**Chapter 65**

**Magic is Draconic**

**31 December 1993,** **Marina Island, Angra Dos Reis**, **near Brazil**

As expected, the magical procedure which allowed a baby dragon to leave the egg was incredibly difficult.

A mother dragon had not these difficulties, of course. The proximity of the parent and the egg was creating a symbiotic magical exchange which ensured the mother could control when and where it would be safest for the baby dragon to meet the real world.

It was a mix of fire and air ‘field’ magic that dragon researchers were still studying to this day, and was used by every dragon in the last few centuries.

But the dragons had a lot of different sub-species, and most of them ignored males and females not sharing their characteristics, and this was when they didn’t fight or kill each other.

To quote a random example, the average Welsh Green managed to tolerate the rarer Welsh Red only one time out of three in a dragon preserve, and none had ever been recorded to live in peace with the Hebridean Black. Alexandra was sure that making the dragons stupider and depriving them of their full intelligence capabilities had not helped the problem at all.

Still, crossbreeding of different dragons was extremely difficult and therefore incredibly rare. And a nesting mother couldn’t give the fire of life to dragon eggs which were not of her breed. By Sauron, a nesting mother wasn’t exactly devoted to dragon eggs that had not come out of her body in the first place. It already was the next best thing to impossible to convince a female dragon to sit on unfamiliar eggs if she was able to mate and give birth to her own babies...

So yes, the Potter Heiress had a big problem with the eggs of the Britannian Gold.

Since this sub-species had been declared extinct more than a thousand years ago, the prospect of finding a gold-scaled mother dragon somewhere was evidently zero. The Exchequer and its Dark Lords and Dark Ladies must have given up at some point in the past too – though in their case Morgana La Fay and her supporters must have faced the challenge with dracology studies that were far less advanced than today.

No, there was no point searching for a non-existent dragon on every continent. The alternative path, unfortunately, was hazardous and had high chances of failure.

“So let me see if I understood your explanations correctly,” the green-eyed witch said to Lady Zabini. “First I have to discover which egg I have the greatest affinity with. I must then warm it up with a precise and controlled enchanted fire, pour a Potion on it, activate three circles of Runes, and at last surround it in a sort of magical cocoon with my own powers. And the exact ingredients, runes, incantations, and words to be spoken are unknown, because the process is something unique for each species.”

“You heard well,” her magical guardian answered. “The method was invented by several Chinese wizards during the fifteenth century for the near-extinct Chinese Celestial. But this sub-species of eastern dragon is not the Britannian Gold. So yes, I’m afraid you must rely on your intuition and your affinities to see if you will be able to convince an egg to hatch.”

It made sense...in a twisted sort of way.

Alexandra would have preferred having detailed instructions like the ones on a classroom blackboard, though. There was less chance for her to miss an important detail or cause irreparable damage to the egg and the baby dragon inside.

Touching the eggs one by one was frustrating enough. There was no mark suddenly appearing on the palm of her hand, the cry of a reptile, or a fireworks show. The five eggs were cold and scaly, and she had to manipulate them by levitation and colouring charms for over three hours before she decided for the second egg on the right.

And to be honest, Champion of the Morrigan or not, Alexandra was only fifty percent sure she had made the correct choice.

“The enchanted fire is next.”

Stella watched her from afar, removing the four other dragon eggs and generating some magical barriers, but didn’t say one more word, so nothing problematic had happened for now.

Alexandra had ‘only’ to wisely choose a fire spell.

The Basilisk-Slayer immediately discarded Incendio from her mind. It was the first-year spell par excellence, but it was not potent enough to warm through the scales of a dragon egg. The same was true of the Bluebell flames, for they were based on cold fire and would provide little warmth to a fire-breathing reptile. Flagrante and Lacarnum Inflamari were also too weak to be of use.

Confringo would satisfy the power requirements, but it was half-fire and half-explosion, and one use of it would undoubtedly guarantee the destruction of the egg.

Damn it. There were other fire spells she had read about in the library, but how was she supposed to know if they would be appropriate for this dragon sub-species? When it came down to it, the old books had only contradictory and vague information to give when long-disappeared dragons were spoken about.

“Time to take a leap of faith...again.”

“Fulgur in Comburo!” This was more a hybrid of Lightning and Fire spell, but given her magical elemental strengths, this was one of the spells Alexandra was rather sure she could control for a few hours.

Reassuringly, the fire didn’t destroy the egg and after a few minutes under the fire, Alexandra could guess the not-destruction was about as positive a sign as she could get.

That left the Potion. In the cauldron next to the enchanted fire, the Potter Heiress had put several peppers, a fire salamander’s skin, the feathers of several prey birds, the remains of a dead Firecrab, and a lot of water. And she added three drops of her blood taken from her finger.

A dragon was as much a creature of fire as it was a creature of air, and if there was need to create a bond, the dragon needed to acquire her magical signature, and the only way to give it was bone or blood. And Alexandra was not about to mutilate herself for a Potion.

Evidently, this made the Potion, and everything she was doing with it, illegal as hell. There were very few healing Potions or substances where a wizard or a witch had the legal authorisation to pour his or her blood into it, and her improvised red paste was not one of these exceptions.

That it was her blood used in the procedure wouldn’t make a difference in the eyes of a court of the Wizengamot.

“They must really love to send people to Azkaban...” This had become more and more of a logical answer as to the ‘why’ of everything London and Cornelius Fudge’s administration did. Yes, Blood Magic could be used for bad purposes, but not every use of Blood Magic was done for the sheer pleasure of cursing your sworn enemy or increasing your power in a bid to become the next Dark Lord.

She poured out the reddish paste created from her inspiration and the ingredients available on the egg. Like the previous steps, it had no visible effect.

“Come on, come on...”

But clearly the dragon inside the egg was either sleepy or unwilling to give her any clue.

“Okay, let’s try the Runes.”

The choice of the language was the ‘easy’ part. If the name was any indication, the sub-species must have been living on the British Isles like she had. The appropriate rune script had to be the Ogham.

And that’s where the bad news started. For all her lectures at MacDougal Manor, she had only read about the Ogham runes and never put them in action.

There were at least a few evident choices. Luis was the Ogham of flame. Oir in this context was the ‘gold’ of Britannian Gold. Getal was Death, and Idhadh was Lightning. And Straif was the sulphur.

Ultimately, she decided to draw these five and she added Muin, the unifier, which could be imbued as cunning as well as love. Drawing three full circles of Galdr around the fire took hours and her exhaustion was beginning to show. All the runes she imbued drank her magic like there was no tomorrow and at the same time the fire had to burn at the same temperature and with the same pressure.

“Luis and Oir, flame and gold, Getal and Idhadh, immobility and tempest, Straif below Muin, sulphur bows before magic, let grow, give life, bring back from the brink this newborn spark! In the name of the embers of magic, I beseech you! LOGISM!”

The fire and the circle burned in gold flames and Alexandra took two step backs and seized her wand. It was a good precaution, because seconds later the centre of the rune circles exploded and only a hastily-cast Protego saved her from being thrown away by the deflagration.

“I think I should try to convince Morag to invest in a reparation business next year.” Somehow, there was always a lot of damage wherever she improvised. Alexandra grimaced, looking at all the sand, water, and a lot of the surroundings which had been violently moved. She had neither the time nor the mastery to surround the egg with her magic, and that meant more or less the ruination of the experiment.

“Aguamenti,” she cast first to stop the secondary fires lit by the explosion. To her pleasant surprise, the egg at the centre of the blackened ground was intact. “Aguamenti!”

The gold colour rapidly re-emerged once the ashes and the pieces of carbonised wood were removed.

“I think I will need to re-read a bit the translation of these Chinese dragon-trainers!” the Champion of Death shouted to her guardian as the magical barriers were removed, and the wards were unpowered. She went on one knee and tried to touch the egg with one finger. It had spent a long time in the fire and she didn’t fancy returning it into its chest if it was incandescent. But the egg was already lukewarm, not hellishly hot...and then it moved and a large squeal came from inside.

Alexandra withdrew her hand in a hurry, but a second squeal resonated and the top of the egg began to break under a minor but repeated assault.

Afterwards she would realise it had only taken seconds, but at the time the moment spread like an eternity. Inch by inch more and more of the egg was broken, and a little golden reptilian egg met the outside world for the first time.

The baby dragon squealed, not having the vocal chords to roar or hiss threateningly.

“I’m returning to the house. The baby is going to need a lot of food,” Stella Zabini told her. Alexandra nodded wordlessly, her eyes not leaving the sight of the little newborn Britannian clawing and hitting the upper parts of the egg to leave it.

The name had been a hint, but even cloaked in a lot of fluids from the egg, the magnificent golden colour could not be denied. The baby had a little horn on the muzzle, and four-fingered claws. And naturally there were the fledgling wings immobile on the back.

Already she was hearing Blaise running in the distance and a House Elf teleporting several plates of food over but in this instant they could wait.

Not knowing the effect further use of magic could have, Alexandra used her hands to ease the passage of the young dragon out of the egg. The moment it jumped out, the wings were unfurled, and by Smaug, that was a long tail...

“I will name you Fingolfin.” She had debated over a few names, but the horn and the little protuberances on the neck told her there was a high likelihood the baby was a male. “You will be a reborn golden flame of magic.”

The Potter went to caress the neck of the newborn dragon, and Fingolfin squealed in joy...and *spoke*.

“Mommy!”

**2 January 1994, Lovegood House, Ottery St Catchpole, England**

The house where Luna Lovegood and her father lived had a name. Nigel had refused to remember it. There were limits to what his brain could endure. It was bad enough that someone inside had stashed hundreds of animal claws, horns, and furs within and then bungled the whole affair with a chaotic Self-Expanding Ward. The inside was thus far larger than the outside and it changed like a living labyrinth every time this year he had visited his fellow Ravenclaw.

Sometimes the ex-Gryffindor wished they could use his own house to meet and decide what they were going to write in the columns of the *Loud Duck*. Unfortunately, his father had left once again early this morning, and as much as he was uneasy visiting the Lovegood’s ugly tower, Nigel liked the prospect of staying with his grandfather from breakfast to dinner even less.

The auburn-haired boy felt like he had tasted something bad, but unfortunately, like Alexandra had the depressing habit of saying, sticking your head into a hole and trying to ignore a problem was not going to make the problem disappear. His grandfather didn’t like him. Merlin and Morgana, Nigel was half-convinced there was no one save his father that the old man actually tolerated in public and in private. And after entering Hogwarts and listening to the stories of his friends’ parents and grandparents, he had acknowledged the behaviour of his grandfather and the feelings of fear it gave him were not normal. Nigel had believed it was because he wasn’t a powerful or gifted wizard at first. But as he was involved in spectacular adventures and his grades markedly improved, the attitude of the elderly wizard had not changed at all.

The former Gryffindor was still waiting a smile or a word or two of true compliments, though he had resigned himself to never receiving it. His grandfather was a really, really unpleasant man to live with, and after so many years Nigel was beginning to get tired of his foul tongue. Since his father was rarely present, the days he never saw him were good, and not just because he was with his friends.

The young wizard abandoned the depressing subject to focus on the reason he was visiting Luna Lovegood today.

“I think our best chance to publish the *Loud Duck* without Dumbledore’s interference is to wake up early and borrow a few owls from Diagon Alley. That way every reader will receive his newspaper on the Hogwarts Express and Dumbledore may rage all he wants, but the content of the articles will have spread to the four Common Rooms and beyond in a few hours.”

“But the Rotfang Conspiracy won’t be exposed! And the quill is mightier than the wand!”

Nigel fought an urge to raise his eyes and ask to the ceiling what he had done to be part of a circle including insane witches and hell-raising pranksters.

“The quill may reveal a few dangerous truths, Luna, but Dumbledore with his wand can torch our entire newspaper organisation in two seconds, tops, if he found our headquarters. And I’d prefer we didn’t give him the opportunity to remove the *Loud Duck* from Hogwarts. It will cost us a bit more, but we won’t have to watch our backs this time. The Hogwarts Express is controlled by a few Aurors beforehand, but no one will think to stop newspaper owls from contacting students.”

“Hmm...the wrackspurts are in ebullition. We may try it...once.”

“Thank you. Now onto the second order of the day. Was it necessary to make the headline so provocative?

The rough draft the younger Ravenclaw girl wrote was taking no gloves this time. Were the paragraphs telling the truth? Absolutely! Had the blonde-haired Lovegood tried her best to give a crisis of apoplexy to a Dumbledore supporter? Yes, without a shadow of a doubt.

**THE FUTURE IRRELEVANCE OF HEADMASTER ALBUS DUMBLEDORE**

To be honest, Nigel was a bit impressed with how Luna had checked her sources – Hermione must have given her a hand. The rules taken from the guidebook of the European Magical Tournament were quoted and justified with precise references, and so were the Wizengamot edicts.

It was the truth, and nothing but the truth.

It was also an article the *Daily Prophet* would never consent to printing without the approbation of the Minister of Magic and his senior advisors.

Luna had recited the positions Dumbledore had lost in recent years like the post of Supreme Mugwump last summer, and informed the readers in blunt words that yes, his Chief Warlock and Grand Sorcerer titles were in danger of being transferred to younger wizards and witches.

This would have been ten times more provocative than even the Irish newspaper was, but his fellow journalist had not stopped there. Below she had summed-up what Alexandra had remarked upon from the instructions given at the Winter Ball: Albus Dumbledore had little to no power over the progress and the outcome of the inter-school Tournament which would begin on Samhain 1994.

Usually, being a Headmaster of one of the prestigious schools was a guarantee of prestige and influence. You were one of the judges, ultimately, and since all the Headmasters and Headmistresses had every reason to limit the number of fellow judges invited for the trials, their partiality or impartiality when the time came to give points to the Champions was primordial.

But since the Scuola Regina had decided to use international judges – a privilege which was theoretically legal according to the long history of Tri-Wizard Tournaments, Dumbledore was not going to have an impact on the successes or the failures of the Champions once it began.

And to further limit further his range of actions, he couldn’t be an advisor, a teacher, or a guardian for those who were going to represent Hogwarts. But he had to be there with the other Headmasters in the lodges or in the centre of the representations, unable to do anything more than give his opinion and far from his powerbase.

Yes, if this Tournament had been conceived by the Exchequer to get rid of several politicians and powerful wizards, Dumbledore’s name had to be near the top of the list.

“Yes, it was!” Luna replied stubbornly with a vitality that told Nigel he wasn’t going to make her change her article or tone down the level of provocation.

“Third order...the title of your second article. Alexandra is not going to accept it. We don’t know if Durmstrang students have made contact with several Slytherins to know our potential Champions but...”

‘**THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF LYUDMILA ROMANOV**’ was maybe something that was going to massively increase their number of subscribers, but Nigel didn’t want to rely on their anonymity as their only chance of salvation...

**2 January 1994**, **Marina Island, Angra Dos Reis**, **near Brazil**

“Mommy! Hungry mommy!”

Seeing Blaise collapse into laughter like a madman at the sight of the baby dragon circling around her was getting old. And not in a good way.

“Don’t worry, Fingolfin,” Alexandra told the golden dragon as his little head watched the dark-skinned Slytherin boy giggle with curiosity. “He’s just jealous.”

Fortunately, the arrival of another plate of cooked meat made sure the first Britannian Gold to live in centuries was immediately more concerned about filling his belly than observing a human’s laughter crisis.

“This will be his last lunch today,” Stella Zabini announced as she levitated several empty plates from the table. “A young dragon needs food, but he needs several hours to digest otherwise he’s going to get quite bloated.”

Alexandra nodded in return. At least they had easily arrived at the conclusion that the Britannian Gold species was carnivorous. But the food had to be cooked. Fingolfin didn’t accept meat and eggs which had not been touched by fire beforehand. They had not tried their luck with fish, the baby dragon was far too young to handle the risk posed by fish bones, but in practise it was virtually certain that in later years, a fish-only diet was unlikely to cause problems.

“It’s surprising he isn’t generating some small flames,” Alexandra commented. “During first year, the Norwegian Ridgeback the Gryffindors were caught with was spitting flames minutes after birth, if the rumours have any truth.”

“Oh I’m sure they were,” her magical guardian lightly replied. “The average Norwegian Ridgeback lives in harsh conditions in the wild, and the babies as such must be able to warm their environment as fast as they can. There are records of them spitting a true flame-roar after one week or two, and they can attack with them after one month or two. The bite of the sub-species is also able to poison its prey with a potent venom.”

“Lovely,” trust the Keeper of Keys and Grounds Rubeus Hagrid to choose one of the deadliest existing dragons by choice or dumb luck. The only thing that could have made it worse was if the dragon was a female. Every book on dragon topics that she had read until now confirmed the females were far more vicious and spirited than the males.

“Just be thankful it was a Norwegian Ridgeback, not a Hungarian Horntail,” the Black Widow said in a deadly serious tone. “Drunk with debilitating Potions or not, the black-scaled dragons of that sub-species are incredibly dangerous to raise. A baby Horntail has not the venom of the Ridgeback or the fire breath’s range of the Chinese Fireball, but it compensates in sheer aggressiveness. In fact, I don’t think I’ve ever heard of a Horntail egg ever put on the black market. Nesting dragon mothers can go berserk if someone tries to steal their eggs, but the Horntail will know no peace until the aspirant-thief has been roasted and massacred.”

Well, it had the merit of being clear, Alexandra thought as she took Fingolfin in her arms now that the baby dragon had finished devouring his dinner.

Though it let her imagine a rather worrying issue.

“Would the organisers of the European Magical Tournament try to involve a Hungarian Horntail in one of the tasks?”

“I find it...unlikely.” Alexandra would have felt more reassured if the Lamia had answered with a clear ‘no’. “I think the presence of dragons is more or less unavoidable. For reasons I’m sure you understand, these noble flying reptiles are always favourites of the crowds.” A humorous glance was given to the squealing dragon the Potter Heiress was caressing from tail to neck on her knees. “But it would be out of character for Sforza to risk bringing a Hungarian Horntail. There are sixteen Champions competing at the same time. Even assuming it’s sixteen against one, there are experienced dragon handlers who have died against such odds, and it could easily result into a bloody massacre of Champions. No, there are better choices to use among the dragon sub-species.”

It was as reassuring a speech as she was going to get before the opening of the Tournament, the green-eyed girl supposed.

“The return of the paperwork is positive, by the way. Fingolfin formally belongs to you, by Venetian law.”

“I’m glad. His new home is ready at Zabini Manor, then?”

As much as she wanted to keep the baby dragon with her, it was obviously impossible. As long as it stayed somewhere the Ministry couldn’t see it, the existence of a Britannian Gold could stay under wraps. But if she arrived with Fingolfin perched on her shoulder, all hell was going to break loose, and that wasn’t an exaggeration. Setting aside the issue of an extinct dragon sub-species returning from the grave, the British Ministry did not have a lot of respect for foreign laws and edicts that contradicted their bigoted prejudices. But even if Dumbledore would not try to expel her for bringing a dragon to his school and steal Fingolfin from her hands, the fact remained not having two eyes on a baby dragon every hour of the day was tantamount to create a catastrophe. Alexandra was sure Hagrid and the Gryffindors could vigorously support her on this judgement.

Ravenclaw Tower was not particularly flammable, but leaving a baby dragon alone when you were going to class for several hours was the definition of imprudence and self-destruction. Fingolfin was very intelligent for a dragon, but there was no way Ravenclaw Tower wouldn’t be devastated in some manner while she was away nor would the secret of his presence be preserved.

“It is. I would encourage you to come to visit him every week, though. As competent as my dragon handlers are, there are no substitutes for the bond you have with this adorable baby.”

“I will.” The lack of competent surveillance at Hogwarts was a boon in this endeavour. And with her magical core increasing in size day after day, she was largely able to teleport from northern Scotland to Zabini Manor without suffering from magical exhaustion.

“And on that promise, I think it’s time we begin to pack our trunks and prepare to return to the British Isles. You have a Hogwarts Express to catch on Monday the 4th.”

“I want to make a detour once we arrive at Zabini Manor,” the Potter Heiress warned her guardian.

“Nothing too illegal I hope?”

Alexandra smirked before Fingolfin asked for more caresses.

**2 January 1994, Manoir des Anges, somewhere near Reims, France**

The old manor was well-defended. Not counting the alarms supposed to sound the alert at the first sign of intrusion, there were twenty-two first-rank wards able to kill a potential burglar or assassin, and seventeen neutralisation wards of secondary rank.

This was the first layer of defences, although it was admittedly the most formidable. The second layer included enchanted stone statues of centuries past like sword-bearing knights, fire-spitting gargoyles, centaurs able to throw stone arrows with their bows, and numerous runic traps which were totally illegal by French law.

The third layer was the House Elves and several animals which had been trained to attack anyone not of Male-Foi magical inheritance.

Today they proved completely useless. Lyre de Male-Foi still was the de jure owner of the *Manoir des Anges*. Her magical signature consequently could not be identified as an intruder, for she was the legitimate mistress of the manor and everything which was in it.

The sight of her ancestral home brought her nostalgia but also great anger. It had been only a year and a half she was gone, but her so-called uncles, cousins, and relatives had already done a lot of damage. Several old trees had been cut down to be replaced by awful stone statues. At least one third of the delicate flowery arrangements had been removed and replaced by a torrent of common red roses.

At least one of the great towers was by all evidence going to be destroyed in a few weeks if the ward circles and the preparations were any indication.

Just for these actions, Lyre wanted to punish them. At the very least it comforted her in her decision.

“Place the domain in mode citadel, Simon,” the young blonde-haired Slytherin ordered her Head House Elf. “No one enters save me, no one leaves save me.”

“By your orders, Mistress!” the little male Elf bowed before disappearing.

Lyre shook her head in astonishment. Merely one year, and her two uncles and five cousins had managed to make themselves loathed and reviled by all the House Elves of the manor and the lands nearby. They were truly stupid.

Bah, it was going to make everything simpler.

The pure-blood second-year drew her wand and slowly began her walk towards the main doors of the castle.

She was twenty metres away from them when her uncle Regis de Male-Foi and his son Lazare stormed out of the manor, having evidently felt the beginning of the security lock-down she had ordered.

They stopped running when they saw her.

“Lyre, you are not supposed to be here!”

“Hello, Uncle. Do you mind telling me why you’re living in my manor?”

Lazare laughed, and the sound was similar to the one the hyenas made when she visited the Paris Magical Zoo.

“Your manor? You have missed the news! This is our manor now! Your line is finished!”

“I see. ***Exsequor***.”

Five centaur statues in one second activated and in the next minute, her uncle and his son received over six hundred stone arrows into their bodies. Lyre was really glad there were enchantments protecting the marble, because otherwise all this red would have left plenty of ugly marks.

She climbed up the marble steps and entered her home, and sure enough the damage continued to show. Several great paintings had disappeared, gold and silver engravings had been stolen, and a divination orb from the twelfth century had been replaced by a cheap copy...

“Solem Supliciaaaarrrrgghh!”

The murderous incantation Raphael de Male-Foi tried to attack her with from behind exploded in his face. The most dangerous measures were now activated, and attacking the mistress of the *Manoir des Anges* was simply a death sentence. The wand was divided into three fragments and then a magical falchion decapitated her first cousin.

Lyre murmured a few other commands for the Elves and the defences. From now on, everything human in this manor save one was going to be tracked and violently eliminated.

And the best part? Neither the French Ministry nor the English one had any idea what was happening. She was casting no spells with her wand or any sort of magical focus. And since the domain was answering only to her, no one would be able to enter. Oh, the deaths of the secondary and tertiary branch of the Male-Foi family would be remarked by Gringotts, but nobody would know for sure where the deaths had taken place. And since the castle belonged to her father and these imbeciles had formally bribed the Department of Inheritances to declare him dead despite all evidence proving the contrary, until the tribunal of January 10th 1994 declared them formally the owners, she was the Lady of Male-Foi. And nobody could enter the grounds without her permission.

Lyre went directly to the second floor, as more and more screams echoed in the distance, before ending in agonised screams. And just as she had supposed, her second uncle Arsène de Male-Foi was sitting on her father’s seat in the Lord’s office.

“Hello, Uncle,” she said for the second time of the day. “Would you kindly remove yourself from that seat? I would hate dirtying it with your blood...”

Unfortunately, the elderly wizard didn’t obey, though his fists tightened and his face was livid.

“Lyre. Have you any idea what you have done?”

“Yes...I ended your usurpation before you stole my home, my possessions, and my fortune.”

“You are in error,” past the moment of surprise and shock, her uncle was trying to speak to her in his usual condescending tone. “We were trying to safeguard the honour and the influence of the Male-Foi name...”

“You were trying to steal my inheritance and you went directly to the Army of the Light to convince them that the secondary branch was the best choice now that the primary line was reduced to one comatose patient and a young girl.” Lyre corrected him.

Arsène de Male-Foi narrowed his eyes.

“You know of the Pact.”

Lyre shrugged.

“Father told me, yes. In exchange for power and influence in certain circles, the Lords and Ladies of House de Male-Foi swore to support the Army of Light in its goals of exterminating the Dark Wizardry and other brutal and murderous purposes.”

“In this case, you know what kind of forces will be summoned against you and everyone you love if you persist in this folly.”

Lyre gave the blind fool a large grin.

“Ah, my poor uncle. Did you fail to read the letters I sent you? One of the few genuine friends I made at Hogwarts is Alexandra Potter. She might or might not be a Champion of Death, now that I think about it...and your band of cutthroats and murderers already want her dead.”

“No...”

“Oh, yes. Imagine my surprise when I learned the ‘paragons of the Light’ were ready to attack a village full of children in the middle of the day to attack someone who has never done them any wrong.”

“There are things you don’t know about your friend...”

Yes, she loathed that condescending tone.

“And I suppose there are things I don’t know about all the ‘Crusades’, ‘Purges’, ‘Hunts’, and murders the Army of Light has ordered in past centuries. How many oceans of blood have you created in your slaughters and massacres? How many promises and Oaths have you broken?”

The expression she was given was completely unrepentant.

“Everything I did, I did it for the Light!”

Lyre rolled her eyes.

“Yes, I am sure stealing the fortune of your Lordly brother was a holy sacrifice.”

“You are too young to understand.”

The young Slytherin girl sniggered.

“On the contrary, I think I am indeed the right age to understand. With the Battle of Hogsmeade, we had the absolute evidence that whatever ‘Light’ you serve, it does not have any semblance of familiarity with ‘Good’. It was you and your friends of the Army of Light who have stolen my father away and declared him dead. It was you and your relatives who tried to disinherit me. Army of the Light and Order of the Phoenix, you are all the same. The moment the heroes fall to save the innocents, you are stealing the gold and the possessions of the defenceless orphans.”

It had happened to Alexandra Potter and plenty of near-extinct families. It could have easily happened to her if Professor Snape and Flitwick had not heard rumours of it at the Hofburg Ball.

“It goes without saying that the Pact between House de Male-Foi and the Army of Light is irrevocably null and void. I do not like your goals, your motivations, nor being stabbed in the back.”

“The Army of the Light and our supporters in the French Ministry will make sure your life ends in prison for this.”

“Maybe,” however at the rate they were losing their warriors and their supporters, and with the Exchequer awaiting in the shadows, it was unlikely in the extreme. “But neither you nor the rest of your sons and relatives will be here to see it.”

One word and Arsène de Male-Foi was engulfed in blue flames. Ten seconds later, there were only ashes of the usurper...and Lyre was now the last of the Male-Foi line.

**3 January 1994, Somewhere in Scotland**

He was not afraid of the cold, but at this moment Piers Polkiss wished their leader had chosen a warmer location for this meeting.

The weather combined fog, cold, and a humidity which got into your bones in a couple of minutes. The teenaged boy had been told to wear very warm clothes and had obeyed, but damn it, were witches immune to winter weather?

Gordon arrived, teleported to this desolate place by the ‘Portkey’, and at last the official meeting of the ‘Hydra Army’ had all its participants. The name was unofficial. Their leader refused to utter the nickname they had proposed in their presence.

“All right, I think we’re all here.”

The twenty teenagers present immediately stopped the whispers and the quiet conversations. Alexandra Potter had changed physically; she was now taller and even with her robes hiding most of her body, her arms and her legs were notably muscular.

But this wasn’t why her presence commanded respect. There was a sort of authority and danger radiating from her, like she was a General and they were the simple soldiers.

“If you’re here today, it is because the global situation has changed considerably.” The younger girl opened her mouth to show them white teeth but Piers didn’t think it qualified as a smile, and neither did his nineteen companions. “I will send you the relevant information later, but for the moment let’s just say that I fear the plans of the bad guys are even more advanced than our worst-case scenarios estimated.”

Gordon raised his hand.

“How bad is it, boss?”

“A good question,” Alexandra Potter replied. “I think the answer is ‘very bad’. There have been clear indicators the Dark Wizards of the Exchequer will be able to launch the first phase of their world domination in one and a half years.”

Piers shivered briskly, and it was not the fault of the weather this time.

“These are going to be dark times,” Dudley’s cousin had never been one to lie through her teeth, and her voice was like one of a priest calling the troops to a battlefield. “The Exchequer has undoubtedly waited centuries for this war, and I can safely affirm we have not seen half of the horrors they will unleash upon this world. Some of you have seen the drugs and the wererats. I have described to you the Summon and the gold of the Philosopher’s stone they are more likely using at this very moment to destabilise magical and non-magical economies. You can consider it virtually certain they have something like twelve Dark Lords to lead their armies and one has the power to gather hundreds of thousands of zombies to serve as cannon fodder.”

“How can we fight against such monsters?”

Alexandra looked at Malcolm with something like piety.

“You ask the wrong question. Do not ask ‘how’. You must rather ask yourself if you are willing to accept a world where Dark Wizards have triumphed and all the achievements of the non-magical civilisations have been burned to cinders or exploited for the cause of evil. Visualise a world where the non-mages and non-wizards like you and your families will be transformed into skinchangers, reduced into slavery or killed, one unfortunately not preventing the others.”

It was not dark, but the eyes of their leader burned like green flames in the winter day.

“War is coming, whether we want it or not. The magical government is filled with cowards and incompetent idiots, and will likely capitulate in one day or two. The non-magical politicians will surely prove more combative, but they will certainly be targeted in priority. The Enemy is smart, and Dark Lords or not they won’t forget to neutralise atomic bombs and the most powerful weapons known to humankind.”

“What if they can’t? What if we, the non-magical population, win against the Exchequer? We have a large advantage in numbers.”

It was James who had dared speak in opposition.

He received an icy smile in return.

“Technically, you’re right. Non-magical humans have an overwhelming advantage in numbers. However they are not united and they are unaware that there is a very real threat inside their own borders. This isn’t a battle they have ever planned to fight.”

A wooden wand was drawn and in a few minutes, the fog began to lift from around where they were standing, revealing that they were not too far from the sea. Okay, it was a small island, so ‘not far from the sea’ was kind of lame.

“The advantage will last as long as the bad guys don’t unleash a magical plague, transform hundreds of thousands of people into wererats, or raise millions of corpses from the cemeteries,” Alexandra Potter began to walk away, gesturing in their direction to follow her. “Against the Ministry of Magic, I’m sure non-magical people would win ten times out of ten. Our dear Minister is a first-class moron. A dozen snipers and the entire Auror Corps would have their heads blown up in a single assault.”

This was...both satisfying and not satisfying to know.

“But magic can be the deadliest of weapons if wielded by competent men and women, and we will not underestimate this enemy just because they serve the Dark.”

“They are still not many of you.”

“Watch and learn.”

And the green-eyed witch began to scream a loud incantation in a foreign language at the sea.

Piers frowned. What was she trying to do? Raise the tide in advance?

The shout lasted for several minutes, and the fists of Alexandra Potter were bathed in shining green magic all the while. As every second passed, the teenage boy got more and more of a sense that the world surrounding them felt...alive.

The air was seemingly pulsating with power. The water was illuminated and agitated by the magical words. The wind assailed them with a frequency which pulsed in a melodious tune.

And suddenly it happened.

There were bubbles and foam, a powerful rumble, and the sea in the distance was disturbed like a God had struck it.

And from the watery depths, a gigantic ship emerged.

“A Dreadnought,” he heard James mutter. “She is lifting a Dreadnought from the seabed....”

“But...” it had to be impossible. Dreadnoughts were the kings of the sea during World War One. And they weighed thousands of tons, most of it in steel. It had to take heavy machinery to move one across the length of a street.

And yet it was here, towed like it was just a toy for Alexandra Potter.

“Do you know where we are now?”

It was Dennis who answered first.

“We are at Scapa Flow.”

“Correct.” And the witch giggled loudly. “Behold the might of the *SMS Markgraf*, König-class Dreadnought of the Imperial German High Seas Fleet.”

The Dreadnought was half-levitated, half-towed in front of them. It was now surrounded in a sort of green aura, but there was no way to deny it was the true deal. The length, the cannons, the steel, the martial appearance...it was a great battleship and though her lengthy abandonment under water had caused plenty of damage, there was an impression of solidity and power.

And for the first time, Piers Polkiss realised the magicians may very well be able to win a war against non-magical people. If Alexandra Potter, a teenage girl who was not yet fourteen years-old, could do that with a capital warship which had threatened the Royal Navy eighty years ago...what could the real monsters do?

The fog returned, and this time it was absolutely not natural.

“The Age of Magic and Legends is not over!”

Piers Polkiss did not need to think twice to find an appropriate answer.

“Hail Hydra.”

**Author’s note**: Hail Hydra! The ‘holidays’ are over, it’s time to return to Hogwarts. Oh, and Alexandra has now a baby dragon and a battleship. The former is a baby, the latter is not in good condition...but a military force has to start somewhere, right?

More links for the story:

On P a treon: ww w. p a treon Antony444

On TV Tropes: ww w. tvtropes pmwiki / pmwiki .php/ Fanfic/ TheOddsWereNeverInMyFavour