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Story Notes:

I swore that I wouldn't do this. But then I saw the movie and my fertile brain went berserk. It has everything to do with the actor who portrayed Him.

The Him, of course, is Severus Snape, Potions Master.

His Muse is quite insistent.

Copyright is held by J. K. Rowling (long may she write) and this small story brings no reward but the joy of writing.

It is slash between two consenting adults.

There are mistakes. I wrote too fast.

If egregious errors pop out at you, let me know.

Nicely, please.

If any of this squicks you, then hit the back button immediately.

You have been warned.

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Chapter 1 - Harry by Athea

Harry

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"What do you mean, its prophecy?" I had to have misunderstood the Headmaster.

"Back in 748, I think it was," Dumbledore said absentmindedly, "the Highpriest of the Druidic Caste had a vision during the Lammas festival." He turned another page and started muttering.

"Don't speak it, Headmaster." The cutting comment came from the man in the wing back chair beside me and I snuck a peek at him. "Remember what happened the last time you muttered?"

"Harrumph, yes, yes, I do remember. It was only a small infestation, Sev. I had it cleared up in no time at all." He smiled sheepishly at Professor Snape whose lips twitched once before settling back into the sneer that I usually saw.

Had he almost smiled? This was getting weirder by the minute. I surreptitiously pinched myself to make sure that this wasn't some strange dream. Nope, that hurt so I must really be here in the Headmaster's study while he looked up a prophecy that had something to do with me and my Potions professor. Weird didn't begin to cover it, I was beginning to think that scary was more like it.

"Here it is. On the last full moon of the year of Fire will the youngest and the hidden one come together to create a spell of conception. Thus will the future come from the past and the circle be cast in flesh. From this union will come the Child of Love reborn. Thou art the first, Thou are the last. And the Light shall triumph." He pushed his glasses up and looked at us with the beaming smile that usually made me smile too.

But I had a sinking feeling that I wasn't up to casting a spell with Professor Snape. Conception sounded dangerous and so did a circle, um, in flesh. I might be sixteen but I was still in the experimental stage of my life. I'd read some of the tantric spell books and enjoyed pleasuring myself in the bath but I wasn't ready to do it in front of anybody or watch anybody else, um, do it either.

Professor Snape interrupted my muddled thoughts with what might be a gasp in anybody else. He was always pale but he'd just gotten even whiter. "You can't be serious, Headmaster. Potter is too young and I am ... unable."

My head was spinning and it felt like a Quidditch match where I looked back and forth between the two of them. What did 'unable' mean?

"Severus, I don't understand. How could you be unable? You were a father." The headmaster frowned at the Potions Master.

"No, I can not. Not again." He was on his feet and even I could see him shaking with fine tremors that shook his whole body. "I am no one's whore, not even for the Light."

I froze right along with Headmaster Dumbledore while the professor all but ran from the room. It felt like an earthquake had just hit and I looked up at the feeling of deep sadness that radiated from the old man behind the desk.

"Dear Heaven, I think I finally understand." He took his glasses off and laid them on the desk in front of him, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Harry, there is some history that you need to know about events that happened about the time you were born. But first, I think we'll have some tea. I will find this hard to speak and you will find it difficult to hear. But we don't have a choice."

Muttering a quick incantation, he materialized a tea tray and poured out for us both. He offered me the plate of ginger cookies and I accepted two with a sigh of relief. Munching the treat, I dunked the last bite in my tea before devouring it. It was a long time until dinner tonight and whatever the headmaster needed to tell me was probably going to be very unpleasant.

His sigh brought my head up while he fixed those blue eyes on me. "A long time ago, the forces of the Light needed a spy in Voldemort's court ..."

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"Hey, Harry, wait up." The voice behind me stopped my vague meandering toward the dining hall. Ron panted up and looked at me. "What's wrong, Harry? You look sick."

"Thanks a lot," I automatically said but in truth, I did feel rather sick. "I think I'll skip dinner tonight and go up to our study."

"You're skipping dinner? You must be sick." He said with a grin but I couldn't smile back. At the moment, I felt like I'd never smile again. There was a pain in my heart that just kept growing until I was afraid that I'd burst into tears right here in the hall.

"It's not that bad, Ron, but I really can't face the dining hall right now. I'll see you later." I hurried up the stairs, almost running to escape the others. I needed to be alone, completely alone and the only place I could guarantee that was in one of the small bathrooms where I could lock the door.

Stopping by my trunk for a towel and my pajamas, I went down the deserted hall and into the last door on the right. This one was the quickest to finally get hot water. While the tub was filling, I took off my clothes and hung them on the back of the door. With the greatest concentration, I did not think about what the headmaster had told me. Finally, I took off my glasses and slipped them in the pocket of my robe before stepping into the steaming hot water.

Soaping and rinsing took a few moments but somehow I knew that this feeling wouldn't be washed away so easily. Turning off the water, I laid my head back and finally brought out the memory of my tea with the Headmaster. Some of it I'd already known but not the part that Professor Snape had played. I couldn't get Dumbledore's sad voice from my mind.

'Severus was such a bright soul with a lightness of spirit that made him one of the most popular of boys. A happy spirit that sang in the Light.'

'We needed a spy in Voldemort's court and Severus volunteered.'

'For seven long years he played his part. But the young man of twenty-one who returned to us was a darkened soul who hid from the Light even though he was of the Light and always would be. He wouldn't speak of his time with Voldemort but from that moment on, he became a solitary man who wouldn't reach out to anyone.'

I scrubbed my eyes hard and tried to keep out the images of a young boy who'd gladly volunteered to serve the Evil One and been trapped in a role that stripped his innocence from him and left him feeling like a whore. Dumbledore's reaction to his statement about whoring for the Light was tears. Voldemort had obviously raped him over and over while he played his part of a willing disciple.

How had he kept his sanity? I felt tears forming and I tried to pretend they were water drops but finally I let myself cry for the boy who'd sacrificed himself before I was born. Maybe some of them were for my parents and all the others who'd been lost during my short life but mostly they were for him, for the life he should have had that had been stolen from him.

They stopped eventually, tears always do. The world was awfully fuzzy without my glasses and at the moment, fuzzy was good. I stared at my toes peeking through the water and recited a spell to heat the water again. It worked perfectly and I sighed. This wasn't solving my problem.

Our problem, since it appeared the headmaster was certain that the professor and I were the 'youngest and the hidden one'. So we were going to have to work together for the prophecy to come about. And that meant that I had to go to him and convince him to cooperate. I wasn't going

to rape him the way Voldemort had, I decided fiercely. He didn't deserve that. But then neither did I and I could admit to myself that I was frightened of the whole sex thing.

Would I have to admit that to him, too?

I was starting to wrinkle like a prune so I drained the water and dried off while I considered my body. I'd finally grown a foot so I wasn't the shortest anymore but I'd always be short. Quidditch had toned my body so I'd grown muscles in place of my baby fat but I was still skinny. Drying my privates, I decided that I looked okay. I wondered what other boys looked like but stopped that train of thought before it got to Snape. Several of Hermione's girlfriends had started eyeing me with little flirty looks. I'd been looking back with, what I must admit had been interest.

But now that was no longer an option, at least until this whole prophecy thing had been resolved. I sighed and dressed in my pajamas, wearing the robe over them since I was feeling a cold breeze seeping under the door. The halls were still empty when I left the bathrooms and hurried down to my study. But the cold followed me and I realized that it wasn't me who was cold. Closing my eyes, I followed the chill wind with my wizard's sight and found it coming from the chapel in the lower level of the Gryphon House.

Snape was down there, huddled against the cold that he'd lived in since he was fourteen. Throwing my damp towel onto the back of my study chair, I took a deep breath, then another before putting on my slippers and leaving my room to go down and talk to the man who figured so prominently in my immediate future.

I took the back stairs and saw no one. There wasn't even a candle lit on the high altar. I could feel him though, through those senses that I'd been training for the last four years. He didn't say anything at all when I sat down beside him on the long wooden bench. I didn't know what to say so I said nothing, just kept him company.

His whisper when it finally came was almost too low for me to make out words. "I hid inside my mind. I pretended that it was someone else he was taking and ... hurting. The books hadn't prepared me for what sex really meant. Are you better informed, Potter?"

"Probably not," I admitted. "I'm still at the stage where it sounds pretty scary to me. It's so ... um, personal."

His chuckle was more like a sob. "Personal ... yes, it is indeed personal. I'll go to Dumbledore and try to make him see that we must let this prophecy go for now. You don't deserve to suffer my unwanted attentions. Even if I could ..."

"You didn't deserve what happened to you, Professor Snape." I sat up straight and spoke fiercely. "He raped you and you thought you had to let him in order to spy for the Light. None of it was your fault."

He caught his breath and I wished that I could see his face. "That is very ... kind of you, Potter. Some days I believe that but most of the time I know that it was a flaw in me."

What could I say to make him see that it wasn't his fault? "I think you need to speak to the headmaster, Professor Snape. Would you do that still tonight? He really wants to talk to you."

"Yes," he shifted on the bench and stood with a creaky motion that sounded like it hurt. "Yes, I should apologize to him for my earlier outburst. I'll make him see that this would be a grave disservice to you."

My eyes had grown adjusted somewhat to the darkness and I felt him turn to me.

"We haven't been friends, Potter but not exactly enemies." He hesitated and I felt a hopeful twinge in my heart. "I will see you tomorrow in class." And he turned towards the altar only to disappear behind it.

I got up and peeked around the corner in time to see a hidden door silently close behind him. Odd, I didn't realize that there were so many secret passages here at Hogwarts. Sighing, I left the chapel and slowly made my way upstairs. Part of me was dissecting the conversation while part of me still had that hopeful feeling that maybe, just maybe, I was going to finally understand Professor Snape a little better.

Ron was in our study and full of questions so I shelved all the turmoil away in the back of my mind. We started studying and I managed to fend off any questions about my health. He'd brought me up an apple and I ate it slowly while going over my Potions assignment. I had the feeling that in class, our Potions Master would be his usual self.

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Well, I'd been right about that, I decided, while my head spun with the new potion spell he'd given us. He'd been cold and cutting whenever anyone screwed up a potion. And yet, the hurtful note that always seemed a verbal sneer had been missing. I'd studied hard before going to sleep and done my potion perfectly while he watched over my shoulder.

He hadn't said well done or anything overtly nice but he had rewarded me with a harder puzzle and that was a vast improvement over the sneer. There was a faint air of melancholy about him but I was hoping that was an improvement over his self-hatred of the night before. Maybe he'd spoken to the headmaster and was finally beginning to realize that his past was just that.

Past. Over and done with. Finished.

I had a message to go to the headmaster after lunch so I ate hurriedly and turned in my dishes before walking quickly to his study. He was standing at the window, his hands clasped behind him. "Sir?"

"Come here, Harry, thank you for coming." He smiled at me then went back to the window. I joined him and saw that the window no longer looked at the Commons but into the past. "There he is, Harry, Severus at fourteen, still the happy loving child that I knew and loved."

The black hair was the same but the dark eyes were full of laughter and his lips were stretched into a grin. He looked happy and full of life. It was hard to see him like that while my memory of his coldness from class was still fresh in my mind.

"I wish ..." I sighed. "I wish he could be like that again."

"So do I, Harry, so do I." He waved his hand and it went back to normal glass. "Thank you for speaking with him last night. We had a long talk and hopefully, I was able to drain away some of the terrible despair that he's carried within him for so long. Come sit down. We need to talk."

"Yes, Sir." I followed him back to his desk. "Did he tell you what we talked about?"

"No, he kept your confidence." He looked at me strangely when I blushed.

"Um, he asked me if I was informed about ... sex." It sounded weird to be telling the headmaster this but he needed to know. "I haven't done any experimenting yet. I haven't even kissed anyone but I have been kind of having the urge to."

He nodded. "We keep most of the students too busy to do any of that sort of experimenting. Your

mind and body grow at different rates. Sometimes the body is ready before your heart is. It should be a true marriage of them both or it's not lovemaking but sex only. And no sex is ever as good as making love with someone that you care about."

"How can this prophecy work then if we don't love each other?" I whispered my greatest fear. "Wouldn't it be the same kind of rape that he's already experienced? I don't want to hurt him or to be hurt either."

Dumbledore smiled approvingly at me. "You have a good heart, Harry. It would indeed be rape if you both didn't want it. How could a child of love be conceived from fear and pain? It couldn't, but what if you got to know each other? Had time to talk together and spend time that wasn't a lesson but a sharing."

I blinked. "Like a date?"

He chuckled. "Exactly. What if I was to send the two of you to my cottage in Scotland for a week of getting to know each other? Then you can decide if there is a chance of making this prophecy work or not. Would you be willing to do that?"

My brain was whirling. This sounded like a very long date to me, a week - a whole week without anybody else but the two of us. I blinked and really considered it. "Will he do it, do you think?"

"He's already agreed but with reservations. I never realized that his marriage had been so barren. I believe his greatest fear is that he'll become like Voldemort, the rapist of an innocent."

"No way could he ever be like Him." I sat up straight. "All right, I'll go."

"Thank you, Harry. You have a healing spirit. I hope that you can perhaps bring healing energy to Severus' wounded soul." He stood and motioned to me to join him by one of his bookcases. With a touch, it swung open. "Go through here and you'll be in Scotland. I'll cover your absence with both your instructors and your friends." He touched my shoulder. "Do your best, Harry. He needs you right now. He's been hidden in the darkness for much too long a time."

I nodded firmly. "I will do anything I have to do, Headmaster."

He smiled. "Listen to your heart. It's your best instructor."

Taking a deep breath, I stepped through the opening and found myself in a small sitting room. Curled up before the fire in the grate was my potion instructor. The look of hope and fear on his face drew me to him like a magnet.

"Hi, Severus, it looks like we're going to be roommates for a while." I said as jauntily as I could. The bookcase swung shut behind me. "I hope that you can cook."

And for the first time since I'd met him, he chuckled.

It sounded good. No, it sounded great.

Maybe I could at least bring back his laughter even if I couldn't heal anything else.

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Chapter 2 - Severus by Athea

Severus

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The afternoon passed quickly while he explored the cottage and the nearby countryside. I watched him greet each new experience with a smile and a laugh even if it was about himself. He tripped and fell into a gorse bush within an hour of his arrival, needing help to get out without getting more stickers in him than he already had.

It was the first time I touched him. It was only his hand and I quickly let it go in order to cast a desticker spell. But the warmth stayed with me and I found myself looking at him, as I'd never allowed myself to do before. He was joy incarnate. Everything was met with the wide-eyed look of wonder that I'd first seen so long ago when he first came to Hogwarts.

That had hurt then and I'd been harder on him than on any of his classmates. But over the years his sweetness had worn down my resistance until I'd begun to look forward to his class. I had been as careful as I knew how to not show the change to the others. That would do him harm with some of the others like Malfoy and his son. I didn't dare take that chance.

But here, away from spying eyes, I could feel myself relaxing some of those barriers that I kept between myself and the rest of the world. He'd even made me laugh out loud twice with his schoolboy humor. It had been years since I'd done that. Voldemort had drained all the joy from me long ago.

Perhaps a little was seeping in again, fed by the laughter that Harry dispensed with such a lavish hand. We walked for several hours, mostly in silence. But occasionally he gave me the gift of a memory of two of his about his family, his real family, not the Muggles he'd been living with. When he finally asked me about my kin, I was able to share the memory of my tenth birthday.

That one was safe enough and one of the memories that I'd clung to while with Voldemort. Mother and Father were still with me and the cake was enormous with all the icing that any youngster could possibly want. Odd, but I could still taste the creamy white confection. I hadn't thought about that in years.

He beamed at me and countered with the memory of his fourth birthday when he'd gotten a black kitten that promptly jumped into his cake and came up streaked with white. That was the first time he made me laugh. The second time was after he ate a bite of the pasta that I'd cooked the old fashioned way with a stove and a pot. His eyes had widened and he told me that it was better than anything he'd ever eaten before.

I told him that all that work with potions had to have some benefit. He'd choked while trying to laugh and swallow at the same time. I'd gently slapped his back until the offending shell had come back out. His peals of laughter had proven infectious and I'd joined him for a brief moment. I could feel him melting some of the walls of ice behind which I'd retreated so long ago.

And that frightened me enough that I pulled back inside myself. He seemed to understand because he cheerfully washed the dishes after dinner with a quip about taking turns cooking and washing up. I added a log to the fire and thought about what Dumbledore hoped would happen this week while we were alone together. I hadn't been joking when I told him that I was unable.

The first time that Voldemort raped me, I'd lost any erection that I might have had and never had another that wasn't spell related. I'd read up on the subject when I returned to Hogwarts and I thought I understood why. Perhaps something of this whole debacle could be salvaged. If I let Harry take me, then he wouldn't be hurt. I liked the young man that I'd watch growing up.

It wasn't love but then I doubted that I could feel that emotion anymore.

Would 'like' be enough to create the child of love?

"Severus, would you mind if I asked you some questions?" Harry joined me on the rug in front of

the fireplace where I sat watching the yellow flames leap joyously along the log. "I'm a little scared."

I nodded stiffly. "That makes two of us, Harry. What are your questions?"

He bit his lip, worrying it the way he did when he was pondering one of my little tests. "I told the headmaster that I hadn't even kissed anybody. Have you?"

I nodded jerkily. "My wife expected it. It is not an unpleasant sensation if you like the person you're kissing."

"Could we start with that then, a kiss so I'll know what that's like?" His shy look melted another wall around my heart. "I do like you."

Oh Harry, my little innocent, I thought to myself. "I think I can manage that."

Then I leaned forward at the same moment that he did. His eyes were screwed shut and his lips trembled. I brushed mine over his gently, feeling like trembling myself. Once, then again with a little more pressure until his lips parted and I tasted the sweetness that was his alone. I suddenly wanted more but my iron control still held firm and I kept it light, almost teasing.

It was the best I could do.

We pulled apart at the same moment. His eyes opened wide and he gulped before he spoke. "Wow."

And that's when I laughed out loud for the third time. "Wow? That's a good thing then?"

He smiled sheepishly and nodded. "If that's what it's like then I understand why some of the others enjoy it so much."

I felt tears fight to get out but I held them back. "As I said, when friends kiss it can be enjoyable."

Harry tilted his head, the way he did when he was thinking hard about something. "Then we must be friends, Severus. Because I really enjoyed it and that helps a lot."

And with that amazing statement, he leaned in and kissed me again. I was so shocked that I parted my lips for his questing tongue. He was an extremely fast learner and I almost whimpered when he pulled away. His eyes were intent on my face when my eyes flew open to protest him leaving.

"Good night, Severus, I think we're going to be all right." He patted my hand before jumping to his feet and heading up the stairs to the second bedroom. The homey sounds of water running and the toilet flushing brought another smile to my face.

He was an amazing young man. Perhaps we really would be all right.

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The black darkness hid me for a moment then the ice cold mage light found me and my master summoned me to his bed. I was sore and aching all ready from the beating he'd given me for failing to make the potion he'd tasked me with. But those aches were nothing compared to what he would make me feel now.

I held back the whimpers that I wanted to let out, kneeling at the foot of his bed naked, the way he'd told me to the week before when he commenced these new lessons. I'd finally finished



bleeding so it was time for him to give me another 'treat'. I was beginning to wish that this lesson would just kill me and release me from his power.

"Come, boy, don't be sullen or I shall be forced to give you to my guards for their pleasure. I don't think you'd like that at all." The cold voice slithered around me like the snakes he sent to me at all hours of the day and night.

"No, my Lord, I want only you to touch me." I forced the words out past trembling lips and he chuckled. Perhaps there'd be no pain this time.

But there was.

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"Severus, wake up." A gentle hand tentatively touched my shoulder and I awoke with a gasp. "You were having a nightmare."

Harry, it was only Harry and I was no longer that scared fourteen-year-old forced into a sorcerer's bed. "Sorry."

He had turned the small bedside lamp on and I took a shuddering breath then another. "I'm going to make some hot tea. I'll bring you some."

I managed to nod while I resurrected my barriers. How sick was it when an innocent kiss could trigger the vile memories of rape and torture? I got up and went to the bathroom to shower away the night sweats. The heat finally penetrated the cold that nightmare always brought with it. Toweling off, I wrapped it around me and headed back into my bedroom.

Harry was sitting on the foot of my bed with the tea tray beside him. His eyes widened when he saw me half-naked and he blushed hard. "Sorry, I thought you might need to talk."

He closed his eyes to give me privacy and I compromised by pulling on fresh pajama bottoms and crawling back into bed. His eyes popped back open and he poured the steaming tea for us both. I cradled it in my hands and absorbed its warmth. We drank silently while I tried to think of something to say.

"Was it kissing me that brought back the bad memories?" He spoke softly and the look of misery in his eyes changed what I might have said.

"He never kissed me, Harry, he beat and raped me but never once showed any affection for me." I swallowed hard and clutched my cup. "It's all I know about the act of sex. The Wizard's Council arranged my marriage. I ... let her lead me and used a spell to make it," dear God how to put this, "good for her."

"So it was never good? Ever?" This time the pain was for me. For me.

"No, I watched others fall in love and I used to wonder why they did it. Why the pain was what they wanted?" I shook my head. "Then I began to notice that they weren't in pain but were instead, filled with joy. That's when I fell into the sin of envy. For a while, I think I truly hated the 'lucky ones'."

"Is that why you disliked me so much when I first came to Hogwarts?" He saw right to the heart of me.

"Yes. I could see from the first that you were destined for great things and I was jealous of the ease with which you sailed through your studies." I owed him my honesty at the very least. "I

would apologize more but I think that some of those hard lessons helped you when ... Voldemort first appeared."

This time the smile was fainter but he nodded. "They did, Severus and I thank you for them. I was afraid for a long time that I wouldn't be strong enough or smart enough to keep myself safe. Worse, I was afraid that I'd get others hurt, too."

"Do not worry about that, Harry. You have the strength to overcome him. That's why he's so afraid of you." I needed to somehow show him his true worth. "You will never be alone in this battle. Dumbledore and I will be there as well as all your friends."

And he beamed again. "I know that now. Um, going back to that other problem we have, did you ever do any tantric reading?"

I blinked. "Tantric magic?"

"Kind of. Draco taunted me one day about me not knowing what to do with my," he blushed and fumbled for the words, "my privates. Hermione gave me the shelf number where I could find some good books on the subject. That was last year and I kind of enjoyed reading them. It made a big difference when I started touching myself."

That picture almost made my cock twitch. Trust Harry Potter to turn a slur into a learning opportunity. It's why he'd win it all for the Light. "You think they might help me?"

"Well," he grinned suddenly, "they couldn't hurt."

I dropped my eyes to my cup. "We might not need them if you are the one in control." There, I'd said it. I'd made the offer to let him use me. Part of me hoped he'd refuse but another faint voice inside my head whispered cautious optimism.

"Severus, we either both enjoy this or we don't do it at all." His voice was calm and sure.

Raising my eyes, I watched him climb off the bed and move the tea tray to the trunk at the foot. Then he matter-of-factly raised the duvet at my side and slid in next to me. Well, that was one way to make a statement. I lay down every muscle tense with remembered pain.

"Could you please put these on the side table?" He held out his glasses to me.

Such trust he gave me with that simple gesture. My hand was shaking but I took them gingerly and laid them aside, turning off the lamp at the same moment. I could hear him breathing and slowly his warmth crept across the flannel sheets to my arm. I'd never slept with anyone before. My wife had her own bedroom and bed that she preferred. I had always slept alone. Harry had to have been a solitary, too but here he was protecting me from the dark memories that haunted me.

"Thank you, Harry." I turned my head and watched him turn towards me.

"You're welcome, Sev. Sweet dreams." His teeth gleamed for a moment so I knew he was smiling.

We'd see about that. I calmed my mind as best I could and began the wizard equivalent of counting sheep. For me, that meant organizing my potion cupboard alphabetically by ingredient. It rarely failed and I fell asleep by the time I got to gnat's breath.

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Chapter 3 - Harry by Athea

Harry

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When I woke up, I was plastered along Severus' side with my head on his shoulder. Oops, he was probably going to be unhappy about that but at the moment I was too comfortable to worry about it. He hadn't had another nightmare that I could tell and when I moved my head a little, I could see that he was still asleep.

All the frown lines had smoothed away and he looked like an older edition of the young boy I'd seen in the headmaster's window. My hand was on his bare chest and I could feel the steady thump of his heartbeat. That was a rather comforting sound and I lay there and just enjoyed it while I thought about what had been said the night before.

He was prepared to do his best for the prophecy but only if I took control. I wasn't sure exactly what that meant. Dumbledore was right about his feelings of inadequacy. He really did fear that he would be like Voldemort. And that just wasn't possible. Severus would never hurt me or cause me to be hurt. I wasn't sure how I knew, I just did. But how did I convince him of that?

Breathing deeply, I realized that I liked the way he smelled. Sandalwood and some kind of musk that I'd smelled before in the potion's lab. It was just uniquely him. Suddenly, I wondered what he would taste like and I stuck my tongue out to lick his skin. His mouth had tasted sweet and now his skin did, too.

"Harry, what in the world are you doing?" His voice was sleep roughened and I caught a sleepy dark gaze when I looked up.

"I wondered if you tasted as good as you did last night." I leaned up on one elbow and watched him blush. "May I please have another kiss?"

"Now?" He looked a little shocked but his eyes dropped to my lips so I figured that he was okay with it.

Leaning in, I slowly laid my lips onto his. He gasped a little and that opened him up for me to come inside. He was hot and his tongue immediately sought mine so we could rub together. That felt wonderful and my fingers stroked his skin, marveling at how smooth it felt. But finally we had to breathe and I watched him open dazed eyes to look at me.

"My goodness." His voice was faint that made me feel pretty satisfied. "Harry, you are quite ... good at that."

"Thank you. I wouldn't be very good if it wasn't you that I was kissing." I realized that with a flash of intuition. I wasn't doing this for Headmaster Dumbledore anymore or even for the prophecy, I was doing it for Severus. His eyes widened and I could see a bit of fear there so I leaned in and kissed him again until he relaxed. When I pulled away this time, I smiled and jumped out of bed. "Last one into the shower has to make breakfast."

I dashed into the bathroom between our rooms and turned the water on, hoping with all my heart that he would follow. I was biting my lip and trying not to be too disappointed when I felt the whisper of another body behind mine. Turning, I smiled happily and welcomed him in. It was fun showering with somebody else and we played until the water suddenly went cold.

I dressed in my bedroom while he dressed in his. He was all lean muscle that I'd traced with soapy fingers from his head to his toes. Severus was bigger than me ... everywhere but he'd only twitched when my hands ran down his legs. I'd been half-hard by the time he'd finished washing me and he'd run a gentle finger over the tender skin that had me biting my lip. For a moment I thought he might really touch me but his hand had started to shake and I'd been quick to pull him

to his feet.

We had time for more later.

By the time I got downstairs, there were already good smells coming from the kitchen. I set the table and held the plates for the eggs and ham. The teakettle whistled and he made tea while I put our breakfast on the little table by the big window. Pretty soon we were eating and I practically inhaled everything on my plate.

"You needn't hurry, Harry. I promise to make more if you want more." His little smile was great to see and I grinned at him with a nod because my mouth was full.

He got up and fried two more eggs for me and I finished them while he slowly drank his tea. I watched him and wondered what he was thinking. He caught my eye and blushed a little. "Severus, what shall we do today?"

"I ... don't know, Harry. This is so far outside my experience that I don't know what we should do." He was still flushed and I wanted to protect him from everything, but most especially his bad memories.

"Then I'd like to take a long hike, come back here for lunch and then do some reading. Would that be all right?" I watched him nod. "Good, after I wash the dishes we can go."

He dried after I washed and we took a pair of walking sticks by the back door before we set out. Everything was so green around us and I couldn't help but see that we were deep in a Scottish burn surrounded by craggy mountains. When I asked him where we were, he chuckled a little and gave me a history of this hidden valley. It was only accessible by magic and thus the Muggles never even knew it existed.

That felt right somehow and I felt freer than I ever had before, safe and protected. Within an hour we'd reached a small lake and he showed me how to skip stones across the choppy deep blue waves. But when he spotted a small brown head, he caught my arm and pointed. We sat down on the rocky beach side by side and soon an entire family of river otters popped up to play.

They had no fear of humans because so few came here. Severus was able to smile at their antics and he whispered that sometimes he pictured some of the other instructors as otters or hawks or other animals. I had done that too and we shared some of our favorites with each other. That felt better than good and I found myself leaning against him with my hand on his knee and his arm around me.

"Harry, you must promise me something." Severus looked down at me with such an odd look in his eyes. "If I ever do anything that frightens you, you will tell me to cease and desist. If I hurt you in any way at all, you'll leave me and get to safety."

"I promise, Severus. But you must promise me something, too." This was serious and if we were to have even the smallest chance of fulfilling the prophecy, I needed to know that he was being open with me. "If ever I push too hard or do anything that brings up old, bad memories, you'll tell me to slow down or stop or whatever it is that you need."

He nodded and pulled me closer so he could rest his cheek on my hair. "I promise. You deserve someone so much better than me, Harry. Someone who can really love you for the bright spirit that you are."

"Headmaster Dumbledore said that you had the brightest soul he'd ever known." I brought both arms around him when he shivered. "That spirit is still there, Sev. It's just hidden away beneath all the pain of being a Death Eater. Don't give up on yourself, please."

"I'll try not to." There was a quiver in his voice and I think he might have shed a few tears into my hair but then I was blotting a couple of my own on his sweater.

He held me for a long time while we watched the otters play. Only my growling stomach brought us up for the walk back to the cottage. It was almost two before we got back and he let me help him make the sandwiches that we devoured in front of the fire. We were both pretty relaxed by the time we finished and I snagged a couple of pillows from the couch to curl up on.

Severus had just put another log on the fire when I tugged him down with me. He looked a little unsure but cooperated nicely when I pulled down the blanket, too. I wanted him relaxed when we did a little light reading. I'd searched the shelves and found a copy of one of the books that I'd been reading on tantric beliefs. I firmly did not think about why Headmaster Dumbledore might have it here in his cottage.

"Now, let's see what the index has to say about sexual trauma." I said jauntily, pretending not to notice the way that his hand shook while patting the blanket over us. "Oh, there's a lot here."

He cleared his throat. "Look under power gathering."

I shot a look at him and saw the misery in his eyes before they dropped. So I looked at the subheadings and sure enough it was there, page 245-248. Turning to the first page, I started reading. Ouch, this sounded incredibly painful. I hurried to the countering of such a spell and read it out loud.

"First the traumatized partner must be made comfortable with their own body. Self-hatred is common and can have lasting effects in every part of their life. A loving touch must be soothed everywhere until no taint of what has come before is left." I stopped reading and laid the book aside. "Will you let me touch you, Severus? I've never touched anyone like that before."

His eyes were tightly closed and his hands were shaking. "He always made me come to him naked when it was time for my 'lessons'. I was flawed, he said but he would just have to make do with me until someone better came along."

Voldemort was so going to regret hurting Severus.

I vowed that as fiercely as I'd ever vowed anything before. "You are not flawed. You were so beautiful in the shower this morning. Please let me touch you."

He turned his head towards me and those dark, beautiful eyes blinked away unshed tears when he whispered. "As you wish."

There'd be none of that, I decided. "Of course, you need to touch me, too. It's only fair, so I'll know what feels good."

A tiny smile twitched the corners of his mouth when what I had said finally got through to him. "Fair has nothing to do with it, Harry."

"Good." I smiled at him and sat up to peel out of my sweater, throwing it on the couch behind us before starting to unbutton my shirt. A long slender hand stopped my fingers and I looked up into frightened eyes. "Please, Sev, I want to at least try."

"So brave, you are so brave." He took a deep breath then another before batting my hands aside so he could tackle the first button. His hands were shaking but they steadied the lower he got. Then he was slipping my shirt off and the look on his face would have made me blush if I hadn't already started to swell.

He noticed of course but all he did was slowly drift a single finger over the growing bulge. Then he pushed me down gently and unzipped my pants, drawing them off along with my underwear. I swear I could feel his gaze like a hand ghosting over my body like a caress. We'd left our shoes by the back door so all he had left were my socks then I was naked. The rug beneath us was a soft, silky weave that felt really good to my overheated skin.

I think I would have been embarrassed except for the look in his eyes, the starved look that made me swell even harder. Then those long elegant hands were moving slowly up my legs until they reached my groin and I thought I'd come without him even touching me. But then he did that one finger thing around the crown and I came all over us both.

"Oh," was all he said before bringing his finger to his mouth and licking it. If I hadn't just come harder than I ever had before, I might have laughed at the look of surprise on his face.

But I was pretty much a quivering heap at that moment, unable to respond in any way, which was probably a good thing since what he did next almost made me shout. He leaned in and lapped at my skin where I'd made a mess. His tongue was slightly raspy and his breath was hotter than the fire. I burned everywhere he licked me and my moan surprised us both.

He immediately stopped what he was doing and sent a panicked look up at me. I raised a shaky hand and touched his arm. "That wasn't a bad moan, Sev. I think it was what page 76 calls an 'oh, my God, he's licking me' kind of moan."

His eyebrow went up in that little quirk, that I used to think was sardonic. "Page 76?"

Now, I had to blush. "Um, the Wizard Kama Sutra."

"That was in the Library?" He'd gone back to his cleaning and I was having a really hard time concentrating on the conversation since most of my tiny little mind was otherwise occupied.

"Shelf 69 in the Self-Development section." I managed while wondering how he was making me hard again.

He stopped what he was doing and bit his lip to keep from laughing. "69?"

"Yeah, I thought that was pretty appropriate myself, especially when I read chapter 12 on Same Sex Loving." I was pretty proud of making him laugh out loud again. I was mostly clean now so I sat up and put a hand on his chest, just letting it rest there until he was down to a chuckle. "Please let me undress you, Sev."

If he wasn't careful he'd bite all the way through his lip. I leaned in and kissed away the pain. Well, at least the pain that I could see, there was a whole ocean inside of him that would take some time to heal. But at least he was going to try for me because he was nodding jerkily and pulling his sweater off. Then it was my turn to start unbuttoning him, slowly but surely exposing him to my gaze.

And he was beautiful. I'd seen the occasional bare boy chest after a Quidditch game when we were all changing clothes but his was so much ... bigger. His clothes hid his broad shoulders and tapering torso. He didn't have any more hair than I did but his muscles were much more defined. His nipples were hard peaks and I pushed his shirt off while wondering what they might taste like.

But the trembling ripples that raced across his skin told me that we'd gone far enough for the moment. I tossed his shirt up with mine and leaned in to kiss him again. He tasted a little different and I wondered what it could be before I blushed, remembering where his tongue had been. But

my hands were still busy with the buttons on his pants. This had to be that multi-tasking that Professor McGonagall was always talking about.

With this kind of incentive, I think I could get to like it.

His skin was soft beneath my fingers except for the little raised lines that I could feel with my fingertips. He raised his hips just a little so I could slide his pants completely off and then his socks. His skin felt cool and I pulled the blanket over us both while I cuddled as close to him as possible.

"Thank you, Severus. You're beautiful everywhere." Those tremors were back but I wasn't going to push any harder right now. So I faked a yawn that turned real once my jaw almost unhinged. "I think we need a nap."

I made sure we were touching everywhere and I kissed the shoulder I was lying on. But part of my mind was plotting a campaign to free him from the old fears that had kept him a prisoner all these years. I'd discovered a rather surprising possessiveness when it came to the man in my arms.

Voldemort couldn't have him.

He was mine now.

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Chapter 4 - Severus by Athea  
Severus

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I awoke with a start from what might have been a bad dream except for my valiant protector. The one who kept watch and woke me with a kiss. Harry was murmuring my name over and over while he tongued washed my face as tenderly as any mother cat did for her kittens.

"Severus, you taste so good that I may give up my favorite chocolate frogs for you." He licked beneath my ear and I felt my groin twitch.

"It will be ... ah ... difficult for you to indulge in me ... oh," I shuddered all the way down to my toes when he gently bit my earlobe.

He stopped to make sure that it was a good 'oh' before grinning and moving on down my neck, my unclothed neck. How in the world had he talked me into removing my clothes? My short-term memory seemed to be faulty. Or maybe it was just my willpower that was failing miserably against such a wholehearted seduction?

"Sev, what are the faint ridges I keep feeling?"

The innocent question quelled any swelling that might have started. "Harry ..." how do you tell someone that the ridges were whip marks that had finally healed after repeated sessions with my good friend Dumbledore? "Souvenirs of Voldemort."

Silence then what might have been a tear dropped on my skin, "Bastard, I wish ..."

"I know. So do I." I let my hand stroke the soft dark hair on the bowed head. "They don't hurt anymore. It was a long time ago."

"It's the scars on the inside that still hurt." Those bright green eyes were intent on mine. "They're

the ones that we need to heal so we can love each other."

Out of the mouths of babes, I shivered. "I don't know if they can be healed. I was in therapy with a healer-mage for almost two years when I returned from exile."

"Did you blame Dumbledore for sending you to Him?"

Oh, now that was perceptive. "At first, when Voldemort started the special lessons, I wished with all my heart that Dumbledore would sweep in and save me. But it just got harder and harder until I gave up hope of ever being free again. And I did blame him for sacrificing me to the Dark. But it wasn't his fault."

"No, but it wasn't your fault either. When you left his study the first time and said that you wouldn't be a ... a whore for the Light, that was the first time he realized what He had done to you." Harry's finger was tracing each small ridge as if it were a magic maze with a treasure in the center. "I wish he had rescued you before Voldemort hurt you so badly. I wish I could go back in time and save you."

"The past is just that ... the past. I try not to think about it although the nightmares bring the memories back." I found my hand stroking his hair like I would a cat. It was so soft and silky that I had the odd thought that I'd like it to be longer so I could feel it against my skin.

But before that thought could take hold an electric shock hit my body and I jerked hard. Harry's head came up frowning. "Did I hurt you?"

"What?" I looked down and found his fingers soothing my nipple. "What did you do?"

"The book said that nipples are erogenous zones. I just kissed one." He looked guilty and I grasped his hand to bring it to my lips.

"It just startled me, you did not hurt me. Let me think a moment." For the first time, I sent my mind back to my first lessons to see why that caress was so shocking. When the memory came, I closed my eyes and trembled. "He would twist them hard until I bled, then chastise me when I cried."

He nodded then gently touched the one over my heart. "Open your eyes, Sev. Watch me, Severus. See me, not Him."

I held onto his hand and watched that dark head slowly lean in and a pink tongue very gently touch my nipple. It still felt like an electric shock but somehow not as bad. This was Harry touching me, not a dark specter from my past. "Keep reminding me, Harry."

"You've got it, Sev. I like the way you taste. Maybe some chocolate syrup right about," he switched nipples, "here."

Odd, those shocks were starting to feel quite pleasant.

And there was a definite twitch of interest in my groin. I would not think beyond the next few moments, although I was beginning to wonder what it would be like to explore him this way. Perhaps all those nerve endings weren't dead after all. Gentle lapping felt so good that I almost closed my eyes but it was too astonishing to see that dark head so close to my own skin.

His hands moved gently over me, following the ridges and smoothing his caring healing over each and every scar. What in the world had I done to deserve this attention? I felt unexpected tears well and I squeezed tight to keep them from falling. He sensed my distress and slid up into my arms, holding me close and kissing my throat.



"We have plenty of time, Sev." Harry said simply and I returned his embrace.

"I think perhaps it is time that I ... touched you." I wasn't sure that I could give him the same pleasure he'd given me but I wanted to try.

"Yes!" He crowed and flopped by my side with an expectant look that brought an unaccustomed smile to my face. "Go for it, Sev."

"Slang, Mr. Potter?" I let my fingers drift up his arm to his chest and the brown nipples that peaked even before I could touch them.

"Sorry, Professor." He grinned, completely unrepentant.

But I was busy with gentle touches to his firm young flesh. His gasps told me that I was doing something right. I finally understand why he wanted to taste me. The musk that blossomed on my tongue when I dragged it over a pert nipple was instantly addictive. Doing it again, I found myself listening for his moan.

"Oh, Sev," was all he said but his hands carded through my hair as if to keep me there.

I switched nipples before continuing down the center of his torso to the concave navel where I tickled him a bit. That started him giggling and squirming, so I did it again. The sound of his laughter was a positive aphrodisiac. My groin was twitching for the first time in twenty-one years. But I was determined to ignore it in favor of tasting more of young Harry.

And he was magnificently erect when I smoothed my hands over his stomach to the dark patch of curling hair that surrounded his organ. His parents had had him circumcised and the long clean line of him was pleasing to my sight. The crown was red and swollen and I remembered what it felt like to taste him. Taking courage, I bent and daringly licked the single tear of fluid from the small slit.

He hiccuped and moaned, his hands falling from my head to the silky rug. I think he feared constraining me as Voldemort had done and I appreciated his tact. I'd been raped that way more than once but Harry was smaller than the dark sorcerer was and I was able to accommodate him quite easily in my mouth and throat. Like my earliest lessons in potions, my deep-throating technique had never been forgotten.

"Sev! Oh ... Sev ... how?" He was growing incoherent and leaking more copiously than ever before. "Sev!"

I sucked lightly and drank down his offering like my favorite potion. Really, Harry was quite delicious. Perhaps I needed to taste him regularly? His hands were limp on the rug; in fact he was quite limp everywhere. But the smile on his face could only be deemed blissful. I felt a moment of pride that I had caused that reaction.

"Sev," his whisper brought me up to pull him into my arms. I discovered that I liked holding him, feeling his warm skin next to mine. He radiated heat like the fire we lay before.

"Did you ... enjoy it?" I wasn't sure how to ask him his impressions.

"Wonderful. Terrifying." He sighed happily and opened his eyes to look into mine. "I think maybe you melted my brain."

"Oh dear, you didn't have all that much to start with. Whatever shall you do when that little has evaporated?" I dared to tease him.

"Hah! Very funny, Sev." He stuck his tongue out at me and I swooped in for a kiss, taking custody of the little pink tormentor before he could say anything else.

Harry sucked on my tongue and his hands caressed my back, finding more of those ridges that distressed him so. But all he did was soothe gentle fingers over them while kissing me so tenderly that I was moved to tears. Only the experience of a lifetime kept them from falling. He sensed that something was wrong and pulled away to look into my eyes.

"Sorry," I managed to say before losing the inner battle and burying my face in his shoulder. It was the first time since I was fourteen that I'd cried like this. I sobbed until I was limp, only then hearing Harry's voice saying my name softly over and over like one of those chants that I'd been teaching for the last four years.

"Severus." He has such wise eyes sometimes, an older soul looking through young eyes. "It's probably too soon to say this ... and I've never felt" he smiled such a strange smile, "... this before but I think ... I love you."

Time froze.

No. I couldn't do this.

I was too old.

Too scarred and flawed.

He had his whole life in front of him.

I closed my eyes to reject his magnificent gift.

"I ... I love you, too."

What? Where the hell had that come from?

Harry whooped and pushed me onto my back, swarming over me and branding me with his heat. His mouth devoured mine with his new knowledge and all I could do was hang onto him and submit to the overpowering tsunami of his emotions. They flooded through me, sweeping away the pain and anguish and scouring me clean of the old memories.

And for the first time since I was a child, I felt my groin twitch and slowly come to life. Harry felt it also and he slowly pulled away, moving carefully to my side and putting out a hesitant hand to touch me. I didn't wilt or fade but only swelled harder. We both watched in amazement while my shaft stood tall.

"Wow," he whispered. "You're beautiful and so big."

The single finger became his whole hand, gripping me lightly at first then harder when I didn't collapse. I watched, fascinated by this singular occurrence in my life. It appeared that Harry had single-handedly raised me from the dead past into a dizzying future. The moment a tear of liquid welled, he lapped at it with that little pink tongue that had so aroused me earlier.

One lick than another while I seemed to weep continuously for him and his hand began a tender stroking that felt better than anything, I'd ever felt before. Little shivers raced across my skin when he tried to fit my flared crimson crown into his mouth, the way I'd done for him. His heat enflamed me further and it was all I could do not to thrust up. But that might frighten him so I gripped the rug hard to keep from gripping his head.

"Harry, I think I may be close." I wasn't sure having never experienced this before.

He grinned, his eyes finding mine but not moving anything except his hands and tongue. The warm sucking finally swamped me with sensation. I felt like liquid fire, similar to a volcano I'd seen once, exploding with molten lava. I seemed to come forever, his warm mouth catching me. I'd once soaked in a hot spring and that languid heat had relaxed all of me until I was quite limp everywhere.

That's exactly what I felt like now. I forced my eyes open to see what I was feeling. Harry was busy cleaning my groin of the seed he hadn't been able to swallow. I was so sensitive that each little rasp made my skin ripple.

"Harry." I needed to say his name to make sure this was real. "Thank you."

His smile seemed to light up the dusk that was overtaking the room. "You're very welcome. Now I know what I was tasting this afternoon. We're both kind of bitter sweet when we come."

I found a chuckle somewhere and he joined in, sliding up and into my arms. I wanted to never move again, just stay like this forever. Somehow, when I least expected it, I'd found the one who completed me. Who made sense of the horror that had been my life. In a very real sense, Harry was my first just as I was his.

Part of the prophecy came back to me. 'Thou are the first, Thou art the last.'

He would be my last, too. I would never have another but him, even if I weren't his last. His life was just beginning and there were many paths ahead of him, but for awhile we would walk this path together. The rest of the prophecy beckoned and I saw dimly what might happen if we did create a child of love.

My wife, Ophelia had used artificial insemination to become pregnant. When Thomas was born, I'd felt content for the first time in such a long time. He was a beautiful little boy and I'd begun to unfreeze a little. But it wasn't to be. Our last argument blew up to gargantuan proportions and she coldly told me that she was taking Thomas and leaving me.

When I protested, she took great delight in telling me that she'd used someone else's sperm because mine was sterile. I still remembered the sinking feeling that hit me then. Voldemort had won yet another piece of my soul. Everything he touched was blighted and all of me was changed. When Dumbledore came to give me the news that they'd been killed in a train wreck, I gave up the fight and let myself freeze over.

But now I was feeling again and for the first time in over twenty years, I could see my choices laid out before me in shining detail. Soon I would make the decision that would govern my life for the foreseeable future. Whichever one I made, Harry would be a part of it. I couldn't give him up now.

I no longer belonged to Voldemort.

I was Harry's to do with as he pleased.

And just maybe, we'd create something beautiful for the Light.

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Chapter 5 - Harry by Athea

Harry

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My growling stomach finally sent us in search of food. We both dressed in the bare minimum and raided the cupboards and fridge for our supper. I kept sneaking little peeks at Severus. He was so ... so relaxed. I'd never seen him like this before and I had to pinch myself to remind me that I wasn't dreaming.

Yep, it still hurt so we must have made love again.

Of course, I could just keep licking my lips for a reminder. His salty taste was odd but maybe I would get used to it. Popping bread into the toaster, I grinned. I wanted to get very used to him. But what did he want? I snuck another look only to find him smiling at me while he stirred something in the cast iron skillet.

"Harry, it works better if you push the lever down first." He told me gently and I looked back at the toaster to see it just sitting there.

Rolling my eyes, I pushed and watched the slices disappear. "What are we having for supper, besides toast?"

"Scrambled eggs a la Aphrodite and no, I will not give you the recipe. It's a family secret." He went back to stirring while I thought about secrets.

"When we get back to Hogwarts, we have to go back to being ... distant, don't we?" I hated the thought.

"Yes, for both our protection." Severus smiled at me a little shyly. "But we still have six days to make enough memories to tide us over. You'll be starting your fifth year and now that you don't have to go back to the Dursleys for the summer, we can spend some of the summer break together. If ... you want to?"

"Of course, I want to." I decided that he was too far away, stepping over and sliding my arms around his waist. Those little ridges striped his back from his neck down to the waistband of his boxers. They must have hurt terribly and I was determined to not leave an inch of his skin unloved, starting at the top and kissing my way down his spine.

"Harry," he sighed my name and I hid a smile against his warm skin. "I will probably have to be twice as stern and sneering in class to make up for this ... urge that I have to turn around and pounce on you."

I snickered. "That could make for a very interesting class. Hermione and Ron would both have kittens."

"And Draco Malfoy would have some very dangerous gossip to pass onto his father." His voice was suddenly dry and I needed to see his face.

I tugged until he was far enough away from the stove so I could slip under his arm. His eyes were a little frightened but I knew about fear, it sometimes seemed to be a permanent part of my life. "He will not have anything to report. I'll take care of Draco."

Those black eyes, which had once been so cold and hard, were suddenly warm as a summer day. "My fierce protector, I shall leave him to you while I take care of his father."

That sounded like a fair division of labor since Lucius Malfoy made my skin crawl. "Okay, Sev, we'll take it one day at a time and maybe the headmaster will loan us the cottage for a week or two?"

He set me aside so he could stir the golden eggs on one side of the pan and the simmering beans in the other half. I wondered what spell did that. "I expect that he'd be amenable to that request. The toast is done."

"Yikes, have you seen the butter?" I got down a plate and pulled out the first two slices of toast before putting the next two in. The butter dish floated over my shoulder and a knife followed it. "Thanks."

We finished making supper and took our plates into the front room so we could sit by the fire. Severus put another log onto the glowing coals and soon little flames danced higher and higher, lighting the room with their warmth. I mixed everything together on my plate and chased it all with my toast instead of my fork. He chuckled at the resulting mess while neatly consuming everything on his own plate.

Setting the empty plates aside, we cuddled in the little nest from that afternoon. I was content to just lie in his arms and enjoy the warmth but his voice broke the silence. "Harry, we need to talk about where this is going."

Tilting my head a little so I could see his face, I agreed. "Okay, it looks like we could, how did it go? 'The circle be cast in flesh.' We're both fully functioning now."

He chuckled a little and pulled be closer. "Yes, indeed, you've cured my problem with your delightful self. The spell of conception is one with which I am familiar. Part of it is potion based and the rest is a mage-level spell that I can cast."

"What kind of potion?" I had my doubts about drinking any of the potions that I'd learned so far.

"You don't have to drink this one." He blushed a little. "It's one that the person who is going to conceive, ah ... receives."

"Receives? You mean like a bath or something?"

"Not ... exactly." Severus was turning redder and redder.

I pulled out of his arms and sat upright by his side. "What . . . exactly?"

He sat up, too, looking everywhere but at me. "It's a douche or an enema depending on whether a female or a male is being impregnated."

"Wait a minute. Are you saying that male wizards can get pregnant any time they want?"

"Well, yes." He shrugged and finally looked at me. "Same sex pairings among wizards are more normal perhaps, then in the Muggle world. And the need to have a child is not exclusively a female prerogative. I know when my ... son was born, I felt something that I'd never felt before. Not quite pride but something like it."

I'd forgotten that he had had a family. Should I ask about them? Would talking about it hurt him? Suddenly I needed to know. "What happened?"

"Ophelia married me because the Council of Wizards thought our bloodlines would produce a superior wizard." His voice was so dry that it creaked, his eyes so far away that I wondered where he was. "We had ... trouble conceiving since I was impotent. Spells took care of most of it and she never expressed any dissatisfaction until just before she left me."

"But she did get pregnant so something worked." I said gently, not liking the defeated look in his eyes.

"It seemed to. Thomas was born at Midsummer and when I held him for the first time, I couldn't get over the feeling that I'd finally accomplished something good and right." He fell silent again and the terrible despair was there again in his eyes.

I couldn't stand that so I reached out and tugged him into my arms. "Let it out, Severus. I've got you."

He was trembling and his arms held me closer while he buried his face against my shoulder. "We had an argument and she told me she was leaving me, taking Thomas with her. I said he was my son, too. She laughed and told me that she'd used another's sperm because I was sterile. That Thomas was not my son and never had been. They left then and I went into a depression that I might not have come out of except for Dumbledore coming to give me the news about the train wreck that killed them both. He brought me back to Hogwarts and probably saved my sanity."

I hated her.

I wanted to call her out of the grave and tell her just what I thought of such cruelty.

I held his shaking body and wished every torment I'd ever heard of on her. My Severus had really terrible luck with the people who should have cherished him. Even Dumbledore had contributed to putting him into hell. That was not going to happen with me. I'd protect him with everything I had.

But right now, I needed to heal this part of him. "Severus, I love you. I will never, ever lie to you or keep anything from you that you need to know."

"Harry," I'd never heard my name breathed like that before.

I liked it. I liked it a lot but even better, I loved how he showed me his own feelings. His lips were warmer than sunshine and his tongue burned mine with his fire. I was suddenly hard as a rock and moaning into our kiss. He lowered me to the rug and kissed down my body again until he got to my groin where he swallowed me whole. It was fast and furious but glorious all the same.

I exploded down his throat and he sucked me dry. All I could do was lie there panting while he leisurely tongued my skin clean. "Severus, I believe that I may never move again."

"Really? Pity that. I was thinking that a hot bath would be a very nice way to end this beautiful day." He leaned up and shared my taste with me, slowly almost languidly.

That sounded good, too. "I like it. You're going to have to help me up first though. I think part of me melted again."

His chuckle made me smile. "Thank you, Harry. I promise never to lie to you, too. I've never felt like this before so you'll have to excuse my bumbling."

"You do not bumble, Severus." I wouldn't let him speak badly of the man that I now knew I loved. "You do tend to keep everything inside though and you may need to work on that a little. But if you forget then I'll remind you."

He stood and pulled me upright. "I'm sure that you will, love. For now, let's take a hot bath and I'll tell you more about conception spells."

Sounded good to me. Instead of the shower, Severus poured some bath oil in the big claw foot bathtub and followed it with hot water. We were already mostly undressed but I made sure that I slid off his boxers.

I was half-hard again and I wondered if that was normal. When I asked him, he laughed out loud and told me that it was exactly how a sixteen-year old would react and a great compliment to him. We soaped each other leisurely while he told me more about the channels of power that were present in every wizard. In youngsters, they were quite small as big as a pencil. But they would grow in size, the more power that was taken in. Those channels could be shifted to adjust to various needs as the wizard grew in power.

That kind of made sense to me since I'd felt changes in my body the last two years especially. It felt like I was expanding inside and there were times that I was sure that it had to be noticeable. But no one had ever said anything so I'd shrugged it off. I listened carefully to his explanation of how the creation channel ran from the heart chakra to the root chakra. When creating new life, the channels that flowed from the spleen and solar plexus were incorporated into a pouch that nourished the baby as it grew.

"Wait a minute, those channels are the ones we use for protective magic and well-being. The person who's using them for a baby wouldn't be able to defend themselves against a magical attack or fight off sickness." I was lying on his chest half-floating in the hot water.

"True, it's why the person who's carrying the child has to stay in the safety of a magic haven ... like Hogwarts." He cupped my cheek with his hand. "It's why I need to be the one who carries the Child of Love. You need to be free to go where your classes and the war against Voldemort take you."

I didn't like that idea one bit. I'd be footloose and fancy free while he was stuck at the school for nine months. But when I would have argued, those long elegant fingers pressed against my lips and he smiled a smile that I'd never seen before, tender and caring. "Harry, let me do this for the Light. Bring life instead of death into the world."

"All right." Sighing, I kissed his fingers and nodded. "I love you, Severus and I was a little scared about ... um, getting pregnant."

"You would have done it though because that's who you are, Harry Potter, Child of Light." He stroked my cheek. "There's a few new lessons that we need to practice before the full moon next Sunday. I think you'll like them."

"Really, will I have to study hard?" I leaned in and began laying small kisses all over his face. "Will there be homework lessons?"

"Indeed yes, but I think you'll enjoy them." He chuckled and sat up, bringing me with him. "First, we need to get out of the tub before we have one of those bathroom accidents that are so statistically enumerated every year."

We dried each other and decided on my bed this time. We didn't have to bother with pajamas and I was looking forward to the start of my new lessons. Severus brought a bottle of massage oil and a towel with him. I thought a massage would be just the ticket after our strenuous day, but that's when he explained what he'd be massaging. I gulped hard and thought about having part of him inside of me ... down there.

He offered to go first but I didn't want to hurt him and I didn't have the faintest idea how to go about it. I'd wilted the moment he told me about anal penetration. He just chuckled and told me that with a little stimulation, I'd be ready in a moment. I didn't call him a liar but part of me was quite certain that I'd do no such thing.

Well, that will teach me to believe him. I lay down on the towel on my back so I could watch him. At first, I was so tense that he refused to even try because he'd hurt me. That's when I realized

that the only memories he must have were of Voldemort raping him. And that thought relaxed me enough for him to slide one finger inside of me. It felt uncomfortable, very uncomfortable but the little flexes also made my penis start to harden again.

Then he touched something and it felt like a lightning bolt had hit me. I moaned and he tensed but I clamped around him to keep him from leaving. "No, Sev, it's all right. It just felt really, really good. What is it?"

He smiled a rather shaky smile. "The prostate gland in both Muggle and wizard males is the pleasure gland. When stimulated, it's supposed to produce feelings of heat. Does it truly?"

"Wow," was all I could say when he brushed against it again. "Yes! Great, better than great. It feels so hot that I'm burning up."

"Excellent. Now just stay relaxed for me while I try for two fingers." He came out slowly and I realized that the tension in my back relaxed, too.

I might be sore later but right now, I just wanted him back inside of me. More of the golden oil and his finger was back, wiggling a little until I relaxed enough for him to slide two fingers in. That felt even more uncomfortable but the fire was back, too. I was hard as a rock by now and he leaned in from between my legs to suck me all the way in. So now, I was on fire both outside and inside.

Clutching the sheets instead of his hair, I could help but thrust up a little. But when I came back down, it seemed to drive him farther inside of me. Talk about a rock and a hard place, I was going quietly nuts when I finally thrust up and came in his mouth. He slowly backed out of me while sucking me dry.

I was a quivering heap but now that I knew how to do it. It was his turn.

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Chapter 6 - Dumbledore by Athea  
Dumbledore

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I gave them three days before I sent a message via Hedwig. They were either at daggers drawn or they were ready to think about the prophecy. I must admit to extreme curiosity as to which had occurred. I was worried about Severus and had been for some time. Now that I realized all that we'd missed when he came back to us, I was even more shocked and appalled.

Forgiving myself took years, especially when I had to inform him of Ophelia and my great-godson Thomas' deaths. To this day, I'm not sure why he was already depressed when I arrived. Taking him back to Hogwarts was the only thing I could do and luckily the Potions Master slot was open. He'd always been good with them and he'd graduated quite a number of good apothecary mages.

But the depression had remained and I was curious whether young Harry could get through to him. I knew that we could let the Child of Love prophecy go for another twelve years when the year of fire came again. There was however, another reason that I'd set these events in action. Harry needed the stability of a family that loved him completely.

Severus was a tenacious man and if his heart could be engaged, Harry could have no better defender. Whichever of them carried the child to term, both parents would love him or her with all their hearts. Finally, they would both have someone who loved them unconditionally. And if the match took hold, they'd each have a mate of power to watch over all three of them.



Gordius, Severus' owl, returned with an invitation to visit at teatime. That worked quite well for me and I went back to my work with a lighter heart. It sounded like they hadn't killed each other yet. I'd still take a peace offering with me, some of Harry's favorite chocolate frogs perhaps. I settled a dispute between two of the houses and fended off an inquiry from Malfoy about his dear friend Snape.

I doubted very much that they were friends. Severus had better taste than that. I told him that the potion's master had been exposed to the polka-dot mumps and was in quarantine until we knew if he had contracted that dread disease. He looked quite taken aback and I quickly swore him to secrecy to prevent any rumors from the school. He agreed too quickly and I smiled at the thought of Severus' return to teaching with that gossip around him.

It would liven things up considerably. About five, I procured some frogs and put up a note that I was taking a nap and wasn't to be disturbed. Then stepping through the bookcase, I came out in the cottage where I'd spent some of my most restful leaves. The living room was a little untidy and I could have sworn that most of the pillows had been on the floor until very recently.

Odd but odder yet was the sound of laughter from the kitchen. I quietly tiptoed to the doorway in time to see Severus pull Harry onto his lap and kiss him. I froze for a moment before hastily pulling back but neither of them was paying any attention to anything but each other.

But with the very air sizzling around the two of them, I began to rethink my celibacy. It had been a while since I'd taken a lover; the school took up much of my time and energy. Perhaps Minerva would like to go out for dinner? While I was pondering my alone state, they must have broken their kiss for the laughter reappeared.

"None of that, young man. I have no need of any aphrodisiacs when I have you to keep me on the qui vive." Could that be Severus' voice?

"It isn't for you, Sev. I was thinking that Dumbledore is stuck in a rut and might need a little help to finally ask Professor McGonagall out." Harry's laughing tones almost made me forgive his insinuation that I was slow.

"Well, I guess a little couldn't hurt. Sprinkle it on the lemon bars but for heaven's sake don't eat any of them yourself." Severus might have sounded stern if it hadn't been for the chuckle. "I'm going to need a stamina potion to keep up with your sex drive the way it is."

"It's all your fault, Sev, for being so sexy. I can't be blamed for attacking you every spare moment."

The sounds of another kiss were quite distinctive and I tiptoed back to the bookcase. It looked like my plan had succeeded beyond all expectations. Goodness, I blinked at the seascape over the mantle; they'd fallen in love. Severus' laughter had been absent for much too long, twenty-one years too long. If Harry could release that precious emotion then the Child of Love might really have a chance to be born now.

It had been centuries since the last one. I smiled delightedly and gave myself a pat on the back. It was time to let them know I was here. "Hello! Is tea ready? I brought frogs."

Severus appeared in a moment with his shirt rather haphazardly tucked in. "Albus, sit down. Harry is bringing in the tea tray."

I chose the wing back chair so they could sit together on the couch. Harry appeared carrying a very loaded tray. He was biting his lip with the effort to keep everything from tilting. Severus pulled up a small table and watched him like a hawk, ready to spell it up should it spill. But he got it down safely and soon I had a steaming cup in one hand and one of the lemon bars in the other.

Soothing my conscious, I decided I'd been living a very staid life lately. I could use some livening up.

"Congratulations, it appears that you are well on your way to a friendship." I smiled at them and watched them exchange a look.

"More than a friendship, Albus," Severus still had that slightly stunned look of a man in love. "We have spoken about the prophecy and we ... would ..."

"We'll do it." Harry helped his lover out. "Sev wants to carry the baby but we have a couple of questions."

"Good, I'll answer them the best I can. It's been almost five centuries since the last Child of Love." The lemon bar was quite good.

"There may be a problem, Dumbledore. I'm sterile although no longer impotent." Severus spoke hesitantly with a quick look at Harry.

"I'm more glad than I can say that 'unable' has become 'able'. But you're not sterile, Severus." I assured him.

And that's when I heard what Ophelia had told him about Thomas before leaving him. The witch, the damnable witch had actually told him that he wasn't Thomas' father. I saw Harry slip an arm around his lover and could see from his face that we agreed about her nasty self.

"Severus, I can tell you unconditionally that you are not sterile. One of the tests that you go through every year for the physical would have told us that. And I know for a fact that Thomas was your son. His blood test came back with Wenton and Snape markers. Quite high markers actually, he would have been a fine wizard had he lived."

The poor man sat as if pole axed. I couldn't believe that he'd been keeping this horrible secret for all these years. No wonder he'd hidden away from the rest of us. He'd thought himself a failure in more ways than one. Thank goodness that Harry had broken through his hard shell, draining away all the poison that had filled him, first from Voldemort and then from Ophelia.

Tears were sliding down his face while he looked blindly at the fire. When his cup began to tilt, Harry rescued it. Putting both of their cups aside, he curled up in Severus' lap and hugged him close, rocking him gently. Severus' arms came around him and he buried his head in Harry's shoulder.

"See, I told you that you were a great father, Sev. He was your son and he would have realized that. He was so lucky to have you for a father." He laid his head on top of his lover's. "Maybe he'll come back to us."

"I'm not sterile." The muffled words were barely audible.

"Nope, not sterile. Not hopeless or unable or any of those evil things that Voldemort and Ophelia told you." Harry's eyes weren't all that dry themselves but his voice was steady. "Remember that I told you that I love you and now I'm even luckier that you love me."

His response was unheard by me but not by Harry, if that beaming smile was any indication. I finished my tea and waited for Severus to grow calm. It seemed that I'd been extremely remiss in my care of my only godson. This time I would do better, I think Harry will see to that.

Finally, Severus' head came up and he blew his nose on the handkerchief that Harry handed him. The look of peace on his face was one that I had never seen and I rejoiced at his newfound

serenity. He looked at me and his smile was quite the nicest thing I'd seen in ages.

"Then, the last objection being taken care of, I guess we are ready to start preparing me for the ceremony." He moved Harry off his lap and picked up their cups again. "We've been going over the exercises that will link all four channels together. I remember the potion for conception but I'll need some of the ingredients from the lab."

"Yes, of course. Make a list and I'll procure them from a private supplier. I don't want anyone snooping around the lab to spot something gone."

The sharp look was much more familiar. "Snooping? Who are you talking about?"

"Malfoy Senior asked today after his dear friend Severus."

Harry stiffened and the fire in his eyes was not something I'd seen before. "Isn't there a way to keep him out of Severus' rooms?"

Severus smiled at his young lover and ran a calming hand over the stiff shoulders. "It's better that he looks around now and sees that my rooms are lonely and barren of all good cheer. Once we're back, we'll make sure that neither he nor anyone else can get back in."

Their eyes met and an entire conversation went on with just the lift of an eyebrow and a little grin. Really, this was quite fascinating. I'd had no idea that they were so ideally matched. I'd been hoping for friendship and instead they'd found a love that grew deeper with each passing moment.

The last time I'd seen emotions this strong was when Harry's parents met and loved. How very astonishing, I felt fifty years younger in the reflected glow of their joy. "Ahem! Back to the spell, please. Once you've used the potion, you'll need a safe place to consummate your love. Have you given thought to that?"

"Yes," Severus brought his eyes to me. "The safest place is the hot springs deep inside the mountain. If you'll set a guard over the entrance, no one will be able to interfere. And the earth magic will mask the flaring energies at the moment of conception."

"Why earth magic?" Harry looked from one to the other of us. "What 'flaring energies'?"

I'd more experience at explaining these energies. "Earth magic is slow, very slow, but also incredibly dense. The flaring energies will be the combination of your fire meeting Severus' water. Conception spells have an incredible display of power and light. Being underground and in water will keep anyone but the two of you experiencing the surge of energies."

"Brilliant!" Harry said with a sly glance at Severus.

"Slang, Potter." He admonished him with a mere shadow of his previously haughty self.

"Goodness, the two of you are going to have to work on your masks once you return to Hogwarts." I joked and caught the guilty looks they exchanged. "Never mind, I'm quite sure that you're up to the playacting needed to keep both of you safe. Now, I'll need another wizard to complete the guards. I believe that Minerva would enjoy helping out and she'd be safe with your secret."

"Why bring someone else in?" Harry was instantly suspicious.

"The four elements must be accounted for when the guards are placed. Harry, you provide fire, Severus is water personified, I am strongest in earth and Minerva is a master of air. That way,

nothing can get in to harm you and nothing you do can get out." I explained a sixth year concept and watched him catch on immediately. Perhaps I should make some adjustments in the curriculum?

"She would be perfect, Albus. Perhaps you should take her out to dinner tonight and ask her?" Severus sounded perfectly innocent but Harry's eyes were watching me finish a second lemon tart.

"What a good idea, Sev. I haven't been on a date in almost twelve years. Why I'm feeling quite elated now that we've got a plan. Give me the list of ingredients to get from my private apothecary and I'll go back and get started. Now, you need to explore the hot springs before Sunday. I suggest that you spend the next two days doing that. Harry will need to practice holding you together while you reach inside of yourself to link the channels."

"That sounds dangerous, Sev, are you sure you want to do this?" Harry looked a little worried and Severus picked up his hand and placed a kiss in his palm.

It was quite the most erotic thing I'd ever witnessed.

"I want to carry our child more than I've ever wanted anything before." He said simply and I watched Harry melt into his arms. "I'll show you how it's done. It's really not all that dangerous, just a little tricky."

"Okay." I barely heard the answer but my eyes met my godson's and we nodded to each other. It was a little more than tricky but we'd get it done safely.

"Excellent, I thank you for the tea. May I take the lemon bars back with me? I don't believe I've ever eaten better."

Harry smothered a snort against Severus' chest then sat up looking innocently tousled. "I'll wrap them up for you, Headmaster. Perhaps Professor McGonagall would enjoy them, too?"

"What a good idea, they'll go well with the port I usually serve my guests after dinner." I smiled just as innocently back at him.

Severus looked a bit worried but he got up to get the list he'd made and Harry made a great show of wrapping the lemon tarts in wax paper. Taking both of them, I wished them a fond farewell and went back through the bookcase to my study. Closing and locking the portal behind me, I smiled at all we'd accomplished.

This Child of Love would be a very special child indeed.

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Chapter 7 - Severus by Athea

Severus

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The moment the bookcase closed behind Albus, I had an armful of laughing Harry. His chuckles were half relief and half-excitement. I know that I was still stunned by the revelations of the last hour. All these years I had believed two lies. The knowledge that small Thomas had indeed been my son was bittersweet. I would have to mourn him later, for now the realization of what was to come had a solidity that I'd never felt before.

The countdown had begun in earnest.

For the first time since I'd come to the cottage, I allowed myself to acknowledge that when we left here, I would be pregnant with our child. Our child, what an amazing concept that was.

"We're really going to do it, Sev." Strong hands cupped my face and I melted at the sight of two starry green eyes. "Really and truly create our child."

"It seems so, Harry. Once we get the rest of the ingredients, I'll distill the potion. Tomorrow we need to hike over to the hot springs and take some supplies with us." I was trying to plan ahead but my concentration was hard pressed to ignore the tempting body so close to mine.

"That's tomorrow, Sev, we've got tonight to celebrate one more nasty lie biting the dust. I knew that She wasn't telling the truth." He sounded downright vindictive and I hid a smile in his hair.

"My valiant protector, you were quite right. How shall we celebrate?" I smoothed my hands down his back to that pert ass that tempted me daily.

"Just a little more stretching and you can come inside of me." He pulled far enough away to look up into my eyes. "That's what I want, more than anything else."

"Are you sure? We're still so new that we could wait until after the spell is done." I was the one who was unsure. I feared hurting him worse than anything else.

"No, it's time for you to come inside of me, giving me your strength and power." He said simply with that beautiful smile that had melted all my barriers.

"Very well, Harry, you'll need an enema to clear the way." I was nervous but part of me yearned to know what it felt like from the giving point of view rather than the receiving.

"Yes!" He lit up and took my hand, pulling me towards the stairs. "We've got everything ready upstairs. I can hardly wait to feel you inside me."

I laughed out loud and felt my nerves settle a little. Harry had taken me five times already and it was still the most wondrous feeling in the world to feel him move within me. There'd been a little pain at first but nothing like the agony that had attended my raping by Voldemort. Harry had made sure that my eyes stayed open and fixed on him when he first slid inside of me.

'See me, Severus, see only me.'

And I had both seen and felt the love that he gave me with every look and thrust. For the first time, I knew what making love really meant. Every stroke he panted through was one more bad memory erased until all that was left was him, filling me to the brim with his love. I'd felt every sensation as if for the first time. In the wounded part of my soul, this time replaced the other one completely.

It was a gift I'd never expected to be given and I cherished it.

But now a second gift was being given and I was almost afraid to accept it. Surely the gods would look on my good fortune and decree a fate worse than any that had come before.

"Don't brood, Severus." Harry's voice broke through my introspection and I saw that he had us both completely stripped. "You deserve every single good thing that is possible, just the way that I do. Now, get me ready before I get nervous."

I kissed him with a chuckle. "You know me much too well, Harry. We shall have to be Academy Award actors after this week. You've destroyed every wall I had and each sour thought is completely gone."

"Good," he nodded sharply. "You hid behind them, alone with the pain, for much too long. Of course, if you hadn't, I would have come along too late to love you because some lucky wizard would have snapped you up."

I shook my head. "I'm beginning to think that we were fated from the moment either of us were a gleam in our parent's eyes."

"Kinky, Sev," he kissed me briefly before turning to the sink where we had our supplies. "Now, our child is a gleam in our eyes. We'll have an interesting story to tell him when he comes to us and asks us how we met."

"Good heavens, Harry. Talk about kinky." I held the bag while he measured in the herbs that I'd been using to clean myself out for him. He heated the water to just the right temp before adding it. For the first time, he looked a bit nervous and I wondered if he'd changed his mind. "Second thoughts?"

"No, just wondering how we do this? You always did it in private before."

"Ah, well, you can do it in private or you could lay across my lap while I fill you up." I offered.

He perked right up. "That sounds like fun. Where will you sit?"

"Right here on the loo." I sat and he stretched across my lap, face down. I used a little lotion on the guardian muscle that he'd insisted I keep stretching. "Ready?" At his nod, I inserted the nozzle and unpinched the tube.

"Yikes! It feels really hot." He squirmed a little and I smoothed my hand over those downy cheeks that had been tempting me since we arrived. "It feels odd."

"Bad odd or different odd?" I asked, while watching the bag begin to deflate.

"Really full odd. How much room is in there?" He said rather plaintively.

"More than you think, love. It's almost done." I finally was able to slip the nozzle out and lay the empty bag aside. "Hold it in now for a few moments."

"I think I'm getting dizzy, Sev." The blood was rushing to his head and I raised him up a little with my right arm. "Okay, that's better. Um, Sev, I'm getting an urge to let go."

"A few more moments, Harry, let the herbs work." I could feel his cock between my legs and I slipped my hand between his legs to stroke it.

"Sev! That's not helping." He was gritting his teeth by now and I decided that I'd teased him enough, although he had started to harden at my touch.

"All right, Harry, up you come and we'll change places." I helped him stand and watched his face contort with the effort not to let go. "I'll go turn down the bed. Come to me when you're done."

Leaving him some privacy, I left the door cracked just a bit in case he called out. It was my bed's turn tonight since we'd been alternating. I turned on the bedside lamp and let its soft yellow light splash around the room, creating friendly shadows among the chintz fabrics of the second guest bedroom. It had always been my favorite and I'd chosen it without a second thought when I first came four days ago.

Could it really be almost a week since Albus had sprung his surprise on us?

What a long way I had come. To lose the icy core of my frozen heart to the warmth of Harry's fire was so far beyond what I'd ever dreamed that I had to pinch myself to make myself believe this wasn't a dream. Pulling the duvet to the foot of the bed, I made sure that we had oil and a towel. Harry had been an enthusiastic lover and I now knew that sometimes lovemaking came with laughter and tears at the same moment.

What a blessing he was. Smiling, I cast a warming spell on the sheets and lay down. Part of me was concerned about what we'd be doing in a few moments but most of me was almost as excited as Harry had been when he came inside of me for the first time. What would it feel like?

He was much warmer blooded than I was. He felt extremely hot around my fingers. But Harry was smaller than I was and I worried that I could hurt him before either of us realized it. The fear should have deflated me but instead only served to harden me.

"What did I say about brooding, Sev?" His laughing voice reminded me of his earlier request. "Stop it and get me ready for you."

"It will take time for me to unlearn the lessons from the past, love." I pulled him down to me and rolled us so I lay atop him. "Keep reminding me."

"I'll just keep loving you, Sev. I'll fill up all those cold, dark places with my love until there's no room for anything else." He cupped my face and kissed me with one of those achingly sweet kisses that my starving soul needed so badly.

When we needed to breathe, we just looked at each other for a long moment. I wondered what he saw when he gazed at me. I know that I saw a young man full of life and passion, someone that had turned my life upside down and given me more than I had ever thought possible.

"I see the man who loves me." He read my mind with ease. "What do you see?"

"A miracle, that's what I see." I leaned in and kissed him again, just a brief reminder of what we were doing then I settled in to make him moan.

My hands were slick with oil and he took two fingers easily. Harry held up his own legs and I thought how very decadent he looked. His organ waved between us and I leaned in to suck just the crown into my mouth while he moaned my name. I loved the sound of my name breathed with passion. But it was time to try for more stretching and I watched him closely while folding a third finger through the outer muscle.

"Oh," was all he said but I felt the tension flood his body. "That's full, Sev."

"Too much?" I was more than ready to stop here.

"No, it's getting better." I felt the muscles loosen a bit and I ventured deeper to spark his gland. "Oh yes, there, Sev, right there."

I smiled and went back to sucking him deep. I'd read that true relaxation comes from a good orgasm and I thought that might be the time to try entering him. Winding Harry tighter and tighter, I pushed him closer to the edge. Twisting my fingers surprised him and he climaxed with the loudest moan yet. It was still my name and when I felt him relax completely, I slid out my fingers and popped my crown just inside the outer muscle.

"SEV!" His cry almost alarmed me but his hands had grabbed my hair. "Don't move."

I froze in place and thought of everything that might have gone wrong.

"Wow. That feels ... amazing." He panted again and let go of my hair. "Big, really ... really big. Okay, move more."

"Out or in?"

"In, Silly Sev, I want to see what he feels like instead of fingers."

"Rest your legs on my shoulders, you're trembling." I helped him and felt him relax even more. "Better?"

"Yes," he opened those brilliant green eyes and the sparkle in them told me more than any words. "More, Sev, give me more."

"Greedy, aren't you?" I slid in further, then further yet until I could go no further. He'd flushed beet-red when I brushed across his gland.

"When it's you, I'm very, very greedy. It feels like I'm riding a broomstick." His innocent look made me laugh out loud.

"Ah, Quidditch will have a whole new meaning when you get back." I pulled out a little ways then thrust back in the way that he had pleased me. His reaction was another breathy little moan that fired my blood. I was beginning to find a rhythm that suited both of us

"Sev! More! I'm burning alive." His dark head thrashed back and forth on the white pillowcase while his hands gripped my arms as if to pull me further in.

I didn't want to hurt him with over enthusiasm but I was on fire, too. His sudden climax surprised me and the inner muscle contractions pulled my own from me. Harry looked so surprised when I flooded him with my seed. I'd never come that hard in my life. I collapsed on him when my arms failed to hold me. I had enough presence of mind to roll us onto our sides or he wouldn't have been able to breathe.

But I never once let go of him nor he of me.

My heart finally slowed to its normal beat. I smoothed his hair back from his sweaty face. His eyes opened and the stunned look there brought back speech. "What's wrong, Harry? Did something tear?"

"No, I'm fine." His fingers trembled slightly when he brought them to my lips. "That felt like ... I don't know what." Then that beautiful open smile dawned and he leaned in to kiss me gently. "Now, you're a part of me just the way that I'm a part of you."

"Harry, you've been in my heart since we started this mad adventure."

"And you're in mine, Sev, but we're physically a part of each other, too." He brushed my hair back behind my ear. "I'm probably not saying it right. It just feels right to have you inside of me, like it's a piece of me that's been missing all my life."

Out of the mouths of babes, I thought while dropping little kisses all over his face. "You said it just fine, Harry. It feels exactly like that to me, too. Together, I truly don't think there is anything we can't do."

"Like create the Child of Love?" He teased me gently and I rested my forehead against his.

"Exactly, Harry, I can hardly wait to combine part of us into new life. He or she will be a very lucky



child to have you as a father." I could feel myself shrinking a bit and I knew that I could hurt him right now without meaning to. "Relax, love, we're about to make a mess of the sheets."

"Yeow," he gritted his teeth when I popped out. "Okay, so much for afterglow, it feels like you parked a steam engine inside of me."

I chuckled and rolled him towards me so I could see to mop up the discharge. When I saw no blood, I finally breathed a sigh of relief. "Hardly that, love, but I'll put some healing cream in to soothe the pain."

It was the work of a minute to heal the ache and then he was in my arms for our goodnight kisses. Each one was better than the last and I tried not to think ahead to the days when we'd be parted at night. We still had four more days to create enough memories to tide us over.

And one special child.

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Chapter 8 - Harry by Athea

Harry

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The next three days went by way too quick. We practiced making love a lot and when the ingredients came via Gordius, he taught me how to make the potion. But on the third day, Headmaster Dumbledore came back to help us link the channels together inside of Severus. It took almost four hours and at the end my poor love was sweaty and limp. I'd been on the outside looking in most of the time but since I had to be the one who triggered the convergence of the four channels, the last bit was all mine.

It was more intimate than putting part of my body inside of his. Doesn't make sense, I know but that's how it felt. Maybe it's because our emotions had to be synchronized and that meant that we were inside of each other's thoughts and feelings. Personal was what I'd called sex but this was the really personal stuff, minds and hearts, not just bodies.

But even though Severus was exhausted, he still welcomed me in and surrounded me with his love. What I saw inside of him was beautiful, the colors fluctuating all over the color-chart. They seemed to match emotions inside of him and he chuckled tiredly when I told him that.

The Headmaster patted my shoulder approvingly and told me that I was quite right. In sixth year classes I'd learn all the colors and what they meant. Then he told me to draw Severus a bath while he made a light meal for me to feed him. He warned us not to make love again until it was time. There was to be a lunar eclipse at 3:43 p.m. and that was the moment when the child would be created.

I think he said something else to Sev when I went upstairs to run the bath but if it was important then my lover would tell me. I put in some of the bath oil that we both liked and I thought about having to bathe alone when we went back to Hogwarts. My heart hurt when I pondered all the things that I'd gotten used to and would have to do without. There had to be a way for us to be together during the school year. Once a week, surely there was a way to spend at least one whole night together weekly.

I'd be willing to grade tests or scrub cauldrons or ... or anything. But before I could get too carried away, the headmaster helped Sev into the bathroom. He looked so tired that he could hardly keep his eyes open. Between the two of us, we got him stripped and into the steaming water. Dumbledore told me to keep an eye on him while he went downstairs to make dinner.

Severus murmured my name and I took a washcloth to bathe him. The soap smelled like the bath oil and I made a mental note to find it and get some. If I couldn't have him with me all the time then I could jolly well have his scent. He tried to help me but he really was tired. I soaped and rinsed him clean before letting him soak in the hot water. I stayed nearby and stroked his hair while he dozed a bit.

Thinking about the channel work made me realize how much I still needed to learn. I'd seen what they should look like when Dumbledore showed me what they were doing inside of Sev. He'd commented on how much larger the heart chakra had grown and Sev's eyes had smiled at me, murmuring that it was all my doing. I liked that idea a lot. His root chakra was a bright orange and that channel was thicker than my wrist.

The heart chakra was sunny yellow while the other two were green and red. Part of the linking was to mix the colors until they were a healthy rose color and that's where it got tricky, the way they'd said it would. The channels were used to being where they were and how they looked. They had to be coaxed to open up to each other and merge into one. For a while there, it didn't look like it was going to work.

Then Dumbledore asked me to brace Sev and hold on tight. The moment I slid in behind him and hugged him to me, something seemed to click. My eyes were closed but I could see the four channels reach for each other and ... kind of slide into each other. The colors came and went in waves until everything began to glow a rose-red. And where the four channels had joined, a small round globe with smaller channels running from it to their original places had appeared.

"The last part of the potion is my semen mixed with the rest. When it flows in, my seed heads for the haven we've created and waits there for yours to join it." His voice was still tired but he opened sleepy eyes and answered my unasked question.

"It's really going to happen, isn't it, Sev?" I was suddenly a little frightened.

"Only if you want it to, Harry. In another twelve years the year of fire will roll back around again." His smile was so gentle that it made me feel like crying.

"I may be scared, Sev but I want this more than anything." Everything settled back into place when I saw his eyes light up. "It's a big responsibility but in twelve years I'll be 28 and ready to carry another child of love."

He chuckled. "There can never be too many love children in the world."

Dumbledore's deep laugh came from the doorway. "Indeed, Harry, I'd be glad to help the two of you create another life. I look upon your children to come as my grandchildren and I can hardly wait to teach them their first spells. For now, Severus needs to get out of the tub and have a light supper."

It took both of us to get Sev out of the tub, dried and into our bed. He tried to help but it was easier to just towel him and slide him between the sheets. Dumbledore had made a clear broth with a few crunchy vegetables in it and put it in a cup so it was easier to drink. After finishing the broth it took him a few moments to chew the carrots and water chestnuts but once they were gone, he slid down, turned over and went to sleep.

I pulled the covers up to keep him warm and followed the headmaster out of the room. He led me downstairs to the fire and motioned to me to sit. "Harry, this is going to change your life completely and irrevocably. You must be very sure that you really want to have a child at seventeen. The next nine months are going to be a challenge."

Nodding, I hugged a pillow to my stomach. "I know, at least I kind of have an idea. It still doesn't

seem quite real to me. But I know that I love Severus more each day that goes by. I like being able to help heal him from the bad things he's lived through. We're more alike than we are different. And I'm a little scared of all the physical things that he's going to be going through the next nine months. But even more, I'm scared that I'll have to do without holding him and kissing him."

"Ah, youth." Dumbledore smiled at me. "There will be occasions when you can be together but they may be few and far between. It will tax your patience, Harry and Sev could backslide into depression without your bright spirit to leaven his own."

"Could we at least once a week meet somewhere safe where we can just hold each other?" I said rather plaintively.

He chuckled. "We'll set up a schedule between my study, the chapel, Minerva's class room and other places to be discovered later. Once summer break comes, I'll send the two of you up here for a few weeks to reconnect. All right?"

I nodded. "Thank you, Headmaster. I just wish it didn't have to be a secret. What happens when he begins to show?"

"He won't be showing, Harry. That would be much too dangerous. There are a couple of spells that we can use to hide the pregnancy from everyone. The farther along he is, the harder it will be to hide because he simply won't be able to do certain things, like pick up something he's dropped."

"Can I help with some of the spells?" I sat up a little straighter when he nodded. "Good. Where will he have the baby? Here?"

"Very good, Harry. He'll go back to the hot springs to deliver him or her in the warm waters there. Minerva has delivered 128 children over the last fifty years and she has already said that she looks forward to this one."

"Whew, I was hoping that it wasn't something that we had to do on our own." I breathed a sigh of relief.

"That's far enough ahead for us to plan for now. Go up and cuddle him, Harry. He'll need your loving presence to settle him down. I've left some supper on the table. It's spelled so you can eat it when you like." He rose and opened the bookcase. "Remember no lovemaking until tomorrow. Minerva and I will be here about noon."

"Good night, Headmaster. Thanks," I waved to him and he chuckled before disappearing and shutting the case behind him. I was hungry now so I went out and devoured two sandwiches and the carrots. He'd left a tangy dip with them and I tried to puzzle out what the ingredients were. I'd ask Sev what they were later.

Turning out the lights downstairs, I went up and showered quickly. The urge to hold Severus was growing stronger and I was still a little damp when I slid under the covers. He gave a little sigh and turned into my arms with a sleepy murmur of my name. For some reason, that almost made me cry again and I held him a little tighter, saying his name quietly so he'd know I was here.

I meant to stay awake and do some thinking but instead I fell asleep.

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We slept in and Severus was still moving slowly when we cuddled under the blankets and said all kinds of mushy things that I'd once sworn I'd never say. Things like 'I love you' and 'your eyes

twinkle like stars' and ... well, I guess there's a reason that they're clichés.

I ate the rest of the sandwiches but Sev just peeled an apple and said that was enough for him. I made sure that his tea had sugar in it, in case making babies was like going into shock. He smiled at me and drank it all. I told him that the other two were coming about noon and he nodded. Then we were quiet while we snuggled on the couch and read more about tantric magic. We peeked ahead to how to make love with a pregnant partner and some of it made him laugh out loud.

But for every page we turned, we kissed. Some of them were light, silly smooches but every once in a while they'd turn hot and heavy, leaving us both gasping for breath. We were both hard by the time the bookcase opened but that acted like a cold bath for both of us. Professor McGonagall was through first and her eyebrows raised when she saw us plastered against each other on the couch.

I got up first and gave him a hand while she took a good hard look at both of us. "Well, Albus, it seems you were right. They are in love."

"Yes indeed, Minerva, quite deeply in love." The headmaster was right behind her. "Oh good, the two of you are simmering nicely. We'd best be on our way. If I remember correctly, it's almost an hour to the caves. Harry, if you'd escort Minerva, I'll just make sure that Severus gets there in one piece."

I didn't want to make a scene but it felt wrong to be parted from Severus even if only by a few feet. Professor McGonagall quizzed me about the last few days and I tried to answer her correctly but most of my attention was on the low voiced conversation behind me. So I turned the tables on her and started asking questions about pregnancy. I wanted a good book on the subject and she promised to get me one then we discussed how I could hide it.

Actually, she had the brilliant idea of writing my mother's name in it so I could pretend that I was keeping it because it was hers. And since I knew that my trunk had been searched several times already, she said that she'd give it to me after a class with the story that she'd found it when she was cleaning off some shelves. I smiled at her and she smiled back.

I was glad that she was on our side and I told her so. She cackled that laugh that was so distinctive and slapped me on the back before calling to Severus to take me in hand. That brought such a wonderful picture into my head that I blushed scarlet. Dumbledore was chuckling and Sev came to my side almost instantly so I knew he was feeling the same way that I was.

It was just wrong for us to be apart, especially now but maybe for always. His arm came around me and I slipped mine around him, leaning into him with a sigh. Walking felt good again and we didn't say a word, just listened to the two behind us, the wind around us and the owl calls high over us.

Anticipation was growing and I could hardly wait to enter the beautiful cave where the springs were. Two tall granite plinths guarded the entrance to the caves and we paused there for Dumbledore to give us a little last minute advice. But we didn't really need it. We left them there and quickly made our way behind the bobbing mage light to the stalactite cave with the bubbling pool of mineral rich water in the middle.

All our supplies were there and we undressed first before I filled the bag with hot water while he poured in the ingredients except for the last one. He was rock hard and it only took my mouth a few good sucks before he came for me. We caught most of it in the bag and while he lay there panting, I slid the nozzle into him and let it flow inside.

He let out a high pitched cry that almost startled me right into the pool. "Gods, that's ... incredible,

Harry. Oh!"

"Sev?" I didn't know what to do. Was it supposed to be like this?

"Harry, I can feel each and every sperm swarming towards that spot." He arched his back like a cat and moaned again. "More, I need more."

But the bag was empty and I set it aside. "Sev, slide into the pool and I'll come in, too."

I had to tug him over the edge and into the hot water. I followed him immediately and he kissed me as if it would be our last kiss this century. The clock was ticking so slowly that I thought I'd go quite mad before I could come inside of him but the timing had to be right. His hands were all over me and if I thought I'd been hard before, well, now I knew what hard really meant.

"Now, Harry, please now. Please, please, please." He was moaning continuously and I finally knew the moment was right.

As tenderly as I could, I turned him away from me and moved into position, gently entering him. But he didn't want gentle, he wanted hard and he wanted it right now, pushing back and taking all of me in one thrust. We sighed together and I came, just like that. We were so connected at that moment that I 'saw' my seed rush into him, following the trail that had been laid with the potion.

The rose-red globe pulsed in time to both our hearts and it flared so brightly when seed met seed that we were both blinded. The water bubbled around us and slowly we separated into two separate people. But not completely, we'd never completely separate ever again because deep inside of Severus was the new life we'd created. He sighed my name and brought my hands up to kiss while I tried to hug him right into me.

We'd done it.

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Dumbledore

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The explosion that billowed out of the underground passage was spectacular in a rainbow of colors that is rarely ever seen. Minerva and I held it back, allowing it to settle deep into stone and the air pockets that honeycombed this ancient mountain. Our wards were hard pressed to keep all that creative energy hidden. The joy and love that spiraled out of the caves felt like a caress that lasted for quite some time.

"Ten to one, it's a girl." Minerva bet me when we finally let the wards go.

"I'll take that bet and raise you, a midsummer solstice birth."

"Done. I've worked up an appetite. Let's leave them alone and go have supper." She slipped her hand in mine and we left the two new parents to their afterglow. It was little enough time they had to bask in their accomplishment before rejoining the real world.

We'd done very well, indeed.

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Chapter 8a (Third Month) - Severus by Athea

Author's Notes:

This is an interlude set inside the Child of Love series. Severus is three months pregnant with Harry's child. The morning sickness has finally passed and Horny Sev decides he needs to play

with Innocent Harry.

Severus

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I woke up and automatically checked for nausea. There wasn't any and I carefully stretched to see if I could make it start with an injudicious movement. Nothing. I smiled widely in a way that any student of Hogwarts would refuse to believe even if they saw it. The Book had said that the morning sickness might stop by the end of the third month but I hadn't believed it. I'd prayed to the Porcelain Goddess every morning for the last 82 days and I was quite ready to stop.

Sitting up slowly, I gently got out of bed and almost tiptoed to the bathroom. Still no urge to throw up last night's dinner of lemon sole and ginger glazed carrots. In fact, I felt hungry for the first time in weeks. I found myself humming cheerfully while I showered and shaved. Yet another thing that none of the students would have believed. Perhaps I should shock everyone by smiling at breakfast?

I chuckled and slid into my silk suit pants without bothering with underwear. With the release from the nausea, I had a brilliant idea and it involved me, my young lover and the potions lab. The holidays had seen the staff and students dwindle to a mere twenty or so. Harry had just gotten back from an obligatory week with the Weasleys. Our mating was still a secret from all but Albus and it was just as important that he keep his good friends as it was for us to be together.

That thought always stopped me dead in my tracks. I was finally part of a couple. After 35 years of loneliness, I had a lover who gave every appearance of loving me in return. It might not last; the sensible part of my brain reminded me. He was seventeen and in love with being in love. My hands stroked the slight bulge that was all there was to show of our child. No matter what happened, he'd given me the most precious gift I'd ever received or was ever likely to receive.

Our child - I could hardly wrap my mind around the concept some days. And I must admit to a few choice words about being pregnant when I was head down spewing my guts out. But that was hopefully behind me now and I could enjoy myself again. However that required the presence of my lover and I plotted how to get him down to the potion lab.

Albus looked a little anxiously at me when I entered the dining hall and approached my chair. Since none of the other instructors had yet arrived I was able to give him my current state of health and watch his eyes light up. I really am quite fond of the Headmaster, if he'd only stop meddling in my life. Of course, he brought Harry and me together so perhaps I really should allow him a free rein, I mused.

Harry was already eating rapidly two tables down from the head table and I let myself have a good look at him before accepting a plate of steamed toast and poached eggs. His color was good and his dark hair still flew every which way. I dropped my gaze to breakfast and waited to get queasy but nothing happened. The buttery blackberry jam was dolloped perfectly on the whole wheat toast, still hot and fresh from the ovens.

I could not forbear a slight groan of anticipation with the first mouthful of perfectly poached egg with its slight hint of dill seasoning the pale white flesh. Really the house Elves had surpassed even their high standards. I looked up in time to see Albus hide a grin behind one wrinkled hand.

"I haven't heard anyone enjoy an egg so much in years, my dear boy." Those blue eyes twinkled at me. "It's very good to hear how much better you're feeling, Severus."

Nodding, I wiped my mouth with a corner of my white linen napkin and drank a sip of the raspberry tea that I'd been guzzling since the morning sickness had overwhelmed me. I was growing quite fond of it. "It is a positive joy to have an appetite again." I corrected myself. "Well, the urge was there to eat but the consequences were enough to put me right off anything but

those ginger snaps that Minerva is so fond of."

"Really? She seems to prefer the lemon bars I served her a few months ago." Albus smiled sweetly at me while I tried not to think about the little extra something with which Harry had dusted them. "You must give me the recipe or at least give it to the house Elves."

Thinking quickly, I shook my head firmly. "It's a Snape family secret, Albus. When you next need some, I'll be happy to trade a weekend at the cottage for a batch or two."

"Ah, very good, Severus, that sounds like an excellent bargain on both our parts. Perhaps this weekend?" His gaze was on one of the lower tables although the twinkle was still there. "Harry, my dear boy, what are you going to do this bright winter day?"

There was the sizzle in the air that always preceded my young lover, tingling against my skin like a caress. He was still a foot away from me but he might as well have come up and pressed himself against me, I got so hard, so fast.

"Good morning, Headmaster. Professor Snape," he spoke brightly to us both and I contented myself with a stiff nod. All the while I was melting inside from his joyful smile, which he split between the two of us. "It's such a nice day that I thought I'd go over to the Quidditch field and do some practice flying. The locker rooms are secured but if one of the instructors would open them for me, I'd make sure that everything was cleaned up after I showered and changed."

Showered - Harry, wet and naked with drops of water sliding down that firm young body. Sweaty Harry, his scent stronger than usual. Suddenly my appetite for food was gone but there was a terrible ache elsewhere that needed assuaging. It wasn't the potions lab but I could adjust my plans to fit the day.

"That's a wonderful idea, Harry. I'm rather busy at the moment but I'm sure that Severus would enjoy a nice walk in the sunshine." He conjured the key to the Quidditch field house and presented it to me. "There you go. Have a nice walk, Severus and a safe flight, Harry."

I sighed as if it were all too, too much to ask of me. "If I must, Headmaster - perhaps it will burn off some of this excessive energy of Mr. Potter's."

Harry's face was so pleading that it would have taken a much harder man than me to resist him. Of course, my resistance was nonexistent when it came to him. Albus made a few more comments while I drained my tea and ate another piece of toast. This time I made my little moan quite on purpose and surreptitiously watched Harry blush a pale pink. It looked good on him but then so did his slow licking of those enticing lips.

It was the closest we could come to teasing each other in public. We constantly walked the thin line between what we wanted to do and what we could do while on the school grounds. Thank God, Albus loaned us his cottage once a month for a weekend. I'd have gone mad otherwise and Harry would have exploded from sexual frustration. I caught a green gaze that was just short of sizzling and made a hasty check to make sure that I'd tucked a bottle of lotion in my inner pocket.

There is more than one way to fly a broom.

The silence stretched between us like an invisible web while we made our way out of the castle. Once on the grounds, we slowed down a bit and just breathed in the icy cold air.

"You're feeling better, Sev." His voice was hopeful and the shy glance up at me made me want to gather him into my arms and never let go. "I was afraid that you'd be sick for much longer."

"No nausea and a spurt of energy that is quite disconcerting." I cast a sharp albeit casual

seeming glance around the snow covered lawns. "Perhaps I should do some flying practice with one of the Slytherin's brooms?"

"No way," he said at once. "It might be dangerous for the . . . um. I mean, maybe I can think of something else that would burn off some of your energy."

"Really?" I looked down my nose at him before waving a casual greeting to Hagrid who was out exercising one of the hippogriffs. "I'll just inspect the Slytherin's locker room for cleanliness and items that don't belong." I watched his busy little mind play with that image. "I could always test the showers to make sure that everything is working properly. My shower this morning was sadly lacking." I dropped my voice and whispered without moving my lips. "Soap and water aren't enough anymore. I'm afraid that a Harry-bath toy is essential to a proper shower."

His little whimper was most satisfactory and I smiled in self-congratulation.

"Evil Severus, that image is going to make me fall off my broom." He was gritting his teeth and his glance was fire-hot through those wickedly long dark lashes. "I think we should test out the whirlpool to make sure that it's still working."

I almost stumbled at the thought of the stainless steel whirlpool that Madame Hooch had installed the year before to help sore muscles recover from Quidditch caused injuries. "What an interesting idea, Mr. Potter. After I've seen you through a practice session, we'll see if you have any sore muscles."

"I've definitely got an aching muscle right now, Professor Snape." He muttered and tried to make us walk faster but I slowed down instead.

"Anticipation is six-tenths of a good . . . practice flight." I checked again with my wizard senses to make sure that no one was nearby or watching us.

"Ha, ha," he said with a hollow voice. "We'll see what anticipation can do. I'll just go in and change."

"Need any help?" I offered politely while unlocking the field house door.

"I've been getting undressed and dressed for years now, Professor Snape." He lifted a haughty chin but leaned into my hand on his back.

"Of course you have, Mr. Potter." I swept the hall with my wand and made sure that we were indeed the only two persons in the building. "I think that I'll just make sure that you don't miss a button or two."

He snorted but led the way just the same. It had been years since I'd entered the rival locker room and that had been a message from Dumbledore to Madam Hooch. But I didn't see much because Harry immediately pressed me down to a bench and straddled my lap. He tasted of bacon and ginger marmalade, an interesting combination but one that was all the sweeter since it came from his lips.

"Oh . . . Sev . . . thank God . . . the morning . . . sickness is . . . over." He scattered kisses over my cheeks, eyelids and even my nose. "I hated you being sick because of the baby." Those earnest green eyes looked into mine while I held him close and breathed him in like the finest rose attar.

"This may only be a reprieve for today. The Book said that it can come and go." I ran my hands over his broad back and rejoiced in his solid weight. His shaft was hard against my stomach and I slipped a hand between us to undo his pants buttons.



"Oh, God . . . more, Sev . . ." he writhed on my lap while I fished out his cock and loosely slid my hand up and down the damp organ. His moans were music to my ears and I finally parted our lips so I could lay him down onto the hard wooden bench.

"More it is, Harry." I slid back far enough to lean over and suck him deep into my mouth. He's salty sweet and absolutely the most delicious thing I've ever swallowed. He'd been without for an interminable seven days and he thrust up with a harsh cry, releasing in long spurts down my throat.

He's always sensitive then but I gently cleaned his groin of seed and licked my lips to make sure I'd gotten it all. Giving an internal check, I made sure that my stomach wasn't going to give it back. That was the last thing I wanted him to see. He's such a caring soul that if I could I would protect him from all harm, even from me.

"Oh, Sev, that was brilliant." Those green eyes opened again and his smile was bright.

"Just a little pick-me-up so you'll be flying with your brain and not your balls." I tidied him away and buttoned him back up while he pouted. "Find your broom and go fly for an hour or so. I'll make sure that everything is ready for your return."

"The whirlpool?" He sat up gracefully and ran a gentle hand down my cheek.

I turned my head just far enough to nestle a kiss in his palm, tickling it with the tip of my tongue. "You might have a sore muscle or two so yes, the whirlpool."

He kissed me hard then jumped up, all that seventeen old energy ready to go again. In less than a minute, Harry had his broom and was out the door. Smiling, I went into the small room where Madame Hooch kept a massage table and the new pool. I fired up the water heater with a wave of my wand and started the huge tank filling. She kept some eucalyptus oil for her annual winter cold and I poured some of it in the gently steaming tub.

Setting a magic timer to shut off the water when it reached a spot about ten inches from the top, I followed the long hall to the door onto the field. Harry was a dark spot in the gloriously clear blue sky. His flying is as much a part of him as his scar, probably handed down straight from his father. Silently, I prayed that it always would be a safe outlet for all that boundless energy. Even if something happened to me, he'd still have our child to love him and give him a focus.

I had my suspicions that Albus had planned it that way. Nothing was certain these perilous days but for the moment we had this precious breathing space and I was going to take advantage of every sweet moment. A gust of wind hurtled around the corner of the stone field house and I shivered a little even in my fur lined robe. How much colder must it be high above the field?

He was wearing the new ermine lined robe I'd given him via Albus but even so it had to be freezing up there. Hopefully, he'd be down soon. My groin had subsided in the chill air and I finally went back inside to get warm. Since he knew that I was waiting, I suspected that he'd be down shortly and I did want to take a look at the Slytherin locker room.

It was as neat and clean as I had expected. Madame Hooch was a fierce proponent of cleaning up after yourself and I approved of that philosophy. Making potions was much the same although the consequences could be deadly rather than painful. She and I had a live and let live relationship but she was a good coach. Harry had learned quite a bit about life and sport from her.

Closing Malfoy's locker with a grimace of distaste, I made another mental note to watch him more closely. It looked like he was determined to follow in Lucius' footsteps if that charm was any indication. Using my wand, I changed the intent ever so slightly into one of protection without the

nasty rebound. It was all I could do at the moment but I would be casting a spell or two of my own on Harry's broom.

Nothing and no one would hurt him if I had anything to say about it.

I was thinking so hard, I didn't even hear him come in. A pair of strong arms slid around me and a cold body pressed against me. "Sev."

Turning in his arms, I kissed his cold lips warm. He tasted of sunshine and arctic air. An aphrodisiac unknown until this moment, I decided. Finally we had to breathe and I trailed my lips over his glowing red cheeks, taking the chill away as quickly as I could.

"Hot water, Sev, lots and lots of churning heat." He pulled slowly away and grasped my hands to tug me out of the locker room and down the hall to the warmest room in the building. His hands were like ice cubes and I brought one to my lips to suck each finger into my mouth, warming him. "Oh God, Sev, I need you."

"I'll just help you with those buttons that I'm sure in your frozen condition you'll be unable to undo." I sent a quick warding spell to keep anyone out who might have a sudden urge to enter the field house. We didn't want to be interrupted unless Voldemort himself attacked the school.

"I always like a little help, Sev-er-us." He moaned just a little when I gently bit his thumb. "Naked now, right now."

Incoherent, I liked that look and sound on him. Stripping him was a little difficult because he kept insisting on taking my clothes off, too. But eventually we both landed in the heated waters of the whirlpool and with a flick of my wrist, I turned on the jets. As the water began to swirl around us, I pulled him back into my arms. He was warming up nicely and so was I.

His legs slid around me and I held him in my lap while he investigated my tonsils with his tongue. The churning water felt like a million little fingers caressing me over and over. He was as hard as his broom stick and I was too. His squirming was about to make me release prematurely but there was purpose in his movements.

"In me, right now, Sev, please in me," he reached behind his back and stroked my cock with almost feral intent.

"We need something." I'd forgotten about lubricant. How could I have been so lax?

"I got myself ready before I came to find you. Please now, my Sev." He slowly but surely forced my crown through the tight muscle that guarded his entrance. "Damn, I think you grew bigger over the last week. Oh yeah!"

He took me in completely and I panted through his squeezing muscles. Nothing had ever felt this good. Nothing in my life had prepared me for the heaven I found in his hot depths. Merlin, he was tight. "Harry, are you all right?"

His forehead rested on my shoulder. "No, I am so much better than all right, it's probably illegal. I missed you so much, Severus. I didn't think my week with Ron's family was ever going to end. I missed seeing you, missed hearing that sexy voice of yours and I especially missed this."

"Hogwarts was sadly empty without your blithe spirit. I missed you, too." I admitted and watched his face light up. I have got to remember to say that more often. He deserves every loving word and deed that I can muster.

"Make love to me, Severus. Make me feel every inch of your wonderful cock." He used those

strong thigh muscles of his to rise up a bit before sitting back down.

I couldn't help but thrust up a little and his moan was sweet to hear. I was going to make this last a very long time. Perhaps I could make him fly the way he did for me. I was certainly going to try.

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Chapter 9 - Hermione by Athea

Hermione

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Something was going on with Harry. We'd barely started fifth year when it happened. He'd been off for a whole week and when he came back, something was different. It was like he'd matured from sixteen to twenty-six over night. He just said that the Dursleys were dissolving his guardianship and the headmaster had taken over. It was like it wasn't all that big a deal and he shrugged off Ron's and my questions with a smile and a joke.

That was just so 'Harry'. What wasn't Harry was his constant studying for Potions class. It's always been one of my favorite classes and I'm good at mixing and memorizing so it made sense for him to come to me for help. But he was like dedicated to potions now when he never had been before.

The next weird thing was his politeness in Potions Class. He'd always had a hair trigger temper in that class and Professor Snape seemed to feel the same way about Harry. But for some reason, they were very polite to each other now although the professor was still really sarcastic to those students who hadn't studied. But with Harry studying more than ever, they didn't clash anymore.

And another weird thing was Professor McGonagall stopping him after class one afternoon and handing him a book called 'What to expect when you're expecting'. My jaw must have hit the floor right along with Ron's when Harry smiled all over and thanked her. That's when I saw him tracing a name on the flyleaf and I got close enough to read his mother's name.

Oh, that was different. He was kind of dreamy for the rest of the day and he kept stroking the binding. I can understand that reaction but when I stopped by his study, he was reading it. He blushed beet-red and set it aside when I teased him. That's when I decided that something was up and I would get to the bottom of it.

So, I watched him without watching him. For four months I practically stalked him without him noticing. He disappeared a different night each week. He was always in bed when the wake-up bell rang but Ron said that a couple of times he'd slipped in right before it went off. He had a secret, that was for sure but what ever it was, he guarded it jealously. That and his studying really puzzled us.

The month break in March was a welcome reprieve. Harry hadn't even gone back to the Dursleys for a day, instead he spent a week with Ron's family then went off on his own. I got a letter every week and he seemed all right to me but he'd gone back to Hogwarts and spent the rest of our break there. That was probably the weirdest thing of all.

I got back a day early and put my clean clothes away before I set off to find him. I searched the whole place from top to bottom in all the places that he usually haunted. But he was nowhere to be found. Standing in the hall outside of the headmaster's study, I was about ready to give up when a voice called my name.

"Hermione, how nice to see you back early. Do you have a moment?" Headmaster Dumbledore stood blinking at me from his doorway. "I could use a little help with a slight problem that's come

up."

It was good to see him after a month away and I smiled at him affectionately. "Of course, Headmaster."

"Good, good, come in and have some tea." He beamed at me and I went in right behind him but he stepped around me and closed the door behind us with a click of the lock. I looked at him when he stood there, eyeing me as if measuring me for something. "Hermione, are you friends with Harry Potter?"

"Yes, is something wrong? I knew it. Something's happened hasn't it?" I threw up my hands. "His letters were so quiet that I should have known something was wrong. How can I help? What is he up to now?"

He looked rather taken aback but he was beaming again by the time I quit ranting. "My dear girl, how very nice that you care so for him. He's quite safe and well but he is laboring under a heavy secret and it's time that he had a little help keeping it. Will you do that for him? Keep his secret and help him with it, even if it means knowing something that you find quite ... odd?"

Oh this was going to be something else, I could just tell. "Yes, no matter what it is, Harry is my friend and always will be. What can I do to help?"

He sighed with relief and crossed the room to a bookcase. "Then, let's be off to where he's spending the last of the break. Come along, Hermione, they should have tea ready by now."

"They?" I asked but he was swinging the bookcase away from the wall, revealing a doorway. He motioned to me to follow and I stepped hesitantly through and into another room somewhere else.

Laughter rang through what I could see was a cottage somewhere in the country if the view from the window could be trusted. The headmaster smiled and headed for the sound of laughter with me right on his heels. If that was Harry, his secret couldn't be that terrible. It seemed like I should know the other person laughing but it didn't sound like anyone I knew.

The headmaster stopped in the doorway to what had to be the kitchen and I peeked around him in time to see Harry throw his arms around a tall man and kiss him. I swayed in shock but kept my eyes glued to my friend. He'd gotten tanner and his hair had gotten so long that it almost brushed his shoulders.

But he was still kissing a man and that was really, really odd.

How odd I didn't realize until Harry broke away and I saw it was Professor Snape. "Love, we are not adding anything to the lemon bars."

"But they're just talking to each other when they should be having more fun." Harry teased him.

He looked happy. They looked happy and I wasn't sure why. But then Harry saw us and his eyes widened until they were practically popping out of his head. "Hermione?"

"Hi, Harry." I would have said more but Professor Snape turned around and it was my turn for popping eyes.

He had either gotten really fat or he was pregnant.

"Ah hello, you two. I thought I'd broaden our 'need to know' perimeters." Dumbledore sounded vaguely apologetic. "Surprise."

"Albus." Snape looked rather worried. "Hermione."

"Professor Snape." I didn't know what to say and it appeared he didn't either.

"Tea is almost ready. Why don't you go back into the front room and we'll bring it in?" Harry said brightly but I could tell that he was upset.

That made me feel rather badly. He obviously liked the potion's master more than he should. But they'd sounded happy before we came and now they were both nervous. The headmaster shooed me back to the other room and pointed me towards one of the wing chairs by the fire. The flames felt good and I shivered a little, holding out my hands to them.

"Hermione, keep an open mind, please, until you know all the facts." Dumbledore sounded subdued and I nodded slowly.

Harry brought in the tea tray and Snape was right behind him. He set it down on the small table and I watched the potion master awkwardly sit in the corner of the couch with Harry watching him like a hawk. He poured the tea and handed out the cups then sat down right beside the professor.

"Okay, what's going on?" I was impatient and I wanted to know now.

The three of them looked at each other then Harry started to talk about some prophecy. The more he talked the more confused I got. Finally, he petered out and I took a deep breath.

"Let's see if I have it all. There was a prophecy about a child. Dumbledore brought the two of you together. You fell in love with each other. And now, Professor Snape is pregnant with Harry's baby. Do I have it right?"

"Um, yeah, that's pretty much it." Harry leaned into Snape's side and the older man cuddled him close.

"What do you think, Hermione? What are you feeling?" The professor sounded calm as if what I thought didn't matter.

Or maybe he cared so much that he was bracing himself for my hatred or disdain? And I looked at them. Really looked at them. Harry wasn't leaning in weakly but protectively. If I said anything harming or hateful, he'd choose the man beside him rather than me. We were friends but he was Snape's lover. Harry loved Severus Snape. How or why I might never know but if I made him choose between us, I would lose. And that wasn't something I ever wanted to lose - Harry Potter as a friend.

"It's weird to the extreme and I can't imagine what you were thinking." I started and watched Snape's hand grip Harry's shoulder. "But you're my friend and there's no way that I'm going to miss out on helping your child be born. I like to think that I'll make an excellent Aunt Hermione."

And I finally saw the beaming smile that I'd been waiting for. "Thanks, 'mione. Will you help us get a little more time together?"

"What did you have in mind?" I asked.

They laid out a series of study periods for the annual potion contest that would be offered to certain select students. Harry and I would partner and Snape would give us advanced instruction. We'd get extra study time and the two of them would get some quality time together with me as a discrete chaperone who'd turn a blind eye if they needed a snuggle. I agreed and the conversation turned general.

But I watched them covertly, at long last realizing what some of the changes in Harry's behavior had been. He wasn't moony like some of my girlfriends who'd just discovered boys. He didn't fawn over Snape or bat his eyelashes or anything silly. He just smiled at him, helped him up when he needed to, rested his hand on his leg and teased him like any friend would do.

Harry had grown up last fall and none of us had noticed. He'd fallen in love and kept it a secret from all of us. That irked me no end. I like to think that I'm a smart wizard or at least I will be but he'd fooled me, too. Had the prophecy changed him? Was there any coercion at all in the way this had worked out? I watched for it and all I saw was two people who were eagerly waiting for their child to be born.

Dumbledore went with Harry to get more tea and left Snape and me alone. I looked at him and saw him brace himself for what he probably thought would be a scathing question or two.

"Do you love him? Really love him?" I asked.

"Yes. I didn't think I could." His gaze turned inward and a little smile flitted across his lips. "It appears to be a fact that no one can resist Harry Potter. Not even me."

Well, that was honest and kind of cute at the same time. "What happens when the baby is born?"

He looked so sad. "We'll have to keep him or her a secret just as we kept the pregnancy a secret. At least until Voldemort is taken care of once and for all. Then, well, I hope that Harry will want to stay with us."

"And if he doesn't?" It was a cruel question but I needed to know.

He nodded as if he expected that from me. "If he decides to move on, then I guess we'll split our time with our son or daughter. He has his whole life ahead of him and I will never keep him from doing what he wants or needs to do. He may even decide that the prophecy was an aberration and he really likes girls."

"Nonsense, Severus, when Harry gives his heart it stays given. I'm afraid you're stuck with him. But I can give you a few tips to keep him on his toes." I told him and watched the sweetest smile I have ever seen slowly bloom on his thin face. Maybe I could see what Harry saw in him.

Harry must have overheard part of the conversation because when he came back in he was smiling at me. But more importantly he brought in my favorite ginger cookies. Severus took two before I could snag any and Harry laughed at him.

"You have no idea how these settled my stomach when I was nauseous for the first three months of this pregnancy." Severus nibbled around the edges just the way that I liked to do. The look of bliss on his face made Harry laugh and drop a kiss on his cheek before he brought the cookies to me.

This would take some getting used to but I was determined to stay Harry's friend and if that meant liking Severus Snape then I'd just have to do that.

"Oh."

Harry and I both turned to the man on the couch. Harry knelt by him and put a hand over Severus'. "Oh."

"What 'oh'?" I snapped and identical dazed looks came to me.

"He kicked." Harry said in shock.

"She kicked." Severus said at the same moment.

Okay, so that was a little more than I expected. Leaving my chair, I knelt by Harry and put out a hesitant hand. Harry moved his so I could touch where he had. And as if the baby knew that a new person was there, a little foot thumped me. Wow, that was really different. Then he did it again and again.

"I think we have a new Quidditch player here." I said with a smile and then heard a sound that I never thought I'd hear, Severus Snape laughing.

Actually, that sounded pretty good for a man I'd always thought was the epitome of sneering nastiness. This whole prophecy thing might turn out all right after all. Headmaster Dumbledore came back in and wanted to know what was going on but when he gently laid a hand where ours had been, the baby stopped moving completely.

Poor Dumbledore was downcast but Severus reminded him that there was still four months to go and plenty of time for the newest Quidditch member to practice kicking. Harry snickered at that and Severus gave him the evil eye.

"Just remember who sleeps on that side, Harry."

Then it was my turn to snicker at Harry's blush. Okay, I could do this. It was weird but then I was beginning to suspect that life as a wizard had lots of weird in it. And if we were very lucky, lots of good friends to share the experience. Funny, but it looked like I'd just added a most unlikely friend.

Oh well, I hated boring and life had just gotten much more interesting.

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Chapter 10 - Severus by Athea

Severus

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I got slower and slower. Each class seemed to take more energy than I had to spare and just leading the older students in their lessons exhausted me. I found myself eating everything in sight and my body absorbed it completely. I gained no weight although my stomach mounded in front of me. There is only so much that a spell can hide and several of the other instructors made snide comments about my need for exercise.

It was a good thing that Harry didn't hear them or else he'd have gained more demerits for his House. He'd taken on the job of my protector with great tenacity. Every day was another miracle in my life and he was the greatest of all my blessings. With Hermione in on the secret, we had a little more time together. We met twice a week for their 'studying sessions'.

No one needed to know that those sessions were mostly spent in my private quarters. I always had snacks and hot tea. Hermione would settle in with the books while Harry gave me a massage to relax those muscles straining under their unaccustomed burden. We had lively three-way discussions and I found myself relaxing with them as I did with no one else.

Sometimes Dumbledore would invite us to his study and we'd adjourn to the cottage for the afternoon. Bathing in the hot springs was nirvana and I looked forward to those days with longing. He and I talked about the cottage and once the baby was born, Harry and I would stay there for the first six weeks without the threat of our secret getting out. I yearned for our own safe

place and Albus promised that he'd do some looking around.

Such retreats are rare and the logistics of building a home, even a small one, in a hidden valley were complicated. It took a massive surge of energy to channel all the building supplies into one place and then you had to assemble them into a house. I rather thought that Harry would enjoy a challenge of that magnitude and we spoke of it occasionally with a kind of wistful note in our voices.

But right now, all I really wanted was my lover's hands on my lower back, massaging away the ache that rarely went away. At eight months, I had a never-ending reminder of how athletic this baby was. Kicks and punches came at all hours of the day or night and I wondered if bruises could form on the inside of your body. I played down how little sleep I was getting but Minerva had it out of me when she checked me in one of her now weekly visits.

There really wasn't anything she could give me that wouldn't affect the baby too so I was determined to catch up on my reading during those hours when I couldn't sleep. And that nocturnal habit was what finally clued me in on the latest ploy of the Dark. I'd had the impression that someone was snooping in the potion's lab that May. The students were busy with final exams and Harry hadn't been able to get away all week.

He and Hermione were feverishly finishing up their potion's project for the contest that would be judged by an independent committee up from London. At the end of a long day, I sat with my feet up and my hands on the huge mound that was our child. Perhaps the next day would bring a visit from the young man who brightened my world. I was thinking of him while stroking the spot that was the latest drum solo site.

And in my mind, I saw him with Ron and Hermione, arguing about something of earth shaking proportions. The baby began kicking suddenly and I felt our focus shift to the potion's lab two rooms over. A dark shadow covered the cupboard where the rare ingredients were and I felt a sense of danger that flared brighter than our conception spell had.

I was on my feet and moving towards the door when I realized that I was in no condition to tackle a thief. All it would take was one attack spell and the baby could suffer. I sent Gordius for Dumbledore and wedged one of the dining room chairs below the handle to keep it from opening. I felt like the world's worst coward but the baby came first and ever since I'd felt the flare of fear, he or she had quieted.

Sudden loud noises from the outer room startled me.

"Hey, what are you doing?" Harry's voice carried in.

"Put that down, you idiot. It's one of the poisons." Hermione's chiding tones were just so her that I almost smiled.

But I couldn't leave them to face the intruder alone so I moved the chair away in time to wrench the door open. A mini-star burst was just dying away when I got into the lab. Harry and Hermione were on their knees with Ron sprawled to one side. My heart almost seized when I saw Harry rubbing his eyes. I was on my knees by his side in a moment; my hands holding his head still so I could look into his eyes.

"Harry, what was it?" I dimmed the lights around us with a quick spell so he could open his safely.

"He teleported, Sev. He had something around his neck that hummed and then there was a loud pop and he was gone." His pupils were dilated almost completely.



The sound of Albus' voice from the lab door told me that help had arrived. I felt Harry's body relax beneath my hands when he heard Hermione's complaints and Ron's dazed voice. He had to help me to my feet before turning to Hermione and helping her up. I led the way to my own rooms after shutting and re-locking the potion cabinet. I could see at a glance what was gone and I'd worry about that later.

I flipped the teakettle on with a flick of my wrist and floated the sweets tin to the table in front of the couch where Hermione and Ron were sitting. Albus took one wing chair while Harry and I sat in the other. I had my arms unabashedly around my young lover and he around me. The baby kicked him once then settled down to sleep while I reassured myself that he was whole and in one perfect piece.

"Now, that we're all semi-conscious, would someone please tell me what just happened?" Albus asked with a frown.

Harry answered first. "The three of us were walking back from the Quidditch match when I felt a ... thump? It felt so odd that I looked around and then I somehow just knew that someone was breaking into the potion lab. And Severus was alone without any one to back him up."

Hermione was next. "Harry said Sev's name then took off at a run while Ron and I chased after him. Once we got here, someone had the potion cupboard open and he threw something at us. All of us ducked except Ron and that's when I saw what he had in his hand."

"The iridescent bat wing jar, right?" I added my small bit.

"Right." She sighed and got up to make the tea when the kettle whistled.

"Um, Harry?" Ron's eyes couldn't have gotten any bigger and he was looking at us with such a shocked look on his face that I almost laughed.

"Sorry, Ron, I guess you want to know about Severus and me." Harry sighed and gave him the short version, postponing for now the long, involved one.

Ron went silent and I really hoped that this didn't mean a breach in their friendship. I knew how much he cherished the first friends he'd made here at Hogwarts. But that was in the laps of the gods and we had a more pressing problem. Someone had gone to great lengths to steal practically the only supply of bat's wings at Hogwarts.

"Thank you, my dear." Albus broke into my thoughts and I realized that Hermione was serving tea to everyone. "Now, how bad is the theft?"

"Quite bad, Albus." I rested my teacup on my stomach and felt a sleepy wiggle from the baby who loved heat. "There were only three labs with any in stock and when the Whistle Penny lab burned to the ground last Thursday that took care of one third. I wonder if it was stolen like ours then the lab burned to conceal the theft or if it really burned."

"Oh dear, that does make a difference." Albus frowned heavily and wrinkled his forehead.

Harry rubbed my stomach absentmindedly while he drank his tea. "We never used bat wing in any potion we've ever brewed. What's it for?"

My eyes met the headmaster's while I thought about what to say. "It's used sometimes with advanced tutorials. Twelfth year students occasionally study the properties of bat wings."

"In the last century, it was used exactly once." Albus rubbed his eyes. "With disastrous consequences, I'm afraid."

"Four potion masters and six students were destroyed when the creature they brewed turned on them. The lab was sealed tightly with every warding seal known to the wizard world." I said and rested my head against the back of the chair. "It took fifty-one years for the creature to die and every master apothecary mage felt its death. This thief is either very young or very powerful."

"Voldemort." Hermione said implacably. "What kind of creature does bat wing make?"

"Iridescent bat wing comes from one source only, South American vampire bats who are in the process of molting." I could hear my dry lecturer's voice. "When distilled with 150 percent proof vodka from a source in Siberia, it creates a vampire like creature who is virtually unstoppable."

"Vampires?" Ron's voice squeaked.

"Vampire like, Ron." Albus finished his tea. "Instead of blood, it sucks out the magic energy that fuels a wizard. In the case of the last creature, it sucked out both life force and magic with hideous results. We need to know if the Whistle Penny lab vial was stolen first. I'll contact the Seekers and have them search the ruins of the lab. If I remember correctly, the residue of that powder is detectable even after fire."

"Quite right, Albus. A master-seeker should be able to winnow it out if it's still there." I finished my own tea, barely able to keep my eyes open.

"Severus needs to get some sleep. I'll stay here tonight and make sure no one else gets in. Where is the third place that holds this stuff?" Harry got up and set both our cups aside before pulling me up.

"It should be safe but I'll send an owl tonight to make sure." Dumbledore stood as well and beckoned to the other two students. "I'll need a little help and the fewer who know about this, the better. Come along and I'll do some more explaining. Good night, Harry, Severus. Get a good night's sleep and we'll meet here in the morning."

Ron was still casting strange little looks at Harry and me. That confrontation would have to wait for tomorrow since I was definitely selfish enough to want Harry with me tonight. I was sagging with weariness but not so far gone that I couldn't help my lover set a pair of the strongest locks we could muster on both the lab door and my rooms' doors.

"Harry, I'm too tired to even take a bath tonight." I admitted and listened to him chuckle.

"That's all right, love, we can shower in the morning." He guided me into our bedroom and stripped me bare before sliding me between the sheets. His innocent striptease would have hardened a confirmed heterosexual but only made me tingle warmly. Sex had been forbidden to us at the seventh month although I still enjoyed sucking him into climax.

Then he was sliding in next to me and his blessed warmth filled all my empty spaces. He spooned up behind me and hugged our child and me close. As if in answer, a warm glow moved through us both.

"That's kind of what I felt when the jolt hit me. Do you think that he's able to link the two of us together somehow?" Harry's voice stopped me from sliding into sleep.

"Maybe, I don't know much about babies and their links with their parents. It's an intriguing thought although my fear could have put you in danger tonight." I finally had time to think about it and realize what I'd done.

"Don't you dare even think about trying to dampen our bond, Severus Snape." Harry sat up and

turned me to face him. In the dark, all I could see was the pale outline of his face. "You don't have to face anything by yourself, Sev. That's what I'm here for, to help and love you for always. Don't shield me from anything, even if it's bad. I need to know and I need you and the baby to be safe. It was not cowardly to lock the door and stay safe."

"It felt like it was." I said faintly just before he kissed me. It was a hard demanding kiss, more intense than our kisses lately.

"But it wasn't," he affirmed before lying back down and cuddling me close. "We're a team, the three of us, and we always will be."

I chuckled once and fell asleep, protected by my valiant lover.

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Our shower was fun and I sucked Harry dry before helping him dress. Nothing tastes better than he does and it was a nice counterpoint to the eggs and toast we had for breakfast. He brewed more tea while I did a thorough search of the cupboard to make sure the bat wing was the only ingredient taken. Thankfully, it was. I'd thought that a fifth level spell lock would be sufficient but it had been opened handily.

That pointed to a practiced user of magic and once again to Voldemort. I was in no shape to tackle the dark mage and it struck fear in my heart that Harry might have to. A noise at the door to the lab startled me alert and I cast a quick spell to make sure it was our expected visitors. It was and I let them in, directing them back to my quarters. Ron was still casting odd little looks at me and I sighed internally but prepared for an emotional confrontation after our meeting.

Albus sat in the chair he'd used the night before and Harry served tea to our visitors before joining me again. "The bat wing was there when the fire started. Arson is still suspected, however."

"Are they checking the site to see if any other ingredients are missing?" I asked him.

"They are now." Albus smiled faintly. "The third holder of bat wing has been warned and they are taking precautionary measures. Are we blowing this up out of proportion?"

"No," my lover said decisively. "Something is going on but it's not what it appears outwardly. Sev, you said someone with great power or very young. Could it be one of the students who's involved in the potion contest? Someone that Voldemort could entice into acting for him while promising him power?"

I cast my mind over the four teams that Hogwarts was fielding for the competition. "Well, it's not Harry and Hermione. That leaves Higgins and Simon, Fowler and Gordon, and last but not least Malfoy and Blake. The unlock spell on the cupboard was cast by an expert but Lucius Malfoy is a master lock maker. He might have passed on his skill to Draco."

"Why?" Ron looked perplexed and Hermione answered him.

"Because he wants to win the contest to get his father's attention." Her voice was almost sad. "He thinks that will make his father proud of him."

"No matter the reason, we have to get it back safely. How do we do that?" Harry said firmly. "Let's do it today before he has a chance to open it."

We nodded and I slipped my hand into his, holding tight. Whatever happened, we'd face it together.

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Chapter 11 - Harry by Athea

Harry

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I was scared, really scared but trying to hide it. Severus had the baby to protect but he was vulnerable right now so he was my first priority while our child was his. I wanted to lock him away from all harm, the same way that he wanted to do for me. We both needed to stay with each other but the investigation was too serious to indulge ourselves.

And Ron was bursting at the seams to know what was going on. I'd debated telling him earlier but he hadn't had my epiphany about love yet and I feared losing his friendship and letting our secret out. Now I had to explain that while continuing our quest for the person who took the bat wing. Severus understood, of course, and he gave me that sweet smile that made me want to take him back to bed for a long cuddle.

But we had to split up to set this search into action and I took Ron with me while Hermione departed with Dumbledore to check out Fowler and Gordon. "Ron, can it wait until this is over? Can you trust me that long?"

"WHAT? Of course I trust you ... in a weird kind of way." His grin was lopsided. "I guess I should be glad that he turns you on instead of girls. That gives me a shot at Hermione that I wouldn't have otherwise. When you paired for this contest, I figured that I'd lost the battle."

"Hermione and me?" I stopped long enough to look him straight in the eyes. "She's one of my best friends, just the way that you are. A sister is all she's ever been and always will be. If you and her get together, I'll be happy for you both."

"Thanks." Ron's grin was huge then it was replaced with his thinking look. "Just one more thing, Harry. He's really pregnant?"

I smiled and blushed at the same time. "Yes, Sev is and yes, he's ours."

"Wow. That's ... wow." He took a deep breath. "I've got a million questions but they can wait. Let's go find our thief."

Now it was my turn to slap his shoulder and grin before heading for Higgins' study. He and Simon were hard at work on their entry and it took precious time to get them to at least give us a hint of what they were going for. Not even me swearing a wizard's oath got them to loosen up. It was Professor McGonagall showing up and sending us out to the hall that turned the trick finally.

We met back at the lab and sure enough, it had come down to Malfoy and Blake. I didn't know much about Blake since he'd transferred in the year before from the Mexican Academy of Divination and Magic, or MADAM for short. That should have been my first clue since the vampire bats were from near there. The books that detailed those kinds of spells were restricted but Blake might have known about them from his family or even their school.

But if so, wouldn't he also know how dangerous they were?

I wondered aloud if he could be a Vordemort plant and caught another odd look between Severus and Albus. Sev had out the book that detailed the spell it looked like they were going to try and use. It was an old spell, almost ancient and I still couldn't figure out why our ancestors had come up with it. But then I had a problem with spells that only destroyed.

Sev was rubbing his back, which usually meant that the baby was kicking him so I slid closer and began rubbing small circles there. He sighed quietly and leaned into me a little. Right then, I wished we could just disappear and curl up in the hot springs. But Dumbledore was marshaling his troops and assigning us to Seek out Draco and Paul. Severus insisted on going too so we divided up with one master and one student in each team.

Hermione and Severus disappeared towards Draco's House while Dumbledore and Ron went to check out the Commons. Professor McGonagall and I headed for the auditorium where the contest would be held. I was nervous at being separated from Sev and Professor McGonagall gave me a pep talk while we hurried. She dropped a real bombshell though when she confessed that he was closer to delivery than she'd thought.

Before I could ask her what that meant, an explosion went off inside my head and I fell to my knees. She bent to help me up, asking me urgently what was wrong. But the waves of pain were still coming and I suddenly realized that they were from Severus or rather, from the baby.

"Something's wrong with the baby. Hurry." I jumped to my feet and took off in the direction of the pain that flowed in waves from the very place we had been heading towards.

Somehow she kept up with me and managed to send a gasping message to Albus at the same time. I sprinted ahead and wrenched open the doors that led to the auditorium. Draco and Simon were on the platform with Severus and Hermione sprawled on the floor between them in a glowing orange circle.

"Draco! Stop!" I shouted and ran up the aisle.

"Stay back, Potter. This is just the trial run." He snarled at me, his eyes focused on the jar that hovered above my friends' heads.

"You have no idea what you're unleashing, Draco." I got to the edge of the platform and heard Dumbledore's voice behind me.

"Sure I do." He smirked in my direction. "You willing to take Hermione's place? We grabbed her to draw you here. Guess it worked, too bad that Snape came, too."

I froze. They didn't know about Severus, they'd thought the same thing that Ron had. I could get into the circle with Sev and the baby while they let Hermione go. He'd kill me if I did it but I wasn't going to be without him, not if I could help it. "Yes, let them go and I'll take their place."

"No way, Potter. One for one." Dark-haired Blake sneered at me and I saw the Death Eater mark on his arm glowing through his white shirt.

"Fine." Severus was beginning to stir. If I was going to do it, I'd have to hurry. "Open the circle and let Hermione out."

One side of the circle faded a little and I grabbed Hermione's ankle and pulled her out to Professor McGonagall before leaping into the circle beside Severus. He was trembling all over and shaking his head as if he'd hit it. But most of my attention was on the jar above us. The wire stopper had been unfastened but the rubber plug was still in the narrow mouthed jar.

"What did Blake tell you this would do, Draco?" I decided to divide and conquer if I could. "And why in Hades did you believe him?"

"Oh right, like you know about this." His eyes flickered over to me and I hoped that I saw a moment of hesitation.

"The last time it was used, it brought forth an energy vampire that sucked the life from four masters and six students before being trapped in a spell bound room for over fifty years. Wouldn't Voldemort love to get his hands on that kind of creature?" I had a hand on Severus' shoulder and could feel him regaining consciousness.

"Don't be a fool, it's a Sept-Dimensional creature from the Martian plain. Nobody else will have anything as brilliant as this, Potter." Draco's gaze was scornful.

"I'm not the one being foolish, Draco. I'll bet that Blake told you that he'd called up this kind of creature back home. Well, he lied about that and he's lying now. He's the one who can teleport out of here leaving us to provide the food for the energy vampire."

Draco finally hesitated and cast a doubtful look at his partner. "He's not going to do that."

"Right," I put as much sarcasm as I could into my voice, taking a lesson from my lover. "He told you that, too. I never knew you were so gullible, Draco."

"Malfoy, does your father know what you're doing?" Sev's voice was almost gentle.

Draco flinched. "It's ... it's to be a surprise during the contest."

"Oh good, I'd hate to think that Lucius had gone senile in his old age." Severus sat up with my help. "But you got the lock spell from him. What did you tell him you were doing?"

"He didn't ask, just gave me the spell." Draco truly looked uncertain for the first time.

Sev gathered his strength and cast a seeking spell that was answered almost at once. Lucius Malfoy flashed into view beside Dumbledore and seemed to take in the situation with a glance.

"Draco, open the circle and keep that jar closed." The sharp incisive voice cut through the air like a knife. "Come along, Son. This isn't quite what I had hoped to see."

His son looked over his shoulder with a bewildered look on his face at the same moment that I felt a power surge begin to pull out the stopper. I leapt up and grabbed them both, forcing the rubber back into the jar. But the outer pull was stronger than I'd thought and I could feel it slipping through my fingers. All I could think of was Severus and our baby and as if from very close to me, I felt two other hands over mine, helping me to hold it in.

A flare of bright rose-red flowed around both of us and I felt Sev in my mind as well as my heart. But a soft baby-hand seemed to pat both of ours, while a peal of laughter rang in my head. The joyful glow held all the way down to where I landed on the platform with the jar clutched tight in my hands.

Unopened.

But the danger wasn't over for where Blake had stood was a towering misshapen beast clad in mist and shadow. I put myself in front of Severus and felt his arms go around me. His hands made a complex gesture and the tall form was outlined in the same rose-red. The beast howled as if in great pain and one great clawed hand came towards us to grab the jar.

But again I heard joyful laughter and a powerful wave of love and caring flowed up the hand to envelop the creature in soft pink and rose. It howled and began to shrink, growing smaller and smaller until with a slight pop, it disappeared. I held onto the jar in a frozen grasp while my ears rang with the silenced cries. I might have stayed there indefinitely but Severus collapsed against me and that galvanized me.

Turning, I fastened the wire stopper and handed it to Dumbledore to hold. Sev was trembling all over again and the look of pain on his face scared me. I held him up and saw him wrap his arms around the baby. "Sev, what's wrong? Is the baby all right?"

"Yes and no." He gritted his teeth then relaxed. "I don't think she's going to wait for the solstice, love."

What? I tried to think what he could be talking about when it hit me. He was in labor.

"Is there something else wrong?" Malfoy's voice came from below the platform and Dumbledore and I exchanged a lightning glance that was a whole conversation.

"Just knocked his head, my dear boy. I think it best if we don't say anything about this unfortunate event. We'll let Potter and his friends take Professor Snape back to the lab and they can put this," he held up the jar and screened us from the others, "safely back where it belongs. And the three of us will adjourn to my study to have a little chat."

He shepherded them out of the auditorium after handing the jar to Professor McGonagall who promptly handed it to Hermione. Then she was on her knees by Sev with her hands right on the baby. "Goodness, yes, this little one is ready. Let's get him back to the lab."

"I thought," Sev grimaced and held my hand a little harder. "I thought we were going to the valley."

"We are but we have a surprise for you." I helped him up and Ron got on his other side to help. "Which means we have to go back to the lab for just a minute."

He nodded but I could see the strain he was under. We hurried as fast as we could but he was panting with pain by the time we got to the lab and into his bedroom. He was still able to lift an eyebrow when we swung his armoire away from the wall to reveal a new portal. Professor McGonagall went through first with Hermione on her heels. Ron followed her and I helped Severus into the cavern where the hot springs bubbled. He looked around in amazement before doubling over in pain.

"Albus said that he was giving us an early baby present. He and Minerva set up the portal while you were attending that potion conference in London. We've been bringing things through when you were out." I was babbling but then I was scared stiff.

"Very ingenuous ..." he panted out the words. "The springs . . . now."

I started undressing him so he could get into the water. I'd gotten good at that over the last few months. He slid in with a moan and I tore my own clothes off to join him. On the borders of my mind I could hear Hermione and Ron talking urgently to Minerva but then she was in the pool with us and I could feel her hands covering Sev's.

"Slow breaths, Severus, just the way we practiced. That's it, feel the water around you. Tell your child how warm and safe it is outside your body." Her no nonsense voice had taken on a kind of mesmerizing tone. "Such an eager one and so ready to be born. Harry, are you ready?"

"Yes," I took a deep breath, let it out, then took another one. Reaching inside of the man I held with a wizard's touch, I 'showed' the baby the way out. Meshing my energy with his, the way we'd been practicing, I gave him the strength he needed to push. He writhed in my arms and I held on tight, closing my eyes and picturing the baby sliding down the widening birth channel.

"That's it, little one." Minerva's voice was almost a croon. "Almost there, Severus, just once more and you'll hold your child in your arms."

I felt him gather the remains of his strength and push with a soft almost desperate cry. And in the echoing silence, he collapsed against me while Minerva brought our child out of the water with a smile. For a moment, the whole cave glowed with a soft burst of rose energy that flowed from her like a cloud.

"Congratulations, Harry and Severus, you have a beautiful little girl." She pinched the umbilical cord closed and placed our daughter into Sev's arms. "Now for a little clean up." She concentrated on healing Sev while we gazed in awe at the scrunched up little face.

"She's beautiful." Sev's voice was just a whisper of sound but I heard him.

"We do good work, love."

He turned his head to kiss me gently before looking back down into a suddenly open gaze. "She has your eyes, Harry."

"Yeah, but she has your chin." I very, very gently smoothed a finger over her cheek and she looked at me as if she knew me. "Welcome, Aphrodite. We're very glad you're finally here."

"Aphrodite?" Hermione's voice came over my shoulder.

Sev's and my eyes met and I laughed out loud. "It's an old family name. She'll grow into it, Aunt Hermione."

Laughter filled the cavern and I held my lover and daughter close. It didn't get any better than this. The future looked very bright right now.

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Chapter 12 - Severus by Athea

Author's Notes:

This is the last part of the story. Thanks to everyone who wrote me and many, many thanks to J.K. Rowling for giving us this delightful universe. Even more, thanks to the casting director for his/her inspired choice of actor for Severus.

Severus

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Babbling brought me up and out of our nice, warm bed as if an invisible hand had lifted me up and set me moving. Aphrodite was wide-awake and thought I should be, too. I stumbled into her cave and pushed aside the gauzy yellow fabric that tented the small space that was hers alone. She was dry but restless and I picked her out of the snowy bedding in the dark oak cradle that had once been mine, cuddling her against my bare chest. "It's too early for you to be up, sweetheart."

"I understand that, 'Dite, but I was hoping to sleep in." I said rather plaintively.

"All right, breakfast it is." I carried her through the short tunnel between our bedrooms and out into the sunshine. Settling in to the protected alcove that had become our favorite outlook of the lake, I held her to my left nipple and she began to nurse.

I'd debated over whether I should nurse her myself but the very thought of all the bottles, formula



and time had tipped my decision. Not to mention, Harry's reading had told us it was healthier for her. I'd grown slightly plumper across my chest and that seemed to be enough for her. The more I nursed her, the more comfortable I got until it became almost painful to not nurse.

She sucked strongly this morning and I could feel myself begin to respond. Somehow that reaction hadn't made it into the baby books that Harry and I had devoured. I'd grown used to getting hard whenever I fed her. But lately that meant that I had to take care of myself instead of finding my young lover and making love with him.

He was planning something but I didn't know what. We'd already had a party for 'Dite with all the people in on the secret. She now had a grand-godfather in Albus and two godmothers in Minerva and Hermione. Finals were over and Harry spent every spare moment he had with us but sometimes he had a far away look and right now he was in London meeting with his lawyer. I was praying with every thing I had that he hadn't grown tired or constrained with our situation. He loved us, I knew that but he was so young to have such responsibilities.

"What, sweetheart? Done with that one already?" I shifted her to my other nipple and watched her suck in more of the milk I was lactating.

She was so precious to me, such a miracle, that I tried not to be greedy. If Harry needed some space and time to himself, it was the very least I could give him. Looking out over the lake, I spotted the bobbing heads of the otter family. They always made me smile with their antics. They'd grown used to our presence and even approached us when we took 'Dite down to splash at the water's edge.

Perhaps it was being born into water or the fact that she shared the element of water with me that made her so fearless. The cooler waters of the lake had surprised her at first but she soon took to it like one of the otters. The head of the otter clan had approached her as she sat between my legs, half in and half out of the water. She cocked her head at him and he at her then she babbled something at him. He squeaked back before swimming away.

I guess she was just adding another set of folks to her growing kingdom. 'Dite ruled us with love and tenderness, but ruled us just the same. Perhaps that was what Harry was chafing against? Well, not really chafing just ... I sighed and decided not to look for trouble. It would find me soon enough.

"Sorry, sweetheart, I promise not to think sad thoughts for awhile." I put her up to my shoulder and patted her back while she burped for me. It was almost uncanny how she picked up the emotions around her. I sincerely hoped that she wasn't an empath because that training was rigorous in the extreme and until she got it, she'd be prey to every emotion of every person around her.

And I already knew that I was prone to depression. Determinedly, I rocked her and thought only good thoughts about how lucky I was to have her and Harry. The further friendships with Minerva and Albus had grown more equal, which at my ripe old age of 35 was long overdue. Their burgeoning romance was quite satisfying to me and gave endless amusement. They adored Aphrodite and several times when I needed to go to London, they'd baby sit for me.

"Really, you'd like to go down to the lake?" I got the mental picture quite clearly in my head. "I think that's a wonderful idea. Shall we take the blanket and have a picnic?"

< babble >

"A picnic it is." I stood up and carried her back inside. We had one of those sling pouches and I filled a diaper bag with her supplies before packing a bag filled with big people food and drink. She nestled against me with a soft sigh and dozed a little while I walked down to the lake.

We'd scooped out a stone-free spot with some junipers growing nearby to stop any wind that might swoop down to chill us. August continued hot and sunny so I was rather looking forward to a swim after 'Dite had splashed a bit. The blanket had been spelled to keep out insects and animals while keeping her safely within its confines. Paddling tired her out so she'd sleep for a bit then I could have my swim.

I was only wearing cotton shorts and her sleeper and diaper came off quickly. The moment her tiny feet touched the water, she began to giggle and splash. The otters swam closer and she watched them play while making sure that both of us were drenched. One of the young ones swam closer and started a staring match that soon degenerated into more splashing.

It was such a joy to watch her whole-hearted enjoyment of the day. I made another vow to take each moment as it came and accept the delights of our daughter and new living quarters. Since 'Dite had been born, we'd slowly made the four interconnected caves that Albus had coaxed out of stone into living quarters that bordered on the sybaritic. Her room was a small bower of soft pastels and fabrics.

Minerva and Hermione had, between the two of them, designed a space fit for a tiny princess. Instead of gray Scottish granite walls, sunny yellow fabric tented the entire space. The furniture was mostly white wicker with a changing table nestled on top of the low dresser. The floor was covered completely with a crimson Chinese rug that I suspected from its deep pile was a McGonagall antique. The only rather masculine piece of furniture was her cradle and since it was a family heirloom, they'd agreed that it was all right for now. I suspected that once she graduated to a crib, more wicker would appear.

The grownup bedroom had mostly my former bedroom furniture with a pair of tall armoires from Snape Manor to hold our clothing since caves rarely ran to closets. Instead of my former dark sheets, however, we'd splurged on lighter colors that ran the rainbow from buttercup yellow to pale rose. The plump duvet cover was patterned lace on the outside and softened the rather harsh lines of the platform oak bed that rose above a miscellany of Indian and Persian rugs in many colors.

The bathroom pretty much consisted of a composting toilet and a sink with cold water. If we needed hot, one of us would dip some out of the hot springs. That continued to be our bath although once the semester began, we'd probably use the shower back in my private rooms at Hogwarts.

The fire pit in the front room was the center of focus with the comfortable couch and pair of wing chairs clustered on the far side and the mahogany table and six chairs on the near side. Bookcases ringed the round granite walls and more colorful rugs protected our feet from the stone floors. The kitchen was a smaller cave with light pine cupboards and a table, plus several direct current appliances that were fed electricity from the solar panels that resided higher on the mountain. Snaking the wires down had been an interesting exercise that took almost a week.

All in all, I'd never had a more comfortable home in my life.

If only Harry wasn't thinking of ... I didn't know what.

"Oops, 'Dite, I'm sorry. How about a little nap while I take a nice long swim before devouring a late breakfast?" I asked her and she nodded emphatically before reaching up and patting my face. Standing, I carried her back to the blanket where I dried and redressed her in yet another mint green cotton outfit from her Aunt Hermione. Her eyes were already closing when I covered her with a light blanket.

Stretching, I strode back into the lake and dunked myself completely before purposefully swimming to the far side of the loch. The clear cool water felt wonderful and I felt the stretch of slowly healing muscles. Albus and I had disentangled my channels back to their former routes although all of them had grown considerably. I'd begun to experience a growth spurt in power that rather surprised me. That hadn't been in any of the grimoires that either Albus or I had ever read.

I was looking forward to seeing where my magic led me.

If only ... I stopped that train of thought and blanked my mind except for the thread that was always watching and listening for Aphrodite. I swam until I felt my muscles begin the slight burn that told me it was time to head in. My stomach was growling and I was in definite need of refueling. I was finally close enough to our pebble beach and put my feet down to walk from the lake.

Shaking my head, I slicked my hair back in time to almost be bowled over by Harry. His kiss was tart and sweet while I reveled in having him back in my arms. The physical ache disappeared the moment we touched and I wound my arms around him, wanting to never let go. He'd already stripped down to nothing and our skin met everywhere. But all good things must end and we finally had to breathe.

"I thought ... I'd never ... get away from ... Mr. Banes." Harry kissed his way down my throat while talking. "I must have signed a hundred ... pieces of paper ... before he was satisfied. I missed you this morning."

"We missed you too, Harry. 'Dite wouldn't let me sleep in at all." I was stroking every bit of skin within reach. "Do you ... have to go back?"

"Nope, it's all taken care of and Aphrodite is legally my heir if anything should happen to me." He grinned up at me before licking my nipple and gently tugging it with his teeth.

And I was suddenly steel hard and leaking. "Harry!"

His grin was unrepentant. "I've been hard since I got off the train, Sev. I really, really need you to fuck me." I almost came when I heard him say that word but he was pulling away and going down on all fours, half in and half out of the water. "I got myself ready for you, love. Need you so much."

I covered him with my body and tested his heat with two fingers before nudging the small hole and sliding inside. I didn't move for a moment and he slowly relaxed around me. A sigh of my name was my signal to move deeper. Finally, I was completely sheathed inside the tightest, hottest place I'd ever been. He flexed around me impatiently but I kept my strokes slow, targeting his gland with every thrust until he was writhing under me. Only then did I let one hand leave his hips to fondle him.

Harry hiccuped once and came so hard I had to hold him up to keep his face out of the water. I seemed to release forever, jerking with each muscle contraction until he had all of me. Kissing the back of his neck, I once again prayed to my favorite goddess of love that he would stay with us.

"Sev," his voice had that husky note that told me he was feeling replete. "I love the way you love

me."

"I love you, Harry. I'm so glad that you listened to Albus and gave me a chance." I rocked a little while he wiggled around me and damned if I didn't think about hardening again. Only Harry could make me so insatiable.

He straightened up and turned to kiss me. We feasted for a little while before the pebbles we knelt on began to dig uncomfortably into our knees. He helped me to my feet and we walked hand-in-hand back to the blanket where our daughter slept. We unpacked the grownup bag and ate every crumb of the apple tart I'd baked the day before. Harry told me about the trip and Mr. Banes, his parents' lawyer.

Aphrodite's birth and the filing of the birth certificate with the law firm had triggered a flurry of legal activity. Harry's fatherhood, probably expected when he was much older, had changed matters of the Potter estate. When he fell silent, I wondered but when he started trying to poke a hole in the blanket, I knew something was on his mind. Maybe even the reason for the abstractions that caused me such alarm.

"Severus, is this enough for you?" Those green eyes were so serious. "I mean, am I someone that you want to keep forever and ever?"

"What?" I shook my head. "Of course, you are. I love you. But ... I would understand if you ..." Oh, this was hard. "If you needed something ... different."

And once again, I found myself with two armfuls of lover, bearing me back onto the blanket and touching me everywhere. He kissed me hard while his fingers slid through my hair in my second favorite caress. I held on to him and returned the kiss with all the love I had. Slowly he gentled until he was brushing my slightly swollen lips with his.

"I love you, Severus Snape. Albus told me that I'd have to be the one who asked because you wouldn't." He pulled back just far enough to look seriously into my somewhat dazed eyes. "Will you marry me, Sev?"

What? Marry him?

He was too young. I was too old. We still had the war with Voldemort. His last year of school was coming up.

Daddy? I turned my head and met a second pair of green eyes. Had she just thought her first word? "You think I should say yes, 'Dite?"

Harry was trying to keep back his laughter while our daughter read me the riot act, in a ladylike way, of course.

"Yes, Harry. Yes, I would love to marry you." I finally got my tongue under control only to lose it to his kiss.

We kissed until our air ran out and we had to breathe. He stroked my hair again and I felt myself begin to purr. "Thank you, Sev. I was afraid that you'd think I was too young or immature or something."

"I thought I was too old, too scarred and much too boring for you." I confessed and saw the same

chiding look on his face that Aphrodite had on hers. "You realize that this little miracle is our child's first matchmaking scheme?"

He grinned at me. "Well, she is named for the Goddess of Love and she's the first Child of Love born in five centuries. Before she's done, I expect she'll have a lot more couples in her generous heart."

We both broke into laughter and rolled apart so we could give her the cuddles that she was demanding. Harry picked her up while I wrapped my arms around them both. For long moments that was all we needed. The warm air wrapped us in soft breezes, the otters' chitterings echoed over the loch and my heart opened up a little more to take in yet one more miracle.

Harry and Aphrodite were the center of my world. I was rather looking forward to the ceremony to come. This marriage would be different. Two hearts had already been joined while two bodies created a child. But now, those hearts would become one. I wondered if we were part of some great cosmic scheme on the part of the Light? Had we always been fated to meet and love?

Had Aphrodite looked down at us from the Light that filled the universe and chosen us for her parents? I glanced down into a laughing green gaze and for a brief moment saw a pair of ancient eyes looking back at me. Then it was gone, leaving me to wonder if I'd seen anything at all. It didn't matter, I loved Harry and for some reason, he loved me.

I couldn't have asked the Universe for anything more.

"Love you, too, 'Dite." We chorused back to her and began to plan the wedding.

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Aphrodite

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Good. I wiggled all over, enjoying Daddy's kiss and Papa's tickle. One down and two more to go. For now.

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The end of Child of Love

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