**Chapter 58**

**The Prophecy of Camlann**

**25 October 1993, Rome, Italy**

“I want to know about Alexandra Potter.”

“Of course, my Queen,” she slightly inclined her head in deference. “But I was under the impression Knight Informer was going to join us...”

One hidden door opened and the light green robes of the Knight appeared as if her words had summoned her.

“It appears your question has been answered,” the Queen of the Exchequer commented with a thin smile. “You can remove your masks my Knights. I think we can dispense with all the formalities, with dawn so close.”

It was phrased like a suggestion, but one could recognise the steel in the soft words of the Dark Lady, known to her subordinates as Isis, Queen of the Exchequer, and to the ignorant witches and wizards as the doom of many prestigious and weak Light civilisations.

In less than five seconds, the two witches removed their masks and levitated their cloaks on the empty chairs nearby with their wandless skills.

“You have not changed your hair, Hélène,” she teased the French witch.

“And you have not stopped wearing these ultra-sexy robes, Angelica,” her interlocutor returned the teasing. “The preparations for the Tournament are going well?”

“Of course. You want some tickets for the opening ceremony?”

“Yes, I think it would be lovely.”

The two Ladies grinned before they returned to serious business.

“I didn’t have the opportunity to read the latest reports of Rook Imposter, but I think the Champion of the Morrigan is increasing her power and her skills according to our projections.”

The Succubus shrugged as she gave a disappointed look to the corpse hung over the table.

“Obviously we have no one in our employment close to her, but I think her Animagus training is progressing well. The Charms Master confirmed recently to the other teachers she was about to finish her third-year project and her Runes teacher is impressed by her efforts in the Futhark and Hieroglyphs languages.”

“Don’t forget she got four million Galleons from Dumbledore and sent the Ardoch Heir by an illegal Portkey directly to the Galapagos.”

“You have managed to confirm it was her?”

Hélène de Broglie, also known as Knight Informer, clicked her fingers and the plate in front of her went from gold to the colour of blood.

“It took us a lot of hours to rebuild what remained of the young Ardoch Heir’s mind, but yes we managed to confirm it. I don’t think anyone else outside our organisation could have done it, however. Our Bishops specialised in Mind Magic are good, but this Obliviation did a lot of damage...more damage to be honest than I would have done when I was thirteen.”

“You have the Ardoch Heir in a functional state, then?”

The French witch answered by raising an eyebrow and smirking.

“As long as we’re not looking too closely on the ‘functional’ part...he’s missing roughly a third of his memories and the mental symptoms are not painless at all. And he’s also missing part of his wand arm, courtesy of what looks to me to be an experiment on the Curse of Alexandria.”

“The girl has talent, I will give her that.”

Angelica Sforza smiled, remembering another green-eyed girl which had manifested a lot of promise, before returning to a serious expression.

“My Queen, with all due respect, I don’t think we can afford to wait until the beginning of the European Tournament before contacting the Champion of the Morrigan.”

“You are afraid we won’t be able to control her moves?”

“In part,” the Succubus admitted. “Teenagers are always difficult to deal with, it’s in their nature...but I was more referring to the fact she attracts too much attention for her own good.”

The Army of Light and Trinity had in the last centuries made perfectly clear they were quite willing to kill any potential Champions of the Dark, and Alexandra Potter had made too many waves to escape the gaze of their Seers and spies.

“Dumbledore is having difficulties in the political arena. He will not take the risk of moving against her.”

“That doesn’t mean he can’t look the other way when other Light wizards do the dirty work. We suspect he did it at Godric’s Hollow over twelve years ago. Why not do it a second time?”

Hélène shook her head in disapproval.

“Godric’s Hollow was in the middle of nowhere. If they want to attack the Champion of the Morrigan right now, they will have either to storm Hogsmeade and risk hundreds of children casualties, or try their chances against the defences of Stella Zabini. I know Angelica that you and Stella can’t stand each other when you’re invited to the same balls, but while she isn’t part of our organisation, she isn’t exactly shy with her wards and other security measures. As for attacking Hogsmeade, it would be a political disaster, ten times worse than the recent affair we engineered to weaken Knight Necromancer’s brother. The Army of Light’s foot soldiers are fanatics, but this would more or less be an invitation for us and all our ICW friends to hunt them without repercussion.”

“Not to mention my successor is not a weakling magically and she wields my sword,” Isis intervened. “Hélène is right, this would be their last mistake. Assuming they did try, the Morrigan is in the ascendant as Samhain is celebrated and if a Champion can kill two Basilisks and several students several months ago, she can certainly handle one of their kill-teams. And yet.”

Green eyes flashed out and watching them was like looking at death itself.

“And yet, I do not trust Fate and the common sense of the fools of the Light. I have waited too long for a new Champion of the Morrigan to succeed me. I won’t rely on these fanatics doing the reasonable and intelligent thing. Hélène, I have received reports Gellert Grindelwald is no longer indispensable to our projects. He and Knight Priest can watch over Hogsmeade for Samhain...just in case. Angelica, have your teams recovered all the Portraits of Ruin?”

“Yes, my Queen.”

“In this case, heal the soul of your Apprentice, extract it from the paintings by Blood Ritual and give her the body we created three years ago. You are right the Champion of the Morrigan will need to be kept on the right path...at least for the next three years. I don’t really care what her ambitions will be after that.”

“The goblins will be aware of her resurrection the moment I finish the Blood ritual,” Angelica Sforza told her superior. This was not a protest; she had pushed for this move to begin more than a decade ago.

“So be it. It isn’t like they will be able to do anything save passing the information to other parties.” The Queen of the Exchequer stated in a voice that tolerated no counter-argument.

“I suppose we must speak of the other Dark Champion?” Angelica asked.

“Oh yes,” Hélène turned the decoration surrounding her in onyx and ebony colours. “Let’s talk of the very problematic child we will have soon to deal with.”

“Lyudmila Romanov.”

**28 October 1993, Hogwarts, Scotland**

Third-year electives had a reputation at Hogwarts, like any other class taught in the ancient castle. And most of said fame – or lack of it – depended on the teacher.

Professor Vector had only needed a couple of years to establish Arithmancy and her teaching as one of the strictest and most challenging courses proposed to the young witches and wizards.

Professor Babbling was on average seen as an eccentric woman fond of everything which was related to Runes and enjoyed seeing her students work together in various group projects.

Care of Magical Creatures under Professor Kettleburn had half of the time been a priceless opportunity to be injured by dangerous creatures you didn’t even know the name of before the lesson started.

Muggle Studies was recognised as funny, but the Professor was a couple of centuries out of date, and the curriculum was unfortunately as obsolete as she was.

Divination had not that sort of reputation. It was far, far worse than the infamy of Muggle Studies and Care of Magical Creatures added together and then multiplied by three.

Divination was a class. At least Nigel thought it was one. It was hard to tell sometimes. Too many times it was like experiencing a spectacle that had stopped being funny the first time, but for a mysterious reason, the actors continued to play it over and over every week of the year.

Initially, the Gryffindor-turned-Ravenclaw had not wanted to take this elective. The information delivered by the older Ravenclaws to the second-years was discouraging – which meant it was perfectly accurate. You learned nothing in Divination; if you were really a Seer, a Prophet, or possessed any kind of ability in manipulating the future, you were going to succeed without trying; if not, then reading thousands of books and practising from dawn to dusk was not going to help.

In the end, Nigel had decided to heed Morag’s advice: he was doing better in the fundamental classes, and as long as the electives weren’t a burden, it would hopefully continue that way. Care of Magical Creatures had traditionally little written homework, and Divination was a joke. Choosing these two electives was a good way to focus on what was important and not get distracted by something you could always abandon after fifth year.

It was why he was watching a blue tea cup, expecting nothing interesting to come up. Alexandra, Morag, and Hermione would not be disappointed to hear that everything was fine at the top of the North Tower: nothing of importance had been learned.

“What do you see?” asked Ernie Macmillan.

“I think it’s a sort of...teacup?” Honestly, the drops at the bottom of the cup the Hufflepuff had drunk were a shapeless mass of brown. If you had drunk Firewhiskey, maybe it would look like the marble stairs of the Entrance Hall. So, since he obviously had not been granted a talent for Divination, it was best to prepare yourself for the OWL exam. And he was going to perfect his favourite method for fifth-year: invent everything. “Yes, it is definitely a teacup. The signification of this is clear: you must drink another cup of tea and the future will be revealed...”

“You should get a lower and more mysterious tone,” the blonde-haired Hufflepuff whispered. Ernie Macmillan like him was after an easy OWL, and it had not taken long for them to decide it was better to pretend to read *Unfogging the Future* while in reality they decided in advance everything they were going to find in their tea leaves. “Perhaps we should buy a few packs of the powder the Weasley Twins demonstrated in the Great Hall last week too. I’m sure that would give us a nice mark at the year’s end exam.”

“Your prediction and open your book,” Nigel whispered back. “Parvati is looking at us.”

Ernie nodded quickly and began to give a concentrated and determined look at Nigel’s cup.

“Let’s see...”

If ‘Professor’ Trelawney had been the only one to think what she preached was a web of absurdities, the class of Divination would have been a breeze. Alas, to use Alexandra’s own words, ‘one does not choose the era one lives in’, and it was their misfortune that they were stuck with students who believed Divination was a real and legitimate branch of magic.

Not the Ravenclaws, thankfully, though they weren’t that many of them in the first place: Kevin Entwhistle and Michael Corner had only landed in this class because they had abandoned Arithmancy. Not the Hufflepuffs either, who fielded the largest group of the four Houses. It was difficult to say if Crabbe and Goyle believed in Divination or not. They weren’t exactly dazzling everyone with their intelligence. Nott and Bulstrode looked very sceptical with the whole ‘open your minds and let the winds of fate give you the answers you seek’.

And then there were the true believers. Parvati Patil, Lavender Brown, Fay Dunbar, and Thelma Holmes, far from realising the foggy and imprecise affirmations were just nonsense in the mouth of a fraud, were convinced the mysteries of Divination were open to them, and were watching over the rest of the students to see if people laughed at the never-realised omens declared by their ‘teacher’. Their teacher was definitely not a Seer, but you would never have believed it from the looks of adoration the girls gave to the fraud.

“I think your tea drops are clock-shaped,” the Hufflepuff showed a gloomy expression. “In my opinion, you are going to arrive late next week to an important class...”

“Terrible,” Nigel commented with a shiver like the news frightened him. In reality, the possibility of not writing in time and hour the latest Potion essay frightened him far more than anything Trelawney could ever do.

“Oh look,” Ernie whispered. “The end of the class must be near; Trelawney is going to Longbottom’s table. This is going to be good.”

“Two Sickles she will predict his death in the next five minutes. Four Sickles she will collapse in January when she reads his Life line for Palmistry.”

Ernie snorted in disbelief.

“Please,” the Hufflepuff pure-blood replied. “Nobody will ever take those odds. There’s supposed to be some uncertainty when you bet something...”

And indeed, about two minutes later, Trelawney decided the muddy brown thing at the bottom of Neville’s cup was in reality a crow crossed with a scythe. In consequence, and with great consternation, Professor Trelawney affirmed to the Boy-Who-Lived he was going to experience an atrocious period of ill-luck – the woman’s words, not his – and the next weeks would begin events leading ultimately to his death.

Parvati, Lavender, and the other Gryffindor girls gasped like the end of the world was suddenly at hand. The rest of the class, fortunately, looked more than a bit unimpressed.

“How many does that make?”

“The thirteenth time, I believe,” Ernie lowered his head towards his cup to hide his smile before snorting again. “After the Quidditch game and the departure of the Dementors, I think Longbottom’s chances to survive this year are pretty good. And honestly, telling him class after class he is going to die in different circumstances makes her look crazy, not like a good Seer.”

“Yes, it’s not like the other people she foretold the death of have actually lost their lives...”

In the last two years, people had been killed inside the walls of Hogwarts. You would think Trelawney had at least announced people like Byron Vaisey or one of the other Slytherins involved in the Heir Conspiracy were to die beforehand. She hadn’t. So there were two possible scenarios. Either every person Alexandra had slain was somewhat hidden to the view of Divination practitioners, or Trelawney was simply a fraud.

Nigel knew which theory he considered the most likely.

“You have to give her points for originality, at least...” Ernie affirmed as the bell announcing the end of the class rang and everyone began to abandon this ridiculous tea party.

“Originality and this...perfume...are all this woman has to...hey Crabbe, watch where you are going!”

But it was too late. The big Slytherin had rushed towards the steps leading out of the classroom without looking where he went, and their table was on the way. They had not the time to do anything. Before they were able to react, their tea cups were already shattering on the floor and the quills and several school items accompanied them.

“Mr. Crabbe! Mr. Wolpert! Mr. Macmillan!” and their teacher was suddenly there, looking truly angry as more of her ten Knuts-worth ugly tea cups were suddenly quite broken. “You will not leave this room before everything has been cleaned up!”

“Yes, Professor,” Ernie mumbled as the other students quickly left the Divination classroom. Anyone who believed the Hufflepuffs were inoffensive would have been forced to disagree as the blonde-haired boy gave Crabbe a glare promising a painful retribution. Crabbe didn’t appear to react, but it was always hard to decipher his expressions. It was not like the ‘icy stare’ of Daphne Greengrass or the haughty looks of many pure-blood Slytherins. No, Crabbe and Goyle’s visages were just not showing much vitality and nuances. “Reparo.”

“Reparo,” their Mending Charms were slow to work, though. Perhaps the materials used for these cups were magic-resistant? Crabbe next to them had even less success.

“Seriously,” Ernie whispered, leaving a hand over his mouth as the three of them were now all alone with the Divination fraud. “Is she a squib? Every teacher in this school is able to repair broken objects with a move of his or her wand. But you never see her doing that.”

“It’s true we never saw her use any magical focus,” Nigel was forced to agree as the two tea cups were at last returned to their pre-incident appearance. “Okay, I have Transfiguration now, and Professor McGonagall is not...”

CRASH!

Ernie and Nigel turned immediately to glare at Crabbe, but the bulky dark-haired Slytherin looked at them in incomprehension and there was no broken tea cup near him. After a second or two, the three pair of eyes observed the immobile figure of Professor Trelawney. One destroyed pink tea cup was at her feet.

“Oh, come on!” Ernie breathed loudly. “Let’s go to our next class, I’m not paid to throw Mending Charms right and left, she can call the House Elves...”

“***It will begin at Samhain***!”

The sentence had been voiced in a voice which was not the one of Professor Trelawney.

“***It will begin at Samhain***.”

The voice had become like a choir of different persons all taking at the same time. Trelawney looked...possessed, and there was a sort of...fog surrounding her.

“***It will begin at Samhain. Born with the eyes of death, dark will be her first breath. She is the Heiress of the Forgotten. She is the agony of this magical era.***

***Six Kings, Six Crowns, Six Swords.***

***One by one, the Fall begins.***

***Come Day of Battle, O Angel of Death.***

***Cast thy lightning and reign over the ashes.***

***Ragnarok***.”

Each word made Nigel shiver...and then the feeling of cold and dread ended as soon as it had begun.

“Oh, how clumsy I am!” the woman exclaimed.

The Ravenclaw, the Slytherin and the Hufflepuff looked at her with stunned expressions. What had just happened? Was this another of her tricks to pretend she was a Seer? After a couple of seconds, the three boys decided silently it was best to leave this room immediately.

“I will need to buy another ten of these pink cups, really...”

“Do you think she was playing the comedy?” Nigel asked once they were out of the Tower and returning towards the most frequented wings of the castle.

“I really don’t know,” Ernie admitted. “If she had wanted to bolster her reputation, she would have done it in front of the entire class, not with the three of us. Honestly, if she wanted students to impress, she would have chosen Patil and Brown...I don’t know.”

“I heard the song somewhere...” Crabbe grunted.

Ernie and Nigel looked at each other in astonishment. Crabbe knew something they didn’t? But the big bodyguard of Draco Malfoy didn’t even watch them. His eyes were turned towards the painting of a ridiculous knight riding a sheep.

“There was a song my mom told me when I was ten...told me it was a song for the Armies of the Dark...it had one of these things...’Six Kings, six Crowns, and six Swords’...for the outcast and the damned, she told me.”

And his mother had sung him things like that at ten? Many Old Families were crazy, but that bad...

“What was the name of this song?” Ernie demanded with the expression of someone who had an idea about the ugly answer.

“The Prophecy of Camlann.”

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“Hmm...Alexandra?”

“Yes, my cute red badger?”

It was late in the evening and their study room was silent. Daphne had departed over twenty minutes ago, leaving Susan and she together. It went without saying that after the departure of the Ice Queen, they had not worked much on Runes or anything academically related.

“Badgers can be fierce hunters, you know,” Susan purred before kissing her once again on the lips. “And badgers can be quite ferocious when provoked. There is a reason why badgers have not many predators...wolves, bears, and even eagles...they know a clan of angry badgers can be their deadliest enemy...”

“Yes,” Alexandra agreed before passing a hand through the red hair of the Hufflepuff. “They are that. But they’re also very cuddly.”

“Should I be worried then about being replaced by a big plush animal by the winter holidays?”

Knowing she was going to receive a pillow straight in her face if she didn’t give the good answer, there was only one choice.

“Of course not, you are the only plush I need...”

“Good girl.” And a good kissing session followed for about ten minutes, the hydra in her belly hissing in satisfaction. But like a lot of good things, this moment had a beginning and an end. Soon they heard the bell announcing curfew was an hour away.

“I need to return to Ravenclaw Tower...” The black-haired witch stopped enlacing the red-haired Hufflepuff before taking the robe waiting on the table. “I also need to take care of this Rune documentation.”

Four Animation Charms and the mess they had left in the study room coalesced in three large piles. Two Levitation Charms later, the parchments were in their school bags...barely.

“It’s weird we aren’t offered bodybuilding training at Hogwarts,” the Potter Heiress remarked as the inkpots and the quills were lined up like an army about to march to battle. Then she noticed the serious expression Susan was harbouring as she sat on the old couch where they had been kissing for a long time. “What?”

“I want to speak about something serious before we return to our dorms,” the girl wearing the colours of Helga Hufflepuff spoke. Alexandra raised an eyebrow. It wasn’t Runes or any type of school homework, she was sure of it. Susan had good grades in her non-elective classes so it wasn’t like she needed her help. “Hannah.”

This wasn’t exactly one of the topics she had anticipated being questioned about by her girlfriend.

“What about Miss Hannah Abbot?”

Susan watched her with an expression more appropriate for a bird of prey than a badger before précising her thought.

“You don’t like her.”

Alexandra frowned.

“That’s not true, Susan.” The Ravenclaw third-year sat on the couch before holding the right hand of the cute Hufflepuff. “I don’t dislike her. I don’t like Longbottom, Malfoy, and quite a few of our fellow third years. Among the ranks of House Hufflepuff, I’ve made no secret there are several boys and girls I really can’t stand. I think I’ve said quite a few times when you were present that Zacharias Smith should have been sorted into Gryffindor or Slytherin, given how rude, brash and loud he is.”

“But...” Alexandra delicately placed a finger on the rosy lips of Susan.

“I am wary of Hannah, because I pertinently know she is unable to keep a secret as long as there’s a good story at stake for the Hogwarts Rumour Mill.”

The red-haired Hufflepuff stuck her tongue out as soon as she removed the finger.

“Hannah isn’t Lavender Brown,” the Heiress of House Bones told her in a semi-offended tone.

“On this point, you’re absolutely right,” Alexandra conceded, “but you have to admit, Susan, it’s a very low threshold you’ve set there.”

And by any standard, the green-eyed witch knew she was generous. Lavender Brown was the Gossip Queen of House Gryffindor with her group of giggling Lionesses, and her qualities...she couldn’t find any.

The more she thought about it, the more Lavender Brown had a lot of common points with one Draco Malfoy. Okay, the comparison was not perfect. House Malfoy was far, far wealthier than House Brown. And Lavender had never been caught with a blood-racial bigoted insult on her lips. But as far as she had been able to observe in two years and some months of magical education, the two of them were perfect symbols that magical nobility had fallen into mediocrity. Where their very birth and their family lineages should have allowed them to stand at the top of the rankings, the two were content to remain at a sub-standard magical level and criticise others for flaws they couldn’t do anything about.

So no, Hannah Abbot wasn’t as bad as Lavender Brown. It would take a special kind of effort for a Hufflepuff to descend to that level. That didn’t mean she was not going to watch her words as long as she was around.

“I’m not saying I dislike her. She’s funny and she can be good company when we meet together. It’s just that I don’t trust her with my secrets. Sorry.”

“Everyone has secrets, Alexandra...I’m sure yours will tolerate getting out in the gossip one day or another...”

“No, they won’t,” Alexandra slowly approached the lips of her girlfriend before evading the kissing attempt and murmuring into her ear. “My Animagus form is a hydra. Realise the implications?”

The eyes of the Hufflepuff witch widened immediately and if they hadn’t been so close, Alexandra was sure Susan would have made an impressive jump.

“You know how to make your revelations, Mrs. Potter,” Susan managed to articulate before their lips were in contact again. “Swear me this is no joke.”

“I swear it, Susan.” Alexandra’s lips turned sardonic once more. “Do you think more of my secrets should go out to scare the little first-years?”

“Merlin and Morgana, no!” Susan managed to crack a smile. “We don’t need a crowd fleeing Hogwarts before dinner time screaming there’s a new Dark Lady around, do we? But Hannah...we were raised together, Alex. Auntie Amelia wasn’t able to get out of work that often, and a lot of my childhood years were spent in the Abbot household. She isn’t just my friend or my first friend. She is the next best thing to a sister I have...I won’t leave her aside.”

Alexandra shrugged. This left the option she had considered several times before today.

“Then I will leave in your hands the question of the Oaths of Secrecy.” The Ravenclaw girl stood from the couch again before placing her school bag over her shoulder. Damn it, the thing was heavy. The weight of knowledge was not light.

“No oaths for me?” Susan teased her.

“I will make you test the Animagus revealing Potion next week...I’m sure you are a very cute badger, but it doesn’t hurt to verify. That way, I will have a reassurance and an insurance from you...not that I need one, I trust you, but precautions don’t tend to hurt before the problems come around...”

“Are you asking me to break the rules my Auntie is charged to enforce?” The large smirk showed by the red-haired was a good indicator how distraught she was at the idea of disregarding the rules. “Bad Alex, bad Alex...”

“Should I cancel the lunch I’ve prepared for the two of us at Hogsmeade next week-end?” Alexandra wondered out loud.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” the other girl growled. “Or we will see if hydras can fear the badger’s fury...”

**29 October 1993, Hogwarts, Scotland**

“You don’t believe me.”

Alexandra sighed. If there was one negative issue with the fact Nigel and Luna ruled the *Loud Duck* like their personal fiefdom, it was how inquisitive and clever they became at reading her expressions.

“It’s not that, Nigel. I trust you, really.”

Nigel was one of her friends, and if she couldn’t trust him, who was she going to consider reliable?

“It’s just...this is Trelawney we are talking about.” What was she supposed to say? She turned to the other Exiled participating in the debate in their headquarters. “Tell me I’m wrong, Morag.”

“You’re not wrong,” the Irish Heiress confirmed. “And I think you’re really too nice with this fraud, Alex. There are a multitude of words to describe that woman, and the majority are not nice ones. I think ‘she is an alcoholic’ is appropriate, though. She’s also talentless. I mean, you told us yourself the woman had predicted Longbottom’s death thirteen times, right?”

Morag scoffed as Hermione and Alexandra chuckled.

“I think we can take this as confirmation that she is not infallible. Really, everything she predicts correctly is either happening in her classroom where everything is rigged in advance, or she makes her ‘prediction’ so vague and confused that one way or another she will be able to claim she was right all along. Every single time she tries to say someone will die, she is utterly out of her game. Trelawney is not gifted with any ‘Second Sight’ or any Divination skills, Nigel.”

“Are you sure? I mean there must be a reason Dumbledore hired her...”

Alexandra rolled her eyes.

“Dumbledore also hired Lockhart,” the Basilisk-Slayer commented peevishly. “He hired Quirrell, Devkins, and Reed. If the rumours can be trusted, it was also him who forced the former Potions Professors to retire and went to hire Snape and Whitehead...charming individuals those two. He also let the comic duo of History ‘teach’ the younger generations. For the moment, the wise teacher-hiring decisions he made these last years are Professor Vector and Professor Grubby-Plank. And in both cases, there are rumours he stamped his seal on the Board of Governors’ parchments after the deed was done.”

The Potter Heiress wished she had listed all the problems. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the case.

“As far as we know, the woman’s greatest qualification for the post was to be born the great-great-granddaughter of the famous Seer Cassandra Trelawney. In other words, it’s like telling me that because one of my ancestors might have been a Curse-Breaker in the eighteenth century, I would do very well in raiding ancient tombs.” Morag’s voice was cold and uncompromising. “And really, in the end, what are we supposed to believe? That suddenly this fraud has voiced a true Prophecy? Or that she went to the Divination section of the library, read an ancient tome, noticed the Prophecy of Camlann is usually proclaimed by several Oracles and Seers at times of great uncertainty and decided to try this little spectacle to boost her non-existent fame?”

All the Ravenclaws grimaced at the acidic judgement rendered by the MacDougal Heiress. But she made several good points, Alexandra acknowledged, and her hydra was hissing too in approval.

But the insistence of Nigel and past experiences in this unsafe castle forced her to stop and consider the eventuality...what if it was a true prophecy?

“Okay, I believe Trelawney is a fraud. That said, in the unlikely case it wasn’t a hoax...what do we do?”

Morag blinked before answering with no hesitation at all.

“Oh, that’s easy. We don’t think about it. We live our lives, and we forget about it. Playing with prophecies is like playing with Fiendfyre. It always ends in disaster.”

“We could...” But Hermione hadn’t the time to finish her proposal, as Morag cut her off in a deadly serious tone.

“Hermione, I’m serious. Read any book not too biased on the Arthurian legend, and you will learn it was Arthur and Merlin’s obsession with prophecies which led them to the Battle of Camlann. They believed that by manipulating the strings of Fate, they would be immortal, invincible and the Light would reign forever. At the end of the day however, a kingdom was no more, all their armies were rotting corpses, and Mordred killed Arthur. That’s what happens when you try to play with prophecies. There’s never anything good to come out of it. There are just tragedies and disasters waiting on this path.”

“Selective Forgetfulness Potions?” Alexandra asked.

Morag made a big negative nod with her head.

“While I am sure the Weasley Twins can get us half a dozen doses in a hurry, it won’t be useful. If it is a true Prophecy, it won’t matter if we remember Trelawney’s ramblings or not. And if you see Crabbe and Macmillan, I suggest you tell them to do the same thing, Nigel. True Seers and Oracles are feared for excellent reasons.”

“But...Trelawney could truly make more right predictions...”

“Given how...badly secrets are kept in this school, I think it is unlikely. Besides, Trelawney has been here for a long time, and if in a magical place like Hogwarts, she manages a good prediction every two decades, by the time the next one happens, we will all have graduated...”

“Besides, the books are formal this time,” Morag said with a determined face. “According to *Great Oracles of the Antiquity*, I quote, ‘don’t trust the rambling of Seers, especially if you think you have discovered the meaning of their verses’...”

“That decides it, then,” Alexandra passed her hand through her hair before a disagreeable idea arrived in her mind. “Let’s just hope Crabbe and Macmillan didn’t spread the information around...I don’t want to see a true prophecy beginning to play with our future.”

**30 October 1993, Hogwarts, Scotland**

The weather was rather good for a late October day. Okay, it was relative...they were in Northern Scotland. But the relaxation period would come tomorrow as they visited Hogsmeade and its shops. If the Ravenclaws wanted to rest on Sunday, they had to finish their homework on Saturday; a logic that Alexandra had not managed to find a flaw into for the time being.

Like almost every Saturday now, it began with a group study of Arithmancy. The class subjects were getting more and more difficult, and they hadn’t yet touched the subject of spell-creation.

“I dread to think what the Arithmantic calculations next year are going to be like,” Padma Patil said as the five ‘survivors’ of the Arithmancy class finished the homework on the Unlocking Spell Alohomora. “These are first-year spells we’re working on...and we all mastered them without problem two years ago. When we begin to work on third and fourth-year incantations...”

“Thanks for the morale-saver, Padma,” Flora Carrow replied while making with her quill a stabbing motion. “I feel quite reassured now we are going to pass our Arithmancy OWL.”

Alexandra raised her head before returning to a nefarious equation that didn’t want to resolve itself. At the beginning, she had been a bit surprised the Carrow Twins were in Arithmancy; the two Slytherin girls were not frequently in the top ten of their year. But she had learned throughout September and October the two were managing to get good grades only in the theoretical portion of exams – for a reason neither Hestia nor Flora had wished to reveal, they routinely failed at the practical. Yet for Arithmancy, being good at magical theory was no guarantee of success.

“The characteristics of the Mending Charm make no sense,” Hermione grumbled, her bushy hair even more disorderly than usual and a light of insanity in her eyes. “How can mental focus compensate for three different unstable variables?”

“I don’t know,” Hestia Carrow admitted before sighing. “I think I was quite happy before this year not knowing exactly how our spells function. What is the saying? Ignorance is bliss?”

“Something like that,” Alexandra answered absently while reading a one hundred year old book in which she understood maybe one word out of three.

“They really should put Arithmancy as a core class,” Padma declared after biting her lower lip for several seconds. There was no protestation from the two Ravenclaws and two Slytherins sitting around the library’s table.

“You will get no argument from us,” Hestia murmured before scratching viciously at the poor piece of parchment she had looked at for a good ten minutes. “Morgana knows I would have liked a theoretical class like that in first-year to decrease the difficulty for third-year and boost my grades. And while it is complicated, Arithmancy is useful in every branch of magic if you know what you are doing. Not like Astronomy. The influence of Saturn and Jupiter is not important until the Potion and Herbology OWLs...”

“And it forces Professor Vector to cram two years of curriculum in eight months if we want to have a qualification worth something when we leave Hogwarts,” Hermione added.

“Astronomy is tradition in itself at Hogwarts,” Flora reminded them. “And don’t forget that Professor Vector is in a way giving us a...crossbreed of coursework incorporating Durmstrang methods. It wouldn’t be appreciated by a lot of parents to put this in the core classes.”

“Durmstrang methods are highly questionable, and not only in discipline, Dark Magic and their ‘sink or swim’ minds...” Alexandra remarked after a second of silence. “But you have to admit, they tend to get results. I mean, there must be a reason why over twenty governments of Central and Eastern Europe have Durmstrang alumni at the top of their hierarchy.”

“Don’t say things like that in presence of our great Headmaster,” giggled Hestia. “But yes, you have a point. Of course, there are drawbacks with this kind of class philosophy. You can see it in Arithmancy too. Unless it escaped your attention, we are only five students to have chosen Arithmancy, and we’re still in third-year.”

Alexandra at last finished the last part of her homework as Padma voiced her views on this.

“Yes, I have seen several books written by former Durmstrang students. It’s...it’s brutal. If a Professor feels his students are not worth his time, he will fail them without remorse. By contract, the teacher of a core class at Durmstrang needs only to pass the top-ranking student. He won’t get a warning or a protestation from the High Master of the school if he ejects twenty students per year.”

“Elitism pushed to the extreme?” Alexandra questioned rhetorically.

“I think it’s a fair description. They certainly don’t hesitate restricting certain rights and information access to the top students. And it can be kind of weird. A student strong in Charms can be in the fifth-year class, but at the same time he’s less gifted in Transfiguration, so he’s a fourth year as he should be, and in History he’s with the third years...”

“I’m sure the Board of Governors would have fun trying to compile the records,” Flora said and the five girls chuckled. “Oh look, here comes one of the Twin Terrors.”

Alexandra wondered for a couple of seconds if Flora Carrow had not made a joke – the Weasley twins were not exactly famous for staying hundreds of hours in the kingdom of Madam Pince. Their approach was more...practical. But no, there was indeed one of the Twins coming straight in direction of their table. Why did she suddenly have a bad feeling? The first words out of Fred’s mouth were not spoken to reassure her.

“We need your assistance. Now.”

“I suppose it’s urgent enough to interrupt our study session.”

“Yes.”

The green-eyed witch wondered if Samhain had not taken a bit of advance since this Quidditch game. At this rhythm, Alexandra was going to be forced to burn the school before April...

“I’m coming. Hermione, please keep an eye on my quills and homework.”

The Potter Heiress waited before she was out of the library before interrogating the red-haired boy.

“Okay, what’s the problem this time?”

“Ginny,” of course it was. Why was she even surprised? “She was watching one of our...experiments when she collapsed. It is like she is in a trance. We aren’t able to wake her up.”

“Are you sure it’s not whatever you were working on in your lab that is at the origin of the problem?” The dark-haired Ravenclaw queried as they climbed the stairs four to four.

“We were working on the ‘Extra-Bubbly Soap’,” Fred explained with a worried expression. “If there had been a problem with it, everyone would have been injured. And it is just soap...”

Trance, trance...why did it give her a headache?

“You didn’t try an Animagus Potion or something moronic like that, didn’t you?”

“No, we didn’t,” Fred’s lips twitched before admitting. “Our mother screamed so loudly when Ron was caught we aren’t willing to risk it until we’re adults. Plus the Potion ingredients are too expensive to justify them in our budget.”

When they arrived at the Twins’ lair, Alexandra had exhausted most of her imagination. It didn’t help that she didn’t even know what happened in Egypt last summer.

This moment of ignorance didn’t last.

The moment they entered the room, the situation was not hard to understand. Ginny Weasley, in her glamour-less appearance was unconscious, lying on a blanket covering the cold floor. George was watching over. But what was the eye-catching event was that Ginny’s upper clothes save her bra had been removed, and as Ginny was lying on her stomach, it meant they had an excellent view on her bare back.

A back where Runes appeared and disappeared with the colour of blood. A back where strands of blue and green magic sparkled mysteriously. A back where a sort of magical tattoo was traced with non-existent ink.

Except it was not a tattoo, it was a *geas*, a weaving of high ritual magic. And as the familiar shape of a hydra and a sword materialised on the back of Ginny Weasley, Alexandra had a very good idea what was happening to the girl.

“Okay, that’s not good at all...”

“Why not?” she wasn’t sure which twin had spoken. “Look at what this woman did to our little sister...”

Alexandra grimaced. This was not going to be pleasant to explain.

“Fred...George...this is a Celtic *geas*. You can’t do it without the consent of the person involved. If the Queen of the Exchequer passively weaved it on Ginny’s back during summer, your sister had to give her approval. Of course she was without doubt Obliviated afterwards...”

And there was obviously no way to know what sort of pressure the Gryffindor girl had been put under as her family was unconscious and in danger of death.

“And do you happen to know what it is doing?”

“I do.” Alexandra answered coldly. “It is binding her to my service. It is forging her into a Lady of my Court. A thousand years ago, the geas were the ancestors of the Oaths of Allegiance and Fealty. This one is fulfilling the same function.”

“That doesn’t make any sense...why would a Dark Witch trace a sword...and what looks to be a hydra on our sister’s back if she wanted an Oath of Allegiance?”

“Oh, she didn’t carve a hydra. I suspect she imbued the magic and the moment your sister met me on the Hogwarts Express it began to shape itself like my emblem.”

“You have a hydra on your banners?” George had his mouth wide open in shock.

“A little joke from some of my friends which went out of hand,” Alexandra retorted. “And no, the Dark Witch isn’t helping me. She’s helping herself. A geas is a magical binding contract, in a way.”

One she like an imbecile had fulfilled all the conditions for. The Potter Heiress was ready to bet one of the clauses had been to become more powerful than Ginny Weasley. Initially, the seventh daughter of a seventh son was undoubtedly more powerful in raw potential. But killing the Basilisks had given a minor boost, and so had most of her killings. And with the unlocking of Animagus form, the Ravenclaw student had received a sizeable increase in her magical core. To sum-up, she was at last more powerful than Ginny...and the geas would not have activated if this status was temporary.

That had been one clause. It was only possible to guess the others.

“It is completely impossible to bind someone with just Oghams when the other party is unaware of the *geas*. You need a higher authority for this. You need a Power’s intervention, preferably Dark. You need someone who was recognised as a High Priestess of the Celtic Pantheon, a Champion of the Morrigan, or a Crown claimant for the lands we are currently living on.”

“Err...should we begin to search for a list of all possible candidates after this?” Fred asked nervously.

Alexandra exploded in laughter. There wasn’t any joy behind it, though.

“Not many witches in history are remembered to have claimed one of the three positions.” The laughter over, the danger of the situation was really not funny at all. “But for over a thousand years, no one held them. Not since the Battle of Camlann...”

She drew her wand and cast a Lumos to examine the magical Runes fuelled by the geas.

“No need to search, Fred and George. The woman calling herself Isis, also known as the Queen of the Exchequer, was once called Morgana La Fay. It all fits. She was the previous Champion of the Morrigan, Apprentice of Merlin, Half-Sister of King Arthur, Last High Priestess of the Celtic Pantheon, and Queen-Claimant for the Throne of Britannia.”

“Alexandra...the woman is dead...she has been dead for an eternity.”

“Well, it looks like rumours about her demise were greatly exaggerated...” She felt the magic pulse under her fingers as she touched Ginny’s skin and instantly she knew what she would have to do if she wanted to bring Ginny back to consciousness.

Damn it.

Alexandra cleared her throat.

“I accept the gift in the spirit it is given. I accept this girl, soul, magic, and body in my court. I swear protection for protection, magic for magic, death for death, blood for blood, and geas for geas. On Her Name, so mote it be. On the field of battle, let it be known. In the sanctuaries of magic, let it be enforced.”

There was a brilliant flash of magic, and as it dissipated the hydra and the sword were suddenly completed before beginning to cloud themselves in magic. Instinctively, Alexandra knew no one but Ginny and she would ever be able to know the mark was there.

And suddenly she felt them. Hundreds, no thousands of crows and other birds, rising from the edge of the Forbidden Forest. She felt them. She felt the control she could exert on them.

Morgana La Fay had abandoned the vestiges of her claim, leaving her the full title.

She, Alexandra Victoria Potter, was now unquestionably the Champion of the Morrigan.

**Author’s note**: the dreaded month of October 1993 continues...the next two chapters will end the month with Samhain/Halloween. And it’s going to be interesting in every sense of the term.

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