"The Serpent Shall Roar As The Pride Shall Fall" starts a new prophecy. One that involves Hermione's true origins. One that could alter the course of the whole war!

What happens when a violent attack on Hermione usurps her secret, a secret so well-hidden no one in the world knew a thing about it - not even her real or muggle parents?

Just what is the reason behind the fact that the Golden Gryffindor is Hermione Jean Granger one day but Rigella Adhara Lestrange the next?

Cover designed by Freya Ishtar.
Chapter 1

THE SERPENT ROARS

AN: I just play in JKR’s sandbox, the playground is hers entirely. I make not a penny on this work.

A Little Summary: This is my take on the Hermione!Pureblood theme. I will delve into Bellatrix’s state of mind. Canon diverges from before Christmas starts in her sixth year. A new prophecy. New friendships. New enmities. Romances not foreseen. The memory charm in this story is one I will make up entirely to fit the circumstances of the plot/theme. Please do not inform me that I am diverging from canon – this story is AU. I cannot believe there is only one spell to wipe memories – or only one way to retrieve them. So, I am making one up – going along with magical maturation and a coming into their own, sort of charm that still needs tragedy to befall the person(s) concerned, also I will be utilising a cloaking memory charm that will break upon the house concerned that slowly disintegrates. Along with prophecy too. As they say there is more than one way to skin the proverbial...

Theo Nott, Antonin Dolohov, Thorfinn Rowle, Severus Snape, Voldemort in disguise as his younger human self, and Blaise Zabini will all make a play for Hermione.

Antonin Dolohov: Colin Farrell

Rabastan Lestrange: Tom Hiddleston

Rodolphus Lestrange: Rufus Sewell

Riddlemort: Aiden Turner

Everyone else will be as portrayed in the movies.

Other pairings will be: Daphne Greengrass/Charlie Weasley. Ron Weasley/Pansy Parkinson. My OTP Harry/Ginny. Narcissa/Voldemort. Crookshanks/Mrs Norris (because I am a potential candidate for a mad cat loving old lady!) Lavender Brown/Justin Finch-Fletchley. Xenophilius Lovegood/Sybil Trelawney – others are as they are in the books, or thought up as I go along.


This story will earn it's M Rating but I always strive for a HEA – There will always be a light at the end of the tunnel but it takes a while to see it... The only characters I will happily and merrily bash are Cornelius Fudge, Dolores Umbridge, and Cormac McClaggen.

Sorry for the overlong Authors Note – but there were a few things I wished to make clear from the outset. So I hope you have read it, instead of skipping to the actual story otherwise you may lose understanding of the finer points of the plot.
Sipping a seemingly never ending supply of sherry in the Hogs Head was a batty looking woman with big glasses that magnified her eyes to the size of golf balls. All manner of bangles wound up her forearms to her elbow. Her head was wrapped in layered silk scarves of deep plum purples, and bright scarlet red. She was wearing a floor length tie dyed skirt and hand knitted colourful two piece. Gold disc earrings with a turquoise bead in the centre dangled down to her shoulders the size of galleons.

Tutting at the oddity of the wonder of Professor Trelawney, Aberforth Dumbledore sighed as he nonchalantly wiped some beer glasses with a scruffy rag not that it mattered in this grime of an establishment.

Noisily, a group of men swaggered in. Snarling at the sight of Death Eaters in his pub. Impotent in rage at the thought that he was unable to do a bloody thing about it because big brother wanted him as a spy. If there was someone who sympathised and empathised with Snape it was Aberforth Dumbledore. He knew what it was like to be a continuing pawn in his brother's chess game. Godric knows he'd been one all his life!

One of the men turned. Long thick black hair tied up in a scruffy ponytail was almost a giveaway. A pair of thick black eyebrows topped equally dark, glittering eyes definitely was. A long blackish blue beard held plaits throughout with some wooden beads attached to the straggly ends completed the picture. The braids could only be assumed as ceremonial wear. The man looked to be in his early fifties by Wizard standards. Aberforth knew who this man was. He had come in every weekend in case it was a Hogsmeade visit, and he knew whom this man was after. Aberforth pitied the poor Muggleborn girl. What had she done to deserve the hulking bear of a Wizard sniffing after her skirt?

"Four beers," he said in an almost perfect British accent. His obsidian gaze landed on the dribbling woman who was rocking back and forth in her seat. "Seems like the little lady over there has had too much, Landlord, why don't you send her home?"

"The Professor deserves her drink as much as you do, gentlemen," Aberforth replied coldly.
"Just so long as she stays away from us. I don't want her to hear something she shouldn't."

An equally hulking blond to this man's dark, leaned over and whispered something in the dark man's ear which split his face in a wide smirk: "Oh, go on, madam, Prophecy!" he sneered.

"What, are you talking to me?" the woman seemed startled that someone wished to converse with her.

"I said," the dark beard plaited fellow got up and swaggered menacingly to the scared fidgety oddball. "Prophecy something!"

"Divination does not work like that," Aberforth said trying to protect the frail woman. She had almost committed suicide last year due to Umbitch – Aberforth was quite protective over her. "It cannot be commanded upon at will – if she has a prophecy it is likely to happen when you least expect it!"

The blond clean shaven man joined his raven bearded comrade: "Just sit down, Dolohov," he said. "Let's just have a quiet drink tonight. It's almost Christmas, come on."

"You're going soft, Thorfinn."

Well, that bought Aberforth's eyebrow's up – Dolohov, Rowle, he turned to look at the other two with them. One was fairly young. Ah, he recognised him now. Marcus Flint, Aberforth swore he had a hint of Troll about him. The fourth though, the fourth remained mysteriously hooded. Cloaked and quiet. Just as Dolohov was about to reseat himself at the table with his friends, he felt something clutch onto his robes as the woman held him with a strength she did not seem capable of. Her chair clattered behind her as her eyes rolled in the back of her head.

Gazing glassily at Dolohov she intoned in a dark, hoarse timbre: "The Serpent Shall Roar As The Pride Shall Fall – The Lion's Mane Shall Scales Be – Before The Start Of Yule – A Boa In The Lions Den There Is – Great Harm Shall Be Upon That One – Before True Destiny Is Done – In Agony Beauty Be Found – A Family Reunited Occurs – Dark and Light Blurs – On The Morrow Gray Shall Descend – Take Heed Of What This Portends – Beware For All Our Fates Will Unite – In The Blurring of Dark And Light!"

Everyone blinked and quiet settled uncomfortably on all those in the dire pub. Suddenly the woman blinked several times and saw her hand on Dolohov's robes and flinched as if they burned her palm: "I'm sorry," she said lightly, "did someone say something?"

All four men ran out of the pub and Disapparated to tell their Lord of this Prophecy.

Aberforth kindly escorted the woman back to the castle where his annoyingly omniscient brother was already waiting in the freezing wind wearing inappropriately orange robes that billowed in the biting December chill.

"I think someone upset four gentlemen, I never saw four big men run so fast!" she greeted Dumbledore with. How she wished he'd listen to her about Snape. She just knew the dark wizard was going to kill her friend, and she was not happy about it. "I hope I did not upset that dark bearded wizard."

"Never mind about that," Albus patted his employee on the forearm. Periwinkle blues twinkled in the argent light of the moon. "Why do you not go back to bed, Sybil, hmm?"

"I am rather tired, this lovely man made sure I got here safe. You should tip him, Albus. It is only right."
"As ever, Madam, you are kind as you are just," Albus tipped his hat to Trelawney. Once she left the twinkle disappeared as Albus turned to his brother. "It happened again, hasn't it?"

"Long'un this time, Al," Aberforth sighed. "Something about Serpents, Lions, Blurring, and whatsit scales." Narrowing his eyes, Aberforth sighed, "Dolohov seems to be lurking around a lot lately, we all know who he is sniffing after – Meddling Morgana, Al, she's a child!"

"I know, Aberforth," Dumbledore sighed. "But she is well protected, we all know that Potter is going to rain seven fires of hell if she so much has a hair plucked off her head by that brute!"

"Be that as it may," Aberforth sighed. "The boy on his own in no match for four fully grown men... despite that he is the so-called Chosen One!" the sneer was unintentional but Aberforth was almost close to murdering his brother for the way he manipulated people into doing what they did not wish to. "According to Snape he is competent at best, hotheaded at worst! Certainly has no finesse..."

Nodding as he stroked his beard the Headmaster decided to allay his brother's fears: "She is well guarded by others," Albus looked at his brother sternly. "All of the faculty has her surrounded by work – her studious nature lends her incapable to leave the library – even on Hogsmeade trips." With a shake of his ancient head Albus conjured a glass vial wishing to get back to the meat of the matter: "May I?"

"Like I could actually refuse you," muttered Aberforth sourly not at all comforted by his brother's stone cold assurances. Sometimes he hated his brother. Scratch that, he loathed his brother, but was on his side due to some odd sense of familial duty. "Here," he withdrew the memory for the Headmaster to view. "Third one she did, isn't it?"

"Yes it is," Albus smiled wanly, the twinkle ever present: "I really should give that woman a raise!"

As Sybil was settling into her perfumed bed with a fragrant cup of lavender earl gray tea. Trying to dispel the foreboding in her heart deeper than the one she felt over Severus Snape. All her senses were on the alert. For she knew more that the Headmaster allowed her to reveal. Oh the poor dear, she sighed. I know you are a skeptic but you are not a despicable hearted child.

If she had known what was going on several floors below Sybil would have most certainly shown exactly what she was made of, and it would not be pretty. Especially as she knew who and what was involved and at stake. Again, Severus would be central to this one too. Sybil shuddered at the thought of Severus Snape at the heart of every true prophecy she spoke. Her senses were on full alert whenever he was concerned. Also, she wished she could have some way to help the girl but she was more attracted to fact than the obscure. Faith in fact can get you only so far, child, she mused. Oh well, at least it was in Albus hands, with that knowledge she smiled as she slipped into a troubled sleep.

Elsewhere: In The Department of Mysteries a little round globe plopped on the shelf with a name that made a red haired Ministry worker's eyes raise.

He had no time to gather his thoughts on this recent revelation as he felt a large hand clamp around his mouth...
By The Lions Mane

Chapter Summary

The prophecy starts coming true in minor ways.
The sweeter side of Slytherin shows itself to Harry.
Blaise and Daphne come to the rescue of an injured soul in their quarter of the school. When they take her in the Common Room.

Chapter Notes

AN: I own not a penny from the writing of this work, it is a labour of love, this story is going to be fairly dark in places. But who is to say hat even amongst Death Eaters there is not a bit of fluff, some of them must know true love after all. Slight Ron bashing occurs in this story. Definite Percy W. shaming. All the other Weasley's are always saved from my vitriol.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Fancast:

Georgie Henley: Daphne Greengrass
Colin Farrell: Antonin Dolohov

By The Lions Mane

14th December 1996:

12AM – The Dungeons: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
Soft whimpering moans emanated from the shadows of the dungeon floors. Blood smeared along the walls and flagstones, but no one would have noticed the young woman lying there in terrific pain. Apparently the *Crucio* was the highest amount of pain a sentient being could suffer, but the girl would have contested that. Mewling with agony as she slowly rolled over on her aching back. Blankly staring at the eerie green and black shadows dancing in waves across the ceiling, an atmosphere that reminded her of Tim Burton's: Nightmare Before Christmas.

She realised there was no chance of being found and she could not find the strength to send even a whispered spell. Gods she was freezing. The glorious robes nothing but flayed ribbons lying in tangled strips sticking to her skin – her blood or vomit as glue. Someone please, she sent out a silent plea, anyone help. She was laying at awkward angles in her own fluids. Tears still coursed down her cheeks as her teeth began to chatter. What could she do?

She did not know when her vision blacked out.

Cold.

Frozen.

Death.

Embrace me, death.

The last thing she heard was what she thought were the footsteps of Death approaching to reap her soul.

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**14th December 1996**

12:30am Wiltshire Malfoy Manor

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At about this moment in time, far south of England, near the standing stones of Stone Henge, Narcissa Malfoy was entertaining. Sitting in a plush bedroom of an 12th Century Manor house, was a greyish skinned, red-eyed, dark being, lying on a table almost naked as the Lady of the Manor massaged his shoulders and neck. Suddenly, he sat up. Causing Narcissa to stop. This was a punishment that the Witch endured with a light grimace and patience.

“Did you feel that?” he asked sharply.

Instantly The Dark Lord took hold of her wrist. Her whole body stilled as he used his grip to lead her around, so he could face her. With a little pull she landed elegantly in his lap. This meant only one thing. Narcissa would warm the Dark Lord's bed tonight. This may not be the first time she had entertained the Dark Lord, but this time felt different. This time, she had better do all he orders. So then, she sighed, Lucius was enjoying the attentions of someone like Angharad Quinton. A young, nubile Slytherin who was nothing but a cheap whore from Anglesey.
“What, my Lord?” her delicate brow furrowed slightly. Someone that meant much to the Dark Lord had been hurt, clearly. Though, Narcissa was unaware of such a person. “Who is causing your discomfort, my Lord?”

“The faint rippling of a power broken,” he whispered darkly. “The shimmer of a spell fading. An awakening bought about due to great agony thrust forcefully upon them. Faint in the air, I scent that the dawn shall break with a revelation – in the darker labyrinthine depths of your mind even you, my dear swan, can already comprehend something that was taken from you,” Narcissa shivered in his arms. For he was correct. There was something niggling at the back of her mind. “We will win this fight, Narcissa, and when we do, you above all others shall be rewarded!”

“I felt nothing, My Lord,” Narcissa said leaning in to place a dry kiss against his neck. Lying through her teeth. “I am too entranced by the feel of your magnetic power enveloping me, my Lord, as your gratification is all I live for.”

The Dark Lord enjoyed Narcissa. More so than any other of the female of the species. Such elegance, beauty, manners, breeding and charm. Much more wonderful to conquer and divide someone who is as poised as Narcissa, to make her scream wantonly beneath him. Or arched on top of him. Even if she did lie through her even teeth with her pretty mouth.

“I am no Seer,” said the Dark Lord, “but I do feel that the magic, by morning, shall of a sudden, inform me of whom has been lost to us.”

“Or possibly what, my Lord?”

“No Narcissa,” Voldemort said as his long fingers lazily stroked up and down her curvy legs. “It feels like a Human Signature than an object cursed.”

“Then we shall have to preoccupy your thoughts so that you may rest well, my Lord,” Narcissa purred as she scraped her nails down the back of his bald head causing him to hiss. “Tomorrow may be a tiring day for all concerned.”

“You are such a worthy preoccupation though, my dear Narcissa,” the Dark Lord smirked as he captured her lips with his own. “My dear, beautiful, sweet, Narcissa...”

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14th December 1996:

1:am Dungeon Hallways – Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Two people walked out of a classroom could hear the soft moans of someone helpless and in agony. A tall, handsome, dark skinned man was accompanied by an auburn haired, pale skinned, busty female. The young man could pick up the scent of vomit, urine and the metallic iron of blood spilled in the air. Both looked slightly flushed from their activities.

“Who’s there?” the young man snapped.

“Leave it, we're going to be in enough trouble as it is,” said the girl tugging on the robes of her accomplice in lust. “Leave it, Blaise, please!”
It was then they heard a strangled howl of pain. The lovers glanced at each other. The girl chewed on her lower lip. Despite the trepidation in their hearts they decided to seek out the sounds of despair. Wordlessly, Blaise cast a *Lumos Maxima*, Daphne mirrored his action. Their skin glowing incandescently from the luminosity that glowed from the tips of their wands. Cautiously they followed the haunting cries.

It only took a few moments.

“MERLIN!” the young woman fell on her knees besides the human wreck on the floor. “I’ll take her to the common room,” Blaise visibly blanched at the sight of all that blood. “Well!” his companion snapped. “GET SNAPE!”

Quickly, Blaise dashed in the direction of Snape’s office. Once he reached the door he pounded on it. Wild eyed, breathless and sweating from both his amorous exertions and physical, Zabini was certainly the epitome of Panic. When his Head of House finally answered, Blaise took deep swallowing breaths to calm himself down enough to allow for coherent communication, as he understood the taciturn Professor would not appreciate a fumbling stuttering fool at his door. Especially just outside curfew.

“Mr Zabini,” Snape sighed. Not at all surprised about the person outside his door. “You had better have a good reason to be out beyond curfew.” The Professor wondered when he would be called tonight. Despite many warnings that, only on pain of death, was he to be interrupted, otherwise: Figure it out yourself, that Professor Snape lectured on twice daily, he still had to deal with the idiot snakelings at all hours that wound around the earth. Clearly by Mr Zabini’s jumpy attitude this was not a situation mere students should take care of for themselves. Slytherin’s were always in some form of trouble or other. Though Snape had to school in his shock at witnessing his most poised snakeling in a crumbling mess before him. “Well, I am not a patient man, spit it out!”

“Professor,” Blaise sighed out trembling with fear. “We’ve come across a female – blood – urine – everywhere!” To emphasise his point Blaise showed his crimson stained fingertips. “Daphne has taken her to our common room.”

Nodding, Snape squeezed Blaise's bicep. Understanding the fear present in the young man's eyes. “Any clue to whom the victim is?” he asked his distraught student.

“Not enough light to, Sir,” Blaise said as he swaggered by Snape’s side to the common room. The teacher made the boy stop where she was found, and Snape set a cordon around the area. He can inform Tonks if the Headmaster wouldn't. “I hope she’s all right, Sir.”

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14th December 1996:

1am – 2:30am – Slytherin Common Room

Moments later the pair of panthers found Daphne standing outside the painting to enter the common room, biting her lower lip, hiccupping as if she was trying to contain tears. Eyes swivelling from left to right as she was shifting weight nervously from foot to foot.
“Well?” Snape barked. “I trust you have confirmed who the victim is, Miss Greengrass?”

“It's Miss Granger, Sir.” Great, Snape snarled. What has the girl got herself into now? “She's in bad shape, Sir. I do not think there is any part of her body without some injury or other. I dread what happened to her could well...”

Calmly, Severus entered the common room that had been the Professor's haven for his entire life and stopped suddenly, causing Blaise to stumble into his Professor's back. Giggling a little, Daphne helped her sometimes lover off the floor. Neither could ignore the shocked gasp that Severus expressed. The pale wizard had to keep from bending his knees to sob over the young, damaged, woman lying daintily on the leather couch. No wonder Blaise could not recognise her.

“I will Floo over Pomfrey,” Snape's usual sneering tone had vanished. This was despicable. If there was one bugbear, one thing that could break Snape's seemingly cool façade it was the sight of a woman battered to within an inch of her life. All of a sudden, all his hatred dissipated for Hermione Granger. Now, she needed him. When the memories return, he'll make sure to keep an open door. Nobody, he retained control of his anger, nobody has the right to even live after harming a woman. Visions of his mother lying on the kitchen floor shivering with fear as her husband stood over her, breaking her fingers with his foot flooded the forefront of his mind. A little shudder and Snape recollected himself to the scene before him. “Miss Granger is far too injured to take her to the infirmary. Mr Zabini,” Snape turned with such chilling poise it caused the handsome Slytherin to want to wrap up in jumpers for the rest of his life as he warily observed his Head of House from his eyelashes. Softly, Daphne smoothed over Hermione's brow with gentle fingers. “Alert the Headmaster, Professor McGonagall and, loathe as I am to say, Mr Potter.”

“Some people are not going to like her in the common room,” Daphne said threading her fingers through Hermione's bloodied curls. Snape warmed to the Greengrass girl immediately. At least he succeeded with some. “I am not one of them. She helped me several times,” Daphne leaned down and planted a kiss on Hermione's bruised and swollen cheek as if that sweet gesture could make the contusion to wither away. Both men shifted uneasily at the sight of this. Both young women were exceedingly attractive, and Snape was certainly no monk as Rosmerta and others, could attest too. Daphne's eyes softened as she declared bravely. “I think she's the best of the Gryffies.”

Snape was inclined to agree. “Then you will tell Miss Bulstrode; Miss Davies, and Miss Parkinson to behave impeccably and graciously around her.” World weary, tired, and emotionally spent, Severus decided to resort to first name basis with everyone involved. “Blaise,” he turned to the nervously shivering young man. “I believe I told you to inform the Headmaster. Daphne,” he softened both tone and expression when viewing the sweetest Slytherin of them all. “Strip Hermione of what is left of her clothing and hide her dignity whilst I am getting Pomfrey informed.”

The two Slytherins hurried to follow their Head of House instructions. Within five minutes a weary Dumbledore, a harried Minerva, no nonsense Poppy and a tearful Harry were in the Slytherin common room staring down at a catatonic Hermione. Harry shifted uncomfortably in his pyjamas as he gazed around the room he'd seen once before. Best not to tell anyone else that, he sighed as he had to remove his glasses to rub tears from his eyes.

Tears stung Harry's eyes as he felt as if he was flung back to their second year when Hermione had been Petrified. Quietly, tenderly, he rubbed between her pale white knuckles. “I swear,” he said coldly belying the shimmering heat of his inner rage. “I will kill whoever is responsible for this.”

“Azkaban is a better threat,” McGonagall said in an attempt to comfort the child.

“Azkaban did not manage to keep Bellatrix in, did it!” he turned on Minerva in fierce anger.
Snape, for one brief moment, saw himself standing there – how he'd have reacted if this was... well, he knew what he would have done. “Fenrir Greyback – who is, I believe, hunting Remus – and the Lestrange brothers who practically made Neville an orphan?”

“No, it did not,” murmured the older woman in pensive agreement with her second favourite cub.

“Daph...” a younger girls voice said from behind the crowd. Turning around Daphne paled at the sight of her younger sister standing there, holding her favourite stuffed pink Unicorn, with a glittering silver protuberance, to her chest. A toy the child named Fifi. Wiping sleep from her eyes, the youngest Greengrass yawned. When he saw her Harry immediately felt a brotherly wave of protection go towards this little snake, which was odd considering he never felt anything for any Slytherins apart from blind prejudice. “What's going on?”

“Tori, you go to bed,” there were three years between the sisters and Astoria was far too young to view the battered woman on the sofa.

“What are Gryffies doing in our common room?”

“I'll tell you when I tucked you back into bed,” she steered her little sister out of the way.

Once Poppy did the assessment spells she heaved out a heavy sigh. “Well,” she said. “She cannot be moved; even by magic – she has to stay here until she wakes up. I leave her in your capable hands, Severus – it would be good to keep a sympathiser nearby.”

“If I can get a day off classes – I will look after the cara leonine,” said Blaise immediately. Of course you would, Snape sneered, we all know you pretend to like the female Weasley because you actually want Potter's best friend. I've seen you stare at her in Potions. “It will be my pleasure too, Mistress McGonagall.” Blaise bowed beautifully, lifting McGonagall's hand and kissed the back of her curved fingers. “For she is a most precious specimen of our world, and I ardently wish to see her restored to her true charm.”

Severus rolled his eyes as he watched the old witch blush! Blaise was good even if he did lay it on a bit thick. Harry was about to volunteer also until Dumbledore passed a hand over his brow. This had saddened Severus as he, and he alone, knew what the Headmaster was suffering from.

“That can be arranged Mr Zabini,” the Headmaster agreed. “Mr Potter you are excused lessons today also that is if,” here he turned to Severus, “you would not mind if Mr Potter stays in the guest suite, would you?”

“Of course not, Headmaster,” Harry looked at Professor Snape as if he had not met him before. His jaw open wide with shock at the lack of venom in the Head of Slytherin’s tone. “If you would show Mr Potter the way.”

“Good, I shall lead the boy to the chamber,” Snape nodded his attention now back on the injured girl. “Tell Miss Greengrass that she is to be kept behind from her classes too.”

“Make sure no one jostles her,” Minerva sobbed in the direction of Blaise, immediately placing the care of her cub in his hands. This was her favourite cub, and she'd be damned if she allowed Miss Granger to suffer a bite from a venomous viper. “Insults her,” she continued, causing the young male to squirm, “you have my permission to put into detention anyone who calls her that epithet – Mr Zabini.”

“TORI,” Daphne yelled from the top of the stairs. “TORI NO!”

Harry was flung aside by a now teary, emotional, 13-year-old Slytherin girl. Even through her trembling emotions Tori primly sat on the edge of the sofa and really looked as though she could
drown in hysteric's any moment now. Minerva's heart went out to the trembling child as she tried to remain composed whilst observing Hermione: “Who did this, Sir?” Harry could see Tori adored Professor Snape. Snape knelt down on his knees literally and cupped his hand over the tiny little girls: “When I told her I was being bullied for having a favourite toy she hugged me – she is not as bad as I thought a Muggleborn would be. She told me,” sniffle, deep gasp as Tori tried in vain to control her sobs, “she told me that she was bullied at her muggle school for having a stuffed cat in her bag. I don't know why everyone makes fun of her so much,” the 13-year-old sighed. She was lovely in her despair. The younger Greengrass girl tilted her head, stretched her arm and ran a finger along Hermione's bruised lips. “Also, she is so beautiful.” Tori said her eyes softened along with her wistful tone. She was carefully studying Hermione's purple and swollen face. “Why do people hate kind people, Professor?”

“I – I don't know.”

“Some people say you hate her.”

“Come on, Tori,” Daphne said a little fearful her sister would offend their go-to Professor, the older sister protectively grasping hold of Tori's small shoulder. “Hermione needs to recuperate – you can give her Fifi if you want to.”

“She's so pretty, don't you think?” Secretly all males present agreed – however only one was vocal. Astoria turned to see Harry standing there: “You saved Ginny Weasley from the beast of Slytherin didn't you?”

“I did,” Harry said mimicking Snape's stance.

“I guess that means you're going to marry her doesn't it?” Tori seemed heartbroken at the thought that Harry Potter would not marry her. “You would not marry a Slytherin would you?”

Blushing Harry told the inquisitive little Serpent that is not always how it worked. Also, Harry said, brushing Tori's hair aside behind her ear; if he fell in love he'd marry no matter what, or where, they came from. An answer that genuinely impressed Snape.

“Right,” Snape sighed. It was official: Hell had frozen over. One of his snakelings had a crush on the Potter boy. Shuddering with the disgust at the thought he decided to bring the conversation back to the subject at hand. “Poppy – tell me what potions and salves need to be brewed and I will get onto it tomorrow.”

After her exchange with Potter, Daphne had managed to put her sister to bed. Quietly and cautiously she walked to her own dorms – five minutes later Daphne walked out swaying elegantly in a silver silk negligee and backless white fur slippers with a slight heel. The imagery of Ginny in similar attire caused Harry to blush to the roots of his hair as Greengrass' nightie did not hide the voluptuous curves that Daphne possessed. He felt like he was betraying Ginny somehow by temporarily lusting after Daphne. In her shapely arms Daphne held an emerald green silk pyjama set. Trailing behind her were Slytherin green covers and pillows for warmth and comfort.

At the thought of Hermione in emerald silk, Harry bolted from the common room. Blaise smirked at the retreat of the Potter boy: “Are all male cubs that shy around women or is it just Potter?”

“Mr Potter spent the first ten years of his life in a cupboard under the stairs, Mr Zabini!” snapped Minerva. “You will do well to remember that!”

“These are mine, so they are likely to be a little big for her,” Daphne explained to Minerva, “but it is the best I can do.”
“I shall resize them to fit and you can bring them to me once Miss Granger is recovered, and I shall reverse the charm.” Minerva sighed rubbing a hand over her brow as she swayed from the shock and stress.

“Why bother?” Daphne shrugged. “Hermione can keep them. She looks stunning in them.”

Blaise noticed that the Deputy Headmistress was unsteady on her feet and was at her side in a moment. Chivalrously, he supported the elderly Witch. “Thank you, Miss Greengrass for your hospitality and generosity, which will bring scorn upon you on the morrow, and I am ever so grateful to you both for showing compassion, courage, and strength of character.”

Blaise briefly wondered if Snape would have said the same thing if Weasley and Brown had found Daphne and brought her to the Gryffindor common room. Somehow, he highly doubted it.

“I am a sympathiser to Muggles and Muggleborns,” Daphne said; defiance shone through her sea blue eyes, her hands on the hips added truthfulness to her stubborn statement. “Hermione is an inspiration to Witches everywhere. My sister studies to be like her.”

Smiling warmly, Minerva gently patted Daphne on the hand. “I know the reception tomorrow morning could go either way – whatever reason you and Mr Zabini were out beyond hours turned out for the best. I think that is 30 points apiece for saving, alerting, remaining calm and showing hospitality to one not of your own. So that is 60 points to Slytherin.”

Hmm, Blaise thought, maybe I'll be nice more often. “I am sure we did what anyone else would have done,” said Zabini lowering his eyes with humility.

“I hope that you are right,” Minerva sighed.

“I don’t get what is so bad about them, Professor,” Daphne said, as she and the elder woman made sure Hermione was dressed properly and warmed. “Hermione is living proof that it does not take generations of pedigree to keep her magically talented.”

“I have no idea either, Miss Greengrass,” Minerva sighed as she brushed Hermione's hair off her sleeping, pale face. “She’s survived worse – alert me to the changes she is likely to suffer.”

“Goodnight, Professor McGonagall.”

When the elderly Professor left Daphne turned to Hermione who was barely breathing. Placing Tori's Unicorn next to the curly haired Gryffindor's shoulder, she sighed as she resized the sofa. Blaise walked out of the main thoroughfare, though he stayed in the shadows, watching the woman he'd practically drilled into a classroom wall what seemed like moments before, climb in next to Hermione the witch he had yet to conquer. Not for the want of trying; Blaise shook his head with that thought, before heading to his dorms. He was sure to have pleasant dreams due to that vision.

“What happenin?” Nott asked Blaise sleepily. “Though' I 'eard shoutin.”

“Find out tomorrow morning,” Blaise replied.

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14th December 1996:

6:30am Slytherin Common Room
Tired but concerned – Professor Snape walked into the Common Room half an hour before anyone was due to wake up. Rightly assuming that his presence would be required to answer the myriad questions that would arise from Miss Granger's presence in the Slytherin Common Room. True to form the first set converged after Daphne had awoken and got ready for a hard day of nursing to tend to. Pansy and Millicent followed their friend down both confused as to why Daphne was not in uniform. To say that jaws needed to be scraped from the floor was an understatement. Snape felt he'd need a heavy-duty putty knife to prise the lower bracket back up to reconnect the mouth of Parkinson.

Once his entire house was awake and aware this was the time that Hermione chose to briefly open her eyes – Snape hoped she would not become fully conscience in the vipers nest – of course, he rarely got what he wished for: “Wh-wh-,” was all she managed before blacking out.

The first to brave their scowling head of house was Theodore Nott. “What is Granger doing here?” he asked not in a nasty way either, in fact Theodore Nott could not be more pleased. Finally, he may get to play nice with her, like he'd been wanting to since he witnessed her deck Malfoy. “I thought we did not allow her kind in here?”

“Mr Zabini?” Snape brought the dark skinned somewhat enigmatic Slytherin forward.

“She was found battered, bleeding and – as you can see – unconscious.” The handsome man pulled a hand through his sleep ruffled hair offering a weak smirk which caused most of the female population to swoon. “Miss Greengrass and I found her. As Miss Granger was nearer our common room than anywhere else we decided to show our hospitality. Once Madam Pomfrey and our own esteemed Head of House looked her over they agreed she could not be moved,” here Zabini offered a dangerously protective glitter in his shrewd eyes, the coldest steel gaze he possibly could, piercing his fellow Snakes. Individually they cowed; each and every one of them. “Anyone who mutters the vulgarity – or deliberately jostles or hurt her more – will be in detention with Filch for a week!” he growled.

Through the corner of his eye, Snape could see Pansy inwardly fuming. Bulstrode just shrugged it concerned her neither way. Nott seemed ready to pounce to care for her. Some of the younger ones were open mouthed, awestruck by the great Zabini's act of possessiveness. A couple of men from the year above were also smirking with glee at the thought that Potter's bint was here at their leisure. But it was a certain blond he was most concerned with. Silver eyes gazed upon the prone form of his classroom rival with little to no emotion.

“Do her gormless friends know?” said Nott.

“Mr Potter was here briefly as he has a sibling bond with Miss Granger and he is currently dwelling in the guest suite,” Snape explained. He agreed with Nott's assessment of the boys she had chosen as friends. “As such he is to be allowed first access to Miss Granger.”

Here Draco looked at his Head of House: “How do we know Potter did not do this to get a look inside our common room to rat out information...”

Rolling his eyes, Professor Snape answered with a dominant sneer on his face and scorn glittering his eyes: “I think that, for all his faults, Mr Potter would not put his friend under this kind of danger for something as trivial as being nosy, would he?” Besides, he thought, Potter has already tried that trick. Without success.
“Anyone know who perpetrated it?” a fifth-year girl piped up with. Terrified it could happen to her. “So we can be aware of who not to look at?”

“That is information we have to wait for,” Snape said. “Miss Granger needs to recover from her clearly traumatic experience to reveal her attacker, before we can deal with the vile being.” Sweeping a dark gaze about the room to make sure the point had been made clear, Professor Snape added: “You better hope I do not see the instigator to such brutality here,” fixing his glittering glare on Crabbe and Goyle. “For I will not show sympathy or leniency … understood?” Mutely, his little Snakelings nodded. With a weary sigh, Snape continued. “Now, it would be helpful if any of you can remember where you saw her last and whom she was with.”

Well, that was expected. Snape knew none of his house would be forthcoming. Slytherin's mantra was: Head down, shut up, act like you have seen nothing. In that respect sometimes he wondered how Malfoy ended up in Slytherin. Until this year when dearest Aunty Bella taught him what it was to belong to the Snakes. Surely someone must have seen her between end of classes to the point where she was found. One sweeping look around the circular, eerily green lit, common room showed no one had a clue. The answer came from a most unexpected source.

“Slug Club!” Malfoy spoke up.

“Mr Malfoy?” Snape arched an eyebrow.

“That's right,” Blaise said, the Hunter's gleam in his eyes. “Slughorn's Christmas Party – she was with that idiot McClaggan – what she saw in him I have no idea,” tenderly Blaise looked upon the pale, small body unaware of her surroundings. “He was pawing at her and she kept trying to get away.”

“Thank you, Mr Malfoy,” Snape said. “Mr Zabini,” the teacher inclined his head at the African Italian Prince. “Now, as loathe as I am for this to happen, if Mr Weasley or Mr Longbottom – in fact if any of her friends – inquire after Miss Granger you are to direct them to the common room blindfolded. Make sure their ears are covered before you say the password – once in remove said precautions and allow them to sit with her for as long as they desire. This is their friend – I am sure you would wish to hear your friends voices in similar circumstances would you not?” Eat that Black, he thought inwardly. I bet you would not have thought the same if it was one of my female snakes in a similar kind of trouble. Yes, he felt childish at thinking that but...

“Yes sir,” was the monotonous response.

“If McClaggan is the culprit...?” asked Pansy.

“Use your feminine wiles to find out the truth, Miss Parkinson,” smiled Snape, “bat your eyes – flirt with someone in Gryffindor – extend a Christmas truce,” why were these people in Slytherin? Did he always have to do the thinking around here, “that goes for all of you, today your task is to befriend Gryffindor's in your respective years and wind the conversation around this attack.”

Now the common room was buzzing with excitement. A Christmas Truce was exactly what was needed to excite the Snakelings. “Quiet down!” Snape ordered – immediately a hushed silence descended, such was the effect Severus held on the children of the school. “I have a feeling Headmaster Dumbledore will make an announcement this morning – hopefully our tactics will cause one of the attackers to be revealed. I will come in half an hour before curfew tonight to gather information, think of the Gryffindors you wish to befriend – keep the friendship going as long as it takes.”

Draco wondered which Gryffindor would ever want to befriend him when he suddenly shook his head. Something that felt like a memory cloak or a rune seemed to break over him. His father
taught him how to feel when things like this happened after his third year in school. An elf on hand to clear the mess of blood or mop a sweaty brow. Now all it gave him was a splitting headache for about five seconds: “Sir,” he said, “Are we certain a Gryffindor did this?”

“Just because the majority of them jump through hoops to protect their pride, one or two weak ones manage to venture into the den,” Snape said thinking of that rat. “As Mr Blaise Zabini and Miss Daphne Greengrass found her, alerted us to her devastation, offered her our hospitality without prejudice they have the day off from classes to make sure she is not alone, all the rest of you – breakfast and friendships awaits.”

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**14th December 1996**:

*2am Wiltshire, Malfoy Manor*

“What is it, Dolohov?” snapped Voldemort.

Narcissa had proved a wonderful companion indeed and she lay sleeping peacefully in his bed whilst he was drinking absinthe lounging on the red velvet chaise lounge in the private sitting room of his suite. Four of his followers were genuflected, shivering with fear, at his feet. Just how he liked them to be.

The fourth Death Eater removed the hood: “What can I say,” he shrugged his shoulders, “Witch was battier than a fruitcake mix.”

“You do realise you have disturbed my pleasure?” The Dark Lord said plainly. “So this had better be important, and told without stuttering, stammering or quivering.”

“I am sorry, my Lord, but she has prophesied again. My Lord,” Dolohov bowed. “We hastened, all four of us, to tell you that there seems to be a Slytherin amongst the Gryffindors.”

This made Voldemort sit up. “Our friends in the ministry should tell you where and whom this prophecy is...” suddenly, he found himself interrupted as Yaxley dragged what looked like a Weasley behind him and threw the frightened red head at his feet. “Yaxley?”

“Imperio’d him for as long as I could but the little goody two shoes is too stubborn. However the mangy quivering stoat did as I asked,” Yaxley explained as he forcefully booted him in the back. “Apparently he was Head Boy and everything!” the man sneered.

“Show me boy!” snapped the Dark Lord.

“P-Percy,” he stammered. “My name's Percy,” Weasley tried in vain to gain back some dignity after he was ignominiously dragged here by a brute.

“You address me as My Lord, Percy Weasley,” the Dark Lord said icily, “does this pertain to a new prophecy, Yaxley?”

“Yes,” the short reply seemed to be expected as Voldemort did not stiffen. He watched as one of his oldest supporters produced what looked like a muggle snow globe. “Took me by surprise, I can tell you, my Lord.”
Gently, Voldemort held the precious globe in his hands as the blue light blasted from the crystal. “They are so beautiful are they not?” he murmured in reverent awe at the tiny thing he now possessed.

“Turn it around, my Lord. That is where the surprise is.”

So Voldemort did – gingerly swirling it in his hands – there a brass plaque held in with tiny silver nails bore the legend of whom this prophecy was about.

“Ah, so that is who you really are,” he forgot his followers and the snivelling stoat, “I had a feeling a spell had been broken – now I know – oh this is going to be fantastic,” he smirked. Red eyes glazed over with lust at the name upon the plaque.

“Dolohov, I require a Penseive Memory from you. Yaxley – take the Weasel back – torture him a bit if you must but he is to remember this day.”

Long fingers tenderly stroked the crystal. Setting it aside, he took Dolohov's memory of the evening's event and walked into a small, heavily warded closet where he kept his Penseive and poured the memory in. Watching in fascination as the scene unfurled before him. Many times he zoomed, paused, and repeated little bits to make sure he got his facts right and when he returned Yaxley and Weasley were gone.

“Well, my Lord?” Dolohov growled.

“Tomorrow morning, Dolohov, a most welcome announcement will be made – we have found her!”

“Found who, my Lord?”

“Someone important to our fight, Dolohov!”

“In what way?”

The Dark Lord’s eyes gleamed with pleasure: “In the perfect way,” he purred to one of his most devoted follower. “In the most perfect way.”

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Chapter End Notes

This is for the KUDOS and the one person who reviewed to show that no matter who does what - if you like my words, then my words love you too!

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