allow it to work more efficiently for a Were-child, in general. But, I also tailored the potion to Sean specifically."
"I have spoken to Darmott, at the Ministry Research Department about the possibility of custom potions for the Were's. I've kept him apprised of the improvements I have experienced with the changes. He was very interested, and asked me to have you owl him for a meeting to discuss your research." Severus nodded, looking pleased.

"Severus, I would be very interested in discussing the modified potions as well." Draco's expression radiated his interest. Hermione looked very intrigued as well.

"How are his parents adjusting, Remus?" Molly continued offering food and tea to everyone as she spoke.

Lucius chose to answer, since Remus had just taken a bite of his Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte. "The Kinney's were wary and doubtful at first, but once they saw the difference a better quality potion made for their son, they have been more willing to open up and discuss everything."

"That's wonderful!" Molly beamed.

"Yes, it is. They have even come to Hogwarts to discussed the arrangements I will make for Sean, when he attends next fall." Albus looked quite pleased. He hated to see children suffer and lose out on opportunities to learn.

"Your aura's have improved since the boy started spending time with both of you. The colors are much brighter and more harmonious. You should really consider adopting children. They keep away the Brown Dowager Gnats. They make you old more quickly you know."

Lucius startled, and Remus dropped his fork, both men staring wide-eyed at the dreamy-eyed blond, who had already gone back to reading her upside down copy of the Quibbler.

"Luna, I love you but sometimes I am reminded of why they used to call you 'Loony' in school." Draco said with a bit of irony in his voice. "Ow!"

Neville snorted in amusement when Hermione smacked Draco in the back of his head. Draco turned to her as he rubbed the spot. "What'd you do that for? I only spoke the truth!" He looked at his other mate, sitting on the other side of Hermione. "Hush you! Or there'll be no snogging for you tonight--or anything else."
Another slap was heard as Hermione cuffed him again.

"Ow! 'Moine!"

"Behave yourself then, or you both will be on the couch." She commented firmly as she poured herself more tea.

"Oi! What'd I do?!" Neville exclaimed suddenly.

"You opened your mouth, Nev. And believe me, Harry and I got plenty of those slaps at Hogwarts!" Ron smirked, glad to be sitting on the opposite side of the table.

Everyone continued laughing. Hermione glared at him, but her expression softened when her mates placed kisses on her cheeks, causing a smile to appear.

"Indeed. You cuffed those boys so many times, I wouldn't have been surprised if their brains had been addled. But then, an addled Boy-Who-Lived would have been a problem." Severus smirked into his teacup.

"Severus!" Molly looked at him with that look.

"Really Molly, my hair is not red so that look will not work on me." Severus deadpanned, causing another round of laughter.

Albus moved a bit to get more comfortable in his chair. "Lucius, how are your horses? Many new foals expected in the Spring?"

"A few. Actually, I am considering adding a few more horses, possibly a different breed or two, for variety."

"Really? Are there any breeds in particular you are considering, Father?" Draco asked.

"Remi and I have a trip planned for the first of the new year, to look at some Corley Breton's."
Lucius gestured with his knife as he spoke. "They are a hardy breed and the Corley's are the smallest, and good for riding. Especially for the younger riders."

Remus leaned toward Lucius, giving him a look as he spoke. "I suggested he consider the Postier's as well, since they are the mid-range size of Breton, and are a beautiful cart horse. They have a very graceful gait. They are even acceptable for light farm work when needed."

"The stock of Corley's has been declining. It would be advantageous to breed them--all the colors--especially the blue roans."

"Well, I wish you a successful trip, Lucius, my boy! And maybe the two of you can have a bit of a honeymoon while you are there!" Albus smiled indulgently as his eyes twinkled madly.

Remus grinned. "Oh, that will definitely be part of the trip."

Luna folded the Quibbler and set it beside her plate, focusing her gaze on Remus and Lucius, she spoke in a soft voice. "Your travels will be very productive, but only if you embrace the local culture."

Hermione fixed her men with a warning glare, just as Draco was opening his mouth. The click was audible when he closed his mouth. She smiled smugly when she returned her gaze to Luna. "What do you mean, Luna?"

The blond woman set a blackberry Berliner on her plate, taking care as she cut it in half with fork and knife. "Answers to important questions can be found if one listens carefully."

Luna Lovegood had, during her latter years at Hogwarts, and in the years since, proven she had a unique perspective coupled with a gift of the Sight. Those who knew her well had already learned to listen. She had been unerringly accurate over the years. Severus quirked an eyebrow and looked to Albus.

"Albus, isn't Sybil due to retire soon?"

"I believe she has mentioned something to that effect. It seems her sister has asked her to come live with her. It would be much better for her than spending all her time in the tower." He looked at Luna, a small smile on his lips and a twinkle beginning in the pale blue eyes. "Perhaps, Luna and I
should discuss the possibility of her joining Hogwarts' Staff."

Severus cast a pointed gaze at Luna. "It would be quite refreshing to not be subjected any longer, to that woman's sherry-soaked pseudo-predictions."

"I most certainly agree!" Hermione added. "I was definitely put off of Divination, until I began spending more time with you, Luna. I can honestly say, you have shown me that some of the aspects of the field may have some merit."

"Thank you, Hermione. I am glad I could help you to see the truth. Maybe you can find your gift now."

"I wouldn't go that far. Let's just leave it at a healthy respect for now."

Ron leaned against Viktor, as he slowly rubbed his belly. "It's too bad Harry isn't here. He'd be so shocked to hear you say that, 'Moine!"

Hermione rolled her eyes at Ron. Neville leaned around Albus so he could see Severus. "Do you believe we have enough information to start projecting where Harry could possibly be?"

Chapter 14

Breen groaned as the talented fingers worked the fragrant oil into his tight muscles. Thanking the Goddess he had decided to take advantage of the unusually pleasant day to take his carriage into town, and finish his shopping for the Yule Celebration. He'd stopped at the Creperie' for a warm snack and something to drink, that wasn't coffee, sadly. He happily tucked into a small plate of sweet galettes and a glass of warmed cider, something they did just for him. The other chair at his table was pulled out and he looked up, just in time, to see Bradan's brother, Cainnech, grinning widely at him as he slid into said seat.

"Breen Evans, how aer ye! Och! Me brather tol' me ye waer hav'n a bairn agin." The tall auburn-haired man eyed Breen's round middle. "'Tis a healthy bairn, thahn!"
Breen looked pleasantly surprised to see the handsome man again. "It is good to see you again, Cainnech! I'm doing well. And this time, it is twins, actually. Both boys." He chuckled at the man's shocked look. "I know. I can hardly believe it myself sometimes. That is, until I try to move around without bumping into things."

"Congr'lat'ns." He waved to Bradan, holding a hand up, then returned his attention to Breen, after Bradan nodded. "Ah'm glahd Ah cam' back fer Yule, or Ah wouldn' hav' seen ye lik' this. Ye look healthy, jus' as ye did wi' wee Eileen." Cainnech smiled and waggled his eyebrows slightly, causing Breen to blush a bit, recalling the man's affections when he was carrying Eileen.

Bradan arrived at the table, effectively interrupting Breen's reply. He placed a large glass of *Telenn Du*, a local buckwheat beer, and a larger plate of savory galettes in front of his brother. Bradan glanced knowingly at Cainnech and smiled at Breen with a wink, before heading back to the kitchen. Breen and Cainnech chatted amiably for the next hour, catching up, since it had been the beginning of the Summer since they'd seen each other last.

Iain had stopped in briefly, on his way to pick up a couple of repaired saddles from the Leathersmith. He'd stood at the counter, unnoticed, watching the two men while he had a glass of *Chouchen*. He knew Ailey wouldn't mind keeping Eileen for the night. Smiling, he approached the table, greeting Cainnech with a clap on the shoulder and a handshake, then informed Breen if he was considering plans for the evening, Eileen would be just fine for the night with her *Seanmhair* and *Seanair*. She could help with the Yule decorations, and Iain would inform Dobby.

"Cainnech, aer Breen has been ensconced fer the las' couple o' months, wi' Ailey, helpin' in tha kitchen an' wi preparations fer tha Yule. He's more tha' earn'd a bit o' pahmprin', laddie. Aye?"

Breen sputtered. "Iain!"

Iain just smiled warmly, winked at Breen, drained his glass, set it on the table, and left. Cainnech laughed as he watched the older man leave, then looked at the flummoxed expression on Breen's face. "Ye've kenn Iain fer many yahrs now. Ye shoul' know 'e spaeks 'is min' when et comes ta those 'e cares fer. While ye finish, Ah'll grab ma thin's an' stop at tha mahrket since Ah'll be makin' ye supp'r tanight." Reaching out, he lightly caressed Breen's cheek with the back of his fingers, as he held the other man's gaze. Breen's eyes softened, and he sighed, nodding as he studied the caring grey eyes.

"Sounds wonderful." He replied softly. "I'll be waiting. We do need to stop at the chocolatier and the bakery, as well."
"Aye, than."  Cainnech turned and disappeared through a door in the back, and was back a few minutes later.

Cainnech helped Breen out to the carriage and they made the necessary purchases before heading back to Breen's, where Dobby had already prepared for their arrival.  *Blaan* and *Ruadh* greeted them at the door, barking and whining as they ran in circles, excited to see Breen.  Cainnech took pity on them, and to prevent them from inadvertently tripping Breen, he scooped the squirming bodies up, then led Breen to the couch, and placed them in his arms.  Dobby *Levitated* the packages toward the kitchen.

After removing Breen's boots, Cainnech propped his feet up, and encouraged him to lie down, before covering him with the quilt from the back of the couch. He watched Breen's eyelids begin to droop. Kissing the dark head, he encouraged his sleepy friend to nap while he prepared dinner.  Breen was sound asleep, with the dogs sprawled atop him, before Cainnech even reached the kitchen.

Two hours later, a very refreshed Breen joined Cainnech at the table, and gaped when he saw Roasted Beef, Yorkshire Pudding and gravy, and Mixed Vegetables with herbs.  There was a large chilled pitcher of sweet milk for him, and a large glass of *Chouchen* sat next to Cainnech's plate.  They chatted some more as Breen savored every bite.  He really enjoyed the local dishes of Bretagne, but he'd been craving food from home--dishes he used to enjoy at Hogwarts.  When the dishes were cleared, Dobby popped in and set individual Treacle Tarts on the table.  The look on Breen's face caused Cainnech to chuckle.  Once they were finished, Dobby cleared the table and did his usual clean-up, while the men retired to Breen's suite, to curl up together, on the couch in front of the fireplace.

At one point, Breen shifted, trying to get more comfortable in Cainnech's arms, and groaned in pain.  And that was how he now found himself stripped to his boxers, lying on a pile of pillows on his bed, with one of the few people he trusted like this, straddling his hips facing his feet.

"Mmmmm...Cainnech, you still have magic hands.  That feels so-o-o good."  He moaned as he felt the talented fingers leave his left foot on the bed, that leg done, and start on his right thigh, kneading just hard enough to loosen the knots without causing pain.

"Och!  Ye desahrve et, Luv.  Warkin' awl day wi' Ailey, an' carryin' tha wee bairns as they grow.  Takin' care o' wee Eileen.  Cookin' an' bakin' fer tha fam'ly an' tha handl'rs, laerin' ta make food wi' love."
Breen sighed and fairly purred as Cainnech worked his way down his right leg to his ankle and foot. When Cainnech was finished, he helped Breen to turn over, situating the pillows under and around him so he would be properly supported, then started again, at his right foot.

"I hadn't even realized that even my hands hurt." He mumbled as Cainnech carefully and thoroughly massaged each finger of his left hand. That hand soon joined its mate, boneless on the comforter. Breen, reclined back against the pile of pillows, was almost asleep. Cainnech moved carefully so he could begin on Breen's chest, massaging gently. He stopped suddenly when Breen's eyes opened and he hissed.

"Don't stop. You haven't hurt me. It's just that--" Breen blushed. "--my chest has been very sensitive almost since the beginning of my pregnancy." He gave the man above him an embarrassed smile.

Cainnech smiled in understanding as he gently brushed his palms over the now-peaked nipples, and watched as Breen arched and his pupils dilated. "We' Ah'll ha' ta use spaycial caer than."

"I'm certainly not inclined to argue." Breen mumbled as he closed his eyes again.

Cainnech chuckled and poured more oil on his hands. Placing his hands carefully on Breen's chest, he massaged slowly and methodically, working his way down to just above the swell of Breen's abdomen. Lightening his touch, he stroked in large circles over and around the rounded swell, letting the oil soak into the taut skin. As he moved his hands, the babies started to roll and move slowly under his touch, causing him to inhale in surprise.

Breen started giggling. "They like your touch too, it seems." He opened his eyes and watched the movement under his skin. "It tickles too." He continued giggling and started to squirm, as the talented hands moved over his skin.

"Oh, cannae ha' tha' now. Cainnech laughed and increased his touch just enough to eliminate the tickling sensation, moving his hands in a wide arc around the outside circumference of Breen's belly, he glanced up, a mischievous glint in his eyes, and asked. "Es tha' bett'r?"

Before Breen could answer, he slid warm oiled hands down and dipped under the elastic of Breen's boxers to grasp and knead the half-hard cock and heavy bollocks. Breen's hips bucked and he hissed in pleasure.
"Yes-s-s-s-s! Ohhh, it's been too long. Bloody hormones!" He waved his hand, banishing his boxers and spread his legs. "Please Cainnech, don't stop."

"Breen, me Luv, Ah'd be haerd put ta tell ye nae. Ye look quite fit an' enticin' layin' thar." Cainnech continued fondling him as he spoke, his eyes roaming over the nude form. "Ye're skin has a healthy glow, an' yer body ha' round'd oot makin' ye look well-fed." One hand reached up to tweak a pink nipple. "Yer haer es long agin'--so appealin'. Ah wan' ta kiss an' lick yer skin, feel ye agin' me. Tha swell o' the bairns jus' makes ye awl tha maer enticin'."

Breen looked into Cainnech's eyes, noticing the grey had all but disappeared behind dilated pupils. Cainnech was frotting against Breen's leg. Moaning at the effect he'd had on the man, he waved one hand to banish Cainnech's clothing, as he reached up with the other to wrap fingers around the back of Cainnech's neck, pulling him down into a bruising kiss. As their tongues tangled and they tasted each other, Cainnech slid down to lie on his side, next to Breen, pulling him down and against his chest. The kiss was never broken, but Cainnech's hands never stopped touching, caressing, tweaking; pulling the most expressive sounds of pleasure from Breen.

Feeling the heavy erection rubbing against his leg, Breen rocked his hips, looking for friction against his own erection. He growled in frustration. His baby belly was in the way. He threw his head back as he felt kisses placed along his jaw, then down his throat, as a huge warm hand cupped his arse and squeezed, trailing a teasing finger between his cheeks.

"M-More please, Cainnech Luv!"

"Ye taste so swaet, me Luv." Cainnech nibbled and licked the side of Breen's throat, slowly working his way down to lightly tug on a nipple with his teeth. "Ah plan ta taste ev'ry bit o' ye tanight."

Reaching up to bury his fingers in soft auburn waves, Breen wrapped a leg over Cainnech's hip. "Nngghaaah! Need more! Please!"

"Shhhh. Ah know wha' ye need." Cainnech summoned the still-open bottle of oil, tipping some into his palm one-handed. He let the empty bottle drop to the bed, and slid his hand under Breen's belly, past his male bits, to the swollen wet hole behind them. Circling and teasing the small swollen clitoris, he sealed his lips around Breen's other nipple and sucked as he tongued the sensitive nub.

"Ohhhh! Sweet Merlin! Yesss!" Breen cried as his head rolled back and forth on the pillows, his body undulating.
Feeling Cainnech's smile against his flushed skin, he pulled up firmly but gently on the handfuls of hair, bringing Cainnech's face flush with his so he could claim his lips again, pushing his tongue past willing lips to taste more of the big man's spicy flavor. Control of the kiss was taken from him as two strong fingers were suddenly thrust into him and began to stroke in and out, rubbing against Breen's swollen clit with each stroke. Breen's cries were swallowed by the kiss, and Cainnech purred as Breen's hands traveled over him, trying to touch as much of him as possible.

Lifting Breen up, Cainnech rolled to his back in the center of the bed, and helped Breen to straddle him. He pulled the smaller man down and peppered kisses all over his face as he whispered in a rough voice. "Ye aer leadin', me Luv. Take yer time an' yer pleas're. Ah'm haer fer ye."

Cainnech slid his hand down his body, grasping his erection, running an oiled hand over it and holding it in position, as Breen rocked back and forth, rubbing the lips of his hole over the head, his eyes glazed with arousal as he pushed to his hands on Cainnech's chest, staring down into equally aroused grey eyes.

"Mmmnnngghh!" Breen's arousal was so intense he didn't know where to move first. A fine sheen of sweat glazed his skin and he panted excitedly. His long dark wavy hair had come loose and framed his body. A gentle hand stroked up and down his side and back, trying to calm him.

"Shhhh, Luv. Go ahaed an' take wha' ye need." Cainnech crooned as he, again, aligned himself with Breen's body. "Thar ye go now. Let me pleas'r ye, ma swaet Breen."

Breen's gaze seemed to focus briefly and he nodded, before pressing backward, rocking up periodically, until he'd sunk all the way down, burying Cainnech all the way inside of him. Sitting still for a few moments, Breen took deep shuddering breaths, as he waited for his body to adjust to being filled again after so long. He and Cainnech shared a smile as Cainnech trailed a hand over the swell of the babies.

"Beautif'l an' han'some..." Cainnech whispered.

Wrapping firm hands around Breen's hips, he lifted him slowly, then let him down as he thrust his own hips up, eliciting an involuntary gasping moan from the smaller man. Placing his palms flat on Cainnech's chest, Breen balanced himself and began to raise up and drop down in a regular rhythm, strong Quidditch trained thigh muscles flexing. Cainnech watched from beneath lowered lids as Breen moved at his own pace to pleasure himself. He was totally enthralled by the picture Breen presented. It aroused him like nothing else, and he began to rock and thrust his hips in time with Breen's movements. They moved like this, in tandem, for quite some time; slow and languid at first, gradually increasing the pace, until Breen was pumping as fast and hard as he could without causing
harm or pain.

"S-So close. Oh! So close." There was a undertone of frustration in Breen's voice. He was beginning to tire but he didn't want to stop--he couldn't stop. He needed this.

Cainnech grasped his hip with one hand and reached down, past the male bits, and pressed his thumb against Breen's clit, stroking it as he rolled his hips back and forth, so Breen wouldn't have to lift himself. "Grasp yerself Luv. Let us rid' home together."

As Cainnech rocked them, his powerful leg muscles flexing, he continued to stimulate the little bundle of nerves, as Breen fisted and stroked himself in the way he liked best. It wasn't long then, till Breen went rigid, ropes of pearly white covering his hand and Cainnech's torso, followed immediately by an orgasm that clamped down, like a pulsing vice, around Cainnech, taking him over the edge as well. Their cries mingled and echoed in the large room, Cainnech holding Breen and continuing to thrust and rock until they were both spent. Gently lifting Breen so he slipped from his body, he laid Breen down by his side, wrapping his arms around him and kissing him gently as they waited for their heartbeats and breathing to return to normal. Casting Cleansing Spells, he summoned a quilt to cover them as he held the smaller man close, feeling the movement of the bairns against his own abdomen. A feeling washed over him that he'd had before and had tried to reason away, but now realized he couldn't.

He gently caressed the small body against him, feeling a bone-deep sadness. "Och! Breen Evans, ef only tha Goddess wou'd smile up'n me, Ah wou'd be so gratef'l ta luv ye wi' a luv o' tha soul, but, sadly, Ah'm nae tha one fer ye. Yer true luv, he saerches fer ye, tho' he dinna ken et yet."

Deep green eyes met his, a question in their depths. "Cainnech?"

"Nae Luv. Ye aer meant fer an'ther. But, Cainnech Duchovny wi' be thar ta guard ye an' support ye till 'e comes."

Breen cupped Cainnech's face with his hand. "Thank you. That means so much to me." He leaned up and kissed Cainnech affectionately, tenderly. Feeling satiated, loved, and secure, he snuggled against Cainnech, released a contented sigh and slept, Cainnech followed him not long after.

Tbc...
Breen's dogs, *Blaan* and *Ruadh* **

http://www.thebreedsofdogs.com/FAUVES_DE_BRETAGNE.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basset_Fauve_de_Bretagne

** ken -- know
Breen had gotten up three times during the night to relieve himself. He hated to think of how it would be in a few more months. He was back in bed, snug under the warm covers, Cainnech's tall muscular frame spooned up against his back, warm breath ghosting against his neck, and an arm around him, the large hand cupping the swell of his sons. He lay there quietly, gazing out the window, at the beginnings of day above the horizon. The sun hadn't peeked out yet, but the sky above was slowly filling with graduated light, dimming the stars, and the three quarter moon still visible.

His thoughts drifted back to what Cainnech had said before they'd fallen asleep. He didn't quite understand what his friend had meant, but he'd known him long enough to know the man had a special 'sense' about things, and was quite accurate. He'd just never heard him come out with anything about himself before, and so personal. Oh, he held a special place in his heart for Cainnech Duchovny. The big man reminded him of what he imagined Neville would have been like after coming into his own during the war, especially when he'd accepted the task of killing Nagini. It wasn't a physical resemblance--no, Cainnech has the same caring and gentle nature as Neville, and the same flaming temper if you upset him enough. It was one of the traits Harry admired and loved in Cainnech.

He sighed. The words last night had touched him deeply and he had wished more than once, in the
past, that he could love Cainnech in that way. The man would be a perfect soulmate for someone someday--just not him--not Breen Evans.

He hoped Cainnech's gift was accurate again, and there was someone out there for him. Someone to be his companion, his lover, his confidante, his magical match, his soulmate--someone to be a father to his children, and love them as his own. Who could it possibly be?

Dobby popped in briefly, built the fire up, then turned and gave him a quick bow before disappearing again. He'd never stopped being amazed at the intuitive nature of house elves, or maybe, it was just Dobby and Winky. Either way, he was grateful for it, especially during pregnancy. He smiled when a heavy glass of fresh cool water and a plate of digestive biscuits appeared on the table next to the bed. Oh yes, very grateful.

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Harry popped the last bite of biscuit in his mouth and leaned up for a swallow of water, before burrowing back under the covers and against Cainnech's toasty warm body. As he wiggled back, he gave an involuntary squeak of surprise, when Cainnech's morning erection poked him between the cheeks. Shifting slightly, he made a pleasant sound and a little wicked smile crept onto his face. Tapping his hip with two fingers, he mumbled two spells to lubricate and stretch himself. Moving his top leg forward, he inched back and shifted around until the head of Cainnech's cock met up with his pucker. Wiggling slightly, he pushed back and bore down to start accepting the hard flesh. Cainnech, still deep in sleep, reacted on instinct; exactly what Breen had been hoping for. As the big man's hips began to rock languidly, Breen met each thrust, pushing back a little more, taking in more each time. By the time, Cainnech was fully sheathed inside of him, Breen was feeling flushed, and Cainnech's strokes had a bit more force behind them, which necessitated Breen only rocking his hips a bit.

Lost in the delicious sensations, he almost missed a muscular arm snaking around from under his head to wrap around his upper torso under his arm, as a huge hand slid from his belly to gently grip his hip. He let out a moan and felt warm lips pepper sucking kisses up his shoulder to his neck, where teeth began to nibble teasingly.

"Mmmm... ye ken jus' how ta wake a mahn wi' a smile on 'is face... Och! Ye aer huggin' me so tight!" Cainnech's voice was rough with both sleep and arousal, his burr even thicker than normal.

"I thought we should start the day with something slow and delicious this morning, after last night's
high energy feast." Breen rocked back a bit firmer, hissing at the smooth slide of Cainnech filling him all the way up. "Ahh! You feel bloody good yourself."

Cainnech snorted in amusement. "Ye were a bit o' wild yerself las' night. "Al'ays luv ye tha' way."

He tilted Breen's hip slightly and canted his own just so, and began to brush Breen's sweet spot on every stroke. Breen threw his head back under Cainnech's chin and rocked back harder against each thrust. They moved like that for several minutes before Breen twisted his upper body so he could kiss Cainnech, the big man swallowing his cries as they both reached bliss together.

Cleaned up, they lay together, Breen's head, again, tucked below the big man's chin, as Cainnech cradled him, a large hand rubbing his back. Breen leaned his head back and looked up at Cainnech and received a warm smile before Cainnech bent his head and captured his mouth, kissing him deeply and thoroughly.

The pop of Dobby's arrival, ended the kiss, and they both turned to see the house elf *Levitating* two trays of food, as two sets of house robes floated to the bed. Dobby took the trays to the table near the windows and set everything out. He cast a *Warming Spell* over the large windows as they seated themselves.

"Good Morning, Master Breen and Master Cainnech. Dobby hopes you both slept well?"

"Thank you, Dobby. Yes, we are well-rested. Have you heard from Ailey?"

"Mistress Ailey says Mistress Eileen had breakfast with the staff and is helping with the horses." He glanced at the table as he bounced on his toes. "Can Dobby provide anything else for Masters this morning?"

"'Tis awl gud, Dobby. Thank'e." Cainnech raised his cup of tea in a salute toward the elf, who looked suddenly quite pink.

Breen snickered and gave Dobby a nod to let him know they were fine, and the elf looked relieved as he disappeared with a pop.

"Ye don' hav' tha typical hous' elv's."
"No. Dobby and Winky both are two of a kind. They took some getting used to at first, but now, I cannot imagine them not being here."

"Aye. Gud help es haerd ta find."

They chatted quietly as they ate. Then each showered and they dressed, before Cainnech drove Breen to the MacLeod’s. He stepped out after pulling the cart up by the back door to the kitchen, and helped Breen down. Leaning down, he brushed his lips against Breen's, lingering only a moment to memorize the smaller man's scent. Stepping back, he smiled warmly and Apparated back to the Creperie'. It was their way—to not say goodbye. Breen stood there for a moment, staring at the spot where Cainnech had been only moments before, as he savored the taste of the big man on his lips. The excited shriek of a small girl brought him out of his thoughts just in time to catch the small blur of his daughter as she races to him from the nearby stables.

"Da!"

Breen hugged her close. "How is my sweet girl this morning?"

"Fine, Da!" She pulled back and huge dark eyes stared up at him, full of excitement. "Da! Sadb ha' her foal las' night! He looks jus' like he's Da! A lil' Ruath!"

"We will have to go see him. But first, we need to go inside. Your cheeks are as cold as ice!"

He hustled her in the door ahead of him, reminding her to first stomp her feet then removed her boots once she was in the entry. They removed their outer robes, and gloves quickly and hung them up before entering the toasty warm kitchen. Breen inhaled deeply. Ailey was baking again, as she had been for weeks, in preparation for the celebration.

"Good Morning, Ailey!" Breen crossed the kitchen as fast as he was able to press a kiss to his pseudo-mum's cheek.

"Da! Dobby brough' Blaan an' Ruadh here!" Eileen's voice carried as she chased the dogs down the hall.
Ailey summoned two teacups and motioned for Breen to sit, as she took a seat at the end of the table near him. She filled both cups and pushed the milk and sugar toward him.

"So, ma Breen, did ye hav' eh pleasant time wi' Cainnech?" There was a mischievous look in her eyes as she glanced at him out of the corner of her eyes, the corners of her mouth just twitching a bit. "Ye hav' eh glow ab'ut ye... relax'd an' happy. Di' ye gud, Cainnech did."

Breen blushed, embarrassed. He knew he shouldn't be. After all, Ailey was a clever woman and never missed much, and working around farms and stock all her life, she had an earthy approach to things. She's seen him bare to the skin, giving birth. She knew that he shared an intimate relationship with the big Scotsman. So why was he so embarrassed? He sighed.

"It was unexpected, meeting Cainnech, but I realized I welcomed his company. He has always been able to help me past the stresses I don't even realize I have, until they are gone."

She smiled again, knowing that time spent with the big Stonemason was exactly what Breen needed. It was the closest thing to a relationship, though very casual, that he'd had since he had arrived in Bretagne, ten years ago. It was a very long time for someone as young as he to be alone. It was just a shame that the man could only visit a few times a year.

"Ailey, Cainnech... 'saw'... again last night. This time, it was about me." He held his cup up, and Ailey refilled it. "He said my soulmate is looking for me, though he doesn't really know it yet. And Cainnech said... he was sad that it couldn't be him." When Breen's gaze met Ailey's, his eyes were sad. "So am I."

She laid her hand over his and gave it a comforting squeeze. "Cainnech es on a journ'y jus' as ye aer. Yer paths hav' cross'd an' will m'ny times. Yer Soulmates aer jus' waitin' fer tha both o' yer paths ta cross thars, but until than...ye hav' each oth'r."

Laying a hand on the swell of his belly, his voice was quiet, almost hesitant. "I've been having dreams. I can't see him--he's always in the shadows, just out of sight. " Breen gazed out the window, seeing his memories as he spoke. "He has a deep voice. Soothing. I feel safe... and loved... when he is near."

"Doos 'e seem famil'r--som'one ye a'ready ken?"

Breen's brows furrowed. "No one comes to mind, so, I have to say, no. What do you think?"
"Som'times, Soulmates aer som'one we ken. Hav' ken fer a time. Et wou'd be som'one ye woudnae thi'k twice ab'ut. But a welcom' s'prise oth'rwise. As yer haert ken all thes time."

"I don't know, Ailey... There were so few people who didn't see me as someone everyone else thought I was. People who saw me only as a regular person, who wanted basic things. Hated being the center of attention..." The last was mumbled almost under his breath, as if it were an afterthought.

Ailey patted his hand. "Dinnae put so much w'rry inta et. Whan tha time comes, et will happ'n. An' we'll dance at yer bondin'. Drink mead, an' chouchen, an' wine, an' aet till we bust. We'll be m'rry an' dance! M'ybe bring tha' Albus Dumbl'dore char'cter haer an' see if'n 'e can kick up a jig wi' us!"

Breen suddenly had a vision of the Headmaster wearing a kilt and sporran, with one of his favorite shirts, under one of his painfully bright robes, with his colorful socks and his boots. He snorted and burst into laughter, arms wrapped around his belly. Ailey sat back and looked at him, wondering if he was all right. When tears started rolling down his cheeks and he gasped for breath, she became concerned.

"Breen?"

He took a breath as he looked at her, then was off again in another torrent of laughter. Eileen peered around the corner from the hall, her eyes wide as she watched her Da.

Breen was waving his hand around, "Just visions of Albus and his multicolored robes. Hiking them up to do a jig with one of the locals!" He snorted again, and hiccuped between snickers, his eyes wet and red-rimmed.

"Ah will look ferward ta et than!" She handed him a glass of cool water and her handkerchief. "Now, t'is bes' ye ca'm yerself. Too much excit'ment an' those laddies wi' keep ye aw'ke all night."

He waved at her as he tried to get control of his breathing, sniffling and wiping at his eyes. Ailey shook her head as she watched him. His emotions were all over the place with this pregnancy; even more so than they had been with Eileen. She wondered how long it would be today, before something caused his mood to dip into a brood. Ah well, she was used to it and she would just have to make one of his favorite dishes to cheer him up.
Severus rolled over and sat up, rubbing his face briskly, trying to wake up. He blinked toward the windows then grabbed his wand and cast Tempus. It wouldn't be sunrise for another couple of hours, and he didn't feel like getting up yet. Tossing his wand back on the nightstand, he flopped back onto the pillows, his hands behind his head. It had happened again—he'd had another of those mysterious dreams. And this time, because of the dream he'd awoken hard. That had never happened before, but then none of the other dreams had been like this one.

He found himself in a darkened hallway, lit only by a few candles in wall sconces. Looking around, he realized he was in an older home, as evidenced by the structure, and it was tastefully decorated. He looked down to see he was still dressed in his silk sleep pants, the silk shirt open. There was a door at the end of the hall; it beckoned to him. Walking carefully, so his steps made no sound on the tapestry rug. At least he wouldn't have to worry about swishing robes.

When he reached the door, he pushed it open, watching it disappear silently into the room. As he stepped through, it was as if he entered a light fog. Everything was slightly blurry, but the soft sounds in the room drew him quickly toward the large bed in the center of the room. He could see two figures, one considerably larger than the other—a man, and a woman? Slight form, long dark hair, fine features, and a obvious swell to the abdomen—a woman then. He walked around the bed, listening to the soft sounds and voices, realizing they were involved in the ultimate intimacy. His senses told him this was more than just sex.

Squinting, he studied the smaller form, trying to reason what wasn't right. Then he heard it—a soft voice cry out, ‘Ohhhh! Sweet Merlin! Yesss!’

His eyes widened when he realized that was a tenor voice, a male voice. The two lay beside each other, bodies entwined as closely as they could become. Then he was in the bed with the small male and the big blond was gone. He gasped. Lying on his back, he looked up to see the smaller man straddling him and didn't have time to speak before his erection was engulfed in warm tight heat. He gasped again and moaned at the sensation, as the body above him began to move, stroking him. He studied the form as his hands reached out tentatively to touch. Long dark wavy hair hung loose around the young man's body—long enough to almost brush his strong thighs. As his fingers traveled lightly over the form, his touch verified that the man was indeed lightly built, but well-toned.

He found he was drawn to the round swell right in front of him, and found he couldn't resist spreading his hand out over it as he gripped a slender hip with the other, so he could thrust up more firmly. His eyes widened and he sucked in a breath when he felt a small form roll under his palm, followed by a second one. A sudden feeling of possessiveness and protectiveness filled him. Studying the face above him, he tried desperately to see it more clearly.
"Who--are you?" He asked between grunts and gasps.

But he never received an answer as his unknown lover tensed and began to move more quickly.

"S-So close. Oh! So close!" The smaller man gasped.

Then he was lost in the sensations. Just before he awakened, he heard the young man cry out his name.

Reaching down, he stroked his slowly waning erection, and huffed in frustration. "Who are you? Why do you keep haunting my dreams? Making me feel as if part of me is missing?"

In every dream, if he could see the man, his face and anything definite about him, was hazy--obscured--so he hadn't been able to determine who it was. If it was anyone he knew. As the dreams had continued, he'd become restless, and the feeling had increased with every dream. He knew he needed to do something, but it escaped him as to what it was.

"Bugger!" He spat, as he rolled over and pulled the pillows over his head, hoping he could get back to sleep. He really needed to talk to someone about this. But who, he wondered.

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Chapter 16

2,118 words

Ginny Apparated to the garden outside the Burrow, smoothing her robes and checking her hair as she glanced around. She opted for simple Wizarding robes this time--custom-tailored from the finest fabrics of course. Also opting for an understated look, she had chosen dainty earrings and a simple pendant necklace. If she was to find out what her mother and that tea-sucking crowd of hers knew about Harry, she had to worm her way back into her mother's good graces again.
Casting one last *Smoothing Spell* on her robes, she stowed her wand and walked to the door. She could see her mother, through the glass, bustling about the kitchen. She appeared to be alone. Grinning to herself, Ginny lightly knocked on the door, before opening it and stepping through.

"Hello, Mum."

Molly spun, surprised. "Ginevra!" She wiped her hands on her apron before approaching her daughter. "This is a surprise!"

They embraced briefly, Ginny pulling away first and smoothing her robes before taking a seat at the table. Molly looked at her oddly and returned to the counter to fill the teapot with hot water.

"Is everything all right, Ginny dear?" Molly asked as she rounded the counter, *Levitating* the tea tray to the table. She sat down in the chair opposite Ginny and proceeded to pour two cups of tea.

"Do I need an excuse to see my mother? Or visit and have tea?"

"No, dear. Of course not. But we haven't seen you or heard from you since you first came back. So, I thought maybe something was wrong."

"I had some affairs to see to, paperwork to sign. The house to open up and set to rights. Now my time is free to do as I please. Except for a few social functions I must attend to. But, that is life as the widow of a well-known pureblood."

Molly reached out and patted her hand. "What are your plans now, dear? Surely, you have plans for more than social functions, and... shopping."

"My dear departed Chandubhai, was a patron for many charities and I've taken over many of them. I must visit some of his more charitable...endeavors. Keep up his good work in his name. It is enough to keep my busy."

"It's been over three years now, since he passed. Have you dated at all? You are too young to be alone, and there are always the children you could have."
Ginny kept her neutral mask in place. She would never be a brood mare like her mother. When she finally had Harry Potter in her grasp, she would have a couple of children; an heir and a spare. Since in English Pureblood Society, only children inherited, and the mother only received a trust set aside for a widow.

"My time of mourning is finally over, and I am thinking of looking for a suitable husband."

Molly smiled. "Well, that is wonderful to hear! Your father mentioned the other day that there are some new employees at the Ministry now, and several are from nice Pureblood families...Oh! Not that we would ever require you marry only a Pureblood, dear." She seemed a bit flustered at misspeaking.

"Oh I have my eye on a few of the more suitable wizards. Not that there are many to chose from. I mean, since some are marrying other wizards and-- witches like Hermione, attracted two of the most eligible bachelors... I'll just have to look far and wide for someone closer to my own tastes."

Molly watched her daughter's face as the young woman spoke. Several emotions flitted across the young face, some not so pleasant. She evidently still held ill feelings for what had happened years ago. "I would have thought that by now you would have put the past behind you. It has been several years, dear. Everyone else has moved on with their lives. Maybe you should too."

Something flashed in Ginny's eyes. "All I ever wanted was Harry. If we had been left alone, he would have never been harassed by the Ministry. We would have been happy."

"I understand. We all love Harry too, and looked forward to him being part of the family. But, the Ministry wasn't the only ones trying to manipulate him, Ginny. You need to be honest with yourself, even if you refuse to be with anyone else. A relationship cannot be built--or survive--without honesty and trust."

"He trusted me. If he had only let me talk to him, he would have understood what I was doing, was for him. The Ministry wouldn't have been able to dictate his life if he was married and had taken over his Head of Family duties."

"That may be true dear, but, how could you expect him to trust you when you were planning to deceive him? Those who bond and agree to bind their lives must be able to trust their mate in every way. Harry had already been deceived many times by people he had trusted. He obviously was deeply hurt by what he saw as your betrayal of his trust. Betrayal from someone he considered family. Ginny, Ginny... I thought you would have realized and learned by now..."
"Well, he ran away before anyone could explain. Ran away like a coward and, is still wanted by the Ministry. Is that a life?"

Molly sighed. "Since no one has heard from him, we can only guess at what he was feeling. But he is an adult Wizard now, and evidently decided whatever he did--wherever he went--was what he needed to do, for himself. I can only hope now he is in full command of his life and has some peace." Molly leaned back in her chair, glancing up toward the shelves on the wall. "Maybe someday he will come home."

Ginny followed her mother's gaze up to a elegant and very expensive teapot. The painting and style were exquisite. "How beautiful. Wherever did you get it? A gift from Father?"

Realizing where she had been looking, Molly sat up quickly. "Yes, it was a gift. Would you like some biscuits, dear? Or some scones? I baked several batches of each this morning." Molly stood and hurried over to retrieve two large tins and bring them back to the table.

Ginny looked at her mother through narrowed eyes. The teapot was more than a gift. Time to change the subject--for now. "So tell me about this job that you have taken? I was told you had a post at the Ministry that deals with Magical orphans."

Molly relaxed and launched into a detailed description of her position, what it entailed, and how she spent her days. She spoke about the children she helped, and Ginny appeared to listen intently to it all, while her mind whirled madly as to how she would find out where that teapot came from.

The Yule and the New Year came and went. Mystery packages were received individually by everyone in the 'Afternoon Tea Group', all of them quite pleased with the wonderful Yule gifts and treats they'd been sent. Severus continued to experience the dreams, which unsettled him even more. Indecisive as to whom he should speak to concerning them, he chose to keep them to himself for the time being. Hogwarts was again busy with the return of the students. With their departure only days away, Lucius and Remus prepared for their trip to Bretagne. With all the business of the holidays, the teas had been temporarily suspended, with the agreement they would resume when Lucius and Remus returned.

Ginny continued to have tea once a week with her mother, gaining tiny bits of information each
time. She carefully avoided everyone else from her family, and their friends. In the meantime, she contacted several experts in fine china to research the pattern she described from the teapot. Thus far, they had found nothing, suggesting it may be an independent artist. Paying another substantial fee, she demanded they check on that as well, searching outside of England if necessary.

Lucius and Remus strolled leisurely through one of the shops, browsing among the many beautifully crafted items. They were passing the time until they had to be at the MacLeod's estate to see his stock. They had already picked up several items; gifts for friends and family back home, and even a few things for their manor. Lucius was in the back of the shop, admiring the handtooled leather ledgers, journals, and desk sets, while Remus was at the front of the shop, intent on finding just the perfect gift for Molly.

"Luc?"

"Yes, Luv." The blond answered as he approached his mate, carrying two ledgers and three journals, all in different colors. "Did you find something for Molly, at last?"

"Look at this." He held up a soup tureen in the same pattern as the teapot and matching cups Molly had mysteriously received. "Tell me if this is, in fact, the same pattern as Molly's teapot."

"I do believe you are correct, Remi. Interesting. Shall we purchase a ladle to accompany it, as well?" He asked, moving toward a display of silverware and serving utensils.

"She will lov--" Remus began, before he turned suddenly toward the door as more customers entered, followed by a strong breeze from outside.

He watched the shoppers enter, not recognizing any of them, and continued to watch the door and the large windows that looked out onto the busy street. He watched a dark head--a dark messy head, pass the window and turn to cross the street, appearing to wait. He only caught the quickest flash of the face above the dark heavy robes. Could it possibly be? He sniffed the air again. And bolted for the door, leaving Lucius standing there, holding both tureen and ladle.

"Remus?!" He called after him, as he watched him exit the store, and come to an immediate halt, his face falling.
The person he had mistaken for his cub, turned slightly and pulled a long braid free of the cloak, and leaned forward to accept a kiss on the forehead from a very tall and very broad Scotsman, holding the hand of a small dark-haired girl of about three or four years old. The tall man reached out with his free hand and caressed the swollen belly Remus hadn't initially noticed below the dark robes. The three carefully crossed the street and disappeared into a shop on the corner.

Remus felt a warm hand at the small of his back. "Are you well, Remi?" Lucius looked concerned at the pale distressed expression on his mate's face.

"I thought--" He reached up to rub the back of his neck and glanced briefly at the shop the trio had disappeared into. "I could have sworn I smelled him, Luc."

"Whom, Remi?" Lucius' brows creased.

"H-Harry. I looked up, and thought I saw him outside, and smelled him... when I went outside, the scent was stronger, but not quite right. And... the person I thought was him... well... I was clearly mistaken."

Sliding an arm around Remus' waist, Lucius gently turned and guided Remus down the street to where their rented carriage awaited them. He leaned sideways and brushed a quick kiss to Remus' cheekbone. "I'm so sorry Luv. I know how much you miss him."

Waiting for Remus to climb into the carriage, Lucius made a mental note to owl Severus, asking him to do some investigating. Once he was settled comfortably next to Remus, and their laps were covered with the warm riding blanket, he snapped the reins and they headed out of town toward the hills.

Breen grasped Eileen's hand, as Cainnech followed them out of the chocolatier's. Cainnech had told him a humorous story and he was still laughing as he checked the street for traffic. Looking to his left, his eye caught a quick flash of long white blond hair, then it was gone. Shaking himself, he moved out of the way so Cainnech could exit the shop.

"Aer ye ailin' Breen luv?"

A large warm hand gently grasped Breen's shoulder. Breen shook himself again, and gave his friend a reassuring smile. "I am well, Cainnech. I was just reminded of someone I used to know, is all. You know everyone has at least one doppelganger somewhere."
"Aye. Ah waund'r ef yer's es as spec'l as ye aer, Breen."

Cainnech brushed his knuckles gently down Breen's cheek. Breen didn't quite know how to respond to that, but was saved by his daughter's craving for knowledge.

"Da, wha's a dobblegn'r?"

The men chuckled as they turned to head to the next shop, as Breen explained with Cainnech's help, what exactly a 'doppelganger' was.

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Chapter 17

2,892 words

Lucius and Remus arrived in the rear courtyard of the McLeod Manor, as directed. Ailey insisted all visitors be greeted as friends. Halting the horses, Lucius secured the reins and climbed down, as Remus exited the other side of the carriage. Lucius eyed his bonded with a worried look. Remus had been uncharacteristically quiet during the ride, when normally he would be talking about what he'd read of Bretagne in the past. One of the stablehands arrived to take charge of the horses and carriage as the men turned to see Ailey MacLeod standing on the back porch.

Lucius bowed his head slightly and offered her his hand. "Lady MacLeod, I presume?"

"Aye, but please call me Ailey." She said as she shook hands with him, then with Remus. "Ye're Lord and Mr. Malfoy-Lupin, then?"

"Yes, we are. Please call me Lucius, and this is my bonded, Remus." Remus bowed his head slightly toward her.
“Well, ye bes' be comin' in than, while tha tea es hawt an' the scones aer warm.” She turned and entered the huge kitchen, standing aside to direct them to the huge table where tea was already sitting out waiting. "Iain well be haer soon. One o' tha harser was attack'd by a wil' dawg. The healer es lookin' et tha mare now."

"It is no problem at all--Ailey. A cup of tea would be lovely, thank you." Lucius smiled, as they seated themselves.

Remus looked around the huge kitchen, appreciating the homey feel of the room despite it's large size. He accepted a cup of tea from their hostess, studying her as she poured a cup of tea for Lucius, followed by one for herself. She was an older woman he knew, older than his Máthai r, but she didn't look it at all. Long hair braided down her back and keen eyes that most likely missed little, she was obviously a hard worker, as evidenced by strong hands and her trim figure. He sensed she would be a lot like Molly--putting up with little nonsense.

The back door opened and shut with a sharp click. "Pleas' accep' ma apologies gentlem'n."

Lucius and Remus turned to see Iain MacLeod enter the room, a tall neatly dressed country gentleman. Before they could rise, he approached them, his hand extended. Ailey summoned another cup and saucer and poured a cup of tea for him.

"Sit! Sit! Pleas', enjoy yer tea." He walked around the table and sat next to his wife, placing a kiss on her cheek as he did. "Aye, Luv. Tha mare wi' be fine. Et was only a flesh woun'. Dougal was able ta corn'r tha feral beast an' put 'im down. Tha heal'r test'd 'im an' he was'n infect'd."

Lucius and Remus listened with interest to the exchange. One could learn much about a breeder from the small things. Lucius was in no hurry to interrupt the flow of conversation. He reached for a scone, split it and spread marmalade on both halves before placing one of them on Remus' plate. Ailey noticed the gesture out of the corner of her eye, but kept her face neutral.

"Och! Than' tha Goddess! faer tha'! Wi' she be scarr'd?"

"Aye, but nay seriously. T'won' affect her at all, an' since she es breedin' stock only..."

"Aye, t'is good Luv."
Iain turned to their guests, "Ah hope yer trip haer was pleas'nt."

"Yes, it was. Bretagne has always been a favorite of mine. We would vacation here occasionally when I was a boy." Lucius replied. "Though, this is Remus' first visit here."

Ailey excused herself from the table, crossing the room to the ovens to retrieve a half a dozen round golden loaves. Placing them on the other end of the table to cool, she retrieved pans of scones and rolls from the back counter and placed them in the ovens. She cast a *Timing Charm* and resumed her seat next to her husband. Remus inhaled deeply.

"That smells splendid!"

"Than' ye! Cookin' an' bakin' fer tha hands an' staff keeps me qui' busy. Than' tha Goddess, tha' puttin' up an' butcherin' es nay year round!" Her laughter was light and merry.

"So, Lord Malfoy-Lupin--"

"Please, call me Lucius."

"Aye, Lucius than. Wha' aer ye wantin' in tha harses ye're hopin' ta acquire?" Iain leaned forward on the table, giving Lucius his full attention.

"I breed my horses for riding as well as for drawing carriages and carts. I'm also interested in a few of the larger horses for some of my employees that have a small farm on my lands. Since the Corley's have been declining, I would like to build up that stock in Britain. No one else seems to be breeding them anymore though there is a desire for them, as well as the Postiers. So, I would like to obtain several Corleys and Postiers, and at least two pairs of Heavy Draft Bretons."

"Than we bes' tak' ye ou' ta tha stables than." Iain rose and gestured for Remus and Lucius to join him.

They exited the manor and crossed the back courtyard to the stables, as Iain waved to *Paidin*, one of the stable boys. "Have tha yearlin's releas'd int'a tha paddocks fer viewin'."
"Aye, Mast'r Iain." He replied and disappeared into the stables, calling for the other stable boys.

They spent the next several hours in the paddocks and the stables looking at the animals, Lucius trying to decide which he wanted since he was so pleased with what he saw. Impressed with the stables, paddocks, and pastures, and the competence of the staff, he had no concerns at all about the quality of the stock. He and Remus discussed several choices, and Iain was more than happy to answer any questions, even offering to pull the pedigree records when they returned to the manor.

Retiring to Iain's office, they discussed payment for the animals, finally coming to an agreement on a reasonable price. Lucius and Iain signed the purchase contract and Lucius handed him the Gringott's Magical Draft for the full amount of the payment—once they'd agreed the correct amount appeared automatically. He was now the owner of five pairs of Corleys, four pairs of Postiers, and three pairs of the Draft Bretons.

Of the Corleys and Postiers, each pair was a different coloring; chestnut, bay, grey, and two pairs were blue roan--Lucius' favorite. The Draft were chestnut and grey. Lucius was quite pleased with his acquisition as he gripped Iain's hand to shake on the deal. Remus smiled wanly, when Lucius glanced his way, concern obvious on his face. He was clearly distracted by something.

"I'll explain later, Luv." Remus told him in a quiet voice, trying to give him a reassuring gaze, that wasn't quite as successful as he'd intended.

Lucius gave him a minute nod and returned his attention to Iain and finalizing all the paperwork involved with the transfer of ownership of the thoroughbreds. He sensed his husband's restless movements next to him. Feeling Remus' hand squeeze his shoulder, he heard him rise and quietly leave the office, closing the door quietly behind him. Lucius closed his eyes briefly and released a sigh.

"Yer husban' seems ta be bothaer'd. Es he ailin'?" Iain asked, clearly concerned.

"He saw someone in the village earlier that he mistook for his missing godson. We have been searching for the young man for several years--since the end of the Dark War."

"Och! T'is a shame!" Iain set the parchments aside and turned to give Lucius his full attention. "Was hes dis'ppear'nce o'eh suspicious nature, than?"

"We feel sure he is well, but have not had known contact with him, and do not know where he is
now residing. The War was extremely hard on him, and sadly there were those who wished to interfere with his life. We are fairly sure that he left by his own choice, so he could finally live his own life.” Lucius twisted his bonding ring as he spoke. "It has been very difficult for those of us who care for him."

"Dinnae hes fam'ly ken where he es?"

"No. He has no living family. Those of us he cares for, including Remus, as his godfather, are his only family. He was orphaned as a baby.” Lucius saw no point in acknowledging the Muggles who didn't deserve to be known as Harry's relatives.

Iain reached into the cabinet behind his desk and retrieved a heavy glass bottle and two plain glass tumblers, placing them on the table between them. Pulling the stopper on the bottle, he poured two fingers of the golden liquid into each glass. Lifting his glass, he waited until Lucius picked up his. They lightly clinked the glasses together and drank.

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Remus walked the courtyard, then on through the stables, stopping periodically to stroke each curious velvety nose that stuck out to greet him. Heading outside again, he walked along the fenced paddocks, watching the horses cavort, while the handlers and stable boys worked. The Wolf was restless, agitated. It sensed it's cub and whined, close to the surface, though the full moon was still a fortnight away.

He couldn't seem to forget the scent he had detected in the village. It was still strong in his senses, and he wasn't sure why. That was why he had decided to come outside and take a stroll in the fresh air, to help clear his head and try to calm himself. Unfortunately, it was as if he was still standing on the walk outside that shop. As he rounded the last paddock and moved into the stable that housed the recently weaned foals, a strong breeze rose and blew locks of hair into his face that had come free of the tie as his nape. The air moved quickly through the building, from the open doors at one side to the other end, through the open doors where he had entered. In an unconscious reaction, he inhaled deeply--and came to an immediate stop, when the Wolf came to attention. His eyes widened and began to scan the area and his nostrils flared as he scented deeply, walking slowly as he tried to find the source of the scent.

"Remus!” Lucius voice called from the courtyard. "Remus?”

He growled deep in his throat, in frustration, before calming his features and turning to find his husband standing in the doorway, leaning against the frame nonchalantly, his arms crossed and a
look of concern on his face. "What is troubling you so, my Luv? Are you still disturbed by your experience in the village?"

Remus stepped close to Lucius, but left a acceptable small distance between them, in case they were being observed. He looked over Lucius' shoulder, toward the manor, and scanned the area before he spoke. "I don't feel comfortable discussing this here, Luv. Have you completed everything?"

"Yes, the horses will arrive in three days. The Stable staff will be ready." Lucius reached up and cupped Remus' cheek. "I will convey our gratitude for the hospitality, and say our farewells. Why don't you go wait in the carriage. I see it is ready and waiting for us."

"I believe I will. Please give my regrets to Iain and Ailey. They are very pleasant people."

Remus turned and headed toward the carriage, his shoulders drooped to match his mood. Lucius met the MacLeod's outside the kitchen door and explained they wouldn't be staying for more tea. When he climbed into the carriage, he leaned over and kissed Remus on the cheek. They waved at the MacLeod's as the carriage circled the courtyard, their hosts waving and smiling back.

"They understand Remi, and they would like to have us enjoy dinner with them sometime in the near future." Lucius glanced at Remus out of the corner of his eyes. "I believe I shall be doing business with Iain MacLeod again."

Remus' eyes didn't stray from the road in the front of the horse drawing the carriage. "They are very personable people. Most definitely not your typical well-to-do gentry."

They rode along in silence for almost twenty minutes, and it had been at least ten of those minutes since they'd passed the last occupied area. Lucius looked at his husband again, studying Remus' body language.

"Remi, do you want to tell me now?"

Letting out a frustrated sigh, Remus scrubbed at his face with his hands and barely caught himself before he ran his hands through his hair, so he wouldn't pull it free from it's tie. "His scent is still with me, Luc. I just know it's him--and the Wolf is adamant that it is him."

"Well. You'd mentioned in the village that the scent was his but different. How is it different?"
Lucius wanted to draw out Remus' analytical side and hopefully distract him from his emotions and the Wolf.

Remus closed his eyes, envisioned the last time he had hugged Harry and inhaled his scent, trying to determine exactly how to describe it. Harry had always been fresh grass, the sweetness of candy, with an undertone of broom polish and leather, and the herbal hair potion he washed his hair with.

Then he brought up the memory of the scent from earlier today. The initial burst, wafting in on the breeze, into the shop, had been strong. When he'd followed it outside, it had lingered, so his memory of it was clear. Maybe that was why he could still smell it at the MacLeod's? But how was it different? The scents of fresh grass and leather were the same. He could still smell polish but he didn't think it was broom polish. The herbal scents were similar and even the candy sweetness, though it seemed to lean more toward chocolate now. What confused him, was the new unknown component. It was somehow familiar but he couldn't seem to pinpoint what it was. The Wolf was whining again, wanting his cub.

He opened his eyes and studied his hands clasped in his lap. "For the most part, it really isn't very different from what I remember, except for one particular part of it. It's familiar, but at the same time doesn't seem to fit. It's going to drive me mad until I figure it out."

Lucius reached over and twined his fingers with Remus' and gave a gentle squeeze. "I wish there was something I could do to help you, Luv. I could ask Severus and Kingsley to use their substantial contacts to do some checking. I know we've discussed it, but as yet, have not set anything into motion. Maybe, it's time we did."

"Yes. I agree."

"I will contact Severus as soon as we are back in our rooms for the evening. Would you like to try another of the local restaurants, or would you prefer we dine in our rooms tonight."

Remus lifted Luc's hand to his lips and kissed the back of it. "I think I'd prefer to eat in tonight. My appetite is just not present today."

"Understandable. I'll order something light for both of us, then we can sit on the balcony and enjoy the evening."

Remus smiled, and leaned against Lucius. "I knew there was a reason I love you."
"I love you too, Remi."

Neither of them noticed the small cart and horse that passed them on the road.

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Cainnech smiled as he pulled the horse and cart to a halt in the courtyard, looking over to see Breen and Eileen still asleep.

Breen had his arms wrapped around his daughter on his lap, her head tucked under his chin, a Security Spell keeping them secure in the cart. They had dropped off to sleep before they had reached the edge of the village, both father and child spent from a busy day shopping.

Ailey hurried out of the door, reaching for Eileen as Cainnech lifted her off of Breen's lap. "Och! Me poor wee lass. Ye wore haer oot."

"Nay. The bairn wore us awl oot, Ah think." Cainnech whispered as he pulled Breen into his arms and followed Ailey into the manor kitchen.

He followed her through and down the hall to where Breen and Eileen's rooms were. She quickly stripped the child and dressed her in a warm nightgown before tucking her into bed with one of her favorite plushies. When she stepped into Breen's room, Cainnech had lain Breen on his bed, had removed his boots and heavy socks and was working on the heavy robes. Ailey stood in the doorway and watched the big Scotsman for a few minutes. His touch was gentle and careful as he removed the heavy winter robes, and loosened the ties on the tunic underneath. He realized he was being watched and gave her a quick smile.

She approached him, laying a hand on his arm. "Ah'll take care o' tha rest, Cainnech. Ye aer dead an yer feet. Take tha spare room. Ye can go ta home in tha mornin'."

He suddenly looked as tired as he felt. "Thank ye, Ailey." He turned and walked slowly from the room.
She called after him. "Fresh nightshirts aer in tha amoire."

Returning her attention to Breen, she began to undress him and get him ready for bed, working quickly and gently, though she doubted he would awake any time soon.

TBC...
Severus and Albus had spent the last hour discussing the Slytherin students that were having problems and what needed to be done for each of them. A tea tray and a plate of sandwiches had appeared on the corner of the desk, signalling that it was time for a break. They each prepared a cup of tea and selected a sandwich, settling back in their chairs to relax for a bit.

A flapping of wings had both of them looking up to see a large black hawk sail through the window and land on the back of Severus' chair. The bird cocked its elegant head at Severus and stuck out its leg. Setting his cup and plate down, Severus hastily wiped his hands and mouth on the napkin that had been draped across his lap. After he removed the scroll, the bird moved to the back of Albus' chair to accept a large piece of one of the sandwiches before moving to the messenger perch next to the window, tuck his head and have a kip before returning.

Severus unrolled the parchment and began reading, immediately recognizing Lucius' elegant script...

Sev,

All is well here in Toulbroch. We are enjoying our stay here. I have acquired some excellent breeding stock from a well known breeder here. I am quite pleased indeed, and will most likely do business with Lord MacLeod again. But that is not my primary reason for contacting you. Remus experienced something very upsetting the day we were scheduled to meet with McLeod. We had
been shopping in Toulbroch for gifts when Remus bolted out of the shop, positive he'd scented Harry. He states the Wolf sensed him too. Though it initially appears he was mistaken, I am not convinced.

The entire time we were at the MacLeod’s Manor, Remi could still detect the scent. He is very upset by all of this. It took me some time this evening to convince him that we should not cut our trip short and return home. One other bit of information I think you should know is, that Remi stated the scent was slightly different from what he remembered, as if there was an added component now. He states there is a familiarity there, but he is unable to determine what it is, and is unable at this time to successfully describe what it smells like to him. I know it is not much help, but, would you and Albus use your contacts to see if it is possible that Harry could be living here in Bretagne, or has at least traveled through here recently?

And there are other interesting bits of information. The shop we were browsing in at the time, carries other china pieces in the same pattern as Molly's teapot. We've acquired a very nice matching soup tureen and ladle for her. We also noticed that some of the dishes we tried here were reminiscent of some of the items we've enjoyed during our teas.

Please send back your reply with Ciar. I await your reply.

Yours,

Luc

Severus read it a second time before handing it off to Albus to read. "It's a missive from Lucius. It is very possible that we might have a clue as to where Harry is, or has been."

"Really." Albus replied as he took the parchment, his eyes twinkling with interest as he began to read, his heart feeling lighter than it had in ages. Finally, a real clue of where his Harry might be or where he was headed. A tear slipped down his cheek.

"Albus?"

"I'm fine, Severus. Just does a heart good to know that he's well. The gifts are good,...but a clue... a real clue."
Severus picked up his cup of tea and smiled. "Yes, it would be good to know where he is. It would put everyone's minds at ease."

"Agreed, Severus. But, the information would need to be safeguarded in regards to Ginny Weasley Unmesh." The twinkle went cold at the mention of that witch's name.

"Indeed! Perhaps one of us could speak to Molly about the possibility that there could be other marriage contracts at the Ministry in reference to the Weasley and Prewett families."

Albus' twinkle returned. "No need to talk to Molly unless we have to. I have a few trustworthy and closed-mouthed friends who work in the Ministry Archives." He waved his hand banishing the tea tray and used dishes, and a fresh tea tray appeared in their place. "Well, I supposed we must complete our tasks."

Severus agreed with a sigh, and pulled his chair closer to Albus' desk again and the stack of student files and parchments were again opened. Neither man noticed Fawkes titter at the hawk, or the bird move to join Fawkes on his perch. While the men worked, both birds perched, heads together, 'talking' to each other quietly.

A few days later, both Albus and Severus had contacted the necessary people to set things in motion. Albus had contacted Kingsley for status on Mrs. Unmesh. It wouldn't do for the woman to find Harry before they did. It had been decided to not inform the rest of their group of the possible clues, unless something concrete came of them.

Only Albus knew it was Percy who volunteered to go down into the Ministry Archives to search for contracts. Since Magical Law was his specialty, he knew that his father, as the sole remaining male Heir and Head of the Weasley Family, and his Mother, the oldest remaining Heir of the Prewett Family, could still enact contracts in Ginny's name until she was thirty-five years old. That was, if there wasn't already a contract out there that could be implemented. He would have to verify that first before approaching his parents.

He'd made a hobby of studying the laws and contracts directly pertaining to, and affecting his lineage. He and his brothers had discussed at length, the problems caused by Ginny's selfish twisted thinking and plotting. He'd always felt that she had been permanently affected by her experience in First Year with that cursed journal. Yes, he would dig until he found something--anything to bind her to a husband who would be strong-willed enough, and clever enough to keep her under control. He suddenly grinned to himself, as he lifted a dusty stack of parchments from the cabinet labeled
Bondings, Bindings, Marriages, and Betrothals.

"A Slytherin, perhaps..." He mumbled to himself as he began to scan the documents, casting Search Spells as he did.

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A scruffy-looking brown barn owl, landed in the middle of the marble table, and stuck out its leg. Not quite fast enough, it missed when it snapped its beak at the small elegant fingers that relieved it of its burden. Not waiting for a reply, it disappeared back out the window before the birch wand could be flicked in its direction.

Lady U.~

I am most please to inform you that the artisan who creates the china pieces you are interested in has been located. He is in Oriane Margaux, France. It is a small, Wizarding, Artisan Community near Calais and the border to Belgium. The wares from his shop are sold all along the western coast of France. Please convey further instructions with next payment.

~Delaney

Ginny smiled evilly to herself, as she began to pen a response. It was definitely time to have tea with Mum again.

Ppqpqpq

Breen woke up the next morning refreshed and happy. Eileen was cuddled up next to him, sleeping soundly, with her plushie tucked in her arms. After washing up and re braiding his hair, he donned the heavy house robe Ailey had made him and his fur-lined house boots and stepped outside for a bit of fresh air. As he'd passed through the kitchen, Ailey hadn't been in there, but the large room was, as usual, filled with the heady scent of baking bread, eggs, and cooked meats. He smiled as he stepped outside and stood on the stoop.

He sat down on one of the rocking chairs that sat near the kitchen door of the manor house, trying to find a comfortable position, he settled finally and watched as some of the breeding stock was being
led out to one of their Magical Transport Trailers. He smiled. Iain had most likely made a very profitable transaction the previous day. There were at least two dozen animals waiting to be loaded into the trailers—several of them, blues—his favorite. The purchaser evidently didn't reside in Bretagne, or anywhere nearby, for that matter. Iain only used those trailers for long-distance deliveries. The animals would have to be sedated, and he could see the healer standing by with the potions.

One of the newer stable boys was struggling with a rather spirited blue yearling, that obviously did not want to enter the trailer. Breen recognized it as one he had cared for after it's dam had passed away after birthing it. Heaving himself out of the rocker, he crossed the courtyard, and began to talk quietly to the animal as he got closer. Micah noticed him approaching and realized what he was going to do. Flanking Breen, he gave him a smile and watched to make sure the yearling didn't rear. The blue was pulling back on his lead, shaking his head, and snorting in fear.

"Shush, shush, wee Frang! Calm yourself. Shush, shush." Breen crooned as he reached out with one hand, to grasp the lead right below the horse's muzzle, as he reached up, with the other, to gently stroke the velvet nose.

Frang's nostrils flared, as he tried to scent the new creature who had approached, and was touching him now. Breen lowered his hand so Frang could nuzzle it and get his scent. Recognizing Breen as his caretaker, he immediately calmed and nibbled gently at Breen's fingers, as if asking for a treat.

Micah handed Breen a sack of treats—sliced apples and carrots. Breen smiled, "Thanks, Micah." He pulled out a slice of apple, and held it out to the yearling. "Ah Frang. My good boy. No one is going to hurt you." He crooned.

The rest of the men stood around, as they held the leads to their animals, watching Breen work his magic with Frang. It wasn't long before Breen was surrounded by horses, nuzzling him, whickering and asking for treats. Micah stayed close by, and Dugan moved to flank Breen's other side. Breen laughed as he was gently 'kissed' and nuzzled by the yearlings, who seemed to sense his 'delicate condition'.

It would have made a wonderful Wizarding photograph. That was, until the spell of the moment was broken. Ailey's voice was loud and clear in the early morning air as she strode across the courtyard, and several of the men hunched their shoulders as if they were errant boys suddenly caught in an act of mischief.

'Breen Ewan, wha' aer ye doin'?! Tak' yerself aw'y from tha harses this instan'!!" "Micah Josef Sullivan! Dugan Martan MacCoy! Aer ye daft?!? Lettin' Breen an' tha bairns near tha yearlin's! Ye should be asham'd o' yerselves!"
The men and horses parted as Ailey approached, revealing Breen surrounded by affectionate beasts, laughing merrily as his hair was nibbled and his belly was snuggled gently. He looked at the thunderous expression on Ailey's face, her gaze heavily laced with concern. He'd better waylay her or everyone would feel the repercussions.

"It’s alright, Ailey. Frang was anxious. And he always settles well for me." Breen continued to pet his friend. "Now you be good for your new owner. I'll miss you, my friend."

Kissing him on the muzzle, he motioned to the stable boy to load the yearling while he was still quiet. Turning back to Ailey, he donned his sweetest smile, and held out his arms, empty treat bag still in his hand. "I'm fine. So are the twins. See."

Ailey's eyes flashed. Her response was to point toward the manor with her wand. Breen needed no more prodding than that as he walked...no, waddled, back towards the kitchen door.

"Wha' waer ye thinkin'? Aft'r wha' happen'd wi' Eileen? Ye'd nae forgive yerself ef harm cam' ta tha bairns! Now shoo! Ah've ye bre'kfast waitin'."

"Yes, Mum. Won't do it again, Mum. Promise Mum. Love you Mum, for caring about me and the children."

"Och ye!" She smacked him on the bum as she passed him on the back porch, her voice no longer tinged with ire. "Jus' rememb'r ta watch yerself, ye haer?"

"Brats," she mumbled on her way through the kitchen door.

"Seat yerself an' feed thos' bairns!"

He chuckled. "Yes, Mum." He replied as he slid into his chair at the end of the table, and Ailey placed a prepared plate, a glass of fresh milk, and a cup of tea in front of him. She stood over him, arms folded across her chest, until he had consumed at least half of his breakfast.

He really enjoyed being mothered.
Albus shivered, as he entered his office, waving a hand toward the fire to stoke it higher. Spring, with it's warmer temperatures couldn't arrive fast enough. He stepped behind his desk, and started to sit down, when he noticed it. That book was on the floor again. He turned and looked at Fawkes, but the phoenix was sound asleep with his head tucked under his wing. That was five days now, that the book had been on the floor when he'd entered his office in the morning. Odd. Peeves isn't supposed to be able to cross the wards to his office. He cast a Wandless Levitation Spell to return the book to it's niche and then settled down to prepare his first cup of tea, and peruse the morning's edition of The Daily Prophet. By the time Minerva arrived to accompany him to breakfast, he'd forgotten about the mysterious falling book, his mind busy with school business, and the St. Valentine's Day Festivities in a couple days.

Severus pushed aside the stack of parchments he had just finished marking, and poured himself a fresh cup of tea. His Owlpost still sat on his desk from the morning. Now was as good a time as any to read it. He sorted through it; potions journals, correspondence from the Potion Masters Guild, a few more thank-you cards for Yule gifts, a letter from his sister, the latest shipment list for the Apothecary, and... wait... what's this?

Looking at the official seal on the last parchment, he set the rest aside, thinking the seal was familiar. Casting the spell to release the seal, he unrolled the parchment and began to read, his eyebrows creeping closer to his hairline as he did.

Clinique de Fertilité

Brest Wizarding University Hospital
Dear Mr. Snape~

According to our records an acquisition of your stored genetic material, batch #1980-SNA998, was made approximately six months ago, which we have recently verified, produced a viable pregnancy. Our records also indicate that a similar acquisition was made four years ago, also resulting in a viable pregnancy.

Due to a clerical error, you were not informed of the first transaction. For that, we extend our sincerest apologies. Confidentiality, as well as, keeping our clientele informed, is a priority. We have instituted new measures to prevent such an error from ever occurring again.

If you wish to make further inquiries, please send Secured Owlpow to, or Floo our office directly.

Sincerely,

Madam Antionette Delacourette’, PhD, MH, MBAWM
Administrator of Records, Donations and Acquisitions
Clinique de Fertilité, Brest, France

Severus read the letter through twice more before he let his hand drop to his lap, clearly stunned by the news. He’d completely forgotten that trip with Lucius, to his family’s chalet in France. So many years ago, and everyone had been so skittish about the Dark Lo--Voldemort. They’d been traveling, adventurous, living life, when they’d arrived in Brest. They’d spent an evening in that pub, talking until the bouncer tossed them out at closing. The next day, when they passed that hospital annex and saw the sign for the clinic, it had been an unspoken agreement between them. Later, they’d left knowing whatever happened, there would be something of themselves left behind. Safe. A part of them that could go on if they were lucky.

He needed to talk to Lucius. Wondering if he had also received similar correspondence, he rose, grabbed a handful of Floo powder. Tossing it in the hearth, he called out the destination and disappeared.
Ginny sat at the large table in the Burrow's kitchen, watching her Mum prepare tea, as she thought about the message she had received from Delaney that morning. She smiled to herself. With a little persuasion, the artisan had been cooperative in handing over his list of merchants who sold his pieces. Of course, the man wouldn't be making any pottery, ceramics or china for a while, until his hands healed, if ever. And the Irishman had already covered a third of the merchants on the list.

Sitting there smiling as her Mother sat down before her, Ginny felt giddy inside. She was so close to finding Harry, she could almost feel him sitting next to her. Here, in her family's home, where he belonged, and then they would all know she was right. She could hear the apologies and the pleas for forgiveness already.

"Ginny, dear..." Molly placed her hand on her daughter's arm.

Shaking away the thoughts for later, she turned a bright smile toward her mother. "What have you baked to go with tea today, Mum?"

Molly looked at her oddly, as she motioned to the plate on the table, filled with biscuits of several different varieties. "I mentioned when you arrived that I had been baking all weekend. Didn't you hear me, dear?"

Smiling, "Sorry, Mum. My mind wandered for a moment."

"Is something wrong?"

"Oh no. Everything is fine. Quite a bit on my mind lately. Just some things I've been working on are finally coming to fruition."


"Business." She wasn't about to tell her it was about Harry. They would only try to keep them apart.
"Some of Chandubhai's?"

"Why, yes. He had merchants that sold fine china and other wares around the world. I had just received word of a new... line, he had acquired." Her gaze flicked briefly toward the shelf that held the special teapot.

Molly had risen and moved to the kitchen to retrieve another serving plate. Returning she placed it on the table, with two dessert plates and forks. She proceeded to cut slices and placing them on the plates. "I tried a new recipe yesterday. It's a *Kouign-Amann* -- a Breton Butter Cake. Try a piece. I think you will enjoy it."

"You've expanded your recipes. What prompted you to try new dishes?" Ginny asked innocently, hoping she could steer the conversation in her favor.

Molly fiddled a bit with her napkin. "Oh, well, we've been chatting over tea and discussing the different things we've all tried when we've traveled."

"And where have you traveled Mum? I didn't know you and Dad did any."

"Well, we weren't always an old married couple with a brood! Your Father and I did do a bit of traveling on our honeymoon, and before Bill was born. It was still relatively safe then."

"Have you not traveled since we've all left? Surely there are places that you both want to see?"

"Of course there are. But we will wait until your Father retires for that."

"Have you been to France?"

"No." Molly sighed. "Not yet..."

"You should take day trips across the channel. Or even enjoy an overnight. It would be a wonderful time the both of you. You could browse the shops and bring back lovely things for the Burrow--like that teapot." Ginny nodded her head toward the shelf where Molly's treasured teapot sat.
Just barely suppressing a cringe when she saw Ginny nod toward the shelf, Molly suddenly stood and moved to the cooktop and tapped the teakettle. "I'll make another pot of tea, shall I?"

Suppressing a satisfied smile, Ginny turned to face her mother. "Did Dad give you the teapot. Or Bill, perhaps?"

"Well you know your Father and brothers--always buying little things for me when they are out and about."

Molly dropped fresh tea leaves into the teapot, filled it with hot water from the kettle, replaced the lid, and brought it to the table. "Have I shown you the lovely shawl Viktor's mother crocheted for me? From hand-twisted unicorn hair. They have black, and silver, long-haired unicorns over there you know."

"I'm sure Luna could tell me all about them." Ginny grumbled to herself as Molly rushed off to her bedroom to retrieve the shawl.

She'd found out enough, so when Molly came back, box in hand, Ginny plastered a pleasant smile on her face, ooh-ing and aah-ing appropriately as Molly modeled her gift. She would owl Delaney concerning Breton as soon as she returned home.

The following week, Molly had received an Owl that Ginny was to be out of the country on business, so it was the perfect Saturday afternoon to have their special 'tea'. They wouldn't have to worry about her making a sudden appearance. Another mysterious package had arrived a few days previously, so she'd contacted everyone. They all had arrived and were now settled around the table, the kitchen toasty warm despite the rain and cold temperatures outside. The tea service was in the center of the table and Hermione and Luna were helping Molly move the serving dishes to the table.

She'd been keeping an eye on Ron. He and Viktor had arrived the day before and spent the night. Ron had been restless all morning. Viktor waited until Ron had been in the loo that morning to make her aware that Ron hadn't slept well the night before. He had been up every few hours pacing—complaining that he couldn't get comfortable. As she placed the last plate on the table, she noticed he wasn't at the table, and looked at Viktor. He nodded his head toward the lounge, where Ron could be seen pacing back and forth, one hand under his belly and the other in a fist, pressing into his lower back. She narrowed her eyes as she watched her son. It wouldn't do to hover since he was easily
agitated these days. Viktor seemed to sense her thoughts and rose from his seat, disappearing down the hall to the lounge. She smiled when she saw him pull Ron to him, encouraging him to lay his head on Viktor's shoulder, while he massaged Ron's lower back. Molly smiled and turned her attention back to her guests.

Everyone had filled their plates, eating, talking, and laughing. The teapot had already been refilled twice. As usual there had been a delicious assortment of items in the newest package, and everyone was discussing what they liked the best. Viktor had managed to coax Ron back to the table, where he sat with a cup of milky tea with lots of sugar and a small plate with a slice of one of the pastries. The cup was tepid and still half full, and he was poking his fork into the pastry. Clearly his usual healthy appetite was absent. Viktor leaned over and whispered in his ear.

"Do you not like da pastry, Luv. WOULD you like sometink else? Some juice, perhaps?"

Ron just shook his head, not taking his eyes from his plate. Viktor felt him tense, and ran his eyes over his mate, noticing the white-knuckled grip he had on his fork. Noone else seemed to have noticed yet, since they were still chatting calmly.

"Are you vell, my Luv?" Viktor reached back to rub comforting circles on Ron's back.

Ron remained silent, but he nodded, glancing up at Viktor. The tension in his body eased away and Ron relaxed.

"I'm fine Luv. The baby is laying funny on my insides and it's quite uncomfortable."

Hermione glanced over and noticed Ron and Viktor talking quietly. Ron looked a bit peaked. Leaning over, she spoke low enough that the others wouldn't hear.

"Ron, are you feeling okay? You're looking a bit off."

He gave her a wan smile. "M'kay."

She frowned. "Aren't you due soon? When was your last Healer appointment?"
"I'm fine," Ron grounded out. "The baby is just--uncomfortable..."

"Are you sure? Maybe you should lie down."

"Mione!" Ron hissed.

"Who's your Healer? Maybe we should Firecall him!"

"Er-mi-o-nee!" Viktor warned in a low firm voice.

"Ron's gaze rose from the table to meet hers. "Moine! I'm fine." He growled under his breath. "I don't--"

Ron's face paled as he tensed, dropped his head to his chest, and gave a loud pained moan. The unexpected sound immediately silenced everyone in the room and drew all eyes to focus on him. Viktor was talking quietly to him, his hand still massaging his shoulders. Ron didn't move except to bite his bottom lip, evidently in an attempt to not moan aloud again.

"Ronnie, breath dear. " Molly spoke calmly as she circled the table to see to her son. "Luna, please Firecall St. Mungo's and ask for Healer Smythe. Tell him it's time."

"Oh HELL NO!" Draco yelled.

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Chapter 20

3,062 words

"Oh HELL NO!" Draco yelled. His eyes were wide as he watched his former schoolmate struggle with the pain he could no longer hide. Only Neville's hand on his shoulder kept him in his seat.
"Dray, shush!" Hermione snapped, as she gave him a no-nonsense look that clearly said, 'stay put'.

Ron suddenly reached out and grabbed the nearest hand, which just happened to be Severus', and let out a wail, as he squeezed said hand in a viselike grip. To the Potion Master's credit, he barely winced. Remus' Werewolves hearing just caught Severus' hiss--Lucius gaze following his mates. Both men struggled to contain their amusement at their friend's predicament.

Albus' eyes were twinkling madly as he watched his friends. "A baby! What a splendid event for a Saturday afternoon! And we came only expecting tea, good food, and good company!"

"Want to trade places, Albus? I'm sure Ronald would appreciate your help more than mine!" Severus murmured through gritted teeth.

"When Luna is done, I will contact the twins. Where is Arthur? Is he working?" Hermione rose from her chair.

"No need dear." Molly reached up and touched the hands of the family clock, tapping the ones for each member who wasn't currently at home. Her finger passed over Ron's, and then her daughter's, knowing the girl's presence would only upset her Ronnie. She turned around and smiled at Hermione. "They all know now."

Molly moved around the table to help Viktor get Ron to his feet, so they could walk him to the guest room off the lounge. She had, with Luna's help, just finished setting it up the previous day, just in case. All they needed now was the Healer.

"He's a bit early isn't he?" Neville asked, clearly not ruffled by the situation. Instead, he was curious.

Luna answered. "Actually, as of last week, the Healer said it could be anytime. There's a fortnight leeway either way of the due date."

"Ah." Neville answered, before turning to watch Ron being guided down the hall. Severus was shaking his hand and flexing his fingers, trying to get the blood and feeling back into them, as he scowled at a smirking Albus.
"We were having such a nice quiet tea...Now this!" Draco's face took on a pouty appearance.

"Draconis Lucian Alexander Malfoy-Lupin." Remus chided firmly; his voice low. "This is something very special. You should feel honored to be here to share in the experience."

Just then, another loud moan echoed down the hall into the kitchen, causing Draco to cringe. Lucius smirked as he watched his son's reaction. Remus just shook his head.

"Special bloody experience, my arse!" He mumbled under his breath as he put another sandwich on his plate. "Ow!" he yelped when he was cuffed on the head.

"Dray, behave!" Hermione glared at him, as Neville silently looked over her shoulder at him, amusement dancing in his eyes.

Just then, the Healer arrived with his assistant, a young athletic-looking medi-wizard. Luna let them in and directed them to the room where Ron was. As they stepped out of the room, everyone turned when the door opened again, and four redheads entered the kitchen.

"Hello everyone!" Arthur smiled and nodded at the seated guests. "It seems we will have another Weasley tonight. You're all staying, yes?"

"Of course they're staying Arthur." Molly hurried back into the kitchen, stopping long enough to kiss her husband and hug Percy, and the twins who were standing beside their Father. "I'll just start things for dinner then. Hermione. Luna. Would you help me please?"

Percy gave Luna a hug and a kiss as she passed him on the way to help Molly. He then slid into the seat that Viktor had vacated, and Arthur took the one next to him. Neville summoned four more teacups, plates, and forks, and Levitated the tea tray down the table to them. The twins grabbed two more chairs from the corner and sat on the other side of their father.

"So, how long--" Began George.

"--has dear Ronniekins--" Fred continued.
Hermione rolled her eyes as she turned, a huge bowl of potatoes in her arms. "We aren't sure, but he made his discomfort known approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes ago."

"It will be a long night for Ronald, regardless." Lucius added. Arthur, Albus, and Severus nodded silently in agreement.

The twins grinned at each other.

"Maybe--"

"--we could--"

"--distract poor Ronniekins--"

"--from the pain."

Molly whirled from where she'd been working at the counter, and shook the spoon in her hand at them. "You boys will do no such thing! The last thing Ronnie needs is the kind of distraction you two are so fond of!" She then cast a serious eye toward her husband before returning to her task.

Arthur turned a serious face to his twins. "Your mother's right. Distracting a laboring parent-to-be is not wise--and can be painful--for both the laboring parent and anyone near." He was rubbing his left hand as he spoke.

Draco's eyes widened. "W-Why?"

Molly's voice echoed in the large kitchen. She didn't bother turning around this time. "Because he tried to talk to me during contractions when I was having Bill. I broke his fingers and hexed him--wandlessly."

The younger Malfoy paled and shifted in his seat. Arthur chuckled.
"Wandlessly? I wasn't aware you could perform wandless magic, Molly." Severus' expression was surprised but curious.

"Normally, I can't." She turned and tapped two large pots on the stove with her wand. "But while I'm pregnant, for some reason I can. And evidently, so can Ronnie, according to Viktor."

"Isn't that unusual?" Hermione asked.

"Not as much as you might think, Hermione." Lucius answered. "My Uncle Ambrosius didn't require a wand during any of his pregnancies."


Draco suddenly looked very confused. "Uncle Am-- I thought-- he-- Aunt Josette. Aw hell, I thought he just ate too much pastry!!"

There was laughter and snickers all around the table. Lucius raised an eyebrow at his son, then shook his head.

"Hmmm... really. A Malfoy giving birth to twins just like the Weasley's..." Hermione's voice trailed off as she sat back down between her men. "I'll have to research that."

Neville nodded in agreement.

Draco looked to his lovers, "I want an heir, or two, or even three, and I love the both of you very much. I'll gladly help any other way... but I draw the line at giving birth!"

Hermione looked hurt. They both knew that it might be impossible for her to carry, let alone give birth to children because of her war injuries. Their Healer was still researching. Neville wrapped an arm around her shoulders and kissed her on the cheek. Draco gave her a sideways look and at least had the decency to look ashamed of his outburst.
Molly set a fresh tea tray on the table and asked who wanted a fresh cuppa.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the house...

Ron had pulled his husband down till they were nose to nose, gritting his teeth through a contraction, "I. Want. A. Pain. Potion. Now! And not just any pain potion. I WANT SNAPE’S PAIN POTION!"

Healer Smythe stood at the end of the bed, a look of understanding in his eyes. "Now Mr. Weasley-Krum. Ron, it's much too soon for that. Your contractions are still at a mild level for a male labor. If you would just lie in one of the positions we discussed and try to relax, they wouldn't hurt as much. You are fighting against what your body is trying to do. And if you don't stop, your body will not make the necessary changes and the labor will be much longer. I know you don't want that."

"Ronald, my Luv. Please listen to da Healer. He knows vat iz best." Viktor gently pried his husband's fingers from the front of his robes as he spoke.

"I'm never having sex again!" Ron growled when his contraction finally abated.

Viktor brushed the sweaty red hair away from the face he loved so much. "I know it hurts. But in a few hours we'll be holding our child. Born of our love. Molly Elisbeth Louise will be da center of our world and proof of our love."

Ron turned pleading eyes toward his mate. "I know. But it Hurts!"

Viktor sat on the edge of the bed, brushing the mop of bright red hair out of his husband's eyes. "Yes. Ve talked of dis. Many times. You can do dis. You are strong vizard. Now, let me help you get comfortable, then I vill massage your back."

Ron smiled. "Together."

"Together."

"I wish Harry was here," Ron whispered. "He would be one of her godfathers."
"Ven he iz found, he vill still be Elisbeth's Boteza."
Viktor leaned down and brushed his lips across Ron's, before encouraging him to roll to his side and arranging pillows around him so he could relax.

"Naming him Godfather anyhow. He'll know--somehow."
Ron muttered more to himself than to anyone in particular, as he wrapped his arms around one of the pillows.

Viktor listened as his husband continued to mumble. This wasn't a new conversation between them. When they'd learned they were going to be parents, Ron had cried for two days because he couldn't share the news with his best mate. If it hadn't been for the Ministry's warrant and that Vrăjitoare, and her evil plans, Ron's best friend would be here to share in their joy.

"Yes, he vill know. Now breath." Viktor agreed quietly as he firmly massaged Ron's back through the next contraction.

**

Hermione squeezed the pendant she wore around her neck. It was nothing fancy or expensive, but it was her last link to Harry. She and Ron both wore one. Harry had found a dragon scale on one of his excursions with Hagrid into the Forbidden Forest. At the end of their Sixth Year, He'd had given them each a piece of it with their initials on it, and hung on a necklace of woven leather. He'd said it wasn't much, but the dragon scale was hard as steel just like their friendship.

She stood up, slipped off her heels, and walked towards the bedroom. Harry couldn't be here for Ron, so she would be--with Harry along in spirit. She said a silent prayer with her whole heart to the Goddess that somehow he would know.

She'd been about to enter the room when she'd stopped to listen to their conversation, and heard them talking about Harry. Hermione covered her mouth as a sob almost escaped. She knocked lightly on the door frame.

"Ron," she called. "I'm here. And between the both of us, so is Harry." She stepped into the room and held up her pendant as he raised his head to look at her.

Ron took her hand, as she sat in the chair next to the bed, opposite Viktor. "Together, Mione."
Hermione looked to Viktor and smiled. "If your husband doesn't mind?"

Viktor smiled. "If it makes my Ronald happy, it iz acceptable to me."

She nodded then looked into the blue eyes of one of her best friends. "Then Ron, let's have a baby, shall we?"

Ron's answer was a pained whine as another contraction took hold. Hermione reached out with her other hand and gently rubbed up and down his arm, whispering words of encouragement while Viktor proceeded to massage more deeply in the right spots to help ease the pain a bit. They sat relatively silent through the next hour and a half, and a half dozen contractions, while Ron tried to relax and rest in between.

Hermione shifted as the most recent contraction seemed to be easing. "Is there anything else I can do to help? I read and researched everything I could on male pregnancies. And, on labor and birth too. The information all indicated that if you try to relax as much as possible, your magic will help and between it and your body, they will do all the work. You're supposed to try not to fight against it and kind of--go along for the ride, so to speak. Your breathing, by the way, is splendid--just like the books described."

He smiled weakly at her. "Oh, Mione. *Never* change. Did those books tell you anything else that would help the pain?"

"Probably nothing your Healer hasn't already told you."

"Bugger. I still want one of Snape's *Pain Potions*!"

Hermione gave Ron an odd look then began to giggle, uncontrollably. Ron leaned up a bit on one arm as Viktor watched silently, trying to follow their conversation.

"What 'Moine?" Ron asked.

Hermione hiccupped and wiped at her eyes with the back of her hand. "Ron, have you forgotten? There was a time you would do anything rather than take one of Severus' potions. You swore he was out to poison all of us!" She stifled another giggle.
"I'm older. I'm wiser. I'm pregnant. I'm also not stupid when it comes to the best in the business. That man... is the best Potions Master in all of Britain. And when I'm in real pain, I want *his* stuff!"

"I know, Ron, I know. I am sorry. It just struck me as funny is all." She turned to the medi-wizard standing by the desk in the corner, making notations in a thick file. "Can Ron have a Pain Potion?"

The young man turned after setting down his quill, and gave her a pleasant smile. "Healer Smythe will allow the Pain Potion at the appropriate time, but, Ron and Viktor have both been informed that it will only take the edge off the pain. *Stronger Pain Potions* would interfere with Ron's magic during the birth."

"I don't care." Ron whinged as the next contraction started. "I want one-nnnnnnngAAAHH!"

***

Draco's eyes widened when Ron's wail vibrated through the Burrow. "Can't they give him something?" He whispered in a strangled voice, clearly bothered by the pained cries.

"I have provided the Healer with the appropriate potions, but they will only dull the pain a bit, not remove it." Severus replied in a calm voice. Only the glint in his gaze indicated he was a bit amused by his godson's discomfiture.

"Explain! What do you mean by 'only dull it'?"

Lucius answered this time, drawing his son's attention. "*Stronger Pain Potions* --ones that would remove the pain, interfere with the father's magic and hence, the labor and birth. The pain is forgotten as soon as the newborn is held."

Draco looked to his father. "Was Mother in a lot of pain?"

"Your Mother bore you with pride and fierce determination. She screamed and hexed, but in the end, she wept tears of joy, the moment the Healer laid you in her arms."
Draco smiled and a bit of color returned to his face as he thought about what Lucius had told him. Lucius looked down, and appeared to fidget with his spoon, until Remus leaned over to whisper in his ear then kiss his cheek, causing him to smile.

"When Mum was giving birth to the twins, she fired hexes at Dad's feet. He was dancing all over next to the bed. Gramps Weasley sat out in the hallway laughing because every time he looked into the room, she would yell and shout curses at him as well." Percy said. "Oh, and Gramps' and Dad's hair were Slytherin green for a week too!"

"I should have known then, the Twins were going to be trouble." Arthur added. He looked up to see if Molly was still out of the room. "Don't tell her I told you, but, she was a bit of a prankster in school herself. After we married, it only showed itself when she was in labor."

"I heard that, Arthur Bilius Weasley!" Molly said as she swept into the room. "I only gave as good as I got. And I always gave harder."

"It's a wonder you didn't stop after having Bill, then." Remus commented.

"It certainly would have made My life much easier." Severus grumbled under his breath, causing Albus to begin chuckling.

Luna looked thoughtful for a moment, as she toyed with the odd necklace of old buttons she wore. "Danish wizards believe that the *Mælkebøtte Pixies* gather a special dew that is said to make a child's birth painless. And then, there is also the nectar gathered by the *Peruvian Heliconia Beetle* from the *Peruvian Silver Moon Heliconia* blooms. It is supposed to do the same."

Severus blinked. "My dear Luna, those facts are only found in the oldest of texts and studied only by Potions Masters. How--?"

Luna smiled warmly at Severus. "I found some old potions texts that evidently belonged to my mother's great-gran, in my Father's boxes in the attic. The reading was really very interesting."

Severus was thinking quickly, "Hildagaard Von Drake?"

"Why yes."
"I would be most appreciative if I could look at them some time." Severus looked almost--excited, as he spoke.

"I will bring them by your office next week then. We can discuss her theories."

Just then, another loud wail interrupted the conversation again, followed by several colorful expletives that normally were not heard at the Burrow.

Draco stood suddenly, pushing his chair out of the way. "I'm happy to see you are enjoying your little discussion about potion ingredients, Uncle Sev. But, can we Please do something for Wea--Ron!?"

Severus looked almost apologetic. "Unfortunately, only the potion I provided. It has been several hours now. Healer Smythe should be giving it to him soon."

Molly set out a buffet of dishes on the counter, and several pitchers of beverages on the table. "Food is here for when everyone is hungry. I don't think that Viktor has eaten--"

Neville stood. "I'll go relieve him Molly and send him out here to eat. He could probably use a break anyway." He turned to Draco and cupped his cheek with his hand. "Come with me--please? Both Ron and Moine could use our support. You know they both miss Harry terribly."

Draco took Neville's hand and followed behind him, causing many shocked looks around the table. Albus just nodded his head knowingly, as the blue eyed twinkled madly.

Tbc...

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vărățoare -- Romanian for 'witch'.

boteza -- Romanian for 'godfather'
* Hospital Morvan in Brest, France is an actual hospital, which is a large contributor in the field of bio-genetic engineering and research. The annex, wizarding university, and clinic are fictitious.

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PhD = self explanatory

MH = Master Healer

MBAWM = Masters in Business, Wizarding Business Admin.

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Renee' Igerne'

Clinique de Fertilité in Brest

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village = Toulbroch, on the coast, sw of Brest.

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Oriane Margaux, Wizarding Artisan Community near Calais, France, and the border to Belgium -- where Molly's handmade teapot was made. Artisan = Tomás Deoradhán Txilar

***** Chapter 18, Breen is approx. 6 mos. along.
Neville stood. "I'll go relieve him Molly and send him out here to eat. He could probably use a break anyway." He turned to Draco and cupped his cheek with his hand. "Come with me--please? Both Ron and Mione could use our support. You know they both miss Harry terribly."

Draco took Neville's hand and followed behind him, causing many shocked looks around the table. Albus just nodded his head knowingly, as the blue eyed twinkled madly.

Neville wrapped an arm around Draco's waist as they headed down the hall. Draco was looking as if he wanted to bolt the closer they got to the guest room.

"Dray, it'll be fine. Ron and Viktor will appreciate the emotional support."

"But what if he hexes us like Molly did to Arthur?"

"Viktor and Mione won't let him. You worry too much." He leaned over and kissed Draco on the cheek. "Now, come on."

"Mmm... alright."
The door to the room was slightly ajar, and the hum of quiet conversation could be heard. Neville knocked on the door before pushing it open enough to poke his head in.

"We've come to relieve you Viktor. Molly says you need to come out and eat. Can we come in?"

"Ve?"

"Sorry, Draco is with me."

"Malfoy?" Ron mumbled, surprise in his voice.

"Yeah." Replied Neville.

"You may come in." Viktor said.

The door opened wider and Neville slipped in, pulling Draco in behind him. Draco pushed the door mostly closed again before turning back to survey the room. Neville motioned him toward a chair nearby, before he walked over to talk quietly with Ron and Viktor. Draco sat, his arms folded across his chest and looked around, from beneath his lashes. Hermione was seated at the side of Ron's bed, farthest from where he sat, with Viktor sitting on the side near Draco. Hermione smiled gratefully at him and mouthed 'I love you', as she sat holding Ron's hand, rubbing her thumb back and forth over the back of it. The Healer wasn't currently present, but his assistant was sitting at a desk in the corner writing in a thick file, occasionally referring to a magical diagnostic display hovering over the desk; most likely Ron's most recent vitals.

Ron lay on what appeared to be a hospital bed from St. Mungo's, probably transfigured. Currently he reclined, propped against several pillows, covers to his waist. He wore what looked like one of his over-sized faded Quidditch jerseys. Bright orange. Chudley Cannons. It figured. Draco snorted quietly. The redhead's eyes were currently closed, and he appeared to be breathing deeply.

He watched Viktor lean over and whisper something into Ron's ear and kiss his forehead, receiving a nod in return. Ron did not open his eyes. Neville took the chair Viktor vacated, as the dark man exited the room. Hermione patted Ron's hand and laid it on his lap, and rose from her chair. She circled the bed and kissed Neville, saying something to him, before she turned and approached Draco. She sat on the arm of his chair and looked down at him.
"I'm proud of you, and I'm glad you're here."

"I just don't want to make him uncomfortable, Luv." Draco replied as he glanced toward the bed, where Neville was talking quietly to Ron.

She nodded toward where Ron lay. "To be perfectly honest, he's probably not even aware you are here."

"Um..I-I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings earlier. Sometimes I forget--and my mouth moves before my brain."

Hermione gave him an amused look. "And that has not changed since we were First Years, but I still love you anyway."

Draco beamed, "I'm lucky I have you and Neville."

"And we are lucky we have you. I'm going to make a quick trip to the loo and get something to drink, and I will be back, hopefully before Ron's next contraction."

Draco kissed Hermione's cheek, "You better. I don't know if--"

"Oh, you'll be fine. Neville's here, and so is Sean--he's the assistant. I'll be right back."

She stood and exited the room. Draco cut a quick glance toward the bed to see Ron's eyes still closed, as Neville rubbed a hand up and down his arm. Draco felt nervous as he sat there. The medi-wizard closed the file and banished the numbers floating above him and rose, crossing to a table nearer the bed that seemed to hold linen and other items Draco really couldn't see. He was surprised when he realized there was a small bassinet sitting against the wall, that he hadn't initially noticed.

He hadn't really given it much thought, about Ron and Viktor having a baby. But now, with the bassinet and Ron now going through labor... 'Oh, my Goddess,' Draco thought. 'Ron's actually having a baby!' It had been several hours since Ron had been brought in here, and from what everyone was discussing earlier, the man had been going through early labor for several hours before that. He'd just not let on. He took advantage of Ron's eyes being closed, to study him more closely. There were dark circles under his eyes, his cheeks were a bit flushed, and the hair around his face was damp against his skin. He looked tired.
These were the experiences they would have if he, Neville, and Hermione, decided to have children; to be parents. Children to hold and hug, to laugh and cry with, to teach and guide. Could he do this? Yes, with his lovers, he would be happy to raise children--their children--together.

He watched Ron shift uncomfortably, a small frown creasing his brow. Neville leaned in and started talking to him again. Draco felt himself frown. Could he do this though? He'd seen Ron periodically throughout the pregnancy and the redhead didn't seem too miserable. Of course his husband doted on him and was always there when he was needed. But, Ron's cries of pain earlier had really bothered him. He knew enough to realize it was going to get much worse before it was over. Looking toward the door, he hoped Hermione was coming back soon.

If he was honest with himself, he was deathly afraid of pain. He hadn't always been that way. The Dark Lord had delighted in punishing him and Father. Then there was Aunt Bella, who would take out her madness on him--her own nephew--casting the Cruciatous on him over and over, while she shrieked with mad laughter at his screams and pleas to stop. He shuddered.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and looked up to see Hermione. He released the breath he didn't realize he was holding. Giving her a small smile, he grabbed her wrist and tugged her down into his lap. She studied his face for a moment, brushing the hair out of his eyes.

"Are you okay?" She glanced toward the bed. "Did something happen while I was gone?"

Draco, always honest with his lovers, "Facing a couple of my demons."

"And?"

"There is a beautiful pain and horrible pain. Being scared of having children is just that. I would do anything for you or Neville."

"The screaming brought back memories of your torture."

Draco nodded. "I have to find a way to get past those memories."

"Neville and I will be with you every step of the way, Love. Never doubt that."
"And if I decide I am willing to carry our children?"

Tears formed in Hermione's eyes, "Never alone, Draco. Remember--Never alone."

Draco shared a gentle kiss with Hermione, but it didn't last long, because they were interrupted by a moan from the bed.

"Another one." Ron bit out as he looked to Neville, grasping the offered hand.

Sean, the medi-wizard, stepped to the side of the bed and cast a quick spell. "Just talk to him Neville, encourage him to relax and breath." Raising his wand again, he cast *Levicorpus* to position Ron on his side again. "Massage his lower back. It seems to help him."

Neville nodded as Sean stood quietly near the bed watching the numbers of a *Diagnostic Spell*. After moving his chair into a better position, he perched on the edge of it and began to work the heels of his hand along Ron's lower back, as he began to coach him in an encouraging tone.

"I'm going to go back and sit by Ron. Having me near seems to help him. Would you like to come with me?" Hermione studied Draco's expression as he watched Ron and Neville. Reaching up to tuck a lock of hair behind his ear, she continued. "Or, you could go sit by Neville, Luv."

He looked again at Neville rubbing the pink, freckled skin of Ron's back. The covers had slid down a bit, exposing the top of Ron's arse, and the Quidditch shirt was split up the back, but it was obvious Ron either didn't notice or didn't care. Draco glanced at his Mione.

"I'll sit with you." He helped her off his lap, then followed her around the bed, taking the additional chair she summoned from near the wall.

"M-Mione?"

"Here, Ron." Hermione took Ron's hand and then together they breathed through the remainder of the contraction, Ron humming and moaning along with the breaths.
When the contraction finally ebbed, and Ron relaxed, he opened his eyes looking at Mione, then slid to Draco. "Malfoy?"

"In the flesh, Weasley." Draco gave him his trademark smirk. Hermione wiped the perspiration from Ron's face.

Ron chuckled weakly, "Never in a million years would I have thought that you, would be sitting with me, while I was in labour and giving birth."

"Well, Muggle Hell hasn't frozen over, so it must be a good thing."

"Well, I seem to remember when we were in school, that Ron would have laughed if anyone had told him he would become pregnant and give birth." Hermione added, a cheeky smile on her face.

"To Viktor Krum's daughter, no less!" Draco smirked.

"Yeah, well back then, everyone thought it was going to be me and you getting married! Who knew!"

"Weasley, I always knew you had the hots for Krum! You just refused to acknowledge it!"

"What iz dis? My Ronald had de ' hots ' for me? What means 'hots'?"

Draco turned a mischievous eye on the dark Romanian. "It means he wanted your body ever since he laid eyes on you. Mooning over your pictures, collecting your articles, trying to get your autograph at the World Cup in our Fourth Year. When you shook his hand in the Great Hall, I think he came in his pants."

"Oi!"

"Dray!"

Neville snickered from the other side of the bed.
"Everyone thought he was jealous of you taking Mione to the ball, because he wanted to take her. But the truth was, he was mad because you took her and couldn't take him."

"I heard your name more than once in the middle of the night in our room in Gryffindor." Neville added, a slight blush in his cheeks.

"Oi! Here now! Giving away a bloke's secrets!"

Viktor's eyebrows rose higher in surprise as he listened to Draco's and Neville's words, seeming to ignore both Ron's and Hermione's exclamations. When Draco finished speaking, he just stood there for a moment, then a broad grin appeared on his face. He turned and leaned down to kiss his husband firmly on the mouth.

"My Dulciuri Dragoste, I am how you say, honored--touched--to know you felt dat vay for me for so long. If I had known--"

"S'okay, Luv. I have you now." Ron answered, smiling at his husband, his cheeks flaming, before he pinned Draco with a glare. "You on the other hand... if I weren't otherwise occupied..."

"Yeah, yeah, Weasel. I know. You'd kick my arse." Draco waved a hand dismissively, as he smirked at Ron. "Love you too, Weasel."

"Watch it, Ferret boy!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Boys! Some things don't change." Viktor laughed as he took Neville's seat.

Neville moved around the bed and shoved into the chair with Draco, after enlarging it with a spell. "Alright there, Ron?"

"No. And you--" He answered as he frowned and buried his face in the pillow to muffle a loud moaning whinge. "Already?!" He continued, loud enough it could be heard despite the muffling of the pillow, then he began moaning again.
"Relax, Luv. De faster dey come, den da sooner ve haf our baby girl. Now, breath." Viktor spoke in a firm voice as he rubbed Ron's back.

"OOhh...'kay." Ron replied before he began the paced breathing again. Trying hard to stay relaxed, he struggled, unable to resist moaning and whinging, since the pain was increasing.

Neville wrapped his arms around Draco and leaned his chin on his shoulder, as they silently watched Ron and Viktor. Draco reached up and wrapped a firm hand around one of Neville's wrists as if seeking comfort. Hermione glanced over to see Draco biting his lip and looking uncomfortable as he watched Ron, the redheads moans louder than they had been previously. She reached over and squeezed his knee. His gaze flicked to her and he smiled before going back to watching Ron.

Ron finally opened his eyes, still breathing heavily, as Hermione wiped his face with a damp flannel. Viktor passed her the bottle of water so she could help Ron drink a few swallows. Just then, Healer Smythe walked in, a warm smile on his face.

"Sean, would you help Ron to lie on his back. I think it is time we checked to see how you are doing."

"Yes, Sir." Sean answered as he waved his wand to move Ron back onto his back. Viktor helped Ron arrange the covers over him again.

"Luckily, unlike the Muggles, we can do this with magic. Much less painful. Now stay very still while I cast the spells."

Everyone watched as he raised his wand and seemed to draw intricate patterns in the air over Ron's lower torso and around the swell of the baby. It was fascinating to watch and they almost forgot he was casting spells. He lowered his wand and looked very pleased.

"You're progressing well. Things seemed to have picked up a bit, as I'm sure you have noticed. Things will start moving a bit more quickly now, and the contractions will steadily become stronger and closer together. Your body should start the transitional change soon, so Sean will have the Pain Potion ready. You will still have some additional discomfort because of the changes but nothing like it would be without the potion. The most important thing is to try to relax and remember it won't last long. Don't hesitate to have Sean summon me if necessary. Questions?"
Ron opened his mouth to say something and moaned loudly instead. He reached out and grabbed the front of Viktor's shirt and pulled them together so he could wrap his arms around his husband. "Owww! It hurts!"

Viktor wrapped his arms around Ron and rubbed his back as he whispered quietly in his ear. Ron continued to hum and moan as he tried to control his breathing.

They sat and talked quietly amongst themselves, between the contractions, trying to be supportive of Ron. At one point, Neville looked over and noticed Hermione had fallen asleep sitting up, Ron's hand still held between hers. Viktor motioned to Neville then toward the door. Ron, eyes closed, was trying to rest before the next contraction. Neville nodded.

"Dray," He whispered. "Help me get Moine up. She's all done in. I'm gonna take her out and lay her on the couch."

"'kay."

They both stood, and Neville picked Hermione up and quietly exited the room with her. Draco sat down in the chair nearest the bed, where Hermione had been. Neville had disappeared with Hermione just in time, because Ron let out a pained whinge and reached out, evidently looking for Hermione. Without thinking, Draco closed his hand around Ron's larger one and gave an encouraging squeeze. Viktor rolled Ron on his side facing Draco, and started his routine again, concern and care evident on his face. Ron's other hand fisted in the bedding, and his features were scrunched in pain as he vocalized his pain.

Mmmnnaaghhh...hurts... mmm...ooowwww! W-Want... p-potion...now! Ooooooohhhh...."

Draco reached out with his other hand and gently pried Ron's fingers from the bedding, letting Ron grasp his hand instead. "Come on, Weasel. Relax. Go with it. She's fighting to come out. Your blocking her path to the hoops."

The only response was a firmer squeeze on his hands as Ron tried to relax himself. The pace had definitely picked up over the next hour, with Ron only having time to catch his breath, have a sip of water, and his face wiped free of perspiration with a cool flannel. About the time he looked at Viktor with glazed eyes, Sean appeared with the potion, knowing it was almost time for the transitional changes to begin. Draco and Viktor helped Ron sit up so he could drink down the potion. Ron was so glad to have it that he barely flinched at the strong tart flavor. A couple minutes later, he sighed when the potion seemed to dampen the pain a bit.
He smiled a little at Draco. "Mmmm...remin' me to snog Sev'russ. Good potion. Tol' ya."

Draco barely got out his snort of amusement, before Ron curled up into a ball and wailed. "Bloody Hell!"

Sean directed them to help turn Ron on to his back and they propped him up against several pillows, and placed one under each of his calves, with his legs apart. The additional covers had been removed and only a sheet and a light cotton blanket covered Ron from waist to ankles. Sean explained that during this part of the labor, magic was kept to a minimum as much as possible. They were instructed to try to keep him in that position until he let them know otherwise.

Ron had a death grip on Viktor and Draco's hands. Viktor, surprisingly, was still as calm and cool as he had been that morning. Draco, on the other hand, fell back on familiarity to help both himself and Ron through this. He sensed the level of Ron's pain, and could feel himself panicking.

"You're her team captain, Weasel. Show her she can do it. Get outta the way and let her fly."

Tears were sliding down Ron's cheeks. "H-Hurts so bad..." He whispered.

"Yeah, I know. But it's a good hurt. Every pain is a lap around the pitch closer. You wanna hold your baby girl don't ya?"

Ron nodded, then his eyes widened as he wailed and broke into sobbing cries. Viktor leaned over him to comfort him and try to calm him, as he and Draco held him where he was. Draco was feeling panic and looked for Sean. The young man, sensing Draco's agitation, moved to his side and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Be calm, it's almost over and the transition pain will abate. It's a bit disconcerting. We try to prepare them as best we can, but some are still caught off guard by it."

As if on cue, Ron suddenly went limp, his breathing labored, and he released his grip on their hands, though they both continued to hold his. Draco summoned a fresh cool damp flannel while Viktor gave his husband a drink of water. Healer Smythe appeared next to Draco.
"Congratulations, Ron. You made it through transition, and now begins the hard work. I'll be staying in your room now, since you will soon begin to feel the urge to bear down, and help your daughter meet the world!"

"Yeah," Ron replied, looking first to Viktor, then to Draco. "Good pain."

Draco nodded. "Yes. Just remember, good pain."

******

Chapter 22

1,860 words

Neville carefully laid Hermione on the couch, transfigured her clothing into pajamas, and covered her with one of the half-dozen afghans hanging over the back. He brushed the curly locks out of her face and kissed her forehead before he shuffled out to the large kitchen. It appeared everyone was still here, cups of tea and cocoa all around, fire burning merrily in the hearth, and an assortment of nibbles and finger foods on trays in the middle of the table. It looked as though Molly had made sure everyone had been provided with appropriate sleepwear and robes. Neville smiled wearily. It was a very cozy scene. Especially the twins, who's sleepwear rival those worn by the Headmaster.

Sliding into an empty chair next to Luna, he rubbed his eyes. "Molly, you might want to go look in on Ron now. Healer Smythe says things will be picking up pace now."

Molly rose quickly, grabbed Arthur and pulled him along with her out of the kitchen. There were a few chuckles as they disappeared. Percy leaned around Luna so he could see Neville.

"How's he doing, Nev?"

"About as well as can be expected right now. The transitional changes caught him a bit off guard..." He grinned across the table at Severus. "...but he said to remind him to snog you Severus, for making such a good potion."
Severus smirked, and Remus laughed aloud. "That's our world-renowned Potions Master!" Remus declared.

"Draco stayed with Hermione?" Severus asked.

"Hermione is asleep on the couch. Draco is still with Ron and Viktor."

There were several raised eyebrows around the table. Just then, the door opened and in walked Bill and Charlie.

"Are we late? Did we miss it?" Charlie asked, dropping his dragonhide pack in the corner. Everyone shook their heads in the negative.

"Good! Do we have time for a cuppa?" Bill asked, flopping down into an empty chair, beside Charlie.

Albus summoned two more cups and the oldest Weasley boys poured themselves tea, thanking Luna for passing the cream and sugar.

Bill looked around the table. "Is everyone here then?"

"All but your sister. The rest of us were here for tea." Lucius answered and grinned. "Obviously, things got exciting."

"You missed--"

"--Ronniekins' wailing."

"He's been--"

"--quite vocal."
The twins smirked at their brothers. Bill and Charlie just shook their heads. Molly's voice echoed in the large room, startling the twins.

"You try pushing something the size of a Bludger out of your body, through a hole the size of a Snitch. Then tell me your brother has no reason to wail! And in your cases, I had to do it twice in one day!" Turning to her oldest boys, she smiled warmly. "Hello dears. I see you already have a cuppa."

The twins looked very sheepishly at their parents. Arthur grinned to himself as he sat down next to Albus.

Severus rolled his eyes. "Now that I've had that visual implanted in my memory, I am pleased that I never plan to bear children myself."

Everyone chuckled along with Arthur, with the exception of the twins. "Hello boys! It's good to see you made it in time!"

"Hello Dad. Mum!" they chorused.

Luna gently shook Neville, who had fallen asleep in his seat. "Neville, go lay down. You look exhausted."

Molly bustled around the table, waving her wand to transfigure Neville's clothes into clean pajamas and a robe. "Yes, come along dear. You need to rest. Now don't argue. I know what's best."

Neville just shook his head and followed her upstairs.

*****

Healer Smythe and Sean were very busy getting things ready. The strain of the long hours of labor was showing on Ron. It was clear he was tired, but could no longer get comfortable, or have enough time in between contractions to rest. Ron's bed had been charmed to allow him room to sit up, and the length had been shortened to allow the Healer access for the birth. Viktor had removed the Quidditch jersey Ron had on and helped him into a light loose cotton gown, and only a sheet
covered him from waist to knees. Viktor was sitting behind him on the bed now, so he could support Ron during the birth. Ron's head was resting on Viktor's shoulder, as Ron was coached through yet another contraction.

Draco reached up and wiped Ron's face again, noticing how flushed it was now. Viktor was talking him through the breathing, but now Ron hummed and whined continually during the pain. When it ended, Ron's body went limp. He looked over at Draco with glazed eyes.

"You're still here..." He sounded surprised. Draco nodded, not knowing what to say.

Sean hurried to Draco's side. "You're staying?" Draco nodded. "Good, you can help."

He explained to Draco what he needed to do, so they would be ready when the time came. Draco listened intently and nodded in agreement. He glanced at Ron and gave him a quick smile before he positioned himself at the end of the bed opposite where Sean now stood. Healer Smythe stood at the end of the bed, between Ron's spread feet. When the next contraction started, Ron launched into his breathing, whimpering at the pain. But halfway through, the whimpering turned into a grunting groan, as his chin dropped to his chest. The Healer smiled knowingly, pleased, and nodded to Sean and Draco.

"Time to welcome this baby, gentlemen." He looked down at Ron who was gasping for breath. "Ron when the next one starts, I want you to tuck your chin, curl your body forward, and Push! Until I tell you to stop. And don't forget to breath with it."

Ron licked his lips and nodded, a slight flicker of fear in his eyes.

Sean and Draco each had one of Ron's legs under an arm, hand wrapped around the calf, and the other hand supporting the back of his thighs as they held his legs apart and bent at the knee. It was their job to steady him and help him have resistance to push against, while Viktor supported his back. Draco kept his eyes on Ron and Viktor, only looking at Sean occasionally.

"Up!" Ron choked out suddenly, and Viktor helped him curl into the contraction as he tuck his chin and wrapped his hands around the back of his thighs and pulled.

"Now, Push Ron!" Smythe commanded, and began to count backward from 'ten.'
Ron took a deep breath, clenched his teeth, and bore down, emitting a guttural grunting growl as he did. Eyes squeezed tightly shut, his face flushed as red as his hair and sweat broke out anew all over his skin. Draco's eyes widened as he saw Ron's belly undulate. When the count reached 'one', Ron let go of his legs and collapsed back against his husband.

"Breath deeply, as deeply as you can in between. It will help." Encouraged Sean. Ron nodded.

Viktor leaned in and kissed his husband's forehead. "I love you."

"Me too." Ron barely bit out before he grabbed his thighs again, tucked his chin and bore down into the next contraction.

*****

In the kitchen, everyone sat around the table, in comfortable silence, the fire crackling in the background. Percy had removed his glasses and rested his head on his arms on the table. Luna's head rested on his shoulder. Remus leaned back in his chair, Lucius sideways, leaning against his chest, Remus' arms around him. The twins had gone to the lounge, conjured comforters and curled up on the floor in front of the fire. Molly and Arthur held hands on the table, as Molly leaned her head on Arthur's shoulder. Albus had conjured himself a plush chair and was currently snoring quietly into his beard. Severus sat leaning back in his chair, long legs stretched out and crossed at the ankles, and his arms were crossed over his chest. His eyes were closed, but that was no guarantee he was asleep. Bill and Charlie sat quietly, enjoying being home, but wide awake, thanks to the time difference from Egypt and Romania to the Burrow.

Neville descended the stairs, rubbing his eyes. He surveyed the occupants of the kitchen, nodded at those still awake, and went into the lounge. Budging Hermione over, he snuggled next to her and went back to sleep.

Molly glanced out the window, noticing that the sky was very dark, a multitude of stars filling the sky over the Burrow.

*****

"A little bit more, Ron. Come on! You can do it!" Sean barked with enthusiasm.
Ron collapsed again, panting hard, his hair wet now. The cotton gown had ended up on the floor when Ron had decided he wanted nothing touching him. So far, the sheet over his middle remained. He whimpered loudly, as his eyes brimmed with tears.

"I c-can't. Tired... so tired. She's never coming out. Been at this forever."

"You are very close now--I can see a bit of hair. A few more and you will be holding your daughter." Smythe patted Ron's thigh. "You're doing very well indeed."

Ron's grabbed his legs, and Sean started to count this time. Smythe crouched a bit closer to the bed, and Draco couldn't help but look. His eyes widened.

"I see the head! Keep pushing--don't stop yet." Smythe announced.

Sean grinned when he finished counting. "The hair's the color of shiny chestnuts!"

"Take a deep breath and push until I tell you to stop!"

Ron complied, growling and grunting loudly. He was feeling very sharp pain now and his tolerance was slipping.

"Nngaaaaahhh! OW! OW! H-Hurts!!"

"Stop! Now breath. Don't push again until I tell you it's okay!" Smythe barked.

Sean waved his wand and conjured a large mirror behind and above the Healer, so Ron and Viktor could see their baby being born. Viktor looked up and stared. Ron glanced up and gasped.

"M-My bits... are ggone!!*gasp* I...l-look... like a...b-bloody b-ird!!*grunt*"

"Luv! Breath!" Viktor commanded, shaking his head.
They had discussed this temporary condition several times in previous months but Ron seemed to have forgotten. Viktor shared a smile with Sean, Draco and the Healer, as Ron continued to pant as the overwhelming urge to push started again. Frustrated by the overwhelming urge and the pain, he cried out, his wail echoing through the house.

"Now Ron! Give it all you have!"

Sean and Draco's voices joined the Healer's as well now, loudly giving encouragement. Viktor's voice was almost audible now as he talked to Ron and stared into the mirror.

Draco, caught up in the excitement, looked down and gasped. "Kick that broom into the air Weasel! Time to win the Match--I can see the head! Push dammit!"

Ron opened his eyes and looked at Draco as he took another deep breath, and gave it his all.

******

A loud and long shriek of determination and pain rent the silence in the Burrow, startling everyone awake. A few found themselves suddenly on the floor. Staring at each other stunned, no one spoke.

Then the loud cry of a newborn baby was heard. There were smiles on every face, and not a dry eye in the house, as everyone moved toward the bedroom where the newest member of the Weasley-Krum family was making her presence known.

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Chapter 23

Mid-February 2009

1,980 words
Breen’s breath came in soft puffs, as he lay on his side, deep asleep. *Cushioning Charms* keeping him supported and as comfortable as possible this late in his pregnancy. Blaan and Ruadh, lay curled up by his feet, the occasional quiet yip and jerk of a leg indicating they were dreaming. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he struggled to sit up. He looked around his darkened bedroom, then down at his dogs who were still sound asleep. He rubbed his face, confused. Dobby suddenly appeared by his bed.

"Is Master Breen needing Dobby?" Dobby’s voice a low whisper.

"Eileen?"

"Dobby just checked Mistress Eileen. Mistress is sleeping." Dobby tilted his head. "Master Breen?"

"I was awakened by the loud cry of a wee bairn... actually, it sounded too young to be Eileen."

"Master Breen’s wards are up. Dobby has checked all the rooms a half hour ago. No one here, Master Breen. A dream?"

Breen shook his head. "Perhaps. You’d best return to bed, Dobby. Thank you."

The house elf nodded and disappeared. Breen laid down, pulling his covers back up, moving a bit until he got comfortable again. Closing his eyes, only a few minutes passed until he slipped back into sleep, his hand straying to the pendant at his neck, a single word mumbled, barely audible in the dark room.

"Ron..."

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One of the house elves took Severus’ outer robes, and escorted him to the library where Lucius and Remus sat waiting, a tea tray, brandy decanter, and brandy snifters already on the table. He slid smoothly into one of the leather chairs and crossed his legs, ankle over knee.
"Lucius. Remus. How are you today?"

"Doing very well, actually, now that we've caught up on our sleep." Remus smirked.

"I don't imagine the Weasley-Krum's are getting much sleep these days." Lucius added as he poured himself a cup of tea. "Severus, would you like tea or brandy?"

"Tea will be fine, to start." He accepted the cup Lucius handed him.

Luc tells me that you and he have something you wanted to share with me this afternoon?" Remus asked, as he stirred sugar and cream into his tea.

Severus cleared his throat after taking a sip of his well prepared tea, "This story began back in 1980, well before Draco was born. Lucius had been driving Cissa barmy, with his hovering during the pregnancy. She finally owled me and demanded I take him on holiday--to get him out of her hair, so to speak. Andromeda had arrived, and Cissa wanted to set up the nursery and finish the preparations for Draco's birth, in peace. Dromi had already hexed him twice. So, we traveled, going wherever the wind took us. Eventually, we ended up in France... Bretagne, in a small pub in the heart of Brest. Both the food and the ale were exceptional, and we talked until late."

Lucius snorted, "Until closing and they chucked us out, you mean!"

"True." Sev grinned. "As I said, we talked--about many things. Including our roles as Death Eaters and as spies. Each meeting brought out a more insane Voldemort. A more bloodthirsty maniac. We knew our families would be targeted if He ever learned of our deception. Being among His followers, we both knew that anything could happen to us, ending my family line and Lucius', if something were to happen to Draco."

Remus looked confused, wondering where they were going with their story, but he remained silent.

"We didn't really resolve anything, but the next morning, as we were heading out to find a place to get a spot of lunch, we happened to pass the large hospital in Brest, which happens to have a Wizarding Annex." Luc refilled his cup. "Said Annex just happened to have a fertility clinic, which also happened to house a... donation storage facility."

Remus' eyes got bigger as Lucius talked, realization dawning. "You made a deposit! Lucius
Severus only nodded, a smirk tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"Bloody hell!" Remus sputtered. "So, in a clinic in France... for the last three decades, give or take... they've got both of your--"

"Our SPERM, Remus. We thought that if something happened, then hopefully someone would have our children!" Severus rolled his eyes. "And they are referred to as 'donations' since we didn't designate them only for our own use."

But Lucius was fiddling with the cuff of his shirt. Remus' smile faded. "Luv?"

"I had forgotten, Luv. I would have never kept this from you."

"Bugger it, Luc. I can't remember the chapters I wrote a month ago, and this was decades ago! Don't worry about it." Remus smiled, as he hugged his husband. "So, why is that coming up now? Has someone..."

"Not mine." Lucius looked to Severus.

Severus actually blushed, as he spoke. "Well, I received a letter informing me that there was two acquisitions from my donation. Standard procedure under the contract we signed. Successful pregnancies, from what I understand."

"So you're a father?"

"It seems that way. There is a child out there that is approximately three years old. And the second acquisition resulted in a pregnancy that is currently ongoing, per the information I was given."

"What do you plan on doing, Severus?" Looking towards Lucius, "Luv?"

"Well, the three year old is my heir, so I would like to find out where he—or she, is."
Lucius was blushing himself now. "Been thinking."

"About what?"

Lucius took a deep breath, "We could have children of our own."

"Pardon?" Remus raised an eyebrow.

Severus snorted, as he watched in amusement. He suspected what Lucius was thinking.

Lucius turned his body to face Remus. "Children. We're both in our prime. I thought that maybe we could have children of our own. Draco was thrilled when I spoke with him. But I want a family with you."

"Oh, Luc. I'm honored! We should discuss this further, this evening." Remus hugged Lucius and brushed his lips with a kiss. Turning back to Severus. "So, will the clinic release the information on the mother and where the child is?"

"I've read over the contract, after I retrieved it from my Gringott's vault. We both opted for the contracts to magically flag if the child born is an heir. But we can only contact them, if the Mother agrees."

"Have you contacted them, then?"

"Not yet. I haven't had the opportunity with all the excitement of the last couple of weeks. But I will."

Lucius set his cup on the table, leaned back, crossing his legs, and his hands folded in his lap. "So, on to the other matter we discussed. Were you able to find anything out with that information I gave you?"

"I tracked the Teapot to a small shop in Toulbroch. Which prompted me to check on the other items
we received. Your journal and pen set came from the same shop. It could be that Harry was passing through the area when he purchased the items for the first package. From the things we've received, it seems to be a favorite area for him to shop. And it's a well known Magical community."

Lucius was thoughtful. "Interesting. Now that I recall, quite a few if the items were specific to Bretagne."

"So he could be living somewhere in Breton!" Remus exclaimed, suddenly feeling a flash of hope.

"Possible..or somewhere in France or on the nearby islands. But it's a start."

"Discreetly. Don't want the Weasley Chit to get wind of our search... or that Toad at the Ministry. I still detest that woman and her dreaded PINK!"

"The Wolf still wants to take a chunk out of her pink hide for what she did to Harry." Remus growled, his eyes flashing gold for a moment.

"The only odd thing my contact mentioned, was when he visited the artist's shop to find out where Molly's teapot was sent, the man wasn't in--he'd evidently suffered some mysterious accident which resulted in severe damage to his hands. They weren't sure if they would heal properly so he can continue his work. His assistant was actually the one to look up the number of the teapot."

Lucius and Remus looked at the other. "The man was fine when we visited. He happened to be in the shop the day we were there. What could have happened?"

"No idea. But I have an odd feeling about it. My contact's doing a bit of digging and detective work on it." Severus paused. "I'll let you know if I hear anything."

"When do we begin searching? I suggest we take another trip back to Bretagne." Remus seemed to barely contain his eagerness.

"I can't go anywhere for at least a month." Severus reached for the brandy, pouring a small amount into one of the snifters. Sitting back, he cradled the glass in his palm, swirling it gently.
"And I have a deadline to meet for the current textbook I'm finishing." Remus looked suddenly disappointed.

"It won't be a problem for me. I've decided to go back and meet with Iain MacLeod again, about acquiring more horses from him. I can take a few extra days to do a little spying and sleuthing myself." Lucius grinned mischievously.

"He's been reading Agatha Christie, Patricia Cromwell, and JD Robb again." Remus smirked, as he looked at his husband.

Lucius' cheeks pinked. "What? So I've developed an appreciation of Muggle detective novels."

Severus laughed aloud as he glanced back and forth between his friends, clearly amused by their interplay.

Feichin Delaney arrived in Toulbroch on a cool windy morning in March, and walked into the Duchovny's creperie, taking a seat toward the back of the room, so he could watch the windows and the door. It had taken him weeks to make it this far down the coast. There was a local shop here that did indeed carry the teapot. He'd have a drink and something to eat before heading over there to speak to the owner, who was currently out.

"Bradan circled the counter and approached the table, menu in hand. "Good mornin' Sir. Wha' will ye hav' this fine mornin'?" He handed the menu to Delaney as he spoke.

"Some tea please, and two of the galettes with eggs and ham." Delaney handed the menu back to the young man.

Bradan accepted the menu and nodded, before he disappeared into the kitchen, coming back a few minutes later with the tea. Delaney sat back, sipping his tea, as he observed those around him and the shoppers passing the windows. When Bradan appeared a short time later with his meal, Delaney pulled a Wizarding photo from his pocket and held it up.

"Have you ever seen this young man in town?" He asked.
Bradan wiped his hands on his apron before taking the picture to get a better look at the young man in the photo. Short messy black hair and large glasses, and ragged over-sized clothes, were the first things Bradan noticed, as he studied the picture. The young man was sitting with two others, all students apparently, judging from the open school robes they wore.

"Cannae say Ah do, Sir. Who es he then?" Bradan handed the picture back.

Delaney shook his head as he pocketed the picture. "Just someone I am trying to locate."

"Es thaer anythin' else ye need?"

"No thank you." Delaney answered before picking up his fork and knife and cutting into one of the galettes.

Bradan nodded and moved to greet a couple who had just entered and taken an open table.

Two hours later, Delaney walked into the local postal office to send an international owl. He grinned widely as he penned the note. Madam Unmesh would be very pleased with this new information. Casting a Confidentiality Spell over the parchment, he then handed it to the clerk, along with the necessary fee.

Tbc...

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Dulciuri Dragoste = Romanian for 'sweet love'
Ginny folded the message with a smug smile, before tossing it into the fireplace. She paced the room for a few minutes, as she pondered her response. This was good news; good news indeed. They were finally getting close. Sitting at the desk, she pulled out parchment, quill, and ink, and began to write a reply.

*FD~*

*Pleased you have made progress. Step up the investigation. Information is required as soon as possible for next stage of project. Require prompt reply.*

*~GU*

Sealing it with a charm, she summoned one of her owls, gave it the parchment, and sent it on its way. Now was a good time to shop for their new life. She had to be prepared since it wouldn't be long before Delaney found Harry. Yelling for her house elves, she headed upstairs to dress.
Severus laid down his quill and reread the letter he had just finished, as Remus and Lucius looked on. The morning sun was well up, as one of the house elves delivered a tea tray and a plate of scones.

_Madam Antionette Delacourette'_

*Administrator of Records, Donations, and Acquisitions*

*Clinique de Fertilité, Brest, France*

_Mde. Delacourette',_

_In regards to your recent correspondence regarding the acquisition of my donations, batch #1980-SNA998, and the presence of at least one heir, I wish to enact the terms of our contract, and request the information regarding my heir. Please send the information forthwith. Your prompt response will be greatly appreciated._

_Sincerely,_

_Professor Severus Snape_

_Potions Master, Platinum Cauldron Guild_

Handing it across the desk, he waited while the others read it. Remus and Lucius shared a look as Remus handed it back to Severus.

"Are you sure about this, Severus?" Remus' eyes showed both understanding and concern.

"I've thought of little else since we last discussed this. If I have an heir—a child—out there somewhere, it is my desire—and my duty—to contact the child and informed him or her of..."

"Family ties, Severus. You can say it." There was a small smile on Lucius' face, and his eyes were warm as his tone was encouraging.

"Yes. Family ties... letting the child know, he or she has a father and more family. A Pureblood
family with a long heritage."

Remus raised his cup of tea with a smile. "To family!"

~2 weeks later...

Severus sat in Albus' office, discussing possible changes and improvements to the Potions curriculum for the following year, when a large, harried-looking owl soared through the window and landed on the back of his chair. Having a large clawed foot stuck into his face, caused him to glare at the avian in such a manner, that it hooted in alarm and pulled it's foot back. He turned and set his cup down on Albus' desk, then returned his attention to the owl, who waited patiently while it was relieved of its delivery. As soon as the parchment was removed, the owl hopped to the Headmaster's desk, where a small dish of owl treats and a small bowl of water had appeared. Fawkes trilled and made room on his perch for the messenger once it was done refreshing itself.

"Bloody bird." He mumbled, as he cast a Sensing Spell over the parchment, then another to release the Security Spell.

Chuckling, Albus banished the empty dishes from his desk. "What is it my boy? The document appears quite official. I certainly hope it isn't distressing news."

"No..." He stated, his brow furrowed as he continued to read.

_Potions Master Snape,

Enclosed you will find information on the birth of the first child. A daughter, Eileen Lily Alexandra Evans, Born May 1st, in the year 2002. The child's other parent, Breen Jamison Evans has given permission for you to contact the child. The child..._

Severus looked surprised and confused, as he stopped reading and lifted the small picture tucked in with the letter. As he stared down at the small child, he was amazed. She had his dark hair and eyes, but her cheeks held a healthy glow, and thank Merlin, she had her mother's nose, rather than
his. She smiled brightly, as she waved at him. A small adult hand appeared briefly from the side of the picture to calm her energetic bouncing, and smooth her hair. Severus wasn't certain, but he was sure he caught a glimpse of a pregnant belly too. He felt his throat tighten and his eyes prickle as he handed both letter and picture across the desk to Albus.

Albus looked down at the smiling child. Fleeting memories of another child....he read the letter and the name of the other parent caught his attention. "Severus?"

"Hmm?"

"This child's name appears in the book. The Student's Book."

Just then, there was a loud bang behind Severus, on the other side of the office. Albus leaned over to look as Severus turned around in his seat. On the floor by the bookshelves, lay a large tome.

"The Student's Book again. It seems to prefer the floor--again--these days." Albus summoned the book, and as it settled onto his desk, he began to flip pages until he came to the page he was seeking. Turning the book around so Severus could read it, he pointed at the entry he had recalled from a few years ago. Severus leaned forward.

_Eileen Lily Alexandra Evans, born May 1st, in the year 2002
_Hogwarts 2013 - 2020
_Parents: Breen Jamison Evans and _________________

As Severus read, he gasped as script began to appear in the blank space of the other parent--his name--Severus Tobias Snape. He turned the book back around and looked slowly up at Albus.

"Albus...?"

Albus just smiled, "Ah. The Book completed the entry when you learned of your part in the parentage. It's the way of the Book. But that would also mean that the other parent was a student here as well, at some point in time."

"Albus, may I have the letter please?" He held out his hand to accept the parchment and the picture.
He reread the letter again. "It states here, they reside just outside Toulbroch, in Bretagne, France. If I remember correctly, that is where Lucius and Remus traveled to purchase horses for breeding stock."

Albus frowned.

"Remus also mentioned he'd smelled a familiar scent, and thought it was Harry."

"Finish the letter," Albus coaxed.

"Merlin! The point of contact is the child's godfather and grandparent, Lord Ian MacLoed! That's the gentleman from whom Lucius purchased the horses!" Severus stood suddenly. "Please excuse me Albus, I must speak to Lucius immediately!"

"Severus!" The Potions Master stopped and turned to face the Headmaster.

Albus nodded toward the letter in Severus' hand. "That is not all the letter says."

Severus stopped and finished reading. "Both acquisitions were to the same person through the same clinic... The child's mother is pregnant!"

"Severus," Albus whispered. "You are a Father, and evidently will be once again in the near future."

"Sweet Merlin!" Severus sunk back into the chair he'd previously occupied, and sat in stunned silence.

Albus chuckled. He was quite pleased for his young colleague.

"I want to be there. Do you think this... Breen, will allow me?"

"You only need to ask. Though, it seems since the mother has allowed you permission to see the
child, and sent a picture of your little girl, then it may also be possible for you to be there for the birth. I do believe, Severus, that you have travel arrangements to make."

"But--my classes..."

Albus came around the desk and rested a gently hand on Severus' shoulder. "I will make sure your classes are adequately and responsibly covered in your absence. Now, go and meet your children. Just be sure to contact me and advise me if one of the family quarters will need to be prepared." Albus' eyes twinkled madly.

"Albus...I cannot bring back a family...I don't know these people."

Albus paused, as if he were listening to something only he could hear. "Can't you feel it?"

"Feel what?"

"The castle. She's singing. Humming. She's happy and fairly vibrating with it. Something is about to happen and it's for the good. Take it as a positive omen, my boy. Go, go now! Do I need to shoo you out like a stubborn First Year?"

Albus watched Severus' robes swirl, as the man disappeared behind the closing door. Picking up his teacup again, he sipped as he studied the book in front of him. "I do not remember a student by the name of Breen Evans... but I believe all will be revealed in due time."

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Severus stepped from the Floo, to see Remus and Lucius, who were curled up together on the sofa, in an embrace, Lucius' head thrown back as Remus kissed and nipped at his throat. Seeing that his arrival hadn't been acknowledged, he cleared his throat loudly.

"How long have the two of you been bonded? And you still act like it was yesterday."

Lucius' eyes popped open wide and his head snapped up, his chin clipping Remus in the nose, right before they both fell off the sofa in a tangle of arms and legs. Severus leaned against the mantle with
arms crossed as he smirked at his friends trying to get off the floor as quickly as they could in a dignified manner. The only thing that would have made it better was if they'd been half-dressed.

"Severus!" Lucius snapped, as he brushed his hair out of his face.

"Yes..." Severus drawled.

Remus sat on the edge of the sofa and pulled Lucius down beside him. "A little warning would have been nice. I nearly wrenched my back!"

"And no, the newly-bonded feeling has not gone away, and hopefully," Lucius looked at Remus before kissing his cheek, then turned back to Severus, "it never will."

"Will we be hearing the pitter patter of children's feet soon?"

Lucius glared, choosing to ignore the comment. "Why are you here? Not that you aren't welcome anytime OLD friend."

"With a warning when necessary, of course." Added Remus, as he summoned an elf to bring tea. "Sit. Why are you here?"

Severus grinned, then his expression became more serious. "I received correspondence from France."

Lucius and Remus looked at each other then back at Severus.

"And?" Lucius prompted impatiently.

Severus looked at the letter again and the picture. "I'm a father." There he said it. Now it was real. "I have a daughter. And the Mother is pregnant again. Twins." When Severus looked up a lone tear rolled down his cheek. "Never in my life did I think I would be a father."

Remus reached out for the letter, stunned by the man's unexpected display of emotion. Accepting the
letter and picture, he held it out so Lucius could see it as well. Together they read and then stared at the picture.

Remus looked up. "I-I don't know what to say, Severus."

"Well I certainly do! Congratulations old friend! Are you going to go see them? Have you heard from the mother?" Lucius’ eyes glittered.

Remus' eyes widened and he looked at the letter again. "Luc, the contact! It's the MacLeod's!"

"What?!" Luc snatched the letter out of Remus' hand, and read it again "How did I miss that?!" He fixed his friend with an intent gaze. "Have you contacted them yet?"

"I can't believe we were right there!" Remus stood and walked to the fireplace.

"Severus? Are you going to contact them?" Remus asked.

"Well he's not going alone!" Lucius declared.

"Luv, I don't recall him inviting us to join him when he goes to meet his heir for the first time."

"Remi, we already have established a rapport with the MacLeod's."

"This is his decision. He may want to go alone."

Severus sat there watching the men argue... no, discuss the situation back and forth. Well he knew for sure, that he wasn't going alone. And he wasn't asking the Headmaster. Albus was a the last resort. Maybe it would be easier if they went along. He was feeling a bit--unsure. Gathering his resolve, he stood, the movement immediately silencing the debate.

"Gentlemen, I would be honored if you would join me."
"If that is your wish, we would be honored as well." Remus smiled, reaching out to shake Severus' hand.

Lucius grinned and approached him. "Splendid!" He gave Severus a quick hug, before moving to his desk. "I have parchment and ink here so you may reply, Severus."

Severus couldn't help but think that things couldn't go smoothly. That somewhere on the horizon trouble was brewing. It was more than nerves. He could feel it, as he sat and put quill to parchment, and began to write.

He could feel it--deep down, in his soul.

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Ginny stepped gracefully out of the International Floo into the manor that had been acquired shortly before her late husband's death. The two men the Private Detective, Delaney, had hired were waiting for her.

"Gentlemen? I trust my instructions have been followed to the letter?"

"Yes, Madam Unmesh." One of them handed her a stack of parchments. "Here is all the information Delaney compiled. He is out at Potter's Manor now, and will be back shortly."

The Floo glowed green again and out stepped a very tall, very broad, dark-skinned man dressed in a cream colored sherwani and black churidars, a woven stole in maroon and gold, and a maroon safas. There was a small dark red smudge of color between his brows, and Wizarding Slave Bracelets could be seen under the edge of his sleeves. She passed him a quick glance.

He gave her a sharp nod and disappeared into the shadows.

"What is your plan, gentlemen?"

The taller one, with blond hair stepped forward and answered, "We plan to wander onto the grounds. Me and Dirk have been wandering up and down the road looking for work for the past two days. So
they shouldn't notice anything unusual for some time."

Just then, Delaney walked in. "Madam Unmesh! Pleased to see you've arrived. I have news that may change things a bit."

"Ewan--Potter's--child has been seen at the MacLeod's horse farm and spends most of her time there. Along with the mother, which we haven't seen yet. Who seems to be very shy and private. It's all in the file." He pointed at the parchments in her hand.

"What of Harry Potter, then?"

"Word is, he works for MacLoed, as a handler and trainer. Has for the last several years. The locals are a bit wary. It was difficult to get information once I started asking pointed questions about him."

"Madam?" The shorter henchman spoke hesitantly, leaned to get her attention.

She turned an impatient eye on him for interrupting. "Yes?"

He cleared his throat nervously and looked quickly between the other two men. Delaney was scowling at him as well. "Madam. Yesterday, I got a glimpse of the girl's mother, Lady Ewan. I didn't see her face. Slender build, long dark hair, and not very tall. She's also quite pregnant."

Hiding her shock and displeasure, she remained outwardly calm and collected. "Not for long." She growled, before turning to Delaney, "What is your plan, now? I trust that there will be no fumbling?"

"Course not. You know me better than that." He frowned at her, and when she gave him a warning glare, he continued. "All the men are out in the pastures with the herds. The only ones near the manor with the girl, are her grandmother, Lady MacLeod, and one of the younger stable boys. I heard him tell the girl that as soon as someone named Micah, came back for lunch. Then they would ride. We'll be waiting nearby for the opportunity to grab her. I've already found a way to open a small hole in the wards."

"Nika!"
A small house elf appeared and bowed. "Madam."

"Prepare the room. No one gets in or out. Understood?!" She snapped, brushing nonexistent lint from the front of her dark jade salwar.

"Understood, Madam." The elf shimmered away.

She looked at the men in the room. "Well?! What are you waiting for?! GET ME THAT CHILD!"

When the three men disappeared, Ajeet reappeared from the shadows, bowing slightly. "Madam?"

"When they return, make sure they all disappear. Do you understand, Ajeet?"

He bowed deeply to his mistress. "As you wish, Madam."

"Yes. My wish, Ajeet." She waved a hand at him, dismissing him.

Once he was gone, she stepped into the Floo and returned to her French manor house to await the arrival of her future daughter, and heir.

Tbc...


Chapter 25

2,108 words
First part of March 2009...

Ailey kissed Iain and hugged Breen, then watched as Iain helped Breen into the carriage, for the ride to town to see Renee' for Breen's checkup, taking care to tuck in the heavy voluminous robes. The weather still had a bit of a biting chill.

The babies had gained their weight steadily, making Breen's sense of balance a bit wonky. And his magic, well, he wasn't using it anymore, and hadn't for some time. The babies' combined magic interfered, and the results were much worse than when he'd been carrying Eileen. Trying to stave off much of his frustration with it, someone was almost always nearby with a ready wand to help out.

She handed Iain the heavy lap blanket. "Tuc' et aroun' 'im well, Iain, now."

Iain snorted in irritation. "Me darlin', Ah ken how ta tuc' eh blank't! They aer ma wee gran' babes too!"

"Don' forg't tha Warmin' Charm !" She instructed, from behind his shoulder, as she reached in to tuck the blanket around Breen's feet. "Aer ye com'rtble, Breen luv?"

Breen sighed, pushing the doting hands away. "The bairns and I are fine. Would you two please stop fussing so?! It's just a drive to clinic for a scheduled check."

The older couple stood looking at Breen, Iain a bit frustrated and Ailey a bit perturbed, but they said nothing.

"Ailey, do you have that market list? After my appointment with the Healer, we will stop for a bit of lunch, then pick the items up before we come back." He held out his hand.

Iain patted his robe pocket, and smiled. "Ah hav' et, Breen."

He kissed Ailey and hugged her tight, then walked around the carriage to get in, just as Eileen came streaking out of the kitchen door to the carriage. She bounced up and down as she looked at her Da.
"I wanna kiss an' hug ye, Da, befor' ye go!" She looked up at Ailey. "Pleas' help me up, Seanmhair."

Ailey lifted her up so she could stand on the footplate. Breen leaned over as best as he could to hug his little girl tightly, kissing the dark hair. "Behave for Seanmhair while I am gone. You wait for Micah before you go riding. Understood, luv?" Breen held Eileen's chin so he could look into her eyes.

"Aye Da. Be good fer Seanmhair, an' wait fer Micah b'fore I ride." She smiled her sweetest smile. "Da, would ye bring me some Palourde, please?"

Iain leaned over a bit as Breen sighed and rolled his eyes. "Aye, chil', we will stop o' tha confection'rs too, fer ye sweets. Mark tha down, Breen." He pulled the list from his pocket and handed it to Breen.

"It's time to go, Iain or I will be late. Renee' won't like that. You know how she worries."

"Aye. Be bac' b'fore ye set tha table, Ailey luv."

Ailey pulled Eileen into her arms and stepped back before Iain slapped the reins against the horses' rumps. They watched the carriage leave, waving until it was out of sight.

Ailey set the child down and held out her hand. "Come Eileen. Ye can help me with tha plannin' o' tha gardens."

No one noticed the three men watching from the nearby trees. Quiet settled over the grounds, broken only by the distant sounds of the horses and men in the fields, birdsong, or the quiet conversation of woman and child.

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That same morning... in England...

"Are you ready, Luc? Sev is already waiting for us at the IPC." Remus stepped into their bedroom
so see Lucius pulling on his traveling robes.

He pocketed his shrunken trunk. "Ready, Luv. We'd best hurry. Sev won't admit it, but I know he's a nervous wreck."

Remus held out his arm for Lucius. Once the blond had a firm grip, they Apparated.

Severus had checked and rechecked his trunk a half a dozen times. His potions case was filled with everything he would need, including a shrunken cauldron and other tools he might need as well. He checked one last time for the camera that Minerva had brought down along with film. 'Lots of pictures, Severus,' she had prompted.

He couldn't think of anything else he might need. Only that he had a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach. Something was wrong.

His Great Great Aunt Mathilda was a seer and sometimes, Severus thought he had inherited a bit of the blood in him. If he had, it had been active lately. He thought back to the dreams. He'd had another just last night. This time his daughter was in the dream also, and though he could see her clearly, her mother's face was obscured. There were others in the dream as well; others who made his blood run cold, and he didn't know why.

He found himself fiddling with the Citrine pendant his mother had given him. She always said he needed to relax more. He started, when a warm hand landed on his shoulder, his hand already pulling his wand.

"Whoa, Sev!" Another hand stayed his wand arm. "It's just Luc and me. A bit on edge today I see."

Remus and Lucius sat on either side of Severus. Severus looked from one to the other and shook his head, releasing a deep sigh.

"I do seem to be a bit--stressed."

Lucius patted his arm, and smiled. "It's advantageous that I scheduled a short layover in Paris for a late lunch. "We have reservations at a little bistro near the IPC there. It's owned by a family friend. Our food will be waiting when we arrive."
"Did you remember to order the chocolate mousse for me, Luc?" Remi asked.

Luc smirked, as Sev rolled his eyes. "Of course."

Severus crossed his arms, "Do you promise NOT to moan while you eat it?"

Remus sat back and blushed, while Lucius laughed out loud.

"Oh, but Severus, if he doesn't moan, then Andre' thinks he's done it wrong."

"Merlin help me..." Severus muttered.

"You can always sit by yourself, but I know you love chocolate just as much as Remus. But sorry, he loves it more, but no more than me."

"Or on you." Severus quipped, under his breath.

Remus leaned forward, looking from Severus to Lucius, a predatory gleam in his eyes.

Lucius sat back and folded his arm, an innocent expression firmly on his face.

"I will neither confirm nor deny."

"I was reading the brochure from the clinic. It says that each potential mother chooses from numbered lots that have been selected by magical compatibility with hers. I wonder who this person is that best matched you, Severus?"

"I've contemplated that myself. If you read on, it states they have some choices in regards to the donor's characteristics, but high magical compatibility is the final deciding factor."

"It also says that not only do they serve women clients, but men also."
Severus frowned. Male pregnancies weren't uncommon, but why would a man go to a clinic? Before he could vocalize his thoughts, a voice was heard throughout the waiting area.

"Attention, travelers. All International Portkeys have been delayed and rescheduled due to a security breach. All connecting Portkeys have been rescheduled where applicable. There is no cause for alarm. Please remain seated, and have your tickets ready when the IPC Security Aurors make their rounds. We apologize for the inconvenience. The IPC vendors will make beverages and small snacks available free of charge. Again, the IPC apologizes for any inconvenience."

"Bugger!" Mumbled Severus, amidst the grumbling from most of the other waiting travelers.

Lucius stood. "I'd best contact Andre’ and have him reschedule our reservation, and perhaps add a bottle of wine, as well."

"A splendid idea, Luv. I'll wait with Severus." Remus leaned back in his seat and tried to get comfortable for the wait. Severus sighed as he fiddled with his pendant.

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At the MacLoed's...

"Finish yer juice, Eileen. An' don' faerget ta wash yer face an' han's."

"Aye, Seanmhair. May I go to tha stables an' wait for Micah, Seanmhair?"

Ailey was busy clearing the table and magicking the dishes to washing themselves. The men had all long disappeared back to the fields. She stopped, wiping her hands on her apron, and looked at the granddaughter of her heart.

"Aye, Ah s'pose, but nay wand'rin' off, now. Ah'll be in tha gard'ns ef ye need me."

"Love you, Seanmhair!" Eileen said as she hugged her grandmother and ran out the door.
"Ah love ye, es well, ma Wee ang'l." Ailey whispered as she watched the little bundle of energy sprint across the back courtyard to the nearby stables.

Iain smiled warmly. "Aye, Breen. Ma Ailey fusses o'er all she kens es haer own. Tha's why Ah love haer so."

Eileen was getting impatient. Roban had told her Micah was back out in the fields but should be back soon. She reached between the slats of the gate to Úna's stall, and petted the velvet nose of her pony. Úna had been pacing. This was her time of day to exercise and she was impatient as well, to get started.

Eileen started when she heard a noise. But she shrugged it off and continued to croon to her Úna. "Don't worry, Micah will be here like he promised."

Suddenly, she found herself wrapped in strong arms; arms that were squeezing her too tight so she could hardly move. A large calloused hand covered her mouth just as she screamed and began to kick.

"Shut yer gob! OW! An' stop yer kickin'!"  A deep voice hissed in her ear. "I've no problem knocking ye o'er the head!"

She struggled, squirmed, and kicked even harder at that. This was a bad man, like the bad man that Da had told her stories about. Maybe, he was one of them! A chill of fear came over her. She felt funny inside all of a sudden, like the fizzy candies she liked to eat, only bigger--much bigger.

There was a sudden bright flash and the man dropped Eileen and staggered back as if he'd been
shocked. Eileen lay on the ground, barely conscious, breathing hard. Úna was kicking her stall walls, and the mares in the other stalls were agitated as well, neighing in alarm and moving about loudly in their stalls, occasionally kicking as well. Eileen slowly got to her feet using a nearby post for support. Looking behind her she saw a scruffy looking man shaking himself as if he was trying to get rid of something.

"Eileen!"

She looked up to see the big Texan rounding the corner into the stable. "U-Unc'a M-Micah!"

"Roban is unconscious! Are you alright, Short Rou--" He looked past her to see the stranger. His ire rose, seeing Eileen's dirty and disheveled state. "Who are you?! How'd you get in here?! Eileen, come to me, now!"

He held out his arms as she started to take a step. The sound of spellfire filled the air and everyone looked up to see a portion of the loft blasted free and fall on the big man.

"NO! UNC'A MICAH!! Screamed Eileen.

She looked up to see another stranger standing on the other side of the rubble, as the dust cleared. He was stowing his wand, an evil grin on his face.

"Bad man! You hurt Micah! SEANMHAIR!!!!!!" She shrieked at the second bad man as the first grabbed her from behind.

"Delaney's waitin'. Let's go! I want my money." The first said to the second, and as one they turned and disappeared through the back doors of the stable.

Ailey's head came up, when she heard first Micah yell Eileen's name, then the child's voice scream first Micah's name then again for her. She dropped the baskets in her hands and pulled her wand, sending a Patronus to the fields as she ran. Her skirts pulled up, she barely noticed the large white hawk that soared toward where the men were working. Skidding around the corner into the stables, her ears were assaulted by the cries of the horses. Úna was kicking repeatedly at her stall trying to get out.

"Micah! Eileen!" She yelled.
Then she noticed the pile of hay and wood in the middle of the stable, and the large booted leg protruding from under it. She recognized that boot.

"MICAH!" She looked frantically around the pile. "Oh, Goddess! EILEEN!"

She raised her wand to start Levitating the debris clear, and all went black when another section of the loft collapsed and buried her beside Micah, as sounds of Apparation were heard in the courtyard.

Chapter 26

2,356 words

Delaney stepped away from the hole he'd made in the wards and waited as the other two crawled through, before sealing it again. Delaney took Eileen after casting Incarcerous on her.

"Straight back to the manor." The man and child disappeared.

"Now, we can finally get paid. I'm gonna get a room and hit the pub. What are you plannin'?"

"Well, there was this bird at the pub. I --" 

The shadows shifted behind the two grinning henchmen. Ajeet approached them, his hands raised, a wand in one and a curved dagger in the other. They never got a chance to scream, or struggle, as they disappeared and the shadows shifted once more leaving the clearing empty.

Delaney appeared at the manor, in the entry hall, with the child. A house elf was waiting and took the child immediately from his arms, simultaneously removing the spell, then Levitated the child away, presumably to her room. Delaney straightened his suit and smoothed his hair, looking around
"The child is safe and unharmed I presume, Mr. Delaney?"

Delaney spun to see Madam Unmesh standing in the doorway to the library, holding a glass of wine delicately between her fingers. She studied him from beneath kohled eyelids, red lips in an attractive pout. He appreciated the way the turquoise sari hugged her body, silhouetting the pale bare skin of her midriff. She was barefoot, but her feet were as decorated with jewelry as her hands, throat, and ears were. The long red hair had been casually piled and secured atop her head, several tendrils loose, framing her face. He licked his lips.

Ginny moved seductively into the room, approaching him slowly, her movements reminding him of a Silver Snow Panther on the prowl. "Delaney. You look as though you've been *Kissed*. The child?"

He shook himself. "Ah yes, the girl. A bit dirty and a few scrapes. Put up a bit of a fuss, but she is unharmed."

"And was there any other problems?"

"One of the ranch hands walked into the stable as they were grabbing her. But they took care of him."

She cocked an eyebrow at him in inquiry.

"If he isn't dead, he won't be talking to anyone for some time. Dirk blasted the roof and it fell on the him. They had to disarm the stable boy as well."

"That will alert them sooner--rather than later." She didn't look pleased. "Be thankful the manor is *Unplottable*."

She moved to the table to pour a second glass of wine. When she turned back around to hand him the glass, there was a warm pleasant smile on her face again. The warmth barely touched her eyes, but Delaney didn't notice, as he accepted the glass and sat in one of the plush armchairs by the fire.
"Sometimes plans don't work out as well as we hope. But we have the girl." He took a sip of the bittersweet liquid. He grimaced slightly, thinking an ale would have been better. "When do you plan on sending the letter?"

"Soon." Seeing his reaction when he sipped the wine, she smirked. "My wine not to your liking, Delaney?"

"Madam, I like the wine... and the company..."

"But you're a businessman." Ginny walked to the desk and opened a box. "I assume you are waiting on your payment."

She glanced toward the corner briefly and gave an almost imperceptible nod, before she walked back to the sofa and sat on the edge. She reached out and placed the velvet Gringott's bag of Galleons in the center of the table.

Delaney smiled. "It was pleasure doing business with you. Maybe again sometime," he said as he began to reach for the bag.

"Maybe." Ginny watched in rapt fascination as Ajeet grabbed the man from behind, and silently and artistically drew his dagger across the man's throat, before he could even react.

"Maybe not." She purred, as she lifted her wineglass from the table and stood, watching Delaney's eyes widen, his mouth open in a silent scream, as he sunk to the floor, his head against the coffee table. The bag of galleons lay, forgotten, by his side.

She crouched down by his side, her gaze never leaving his. Dipping a manicured finger into the blood pouring from his throat, she slowly lifted it to her lips and licked it clean, while he watched, the light of life slowly dimming from his eyes. "Mmmm... the blood of the willing... not necessarily freely given. Not exactly the climax to your evening you were expecting, was it?"

She reached over and grabbed the bag of galleons and stood in one fluid movement, tossing the bag onto her desk. "Finish it, Ajeet!"
The house elf appeared. "Madam. Child is awake and screaming for her father."

"Very well. I am coming. When Ajeet had disposed of this-- refuse --clean everything of his blood. I want it spotless! Not a single trace left, understood?!

"Yes, Madam Unmesh, as you wish!" The elf bowed.

Ginny handed her glass to the elf and strode from the room, to the smell of flesh consumed by magic.

'Such a lovely smell.' She thought.

Ginny entered the child's room only a few moments later. The child came running at her, but with a wave of her hand she had the child thrown back into the plush chair in the corner, and cast a Sticking Charm, for good measure.

"Listen very carefully, Brat! You behave and nothing will happen. I only want your father. Understood?"

"I want my Da!" Eileen whimpered, as she glared at the mean woman in the odd clothes.

"Hush!" Ginny strode forward and cupped the girl's face firmly, forcing her to look up. "Now we can be friends—or we can enemies. Which one do you choose?"

"Seanhair says friends don' haert each oth'r."

"I haven't hurt you, have I?" Ginny purred.

Eileen glared at the woman, and tried to pull her face away. "Unc'a Micah was! An' those two bad men!"

Ginny smiled. The child was every bit Harry's; stubborn and righteous. "Ah, but I didn't do that. Those bad men did."
"The bad man w-who put me here. He talk'd to the oth'r bad men. Tha-tha' hurt my Unc'a Micah! H-He tol' them to come here." She narrowed her eyes at the woman and tried to pull her face away again. "Did y-you know those bad men?"

Composing a warm face, "No, I didn't. They brought you here to one of my home's. I came to visit and these men were here. I got rid of the bad men and saved you from them. They won't hurt you ever again."

"I-I don' believe you. Y-You hav' the pertend eyes." Eileen pulled again, and Ginny finally released her grip, squatting down in front of the chair. "Da calls them snake eyes, b'cuz snakes try to fool you b'fore they bite."

Ginny's eyebrows arched up. "Really? Well, I'm not pretending. I'm telling you the truth." The redhead woman waved her hand slightly as she placed a **Compulsion Charm** on the little girl. "I'm not going to hurt you."

Eileen's eyes went glassy and she felt floaty and limp at the same time. She could hear the lady talking but it sounded so far away. "Not hurt me?" She mumbled. There was something... but she couldn't remember.

"No. We're going to wait for your Father....Da and Mother. Does that sound fine?"

"Da? I wan' my Da, an' *Seamhair* an' *Seanair*. An' Unc'a Micah. Unc'a Micah is taking me riding..." Something sparked her thoughts. Riding. She was supposed to wait for Micah to go riding. "Go home. Ride my pony."

Ginny sneered on the inside. This child was definitely going to a boarding school when she was old enough. Until then a wing with a Nanny. Far away from her and Harry. Harry would forget the child. She would make sure of it!

"We'll make sure you ride your pony." She lifted the **Sticking Charm**, and took the child by the hand, leading her to the bed. "Now, you are very tired and want a nap." She waved her hand and the child was dressed for bed. "Up you get, and one of the house elves will bring you a small glass of warm milk. You will drink all of it."

She watched the child drink her milk and watched the house elf tuck her in. "Stay with her. If she
awakens before morning, dose her again with *Sleeping Draught*.

The door closed behind her with a click. She didn't see the house elf shake her head sadly as she studied the beautiful child asleep in the bed. Her Master would never have allowed the Madam such behavior. With a sigh, she settled in the corner to watch and wait.

"Chec' tha list, Breen. Es thar anythin' else?" Iain asked as he entered the carriage and pulled the blanket over his lap.

"No. It looks as though we were able to get everything." Breen pocketed the list, and shifted restlessly, groaning as he pressed firmly against his belly then rubbed his hand across it.

Iain looked over at Breen from the corner of his eye, as he slapped the reins and clicked at the horses to get moving.

"Och! Breen. Ah tol' ye tha puddin' wou'dna be eh wise idea." His voice held more of a playful tone than a scolding one.

"Ha! Ha! Iain. It's not that at all. It's just that the boys have grown so. I don't think I have any room inside left. Renee' says they will do most of their growing in the last month, and I still have almost a fortnight to go!" He groaned again, as he leaned back, and pushed gently against a moving bulge in the side of his belly.

The babies seemed to settle finally with the rocking of the cart and they rode on in companionable silence, while Breen dozed and Iain whistled to himself. They were about ten minutes from home, when Iain felt the pendant Ailey had given him for their first anniversary, begin to heat up. He gasped. Something was wrong with his Ailey. She was in danger or hurt. Glancing at Breen, seeing he was still asleep, he urged the horses on a bit and tried to keep them to the smoothest part of the road as he prayed they would get home soon.

Ailey would have his hide if he hurt Breen or the *bairns* by driving too fast.

Breen was dreaming as he slept.
He was walking from Hogsmeade with Eileen, and the boys were running up ahead. He was holding hands with someone. They had just whispered something in his ear making him shiver and laugh.

"DA! Papa is making you laugh!"

He looked down at his daughter and smiled, "Yes, my precious girl, he is."

They strolled along for a while, then shouting started behind them. He turned to see who was shouting, as he called the children to him. Someone was calling his name. It sounded like Iain, but why was Iain in Britain? Was Ailey with him? When he looked back, his companion and Eileen were gone and the twins were huddled against him.

Breen came abruptly awake when the cart came to a sudden stop.

"Ailey!" Iain shouted as he jumped from the carriage.

Stable hands and handlers were running around the courtyard and the stables, some bringing horses back in, and others heading out to the woods and the pastures in groups. There was yelling and shouting. Old Dougal and one of the younger hands helped Breen out of the carriage then took the parcels into the kitchen. He looked around, confused, before waddling off in the direction Iain had run.

As he neared the main stable, he heard a howl followed by a fluent stream of obscenities in Gaelic. Two of the local healers appeared, bags in hand and rushed into the stable. As Breen neared the doors, he tried to move faster, weaving in and out around all the moving bodies. Just as he reached the doors, large warm arms wrapped gently but firmly around him from behind, stopping his progress.

"Don' go en thar, Breen."

Breen looked up and over his shoulder to see Cainnech's warm eyes staring down at him sadly. "Cainnech? What's happened?"
Before the big Scot could answer, he looked up, causing Breen to look back toward the stable, where he watched as Iain walked out next to one of the healers who was Levitating an unconscious Ailey. Breen gasped when he saw the terrible state she was in.

"Ailey! Iain! Will she be alright?! Iain!"

Iain looked at him and mouthed, 'I don't know.' as he kept walking.

When he looked back at the stable doors, the second healer was exiting with one of the handlers Levitated behind her, looking every bit as bad as Ailey. He leaned to get a better look and realized who it was.

"Micah! Oh Merlin! What happened here?!!" He turned to look at Cainnech. "Tell me what happened to Ailey. And to Micah."

"Tha loft collapsed. They waer buri'd--" The big man began to explain.

Breen looked around and his eyes narrowed, the more he looked, the more the panic rose. His gaze locked onto Cainnech as he pulled himself free, staggering a bit to get his balance.

"Eileen! Where's Eileen?!" His voice rose as panic gripped him. "Where's my baby girl?"

He moved around the doors into the stable before Cainnech could stop him again. In the center of the stable was a pile of broken beams, wood, bales of hay and loose hay. Looking up, he saw the gaping maw where the loft had been. He started to tremble as his eyes filled with tears.

"No. No! No! No-no-no-no-no-no-no-noooooooo!" His mumblings became louder until he was wailing. His legs gave way and he fell to his hands and knees, sobbing. "E-Eileen! My b-ba-by! No-oo-oo!"

Strong hands tried to lift him gently as he felt a strong pain grip his belly like a vise and the world went black.

Tbc...
Palourde -- http://www.bienmanger.com/2F869_Palourde_Candy_From_Brittany.html
Early evening of the same day, at the MacLeod's...

Evening had begun to fall as Iain looked out the window. Ailey and Micah were in Healing Sleep, the broken bones set and the open wounds cleansed and sealed. Roban had been treated for a light concussion and sent home with his Da, to recover. Poor Breen. The stress of thinking his child was under that rubble in the stable, had sent him into near hysterics and instigated early labor. His passing out had been a silent blessing. The healers had settled him in bed and administered spells to halt the contractions and stabilize his and the bairns’ conditions. They said he would sleep through the night. Dobby and the dogs were with him now, keeping watch. Dobby was beside himself with worry about his Mistress Eileen, but Iain insisted he was needed here, since one of the healers had been called away for another emergency.

The wee lass that helped Ailey around the manor had prepared a simple meal for everyone, though not much of it was eaten. Worry and stress tended to chase away one's appetite. She had set an Everfilling TeaPot out with the accompanying cream, sugar, and lemon, and a tray of fresh mugs and spoons. The food was under a Warming Spell in case anyone decided they wanted something.

Two of the stable boys were asleep in the second stable loft. The Aurors had placed Security Spells around all three stables, and Wards around the first stable where--it--had happened. The house was so quiet. Old Dougal was out checking on the horses and the boys. The rest of his men were either in their rooms in the staffhouse or with their families nearby, ready to return at a moment's notice if they were needed. A sudden firm knocking brought him out of his thoughts, and he turned and passed through the hall and the kitchen to the door. The wards showed 'friendly', so he opened the door, and stood there for a moment, at a loss for words.
Three men stood under the light of the small stoop, the first pale and dark-haired, and strangely familiar. Behind him were two others he narrowed his eyes to see.

"Good evening, Lord MacLeod!" One of the men stepped forward into the light. "Lord Lucius Malfoy. You were kind enough to allow me to purchase several perfect specimens of fine horseflesh several months back." He had his hand out.

"Och! Mr. Malfoy! An' Mr. Lupin, Ah see now." Iain shook the proffered hands then stepped aside. "Com' in! Com' in! Fargive an' ol' man. Tis ben a lang day."

They followed him in and he motioned for them to sit at the huge table in the kitchen. After pouring them all tea, he sat himself and eyed the stranger with interest. Lucius watched for a moment, then spoke.

"Mr. MacLeod, this is a dear friend of ours, Potions Master Severus Snape. I believe you received his correspondence about his daughter and heir."

Iain had stretched his hand across the table toward Severus as Lucius spoke, and gasped when he heard the name. A sudden flash of pain clouded his face. He shook Severus hand firmly, then folded his hands together in front of him.

Severus cleared his throat, "Your name was given as a contact for a Breen Evans."

Iain closed his eyes and nodded. "Aye! Ah beg ye're paerdon. Ma solicit'r infarmed us o' yer visit, but..." He paused, trying to decide how to explain. "... thes aft'rnoon, Me Ailey, an' our Micah. One o' the handl'rs. Waer attack'd--"

"Great Merlin!" Remus exclaimed. "How badly were they hurt?"

"Why?" Lucius leaned forward, clearly distressed.

"Bahd et was." Iain looked at Severus. "They well heal, but for you, Mr. Snape. Ma haert goes out ta ye. Whoev'r hurt Micah, an' Me Ailey--they took Ma wee granbabe--they took Eileen."
Severus felt like someone had hit him in the stomach with a *Bludgeoning Curse*. They took his daughter! He hadn't even met her yet, and someone had taken her!

"Who?" he breathed out.

"We don' ken tha' yet. Tha Aurors hav' teams searchin'. Hav' been since tha aft'moon. Our Rohan, eh stableboy who was knock'd ab'ut tha haed. They waer stang'rs, he tol' tha Aurors."

"What about Eileen's Mother? How is she taking all this?" Remus asked. "She shouldn't be under so much stress in her condition."

Severus reached over and squeezed Remus' arm. "Thank you, Remus. I was about to inquire after Ms. Evans--and the babies. How is she faring? She and the babies are under care as we speak?"

Iain's expression looked a bit odd as humor seemed to war with the seriousness of the situation. "Aye! Breen's had o' bit o' eh shock, thinkin' Eileen was haurt lik' her Seanmhair and Uncl' Micah. Tha shock o' et start'd labor an' Breen faint'd dead 'way."

"But, she is better now? The babies? Has she been sedated?" Severus asked, clearly worried. "I am a Potions Master, if anything special is required--"

Iain held up a hand, and waited until he had the silent attention of all three of his guests. "Tha bes' heal'rs hav' been haer... But, Ah don' think ye ken ab'ut Breen. Breen es nay lass, Laddies. Breen Evans es ah lad, like yers'Ives!"

Severus' eyes widened. "OH!"

Lucius gasped, then shot a quick grin in Severus' direction.

"Well, that certainly hadn't occurred to any of us!" Remus looked at Severus. "Puts a bit of a twist on things I'd say. Wouldn't you, Severus?"
"Indeed! And, Mr. Evans--Breen is currently carrying twins! My...twins... according to the documents the clinic sent me. It's quite rare and risky for a wizard to have twins."

"Aye, but Miss Renee' at aer clinic es tha best in haer specialty."

Lucius smirked even though it was a bad time for it, but Severus had always batted for his own league. This could work out very well for his friend.

"May we see him?" Severus asked.

"Nay. Tha healer specifi'd Breen was ta hav' nay visitors fear tha time bein'. He's been sedat'd an' willna wake till tha morrow."

"Has there been any information on who has Eileen?" Remus asked.

Lucius perked a bit. "Have you been contacted with demands for a ransom?"

"Nay."

Lucius looked to Remus. They were close to the full moon. "Remus?"

Remus looked over at Severus. "Sev?"

Severus glanced at their host then back to his friends. "I believe the ultimate decision is yours, Remus."

Remus nodded. Severus turned to Iain. "I believe we may have a way to help in the search."

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At Ginny's manor...
The elf had just come to tell her the child was still sound asleep. She really needed to try to call the child by her name. It would hopefully help her make friends with the child. What was her name again? Arlene? Adelaide? Ernestine? Earleen? Evelyn?

"Damn!" She exclaimed, as she grabbed the file and flipped it open, almost upsetting her cup of tea. She skimmed down the page. "Ah. Eileen. What an ordinary name."

Closing the file, she tossed it into a drawer, then secured the drawer with a spell.

Everything was still going according to plan. She would send a missive that she had come upon some rough looking men mishandling a child that was in great distress. After rescuing the child, she had found out the child's grandparents were the MacLeod's, a local family. That should bring her Harry right to her. He always had been a soft touch when it came to family and children.

She still had an unknown. The Mother-- Lady Evans. She sneered to herself. The only thing Delaney had failed to gather sufficient information on. There was practically no information about her; only that she was pregnant again, and evidently well along.

The woman would have to disappear along with the pregnancy. There was nothing else for it. Maybe an accident. The only thing more perfect would be if she could also remove that wretched child upstairs from the picture as well. Then she and Harry would be on.... even ground... with both of them being widowed. Losing their spouse's... she could play on that.

Ginny smiled. Yes. That would work. She lifted her quill and dipped it in the inkwell, as she thought of how to word the missive.

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**In Bretagne, in the woods near the MacLoed lands...**

Remus was transformed and following the faint trail of the little girl. To his *Were*, she reminded Moony of his lost cub. She felt like pack. But that was something he would investigate later. Right now a child was missing. Hurting and very frightened if the scent was anything to go by. It was times like now when he was grateful for the daily potion Severus had developed for him, that allowed him to finally have full control over his *Were* side. The Wolf was friend now, rather than foe.
They'd had to explain everything to Iain and to Auror Clouseau, beforehand. Iain had been very accepting, and Clouseau had immediately asked if the potion was available for use outside of Britain. Severus had suggested he have the French Ministry of Magic contact the International Potions Guild, to see if they had finalized the authentication and classification of it yet.

Severus, Lucius, and Iain, accompanied by a contingent of Aurors, were following on horseback over the rough terrain, weaving in and out amongst the trees. When Moony finally stopped, he transformed. "The trail of the men stops here. There is blood here, and a smell of magic. The Wolf smells the remnants of fear." He pointed to a spot on the ground, as Lucius wrapped a heavy robe around him, and placed a pair of warm boots in front of him.

The Aurors stepped through the barely opened fence onto the dirt road beyond. When they returned, their faces were grim.

Clouseau spoke with them then walked back to where the rest waited, "Four magical signatures, two disappeared. Then there were three again. The third a new one. And then they all disappeared. A second trap, perhaps."

Severus leaned toward Lucius, who in turn leaned in, the horse near them stamping impatiently. Remus stepped closer and an almost silent but intense discussion ensued. A few minutes later, they all stepped apart and motioned the Head Auror over. Severus waited until the man stopped in their little grouping, before he spoke.

"I believe we have a way to continue the search."

Clouseau's eyebrows rose. "How so?! Please do explain."

Severus and Lucius proceeded to explain, as Remus waited silently. He was very familiar with the ancient and obscure spells that Severus, Lucius, and Albus had found and modified for use during the War. Remus smiled as he thought of the Marauder's Map. It had been the seed from which the whole idea had sprung.

"We gather the magic used in a specific area, pull the type of spells we are looking for, then use that magic in reverse to give us information. It's on the same level as a Mapping Spell but used for Wizards and Witches."
"Can you do it?" the aged Auror asked.

"Can ye? Fin' me wee gran'babe?" Iain asked.

Severus eyed the Auror with a glare, his gaze softening when he looked at Iain. "I would never have suggested it as a viable option if we couldn't, Auror Clouseau. This is my daughter we are talking about." He gave Iain a look of empathy. The big Scot nodded in return.

"And..." Severus began, "We can use my blood to find her, as well. A small amount as part of the spell. And before you raise any objections, we do have the Ministry's full clearance to use blood magic in circumstances as this."

The Head Auror was a like-minded individual. "We here in France, don't believe Dark Arts or Blood magic is evil. Only the intentions behind it's use. And, I am too, a father..." He looked at Iain. ... and a grandfather. Do what you can do, and let us see where it leads, Gentlemen."

He moved away to explain to his men what the Englishmen were going to do, while Lucius produced a tiny pewter cup and a small athame', both intricately carved. Severus' eyebrows rose.

Remus chuckled as he shrugged the collar of his robe up around his ears. "What, only you can be prepared for any contingency?"

Severus rolled his eyes as Lucius stifled a laugh. He looked up at the sky. It would be dawn soon. The others gathered around and listened as it was explained how they would assist in the implementation of the spells.

Ginny's manor, somewhere between Rouen and Paris...

"I don't care if she wails all night! She will stay in that room. Make her eat something then give her the Sleeping Draught again!" Ginny bellowed, her face turning an ugly crimson color. "I cannot be bothered worrying about her when I am trying to bring your new Master home!"
Nika wrung her hands nervously, fighting years of automatic obedience. "But, Madam. She--"

Ginny spun to glare at the house elf, shocked that she was even still in the room, and not off doing as she had been instructed. "Cursed house elves! If it weren't for your magic and mandatory servitude, you'd be no more use than a Muggle! Get out of my sight! And do as I told you!"

_Nika_ disappeared with a pop.

"Ajeet!"

The huge silent eunuch appeared and bowed low. "Madam."

"You will bring me the Lady Evans, the girl's mother--put her in with the child." She studied him. "Now."

"As you wish, Madam."

"And, Ajeet."

"Madam?"

"When all this is done, and the new Master has come home, we are obtaining new house elves! The present ones seemed to have forgotten their place!"

The huge man, nodded, bowed, and disappeared into the shadows.

She poured herself a glass of wine, and slowly paced the huge room as she sipped the wine, and waited.
Chapter 28

2,521 words

At the MacLeod's Manor...

Ajeet quietly shadowed the perimeter of the large manor, looking for the dark haired woman. The border was guarded by Auror's. But his Shadow Magick kept him hidden from others. Slowly and surely he looked into each room of the manor. He saw the older woman but he couldn't find the other.

Where could they have placed her? There was one more set of windows, and he sensed stronger wards there. He moved silently to the glass, confident his magick would keep him hidden. Inside, the room was lit by only a pair of candles. In the bed, he noticed a small figure under the quilt, the swell of pregnant belly evident, as was the long dark braid on the pillows. the small woman's chest rose and fell slowly in sleep. He noticed movement, and watched as two small dogs jumped onto the bed and curled up against the woman's side. He scanned the room again, his eyes moving slowly, but didn't see any other occupants.

Placing his palms flat on the window frame, he closed his eyes, bowed his head, and concentrated, as he drew his magick to him and channeled it out into the wall and the glass. Slowed, his body seemed to flow through the wall and window, into the room, like water. There was a heavy sheen of perspiration on his skin as he opened his eyes. He looked toward the bed just as both dogs looks up and the sound of low growling began.

Raising his hand, he concentrated, as he slowly approached the bed. The dogs whined then lay down again. When he touched each one, they fell into a deep sleep. He would harm no creature who had not willingly caused undue harm to another. The Goddess' creatures were sacred.

Pulling back the quilts, he leaned down and touched the pale forehead, sensing that a potion controlled this sleep. She would remain asleep. Lifting the small body gently, he wrapped one of the quilts loosely over the long sleep robe, before straightening, with the small body held firmly but carefully in his arms. Standing again, facing toward the windows and the outer wall, he concentrated, then walked forward. His body and his burden, both flowed fluidly through the wall, before they dissolved into shadow and disappeared.

Dobby walked quickly back into the room, Levitating a small tray bearing his Master's next doses of
potions, a small glass, and a small ewer of fresh water. He stopped seeing the empty bed, but the
dogs still asleep at the foot of it.

"Master Breen?"

Looking toward the small loo, he saw the door open and the room dark. The tray set itself on the
night table, and Dobby popped quickly away to search the rest of the manor.

Several muffled snaps of Apparition could be heard in the dark silence of the meadow. The sky
overhead was alight with a million stars, and the moon hung heavy in the sky, almost at her fullest.
The men were in a close group, crouched, backs to each other, and wands out, as they surveyed the
open area. One assured the area was clear, wands were sheathed and they stood, still alert.

"I smell her again--here." Remus spoke quietly as he pulled Severus arm to bring the man to where
he stood.

Severus still held his wand out, and in his other hand, the small silver dish containing the drops of his
blood and the potion he had brought to him from his personal lab at Hogwarts. At times like this, he
was exceedingly grateful for the magic of house elves, especially his loyal Verbenia.

"Yes, I agree, she and her captor stopped here before continuing on." He turned slowly, mumbling
spells under his breath, as Lucius joined them, his wand now out. The others stood by silently and
watched. Taking slow steps forward for several feet, Severus abruptly stopped, Lucius beside him.
He reached out a hand slowly and felt magic arc against them, repelling them. He cast a Healing
Spell on his fingers and spoke hurriedly to Lucius, who motioned Remus forward. The quiet
discussion lasted for only a few sentences before the three turned to face the others.

Though Severus spoke in a low voice, it carried clearly in the still night air."There are wards here.
Ones that should be undetectable, but, thankfully for us, they were not cast properly, or we would
not have been able to detect Eileen." He nodded at Clouseau . "We will have to bypass them
carefully."

"That is not a problem, Mr. Snape. Auror Bonaparte’ is also a Curse Breaker." A young blond
Auror stepped forward. "He spent some time working in the East for Gringott's Bank."
"At your service, Monsieur." Bonaparte bowed his head once to Severus. "I believe you know William Weasley, who trained me."

Severus’ eyes only widened slightly at the unexpected but advantageous coincidence. He silently stepped aside, as did Lucius and Remus. The young man had been trained well, for the wards were breached and they were through within ten minutes. Severus made a mental note as he moved forward, to send Mr. Weasley a letter of appreciation for training the young man so well, and how invaluable his assistance had been.

As they moved through a small copse of trees and onto manicured lawns, a large spacious manor came into view, situated on a small rise amidst sprawling gardens. The men broke off into groups, and moved in different directions through the gardens. Their movements were silent as they observed what rooms were lit and where there were signs of activity. Whomever lived here evidently had more confidence in their perimeter wards than they should. Those on the immediate grounds and around the manor itself were not as strong. Remus had shed his robe and boots to transform back into the Wolf, and loped ahead, Lucius and two young Aurors followed behind at a run. Iain and Clouseau had joined Severus.

Severus laid his wand in the palm of his hand and whispered, "Point me, Eileen."

The wand whirled in circles until it finally came to a stop, pointing to the left of where they stood. "Around the corner, in that general direction."

They came to a stop at a simple looking door, most likely a service entrance or entry to servants' quarters. As Iain watched, Severus and Clouseau each ran a series of spells and charms to assure that the door was spell and trap free. Clouseau sent message spells to the other groups indicating they should secure the outside of the manor and stand guard. Clouseau entered first, then Severus and Iain last, closing the door quietly behind them.

Iain shuffled with nervous energy while he waited. The big Scot's body was humming with energy, strung tight to catch the person who had taken his gran'babe. He’d come prepared for this. If he'd still had his full magic, the manor would be shaking with it until he found her, but sadly that was not to be. After he'd lost his magic, he returned to his heritage and the training of his father and grandfather, he’d continued the daily sessions, keeping his body and mind sharp in the old ways of the Clan Warriors.

Dressed in a heavy black utility kilt, thick dark Aran sweater and socks, and heavy boots, he felt the comforting weight of his father's dirk at his waist, his sword and crossbow on his back, and smaller dirks hidden up his sleeves, strapped to his forearms, and a large one sheathed on his calf. As the adrenalin coursed through his veins and he slipped back into the mindset of the Auror he had once been, a wicked gleam filled his eyes. A look that hadn't been seen since before his injury in the First
War. The animals who had taken his wee Eileen would pay dearly.

Looking around, they found themselves in a service room off of the kitchens. Only a few lights were on, but no movement was immediately apparent. *Clouseau* cast a few *Surveillance Spells*.

"I detect no persons in the immediate vicinity, but there are at least twelve house elves." He whispered as he canceled the spells. "One of them is heading in our direction."

"It will have to be stunned." Severus spoke in a distracted manner as he watched his wand spin again. "Eileen is here. Use a stronger spell."

Iain's eyes flicked to Severus. "Where are the other elves?"

*Clouseau* cast again. "They are scattered throughout the manor. We will have to stun them as we move through the manor."

"Agreed. Let's move. She's most likely in one of the upper rooms." Severus started forward.

Iain waited for *Clouseau* to move, before bringing up the rear. They moved quickly through the manor, only having to stun three house elves by the time they reached the third floor.

Severus used his wand again, "Point me, Eileen," he whispered. His wand whirled and stopped pointing right. All three men began again and stopped before the only door on that side of the landing. "Well gentlemen?"

Stepping to the door, *Clouseau* raised his wand to cast *Alohomora*, when the door opened on its own. Severus had his wand pointed toward the door, and Iain had palmed one of his dirks. A small female house elf stood in the doorway, dressed in a silk sash, looking up at them.

"Have you come to take the small Mistress home?"

The three men were taken back, by her words. The elf stepped aside and motioned them into the room.
"Come. You must take the child before Madam returns. She will hurt the small Mistress. Only using her to bring the father here."

Iain and Severus looked at each other oddly as they moved quickly into the room and the elf shut the door behind them. "She is in the bed. Madam has commanded to keep her asleep with a potion." The elf began wringing her hands nervously.

"Go to her. She does not know me...yet." Severus stepped aside and put his hand on Iain's arm and nodded toward where the elf pointed.

Clouseau knelt to speak to the elf. "Your name, honorable elf?"

"Mukta. The Master gave me this name when the Madam came to be his wife."

"Interesting..." Severus commented.

"You are helping us free this child, against the wishes of your Madam. How is it you are able to do this?" Clouseau asked.

Severus squatted down next to the other man, and slipped into the familiar lecture mode. "The name, Mukta, means 'liberated' in Hindi. You are a free elf, thus you have free will, though you keep that fact from your Mistress."

Mukta nodded, a small smile on her face, as she seemed to calm herself.

Clouseau's brow creased. "Who is the 'Madam' you speak of, and what does she want with Mr. Snape here?" He motioned toward Severus.

"It is not I that this woman seeks, I presume..."

Mukta looked at him, and shook her head. "You are not the wizard in Madam's picture. That man has eyes the color of Hara, of happiness and fertility. Your eyes are Bhuuraa, the color of the
kaffee Master preferred.”

"Who was your Master, Mukta?" Severus asked carefully, somehow sensing that this 'Master' had passed on.

"Lord Chandubhai Unmesh was my Master, may the Goddess bless his rest."

Severus’ expression immediately turned cold, and his eyes were thunderous. "Ginevra Weasley Unmesh!" He hissed as he stood immediately. "We must leave, now! She is after Harry!"

Iain had just scooped his granddaughter into his arms and was crossing the room to them. "She es nae awak'. But breathin'."

Severus cast a Patronus. "Go to Lucius and Remus. Tell them the child is with Iain and on her way home. Join me inside immediately." He watched the large white raven soar out the door before turning to Clouseau as he spoke. "Take Iain and my daughter to safety. Take the Aurors with you. My friends and I will deal with Madam Unmesh. We have a Wizard's Debt to settle."

Iain was already exiting with Eileen, when Clouseau nodded then followed. Severus drew his wand and laid it in his palm. "Point me, Ginnie Weasley Unmesh."

He felt a tug on his robe and looked down, to see Mukta looking up at him. "Yes, Mukta."

"You will not find her Master Snape. But she returns soon. Ajeet brings the child's mother here."

"The child's moth--" His eyes widened. "Breen..." His thoughts raced; then he gasped. "Breen is... Harry! No!" He turned to Mukta, and dropped to one knee facing her. "Please listen carefully, Mukta, your assistance is required. The person being brought here is not Eileen's mother, but her other father. I am her father, her sire. Harry--Breen, is Eileen's birth father, and he is also carrying her brothers, my sons. Ginny will harm them--"

Mukta seemed to stand taller, a look of angry determination in her large eyes. "Children and babies are gifts of our Goddess. To harm them is great evil! Madam will not harm the babies. Or, their father--your mate. Mukta will see to it!" With that, she popped out of sight.
Severus paced for almost an hour, running spells every five minutes to check the surroundings, but all remained quiet. Lucius and Remus had appeared only minutes after Clouseau and Iain left with Eileen. They now waited with Severus, Lucius sprawled in a chair, toying with a small dagger, and Remus leaning against the bedpost, twirling his wand between his fingers. Mukta had returned shortly after to fill them in on all she knew of Ginny's activities, and to give them all the papers and documents she could find that would incriminate the witch for her crimes. Hearing a noise, they spun toward the door, wand at the ready, to see Iain standing there.

"Put'way yer wand, Laddies. Ah'm nae foe." He stepped further into the room, closing the door behind him. "Has tha deamhan ret'md yet?"

"Why are you here? What of Eileen?" Severus demanded, confused to see the big Scot back, and so soon.

"Clouseau Apperat'd haer ta home, wi' Me blessin'. Yer nae facin' tha' deamhan wi' oot me."

He approached Severus as he spoke, stopping right in front of him. "She haurt me sweet Eileen, an' Breen, who 'as been a son ta me. She willnae escap' punishment!"

Mukta appeared between the two men. "She has brought shame on the Master and his ancestors. All Unmesh House elves will not help the Madam. They will stay hidden. But you must beware of Ajeet."

Seeing the true love and caring, and steely determination in the older man's eyes, Severus silently nodded. "Then we'd best be prepared."

Mukta listened for a moment. "Madam has returned. Ajeet has come."

"Harry..." Severus whispered, as his eyes flashed.

"Mukta will take you. Take Mukta's sash, please, Sirs."

The men surrounded the small elf, each grasping her sash, and they all winked out of the room.

@@@@@@
Chapter 29

2,526 words

Everything was ready, and Ginny again paced the library as she awaited the return of Ajeet with the woman. *Pregnant woman*, she added angrily to herself...

Who was this woman who had captured the heart of Harry Potter--Her Harry.

*She* was suppose to be Lady Potter. ... But no, Neville Longbottom had gone to his Grandmother, who'd then told her parents what he'd overheard all those years ago on the train. Months later, she was married off to an older *Pureblood* Wizard from India. And, Harry had all but disappeared from the face of the Earth.

Sure, she'd taken advantage of *Chandhi'*s riches and status, and pretended to be the wife he was expecting, always remorseful and apologetic when she didn't become pregnant with an heir. Those potions saw to that. She was the beautiful little wife on his arm at all the society, official, and family events and gatherings. She watched, listened, and planned, as she squirreled away Galleons and jewels for herself.

The stupid old man was a blind fool. He'd no idea. It had been pitifully easy to poison the man. She still had her Tom's memories of the potions of course, and he'd told her that night exactly how to brew it. Now she had everything that had been *Chandhi'*s and no child she'd have to share with. And she finally would have her Harry and she'd make sure there were no children this time either, to interfere--or, a meddling first wife.

She stopped pacing for a moment as a smile spread over her face. Pure evil and sadistic, she was so close to having what she wanted. What she's always wanted since her mother had first told her the story of the Boy Who Lived. The poor little rich boy, who defeated the Dark Lord when he was orphaned. The same boy who came to her rescue in her First Year. Just like she knew he would. Just like it was it destined to happen. Just as it was destined for him to marry *her*.

The four men waited and watched from behind a hidden panel in the bookcase, taken there by the little house elf who reminded Severus of another who'd disappeared from Hogwarts ten years ago. *Mukta* had told them that wards surrounded the hidden room so they could not be heard, but could see and hear everything going on in the library. Then she had left after remarking that Ajeet had to be reminded of his duty to the *Unmesh* Family.
"Who is this Ajeet?" Lucius asked. His wand in one hand and a dagger in the other.

"The question should be, what is he?" Remus asked as a tall man appeared in the library, with a bundle in his arms. Remus quietly began to explain exactly what and who Ajeet was to the Unmesh family.

"He's dangerous. And, that's all you need to know." Severus murmured as he looked through the hole in the panel, watching the huge eunuch gently lay the burden he carried on the large sofa. "And he will not hurt what is mine."

"He's more, Severus." Remus chided softly.

"Aye, he es. Eh bit o' Creature in 'im. Indian? Migh' be eh Shadow Guard. Eh lot o' tha older Pureblood'd fam'lies had one es a guardian an' assassin tha' answer'd only ta tha Heir."

"I don't care what he is. After the horror that was Voldemort, I fear nothing. He will not harm Harry or my sons." There was an undercurrent of danger in Severus' voice.

"Aye, Lad. Ah'm wi' ye." Iain laid a firm hand on Severus' shoulder.

"As are we, Sev." Remus added, as he and Lucius exchanged a look.

"I won't let Harry down again," Severus whispered. "Never again."

Ginny whirled around as Ajeet appeared. "So, finally, here is the little woman of the house. All fat and pregnant! Not that you'll live to have those cursed brats!"

Severus hissed from his hiding place.

Breen was swiftly regaining consciousness, and sensed something wasn't right. He knew he should be in his room, but wasn't. This room smelled strange, foreign, and then he heard the voice. Barely containing a gasp, he burrowed deeper into the quilt he was wrapped in, curling around the swell of..."
his children, and allowed his hair to hide his face, thankful that somehow his braid had come undone.

Clasping her hands in glee. Breen's movement to protect himself and his sons was misunderstood by Ginny, "Oh, she's meek. Do you not fight back? I would have thought, that the Great Harry Potter would want a woman with fire and tack! Or maybe he just married you to use as a broodmare, perhaps?"

Breen grit his teeth and remained still, but the remark did not remain unacknowledged by the men hidden behind the books. Severus growled in anger as did Remus. Lucius hissed several foul curses in French, as Iain uttered an oath in Gaelic to defend the honor of his family.

Ginny walked slowly closer to the sofa, and circled it, an extra sway to her hips, as she pushed out her breasts. Reaching down, she grasped a lock of dark hair and yanked before letting it drop. "Pitifully scrawny little thing aren't you, swollen like a pig with his spawn. How did you entice him? You have no figure, poor thing."

Still Breen remained silent.

"I have your daughter, you know. Full of life and fire. Too bad she won't live much longer."

Breen gasped, and barely stopped himself from facing Ginny fully. Instead, he peeked at her from below lowered lashes, between locks of hair. "My Eileen." He whispered, keeping his voice light.

"Yes, your precious Eileen," Ginny spat, "who whinged incessantly for her Da! What kind of mother are you? She hasn't asked for you, not even once."

Breen closed his eyes. His beautiful Eileen was still alive. Damnit it all to bloody hell, Ginny feckin' Weasley, she finally found him here after all this time! How! Now his babies and his baby girl were in trouble. And his magic was all out of wack! It was useless! Normally, she would have been blown to bits by now, like his Aunt Marge had been all those years ago.

Ajeet took a step forward, and opened his mouth to address his Mistress. He must tell her that it was not a woman she was speaking to, but a wizard. One who bore children, something rare in his memories. But when he tried to speak, it was as if a hand of ice had gripped it's fingers around his throat and squeezed. He tried to summon his magic, but found it suddenly inaccessible.
Stepping back into the shadows, he felt the presence of another. Something was placed over his head and draped around his neck. He felt it's magic burn through his body. Looking down, he gasped. On his chest lay the Amulet of Servitude he'd worn for generations, until two days after his Master's death. The Madam had removed it, stating he served only her and her desires now. He struggled as his sense of duty and obligations to the Unmesh Line crashed over him, showing him how close he had come to bringing shame to the Most Ancient and Honorable Line of Unmesh, and to the Ancient Order of the Shadow Guard. He looked down to see Mukta, wearing a similar amulet denoting her servitude to the Unmesh, staring up at him, nodding as if all would finally be well. He nodded in understanding. Things must be put right. Innocents are to be protected.

"Maybe we should cut the damned brats out and sell them to the highest bidder? Eileen would bring a good price on the slave markets--being a witch and young enough to train right." She summoned one of the knives from Ajeet's robes. "And those babies. Boys? Or Girls?"

Mukta narrowed her eyes, raising her hand, ready to cast magic, and watched. Severus saw the glint in the redhead's eyes. It was a blood lust. She wasn't just taunting Harry.... Breen. She was being very serious. In that moment, Ginny Weasley looked very much like Bellatrix Lestrange, and his blood ran cold. He felt Lucius shiver next to him.

"Well?!" Ginny approached the sofa again, keeping the large knife in clear view. "I asked you a question."

Breen shifted, but remained silent, as he tried to burrow deeper into the corner of the sofa and shield his abdomen. She was right behind him now, and he could hear her dragging the blade along the back of the sofa.

"Pitiful! Won't even stand up and fight for the lives of your precious children. Must not be any love lost then. More for me then. Harry won't miss you when I do this!" Ginny brought the knife up over her head, in preparation to thrust downward.....

At that moment, the wall of books opposite the sofa exploded outward, sending books, shards of wood, dust and debris flying everywhere. From the maelstrom rushed four men, three of them casting hexes, as an arrow flew from the crossbow of the fourth.

"Expelliramus!"

"Petrificus Totalus!"
Incarcerous!

Ginevra Unmesh's body slammed to the floor, pinned by the arrow through her wrist, as Severus caught the summoned blade. Mukta appeared from the shadows, followed by a silent Ajeet. Mukta approached Iain and presented the remainder of Ajeet's weapons. The eunuch dropped to his knees then bowed his face to the floor, his arm stretched forward on the floor in front of him.

"He has been reminded of his duty," Mukta said, as she watched the men's attention focus on the figure on the sofa.

Iain moved to the sofa, "Breen, Laddie! Aer ye well? The bairns?" He placed a hand around Breen's shoulders to help him sit up.

Severus ran towards the sofa and knelt beside Iain. "Harry!"

Remus and Lucius had rounded the sofa and lifted Ginny from the floor, holding her upright as they moved her to the end of the sofa opposite where Breen lay. She was clearly furious, her eyes flashing, and clearly upset that she couldn't move. When she saw who she had actually been tormenting and almost killed, all color drained from her face and her body went limp.

Breen sat up carefully, keeping the quilt wrapped around himself, as he stared at the faces around him, ignoring Ginny. "E-Eileen? Iain, where's my baby girl?" He paused, confused. "Severus? Why are you here? Remi? Lucius?"

The sound of Iain's brogue was soothing. "Aer wee lassie es home wi' haer Seanmhair. Which es whaer ye aer goin'." Iain lifted Breen into his arms, wrapped snuggly in the quilt. "Ye caertainly dinnae balong en tha den o' tha She-Deamhan!" He snarled as he glared at Madam Unmesh.

Mukta appeared at his side. "Mukta will take the little Mistress's Grandfather and Da home now."

Approaching her, he held Breen firmly against his chest, urging him to turn his face away. Breen refuses to acknowledge Ginny's presence and buries his face against his adopted father's neck. Iain fixes Ginny with a look of pure murder and spoke in a low deadly voice. "Ye aer luckay tha we aer nae alone, Deamhan, fer if'n et waer up ta me, ye'd suffaer tha same pun'shments es was heap'd an tha Scot Will'm Wallace!"
Ginny paled further, her eyes wide as she listened, and when Iain finished speaking, she passed out. Iain spat at her feet, spun and strode from the room with Breen.

Remus *Levitated* Ginny's unconscious body onto the sofa recently vacated by Breen. The three men moved to stand together by the fireplace on the other side of the room. *Ajeet* remained where he was. Lucius and Severus gave the dark man odd looks, prompting Remus to explain.

"There is no heir for him to obey. Perhaps, *Mukta* will know what is to be done with him.

"She told me that the Lord Unmesh anticipated the possibility this all would happen--or at least the prospect of Ginny's duplicitous behavior." Severus sighed. "As much as I loathed torture under the dictates of Voldemort, I could almost look forward to seeing that woman tortured as Iain had said."

Lucius snorted. "Even that, would be too good for the likes of her."

"Agreed." Remus growled. "The Wolf would love to spill her blood for harming our cubs."

*Mukta* appeared with a sharp pop, accompanied by a young Hindi man who appeared to be of good breeding. "Kind Wizards, this is our new Master, *Kasi Sudhir Nerendra Unmesh*, nephew of our departed Lord *Unmesh*. May the Goddess bless his rest." She motioned toward the three men. "Master, these are the honorable wizards I told you about."

The younger Lord *Unmesh* approached them, and bowed, before reaching out to shake their hands. Dressed in the fine robes of the *Pureblood Hindi*, his long hair pulled back into a clip at his nape, he wore a minimum of jewelry, but the few pieces were elegant and tasteful. His eyes were warm and friendly as he looked at them.

"Please accept the deepest apologies of myself and the House of *Unmesh* for the disgraceful way Lord Evans and his daughter were treated, and for the injuries and damages caused to his home and those he considers family. Please accept my sincerest apologies for the shameful behavior of she who my uncle married, and for our servant, *Ajeet*, who has forsaken his duty to our family."

A moan of sorrow could be heard from the man still prostrate on the floor. Ginny was awake now, her eyes fixed on the new heir to the family, and the judge of her fate.

"*Mukta* explained everything to me when I first arrived. I regret that your uncle suffered the cruel
disrespect of that woman, which I am sure are the least of her crimes against him and your family. To his credit, the man seemed much more clever than she could have anticipated." Severus glanced toward the woman on the sofa then back to the young man. "Auror Inspector Edouarde Clouseau must be contacted to take her into custody, so she will stand before the French Wizengamut for her crimes."

"You are Lord Snape, yes?" Severus nodded. "He has already been contacted and will be here shortly. I understand that Lord Evans carries your sons, and the child Eileen is your daughter?" He nodded again. "Please allow Mukta to take you to them. I will discuss the rest with your comrades, who may then apprise you. I will be in touch with both you, Lord Evans, and Lord MacLeod."

"Thank you, Lord Unmesh for your consideration and your kindness. I will await word from you." Severus added as the elf took hold of his wrist, and then they were gone.

Lord Unmesh then turned to Remus and Lucius, motioning them to another sofa, near the fireplace, as another house elf appeared with a tray of refreshments. The men sat down, to await the arrival of the Aurors, while the man on the floor and the woman on the other sofa remained motionless.

TBC...

ken = Gaelic; know, understand

Deamhan = Scottish Gaelic for demon, or devil.
La Liberté de Breen à Vivre  (Breen's Freedom to Live)  Ch. 30-32

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Chapter 30

3,056 words

At the MacLeod Manor...

Dobby was beside himself, upset that he could not find Master Breen. After searching the manor completely, he searched the grounds, alerting the sleeping hands along the way. The Aurors were summoned and all was searched again. Sure that Lord Evan's disappearance was linked with his daughter's, Auror Inspector Clouseau was immediately contacted. Needless to say, all were exceedingly surprised to see the Inspector and his team appear with Miss Eileen.

Once the child was examined by the family healer, and pronounced uninjured, she was tucked into bed, with both Dobby, and the dogs, Blaan and Ruadh, to watch over her. She had awakened, the Sleeping Draught overdose finally leaving her system. It took a little while for Clouseau to explain to her how she came to be home again, and that she needed to rest so she could see her Da, Seanmhair, Seanair, and Uncle Micah in the morning. Before he left, he handed her the amulet that her Seanair usually wore around his neck, telling her he had asked that she keep it until he came home. At that point, she finally drifted off to sleep.

Clouseau had gathered a fresh team of Aurors in the courtyard and was about to head back to the Unmesh manor, when Iain appeared, carrying someone wrapped in a quilt, and accompanied by a tiny female House elf wearing a brightly colored clothing. The man looked both worried and furious, which prompted the Aurors to part quickly as he passed, heading toward the manor. After telling his men to stand down, he followed Iain into the manor and into a bedroom just down the hall from the huge kitchen.
Ignoring his shadow, Iain carefully laid Breen on the bed, turning only long enough to bellow, "Maire! Summon Miss Renee' from the clinic!"

"Right away, Sir!" Came the reply.

Clouseau moved around the bed, and was surprised to see Breen, and he seemed to be in pain. "What has happened?"

"Breen has gone into labor. Tha stress... tha' Deamhan, she--" Iain growled, then took a cleansing breath. "We wait'd en ah hidd'n room tha elf shoed us. Tha Indi'n servant had Breen wi' him when he came ta haer. She dinnae ken she had Breen--thaugh' he was 'Lady Evans'! Said vile thin's ta Breen, then tried ta kill 'im!"

Iain started muttering to himself angrily in Gaelic, as he gently tucked Breen under the covers. Leaning down to kiss the moist forehead, he whispered. "Ye try ta rest, Laddie. Miss Renee' wi' be haer soon."

Breen nodded, as he bit his lip. Iain summoned a chair and sat next to the bed, never releasing his grasp on his son's hand. He turned to motion the Auror to another chair.

"Inspector--" He began.

"Please, call me Edouard, Lord MacLeod."

"Iain, please."

"Iain, were they captured?"

"Aye, tha Deamhan-- she was boun' by magick, an' tha servant--he surrender'd." His voice and expression were calm, as he absentmindedly stroked his thumb back and forth across the back of Breen's hand, but there was still a spark of anger in his eyes.

"I should return to the manor with my men and make my arrests. I assure you, Iain, that she will be prosecuted to the full extent of French Wizarding Law."
"Iain," Breen whispered. His eyes were closed, but he knew that the Auror would need to know his secret. Ginny would tell the world the first chance she got. And then the Wizarding World would come looking for him again-- no, for Harry Potter again.

Iain turned his full attention to the young man on the bed, "Aye, Laddie."

"Tell him. Needs to know my secret. Protect my new life--please." Green eyes showed worry and sadness, and... fear.

_Edouarde_ frowned and stood, instantly on guard. "Iain?"

"My son--tha son o' me haert," Iain brushed the hair from Breen's forehead, "es Harry Potter--or was, once."

"Couldn't break it to him easy, could you, Iain?" Breen's eyes showed a flicker of mirth, as the Auror dropped back to his seat in shock.

"_Ma Déesse ! _" He exclaimed as he stared at Breen.

Breen grimaced in pain as another contraction came and went. Opening his eyes, his gaze met _Edouarde_'s. "Ginny had planned, after the War, to trick me and use potions to get pregnant with my child, then I would be forced to marry her. She has been obsessed with me since my First Year at Hogwarts. She decided she was going to be Lady Potter no matter what--no matter who she hurt. I don't love her. Never did. I'd given my whole life up to that point to the Wizarding World and it was always controlled by others."

He closed his eyes, as a look of sadness crossed his face. "I wanted my life to be my own. To be free to live. Really live. So I changed my name, I left, and came here. To start over. That was ten years ago. I have found peace... and happiness... and a family of sorts." He smiled at Iain. "I don't want to lose that. It was hard enough to not tell those I love where I am and that I am well and happy."

_Edouarde_ frowned as he listened. Going over the facts in his head; what he knew and what he had learned just now. "The Ministry searched for you after you disappeared."
"Yes," Breen grunted, as another contraction passed. "They wanted to control me. Show me off, or hide me away till they needed me again. I was never going to be free. The Ministry... feared me. The Goblins... they understood."

Iain looked at Breen, then to Edouarde. "Es thaer any way ta protec' him an' still serve justice an tha woman?"

_Edouarde_ stood, "I will speak to my Superiors and the the _British Liaison to the French Wizengamot_, and see what we can do to protect your privacy, Lord Evans. After all, we have much to be thankful for--considering the gift your past self has given all of us." He smiled. "You have more than earned your privacy, young man."

He bowed and exited the room without another word, as the Medi-Healer and her assistant entered the room.

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Severus appeared with Mukta outside the Macleod's home. She bowed to him and disappeared with a pop. Nervous and a little shaky, he made his way into the home. So many questions in his mind. He'd only gotten a glimpse of Harry... Breen. And he was even more beautiful than when he was a young boy at Hogwarts.

Even more now that he was ripe with child... Children. _His_ children. His thoughts whirled as he spotted Clouseau. The man smiled, nodded, and pointed toward a room down the hall, then hurried out the door. Iain stepped from the room and smiled when he saw Severus--a very nervous Severus.

"Ah dinnae have ta tell ye tha' ef ye hurt him ar Me Eileen en anyw'y, shape ar form. Ye will answ'r ta me." Iain smiled, and walked down the hall.

Severus swallowed. The big Scot actually unnerved him, and he was an Ex-Death Eater. He knew at this point that Harry--Breen--couldn't have found a better family. He'd been well cared for. It would be a lot to live up to. Straightening his robes, he walked to the bedroom and knocked lightly on the closed door. It opened, and a small older woman smiled up at him.

"Aye. Aer ye tha bairn's oth'r Da?" Brid asked quietly.
Severus nodded. "May I come in?"

*Brid* looked back at the MediWitch, who nodded. "In wi' ye than." She said as she stepped aside.

Harry was sitting propped up by a large mound of pillows, his eyes closed in concentration. The young man was rubbing his belly and breathing.

Severus approached the bed slowly. He spoke softly. "Har--Breen?"

The warm fluid voice, speaking his name, flowed over him like a warm waterfall, as the pain of the contraction finally flowed away. A voice he hadn't heard in--his eyes popped open and he looked up. There, not three feet from him, stood Severus Snape, in the flesh.

"Severus... I saw you. Before, at...I thought… imagined..."

"Hush. Do not think of that now. Tell me, are you well? The babies?"

The other woman in the room approached Severus, extending her hand, as she flashed a warm smile. Medi-Witch and Midwife *Renee' Igerne'*, and you are?"

"Severus Snape. I am the babies' fa--other father. It was my essence that Har--Breen selected."

A gasp was heard from the bed, and *Brid* crossed the room to sit on the bed. Renee' ignored it for now and continued to speak to Severus. "Breen and the babies are stable. He was in labour but we were able to halt that--for now. Breen is on full bedrest until after the babies are born. You may visit, but please try not to stress him. At this late stage, it wouldn't take much to start the labour again." She reached down to retrieve a worn pair of Birkenstock mules from under the chair. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Snape. You come from good stock. Eileen and the babies are strong and healthy. Come *Brid*. I believe I smell tea steeping."

He watched the pair exit the room. Long loose braids, faded jeans, heavy Aran sweaters, and Birkenstocks; these were not the typical Medi-Witches. He shook his head in disbelief.

"*You* are the donor?" Breen asked wide-eyed. Then he frowned in concentration. Eileen's facial

"I've seen a picture of Eileen. She's beautiful."

"And very authoritative and demanding, when she wants something."

"Eileen was my Mother's name."

"I'd no idea. Iain's wife's name is Aileen—we call her Ailey. She's been like a mother to me."

Severus slid into the chair next to the bed. "I am happy you had them to care for you." He glanced at the swell of Breen's abdomen, "Have you selected names for...?"

Breen nodded. "John-Paul Lucien, and Christophe Emil Noel."

"Sons..." Severus whispered.

"Oh yes. I can tell they are going to be very active. If their kicking of my insides is any indication... they'd make great Beaters or great Soccer players."

Severus chuckled. Breen smiled. That look was good on the older man.

"How is everyone back home," Breen asked quietly.

"Albus is still a candy-obsessed old man. And the candies and treats you sent just made him even happier."

Breen blushed. "How long did it take all of you to realize the gifts were from me?"

"We all knew from the first basket. Molly uses her Teapot whenever we all meet at the Burrow and have tea. I even share my chocolates when we get together."
"All of the chocolates?"

"Yes, even with your Wolf."

"My Wolf? How is Remus? He was there... and Lucius? Are they together?"

"They are bonded. Have been for over a year now... and still act as though they were bonded yesterday."

"Really. I definitely didn't see that one coming."

"Ah, then you're most definitely in for a surprise or two. Miss Granger, Mr. Longbottom and my Godson, Draco, are in a Triad, and planning a bonding sometime in the future."

"Nev? Moine? And Draco?!"

Severus nodded. "Your Mr. Weasley has also bonded... to Viktor Krum. They just recently had a child. A baby girl, of which you are the Godfather."

"Ron!? Married to Viktor Krum?" Breen started to chuckle. "Oh Merlin! I knew he had a crush on him, even though he swore he didn't!" He thought for a moment. "A baby girl? How--?"

"Oh, Mr. Weasley-Krum certainly knows how to turn a perfectly good Sunday afternoon tea on it's ear. He is very vocal and demanding during labour. I still have the sore fingers to show for it."

Breen noticed Severus was unconsciously rubbing his hand as he spoke.

"Um, what about the other Weasley's?"

Severus cleared his throat. "Well, Percy has married Miss Lovegood. No children yet, much to Molly's dismay. But she's making up for it with Ronald's child."
"What is the babe's name?"

"Molly Elisbeth Louise Weasley-Krum. Quite the moniker to live up to. She has chestnut red hair and the Weasley temper to match."

"Oh no!" Breen laughed. "When was she born? Was it around the middle of last month maybe?"

Severus startled. "Yes! How did you know?"

"I dreamt of Ron, and awoke to the sound of a newborn's cry."

Severus’ eyes widened, and he leaned forward a bit. "I've been having dreams as well, over the years. They started a few years after you disappeared. Looking back now, I finally understand that they were about you, and Eileen, and the twins." Seeing Breen's surprised look, he explained. "One of my ancestors had the Sight. I believe I have a bit of it too."

"The dream about Ron wasn't my first either. I kept dreaming of someone--someone who was the father of my children. Someone who cared for us. It was you. Now I see." Breen's voice ended in an awed whisper as he stared at Severus. "Cainnech was right."

"Cainnech?"

"A close friend I've known here for several years. His family owns the crêperie in Toulbroch, and the Sight is prominent in his family. He's told me in the past that my destined mate would find me, someday."

The twins decided in that moment to become active, and Breen gasped as his belly undulated. He rubbed his hands in circles on his belly trying to soothe his sons back to sleep. It was for naught though, as the movement rippled across his abdomen again. Severus' eyes widened as he watched.

Breen looked up and bit back a smirk at the expression on the other man's face. "Would you like to feel them? Your son's?"
Severus reached out with shaking hands towards Breen's stomach.

"They don't bite, Severus." Breen reached out with his own hands, taking the other man's and guided them to his stomach. "Feel there."

Severus eyes lit up with amazement when he felt something push back at his hand. "Babies. Two of them."

Breen laughed, causing his belly to bounce. "Yes, Severus. There are two of them. That is what the term 'twins' indicates, after all."

Severus glared, rolled his eyes, and then he spoke, "I am sorry we were not able to better protect you, Har--Breen."

"I was the Chosen One. The Ministry thought they owned me. Gin... She thought I was her prize. But I came here and I was finally free. I found my path in life, finally. And I couldn't be happier. You have nothing to be sorry for." He placed a hand over one of Severus' that still rested on his belly.

"We have missed you. All of us. Ronald and Hermione, moreso."

"I understand. There were times when I wanted to turn around and say something to both, or Owl them. But, I had to walk my own path. Alone and hoped one day that we would be together again."

Severus smiled. "It seemed you were correct."

"Life is a circle. Who knew that the donor would be you?"

"Or that you would choose my donation."

"Actually, my magic chose your donation. It was perfectly compatible with my magic."

Severus' heart started beating faster. "Breen? Do you understand why?"
Breen looked at him oddly. "I don't understand what you mean?"

"The dreams. The compatibility of our magic for you to carry my children." Severus called his magic to his fingertips and trailed them around Breen's stomach. The babes seem to calm and settle down. "Our souls called to each other."

Breen felt his cheeks warm as he felt an excited fluttering in his stomach that had nothing to do with the babies. He dropped his gaze to where his fingers fidgeted with the threads in the quilt. Soulmates... was it possible? Was Severus the person Cainnech had ' Seen '? All of a sudden his chest felt tight, and he was having difficulty breathing.

Green eyes met dark ones. "Is this real?"

"Oh, very, Breen. Very real."

"I've wanted nothing my whole life, but a family to call my own. I'd thought I had it when I was in Britain. But..."

"Things happened."

"Yes. Then I came here, and met Iain and Ailey. Became part of their family. Had my daughter and now my sons."

Severus slid from the chair to kneel next to the bed, placing his other hand over Breen's where it rested over his. "Our sons. Our daughter."

"Yes... But... I don't want to wake up in the morning and find it's all been a dream."

Severus gripped Breen's hand. "Then let it be a beautiful dream that we never wake from. I've wanted a family for so long, Breen. Wanted someone to call my own. To wake up next to someone. To love someone. I'd thought my chance had passed long ago... then the dreams began. And I had hope."
"But, we're different people now. Like strangers meeting for the first time."

"Are you so sure?"

"I've changed. I've grown up. I'm not Harry Potter any longer."

"And I have changed as well, Breen. Just because you've changed your name does not mean you are a different man. And I am no longer your Professor, whom you didn't understand, who, in turn, misunderstood you."

"Touche'. Can we start again? Get to know each other? As we truly are."

"That, Mr. Evans, would be a pleasure," Severus purred, causing Breen to blush again.

"Me too." He replied, and was immediately overcome by the urge to yawn, which he did, covering his mouth with his hand. "Excuse me. It seems I am very tired all of a sudden."

"Just rest then, Breen. I'm not going anywhere. I plan on staying as long as you'll have me."

"Thank you, Severus..." Breen murmured as he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Severus rose and pulled the chair closer so he could sit again, still holding Breen's hand, as he quietly watched him sleep, studying him, and appreciating the handsome and brave young man he had become.

He had been given a grand gift by the Goddess, and he would do everything in his power to keep it and care for it--them--his family--for the rest of their lives.

Tbc...
"Iain!... Iain!" Ailey called, as she sat up and tried to climb out of bed. When she received no reply, and her husband did not appear, she called again. "Iain Pa'l MacLeod!" She barked, as she tried to stand. "Ye ken Ah've nae me wand! Nae matt'r--"

Maire came running into the room, her skirts hiked up. "Miss Ailey! Ye shou'd nae be tryin' ta walk yet!"

"Och! Et's time Ah got ba'k ta ma kitch'n! Es ma wee granbabe, Eileen, been found, Maire ?"

"Aye, she's tuck'd safe en haer bed. An' Mast'r Breen es home too." The girl's eyes suddenly widened as she clamped a hand over her mouth.

Ailey's eyes narrowed at the girl as she pulled on her house robe. "What're ye sayin'? Whaer es Breen home from?" When she didn't receive an immediate answer, "Maire ?"

"Off ye git, Lassie! Ah wi' tend ta tha Missus."

They both looked toward the door to see Iain standing there, freshly showered and dressed, his hair still damp. The girl bolted, obviously relieved to be able to escape. Ailey turned a sharp eye on her husband, her fists firmly planted on her hips, as if she hadn't spent the last few days in bed, under a Healing Sleep Spell. Iain strode into the room and gathered his wife into his arms, holding her tight, and kissing her before she had the chance to speak. When he finally broke the kiss, he was please to see her looking a bit dazed.

Ailey put her forehead against her husband's as she caught her breath, "Explain b'fore Ah start hexin' tha lot o' ya, Iain."

Iain sighed. He'd hoped it would work, but it hadn't since before they'd had children. Guiding her back to the bed, he sat her down before joining her. Holding her hands between his, he looked into
her eyes.

"Ma Ailey, Ah'm pleased b'yond waerds ta see ye awake an' well." Seeing her open her mouth to again chide him, he held up his hand. "Breen an' Eileen aer fine. Breen was tak'n by tha same paerson tha' took Eileen. They aer home now, an' tha Deamhan--"

"Iain P'al!"

"--Tha woman an' haer servan', hav' been tak'n by tha Aurors. Breen went inta labour, but Miss Renee' was summon'd an' put 'im ta rights. He's ben confin'd ta bed till tha bairns come."

Ailey knew there was more. "Tell me all if it, Iain P'al."

"Tha oth'r father--tha donor, faer Eileen an' tha bairns ...tha mahn who wrote... he's here. An' Me Love, he's one o' Breen's former professors from boardin' school. He's an hon'rable mahn, Ailey, an' very brave. We wou'dnae foun' them wi' oot him."

"Es Eileen alrigh'? Nae nigh'mares?" Ailey struggled to stand again. "Ah mus' see haer!"

"Dobby an' the hounds aer wi' haer."

"An' Micah?"

"Eh bump an tha haerd head. Hes wounds aer heal'd. He'll be fine. Jus' blusterin' ab'ut wantin' ta kick some arse faer sneakin' up on 'im, an' takin' his lassie. But, tha men who did tha deed aer dead. They escap'd easy if'n ye ask me!"

"Aye! They dinnae hav' ta answ'r ta me!" Ailey growled, almost looking fearsome, if it were not for her still-pale countenance.

Iain chuckled, as he wrapped his wife's hand around his arm, walking her slowly out into the hall. The early morning sun was just beginning to stream through the windows, as he guided her downstairs to Breen's room, where the dogs were sitting outside, whinging quietly as they stared at the door. Lucius and Remus were already standing outside the door. They nodded to each other,
and Remus motioned toward the door, making a sign to listen. As they approached the door, they heard the murmur of a small familiar voice, so they stopped to listen.

Eileen awakened just as the sun peeked over the horizon, extremely happy to see she was again home, in her bed. She giggled as Blaan and Ruath climbed all over her, licking her face, their tails wagging happily. She climbed out of bed and padded barefoot out the door and downstairs looking for her Da. Seanmhair's door had still been closed, so she tried to be as quiet as possible, stopping twice to shush the dogs, who'd followed along.

Telling the dogs to stay, she pushed the door to her Da's room open slowly and peeked her head into the room. Yes! Da was in bed, asleep, and he looked well. Then she noticed the man in the chair next to the bed. She didn't recognize him. Squeezing through the opening, she closed the door behind her to keep the dogs in the hall, and tiptoed carefully across the room. She stopped right in front of the chair the man was sitting in. Well, kind of sitting in, as he was asleep, his head cradled on one arm on the edge of Da's bed and was holding one of Da's hands with the other. Their hands were clasped together against the bump that was her baby brothers.

She looked at her Da again and noticed he was smiling in his sleep. Then, she looked back at the man. She studied him. He was tall and had long legs. His fingers were long. She looked from his hands to hers, holding hers up in front of her. She could see one of his ears. It had the funny earlobe--like hers, she thought, as she reached up and touched one of her own, then his. His hair was dark; darker than Da's. She reached out and touched a lock of it. Like hers, it just wasn't wild like hers and Da's. His nose was big and had a bit of a bump on it, what her's had looked like when Angus, down the lane had hit her with a rock last year. She reached out and very lightly ran a fingertip down the length of his nose. Maybe someone hit him with a rock too... His lashes were long and really dark--she ran a fingertip across her own; yes, they were just like hers. She sat down on the floor, cross-legged, pulling her nightshirt over her legs, rested her elbows on her knees, her chin on her clasped hands, and continued to study him and Da, as they slept.

Severus didn't move when the door opened. He felt more than saw the other person enter the room. The magic coming from the other was young, and very vibrant.

He barely opened his eyes, and watched Eileen enter the room. He stayed perfectly still as she touched him gently and carefully. Her fingers were a soft caress as she studied him with her little fingers. He watched as she stepped back and sat down on the floor. He watched her from below lowered lids as she looked back and forth between him and Breen on the bed. Other than her eyes, she didn't move. Finally unable to resist any longer, without moving he spoke, calmly and quietly, so as not to startle the child. His daughter.
He watched her carefully as he spoke. "It is not polite to stare."

She merely looked up at him, locked eyes with him a moment and replied, matter-of-factly, "Ahr eyes aer tha same color. Ye're my Papa, aern't ye. Aer ye my broders' Papa too?"

Severus straightened, and sat up in the chair, still holding Breen's hand. "You are very astute for such a young lady."

"Does tha' mean smaert?" Eileen asked, as she folded her hands in her lap.

Severus nodded. Eileen smiled.

"Da says Ah'm very smaert b'cause o' tha Papa he picked for me. He pick'd you! Tha' means ye aer very smaert too!"

"I am a professor--a teacher. I teach young witches and wizards the art of Potion-making."

"Oh, Da says tha's like cookin' but haerder. My Seanmhair lets me help haer en tha kitchen som'times, but Ah like helpin' Seanair wi' tha horses more."

"That is also an admirable profession. Horses are fine creatures."

She tilted her head and studied him for a moment. "Where do ye live?"

"I live in Britain, across the Channel. I came to see you when I learned of your existence--that you are my daughter--and my heir. And, in answer to your other question earlier, yes, I am also the twins' father--Papa."

"Da says his magick picked ye. Does tha mean ye aer special?"

"Yes, my sweet princess, that means he is very special." Breen's sleepy voice interrupted.
Eileen sprung to her feet and climbed on the bed. "Da!" She crawled up carefully and hugged him. "Ah missed ye!"

"And, I, you, my sweet girl. I love you."

"Love ye too, Da!" She turned and motioned toward Severus. "Da! Tha Papa ye pick'd far me and the bairns ... he's here!"

Breen chuckled as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. "Yes, Eileen. I know."

Severus' eyes were warm as he looked at him. "Good morning, Breen."

"Morning, Severus." He brushed his hair away from his face. "You stayed the night."

"Of course. It is where I should be--where I wanted to be."

Breen nodded, a small smile on his lips. He looked at his daughter. "It seems you two have been getting acquainted while I slept. Eileen, I would like you to meet your Papa, Professor Severus Tobias Snape. A most gifted Potions Master, a stern but knowledgeable professor, and a very brave man--a decorated war hero. You should be very proud to have him for a Papa."

Severus' cheeks pinked slightly, and he cleared his throat.

Just then, the door opened, admitting two excited hounds, barking and yipping as they crossed the room and jumped on the bed. Immediately behind them, were Lucius and Remus, who stepped in and aside, to allow Iain to guide a somewhat unsteady Ailey into the room.

"Ailey!"

"Seanmhair!"

Severus stood up and offered the older woman his seat. Iain helped her sit much to the woman's grumbling. "Ah'm nae feeble! Jus' let me see Ma Breen!"
Eileen leapt to her feet and wrapped her arms around Ailey as she pressed her face into the soft house robe the older woman wore. Ailey held the child tight, kissing her hair as tears welled in her eyes. Iain squeezed her shoulder and smiled at Breen who beamed back in return. He looked at the others, seeing that more chairs had been summoned and the other men were sitting. Ailey reached out one hand to clasp one of Breen's, giving it an affectionate squeeze.


"A'll calm meself when som'one explains who an' why strang'rs tried ta steal me gran'babe.. an' then take Breen!" She looked around the room, anger in her eyes, but when she looked at Breen, there was also a shadow of worry there.

Breen closed his eyes and sighed. Perhaps it was time to tell his adopted Mum the full truth of his past. He rubbed circles on his belly, trying to calm the twins who seemed to sense his unsettled emotions.

Iain noticed Breen was lost in thought, evidently trying to decide if it was time to tell all, so in order to give him some time, he took it upon himself to introduce Ailey and Severus to each other. Or so he’d thought, when Eileen suddenly pulled back from Ailey's embrace, with a huge smile on her face as she looked up at her Seanmhair.

"Seanmhair! Seanmhair! My Papa is here! My Papa tha' Da pick'd!" She pointed toward Severus, who stood, and nodded his head at his daughter. "An' he looks lik' me! An' he es tha bairns Papa too!"

Severus approached Ailey, held out his hand as he bowed slightly. "Severus Tobias Snape. It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady MacLeod."

Ailey took his hand and shook it, "Pleas'd ta meet ye, Lord Snape." She cocked her head to the side, and looked over to where Lucius and Remus sat. "Breen?"

"Yes, Ailey, I know them." Breen took a deep breath, frowned at the amused expressions on Remus' and Lucius' faces. He shook his head. "Remus is my godfather, and I attended Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry with Lucius' son, Draco. Severus was my Potions professor, and he trained me for the Final Battle."
Ailey studied him, noticing the worry in his eyes. "Breen...ye aer tha son o' me haert. Et dinnae matt'r wha' yer past es. Ah accept'd tha' when ye faerst walk'd inta me kitch'n lookin' lik' eh lost waif." She squeezed his hand, as Iain helped her to move to sit on the edge of his bed. Iain sat in the chair, close by, to steady her if needed. "Thar's more. Tell me, laddie. Tell yer Muime."

Severus moved his chair to sit on the other side of Breen's bed, offering silent support. He knew all too well, as did Remus and Lucius, how hard this would be for the young man. Letting his past meet his present and future.

Breen didn't look up as he spoke, his voice almost a whisper. "My real name—the one I was born with... is Harry Potter."

"Now, was tha' so haerd? Eh name dinnae mak' eh mahn. Eh mahn mak's tha name. An' et wou'd seem tha' these good men miss'd ye when ye left. But, ye left faer eh good reas'n. Ef Ah rememb'r ahl tha shenaigans goin' on ov'r, across tha Channel."

Breen shook his head, without looking up, and Ailey eyed her husband. "Ye ken his past, Eh? Iain P'al?"

"Aye--" Iain began.

"Ailey, please." Breen voice drew her attention back to him; green eyes pleading. "Please, don't be angry with Iain. He kept my confidence, and I finally had my life to live for myself... and I have been so happy here... with all of you. There is no 'Harry' any more. I'm Breen now."

Ailey whipped around and locked her eyes with Breen's. "Do Ah seem angry? Upset? Nay. Ah ken ye had yer secrets, an' thaer was pain in yer past. Ah sensed et, an' we spoke o' et. Me Iain P'al wouldnae hav' brought ye home ef he dinnae trus' ye. Ah dare an'one ta try ta take aw'y me son now!"

Breen's eyes welled with tears. "Thank you, Ailey. I consider you my Mum too--and Iain like a Da of my own. I think my parents would be pleased. I love you both."

All eyes turned at a gasp from nearby, to see a surprised Severus looking down at Eileen who now sat on his lap, leaning back against his chest, with a smug smile on her face.
"An’, our Eileen kens who ta trust an’ nae trust,” Ailey said.

"Ah’ve dreamed o’ him, Seanmhair. Ah saw him in me dreams. Him an’ me broders."

Breen looked at Severus, and raised an eyebrow. "It seems the Gift has passed to yet another generation of your family."

"Indeed." Was the reply as Severus wrapped an arm around his daughter.

Eileen looked up at Severus, and her brows creased, then she looked over to her grandparents. "Seanmhair. Can ye heal Papa's nose? Som'one hit him wi' eh rock too."

"That wasn't a rock, Eileen," Lucius said, trying to keep a straight face.

She stared at the pretty blond man. "Who aer ye, Sir?"

Lucius bowed his head in greeting. "My name, my dear lady, is Lucius Abraxis Malfoy-Lupin. This dear man beside me, is Remus John Lupin-Malfoy. My husband."

Remus nodded in her direction and gave her a wide warm smile.

"Ye're funny. Ah lik' ye. Wha' happen'd ta Papa's nose?"

Remus spoke up, his eyes twinkling with mirth. "Your Da's other Godfather punched him during a disagreement when we were seventeen. But your Papa got him back, well and good."

Eileen didn't look satisfied with that. Fixing Severus with a firm look, she continued her questions. "Din' ye hav' a healer?"

Remus snorted. "Ah. But, we did. Madam Pomphrey was a very good mediwitch, and still is. She would have fixed his nose perfectly—if he had gone to her. But, the Headmaster could not find out they had been fighting... and... were not on school grounds--where they were supposed to be, since it was after curfew."
Breen looked wide-eyed at Remus and then at Severus. This was news to him. Severus harrumphed, and said nothing, fixing a glare toward his so-called friends. It was all Lucius could do to keep his chair, as his body was shaking with silent mirth. Remus just sat back, arms folded, looking like a mischievous schoolboy. Iain was chuckling and Ailey couldn't help but smile.

"Why were you and Sirius fighting?" Breen asked.

"Shou'dnae be fightin', Papa." Eileen scolded. "Da says fightin' es bahd."

Severus frowned. "I don't believe we should be discussing this..." He glanced down at his daughter then back up to the others. "... now."

"Did the Headmaster ever find out?" Breen asked, ignoring the silent message.

"Yes." Remus snorted. "He found out--and was very upset."

"I seem to recall you had similar proclivities, Breen," Severus replied, trying to deflect the discussion. "As many times as I pulled you, Mr. Weasley, and Draco apart."

Eileen looked at her Da and her jaw dropped. "Da! Ye too?! Ohhh, Seanmhair es gonna punish ye!" Her hands were on her hips in a perfect imitation of Ailey.

That prompted a smug grin from Severus and gales of laughter from the others, as Breen stared at his daughter, his own mouth open in shock.

"Like Draco didn't help by starting it. Calling me names like Scarhead!" He finally mumbled.

"And, where is your scar?" Lucius asked, his eyes flicking briefly to Breen's forehead.

"The Goblins moved it, since they were unable to remove it. It's on my lower back now."
Just then, the door creaked open, and Miss Renee's head appeared. "Good morning! Well! Quite the crowd in here this morning!" She entered, Brid behind her, and approached the bed. "Ah, there you are, Ailey. It's good to see you up and about. I can check you both over at the same time now."

She surveyed the room. "I believe it is time everyone stepped out, except Ailey. We will need some privacy. Iain, if I'm not mistaken, Maire has tea ready and breakfast on the sideboard. I will be out promptly with their status." She shoo'd everyone out and closed the door behind them.

Iain turned to Severus, putting a hand on the other man's shoulder, when he noticed him looking concerned at the closed door. "Come, laddie. Good food an' fresh tea es wha' we need while we wait."

Chapter 32

2,153 words

Arthur tried to come home at least twice a week to have a quiet lunch with his wife. They had just taken their seats and Molly was pouring tea, when a knock was heard against the back door. They looked at each other in question. Noone was expected today. Molly didn't even have any of the grandchildren to care for. Arthur motioned as he rose from his seat.

"I'll get it, Mollywobbles." He gave her a quick smile before he opened the door.

When Arthur didn't welcome the visitor in, Molly looked up and was unable to see past him to who was in the doorway. "Who is it, Arthur, dear? Invite them in. I've made plenty of tea."

Arthur stepped aside, "Please come in." He said quietly.

Kingsley Shacklebolt, current Head of the MLE, entered, followed by a gentleman in uniform robes of the French MLE. Both men wore serious expressions.
"Thank you, Arthur. Molly, good to see you."

Molly stood. "Please have a seat and I will get more teacups."

Arthur sat down in his seat, across from their visitors. "Kingsley, what's wrong? Is it one of the children?"

There was a crash of china in the kitchen, followed by several Reparos. Kingsley looked toward the kitchen. "Your children are all fine, Molly. The one's that are here anyway." He motioned toward his companion. "This is Inspector Auror Eduarde Clouseau of the French MLE in Paris.

Molly slid into her chair after setting cups of tea down in front of Kingsley and Clouseau. She pulled a handkerchief from her pocket and began to fidget with it. Arthur reached over and laid one of his hands over hers, trying to calm her.

"I'll keep this brief, as there is a time constraint and extenuating circumstances. Ginny has been taken into custody in France. The charges against her are kidnapping, assault, conspiracy to commit murder, child abuse, and endangerment."

Clouseau cleared his throat. "As well as tampering with an ancient Bonding of Servitude."

Molly's eyes were wide and she began to weep quietly, as Arthur wrapped an arm around her, his own face pale. "I shall assume the crimes were against a French citizen, Inspector, since you are here."

"An adult male and a child--his daughter, actually, and the young man is expecting twins. So, in essence there were four kidnapping victims."

"Merlin!" Molly exclaimed. "Are they alright?!"

"They are all fine, Madam. But we cannot discuss this further here. Both of you are needed in France immediately. Your daughter has been ruled unfit to make decisions for herself. It seems she had a breakdown when we took her into custody, and was screaming something about a 'Tom' and creating a new lineage of Purebloods."
Molly stood, her eyes red-rimmed and face flushed from crying. She banished the food to the cold box and cleaned the kitchen with a few flicks of her wand, then turned to the others in the room.
"Well, we'd best get on with it Arthur. If you will give us ten minutes, we will be ready to return with you. Come Arthur, we need to change into our traveling robes. I will pack our bags."

The flames flared green in Albus' private rooms, causing him to look up from the Muggle graphic novel he was reading.

"Severus! What a surprise! Did you--"

Severus’ face looked weary and very worried. "Albus, you need to come to Bretagne immediately. We need your expertise in the Dark Arts."

Albus rose and walked toward the hearth. "Why?"

"I cannot explain here, Albus. Please come through to the MacLoed Manor in Toulbroch. I will be waiting." As soon as he finished speaking, Severus' face disappeared from the flames, and they returned to their original red-orange color.

Albus looked at the book in his hand, and sighed as he placed it on the table. He disappeared into his bedroom to change.

Albus stood in the parlor of MacLeod Manor, his eyes wide and his face in complete surprise. "Harry? My dear boy is here? He's the other parent of YOUR daughter? And he's been here all this time?" He looked from Lucius to Remus as he spoke. Severus was currently with Breen and the mediwitch, getting an update on his and the babies' conditions.

Remus nodded. "But he's not Harry anymore. Hasn't been since he left England. He is Lord Breen Evans now. His estate is just over the low hills to the east."
"Ahhh... now I understand why the names in the Students’ Book seemed so familiar."

"He took his mother's maiden name and became part of the community. He found a home here," Remus spoke. "The Macleod's took him in and he found a family."

"He is finally the master of his own life, Albus. And he is happy." Severus' voice filled the small room, and the other's turned as he entered, looking haggard, but surprisingly happy himself. A small child skipped along beside him--her hand clasped firmly in his. She turned and looked up at Severus, holding her arms up.

"Up, Papa!"

He swung her into his arms and she wrapped her legs around his waist.

"And who would this young lady be?" Albus asked smiling.

Lucius stepped forward to stand next to Severus, and bowing with flourish. "May I introduce, Her Ladyship Eileen Lily Alexandra Evans."

"Snape," Eileen added with a giggle. "He's my Papa, so Da says my last name is Evans-Snape!"

Lucius feigned mock horror at his faux pas. "Forgive me, my Ladyship! Lady Eileen Lily Alexandra Evans- Snape, may I introduce Professor and Headmaster Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and a Professor of Transfiguration."

Eileen tried to look proper and stuck out her hand, as she tried not to giggle. Albus bowed regally and accepted her hand, placing a kiss on her knuckles. "It is my pleasure, My Lady, to make your acquaintance."

"Honestly," Severus rolled his eyes, "both of you are incorrigible!" He grumbled, as the other men rose and Remus tried in vain to not snicker from his place on the sofa.
"How is Breen?" Lucius asked. "And the babies?"

"They are doing well." Miss Renee' entered the room, followed by Iain, guiding a still-wobbly Ailey.

They moved to sit on the sofa beside Remus, as Lucius sat on the arm of it to the other side of Remus. Severus set Eileen down. "Go sit with your Da, Eileen. Take care of him for me."

"Kay Papa!" She leaned up and kissed his cheek before running out of the room.

Albus' eyes twinkled madly when Severus looked at him. But before the Headmaster could say anything, Severus interrupted him. "Albus, this is Mediwitch Renee' Igerne'. She is Breen's midwife and healer. Apparently she also cared for him when he carried Eileen and attended her birth as well. Miss Renee', meet Albus Dumbledore. Longtime friend, and my 'employer' at Hogwarts."

They nodded at each other, before taking seats. Renee' kicked off her Birkenstocks, as was her habit, and pulled her stocking feet up to tuck under her in the chair.

"Ahhh... much better." She eyed everyone briefly. "As I said a moment ago, Breen and the babies are doing well. Their heartbeats are strong, all their vitals are good, and they are in position in preparation for birth. Breen's body has again begun changing in preparation for labor. This time, we will not stop it. He is in minimal discomfort right now, with the exception of the weight of the babies on his internal organs, low in his abdomen—and he is experiencing some joint discomfort due to the softening of ligaments. Occasional position changes and massage seems to help that. He is to remain on twenty-four hour bedrest, and someone needs to be with him at all times."

"When do you expect him to begin the birthing process?" Albus asked tugging on his beard.

"Well within twenty-four to forty-eight hours at the earliest. Maybe three days at the most. Babies are not predictable."

"Why Albus?" Severus asked.

"Hermione," Remus whispered.
"And Ronald," Lucius added.

"I do believe Breen needs his friends here." Albus began. "Not to make light of your presence, Severus, by any means."

Ailey eyed the men. "Ah ken ma Breen has miss'd hes friends, an' t'wou'd be eh kin'ness ta hav' them haer ef possible."

Iain wrapped an arm around his wife. "Aye. Me Ailey es al'ays right en these things."

Severus turned to Albus with a resolute look. "If their presence will make him happy, then they will be here. Please see to it, Albus? Lucius and Remus will be more than happy to assist you. I must return to Breen now."

With that said, he turned and exited the room.

Lucius blinked. "It's interesting. Do you think that Severus has harbored a....crush on our young Harry Potter--now, Breen Evans--all these years?"

Remus and Albus looked at him, then at each other, then together they shook their heads and chorused, "Naahh!"

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Molly and Arthur currently sat in a comfortable lounge/waiting room in the French MLE offices. Kingsley and Edouarde Clouseau had explained Ginny's crimes in detail, and what they would expect of the proceedings since Ginny was not a French citizen. The Ministry arranged a room for them at a nearby bed and breakfast, and had also provided one of the solicitors they kept on retainer for their employees. The man had arrived shortly after they did, and after receiving the report and speaking with them briefly, he'd hurried off to meet with Ginny.

"Oh, Arthur! What are we going to do? Ginevra could end up in Azkaban for this!" Molly cried, dabbing her eyes with an already damp handkerchief.
"Thank Merlin, Kingsley had all the Dementors destroyed!" He mumbled. Hearing a sound of distress from his wife, he rubbed her back and tried to soothe her. "Sorry, my dear, just thinking aloud. There is a chance she's a bit mental, and could be committed to St. Mungo's..."

"I should have seen something like this coming, Arthur. Her husband dying mysteriously, then she comes back and all the teas... She was never one to sit and have tea with me before. And she was still going on about Harry. Asking questions. Odd questions. If I had only seen..." She began to weep quietly again.

Arthur pulled her to him, holding her close. "Shush now. She's always been a cunning one, our Ginny. More so since her First Year, and that mess in the Chamber. We'll get through this, Mollywobbles. I promise."

The door opened, revealing their solicitor, who stepped inside. After closing the door, he sat across from them, his face lined with concern. The news wouldn't be good.

pqpqpq

**Two days after Albus arrived...**

Albus slipped into Breen's room silently, since he was wearing only his favorite thick socks on his feet. He walked over to the chair by the bed and tapped Severus on the shoulder. Severus started, but Albus' hand on his shoulder allowed him to sense the older man's magic so he didn't pull his wand.

"Severus, get some sleep my boy. I will sit with Breen for the next several hours."

Severus looked to make sure Breen was alright and still asleep, then turned to look up at Albus. "I'm fine. I just dozed off."

"Nonsense. You are dead on your feet. Now go have a shower and a cup of chamomile tea and go to bed. I insist."

"Albus-"
"Severus, listen to me. There is a reason the mediwitch wants one of us with him at all times. And what if he goes into labour? You will need to be there for him--and the babes. You certainly cannot do that in your present condition."

Severus yawned as he stood. "Agreed. You will fetch me if something happens?"

Albus smiled and patted the hand on his arm. "Rest assured, you will be the first--after the mediwitch. Now off with you."

Severus nodded and shuffled slowly out of the room. His room was across the hall so he was close by. Albus sat in the chair after transfiguring it into a large cushy overstuffed one. He conjured a stool for his feet, putting them up. Folding his hands in his lap, he sighed, and studied the young man in the bed as he enjoyed the quiet of the night. Dobby appeared a little while later, with a cup of chamomile tea for him.

"Professor Snape is sleeping Headmaster. Dobby put the draught in his tea like you asked."

"Very good, Dobby. Thank you. The man needs his sleep if he's to care for his new family properly. Go and rest yourself, Dobby. I'm sure your assistance will be needed tomorrow."

"Yes, Headmaster. Thank you."

After Dobby disappeared, Albus sipped at his tea. Yes, he sensed things would begin getting very busy tomorrow.

____________________

MLE ~ Magical Law Enforcement

ken ~ understand

_Muime_ – Scottish Gaelic for stepmother, nurse, nanny, or caregiver.
Chapter 33

2,153 words

Breen stirred, trying to get comfortable again, but the babes weren't having it, and neither was his bladder. Opening his eyes, he noticed that the morning sun was lighting up the backs of the curtains, and he could just barely hear the voices of the men, and the whickering of the horses, outside. He pushed himself up to sit, preparing to swing his legs over the side of the bed.

"Ah, there'll be none of that now. Dobby!"

The house elf appeared just as Breen's gaze flew to the open door, to see none other than Albus Dumbledore standing there, accepting a breakfast tray from Maire.

"Yes Headmaster! What can Dobby do for you?" The elf bounced in anticipation.

"H-Headmaster?!

"Dobby I believe Master Har-Breen may have need of the loo. Would you assist him please?" Albus set the tray down on a small table beside the chair. "We will talk when you are back in bed, my boy."

Dobby helped Breen up and guided him to the loo, waiting outside until he was finished, then helped him back to bed, casting a spell to fluff his pillows and tuck the quilt back around him. Once Dobby was assured he was no longer needed, he snapped his fingers and was gone.
Breen watched silently as Albus prepared a cup of tea and handed it to him. After accepting it, he sipped at it. "Thank you, Headmaster."

"Albus, my boy. You are an adult now, and no longer a student."

Breen smiled a bit. "Albus then. Why are you here? Who told you?" He watched the Headmaster from below lowered lashes.

Severus *Firecalled* me. Do not fret, Breen, the Wizarding World is still blissfully ignorant of the whereabouts of their Golden Boy. Your secret is safe."

Breen relaxed and let go of the breath he didn’t realize he was holding.

"I must say, I find your daughter Eileen quite delightful. She's a very clever and intuitive child. She and Severus seem quite taken with each other."

Breen smiled at that. "Yes. Yes, I believe they are. And thank you for the compliment. Eileen is the light of my days."

"And soon, you will have two more little lights to brighten your days." Albus gestured toward the swell of Breen's belly.

Breen set his cup down on the night table, and shifted trying to get more comfortable. "Yes, I will. And they can't come soon enough. I've been so uncomfortable for the last fortnight." He grimaced as he shifted again.

Albus stood and moved to the bed. "Is there anything I can do to help? A *Cushioning Charm* perhaps?"

"Sadly, anymore *Cushioning Charms* on this mattress and it will swallow me--and the babes--both." He turned on his side, stuffing pillows under his leg and belly. "Ahh, there. That helps--at least for a little while."
Albus returned to his seat, and refilled his cup. "Would you like a bit of your scone?"

Breen's stomach chose to growl loudly at that point. "Oh yes. That would be lovely. Just plain please."

Breaking off a piece of the warm scone, Albus handed it to him, along with a napkin. They sat there in silence as Albus ate his breakfast between handing bits of scone and sliced fruit to Breen. Once they were finished, Albus banished the tray to the kitchen, and Breen changed his position again, ending up laying back against the pillows in a semi-seated position. His brows knit a bit as he rubbed his belly.

"Still hurting, my boy?"

"I'm afraid it's going to be this way until after I've given birth. It was the same with Eileen after all. Though, a bit less seeing as she was only one."

The creak of the door drew their attention, as Severus stepped in, followed by Eileen.

"Mornin' Da!" She skipped to the bed and leaned up to hug him.

"Morning my Sweet Girl. And how are you this morning?"

"Ah'm fine Da. Seanmhair helped Maire make bannocks ta go with tha eggs an' beans fer breakfast! She tol' Ol' Dougal ta only have two. He wasn' pleased! An' Good Mornin' ta ye, Albus Dumbledore!"

"Good Morning, child. You're making me weary listening to you talk so fast." Albus grinned at her. "And you may call me just, Albus."

Eileen crawled up on the bed, as Severus sat down carefully on the end of it so as not to jostle Breen too much.

"Da! Is et time fer my broders to come yet? They been in there a'long time!"
"I don't think it will be too much longer. They haven't been moving nearly as much in the last couple of days, and I only felt them stir before I went to the loo."

"Papa wan's them ta come. Don' ye, Papa?" She turned to look at Severus, who nodded in return.

"Yes, I am greatly anticipating their arrival, Eileen."

"Greatly anticipating who's arrival?"

All heads turned toward the door, where Lucius and Remus stood, flanking a smiling Hermione and grinning Ron.

Breen gasped, as tears welled. He blinked madly trying to clear his vision. "Moine! Ron!"

He held his arms out, and was immediately hugged by Moine, her soft hair brushing against his face, as she sobbed against his shoulder.

"Oh Harry, we've missed you so much!"

"I've missed you too, Moine." He squeezed her tight, turning to kiss her cheek and inhale her familiar scent. "How've you been? How are Neville and Draco?"

She leaned back, and sat on the edge of the bed, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "You know about that?"

"Albus and Severus are both here, as are Remus and Lucius. What do you think?"

Ron stepped up to the bed, holding a small bundle. "I guess you know my news then."

Breen looked up at his best mate. "Yeah. You married your secret crush, and had a daughter. Congratulations!"
"Would you like to hold her?"

"Oh yes!" Breen held out his arms.

Ron leaned down and placed Elsbeth into Breen's arms, leaning in to hug Breen, and kiss his friend's cheek. "I've missed you, mate. It's been too long."

Breen closed his eyes and enjoyed the caring touch of the hug and kiss, as the babe in his arms wiggled a bit trying to get comfortable.

"I've missed you too, mate. More than you know."

Eileen peered into the blanket. "Ohh! Pretty baby! She has hair tha color o' Cinnie's coat!"

"Cinnie?" Ron, now sitting in a chair next to Moine and Albus, looked confused.

"One of the weanlings, Eileen helps with, out in the stables. She loves being around the horses." Eileen nodded enthusiastically. "Eileen, these are my best friends from school, Ron and Hermione. Ron--Moine, this is Eileen. My daughter."

"Pleas'd ta meet ye." Eileen gave them each a huge smile. "Is tha babe yers?" She asked Hermione.

"No. Elsbeth is Ron's baby with his husband Viktor. I don't have any babies yet."

"Ye will. Ye shou'd talk to Miss Renee'. She helped Da have me, an' ma broders."

Breen pulled the blanket back a bit to look at Elsbeth's face, as he gently rocked her. "So much like you, Eileen when you were a new babe. So beautiful."

"She has Viktor's dark eyes, and I'm hoping, his calm temperament, as well."
Breen chuckled and there was light laughter from the rest. Severus just quirked an eyebrow.

"As a precaution, Mr. Weasley-Krum, I shall retired before the next generation of redhead Weasley's begin attending Hogwarts."

That prompted more laughter all around. Ron smirked, knowing full well, why Severus felt that way, and he didn't blame the man a bit.

"Well, Severus," Albus began, "That will certainly ensure that you won't be instructing your own children either."

"I believe you are correct, Albus."

"Lucky. They'll never have to experience the Great Bat of Hogwarts!"

"Ronald!" Hermione snapped, swatting him on the shoulder.

Ron gave Hermione a look that was very similar to those back in school, when she'd scold him. Breen started to giggle, as Severus feigned an offended look. Albus, Lucius, and Remus chuckled, as Eileen looked back and forth.

"Papa?" Eileen narrowed her eyes, "Did Ron jus' call ye a bat?"

"Eileen, I will explain it all to you later." Severus sent a warning look to Ronald, which only caused Breen to giggle harder.

Ron stood and lifted Elsbeth from Breen's arms and rested her on his shoulder. "I think I'd better check her nappy, and it's almost time for her feeding." He beat a hasty retreat from the room.

Even Hermione was giggling by this point, especially after Severus showed a rare smile. Breen was almost hiccupsing, as tears of mirth ran down his face.
Albus rose from his chair, transfiguring it back to its original state. "I do believe I will retire to my room for a bit of a kip. These bones yearn for a soft bed."

Lucius stood, pulling Remus up with him, "I have some legal matters to attend to. We will look in on you later, Breen."

They followed Albus out the door, closing it behind them. Severus banished the empty chairs back to their original locations. Moving to sit on the side of the bed near where Hermione's chair was, he pulled Eileen into his lap, and turned her so she faced both her Da and Hermione.

"Eileen, you look so much like both your parents. Is there anything else besides working the horses, that you enjoy doing?"

"Miss Herm'ine, I help my Seanmhair in tha kitchen an' tha garden. An' I like ta ride my pony, Una."

"Do you like books?" She asked, a hopeful look in her eyes.

Breen and Severus shared a quick look before they returned their gazes to their daughter. Eileen looked at her Da and smiled. "Da reads ta me, an' I cahn read a bit. Yeah, books aer good."

Hermione smiled. "Yes. Yes they are." She glanced at Breen. "Your Da is looking a bit tired. Would you like me to read you a story?"

Eileen looked at her Da, and he nodded. Severus lifted her and placed her on her feet.

"Behave yourself for Miss Granger."

"'Kay Papa." She took Hermione's hand and they left.

Severus pulled the chair to the head of the bed, close to Breen and sat down. Breen inhaled and released a deep breath, relaxing back into the pillows, as he rubbed circles on his belly. He grimaced slightly and pressed against his belly, as he took deep breathes.
"How are you faring?"

"It's begun Severus." He replied calmly. Severus' eyebrows rose. "Don't worry. I have several hours yet, at the minimum."

Making a move to stand, Severus looked concerned. Breen waved him back into his seat, then slowly turned on his side, Severus moving to help him arrange the pillows. Once he laid back, Severus sat again.

"Miss Renee' and Brid will be here soon. There is no need to summon them. When I get this close they check me almost daily. And because of what happened it is daily now."

"How long?"

"I awoke a few times during the night with the beginning twinges. By the time I woke this morning, they were true contractions, but still light enough I could ignore them."

"And now?"

"They are beginning to become uncomfortable." Breen answered, as he laid back, closed his eyes, and began to deep breath again. "The babes have been very still, just as Eileen was when I went into labour with her."

Severus became silent as he watched Breen try to relax. He seemed to be deep in thought. After several minutes, he spoke, almost hesitantly. "How intense was it when you had Eileen."

Breen snorted. "Pretty bad for most, according to Ailey. But it's relative, I guess. The only pain I've experienced that was worse, was the Cruciatus Curse --but not by much at the end."

Dark eyes widened, an indication of Severus' surprise. "Indeed. It did seem so when Ronald experienced it, but, I wondered if he was being a bit over-dramatic."

"Hmmm... he and I will have to compare notes, so to speak. But no, I seriously doubt it was all dramas. Ron tends to be a bit more... vocal, about situations he's in. I see the concern in your
eyes, Severus. I'll be fine. Miss Renee' and Brid are wonderful, and Ailey will be with me again..." He lowered his eyes and looked at Severus through his lashes. "Unless... you would like to be present for the birth of your sons."

Severus took Breen's hand. "A very long time ago I gave up the notion that I would be a father. Now... after meeting and spending time with my... our daughter... I would be very honored to be present and help in any way I can."

Breen squeezed Severus' hand. "Thank you Severus. I was hoping you would say yes."

Chapter 34

2,418 words

Sure enough, Miss Renee' and Brid arrived within the next hour, and had as a precaution, brought everything they needed for the labour and birth. The women had an uncanny knack for predicting the onset of labour and hadn't been wrong yet. Word traveled quickly this time and everyone was excited. Unlike last time, Breen would have many here for him that he had cared for when he was younger, and that gave him an additional warm feeling.

He looked up, as Brid helped him into the familiar Muggle gown and helped settle him on the pillows, to see Severus standing nervously in the corner, wide-eyed, watching all the flurried preparations. He hid a smirk as he saw Ailey enter the room slowly, using a cane. She walked right up to Severus.

"Cahlm yerself mahn! 'Tis only eh birth! Breen wi' be fine. He did well wi' Eileen an' he wi' ag'in wi' tha wee bairns. Now, off wi' ye! Go sit wi' Breen an' help him thrugh tha pains. They aer yer bairns, aft'r all! Brid wi' show ye, an' Ah'm here es well!"

She gave the tall wizard a shove toward the bed, before making herself comfortable in a large upholstered chair near the window, out of the way. He turned and gave her an odd look before walking across the room to sit in a chair next to the bed. He looked down to see Breen snickering, clearly amused. Evidently he had witnessed Ailey's style of mothering, and was quite familiar with
'Severus had clearly met his match and life would certainly get very interesting--and explosive--if those too continued to spend any time around each other.' Breen thought to himself, as another contraction crawled uncomfortably over his abdomen, tightening down enough to make him catch his breath.

Severus had opened his mouth to make a snarky comment on Breen's reaction to Ailey's treatment of him, but the words died on his lips when he saw the smile disappear into a strained expression, as Breen closed his eyes and tried to breath slowly. Feeling a small warm hand on his arm, he turned to see Brid standing there. She leaned down a bit, keeping her voice low, so as not to disturb Breen's concentration.

"Breen kens what ta do jus' fine. Wha' he needs es fer ye ta encourag' him throughth tha contract'ns an' ta help him be es comfortable es possible. Ah wi' help ye es time progresses." She smiled and patted him on the shoulder before going back to the preparations.

He leaned in and placed a hand on Breen's blanket-covered thigh, and began to rub gently, letting the younger man know he was there to support and help him. Watching him closely, he was able to study Breen, without the younger man knowing, as he kept his eyes closed frequently between the contractions in an attempt to maintain calm and rest. Severus felt the occasional pat or squeeze on his hand to let him know his presence was acknowledged and appreciated.

Breen had changed, in innumerable ways, in the last ten years. It was obvious, that escaping his unwanted fame, had been the beginning of a real life for him. He'd found a measure of happiness here, with a new identity and a new life. There was a quiet confidence now, and a sense of security, Severus had never sensed when he'd still been the boy, Harry.

But the most startling to Severus, had been the physical changes. Where Quidditch and training for the Final Battle had honed Breen's body, working with the horses had clearly refined it. Even with the additional weight of the pregnancy on his frame, it was still easily visible how the steely muscles moved under the skin. His facial features had lost their adolescent softness and his profile was chiseled now, below the healthy glow of many hours spent outdoors, working with his beloved horses.

He was still quite small in stature, standing a mere 165 cm tall, with a lighter frame than was usual for a young man. But, Severus had been made aware many years ago of the shameful way those Muggles had raised him--neglected him, causing his growth to be hampered.
The glasses had long ago disappeared, leaving those large verdant eyes very much visible, and the hair! All that lovely, long, wavy, thick hair! It was no longer wild, but still gave the sense that it could be, if given half a chance. He vaguely remembered the dream he'd had of finding himself abed with a very naked and aroused Breen. All that dark, lovely hair draped over Breen's body, as he had straddled Severus. He thought back over the dreams he'd been having for so long, and they all seemed so clear now. He shook his head. Now, was not the time for such thoughts!

His attention was snapped back to the present, when he heard Breen moan. He looked over to see Breen's brows furrowed and him worrying his lower lip between his teeth. Footsteps approached.

"Ah, I do believe it is time to see how you are progressing, Breen." Miss Renee' smiled pleasantly at Severus, as she waited for the current contraction to subside. "When the contraction has abated, Severus, if you would please, help him move so I may examine him. Brid will assist you from this side of the bed."

He stood, and leaned down, as Brid appeared at Breen's other side. He spoke in a low calm voice. "Come, Breen. Miss Renee' needs to see how you and the babies are coming along."

Breen nodded, and worked with him and with Brid to slide down and get into position. When Renee' began to manually palpate Breen's abdomen, Severus looked at her oddly. She noticed his expression and chuckled.

"When a parent is labouring, we must keep magic to a minimum, or it may interfere with the progress. The body has it's own magic governing the birthing process and we don't want that disrupted, unless it is absolutely necessary."

"Ah." Severus replied. "Understandable."

She went back to her examination, intent to complete it before the next contraction began. When Breen whimpered a bit in discomfort, she tried to soothe him.

"I'm sorry Breen. I know this is uncomfortable but I am almost finished, and then you can find a more comfortable position again." He nodded.

Once Breen was situated again and Renee' had washed her hands, she came back and sat on the corner of the bed, looking back and forth between her patient and the babies' other father.
"Breen, you are about two thirds of the way dilated, but I am a bit concerned. The babies are not quite fully in the proper position for the birthing, and I am not sure at this point why."

Breen opened his eyes fully and stared at his healer, as Ailey rose and limped over to sit on the other corner of the bed, and Brid stood behind Renee.

Severus shifted nervously in his seat. "If there is need of any specialized potions, I will be able to obtain them for you."

"Thank you, Severus. I try my best to be prepared for every eventuality and already have all possible potions on hand just in case they are needed."

He smiled approvingly at her and Breen squeezed his hand. "I told you she was the best."

"What can be done then?" Severus asked, clearly concerned.

"There are several techniques I use successfully. Some are very old, tried and true Wizarding methods, and others are ones I have borrowed from Muggle Midwifery and Doulas. I have a few combinations that are very successful in a situation such as this. It will require movement on your part, Breen. Do you think you can manage that?"

Concern shadowed Breen's face, but it was quickly replaced with determination. This hadn't been necessary when he'd had Eileen, but it didn't matter. "I'll do whatever I must to bring my sons into the world, safely." He looked over at Severus. "Our sons." He added.

"Good. Then let's get to it, shall we?"

Severus leaned forward and stood. "Is there anything I can do to assist?"

Renee's eyes danced with mirth. "Oh my, yes. I daresay, by the time you meet your sons, you will be every bit as weary as Breen."

As a testament to her long history of dealing with birthing parents and their mates, her expression didn't waver, when Severus raised an elegant eyebrow at her in inquiry. Ailey chuckled from
she sat. She remembered well, Iain with their children's births, and herself after Eileen's birth more than four years before.

"I suggest you change into looser, more casual clothing, Severus. You will thank me later."

She turned and went to a small table in the corner, sat, and began writing in a file; no doubt recording Breen's current condition, progress, and her recommendations.

"Go ahead, Severus. I will be fine." Breen squeezed his hand and let go.

Ailey appeared beside the bed. "Off wi' ye now! Ah'll stay wi' him till ye return. Go! She made a shooing motion when the tall wizard didn't move fast enough for her liking. Severus gave her a slight frown, and glanced once more at Breen before striding from the room.

Ailey sat carefully on the edge of the bed, letting her cane drop to the floor, and leaned over to place kisses on each of Breen's cheeks and one on his forehead, then reached down to gently caress the swell of the babies.

Och! He's eh firey one, tha' profess'rar o' yers! Seems ta be ver'a protectiv'." Her expression showed her approval.

"Yes, he is. But, you haven't seen anything yet! All the students at the school scattered whenever he appeared--most feared his ire." Breen sighed. "Though when we were students, noone knew it was mostly a 'mask' he wore, because he was a spy for the Light. I didn't find out until my Seventh Year, but even compared to then, he has changed so mu--ooh!"

He laid back, closed his eyes, and tried to relax and breath, as another contraction began. Though he tried to relax his whole body, he still grasped Ailey's hand, drawing comfort from the contact with his 'adopted' mum. She brushed the hair away from his cheek.

"Shhh... ma sweet laddie. Go wi' et. See yer bairns movin' doown insid' ye." She crooned to him, rubbing her other hand up and down his arm and his leg.

There was a light knock at the door, and Brid opened it, speaking to someone before Renee' came to her side. A moment later, the door opened further, and a familiar face appeared.
Ailey looked up and smiled, as she motioned for Cainnech to come sit by the bed. He moved through the room and sat, his eyes on his young lover. Silently watching Breen, he seemed to hold his breath, both worry and excitement warring in his features.

Finally, Breen blew out a cleansing breath and opened his eyes. "Cainnech!"

"Aye, Luv, et's me. Ah see tha' spec'l day has fin'ly come." The big man bussed a kiss in the dark hair and sat back down. "How're ye farin'?"

"Fine, so far. They're getting harder now." Breen gave a sheepish grin. "I hope that means it won't be long."

"Ye'll be fine, laddie. Tha' bairns' Da bein' haer es ah gud omen." Ailey gave Cainnech a knowing look, causing the big man's eyes to widen as he looked at Breen.

"Oh! Ah dinnae ken tha'!" Cainnech smiled at Breen, as his eyes twinkled. "Es tha' gud far ye, now, Luv?"

As the others watched, Breen's cheeks flushed pink, and he dropped his eyes self-consciously to the blanket.

"Da! Cainnech!" Eileen appeared and scampered across the room, pulling a tall slender man by the hand. "Papa! Come meet Cainnech! He took care o' me an' Da faer ye!"

Severus eyed the big muscular Scot sitting by Ailey, and his Breen. He wondered who the big man was, and what his connection to Breen was. After being pulled around the bed, they stopped so Eileen could climb on the bed, kiss her Da, then beg to be picked up by Cainnech. Severus looked up at the man. He was at least 15 cm taller and considerably broader. Severus held out his hand.

"Severus Snape. It is pleasant to make your acquaintance."

His hand was almost lost in the other man's and shaken firmly.
"Pleas'd ta mak' yer acquain'ance, Mr. Snape. Ah'm *Cainnech Duchovny*. Eh friend o' Breen's. Pleas' acc'pt ma bes' wishes fer ye as eh new Da! Ferst Eileen, an' now tha bairns! Ye aer indeed eh bless'd mahn!"

He hugged and kissed Eileen, before setting her on the bed. He leaned down again and kissed Breen's cheek. Seeing Breen's confused look, he stroked a finger gently down the smaller man's face then stood.

"Breen, Luv. Ah only cam' ta see tha ye aer doin' well, an' ta let ye ken tha' Ah've nae had but good from me Gift. Ah'm chuffed to see tha Goddess ha' fin'ly brought ye tageth'r. Me time o' bein' yer guardian an' protect'r is o'er. Ah will look fer ye at tha gatherin's, me mate." He turned to Severus. "Ah've watched o'er him till now. Ye're eh v'ry bless'd mahn--v'ry bless'd."

With a smile and a firm clap on the shoulder, that caused Severus to flinch, Cainnech kissed Ailey on the cheek, and strode from the room. Severus watched the big man go, confused at his words. It certainly wasn't what he'd expected. Evidently there had been a very close relationship between Breen and this Cainnech, and the Scot had just relinquished it, maintaining that he would stay in touch. Severus started to ask for an explanation, but when he looked at Breen, the young man was incommunicado, being in the midst of another contraction.

Brid hurried over. Grabbing Severus' sleeve, she started talking as she pulled him away from the bed. Breen was now resting as he waited for the next contraction. Ailey had moved to the chair by the bed.

"Com' now. Ah wi' explain ta ye wha' mus' be done ta move tha bairns. Ye're presence wi' be v'ry import'nt ta Breen."

He watched and listed intently, absorbing everything she was telling him and showing him, so he'd be able to help Breen as much as possible. He put the subject of *Cainnech* to the back of his mind.

Tbc...
Chapter 35

2,893 words

It had been several hours now, since Cainnech had left, and Brid had showed Severus how to help Breen so the babies would shift fully into the proper position for birth. Though there had been movement, they still weren't quite where they should be, so here he was, walking again, stopping for each contraction, then alternating with some of the other techniques. The babies' vitals were still strong, so Renee wasn't concerned—yet.

"Ohh--S-Stop, 'nother..." He bit out as Severus turned and leaned a bit to help him wrap his arms around the taller man's neck.

Strong hands began massaging deeply into his lower back and periodically stroking up and down his flanks, as he tried to relax and keep his breathing steady. He was down to a sleeveless round-necked, thigh-length shift now; just enough to be considered modest in this situation. He had his face buried in the crook of Severus' neck, letting the man's familiar scent help keep him calm.

"Shhh...Relax. Yes, that's it. Breathe in slowly through your nose. And... blow it slowly out. Focus on staying relaxed. Open. So our sons can move as they should. You're doing very well, Breen." Severus murmured softly as he held the smaller man.

"T-Try--"

"Shhh... don't try to speak. Just focus. I'm here for you."
“Mmmm…” Breen hummed into his neck, sending a warm shiver through his body.

Severus buried his nose in the dark hair and inhaled the scent that was all Breen. As one hand continued massaging the smaller man’s back, he lifted his other hand to stroke down the dark fall of thick, wavy hair covering Breen's back. It was so soft, and the gesture seemed to calm both of them. He felt Breen's body relax further as the contraction finally abated. After taking a couple of deep breaths, Breen looked up at him.

"I'd like to use the ball now, please."

"As you wish."

He helped Breen over near the bed, where a soft mat, a small stool, and a very large, heavy inflated ball sat. He helped Breen to sit down on the ball, his legs spread wide, then sat himself, on the stool facing Breen, still holding his hands. When Brid had summoned the ball, he had looked at her as if she were mad, but once she explained how using it, worked for the laboring parent, he nodded in understanding. He still thought it looked like an oversized playground toy, though.

"Ready?"

Breen nodded, and began to rock gently from side-to-side, looking at him from below half-closed lids. He looked back, holding the gaze, and was caught off guard when Breen managed a tiny smile. It was gone as quickly as it had appeared, as Breen yawned.

"Ye shou'd hav' eh lie-down an' try ta rest." Brid said, when she turned and caught the tail end of the yawn.

"In a bit. This helps." Breen mumbled, his eyes closed, and his hands still held firmly in Severus'.

The older man looked at the mediwitch and rolled his eyes, and received a knowing nod and a wink. She knew Breen would need to move again soon. It was the way of these things. She picked up the stack of linens and towels and walked across the room.
Ron had just received an owl from his parents, and had been seeking out Albus. As he held Elsbeth in his arms and swayed back and forth, he explained quickly about them being brought to Bretagne for Ginny. He was still in shock over what his sister had done. They'd no idea that two of her victims had actually been Harry and his daughter.

Albus assured him that he would go immediately to fetch them, and he would also speak to Clouseau and Kingsley about the possibility she'd been tainted by the Dark Lord in her First Year, and what options there were for her.

Albus left the room to gather his cloak, as Hermione entered the room. She put her arms around his waist and leaned her head on his shoulder, and just looked at Elsbeth, sleeping quietly in her Da's arms. They stayed like that, swaying gently, sharing comfort.

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Ailey had slipped from the room quietly and unnoticed, and headed for her kitchen. It was time that dinner needed to be prepared for everyone and she needed to get back into her routine. Iain's fussing be damned. She loved him dearly but he fuzzed so when she wasn't well. She hated seeing the worry in his eyes. The sooner she was back in charge of her house, the sooner he would be able to focus on his horses again, and that was the way it should be.

As she entered the kitchen, she noticed that Maire had already begun the preparations for the meal. Eileen stood on a stool next to her helping clean the vegetables for the Cotriade. She could see the fresh fish nearby, waiting to be prepared as well. The smell of baking bread filled the room, as well as the Mouton a la Cuillere, Maire would have put on to cook that morning. She smiled.

"Ah'm glad ta see ye've got on wi' et. Did ye allow extra fer our new guests, Maire?" She asked.

"Aye, Miss Ailey. There'll be plenty."

Eileen turned and grinned. "Ah'm helpin', Seanmhair!"

Ailey nodded and smiled. "Gud. Ah'll leave ye ta et, an' be back en eh bit. Don' ferget tha Chouchen, Sweet Cider an' tha Pommeau fer lat'r."

"Aye, Miss Ailey. Miss Eileen willnae let me forget."
Turning, she left the kitchen to find Iain. She wanted to know how everything else was, hoping all was well.

Albus arrived at the French MLE Offices, just as Molly and Arthur were walking out with their solicitor. It had been a very long and tiring day, trying to determine what options were available considering the very serious nature of her crimes. He had a few minutes to observe them before they noticed his presence, and what he saw made his heart break.

Both looked bone-weary as they bid their solicitor goodnight. They were wan and drawn, with dark circles under their eyes, and it was very evident Molly had been weeping, a sodden handkerchief clutched between her hands. Even Arthur's eyes were the tell-tale red. The bad choices of their only daughter made Percy's behavior during the war, pale in comparison. At least they'd proven he'd been under a long-acting Imperius.

Granted, he suspected, as did Severus, that Ginny had been affected by her contact with the shade of Tom Riddle in her First Year, but she would still have had some free will. The Dark Magic she'd been exposed to, had brought out a very dark side of her personality, that might not otherwise surfaced. He shook his head, put a warm smile on his face, and approached the elder Weasley's, once the solicitor had disappeared down the hall.

"Molly. Arthur. I'm so glad I was able to have arrived before you departed."

Both looked up, clearly startled to hear a familiar voice.

"Albus! What brings you here? Do you know about...Ginny?" Arthur choked out his daughter's name.

"Yes. Yes. I have my contacts, and I am here to help." He stepped between them and wrapped his arms around them, gently leading them to the Apparition Room in the French Ministry of Magic's Atrium. "I've come to take you to stay with some new friends I have acquired in Bretagne. I believe you will find them a very pleasant and welcoming group."

"A- Are you sure, Albus. We won't be imposing? I'd rather we didn't inconvenience anyone." Molly asked, clearly concerned.
The pale blue eyes began to twinkle madly. "No, no. It is something I think you both need very much right now. They are very understanding people. Come along now. I've had Dobby retrieve your bags."

Micah had wandered into the kitchen for something to drink, and decided to stay to enjoy the aromas and visit with Eileen and Maire. He'd only been allowed up and around again the night before, since his injuries had been more severe than Ailey's. Eileen had been ecstatic to see him feeling better again.

"Unca' Micah!" Eileen squealed as she jumped down from her stool and raced across the kitchen to be caught up in the arms of the big Yank. She peppered his face with kisses and hugged his neck tight.

He chuckled. "Hey there, Short Round. I missed you too!"

Eileen stared up into his eyes as she held his cheeks, her expression becoming serious. "Aer ye all bett'r now?"

"Darn Tootin'! The Healer fixed me right up!" He set her down, so she could go back to helping. "So, Maire, what's been goin' on 'round here since I been laid up?"

"Mast'r Breen is in labour righ' now." She answered nonchalantly, smiling to herself, as she kept her back to the big man.

Micah's brows rose. "Yer pullin' my leg!"

"An' me Papa's helping him too! Me Papa's here, Unca' Micah--me own Papa! An' tha twins' Papa as well! An' Albus es here an' he has eh really long beard... "

"Shoot! Lookit all I missed!"
Just then, Albus came in the door, accompanied by an older redhead couple, that looked as if they'd had a very rough day. Micah rose, wiping his hands on his denims, before holding one of them out.

"Albus!" Squealed Eileen.

Micah grabbed her in the other arm, as she sailed by. "Oh no ya don', Short Round! Miss Ailey'll have your hide if'n she sees ya greetin' folks like that." He stuck out his hand again. "Name's Micah Avery, Sir. I'm one 'o the handlers here."

"What a delightful accent! Southern United States, if I'm not mistaken. Albus Dumbledore. Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, in Scotland, and a friend of the Malfoy-Lupins. Let me introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley--Arthur and Molly. They are dear longtime friends."

Micah dipped his head and touched his forehead, almost as if he were tipping a hat. He shook hands with both of them. "Much pleased to meet ya."

Arthur's brows were furrowed, he was thinking very hard about something, then he looked up at Micah. "You're one of those Yank cowboys, aren't you?"

"Arthur--" Molly began, but was cut off by Albus leading her to the table, where Maire had set out tea for them.

Micah's smile widened further. "Yessir. From Scrub Rock, Texas. Born an' raised!"

"Fascinating!" Arthur exclaimed as he and Micah sat down with Albus and Molly. "Tell me, please. Is it true--what they say--that everything is bigger in Texas?"

Molly accepted the cup of tea from Albus, and sat quietly, listening to the men talk. She noticed the aromas filling the large room, and she looked around from below lowered lids. She turned when a small hand appeared on her arm.

"Hello. Ah'm Eileen. Wou'd ye like ta help me an' Maire? Me Seanmhair isnae up ta cookin'."
Molly's eyes seemed to brighten a bit, and a smile tugged at her lips. "I would love to, Eileen. And my name is Molly."

She rose from the table and followed the girl, who then introduced her to the young woman. Albus' eyes twinkled and he smiled into his cup as he watched his friends forget their sorrows—even if it was only for a short time. He excused himself and rose to go find the others and inform them that the elder Weasley's were here and they did not yet know about Harry.

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Ron slipped into Breen's room, a small tray balanced in one hand. Setting it on the small table by the window, he turned and watched the two men on the floor for a few moments, before making his presence known. Severus sat on the floor mat, leaning against the end of the bed, his legs straight out. Breen was on his hands and knees over Severus' legs, perpendicular to his body. There was a light sheet thrown over Breen's lower half to maintain his modesty. Breen had his body tilted forward and slightly down, and he rocked slowly.

He stopped and moaned, signaling the beginning of another contraction, and laid the top part of his body down so it rested on Severus' legs, and rested his forehead on his crossed arms on the floor. It looked a bit odd with his arse up in the air, but Severus had easy access to deeply massage Breen's back where he wanted it the most. As Severus dug the heel of his hand into Breen's back, he leaned down to quietly coach him, as he ran the other hand over the dark hair and rubbed Breen's upper body gently in a soothing motion. Ron could sympathize wholeheartedly that anything, no matter how odd-looking, that made labour easier was worth doing.

He waited until Breen relaxed and returned to his hands and knees, before approaching them. "Severus, I've brought you dinner—per Lady MacLeod's instructions, and a small meal for Breen as well. I'm to relieve you so you can rest and eat."

"Very well." Severus leaned toward Breen, who was now perched in a flat-footed squat, the sheet wrapped around him. "I'll not be long." He briefly ran the back of his hand down Breen's cheek, then rose gracefully to his feet.

Ron immediately sat down where Severus had been, Breen's dinner in hand. "Alright there, Ha--Breen?"

"Yeah. Tired." Breen sat down, in what Ron thought resembled a yoga pose. He eyed the dishes in Ron's hands. "What did Ailey send for me?"
When Ron hesitated, Breen gave him a tired lopsided smile. "S'okay. I've got anywhere from seven to ten minutes before the next one."

Ron handed him the large mug. "She sent a broth with little bits of vegetables in it. Smells heavenly. Oh! And a small bowl of bits of cheese and fruit. She said you needed to stoke the fire." He grinned when he said that. "I'd have loved to have some of that broth when I was having Els."

Breen took a couple good sips from the mug and hummed in delight. The broth was delicious—as always. He hadn't even realized he was hungry until he smelled it. "I'm sure Ailey will give you the recipe for your Mum. I have a feeling you'll have other chances to use it." He winked at his best friend and went back to sipping the broth.

Breen frowned and handed the half empty mug back to Ron, who rose and took it and the bowl to the table. Brid came over and cast a low-level temperature spell over the food, and banished the empty dishes from a few hours ago to the kitchen, then nodded and smiled at Ron. He returned to the mat and sat back down.

"Still alright?" He asked, studying Breen's face for signs of pain.

"Yeah. It should be a tad bit yet."

"So we're both Dads now, yeah?"

"Yeah. Who'd have thought. I always figured it would be Moine, and we'd be the godfather's." Breen said as he shifted forward a bit and rubbed his belly.

"Yeah, 'bout that. Moine got cursed and they couldn't--"

Breen's eyes widened. "No!"
Ron nodded, sadness in his eyes. "She didn't take it so well, but since I had Els, they've been talking, and Dray and Nev are both willing to take the potion and carry at least one baby. Moines right chuffed about it too." He grinned.

"Wicked--OH!" Breen moved to his hands and knees, as Ron kneeled next to him and began massaging his back, and murmuring encouragement.

"I'm here with ya, Mate. Relax. Remember when Seamus brought that Moonweed back from Yule Hols, Seventh Year? Imagine ya just smoked a bunch of that, and your body is all limp and loose, yeah?"

"Mmmhmnm..." Breen hummed in response.

"That sure was some wicked stuff! Was too bad he couldn't get more, though. It would have been great for the House parties."

"Indeed."

"Bugger!" Ron mumbled under his breath.

Severus sank down to sit cross-legged next to Ron. "Moonweed. A substandard strain of herbological hallucinogen. Now, in my Hogwarts days, the quality smoke was Amethyst's Dream—a Wizarding variant of the Muggle strain, Purple Haze."

Ron stared at Severus. "You?!"

Severus smirked at his former student. "Yes. We had quite the productive little crop going in Greenhouse Six, by the beginning of Seventh Year."

"There was no Greenhouse Six at Hogwarts, Sev'rus." Breen mumbled as he tried catching his breath, the contraction finally over.

He sat back in his previous position and eyed the older man.
Severus looked from one young man to the other, amusement clear on his face. "Not anymore."

"What--" Ron began, when they were interrupted by Renee.

"It's time to check you again, Breen and see if the babies have moved to where they should be." She quirked an eyebrow at the two men sitting side-by-side next to her patient. They rose and moved over by the window. "Now, I can check you right here, or you can move to the bed. It is your preference and whatever would be more comfortable for you."

birthing ball = http://www.birthingnaturally.net/cn/tool/ball.html

Cotriade = http://www.tourismebretagne.org/eng/tasty-brittany/flavour/fish/cotriade.cfm?pageName=poissons

*Pommeau* = This liqueur aperitif is made by combining sweet cider at the start of its fermentation with apple brandy, in the proportions 2/3 to 1/3. Pommeau lives up to the promise of its golden hue: a flowery flavour with the sweetness of apples and warmth of the sun.

*Chouchen* = The Breton name for mead. This liqueur is known as "chemillard" in Gallic regions and "chouchen" in Brittany. An alcoholic drink based on honey and water with the addition of yeast, mead ferments rapidly but acquires its flavour slowly.

Mouton a la Cuillere = Seven Hour Mutton

Breton Cuisine =

Chapter 36

3,668 words

After a boisterous and very social meal, in a magically enlarged kitchen, Maire offered to take care of the clean-up, so Ailey and Iain could sit with the company in the large cozy lounge, in front of the fire. All the hands had decided to stay until they had word of Breen and the twins. Currently, they were out in their quarters, playing Wizarding cards.

As everyone was clearing the kitchen, Albus had pulled Iain and Ailey aside, and explained who the Weasley's were, what the status of their daughter was, and how utterly devastated they were that she had done what she did despite everything they had tried to turn her from the dark path she brought herself to. He was assured that they understood and would do what they could to help ease Molly and Arthur's concerns.

Everyone was settled comfortably around the room, tea and other local beverages nearby. Once Ailey was sure noone was in need of anything, she finally sat down next to Iain, who'd been watching her with a worried eye. She patted his leg and kissed his cheek, before turning toward their newest guests.

"Ah want'd ta than' ye fer helpin' Maire an' Eileen wi' tha meal, Molly."

"The kitchen is my home, anywhere. I love to cook for my family and friends. A well-fed family, is a happy family!"

"Aye! Tha' 'tis!" Ailey replied as everyone laughed and nodded in agreement.

Albus, twinkling to the max, "I can say I've gained a stone or two from eating Molly's fine cooking."

"I daresay, Albus, that we all have." Remus patted his belly, and grinned at Lucius, sitting next to him.
"I certainly don't hear Madam Malkin's complaining." Lucius smirked.

"That's because all of you were much too skinny. Not an ounce of fat on you at all," Molly admonished, letting her eyes rest a little longer on Remus, than on the others, as she looked around.

"How many bairns do ye hav', then?" Iain asked.

"Ah seven. Plus a few. I've managed to adopt a few of my children's friends along the way."

"Molly has a way of gathering strays to her," Arthur smiled as he gazed fondly at his love. "And the children don't hesitate to bring more friends home."

"Aye, Ah ken wha' ye mean." Ailey smiled warmly, as she thought of her Breen and Eileen.

"We have six sons and one...daughter." Molly hesitated. "Two of the boys are twins. Pranksters. They keep me on my toes."

Arthur patted Molly and leaned in to brush a kiss on her cheek. "One of our sons just made us Grandparents, Ronald and his husband, Viktor, had a little girl. Just beautiful."

Remus and Lucius exchanged looks before glancing at Albus. He smiled at them, his pale blue eyes twinkling madly.

"Bairns aer eh blessin'. They giv' us much pleas're."

"How many children do you and Iain have, if I might ask?"

Iain smiled and gave his wife a squeeze with the arm he had wrapped around her shoulders. "Me Ailey has giv'n me two fine daughters, and a strong son." They shared a smile before he continued. "And the Fates hav' brough' us eh second son, Breen. An' he's giv'n us anoth'r grandchil'."

"An' soon ta be two more!" Ailey added.
Molly looked worried. "Are we interrupting? We can leave if need be."

Ailey put her hands out, shooing the Weasley’s back down into their seats. "Nay! Nay need ta go. 'Tis a happy time ta share."

"Molly," Albus began, "Arthur...."

Lucius and Remus looked at each other when Eileen came rushing into the room with Severus right behind her. "Seanmhair! Da es gettin' closer, Miss Nee says. Papa an' Ron hav' been sittin' wi' Da! Now 'ermione es wi' him!"

Molly and Arthur's eyes widened when they saw Severus. The child had called him her 'Da'. Ron and Hermione? They were here? Arthur looked to Albus.

Severus noticed their presence almost immediately, and pulled his daughter to his side, motioning for her to hush, which she did. "Molly. Arthur. What a--pleasant--surprise."

"Albus? Please tell us--"

Eileen looked up at her Papa, "They look lik' Ron, Papa."

"Severus?" Molly asked.

"Molly. Arthur. This is my daughter, Eileen. Eileen, say hello to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. They are Ron's parents, and Elsbeth's grandparents."

Eileen stepped forward and curtsied. "'M pleas'd ta make yer 'quaintance."

"Severus," Molly began, "Who is the little darling's mother? Do we know her? She looks familiar."

Severus glanced at Albus, wondering why the old man had brought them here without telling them
about who the MacLeods were and about Breen. Albus just smiled and gave him a small nod.

"Her other father is currently in labor with twins--my sons. He is, in effect, the MacLeod's adopted son."

"Severus Tobias Snape just tell us what's going on!" Molly glared at the other man.

"Eileen is the daughter of Lord Breen Jamison Evans, who you would know as Harry Potter."

Arthur gasped. Molly blinked. Her mouth opened and closed. Then she frowned for a moment, until she stood up. suddenly.

"Let me see my boy!"

Everyone just sat.

"Well? NOW!"

...  

"Severus!"

The tall wizard turned as all eyes went to the doorway, where Ron stood holding his daughter. "Miss Renee' says to come back. Breen is asking for you."

"Molly, come along, say hello if you can," Severus said. "Eileen, stay here with the others."

"Aye, Papa!" She answered brightly, and promptly crawled up into Albus' lap."

"Severus, Molly. Wait!" Arthur stood suddenly and crossed the room in only a few strides. "--Not seeing my son without me."
Albus and the others chuckled as the three left the room. Ron shook his head and took a seat near Albus.

"They didn't even notice me and Els!"

"Ron, they can see you anytime they want." Hermione commented as she entered the room.

"It's been how long since they've-- or any of us--have seen Har-Breen?"

"Almost ten years, I believe." Albus offered. "Been too long. Been way too long. And it's time the whole family is brought back together, and what a wonderful thing to brings us all together again!"

"Like the last time? When it was me and Elsbeth you all were waiting on?" Ron smirked.

"And If I remember," Lucius began, "You were begging for one of Severus' potions."

"Nothing better for pain than one of the Potion Master's potions! Though I would have liked it much sooner."

Molly and Arthur followed behind the Potions Master as he swiftly made his way around the home. He stopped before a door and knocked. The door opened and they followed Severus in.

The room was large and comfortable, and busy. Molly and Arthur noticed two women, most likely midwives, hovering over a form in the large bed. Severus strode to the bed, as a long low moan was heard. Molly and Arthur followed and stood behind where Severus sat, keeping out of the way.

Renee' smiled at Severus. "He's almost fully dilated. It won't be long now."

Molly was stunned, as she stared at the young man in the bed. He looked the same as she
remembered, only without the innocence and the frailness of his youth. He looked much healthier, with more weight on his frame--she could see it in his face. The long hair was a surprise, but she remembered his mother's hair had been like that. He looked so much more like her now.

Severus had shifted, so Breen, lying on his side, could see the people standing behind him. Dazed from the pain, he squinted thinking he was seeing things.

"M-Molly? Arthur?"

Severus looked from Breen, then over his shoulder at the elder Weasley's. Smiles appeared on their faces.

"Harry dear."

"Hello, son."

Breen reached out toward them, awe in his voice. "It's really you?!!"

Severus stood and motioned them toward the bed.

Molly knelt beside the bed.. and took Breen's hand in her own, tears falling down her cheeks. "Oh my dear sweet boy. Look at you." She took in his swollen abdomen, "Giving birth--to twins!"

"As long as they don't take after their Uncles Fred and George, w-we'll be good, Molly." Breen whispered. Tears flowed freely down his cheeks.

Severus snorted, as he glanced at Arthur, who smirked and shrugged his shoulders in return.

"Is everyone here, Severus?" Breen asked.

"No, Breen. The other Weasley children are not here." Severus replied, relief evident in his voice.
Molly turned and raised an eyebrow at him. Arthur just shook his head, as Severus smirked at her.

"Ohhhh...!"

All eyes went to Breen, as another contraction started. Severus moved to sit on the other side of the bed so he could massage Breen's back. Molly didn't even flinch when the grip on her hand became like a vise. She empathized with Breen and moved closer to begin lightly stroking his face and hair, as she whispered soothing encouragement. The grip on her hand began to loosen.

Breen's eyes went glassy and he started to speak incoherently, as he whimpered. It was obvious his level of pain had suddenly increased. At the change in Breen's voice, Miss Renee' approached the bed, Brid by her side. Sitting on the edge near Breen's feet, she lifted the sheet covering him. A moment later, she dropped the sheet and gave a gentle pat to Breen's leg.

"When this contraction ends, Breen, you should be through transition, and we can move you to the birthing chair. You'll begin feeling the urge to push any time." She focused on Severus. "You will take your place behind him in the chair, to support and coach him."

Severus nodded, but didn't look up. Arthur leaned down and stroked a hand through Breen's hair.

"Molly love, I'm going to go sit with the others now, and leave you and Severus to help Harry--Breen, to have his babies. I'll let them know he is close and doing well."

She nodded. They barely noticed the door click shut behind him, as they helped Breen to a sitting position on the side of the bed, in preparation to stand. Brid and Severus clasped hands under his back and knees, lifting him in a cradle carry. It was only a dozen steps to the chair, and they set him down, helping him to get seated comfortably in the chair. Severus took his place behind Breen, allowing him to lean back against his chest. Two additional chairs had been placed to either side of the birthing chair, and Ailey and Molly now occupied those.

Breen grimaced and began to breath as another contraction rolled through his body. Severus, who had placed his arms around the smaller man, and lay his hands on the swell of his children, looked down suddenly and his brows shot up. He felt the muscles under his hands go suddenly hard as granite, as he felt a strong ripple of magic pulse under his hands--his sons' magic. He leaned close to Breen's ear.

"They are eager to meet the world, Breen. I feel their magic."
A slight nod and a tight smile were his only response. Just then, the door opened and in stepped Ron and Hermione.

"We wanted to be with Har--Breen, to help him through the last of this. Please." Hermione asked, shyly. Their eyes begged as they waited. The Healer nodded at them and they hurried to sit on the floor to either side of Molly and Ailey, well out of the way.

Ron leaned forward. "Moine and I are here for ya, Mate."

Micah walked through the long hall and into the large room, looking around at everyone sitting and chatting quietly. Eileen was perched on the old headmaster's lap, her hands waving and gesturing as she chattered away. The old blue eyes twinkled with amusement, Albus' full attention on the child. He noticed the Messrs. Lupin-Malfoy were sitting nearby with the redheaded man whom he'd met earlier--the parents of the young Ron Weasley who'd he'd met the day before. The man looked a bit less stressed and happier than he had earlier.

Micah helped himself to a glass of chouchen before taking the empty seat next to Eileen and the headmaster. As he settled himself, Albus turned to him and smiled. Eileen noticing she'd lost her audience, followed his gaze, and a huge smile appeared on her face.

"Unc'a Micah! Ye've come ta set wi' us an' wait fer Da ta hav' me broders!"

She dropped a kiss on Albus' cheek and climbed down from his lap. Micah was already reaching for her when her feet touched the floor. He swung her up in the air before setting her on his lap. She squealed with delight, causing the other three younger wizards to turn. Arthur's eyes lit up and he scooted to the other side of the small couch he sat on, bringing himself closer to the big man.

"Micah, isn't it?" He received a nod. "I would be ever so grateful if you would tell me more of your home. I recall reading an account once about a battle at someplace called The...La--Lama--Mala--"

"The Alamo, Mr. Weasley. An' Ah'd be as pleased as a hawg in slop ta tell ya 'bout the great state o' Texas!"
Arthur looked as though his birthday and Yule had come all at once. He settled in to listen to the melodic southern drawl of the big man as he began to talk.

"Come here, Moine!" Ron whispered excitedly, from where he stood behind and just to the side of Miss Renee'. He held his hand out and motioned for her to come to where he was. "I can see the little guy's head, Mate! You're almost there!"

The young witch moved to his side, and gasped, her hand to her mouth, as her large brown eyes watched the miracle before her. Ron put his arm around her and squeezed.

Breen's head fell back against Severus' shoulder as the contraction ebbed. He gulped deep breaths, his skin shiny with perspiration, wet curls framing his face. Severus accepted a clean damp flannel from Ailey and gently wiped his face and neck, before brushing the damp hair away from his face.

"D-Don' remember... being... so hard... with Eileen..." he gasped, weariness beginning to show in his tone.

"Try to slow your breathing Breen. You don't want to begin hyperventilating."

Miss Renee' admonished in a soft tone. "You've made it through the longest part. It shouldn't be much longer now."

He nodded. He only was able to take two deep slow breaths and blow them out before he curled his body forward, and buried his chin against his chest. Severus began massaging up and down his arms, sides and thighs, as he coached him. Pushing as hard as he could, Breen's face flushed deep red, and his body shook with the effort, as he emitted a long grunting growl.

Miss Renee's head came up suddenly, her hand gently gripping Breen's thigh to get his attention. "Stop pushing, Breen! Do your breathing! Don't push again until I tell you."

Ron and Hermione leaned forward to get a better view over the woman's shoulder. Brid came and squatted next to Miss Renee' and they spoke quickly in quiet tones. Hermione's eyes widened when she realized what the problem was. She quickly schooled her features, but Severus, Ailey, and Molly had already noticed. All three looked at her, Severus arching a brow at her, which caused Ron to glance down at her in question. But she was interrupted before she could speak.
"Keep breathing, Breen. I'm sorry. I know how hard it is to resist pushing. But I must remove the umbilical cord from around your son's neck." Expecting the panicked looks, she continued. "He'll be just fine. Only a moment longer."

Breen whimpered, in a combination of pain and panic for his son. His legs shook as he waited for her to free his son, her fingers inside of him, working around the baby's head to free the cord. Everyone seemed to hold their breath for the longest few minutes they would ever experience.

"Push!" She ordered, as another contraction started. "That's it. Not too hard. You don't want to tear this early."

"Ngghhhhhaaaaah!!"

The baby's head finally slipped free, releasing some of the pressure Breen had been feeling. The Healer helped the baby turn.

"Now, one more good push!"

She guided the baby as his small body slipped free. Breen fell back against Severus, his eyes almost closed, as he waited to hear his son's cry. Ailey and Molly both stood to get a look. Miss Renee' stood and leaned over, placing the baby on Breen's bare chest. Brid began to immediately rub the child vigorously with a thick soft towel both cleaning him and stimulating him. It was only moments until his first wail rent the air.

Seeing Breen (and Severus) tearing up, she admonished him. "You have a bit of time to rest and say 'hello', before his brother decides he must make his appearance."

Breen looked up at Severus, who'd placed a hand on the child's head, then leaned forward to kiss the little forehead.

"Hello, Iain. I'm your Da. I love you, my son."

Severus cocked a brow at the name but said nothing.
"Say hello to your Papa, Iain."

Molly, Ailey, Ron, and Hermione huddled around Severus and Breen, looking at the tiny form, as both his parents gently caressed him in awe.

"He's got your wild hair, Mate! Won't be wasting Galleons on hair products then, yeah? Oof! Moine! Whatcha do that for?!"

Ron rubbed his side where Hermione had firmly planted her elbow. She ignored him, smiling innocently at Breen. Severus snorted, clearly amused. The older women just shook their heads.

"He's beautiful, Breen. Congratulations. And to you too, Professor.

Severus inclined his head.

"I'm so happy you all could be here." Breen looked at the faces around him. "Molly, wh-where's Arthur?"

"Oh deary, he's no good at a birth. Fainted dead away at the sight of the blood and the babies crowning. After fainting at three births, he was more than happy to let me have the rest, while he waited in another room."

Breen's eyes widened. "No!"

Ron looked surprised as Hermione began to giggle. "I didn't know that!"

His mother fixed him with a stern gaze. "And you won't be telling him I told you either, Ronald."

"Yes, Mum."

"Ohhh! H-Here c-comes--Ngghhhhaaah!" He bit out as the invisible vise gripped his body again,
forcing him to push.

Brid lifted little Iain gently into her arms, and moved away to a nearby warming cot.

Severus didn't know where to look, glancing over to where his oldest son wailed, as the medi-witch cleaned him up and checked him over, or down to where he would see his youngest appear. He was a father! It was finally starting to sink in! He glanced sideways, once at Ailey and then at Molly. Both older witches were watching him with amusement in their eyes. Breen's weight sagging against him brought his attention back fully to the birth. He brushed the damp hair away again and Ailey wiped Breen's face and neck.

"Grrrgahh!"

This time, Miss Renee' barely had time to grip the second baby, as his entrance into the world was going much more quickly and smoothly than his brother's. Then Breen felt a warm squirming weight on his chest again, followed by a wail to equal his brother's.

"Another fine healthy boy! Congratulations!" Miss Renee' beamed as Brid continued to rub the child, his skin pinking up nicely. "Just the afterbirth now, then we can get you cleaned up so you can rest. When you feel the urge again, push, but it won't be as hard now."

She sat back down on the short stool to wait. The others ooh'd and aah'd over the newest arrival, as Severus and Breen stared, taking in every bit of their son, with tear-filled eyes.

"M-meet Christophe, Sev'rus. Your other son." Breen whispered, as he stroked a finger down the tiny cheek. "Christophe, this is your Papa, an' I'm your Da."

Hermione tugged on Ron's sleeve. "Let's go let everyone know your son's are here and doing well...if that's alright?" She looked at Breen and Severus, who both nodded.

The two exited the room quickly to spread the happy news. Brid tapped Severus' arm, and when he turned, placed a swaddled, and finally quiet, Iain in his arms. As soon as she was certain he had his son firmly, she lifted little Christophe into her arms to clean him up and check him over. He had calmed down to whimpering hiccups, so she shushed and calmed him as she worked.

Ailey washed Breen's chest with a warm flannel, as Severus leaned down so Breen could see their
son's face. Tears coursed freely down Breen's face, as he looked at his son, then at the joy he could see in Severus' face as he gazed at the child he held. It was something he never expected to see, and the sight made him so happy. Ailey approached with Christophe in her arms, Molly at her side, talking quietly to him.

Breen groaned and bore down as he felt the afterbirth. Molly moved to Breen's side, squeezing his arm in encouragement. Severus and Ailey stood close together, admiring the babies, talking quietly. Clearing away the expelled tissue for later testing, Miss Renee' reached for her wand to cast spells to heal and clean her patient, and cast the spells to prompt his body to start the reversal process. As she lifted the willow wand and opened her mouth to begin the first spell, Breen curled forward and cried out in pain, as blood and fluids gushed from his body.

"Oh Sweet Merlin!" Molly exclaimed, as Miss Renee' and Brid went calmly into action. Severus and Ailey could only watch in stunned silence, holding the babies close.

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Iain Pàl Artair Evans-Snape \_____ Wild black hair, green eyes, comb. of both
____ parents' noses, fair complexion

Christophe Emil Noel Evans-Snape /

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Chapter 37

2,757 words

Severus placed Iain in Ailey's other arm, and moved to Breen's side. "Molly please help Ailey with the babies." She nodded at him and moved to the other woman's side.

He stroked his hand against Breen's face. "Shhh... try to stay calm. Your healer will take care of you. The boys are doing well. Think of them."
Breen's lower lip trembled as they both watched Miss Renee' palpitate his considerably smaller abdomen. Her brow was creased, indicating how deeply she was concentrating.

"The entire placenta was expelled... I detected no abnormalities... Brid!"

The other woman appeared at her side, and palpitated where the healer indicated. She lowered her head and closed her eyes, trusting her hands as she felt. Her brow furrowed a bit and she moved her hands over the area a second time. She opened her eyes, looked at the other woman and nodded, before moving away.

"Wha-What i-is it?" Breen asked.

"Indeed. What is wrong? Why is he still bleeding?" Severus felt panic, but managed to keep it hidden.

Miss Renee' sat down on her small stool again, Brid at her side. "It seems you still have a little more work to do before you may rest, Breen. When you feel so inclined--push."

Breen looked up at Severus, then over to Ailey and Molly, and back to his Healer, confusion and worry evident in his expression. But, Miss Renee' had never given him reason to not trust her.

"Uh-oh-okay."

A few minutes later he felt his body expel again, this time, something smaller than before, followed soon after by another form smaller than that one. The men held their breath, their eyes on the Healer. Brid handed some towels to Miss Renee', followed by her wand. Curious, Molly moved to stand behind them to see what the problem was. The look of worry on her face melted away, replaced by a smile, and she motioned Ailey over. The other woman joined her, and her eyebrows went up when she looked.

"What? Will I be okay?" Breen's voice was very weak.

Ailey smiled warmly at him. "Aye, me laddie. Ye're gon'ta be jus' fine!"
Miss Renee' stood, as a tiny wail broke the quiet in the room. "Congratulations, Breen--and Severus. You have a daughter!"

Both men, and the older women, looked on in amazement, as the tiny form, was laid on Breen's chest and covered with a thick towel warmed with a charm. She was fair-complected like her brothers, but tinier, and instead of the dark hair, she had a headful of auburn curls.

"Oh, Sev... she's... she's..."

"Absolutely beautiful, Breen."

"She is noticeably smaller than her brothers, and we will monitor her closely, but I believe she will be fine. This definitely explains why the boys had so much trouble moving into position for the birth--too many babies and too little room. Frankly, I'm shocked that she managed to hide from us through the entire pregnancy! Her brothers' magical signatures are so much stronger than hers that we couldn't detect it. Well this is one for the journals, Breen. I'm going to have to submit a paper. All patients are anonymous, of course."

"We will give our permission as long as Breen's privacy is protected." Severus looked sternly at the Healer.

"That is one of my biggest priorities behind the care of my patients, Severus. I would not have so many faithful patients if I behaved otherwise." She turned to Ailey. "You may want to have someone retrieve another cot. All three should fit fine in here. I would place an extra warming charm on the girl's cot for the time being. I will come by daily for the next week or so to check on her, and the boys as well."

Ailey nodded, and motioned to Molly. "While ye finish en here, we'll tak' tha bairns ta meet their Seanairean Iain an' Artair. Com' long Seanmhair Mallaidh."

" 'Kay, Muime and Auntie Molly..."

"Now, let's let Brid clean up your daughter, while I cast the necessary spells over you, then she will help you bathe and get into clean clothing, giving the proud Papa a chance to show off his daughter."
Breen looked up at Severus, giving him a tired grin. "You are a proud Papa, aren't you Severus."

Onyx eyes, wet with tears, gazed down at him warmly. "Most definitely, Mr. Evans."

Severus smiled and brushed his cheek with his fingers, looking as if he wanted to say something else, before he moved to take their daughter from Brid, and head toward the door.

"Severus?"

The older wizard turned around. "Yes, Breen."

"Lily. Her name is Lily."

Severus nodded. "Of course." He replied before exiting the room.

Iain and Arthur were in heaven. They sat next to each other, each holding a baby boy, Molly and Ailey flanking them. Eileen was perched between the men, a hand gently petting the dark hair on her brothers' heads. Grands ons; two of them. Little brothers. Beautiful, beautiful boys. The others in the room were crowded around them, some standing and some sitting on the floor at their feet. Dobby appeared with a pop, and handed each man a perfectly warmed bottle of *Wizard's Milk*. Both boys wasted no time latching on to the nipples and sucked hungrily. Satisfied, Dobby disappeared.

Ron sat nearby, feeding Els, a happy smile on his face as he watched everyone welcoming the new babies. He looked down at his daughter and kissed her head.

"You'll have two playmates to grow up with, Els. Picnics and birthday parties at the Burrow."

She gurgled at him then went back to drinking. He glanced over to the other side of the room, then back down at Elisabeth. "When we get home, Els, what's say I talk to your Papa about giving you a little brother or sister, yeah?"
He laughed when she gurgled again, waved an arm, and kicked her feet. He looked up when he heard someone enter the room. He watched Severus walk across the room, another bundle in his arms.

"Is there room for two more in this gathering?" Severus asked, causing everyone to turn, and stop, stunned silent as they stared at the bundle in his arms.

"Bloody Hell..." Ron's voice drifted through the room.

Albus rubbed his hands together, the blue eyes dancing. "Splendid! Three babies! I'll have to have the castle enlarge those quarters...the house elves will have to bring more furniture out of storage... and linens..."

Molly and Ailey smiled and looked smug, as Eileen slid from the couch and approached her Papa. Severus knelt, and leaned down a bit so Eileen could see.

"Three?!!" Remus whispered. "Triplets?!"

Lucius had a silly smile on his face as he looked at all the babies. Hermione stared at each with such want in her eyes.

"The Goddess gave us an extra blessing, Eileen. Meet your baby sister, Lily."

She reached out a finger to stroke the tiny curls. "Oh Papa! She's so pretty! She has hair lik' th' Weas'ey's!"

Everyone laughed.

"Yes, yes she does. But, she also has your Grandmother Lily's hair. That's who your Da named your sister after... a very special woman and a very gifted witch.

There were murmured words of agreement around the room.
"Am I nam'd aft'r som'one too, Papa?" Dark eyes so like his own stared up at him.

"Yes, my daughter. You are named after my mother. Your Grandmother, Eileen. You have her hair and eyes."

"Good! Papa, Ah thin' Lily es hungry."

Just as the baby girl started to fuss, Dobby appeared with another bottle and handed it to Eileen, with a smile, before popping out again.

"May Ah feed her, Papa?"

Severus moved to sit in one of the chairs. "Yes you may. Come sit in my lap and I will help you hold Lily."

pqpqpqpq

Everyone had finally gone to bed. Miss Renee' and Brid had packed up and left. The babies were sound asleep in their cots, and Breen had been healed, bathed, and dressed in warm soft sleep pants and a tunic, his freshly washed hair braided. Totally exhausted, he was sound asleep, Eileen curled up against his side. Severus was exhausted as well, but he sat in the comfortable chair next to the bed, his feet propped up on the matching ottoman, and gazed at his newest children. Little miracles, all of them; just like their older sister. Little Lily had been such a surprise. He felt the Goddess had intervened, and placed that child with her brothers later, but he would keep that theory to himself. He thought about the warm-hearted, friendly, caring young woman she was named for. He missed her dearly. His voice was low and soft as he spoke, as if he didn't realize he was vocalizing his thoughts.

"You'd be so very proud, Lily. Your son did well, and is very happy, despite everything that he went through. And the children he has given me...a gift so priceless. Did you have a hand in your namesake's presence in our lives, Lily? If so, then I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and vow I will care for these children, and for Breen, with all that I am and all that I have. They will be safe, healthy, happy, and very well loved. I swear it."

He would have to contact Gringott's to retrieve some things from his family vaults. No matter how long Breen wanted to take for them to know each other now, he had already decided. He would ask
the younger man to be his bondmate. It was the logical thing to do--and what his heart told him. Family. Children. Someone to share life with. He would spend the rest of his life making sure they stayed happy--and protected. Yes, he would Owl Gringott's in the morning, then speak to Breen about the naming ceremony.

Ginevra Weasley Unmesh paced angrily in the holding cell, turning sharply every time she came to the back wall or the iron door. They were sending someone to 'evaluate her mental state'. She gave a disgusted snort. There was nothing wrong with her mind, nothing at all. Yes, Delaney and his lackeys had failed her. Yes, that useless eunuch, Adjeet had failed in his duty to her, thanks to that damned house elf, Mukta. That one's head would be mounted on a wall soon, and she would make sure Adjeet lost much more than his bollocks.

She had to get out of here. Take her role, as heir to the Unmesh family, back from her dead husband's nephew. How dare he remove her! He just wanted all the power, privilege, and assets for himself! She stopped pacing, tapping a finger against her lips, as she turned several ideas over in her mind.

Yes... As an added measure of insurance, she could brew a Ligare Amare Aeternus Draught, and slip it to Kasi, and as his wife she would again be in control of the Unmesh family and all it's holdings. It wouldn't be all that bad. He was an attractive young man, after all, and would make a wonderful lover for when she wasn't with Harry. Oh, she'd marry him too, and reap the benefits of being Mrs. Harry Potter. And he would have to change his name back too. A nice strong dose of Ligare Amare Aeternus Draught would take care of Harry as well. And since he already had children... well, as annoying as they would be, at least she could keep her figure. And the children... well... out of sight, out of mind... Now, to work on a plan of escape...

An evil grin spread across her face and she began to chuckle, which quickly morphed into maniacal peals of chilling laughter that echoed eerily off the stone walls.

Severus had, the morning after the birth, asked him to write out the children's full names so the Ministry paperwork could be completed. Breen wrote them out and handed the parchment to him:

*Iain Pàl Artair Evans-Snape

*Christophe Emil Noel Evans-Snape*
He also made sure the Ministry records showed that Eileen was his heir, listing her family name as Evans-Snape, as well. All records had been filed in the French Ministry of Magic, then sealed with a high-level privacy spell, keyed directly to the Minister herself. *Clouseau* had called in many favors to ensure Breen's privacy and new life were protected. He'd even mentioned that someone from the Indian Ministry had contacted the French Ministry as well.

When the triplets were a week old, everyone gathered for the naming ceremony. Albus gladly presided over the ceremony while a member of the French Ministry of Magic witnessed. Once the newest Evans-Snape children had been named, everyone got down to the business of celebrating, with much food and drink, music, singing, and dancing.

Severus and Breen sat together holding the babies, as they enjoyed the festivities. About a half hour into the merriment, they were startled by the sudden appearance of *Mukta*, and another unfamiliar house elf, both wearing the brightly colored sash denoting them as servants of the House of *Unmesh*. Eileen appeared from the direction of the musicians, and stood next to her Papa.

Both elves bowed deeply. *Mukta* stepped closer, and presented the three scrolls she held. Severus accepted them. Quickly summoning one of the babies' Moses baskets, he settled his sleeping daughter into it, and her sister sat on the floor next to the basket to watch over her. As *Mukta* began to speak, Severus unrolled one of the parchments and held it out so Breen could see it as well.

"My Master, Kasi Sudhir Nerendra Unmesh, sends greetings, well-wishes, and gifts for the blessed infants. These are astrological charts for each child, prepared by the honoured Unmesh family astrologer, Prabhakar Aruna Chander Lakshmana, an ancient and most wise, and gifted wizard."

"Th-thank you." Breen stuttered out, his eyes wide.

She held out three small wooden boxes, their surfaces completely covered with intricate and beautifully carved Indian designs and symbols. Accepting those, he laid two of the boxes on his knee and opened the third. Breen gasped.

"Ohhh! Pretty!" Eileen chirped.

Inside the silk lined box, lay a small carved silver bracelet, set with tiny gemstones. He handed the box to Breen and opened the other two, to see they contained similar bracelets, though the first was
far more feminine in design than the others.

"These are talisman bands of protection. Once placed upon the children, they will fit accordingly and resize as the child grows. With a spell, they can become invisible. Master commissioned them from the artisans who have served the Unmesh family for the last thousand years, requiring the inclusion of all spells of protection, tracking, and location."

She handed him two smaller boxes. "The bracelets are keyed to these rings provided for the both of you to wear."

Breen opened the boxes and gasped. The rings were intricately carved and as beautiful as the bracelets. Eileen reached out a finger to touch one of them.

"Mistress Eileen. Master sends the same gifts for you, and begging forgiveness for the distress and pain you were caused." She held out another scroll and carved wooden box to the girl. "Mukta also begs your forgiveness for not protecting you more fully from the shamed Mistress-Who-Is-Nameless."

Eileen handed both items to her Papa, and grabbed the little house elf in a tight hug, causing an alarmed squeak to be heard. The other elf's eyes got impossibly bigger as she watched. Eileen released Mukta and stepped back, a huge smile on her face.

"Ye've nae reason ta be forgiv'n, Mukta. Ye waer me only friend, an' ye helped me Papa an' me Da. Ye're eh good house elf! An' than' yer Master fer tha gif's."

"Yes, Mukta. Your actions were greatly appreciated and appropriate considering the situations. You bring great honour to your Master's House. We both, Breen and I, thank you. Please convey our deepest gratitude to your Master for both the special gifts and the gesture of goodwill."

Mukta and the other elf bowed deeply. "I will convey your message to my Master, Lord Snape and Lord Evans."

A moment later, both elves were gone. Breen turned to Severus, still looking a bit stunned. "That was entirely unexpected."

"Indeed."
Just as Lily began to whimper from her basket, Dobby appeared with three perfectly warmed bottles.

Tbc...

Iain Pàl Artair Evans-Snape \_____ Wild black hair, green eyes, comb. of both parents' noses, fair complexion

_____  

Christophe Emil Noel Evans-Snape /

Lily Mallaidh Eileen Evans-Snape Auburn red hair—wild, green eyes, comb. of both parents' noses, fair complexion

Mallaidh - Irish variant of Molly

Artair - Scottish form of Arthur.

Pàl - Scottish form of Paul.

Seanairean -- Gaelic, plural form of grandfather.

Seanmhairean -- Gaelic, plural form of grandmother.

Muime - Gaelic for stepmother, nurse, caregiver.

Ligare Amare Aeternus -- bind love eternal

Kasi Sudhir Nerendra Unmesh -- nephew of Ginny's dead husband, and the rightful heir.
Things slowly moved back to normal over the next few months. The farm and stables were in full swing again, gearing up for the Spring. Ailey was directing the bi-yearly cleaning, and preparation and planting of the gardens and orchards. Maire was staying at the manor full-time for the time being. There would soon be another Solstice Celebration to prepare for.

Albus had offered to set higher security wards around the MacLeods and Breen's estates. Severus, Lucius, Remus, Arthur, Ron, and Hermione had been more than pleased to help. He had also set up a secure Floo connection between the two manors so Breen and the children could travel more safely between them. Both Eileen and Breen had experienced nightmares regarding their abductions. Dobby had insisted Breen and the children remain at the MacLeod's until he had the nursery properly furnished and prepared at Breen's manor.

Remus, Lucius, Albus, Ron with his daughter, and Hermione, had all returned to Britain within a fortnight of the birth. Before going home, the Weasley's headed to The main offices of the French MLE. Their daughter was being moved to the Wizarding Bastille de Antoine Prison, outside of Paris, to await her trial, as she'd been deemed too unstable and dangerous to stay in the MLE cells. They had family and Ministry business to take care of, then would return to Paris.

They wanted to be present for her trial by the French Wizengamot, after which she would be turned over to the Indian Ministry of Magic to be tried under their laws for the death of her husband. As saddened as they were about Ginny, they wanted to make sure she received the punishment for what she'd done to so many. Due to his past notoriety and the emotional repercussions, Breen had received special permission to provide a Pensive of both his and Eileen's memories, in lieu of
testifying in person. Other witnesses had done the same, as well as agreeing to be present for the trials.

_The sooner that evil bint was locked up as far away from his family as possible, the better._ Severus thought, as he stood at the second story window, overlooking the garden, where Breen was sitting on a blanket with Eileen, and the babies. Dobby was there as well, hovering and helping, while Blaan and Ruadh frolicked nearby. The dogs had already learned to be cautious around the babies.

He'd had to return to Hogwarts for a week to prepare his classroom and quarters for the coming Summer holidays. Albus had been kind enough to arrange for a substitute Potions professor to finish out the school term, and the man had been provided his own rooms. The old fart was acting like a doting grandfather, rushing Severus back to Bretagne, assuring him that he would take care of any forgotten details. That had also happened to include reminding him that the new family quarters had been modified and totally furnished and supplied; ready for him whenever he was ready to to bring his new family back to Scotland. Severus just rolled his eyes at the man and said nothing. What could he do against that twinkle anyway?

The day he left, Albus had asked Minerva to his office, and with permission from Severus, and Breen, told him of the recent events and what had become of their little Harry. Minerva had bawled like he'd never seen before, beyond happy, and wanting to know if she could visit the bairns. Of course, Albus left out the part about them getting correspondence and anonymous packages from the young man for ten years. The woman had a well-known temper, and she'd always had a soft spot for that particular member of her House. Severus had promised to ask Breen as soon as he saw him and would Owl her, then he left.

He'd not wanted to leave, even for the one week, but it hadn't been avoidable. At least, he'd taken advantage of the opportunity to visit his family vault at Gringott's, and make arrangements with the Goblins and his solicitors. Both the children, and Breen were now his heirs, and would always be provided for, no matter what.

Breen didn't yet know he had returned. He'd go down soon, but he just wanted to stand here watching his family, for a little longer. They'd spent considerable time together after the birth, talking and reacquainting themselves with each other. They'd both changed so much over the years, and seemed to get along quite well now. His feelings for Breen had changed so much from what he'd felt for Harry, before he disappeared. He thought back to the dreams he'd had over the last several years, seeing them clearly now, for what they were. He could see himself sharing a life and a future with the younger man. From a lonely single wizard to suddenly within days to a man with a family of five; it boggled the mind!

He fingered the velvet bag in the pocket of his robes, and smiled. Taking a deep breath and releasing it slowly, he turned and exited the room, heading downstairs.
Ailey came down the hall, *Levitating* a stack of clean folded linens, as he stepped from the staircase. "Och! Sev'rus! Ye've r'turned! Breen an' tha *bairns* aer en tha garden. He wi' be pleas'd ta see ye."

"I will be pleased to see him as well, and my children. How are you this fine day?"

She settled the linens in a nearby closet, and stowed her wand. Turning to him, she tucked a stray lock of hair back into her braid, taking notice of how his hand was fidgeting in the pocket of his robes. "Busy es eh sprite en spring. So much ta do! But, ye shou'd be goin' ta tha garden. 'Tis almos' time fer tha wee ones kip. Off wi' ye now!" She made a shooing motion at him then shoved him gently toward the back of the manor.

When he reached the double doors, he looked back and smirked, as he watched her hurry away, muttering to herself about so much to do and not enough hours in the day, even with magic.

With his hand on the door handle, he opened the door and stood there for a moment looking out at what he hoped would be his future. His beautiful Eileen was playing fetch with the dogs, giggling madly, her cheeks flushed and wild hair tousled. Breen sat cross-legged on the thick quilt, dressed in loose trousers and a oversized Muggle sweatshirt. All three babies lay in a row in front of Breen, arms and legs moving as their Da leaned over them, talking to them and tickling them with the tip of his waist-length braid. One of the babies tried to laugh when Breen ran the tip down his nose; most likely Iain, since he was the most boisterous. The sound made Breen grin in surprise and his green eyes danced. He leaned down and blew on the boy's belly, eliciting another squeal, which in turn excited his siblings. Breen started to laugh, and at that moment Severus felt his breath catch, and all doubt melted away. Opening the door fully, he strode outside, letting the door shut quietly behind him.

Ailey peeked from behind the hall door, whispering as she watched Severus walk toward Breen and her grandchildren. "Tha's a gud mahn now. Yer tha one he's ben waitin' fer. Go mak' ma laddie happy--he wi' say 'aye', an' hav' tha fam'ly he's want'd so."

Molly and Arthur had returned home for a few days. Ginny had been found guilty in France, on multiple charges, but wouldn't be sentenced until after her trial in India. Then the combined Wizengamots would hand down her punishments. They needed some time with the rest of their
children and their families, to share love and support, as well as updating them on the trials. Molly and Arthur had asked the other children to stay away from the trials, and it hadn't been difficult for them to agree, still being quite angry with Ginny for what she had done. When the rest of the children had been told, after taking a Vow of Confidentiality, who Ginny's latest victims really were, chaos had broken out in the Burrow kitchen. Percy and Ron just sat back and watched as their brothers started yelling.

Their previous anger paled compared to now, as well as the indignation that they hadn't been told that Harry's whereabouts had been suspected for some time and that he was fine.

Ron noticed his Mum tearing up, and his Dad paling. He'd had enough. Handing Els to Viktor, he stood, thankful Viktor had cast a Silencing Spell over the sleeping child when they arrived.

"Oi! You lot! Shut yer gobs!!" He bellowed.

Silence immediately echoed in the large room, and all eyes--surprised and not, were on him. Not waiting for them to catch their breath and start up again, he looked to his parents. Receiving a nod, he continued.

"Sit down and listen!" He waited until all chairs were occupied again. "You all know what Gin's been like ever since her crush on Harry started. And it got worse as time went on. You all love him like family, just like me. He went away to be safe and to have a normal life. He went far away, changed his life, and his name even, and our sister still found him! Merlin! She almost killed him, and his daughter! And the babies he was carrying!"

"Babies?!" Fred squeaked in shock.

"What babies?!" Echoed his twin.

Charlie looked as if he was going to go off again. Ron glared at him.

"Yes, twins. Though when he finally had them, there was a surprise... he had triplets. Two boys and a girl."

"How do you know?" Asked Bill.
Percy chimed in at that point. "Because he was there. As was Hermione... and Mom and Dad."

George turned to his parents with a smirk. "Oi! Mum. He out-did you and Dad!!"

That broke the tension and everyone laughed, and relaxed. Molly's eyes were again dry and the color had returned to Arthur's cheeks. Percy and Ron shared a relieved look as Ron took his seat again. Molly and Ron proceeded to tell everyone about Breen, Eileen, the birth, and the babies. Questions about Breen's 'new' family, the MacLeods, and his new friends, were answered. They were fascinated by his choice of career, especially considering he'd never need to work, and not surprised that Dobby had followed him. Arthur told of his conversations with the big Texan, Micah, repeating in detail, all about the Muggle things he'd learned. It was the general consensus that changing his name was a good idea considering he was able to finally be truly himself now.

The ultimate question finally came up while Molly and Luna were serving pudding. Ron was surprised it had taken so long.

"Yo, baby brother," George waved a forkful of treacle tart in Ron's direction. "Who's the Dad? Some--"

"--good looking French bloke?" Fred added.

"Did'ya--"

"--meet him?"

Charlie looked to the other end of the table. "Yeah, Mum... Dad... Who is he?"

Molly smiled into her napkin, and Arthur cleared his throat to cover a chuckle. Bill arched an eyebrow.

"Well, does he at least take good care of Har--Breen? And treat him well?"
"Oh my, yes, dear. He treats Breen very well." Molly managed to answer, sliding a amused glimpse at Ron, who smirked back.

Arthur refilled his teacup. "He's a bit older than Breen, highly educated, and respected in his field, comes from a very old family, financially secure, very responsible and level-headed--"

"Is he a Wizard then?" George asked as he leaned forward to serve himself more treacle tart.

"Yes. And a very gifted and powerful one, as well."

Bill pushed his empty plate away and picked up his tea. "How long has Har--Breen known him?"

"Oh, for several years." Ron replied, keeping his gaze on Els, who was now cooing at him from Viktor's arms.

Percy coughed into his hand and took a quick sip of his tea.

"What's he--"

--look like? Is he--"

--handsome?"

The twins, ever the roving-eyed bachelors, looked eager for the answer. Molly thought for a moment. Arthur busied himself gathering and stacking the dishes and *Levitating* them to the sink.

"That is somewhat a question of perspective, but I would say, in my own opinion, he is attractive in a classical way--very different from someone like, say, Mr. Lockhart. Wouldn't you agree, Luna dear?"

The doe-eyed blond smiled dreamily from her seat next to Percy. "Oh yes, Molly. Breen would never be so shallow as to want someone like Mr. Lockhart! He would desire someone more honest, responsible, and grounded."
"Oi now! Luna, how--"

"--do you know what--"

"--his dream man--"

"--looks like!?"

A frantic tapping ended the conversation and drew everyone's attention to the corner window, where a large eagle owl was perched.

Arthur stood and hurried to open the window. "I believe this is Kingsley's personal owl."

The large bird hopped onto the open window frame and held out his leg, waiting patiently as Arthur removed the small scroll, bearing the Ministry's Seal and Encryption Spell. The owl hooted once and disappeared into the evening sky.

Arthur returned to his seat, pulling his wand. Passing it over the scroll, he muttered the Decryption Charm under his breath. Everyone looked curious and very interested, except Molly and Ron, who also looked worried.


He read the message twice before handing it to Molly. "Kingsley should be arriving any moment. We're to stay put. He will explain when he arrives."

"Arthur..." Molly whispered.

He leaned in close and kissed her cheek, before speaking in a quiet voice. "Shhh... my Mollywobbles. Whatever it is, we will deal with it."
Chapter 39

2,474 words

When Breen had caught sight of Severus, he'd given the man the most brilliant smile, clearly happy to see him return. Eileen had let out an ecstatic squeal and nearly bowled him over when she ran and wrapped herself around his body. He'd sat down facing Breen, the babies between them, and Eileen plastered to his side. Dobby had greeted Master Severus, then excused himself, disappearing with a pop. Braan and Ruadh had even come, tails wagging, to say hello and get a pet or two from him. He'd hugged and kissed Eileen, and held each of his babies, as Breen told him how everyone had fared while he was gone.

A short while later, Ailey and Maire came outside, saying it was time for the wee bairns' kip. When Eileen looked to be settling in for a long cuddle with her Papa, her Seamhaidh reminded her that she also had to go. She was a growing lassie and needed her sleep as well. Breen and Severus both urged her to go, Severus promising to spend extra time with her after the evening meal. That seemed to ease her pout, and she went willingly.

Now they sat together, just the two of them, facing each other, hip to hip, talking quietly of their children and of the business that had required Severus' brief return to Hogwarts.

"How long will you be able to stay, Severus, before you have to go back again?" The green eyes looked hopeful.

"I have all Summer. Albus is not expecting me back until just before the new term, as usual." Severus replied, as he studied the face before him. 'Oh to open my eyes to this every morning...would be a blessing indeed.' He thought.

"That's wonderful! You will be able to spend so much time with the children! Eileen will be so excited." Breen reached up and pulled his braid forward, fiddling with the end. "I know traveling would be limited and where to go because of the triplets age... but I'm sure there are things to do. I can ask Muime, if you like." He studied Severus, trying to figure out the odd expression in the man's dark eyes. "And I know Dobby would be glad to go along to help." 'And I would love to go along and spend time with you too.' He thought.
"You wouldn't join us?" Severus was confused. Didn't Breen want to spend time with him as well?

"Oh. Oh! Of course I would... if you wanted me to." Breen's cheeks flushed attractively under Severus' gaze.

"I would. I have enjoyed your company greatly, since finding you again."

The blush deepened. "And I have enjoyed yours as well, Severus."

It is my desire to spend much more time in your company, learning even more about you..." Severus reached up, gently tucking a loose strand of hair behind Breen's ear, before lightly stroking his fingers down the flushed cheek.

Breen closed his eyes and leaned into the touch, as he spoke softly. "Nothing would make me happier."

"You've given me more than I could have ever hoped for." Severus whispered, as he stroked a thumb gently across Breen's lips. "I could easily come to love you."

"And I, you." Green eyes opened and stared into black ones. "You gave me my greatest wish. A loving family."

"Bond with me, Breen Jamison Evans. Would you grant me that honor?" Severus watched Breen closely, awaiting his reaction.

Breen gasped at the words, and his eyes brimmed, as he looked down at the elegant bag Severus had placed in his palm, then placed his own elegant hand over it, as he waited. Looking back up, he could see many emotions whirling in the dark eyes. Caring. Fear. Anticipation. Anxiousness. Severus' hand trembled slightly. His own heart was beating faster, and he was feeling a bit lightheaded. Several deep breaths chased the feeling away.

He nodded. "Yes, Severus Tobias Snape. I would be honored to accept and to bond with you."
The dark eyes brightened and a huge smile slowly spread across Severus' face, catching Breen unawares, since it was a new sight for him. Opening the bag, Severus reached in and pulled out a pair of matching bonding bracelets. He slipped one on to Breen's left wrist, and presented the other to him to be placed on his own wrist. Magick tingled as the bracelets fit themselves to each wrist.

They stared at the bracelets, their hands still grasped, when Severus' gaze rose to Breen's face, prompting him to look up. The dark eyes held a question; another question.

"Severus, what is it?"

"May I kiss you, Breen?"

Breen startled, his eyes widening in surprise, not expecting the question to be that. Then his eyes softened.

"Yes. Please." Was the soft reply.

Long elegant fingers cupped both sides of Breen's face, as Severus' lips brushed tentatively against his fuller ones. Reaching up and grasping the other man's wrist encouraged him to move in again, this time, with a bit more boldness. Breen responded, enjoying the sensuous touch of Severus' mouth on his. Just then a loud whoop came from the doors to the manor. They broke the kiss and looked just in time to see Ailey standing in the open doorway, grinning, and Eileen racing toward them at a full run. She dropped onto the quilt, practically in their laps.

"Aer ye gettin' bonded, Da? Papa? Ye ask'd him didn' ye? Da, ye said aye ta him? When're ye gettin' bonded? *Seannmhàir* will need ta ken, so she can plan tha party. Wi' ev'ryone be comin'? Ev'n Albus, an' tha Weas'ey's, an' yer friends, Rem's an' Lucius, an' Ron an' Elsbeth, an'--"

Severus stared, stunned, at his daughter, his eyes wide and his mouth open. Breen was giggling, clearly amused. When he looked over and saw Severus' expression, he fell over, clutching his middle as peals of laughter filled the air. The sounds silenced his daughter and shook Severus out of his shock. They both stared at him as if he'd gone mad. Trying to sit up again, with tears of mirth running down his cheeks, he tried to catch his breath.

"Oh, Sev'rus. You-You'll get u-used to it. Sh-She always g-gets like this when she's excited."

Seeing Eileen scowl at him, the expression so like her Papa's, he started giggling again. "Sh-Should have s-seen her when I told her we were having t-twins..."
Severus happened to glance over and see his daughter's expression, and he found himself chuckling. "Weren't you supposed to be having a kip, my daughter?"

"Aye, she was." Ailey stood over them, hands on her hips. "But tha lassie snuck back downsta'rs. Com'long now, wi' ye. Yer Da an' yer Papa wi' be haer when ye wake. Congrat'lations ta ye both. We cahn discuss plans lat'r. Come lassie." Ailey held out her hand.

Eileen's lip protruded, but she rose anyway and took her Seanmhair's hand. They watched the two head back to the manor, as Breen sniffled and wiped his cheeks, still giggling. Severus just shook his head and gave him a gentle shove, toppling him over, causing the giggles to start anew.

pqpqpqpq

Ailey had insisted that the bonding take place on Beltane. The babies' naming ceremony had been performed within days of their birth, but they would be introduced to the community at large, on the day of the bonding. Everyone accepted that Ailey was a force unto herself and it was pointless to argue. Breen just sat back and watched everyone contemplate disagreeing with her, then change their minds and work within her plans. He found it quite amusing.

Severus had realized early, that it was about as productive as arguing with the Headmaster, when he had his mind set on something. Luckily, both he and Breen had agreed that Beltane was an appropriate choice. Preparations began immediately after Ailey informed Iain of the happy news, and continued in a flurry for the next several weeks. She was an elated Seanmhair of three more beautiful grandchildren and was about to welcome another new member into their family, as well as all their friends from Britain. Just that many more people for her to 'mother'.

One afternoon, while Breen and the children were napping, Ailey and Maire were busy working on the robes for the ceremonies, and he was going over more legal documents from Gringott's, an owl arrived with a missive bearing the seal of the British Ministry of Magic. Feeling a bit wary, Severus cast Scanning Spells and popped the seal. He scanned the missive quickly, then read it again slowly. Sighing, he let the hand holding the parchment drop to the desk, as he rubbed the ache between his eyes.

There were two messages contained within, from Kingsley. He had included a report and official communication he'd received from Auror Inspector Clouseau the week before. It was finally over. His family would be safe now. He looked over the documents again. During the transfer of Ginny Weasley Unmesh to the MLE in India, she had managed to escape her captors and disappeared into the busy streets of the city. Despite the efficiency of the Indian Aurors, she evaded them for almost ten days, until one evening, a anonymous message was received.
The young witch's body was discovered outside the Unmesh estate. Beside her was the body of the servant, Adjeet. They hadn't been aware that the man had disappeared mysteriously from his holding cell. It seemed the eunuch had overheard of his former Madam's escape. He'd found her and executed her ritually then took his own life, both within the ancient laws of the Shadow Guard. He had taken vengeance for his former Master's house and reclaimed his own honor. Madam Unmesh's remains were forbidden to be entered in the soil of India. Her body had been magickally cremated and returned to her family in Britain. A Seal of Secrecy had been placed on the files and all involved had taken a Vow of Non-disclosure.

He scanned the official report from the MLE in India. A gruesome ending for the witch, but fitting in his opinion, though it had been a bit more merciful than death at the hands of a Death Eater, though not by much. He was amazed at the damage the Shadow Guard had self-inflicted when he'd ritually taken his own life. It seemed ancient laws in India were just as violent as in Britain. Kingsley had included a postscript to his message, from the Weasley patriarch, asking that he not tell Breen, or anyone else in Bretagne, for the time being. The Weasley's, despite their grief, wanted nothing to mar the joy of the bonding and the babies' official presentation to the community.

Severus' heart went out to Arthur and Molly, and their sons. They had to be suffering, yet they put Breen's happiness first. They truly considered him one of their own. His respect for them grew even more. He would contact them confidentially and offer his condolences. No. He wouldn't tell Breen. He would leave the decision of when to tell him, up to his first adopted family.

Calling his owl, Bricius, to him, he penned a quick note to the goblin that managed the Snape accounts, sealed it around the documents he'd received from Kingsley and sent the owl off to Gringott's in Diagon Alley. They and the information they contained, would be secure in his vault, until the appropriate time.

After Bricius exited the window, Maire entered the room with a cup of tea, a sandwich, and a list of the days tasks for the bonding preparations. He thanked her and sat back to enjoy his lunch, as he looked over Ailey's list.

Miss Renee' closed her bag and pocketed her wand, as Breen slipped back into his robes. A squeal of excitement drew their attention briefly to the blanket on the floor, where Eileen sat, playing with her siblings. Christophe's arms and legs were moving excitedly as he gurgled up at his sister. Iain and Lily were both wide-eyed as they watched their older sister.

"You've healed well, there are no abnormalities, and your weight is good. The babies, as well, are
where they should be for their age." She laid a small parchment on the bedside table. "Here are the alterations I'd like Severus to make in your Post-natal Potion. With their rapid growth, all of you need the additional nutrients. Your daily dosage is the same. As always, let me know if there are any adverse effects." She chuckled. "Of course, I know you will tell your promised first."

Breen grinned at her. "Of course."

"So, how are the plans and preparations advancing for the bonding? Is Ailey growling yet?" She gave him an amused and knowing look, as she sat at the table by the window, across from Breen and accepted a cup of tea.

"Hmmm... not yet, but we have at least a fortnight until Beltane. It's amusing watching everyone scurry to accomplish their tasks and stay out of her way. I've found that as long as I have the babies with me, she loses her steam."

"Well planned, Breen!" Renee' set her cup down and stirred a bit more milk into it. Her expression became serious. "Have you told Severus yet?"

Breen stroked his fingers lovingly over the engraved bracelet on his wrist. "We discussed it a week after I agreed to bond with him. He seemed pleased with the idea of more children--something you know I desire. He said the decision was up to me. He would support my decision."

"Though, I know you won't regret your choice, and change your mind, I still need to remind you that the counter-potion will no longer be effective after four years. If you pass that time, the change is permanent."

Breen smiled at his healer and friend. "Yes, Renee', I remember. And if it became a permanent state, I would still not regret it. And, it's not like Severus and I couldn't be intimate without the concern of pregnancy at an unplanned time."

Renee' nodded. She studied the young man before her, as a thought formed in her mind. "Breen... you aren't hoping to get with child again on Beltane, are you?"

Green eyes fixed on her own. "If I remember correctly, it will be safe for me--and the babe --by then."
Renee' shook her head and began to laugh. "Breen Jamison Evans, soon-to-be-Snape, you never cease to amaze me! I know better than to try to dissuade you once you've set your mind. Just be sure to come to me as soon as you suspect, yeah?"

"Yeah." He replied with a smile. "And I'll let Eileen have the honor of telling Severus."

At that they both howled with laughter.

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Chapter 40

2,920 words

Severus followed Dobby through the manor house on Breen's estate. It was a bit smaller than the MacLeod's but still large enough for their family and even a few more children. He smiled at the thought. He'd asked Dobby to complete the changes to the nursery to accommodate three infants instead of two, and to furnish and decorate the bedrooms for the children. He'd talked with Ailey, asking her input before making his final decisions about the Master's Suite and the additional bedrooms, which would be guest suites--for now.

Each of the childrens' individual bedroom suites was a different color scheme in soft cheery nature tones, with large windows, lots of storage, and a large play area. Dobby had located the triplets rooms so they connected to each other with large double doors. Ailey and Iain had their own suite across the hall. The guest suites were temporarily located to their own hallway, and were done in neutral tones with accents of greens and browns. The Master Suite was on the floor above, with it's own staircases into the children's rooms. Breen had insisted and Severus agreed, as well as casting highly sophisticated monitoring and alarm wards.

After Severus had checked each room and approved it, they moved to the main floor. It had been apparent that Breen spent little of his time here after he'd become pregnant with Eileen. Dobby had done an excellent job of maintaining the manor but it was still sparsely furnished on the main floor. Here, he had given Ailey free reign, knowing she would make the rooms as warm and homey as those in her and Iain's home. His only request had been for additional bookcases and heavy leather furniture in the library. She nodded knowingly. Evidently, Breen had told her of his overflowing bookcases in his rooms and office at Hogwarts.
"Master Severus, Dobby knows Master Breen likes lots of plants and flowers. Dobby can make a small greenhouse off of the kitchens and small dining room."

He looked around the smaller of the two dining rooms, attached to the kitchens. It was meant for daily use by the family in residence. "By all means, Dobby. That is an acceptable idea, but make it of moderate size, so I am able to secure a section for safe potion ingredients."

Dobby clasped his hands excitedly. "Oh yes! Dobby will do that for Master Severus. Dobby can make a separate room, with a magically locking door that only the Masters can open. Safe for Mistress Eileen and the babies! It will not let them open it."

"Excellent Dobby. And perhaps replace the windows behind the sinks with greenhouse windows to hold herbs used on a daily basis." He opened a door in the corner of the prep area of the kitchens. "And double the size of the pantry and the chill cabinet. I want there always to be a year's supply of food and essentials on hand, including what can be raised, grown, and preserved on the estate."

"Yes, yes, Master Severus is wise. Must keep a place of safety and privacy for Master Breen and the children. Dobby's new Master will take good care of his family."

Severus stopped, and turned, clasping his hands behind his back as he looked down at the energetic little house elf who had sworn to serve the young man Severus was about to bond with. He suddenly saw the creature in a totally different light. Dobby would do anything and everything necessary to take care of his charges and to protect them, even at the cost of his own small life. It wasn't out of a sense of just duty. Dobby had chosen to serve first Harry Potter, then followed the young man when he disappeared to Bretagne and became Breen Evans. When the children were born, they also became his chosen responsibility. 'Would he choose to serve him as well?' he wondered.

"I feel I need to thank you, Dobby, for your devoted service to Breen--and the children. You are indeed a highly valued--and appreciated, house elf. We are blessed to have you chose to be in Breen's service."

Huge brown eyes looked up at him in confusion. "Dobby thanks Master Severus very much for complimenting Dobby. But does Master not know that Dobby also chooses to serve Master Breen's promised, Master Severus, too?"

"Evidently I hadn't, Dobby." Severus inclined his head toward the elf. "I thank you for the honor
"Oh! Master is welcome! Dobby is honored to serve a great Wizard Potions Master and the chosen of Master Breen Evans!"

Severus smiled. "Now that we have cleared that up, I have a question for you now, Dobby. I would like to ease the burden a bit. What with the addition of three more members of our little family and my presence--well, I'd like to employ a few more house elves to assist you and Winky when the family is in residence." Seeing Dobby's ears droop a bit, he rushed on. "But, I would like your expert opinion on the elves to employ. You are the most familiar with the families needs and which elves would be willing to relocate here, work for pay, and readily agree to Vows of Confidentiality."

As he continued to speak, he was pleased to notice the large ears perk back up, and a glint of excitement appear in Dobby's eyes. The small chest puffed out a bit and Dobby seemed to stand even straighter.

"Dobby would be most honored to chose the perfect elves to serve the House of Evans-Snape!"

"I will leave it in your capable--hands. Now, have the Impervious and Sanitus Charms been cast on all surfaces, and floors, as Madam MacLeod has requested?" Severus turned and started walking through the rest of the kitchen spaces, Dobby right behind him, as they headed outside to check the auxiliary buildings.

The Burrow kitchen was empty, and the house was quiet, as Ron, Neville, and Draco entered. They stood and listened, looking around. Draco exchanged a look of concern with the redhead, as he shut the door behind them with a click.

Neville walked to the end of the kitchen and turned. "Has the Burrow ever been this quiet before?"

Ron shook his head. "Not that I can remember, but Mum is rarely here alone. She's probably in the lounge, knitting."

"I don't know, Ron. If she's grieving, perhaps we shouldn't intrude." Draco held back a bit. Neville looked between them, not sure.
"Nonsense. If anything this will cheer her up. Merlin knows both she and Dad need cheering up these days!"

Neville smiled and nodded. Draco sighed. "All right Weasel. She's your Mum so you should know. Let's go then."

When they entered the lounge at the front of the house, the sight they were met with wrenched their hearts with empathy. The Weasley Matriarch sat in her favorite chair, the floral of the plush chair faded from many years of wear. She'd fallen asleep, her knitting in the basket next to her feet. In her lap, lay a little pink and white baby sweater that Ron remembered vaguely seeing his sister wear when they were small. In his Mum's hands, was clasped a picture of Ginny taken before she was old enough to attend Hogwarts. Tear tracks streaked his Mum's cheeks, and Ron felt his heart clench.

He kneeled down next to her and placed his much larger hand over hers. "Mum. Mum. Wake up. It's Ron, and I've brought Dray and Nev with me to visit."

She stirred, opening her eyes, surprised to see she wasn't alone. When she tried to sit up too quickly, reaching up to wipe at her eyes, Ron stopped her.

"It's ok, Mum. We came to visit."

"Hello, Mrs. Weasley." Draco and Neville chorused, unintentionally. They flushed when she looked at them.

"Now what have I told you boys? You can call me Mum, or Molly. Mrs. Weasley was my mother-in-law." She looked back and forth between them. "You've come to visit? Then I'd best make tea."

Ron stopped her again, when she tried to stand. "Mum, relax. We did come to visit, but we also have news. Good news." He added quickly when a look of worry flashed across her face. The other two young men were smiling and nodding in agreement when she looked at them.

Now she looked curious. "What is it, Dear?"

Draco and Neville knelt on the other side of her chair and each clasped her other hand in theirs. "We
wanted to tell you before anyone else, except Moine, of course..."

"And me too, Mum."

They remained silent as she looked back and forth between the three of them. It was obvious her mind was working hard to figure it out. She finally harrumphed. "Quit teasing an old woman, you imps!"

"M-Molly," Draco began, drawing her gaze to his grey-blue gaze. "Nev--and I--well, we wanted to tell you..." He blushed as his words trailed off and he looked to Neville for help.

Neville gave his mate a one-armed hug. "What Dray is trying to say is, he, Moine, and I--are going to be parents. And we want you to be the baby's Gran too."

A light of happiness flared in Molly's eyes that hadn't been seen in the recent past. She gasped as she clapped her hands together. All three men smiled as they watched her. She studied first Neville's face then Draco's, before speaking.

"Neville--no. Draco?"

The blond blushed red and nodded as Neville beamed proudly beside him. Molly pulled him into a hug, rubbing his back and kissing his cheek. As soon as she released him, Neville was given the same treatment. Then she sat back and eyed them.

"What about Hermione? Shouldn't you have told her first?"

"Oh!" Exclaimed Neville. "She already knows, but she couldn't come with us today--something work-related that couldn't wait."

"Oh, good. I'm sure she's quite elated."

"Most definitely." Draco added with a smirk.
"Mum." Ron's voice was quiet.

"Oh my! Yes, Dear! What is--" She reached out to place the back of her hand against his forehead, then grasped his chin, turning his face from side to side. "Are you well, Dear?"

"I'm just fine Mum--as long as you think your heart can grow enough to accept two more granbabies instead of just one." He replied with a huge grin.

Her eyes widened as realization hit again, and she shrieked with joy, causing the men to flinch. Despite the assault on their hearing, they all returned huge grins. Ron was enveloped in a tight hug and his face covered in kisses before he could take another breath. He heard snorts and snickers of amusement from nearby.

Letting him go, she stood and scooted between them toward the kitchen. "Ronnikins, would you please start tea? I really must Firecall your Father immediately. Oh! More granbabies! He's going to be so happy!"

The three of them stood and exchanged amused glances as they followed her toward the kitchen. Molly grabbed powder from a dish on the mantle and dropped to her knees as she tossed it on the flames, calling out "Ministry of Magic, Arthur Weasley's office!"

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Madam Antionette Delacourette'
Administrator of Records, Donations, and Acquisitions
Clinique de Fertilité, Brest, France

Mde. Delacourette',

In regards to my donations, batch #1980-SNA999, it is my desire that they be transferred in a self-contained long-term stasis chest, to Gringott's Bank, Diagon Alley, Wizarding London, England, to be placed in the Malfoy-Lupin vault. Contact information for my account representative is listed below. Please include an invoice for the cost of the chest and shipment. An order for the placement is already at Gringott's. Please send verification when the transfer has been done. Your prompt response will be greatly appreciated. I thank you for your confidential service these past years.
Lucius stood at the balcony doors, and watched the avian disappear into the clouds. He turned and walked to the divan by the fireplace, sitting down to curl against his husband. Fingers stroked through his hair.

"Now we wait, My Love. Now we wait."

"Yes, Love. We wait."

The night was quiet, horses were settled in the barns, all the adults nestled in, relaxing, and the children had been in bed for a couple hours. Breen gasped for breath as he pulled away, breaking the passionate kiss he had been sharing with Severus. He looked up at Severus, seeing the flush in the normally fair complexion, his eyes aflame with passion as he too gasped for breath.

"S-Sev'rus..."

Severus wrapped his arms around Breen as he leaned against his chest, feeling a pair of warm lips place kisses against his throat. He groaned and laid his cheek against Breen's head, enjoying the feel of the dark wavy hair against his skin. His hand followed the curve of Breen's spine down and slid to rest on his hip, as he fought the urge to pull their bodies fully flush.

"I know, my Breen. I know." His voice was still breathy.

Green eyes looked up at him, and he heard, whispered softly--pleading. "Kiss me, Sev. Kiss me again."

Breen was swept up into Severus' arms. In a half dozen strides, they were back inside Breen's rooms.
and on the sofa by the fire. He laid back as Severus aligned their bodies, lying alongside him and began to nip and lightly kiss his lips, as he stroked a hand along Breen's body. A needy noise was the only warning Severus had before he felt fingers in the hair at his nape, pull him down into an aggressive kiss.

Kissing with a desperate need, hands slid inside Severus' shirt to touch and caress his skin, as a leg wrapped around the back of one of his. Fingernails dragged lightly down his back caused him to moan deeply. Not sure how his tunic had been removed and not quite caring, Breen arched as talented lips and fingers worshiped a path down from his neck to his abdomen. Canting his hips against Severus' chest, he was able to get friction, as Severus began to frot against his leg.

"Papa!"

It was as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown on them. Pulling apart, gasping, they both tumbled to the floor. Looking toward the door to the attached nursery, relief washed over them to see they were still alone. Severus managed to get to his feet first, pulling Breen up and pushing him to sit on the sofa.

"I'll go." He turned and walked quickly into the nursery.

Breen stood and righted his clothing, closed and tied his tunic. When he reached the door, Severus was already stepping back through. He stepped aside so Breen could look into the room and see the children were fine. Eileen smiled at him before turning on her side and dropping off to sleep. The twins were all sound asleep in their over-sized cot.

Closing the door most of the way, Severus led him back to the sofa, sat, and pulled him down into his lap.

"The purple bunnies were chasing her pony again." Severus explained, wrapping his arms around his Promised.

Breen laid his head on Severus' shoulder. "Ah. And Papa scared them away?"

"Of course. I used my most terrifying glare."

"The one you use to terrify First Years?"
"Yes. But, if they persist, I may have to employ the one I once used to terrify young heroes."

"Hmmm... do you really think that will be very effective? It wasn't that effective in the past." Breen bit his lip as he tried not to smirk.

"Really. Hmmm, perhaps a different technique would have been more effective." Leaning down, he bit down and sucked gently on 'that spot' behind Breen's ear, causing him to squeak in surprise, before moaning loudly.

Ohhh! Ahhh! S-Sev'rus! S-Stop! Please..."

Severus sat back and looked at Breen, seeing his cheeks already flushed, eyes dilated, and his breathing escalated. He summoned a glass of water and handed it to Breen, watching as he slowly emptied the glass. Setting the glass on a nearby table, Breen sighed.

"Thank you. I'm afraid if we start again, we won't be able to stop. There's only another week until Beltane..."

"No need to explain. The power and blessings of bonding on Beltane are explanation enough."

"And it being our first time together."

"Yes, there is that." Severus pulled Breen's head to lean against his shoulder again, before lacing his fingers with Breen's. "The healer has pronounced you well. What did you finally decide?"

Breen looked down at their joined hands and the matching bracelets. "There's a higher chance of complications if I keep using the temporary potions, forcing my body to go back and forth. I took the long-term potion." He looked into Severus eyes, seeking the older man's feelings about that decision.

"You have five years before you must decide if you want to reverse it. As I said before, I will support your choices." He stroked his fingers against Breen's cheek. "The thought of more children pleases me."
Breen smiled, as much from relief as from happiness. "I'm pleased you feel that way, because I don't think I'm finished wanting children."

"Then it is fortunate that our first coupling will be on Beltane, My Breen." Severus purred, causing Breen to blush.

Severus cast a spell to stoke the fire, and they sat cuddled together, content, staring silently into the flames.

Tbc...
Chapter 41

2,572 words

The sun was barely peeking over the horizon as Breen opened his eyes. The sight that met his eyes brought a smile to his face. Eileen lay curled up beside him, little Christophe between them, and Severus sat on the other side of the bed, cradling Lily and Iain in his arms. Dark eyes shone with love, as Severus smiled at him.

"Blessed Morning, My Promised." Severus spoke quietly so as not to disturb his small charges.

Breen sat up carefully, before picking up Christophe and settling him on his chest. Leaning forward, he smiled back. "Blessed Morning to you as well, My Heart."

Tipping his face up, he presented his lips for a kiss. Severus moved the few inches forward and brushed his lips against Breen's, hesitating a moment before sitting back.

"I could stay in my room no longer, as I have been awake for hours. It is almost time to feed the Trio, so I decided to change them and bring them here--saving them the stress of waking wet and crying."

"And Eileen?"

"She was already in your bed when I went to the nursery. Does she do this often?"
"It has been more frequent since... that night. Were the dogs on her bed?"

"No, the little ankle-biters were outside my door."

"Ah." Breen smirked. "That's why then. They usually sleep with her and she feels safer."

"Hmmm. Perhaps, after our bonding, there is a way to make them stay with her at night..." Dark eyes danced with heated mischief.

Breen blushed. "Severus!"

The arrival of Dobby, bearing a tray, stopped further discussion. Placing the tray on the small table, he brought the bottles of Wizard's Milk to Severus and Breen. Giving them a brief smile, he vanished. Breen noticed that there not only was a full tea on the tray, but also a plate of warm scones and fresh rolls as well, under a Warming Charm. His stomach growled loudly in reply. Severus snorted, clearly amused, until his stomach growled as well.

Seeing Lily begin to fuss, Breen carefully laid a still-asleep Christophe back down between him and Eileen. Then he reached his hands out to Severus.

"I will feed Iain, while you feed Lily. By the time they are done, Christophe will be awake and ready for his bottle."

Severus passed Iain to his Da, then summoned one of the comfortable chairs to the side of the bed. Quickly, they were situated and both babies were feeding hungrily, while their siblings continued to sleep. There was contented silence for several minutes while they watched their children drink. Breen hummed a familiar lullaby under his breath; one that Ailey had taught him.

Severus watched his daughter suck hungrily at the bottle, amazed such a tiny child could be so hungry. She always seemed to do her best at keeping up with her brothers. He rocked gently side-to-side as her eyelids began to droop and the motion of her mouth began to slow.

"Did you sleep well?" He asked in a low voice.
"Once I managed to get to sleep. I guess I was too excited--and worried--about everything today." He sent the bottle to the table and lifted Iain to his shoulder and began to pat and rub his back. "It's not just our day. It's Beltane too. There's so much to do for just one of those."

"There is no need to be concerned. Ailey has everything well in hand, as she planned to combine both rituals and celebrations. Bondings and handfastings are commonly done on Beltane. You have told me many times that Ailey is a formidable woman who completes what she sets out to do. All will be well. The Goddess will take care of us and ours, My Love."

"You're right, Severus. Sometimes I forget that things can go well--there's not catastrophe' around the corner."

"Indeed."

Iain burped loudly twice, causing his parents to laugh. After wiping his face, Breen laid Iain between his spread legs, turned on his side. The child was already sound asleep. That was Christophe's cue to begin fussing. Summoning the third bottle, Breen settled his son in his arms and began to feed him, looking over at Severus, and noticing his daughter.

"Um. Sev. You might want to burp Lily. She's definitely done." He nodded his head toward the tiny form in Severus' arms.

Looking down, Severus smiled at Lily. She had dropped off to sleep, tummy full and content, the nipple of the bottle still in her open relaxed mouth. Every so often, her lips would move slightly as if she were still feeding. Sending the empty bottle to the table, he moved her carefully and burped her before cradling her against his chest as he leaned back in the chair.

"You love watching her sleep, don't you?"

Severus looked up, surprised, and not quite sure how to answer the question. When he took too long to answer, coupled with his expression, Breen continued.

"Severus, do not worry. I know that you love them all, and love them equally. But I've noticed you seem to have a--connection--with Lily. It's because of my Mum isn't it? She reminds you of her."
He rubbed a hand up and down the tiny back, and kissed the head of tiny red curls. "Yes. And no... Yes, she reminds me of your Mother, but, that isn't all of it." He hesitated as he gathered his thoughts. "When I saw her for the first time, then held her while you slept that morning, after having them... I had time to turn it all over in my mind. She remained hidden throughout the entire pregnancy, making her presence known, only at the last minute, when she was ready to meet the world... and us. She is so much smaller than her brothers, but still quite healthy... And, when I looked into her face for the first time, I felt--sensed--something. It was familiar--very familiar." Severus looked up and met Breen's eyes. "It is my belief, that your Mother somehow gave her namesake to us, as a gift. I can feel a bit of her spirit and magic in our Lily."

Breen's eyes welled with tears as he held Severus' gaze. "I believe you, Severus. If that is the case, then we are very blessed indeed. Knowing Mum was near while I carried and had our children, warms my heart. And I believe she meant it as much as a show of her love for you, as a gift for our family."

Severus nodded, eyes bright and lips pressed together, as he held his daughter close, and watched his soon-to-be Bondmate feed their son. Tea and hunger were momentarily forgotten.

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Later, after Eileen had awakened and been fed, she and the babies were taken to the nursery to nap, before they were bathed and dressed for their parent's bonding ceremony that afternoon. It would be a very busy day and night. Dobby and two elves loyal to the Snape family, were in charge of them, as well as the other young guests present for the festivities. House elf magick was a wonderful thing. The nursery was now more than roomy enough and sufficiently well-furnished to meet the needs of so many children.

The clearing in the nearby stand of ancient oaks had already been prepared for that night's Beltane celebration. Ailey and Molly hurried into the kitchen, sending their outer robes to the hooks in the entry and leaving their shoes by the door. Ailey motioned Molly to sit, while she prepared two large cups of tea from the pot on the only empty spot on the counter, under a Warming Charm. The counters and the majority of the large table were covered with everything that had been prepared for both celebrations, all under the appropriate Warming or Cooling Charms.

Taking a seat across from Molly, at the only clear spot at the end of the table, she pushed one of the steaming mugs across the table. "Och! 'Tis done! Ah than' ye fer yer help, Mallaidh."

"No, I thank you, Ailey, for allowing me to help with everything. It means so much to me to do this for Har--Breen... and Severus."
"Nay, 'twas yer right, Mallaidh, ye bein' Breen's fierst Máthair."

Molly's face fell, a look of sadness filling her eyes. "Lily would have loved all of this..."

Reaching across the table, Ailey laid a comforting hand over hers, gazing at her with eyes full of empathy. "None o' tha', now! Et willnae help an'thin'. We cannae change tha past. Only due aer bes' ta rememb'r tha lov'd ones an' keep thar mem'ries alive."

Molly smiled weakly, as she brushed away a tear. "I know. You are right. It's just that... so many... have been lost... those that should be here to witness Breen and Severus... Eileen and the babies..."

"Ah ken yer feelin's, Mallaidh. But, thes day es fer joy, an' we must enshare tha' 'tis eh joyous mem'ry fer aer lads."

"True." She drained her cup and sent it, along with Ailey's empty one, to the sink with a spell to wash them. "It's time we joined the others in getting ready, since all is prepared and ready, now."

They rose, walked into the hall and ascended the stairs. Ailey gave Molly a quick hug before they parted at the second floor landing. "T'will be time soon ta welcom' tha guests properly."

The third floor of the manor had been opened and readied to accommodate the guests not staying in Toulbroch. All immediate family members of the couple had agreed to stay at the MacLeod's, with extra space available at Evan's Manor.

Severus paced his room, ready except for donning his robes for the ceremony. He pushed his hands deeper into the pockets of the luxurious house robe Breen had gifted him with after they'd agreed to bond. It had been totally unexpected, but greatly appreciated. He'd never had a robe quite so nice.

He was nervous, very nervous, and that irritated him. He'd dealt with recalcitrant and obnoxious adolescents, snobbish and demanding parents, inept and annoying colleagues, ruthless Death Eaters, and a maniacally insane Dark Lord; not to mention, a sneaky manipulative Headmaster!
He harrumphed in frustration. Why should he be nervous? He was only getting bonded! Bonded. Something he never thought would become a part of his life. Just as he never thought he would have children; but he did. Four children! And the prospect of more in the future. It boggled his mind how much his life had changed in the last few months. He'd met his heir, watched his youngest three born, found his soulmate, and fallen in love. All of a sudden the peace of a Dark Lord-free world had taken on a whole new perspective; one that suddenly felt full of unlimited possibilities. He would be a husband, and a father; spending the rest of his life, upwards of the next eighty to one hundred years, permanently Soul Bonded, with a young man he had so misunderstood for years, but had been given a second chance to know. And that young man, with a huge heart full of an unending bounty of love, had given him love; given him children--a family--an heir. Both their families would continue, after all.

All right, so he did have a reason to be so nervous. This was a momentous step to a new beginning in his life. Sitting in a chair by the window, he stared at the white, hand-embroidered robes hanging on the wardrobe door, as he rubbed his damp palms together. Merlin! He could use a drink right now!

He looked up, when he heard a knock at the door. The door opened and Remus' head appeared.

"You should be needing a drink right about now, yeah?" He said with a grin, as he walked in, followed by Lucius.

Severus sighed in relief. "You have no idea."

Breen squirmed again, unable to sit still. He'd worried his lower lip between his teeth until it was red and puffy. Ron sat on the edge of the bed, watching, amused. He could only guess what Severus would think of the kiss-bruised appearance of Breen's mouth. Hermione let go of an exasperated sigh, as she gave Breen's hair a gentle tug.

"Sit still, Breen! If I don't get this done soon, you'll be late for your own bonding! You still have to put on your robes."

Breen stopped moving, looking at Hermione's reflection in the mirror. "Sorry, Moine."

She continued braiding his hair, working the ivy and tiny sprays of white heather into the tails of it as
she went. Just as she finally got to the end of the tiny braids, holding the rest of Breen's hair away from his face and was securing the end, he began to squirm again. She moved to face him and knelt down, taking his hands in hers. Ron stood and came to stand behind her.

"Stop! What's wrong Breen?" She asked. "Talk to us, please."

"Yeah, Mate. Tell us what's got you jumpier than a chocolate frog."

Breen bit his lip again as he looked at his closest friends since he'd started at Hogwarts. His voice was quiet, unsure, as he spoke.

"What--What if--Severus changes his mind? What if he decides he doesn't want me--us?"

Ron squatted down, resting a hand on Breen's robed knee. "Mate, have you ever known Severus, professor or no, to not know what he wants? Or, to suddenly change his mind once he's made a decision?"

Hermione squeezed his hands in a reassuring way. "And, I've never seen this side of Severus--not with anyone, until you and Eileen came into his life, then the babies. He loves you--and the children--with his entire being, Breen. There is no way he would ever decide not to Soul Bond with you."

Ron took a deep breath, "Mate, up until we found you again, it was like he was waiting to exhale. Waiting for the next step in his life to happen. Waiting for you to happen. The children were an added blessing."

"He just didn't know what he was waiting for," Hermione smiled.

Ron laid his hand on Hermione's arm. "Moine." She looked up at him. "He really needs a distraction, so we can get him ready."

She grinned and her eyes brightened. "Breen?"
"Hmmm," Breen answered, lost in thought.

"Draco is pregnant."

"Hmm... Wha--?!
 Breen's gaze snapped to her's, his eyes wide with shock and his mouth a large 'O' of surprise.

"Oh, and...Ron is as well." Hermione couldn't stop the smirk on her face, like it was her doing.

"Wait! What?!" Breen's head swiveled back and forth quickly, between the faces of his friends.

Ron helped Breen to his feet, Hermione helping from the other side. Ron waved Hermione toward the door, as he steered Breen toward the wardrobe. Breen was mumbling to himself about babies and surprises, his worries forgotten.

"Hurry. Let them know we will be down soon. I'm going to get him dressed while he's still distracted."

Hermione nodded and the door clicked closed behind her as Ron helped Breen out of his house robe.

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Chapter 42

2,998 words

Everyone was gathered in the clearing, in a circle around the weathered altar in the center. They were all barefoot, dressed in simple elegant robes the colors of nature, the only adornments were sprays or woven belts of ivy and flowers. A Warming Charm had been cast for everyone's comfort. The Priestess and Priest had arrived and were waiting quietly, side-by-side, behind the altar, resplendent in their robes of deepest wine red, their silver amulets, symbols of their station, catching the afternoon rays of the spring sun.
The lower branches of the trees had been draped with ivy and garlands of flowers; fairy lights flitted from branch to branch. Carefully cast *Herbological Spells* had created beds of blooming flowers between the trees, scenting the air beautifully as they created a bounty of color around the newly budding trees.

All heads were turned toward the entrance between the trees, awaiting the arrival of the Promised Couple. Excited murmuring traveled through the waiting group, as the small procession could be seen approaching. Soon they passed into the circle.

First came two young priests, dressed in robes of stone grey. they were followed by Lucius and Remus Malfoy-Lupin, as representatives of Severus' family, then Molly and Arthur Weasley, as parents-in-absentia for Breen. Hermione, Ron, and Draco, were next, each carrying one of the triplets, with Neville behind them, holding Eileen's hand. The adults were dressed as the rest of the guests, but the children were robed in white, like their parents. They all took their places to either side of the altar, the young priests to either side of the Priest and Priestess.

Everyone seemed to hold their breath, as the two final figures entered the circle, their hands folded at their waists, concealed by their white robes embroidered in fine gold and silver thread. The pattern of ivy vines just visible as the light caught the folds of the flowing fabric. With their hoods up, their faces were concealed. Only their feet could be seen as they walked through the new grass to stand together in front of the altar, their heads bowed.

The Elder Priest's voice resounded loudly, it's timbre strong and commanding, as he spoke. "I ask you now, do you, Severus Tobias Snape, come freely and willingly this day, to bond with Breen Jamison Evans?"

Severus raised his head and pulled back his hood, letting it fall as he met the Priest's gaze. "I do so come freely and willingly this day to bond with him."

Again, the Priest asked the question, directing it to Breen. "I ask you now, do you, Breen Jamison Evans, come freely and willingly this day, to bond with Severus Tobias Snape?"

Breen lowered his hood, his gaze meeting the Priest's. "I do so come freely and willingly this day to bond with him."

The Elder Priest steps forward, his eyes scanning those present to witness this sacred ceremony.
"On behalf of the Promised Couple, I would like to extend gratitude to all of you, for your presence here to help honor and celebrate this momentous day, and for those who assisted in all the preparations, helping make this a very special and memorable day. Severus and Breen have decided to forego the ancient tradition of a *Handfasting*, instead to commit to each other in a full *Soul Bonding*. The traditions of *Handfasting* and *Bonding* are as old as the written language and have been practiced by man for aeons, though *Soul and Magick Bondings* are particular only to our World."

"Thus, we have come together this day in celebration of the spiritual, magickal, and soul binding of these two men. The law of life is: Love unto all beings. Without love, life is nothing, without love, death and rebirth have no meaning. Love is anterior to life, posterior to death, the initial creation and the exponent of the earth. If we learn no more in life, let it be this."

"Bonding is a commitment to be entered into only after considerable contemplation and reflection. As with any aspect of life, it has its cycles, its ups and downs, its trials and triumphs, happiness and sadness. There cannot be one without the other to balance it—in the *Soul Bond*, it is more so, as this ancient and most sacred of Bondings, cannot be undone. It is with full understanding of this, Severus and Breen have willingly come here today, to be joined as one, from this day forward, and always."

He steps back as the Priestess takes his place. The young priests move to light the candles to either side of the altar, as she speaks, her voice rich and melodious.

"As the candles are lit, let us contemplate the symbolism, and their meanings in our lives, and in the lives joining here today."

"The Green candle represents the element of Earth and the North, symbolizing solidarity, prosperity, and new beginnings."

"The White candle, represents the element of Air and the East, symbolizing the power and clarity of thought, wisdom, communication, knowledge, and enlightenment."

"The Red candle represents the elements of Fire and the South, symbolizing security, passion, energy, vitality, and renewal of life."
"The Blue candle represents the element of Water and the West, symbolizing peace, understanding, truth, fidelity, and patience."

The priests return to their places as the Priestess places her right hand over the bowl of water on the altar. "Blessings be upon this water."

She then scoops salt from an adjoining bowl on the altar, adding it to the water. Placing her right hand over the bowl of water and salt, she speaks. "Blessings be upon this salt from the sea."

Raising her hands, palms upward, she looks skyward. "I summon the Circle, the Circle I summon, and bind to the womb, our spiritual birth through Air, Fire, Water and Earth."

Turning first to face North, she begins to call the Quarters.

"Spirits of the North whose element is Earth, give your blessings to Severus and Breen who are about to be bonded in soul and magick. Grant to their union your gifts of stability, strength, and abundance."

She turns to the East.

"Spirits of the East whose element is Air, give your blessings to Severus and Breen who are about to be bonded in soul and magick. Grant to their union your gifts of communication, wisdom, and understanding."

She turns next to the South.

"Spirits of the South whose element is Fire, give your blessings to Severus and Breen who are about to be bonded in soul and magick. Grant to their union your gifts of vitality, passion, and creativity."

She, lastly, turns to the West.

"Spirits of the West whose element is Water, give your blessings to Severus and Breen who are about to be bonded in soul and magick. Grant to their union your gifts of love, intuitiveness, and friendship."
Moving back to the Center, behind the altar, she again faces the Promised Couple.

"Now we stand in the Center of the Circle, where all things meet their opposites; goodness and evil, darkness and light, spirit and matter, that which makes each whole and complete, just as Severus and Breen are about to join as one. For the time that we gather here, let this place be free of all outside influence, of all resentment, and of all negativity. Each of us has gone through their own dark and long nights; may this couple no longer face that darkness, or any other, alone, but rather find in each other the strength and light we seek when we turn toward the sun after our own dark times."

The Elder Priests steps forward again to the Priestess' side, and addresses the couple.

"Severus and Breen, is it your intent to be Bonded, both by your souls and your magick, now and forever, in this life and in those that follow?"

*In Unison, they reply, "It Is our Intent, doing so willingly."*

The Elder Priest replies, echoed by the Priestess, "So Be It; So Mote It Be.

The Elder Priest continues. " Will you share life’s burdens between you, so that neither is overcome?"

*In Unison, they reply, "Yes, we will share them equally."*

"Will you care for, love, guide, protect, and teach, both those children you already share and those that you will in the future?"

*In Unison, they reply, "We will do so, joyfully."*

"Will you share each other’s dreams, and by dreaming together, explore what you might yet accomplish together in the years to come?"
In Unison, they reply, "Yes, we will.

"No couple travels through life without expressing anger on occasion. Will you make your anger a forge to temper and strengthen your bond, or allow it to become a furnace to burn and melt it away?"

In Unison, they reply, "We will make it a Forge to temper and strengthen us and our bond."

"Will you seek never to betray the trust you have in each other, lest you plant the seeds of doubt, which may grow and rend apart the love that you share?"

In Unison, they reply, "Yes, We vow to never betray that trust."

The Priestess picks up the plate of small honey cakes, holding it toward the couple on the palms of her hands. "I do offer these cakes which represent the Mother Goddess."

Breen accepts the plate of cakes and feeds one to Severus, who then feeds one to him. The Priestess accepts the plate back and places it back on the altar.

The Elder Priest picks up the goblet of wine, cupping it in his hands, holding it toward the couple. "I do offer this honey wine that represents the Father God."

Severus accepts the cup, and offers it to Breen who takes a sip, then offers it back to Severus who sips from it before passing it back to the Elder Priest, who then returns the goblet to it's place on the altar.

"From this day and through this union, Severus and Breen will come to know, through each other, more intimately and spiritually, the God and Goddess."

Picking up the white, gold, and silver cords from the altar, the Priestess passes them to the priests. "Now we will pass the cords around the Circle, so that each of you may bless them with your good wishes for Severus and Breen. Let no one wish them ill or it will return three-fold."

The young men silently walked from the altar around the Circle, each hold out, across open palms,
one white cord and one of either the gold or silver cords, stopping briefly in front of each person, allowing them to place their palm upon the cords and speak their blessings. Once they have returned again to the altar, the cords were passed to the Elder Priest who passed two of the cords to the Priestess. Stepping forward in unison, they motioned Severus and Breen to face each other.

Turning, Severus and Breen grasped each other's wrists, arms crossed, and stood waiting, their gazes locked on each other. The Elder Priest wrapped first a white cord, then the gold cord around their wrists and hands as he spoke.

"Before me, and the Father God, Severus and Breen will swear vows to each other. With these cords I bind them forever to the vows that they each are about to make."

Then the Priestess wrapped the other white cord, then the silver cord around their wrists and hands as she spoke.

"Before me, and the Mother Goddess, Severus and Breen will swear vows to each other. With these cords I bind them forever to the vows that they each are about to make."

When she was finished, the Priestess took her place again, beside the Elder Priest, and nodded toward the couple. Breen smiled nervously and took a breath, before he began to speak, his voice filled with emotion.

"This day, My Beloved Severus, I pledge my love to you forever. Body to body, heart to heart, soul to soul, life to life, I give to you everything that I am and ever will be. I promise to be ever faithful and to do my best to always meet your needs. I swear my abiding support for you, through whatever comes our way. I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night, and the eyes into which I smile in the morning. I shall be a shield for your back and you for mine. I shall not slander you, nor you me. I shall honor you above all others. I vow to love and care for our children, and those we may still have, as I love and care for you. I love you with all my heart, soul and everything that I am; for always, forever, from this life to the next and all that may come after."

As he finished speaking he gave Severus' hands a squeeze, biting his lip, as he tried to keep control of his emotions. Severus' eyes were bright as he stared into love-filled eyes and began his vows.

"This day, Breen, My Heart, I pledge my love to you forever. Body to body, heart to heart, soul to soul, life to life, I give to you everything that I am and ever will be. I promise to be ever faithful and to do my best to always meet your needs. I swear my abiding support for you, through whatever comes our way. I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night, and the eyes into which I smile in the morning. I shall be a shield for your back and you for mine. I shall not
slander you, nor you me. I shall honor you above all others. I vow to love and care for our children, and those we may still have, as I love and care for you. I love you with all my heart, soul and everything that I am; for always, forever, from this life to the next and all that may come after."

He gave Breen's hands and answering squeeze as he finished speaking. He stared into Breen's eyes trying to convey all the love and adoration he had for the younger man. The deep voice of the Elder Priest again filled the air. Severus and Breen turned their attention to the Elder Priest and Priestess again.

"Your bond is blessed, but even so, still incomplete. You cannot be, at all times, together physically. How then, will you be bound, when this is the case?"

They answered in unison. "We will wear the bands of bonding."

"Because a circle is endless, a bonding band or bracelet is the symbol of undying love. These bands you wear will from this day forward become a solid unbroken circle, as a sign of your undying love of each other, and as an outward sign to all of the sacred commitments and vows you make this day, before the God and Goddess, and all here present. So Be It. So Mote It Be."

The Priestess echoes the blessing. "So Be It. So Mote It Be."

As she finished speaking, a glow of bright magick surrounds their wrists, and the binding cords disappear into the bonding bracelets, making them each a solid unbroken circle, as additional rune appear on the surface. The couple turn to again face the altar, as the Priestess steps forward, raising her arms skyward again.

"We thank you, guardians of the North, of the South, of the East, and of the West, for your blessings and your attendance. We bid all hail and farewell. This Circle is now closed and go in peace! Blessed be!"

The Priests and all the guests and witnesses present echo the blessing. "Blessed be!"

The Priestess lowers her arms, as the Elder Priests steps to her side, addressing the group.

"Now that Severus and Breen have consented together to abide in peace and love, having given
themselves, both in soul and in magick, to each other, by their solemn pledges and declared such before these witnesses, I now declare, by the power of the Mother Goddess and Father God, that they are Soul Bonded and their spirits shall be together forever more."

"May you be blessed, every step of your path together. May the sun shine upon you; may the moon move the tides of your emotions with grace and magic; may your hearts sing; may your hearth be warm; and may all your days be blessed and filled with joy."

"And finally, may you always have true happiness and bliss, as you seal your Bonding vows with a kiss!"

Severus drew Breen into his arms, leaned down and covered that sweet mouth with his own, filling the kiss with as much love and promise as he could. Feeling fingers in his hair, his Bonded answered the kiss with promises of his own. The sounds of enthusiastic clapping, shouts, and whistles filtering into their hearing, kept them from letting the kiss become too passionate, and they broke apart. Wide smiles on their faces, and cheeks wet with tears of joy, they turned to face the circle of people around them. Cainnech stepped into the circle, a large broom in his hand and a joyous grin on his face. Turning to the East, he placed the broom on the ground and stepped back. He looked to Severus and Breen, expectantly.

"Well, go an now. Ye cannae start eh new life taygeth'ri wi' out jumpin' tha broom!"

They looked at each other and shrugged. To further whoops and hollers of encouragement, they walked to the Eastern quarter, with their arms around each other's waists, jumped the broom starting their new life together.

Everyone moved to surround them, hands patting them and shaking hands, as they gathered their children to them, smiling and accepting the well-wishes of family and friends.

@@@@@@@@
Though both men had participated in many Beltane celebrations in the past, this year's had been a bit hazy. After moving to the area set up for refreshment, the well-wishing and congratulations had continued. Dobby had taken the children back to the nursery when it appeared dusk would be coming soon. After changing into robes of palest sage, they stood with the other's in the Circle and participated in the ritual. Adrenaline began to flow as the evening commenced, and the flames of the Bel-fire burned high. Singing and dancing to the drums and the pipes, good food and much honey wine; the magick of the Queen Goddess and Greenwood God, and the thinning of the veil between the worlds.

The magick danced along their skin, as they ran into the wood, the sounds of the celebrants, and the music, and the roar of the Bel-fire faded a bit as they moved. The air cooled, then Breen was on his back in the cool grass, Severus lay over him, his body radiating heat, as they kissed deeply.

He could feel Severus' body against his own, their erections cradled together between their bodies. Where had their robes gone? It didn't seem important as long fingers buried themselves in his hair, and kisses were placed all over his face, and down his throat, as Severus began to worship his body.

Their bodies undulated against each other, limbs moving and tangling, as they touched and kissed, tasted and nipped each other; discovering every inch of the other's body. Gasping for breath between kisses, arousal had built to such a fevered pitch, that their bodies felt strung as tightly as a huntsman's favorite bow.

Breen wrapped his legs around Severus, thrusting his hips upward, cock rubbing against that hard body. His eyes were the deepest green in the moonlight, glazed with lust; his hair spread out around his body. Severus looked down at him, drinking in how beautiful and handsome his husband looked; his hair in raven waves around him, skin golden in the moonlight and his eyes--his eyes shone with love and a yearning Severus could not mistake.

"Love you, Sev--so much!" Breen whispered. "Make us one."

"And I you, My Breen."

Reaching down, Severus hitched Breen's legs higher, to wrap around his waist. Centering himself, he leaned down to kiss Breen deeply, as he thrust into the moist, tight heat of his husband's body. Breen's body arched, and he moaned into the kiss, as their bodies quickly fell into the ancient rhythm.

Later, when they lay entwined, Breen noticed, and brought his husband's attention to, a bottle of honey wine and a basket of oatcakes that sat nearby. Next to them lay their robes, neatly folded.
Severus reached over and pulled the cork from the squat bottle and took a deep drink, smiling when he tasted the herbs he knew Ailey had added to the wine. Offering Breen some, he also shared some of the oatcakes, before he fell upon his husband again. The rest of the ritual night passed thusly, with only the creatures of the forest, and the fairies to hear their passionate cries.

When they exited the wood, into the clearing, there were already preparations being made for the May Day Celebration. Several people turned, smiling and waving when they saw the couple. Dressed again, they walked hand-in-hand, Severus carrying the now-empty bottle and basket, and Breen, an armful of flowers they had gathered in the wood, on the way back.

Crossing the meadow and the gardens, they approached the manor, not noticing the faces at the kitchen windows.

"Mallaidh! Com'!"

Ailey motioned Molly to join her at the windows near the sinks. Hermione and Maire were right behind her. The four women leaned together to look outside, spotting the barefoot and robed couple as they neared the manor. Rosy cheeks, and bright eyes; mussed hair teased by the breeze as they talked quietly, their arms around each other's waists. Ailey nudged Molly and pointed toward the empty bottle and basket Severus carried.

"Nay eh drop nor eh nibble ta be see'n!"

The woman scurried back to their previous task, attempting to look innocent of mischief when Severus and Breen entered the kitchen. There were hugs all around, and as Breen headed upstairs, Severus approached Ailey, handed her the bottle and the basket, gave her a knowing look, and leaned down to kiss her cheek.

"Tapadh leat, Màthair. " He whispered before stepping back.

Severus crossed the kitchen, toward the hall, only stopping to place a kiss on the cheek of a very surprised Molly. All four women watched him exit the kitchen before three pairs of eyes fixed on a very satisfied-looking Ailey. A red eyebrow cocked up above an inquiring smirk.
"I'll be eh **bairn** fer **Imbolc**!"  Ailey announced with a straight face, before turning back to the food she was putting out for the meal. *Maire* began to giggle and just shook her head.

"Bloody Hell!  She would have made a good Slytherin!" Molly whispered in surprise, suddenly sounding quite like her Ronnie.

"Molly!"  Hermione squeaked, never before hearing the woman speak such language.

Molly turned to the younger woman. "Tsk, Hermione dear! It's the truth!"

Ailey smiled to herself and began to hum, as she pulled several more bowls and plates of food toward her.

Albus and Iain sat together on a bench under one of the Oaks and watched the dancers around the Maypole, gaily-colored ribbons moving in the breeze. Albus nudged the Scotsman with the mug of mead he was holding and nodded to their left, his blue eyes twinkling madly.

They could see Lucius and Remus dancing together, and not far away were Molly and Arthur. Next to them were Hermione, Draco, and Neville. But what had caught their eyes was the couple under one of the oldest Oaks in the grove. Severus and Breen, wrapped in each other's arm, lost in another kiss and totally oblivious to everything and everyone around them. A few moments later, they watched as the couple disappeared again, into the woods.

Iain laughed. "Och! Pay up, Albus!"

The Headmaster dug in his pocket and flipped Iain a Galleon. "Care for another wager, then?"

"An' tha' wou'd be?"

"Two Galleons.  A baby born on **Ostara**."
"Nay-- Imbolc. Two Gall'ons 'tis."

Albus held out his hand, and as Iain’s hand closed over his, he looked up to see Cainnech Duchovny grinning down at the older men.

“Nay—‘twill be Imbolc.”

~fin~

(maybe)

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Tapadh leat, Màthair -- Scottish Gaelic for 'Thank you, Mother.'

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