

Amicus Draconis - 1st Cycle: Cycle of the Badger

Translation of Amicus Draconis

Von Yamato_

Kapitel 1: 01. Children of Magic

Opening Credits:

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Warnings: moderate violence, slash, het, character deaths, suicide

Spoilers: PS/SS, CoS, PoA, GoF (written Pre-OotP)

Genre: General (contains ActionAdventure, Mystery, Drama, Slash, Romance, Dark, Humor, Song Fic)

Status: Novel-length, WIP, 13 Episodes, but I'll have to split some of the longer ones up because they'll exceed 300 kilobytes.

Beta: Ellie, Ann & Arsinyk

Note on translated version: Well, I gave it my best shot, hope it sounds okay. At times it's a little different from the original, especially the Fred & George intermissions.

Lead Characters (of story): Harry, Hermione, Ron, Draco, Marcus Flint, Neville, Ginny, Cho, Sirius, Voldemort, Lucius & Narcissa Malfoy, Severus Snape, Walden Macnair, Tod Macnair (OC), Peter Pettigrew, Camille Lestrangle (who is Bellatrix since OotP), Marguerite Lestrangle (OC)

Supportive Characters (of story): Dumbledore, Remus, Hagrid, Minerva McGonagall, Istave Lestrangle (OC), Fred & George, Seamus, Dean, Lavender, Hannah, Oliver, Katie, Lee, Pansy & many other Hogwarts students, Mad Eye Moody, Murcus, Lucilla Malfoy (OC), Véronique & Cécile Lestrangle (OCs) the Macnair family (OCs), Ophelia Flowerfield (OC), Coral (OC)

*

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assured mine;
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine.

Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end.
I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend:

Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
O what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!

But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot?
Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.

*

Amicus Draconis

First Cycle: Cycle of the Badger

Episode 1: Children of Magic

London, September 1998

Night had fallen over London, but the huge city was far from going to sleep. Honking cars blocked the streets alongside heavily drunk soccer fans, while bright coloured lights flashed lazily over the asphalt, and the ever-present smell of beer, petrol, and fish made the air hard to breathe.

It was unnaturally cold for an evening in late summer. Even people's faces seemed strangely frozen, their joy and laughter shrill and hysterical. But if you asked one of them how this sudden winter had entered his heart, he probably would not have known an answer.

Yet a few nervous glances turned skywards, a few people wondering why the ever-present thick foggy clouds covering the city seemed so very dark and gloomy tonight, almost menacing. Faster than ever their pointed shadows were gliding across the roofs and walls, and from time to time a red glowing star would appear in between, like the sparkling eye of some large demonic animal.

Every sensible person would dispose of thoughts like that at once. Monsters in the mist, ghosts, witchcraft, black magic, creatures of the night. Something for lunatics and little children.

Something for nightmares...

Nightmares. The monstrous horses of the worlds below. Darker than darkness itself, their grisly bodies seemed to contain naught but smoke and mist, impossible to touch, impossible to feel, their shapes blurring before the human eye. As if they could gallop right through a human body, ripping out his soul. Hell's fire burnt fiercely in their eyes, flames of death emerging from their sniffing nostrils.

The ghostly creatures riding their backs concealed themselves under long flowing black robes, large hoods covering their faces. To anyone watching them, it would be impossible to see, if they were human, or demon.

The Ghost Riders of Voldemort rode the skies again.

Tonight there were only five of them over London, but other groups might be roaming elsewhere to fulfil their quests of evil. Their steeds raced the sky as common horses raced the land, and they could cross incredible distances in a single night.

To the human eye, the horse and her rider were visible only as a misty cloud, making them the perfect tool to carry out the Dark Lord's commands. Yet they had to return before daybreak, since their gruesome steeds could not bear to see the light of the sun.

The Ghost Riders of Voldemort rode the skies again, and only a selected few had the ability to see them for what they truly were. These few crouched into the corners of their rooms, climbed into their closets, or hid under the blankets of their beds, trembling with fear.

Hoping they would pass....

Just this once....

Maybe they won't see me, if I close my eyes....

For these few were children, children born with the ability to use magic.

"Did you have another one of these nightmares, honey?"

"That was no nightmare, Mommy. The scary ghosts on black horses were outside my window again!"

"Don't talk like that, there's no such thing as ghosts! Go back to sleep, honey, you don't want to be late for school tomorrow."

Would any sensible person believe them?

The five riders changed their formation, assuming the shape of a triangle in the night sky. All of a sudden their leader lost speed, holding out a copper amulet in the shape of the rooster. Dangling from his outstretched arm, the amulet spun fast around on its chain.

The hand holding the amulet looked quite human. The long slender fingers curled tightly around the chain, the knuckles turning even whiter than the pale skin.

Slower and slower the rooster spun, until he froze in mid-air, his beak pointing directly at the window before them. Careful not to move his hand, the leader turned to his companions, eyes of cold grey glittering triumphantly beneath his hood.

The Ghost Riders had found what they were looking for. The Dark Lord would be pleased with them.

* * *

The Seer's gaze remained fixed on the crystal ball although the light inside had vanished quite a while ago.

"Well?" demanded the voice. "What did you find out?"

"Auspicious signs, my lord." She lowered her eyes, hiding them beneath her long lashes. "Your power is bound to spread out over the world, mighty and unstoppable. There is only one small obstacle between you and your absolute triumph."

"I am listening."

"A wizard who could possibly achieve the power to defeat you."

"You dare to claim that another wizard could be more powerful than me? Do not taunt me, foolish woman." The voice became dangerously soft. "I have killed for far less insulting remarks."

Her face remained calm as ever; it did not betray whether his words had frightened her. "Forgive me my forthrightness, my lord, but do you not have enough sycophants agreeing to anything you say? Lying to your face in fear of their pitiful lives? What I offer you is nothing but the truth. My life belongs to you and it is your decision, how it may serve you best."

The voiced laughed. "How clever you are, Narcissa. If you were a man I would take you into the Dark Council without a second thought. However, as things are, you must leave politics to your husband and take care of your children at home."

The voice paused, possibly waiting for the Seer to argue, but she did not take up the challenge and remained silent.

"Very well. As soon as you find out more about the hideout of Har...You-Know-Who," he corrected himself with a soft chuckle, "... I want to be informed at once. You know how to contact me."

The voice faded away. But an evil aura remained between the walls of her room and it would not wither.

* * *

After her parents had chided her for the third time, Ophelia Flowerfield had given up and returned to her room. She grabbed an armful of stuffed animals, placed them on her bed and hid them carefully under the covers, so anyone who looked would think that somebody was lying in there.

Then she crawled inside the closet.

And waited.

For a while she wondered whether it would be safer to leave her room and hide somewhere else in the apartment. Or maybe she could sneak out and run away....

But she decided against it. If she ran about like a scared rabbit, they would probably see her.

They could see in the dark.

Maybe, they could see through walls.

She lay down flat on her belly, bending her head and trying to get a glimpse through the gap between the closet door and the carpet. There was only a little bit of light, probably from the other apartment building right across. Maybe some of the windows were still lit.

Her own room was dark. She could only see a bit of carpet and the foot of her desk. And a pencil lying on the carpet, next to the desk.

Why hadn't her mother noticed? She always made such a fuss about tidying up the room.

Flopp!

She pressed her hands to her mouth, and just in time managed to keep herself from screaming. Luckily it was only one of her school notebooks; it had slipped from the upper shelves and fallen to the floor.

Flowerfield, Ophelia. 2nd grade. Mathema...

She couldn't read the writing anymore, because the trickle of light through the gap had vanished.

Gone. The writing desk was gone... the carpet was gone... the room was gone.

Only the pencil was still there. She heard a loud crunch when it broke.

"Watch it, Goyle," said a drawling boy's voice, with slightly mocking undertones. "We're not here to wreck the house, although that might be amusing. We're here for the child."

"Where's the little brat?" a second, somewhat croaky voice snarled. It also seemed to belong to a boy or a young man. From their sounds, the intruders seemed to be searching her room now. She could hear her covers being pulled off the bed.

"She's in here!"

The closet door was opening slowly, with a creaking sound.

Ophelia held her breath.

There were three black-robed figures in her room, one standing close to the closet, another one next to the bed, and a third one by the window.

But not one of them had touched the closet door. It had opened all by itself.

Like magic.

Ophelia crawled back into the furthest corner of the closet. She tried to scream, but the dark creature in front of her, steadily approaching, beat her to it. A movement with the strange wooden stick he held in his hand, a word she didn't understand, a sudden harsh wind, that seemed to circle her head, and she couldn't get a sound out anymore, not even a whimper.

"This is the safe way to silence annoying little children..."

The wind had blown her attacker's hood back, and she could see she was indeed facing a human, a pale boy with pointed, almost elf-like features, who couldn't be any older than twenty. His silvery blond hair was combed back from his forehead and his glittering grey eyes were staring at her coldly. His nose was wrinkled in a sneer, as if he was seeing something particularly disgusting.

The corners of his thin mouth curled up in a cruel smile. "There are other ways, of course: far less pleasant ones. You don't want to find out, do you?"

He stretched out his hands, as if he was going to reach for her, but then changed his mind, calling for his companions: "Crabbe! Goyle! Tie the Mudblood up and take her out to the others!"

Then he turned on his heel, swaggering towards the window.

One of the other two was approaching her now, some sort of vine shooting out of the wooden stick he carried. The vine wrapped itself tightly around the little girl's body, except for the end; he kept it in his hand, and pulled her out of the closet and towards the window as if she were a dog on a leash.

Five black, horse-like creatures were floating in front of her window. On two of them sat more robed figures. But that wasn't the worst.

Children were dangling in the air beneath the horses. Like her they had been tied up with those strange vines and the vines were bound to the saddles of the horses.

What did these people want with the children? Why had they taken them away?

The door to her room opened. "Ophelia, if you can't sleep, we could..."

"Avada Kedavra!"

A green ray of light shot out of the pale boy's stick and for one endless terrible moment her whole room was bathed in a blazing green light. A hissing sound rung in her ears, as if a horrible snake, invisible to her eyes had appeared out of nowhere to throw itself at her mother.

In the very next moment her mother dropped to the floor, lying motionless by the doorframe.

The girl screamed but no sound came out of her throat. She struggled at her bindings, but it was no use, her captor was at least three times as strong as her.

Calm and completely unmoved, the pale boy was leaning against the window frame, as if he could care less. He smirked coolly, blowing the smoke from the end of his wooden stick.

With a nod, he signalled his companions to leave. "Come on, don't waste my time."

The night air was cold, much colder than Ophelia had expected, but it seemed some of the cold emanated from those creepy horses. Soon they were high above the city and she closed her eyes, so she wouldn't have to look down. Her head was filled with questions, questions that didn't have answers.

Voldemort's Ghost Riders crossed the night sky, dragging the captured children along like a gruesome mobile.

* * *

"Say, Captain, how many troops are we still waiting for?"

Marcus Flint, captain of the Ghost Riders, raised his tremendously confused eyes from the Muggle map he was currently holding. He just couldn't read the damn thing. Who had ever heard of a map with no water in the rivers and the mountains as flat as the rest of the bloody thing! Not even the different layers of smog were visible on there, and muggle cities were always covered in layers of smog. Even Marcus Flint knew that, and Marcus Flint could look back on six generations of pure-blooded witches and wizards and had never ever taken the subject of Muggle Studies while he was at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Hogwarts ... yes, there had been a time before the Dark Lord had taken his destined place as supreme ruler over the realm of magic. Back then Marcus had been captain of the Slytherin Quidditch Team, and they had won one game after another...oh those were the days, my friend! He had hoped to be taken on by a professional Quidditch team after graduation, maybe even the national one. However, the Fates had had something different in mind for him.

Not that there was any reason to complain. He had gotten far in these three years since he had left school, extremely far considering that his family had never been an active part of the Death Eaters and even now they didn't rank high among the followers of the Dark Lord. However, joining the Ghost Riders was the best option an ambitious young man could have in order to prove himself to his master.

He took a look around. Since they didn't have anything to do right now, most of the guys were relaxing in the grass, gambling with magical cards or dice. Pretty much all of them were between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, many of them had gone to school with him. Girls were a big exception to the Ghost Riders and none of them had yet reached a position of command.

"We're almost complete." Marcus addressed Terence Higgs, who had spoken to him. "As soon as Draco's group gets back from London, we'll have everyone."

"I was just wondering..." Terence leaned a bit closer to be able to lower his voice. "You see, Grand Dragon Macnair is getting impatient."

"Grand Dragon Macnair will have to sit it out." Marcus frowned slightly; he didn't think much of the members of the Dark Council. In his opinion they were a bunch of arrogant bastards. To speak that thought aloud, however, would be signing your own death verdict, and Marcus knew when to keep quiet.

Terence obviously didn't, because he added with a glance to the map: "Looks like Malfoy could use one of those, couldn't he? You think the idiot got lost on his horsie?"

Under different circumstances Marcus would have laughed at the joke, but not with Macnair approaching behind his back, talking bad about the son of a council member in presence of other council members was one of the 'Don'ts' as well; you could never know who was in allegiance with whom and what consequences it could have. Politics were complicated. And if you didn't understand any of them, like Terence Higgs for example, you wouldn't get very far.

"The last group's in London, Flint?" Showing his usual patronizing smile, Macnair's face didn't betray whether he had heard the last remark. "So there's still Mudbloods left in London?"

"You heard me correctly, sir," Marcus nodded. "It's difficult to find them all; we have to search each section separately. As you know, the Flame Quill has never been found."

"We will find it." Macnair's voice sounded very confident. "It's just a question of time until Dumbledore will crack and tell us where it is. Then you can simply go down the list and get them all."

"Yes, that would save us a lot of time." Marcus' eyes were searching the skies, but there was no sign of the latecomers so far. "Say, sir, do you require our assistance in guarding the children? There's still enough time till daybreak; I could leave you a few of my people...."

"No assistance needed, Flint. My own people are well up to the job. Call it an early night!" Macnair chuckled. "Won't your girlfriend be happy that you've got some spare time for her?"

Marcus swallowed hard and averted his eyes. What did Macnair know?

"Well, a kid your age's got to have a girlfriend, don't he?" Macnair added jovially as he

sensed Marcus' confusion and a tiny trace of fear. "Don't worry about it, son. What's all the hard work for, if you don't get to have a little fun afterwards?"

In an almost fatherly gesture he placed a hand on Marcus' shoulder. "Well as long as you know your limits and keep your private life to yourself, there won't be any trouble. I'll make sure of it, eh?" He gave Marcus a wink.

With a sigh, the young man nodded. In the realm of magic, it was hard to keep a secret. Well, things could have been a lot worse.

"You know, sir, my worries about guarding the children..." he said, hastily changing the subject. "I...uhm... permission to speak freely, sir?"

"Permission granted, Captain Flint." A tiny smile lifted the corners of Macnair's mouth. The boys were exactly as he wanted them: loyal, submissive and a little too eager to prove themselves.

They didn't have any political influence at all; they were no more than a tool carrying out the Council's orders. However, they thought quite a lot of themselves.

Marcus' eyes darted left and right to make sure they weren't overheard. "I happened to come across a rumour. Only a vague one, of course, but it always pays to be careful."

"I'm listening."

"The Mudblood children we took last week; it's said, they have been freed. Freed by You-Know-Who!"

Macnair laughed heartily. "Oh come on, Marcus, you don't believe that rubbish, eh? Freed by You-Know-Who? A splendid joke indeed! You-Know-Who is busy hiding deep down some rabbit hole. Attack us? Never! He wouldn't even dare if his kiddy league was twenty times as powerful."

"If you say so, sir." Actually, Marcus knew pretty well that these rumours couldn't be so far-fetched. After all, Draco Malfoy had told them to Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle yesterday. Draco probably knew them from his father. In the realm of magic, not even a tiny mouse could stick his nose out of a hole without Grand Dragon Lucius Malfoy, Member of the Dark Council and Lord Voldemort's right-hand- man, hearing

about it.

But who was Marcus Flint to argue with a member of said Council?

"Look, sir!" Marcus pointed upwards. "The last group's returning. And they brought us some more children!"

* * *

Ophelia couldn't remember ever being so cold in her entire life. Her whole body felt numb, as if it were made of clay. When she finally felt solid ground beneath her feet, she wasn't able to stand up straight.

The other children weren't in any better shape; some of them even had lost consciousness. Others glanced around, their eyes filled with fear. None of them were able to speak; these dark riders had charmed away their voices.

A hand reached for the vine that bound her, pulling her to her feet. "Bring all the children over here!" a voice yelled.

The riders had gone now, but there was new group of these dreadful people, and their robes were not black, but dark red. Almost like blood. They were pushing the children along like a herd of sheep, dragging the unconscious ones.

The ground below them became sandy and they walked downhill for a long time. Around them were strange rocks of red sandstone. Ophelia didn't think that they were still in London.

At the entrance of a huge cave, the group finally came to a halt. Some of the children were so exhausted, they fell to the ground right where they stood. Others hurried to the stonewall next to the cave entrance, where a trickle of water was running down the rock, drinking the water thirstily. Their captors didn't stop them.

A man stepped up in front of them, a large fat man with a huge beer belly, a puffed-up face and a shiny red nose. If Ophelia had been older, she would probably have realized that he was someone who fancied more than a drink or two.

"Listen up," the man barked. "I'm Steve Pinch and you will remember the name! You will call me sir! And do you know who you are?"

Silence. After all the children couldn't answer him.

"I'll tell you, what you are! Scum! Mudbloods! You're nothing more than the dirt under my feet and dirt should be cleaned away! So give me one good reason why I shouldn't just squash you like the bugs you are!"

No answer. With a malicious smile he looked at the children, taking in their fear, which he seemed to enjoy.

"However..." His voice calmed down a bit. "If you should prove to be useful bugs, the Imperial Wizard, our all-powerful master, supreme ruler over the magical world may possess the grace to spare your wretched lives. Now we will bring you down the mines to dig for fairy gold. You're small enough to crawl through the tunnels..." He raised his forefinger. "And about one third of you might even grow big enough to get another, less troublesome job."

He spat on the ground. "But you gotta earn it first, scum!" .

Steve Pinch continued to talk, about the Dark Lord, the worthlessness of Mudbloods and the glorious age they lived in, but Ophelia was far too tired to pay attention. During his long speech, even more of those red-robed people marched out of the caves, joining the other guards around them. Pinch ignored them and talked on. Olivia stared on all the red, desperately trying to stay on her feet. If she broke down now, they would probably...

One third, Pinch had said. One third. What happened to the other two?

The robed figure next to her looked so strange. She was smiling beneath her hood, a true smile, not one of those evil grins. As if she were truly a person, a human being and not a guard who was supposed to take her down into the mines.

But that couldn't be! Surely her mind was playing a trick on her!

This person had such warm brown eyes. No doubt, it was a woman. A girl, maybe. But how was that possible? None of their captors were girls....

Pinch had finally finished his speech and with a movement of his fat wobbly chin he pointed towards the cave entrance. The guards pulled the children up again.

A little girl was crying....

Ophelia heard her sob....

A little girl was crying, really crying with her voice and all. Her voice was back.

All their voices were back.

In the very next moment all the children started to shout and scream. Ophelia heard herself yell, as if her voice belonged to a stranger. She didn't realize yet, that it was her own voice making that noise, that she could control it. Had the spell truly been broken? But how? And by whom?

One grip into his blood red robes, and Steve Pinch held one of the wooden sticks in his hand. Ophelia had realized by now that those sticks were likely to be wands, even if they didn't look like the black and white wands wizards used on TV.

Steve Pinch drew in a deep breath and raised his hand, holding the wand: "Silen-!"

But someone else was much faster than him. "Expelliarmus!" yelled another robed figure; all Ophelia could see beneath his hood was a pair of sparkling green eyes behind silvery glasses, which flashed the light. Whatever spell Pinch had wanted to use, he could not finish it. His wand was blasted away and all he could do was stand and stare unbelievably at his empty hand.

As if the green-eyed boy had issued an order, all the others pulled out their wands as well, and for a moment loud shouts and bright flashes of light made it impossible for her to see and to hear. The next thing she saw was Steve Pinch falling flat on his beer belly while thick ropes wrapped around him. The vines binding the children, however, withered and broke away.

It all happened so fast that Ophelia could hardly understand what was going on. Red robes fighting other red robes. More sparks, flashes, wands and people zooming through the air. Something exploded loudly....

And the girl with the warm brown eyes reached for her, pulling her onto a...

Broomstick???

"Hold on!" she yelled loudly trying to make herself heard over all the noise. "Hold on tight, now, we're going up!"

The broom shot straight up, circling the cave entrance once, and whooshing back down a moment later, so that the girl could grab another child, a very small boy, and put him on the broom in front of her. Then they finally dashed off into the night air. More brooms rose around them; it was an entire squadron.

A red haired boy floated directly over fat Steve Pinch, poking him with his wand. Trembling, the two children sitting on the broom behind him clung to him and to each other, while he had started to make a speech. "You can tell your Dark Lord that we will never surrender. As long as one last breath is flowing through our veins, Harry Potter and the brave rebels of Gryffindor...and well, I suppose Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, too, will fight for the freedom of all witches and wizards!"

"Ron, you idiot, will you stop it!" the girl shouted angrily. "Come on, we have to go!"

"As long as one last breath is flowing through our veins..." giggled another girl and a third one added. "Ron for president!"

The boy's face turned as red as his hair, and without another word, he raced past the girls.

* * *

Amicus Draconis - 1st Cycle: Cycle of the Badger - Episode 1: Children of Magic

"I wonder, I wonder, do you know what I wonder?"

"No idea."

"What's this?"

"Hello, dumb brother? This is the eye catch!"

"Right. We survived the alpha part of the first episode. So stay tuned for the beta part!"

"Beta sounds good. Reminds me of something, we have to do."

"Ladihoh! Praise our wonderful beta readers bravely plunging their way through the dark and gruesome swamps of Yamato's writing."

"Praised be the betas, praise them, praise to them! May the light forever shine on Saint Ellie, Adorable Ann and Angelic Arsinyk!"

"Stay tuned. Coming up next on AD: New Hogwarts, a secret hideout and lots and lots of questions."

Amicus Draconis - 1.Zyklus: Zyklus des Dachses - Folge 1: Die Kinder der Zauberkraft

* * *

Like a startled flock of birds the broomsticks raced up and away. To Ophelia it felt as if they were going in circles; they changed direction every so often. Again and again the boys and girls doubled back to make sure they weren't being followed.

"We can't let them find our hideout," explained the girl, as she turned round to Ophelia. Then she addressed the little boy in front. "Don't get scared now, I need to make sure they didn't jinx the broom. I'll need my wand to do that, so I'll have to let go of you with one arm. Are you holding on tight?"

The boy nodded.

"All right."

She flicked her wand, but nothing happened. "We're okay," she reassured the children. "They didn't have enough time anyway. Also, they aren't the brightest!"

"By the way, my name's Hermione Granger," she introduced herself.

Ophelia and the little boy gave their names as well. He was Thomas Krueger from Greenwich and he was four years old. "Are you taking us home?" he asked with a shaking in his voice.

Hermione sighed deeply. "I'm sorry, Thomas, I can't,. They would simply kidnap you again and all would have been for nothing."

"What do these people want with us? Why can't they just leave us alone?"

"That's a very long story," Hermione answered. "And it will sound like a fairy tale, but every word of it is true. I suppose I best start at the very beginning...."

"Is that a school uniform you're wearing?" Thomas interrupted. "What kind of school do you go to?"

Ophelia took a look around and saw that all of their rescuers were wearing school uniforms. White shirts, striped ties, V-shaped jumpers in grey, with trousers for the boys and skirts of the same colour for the girls. Only one thing was different from a regular uniform; there were no blazers. Instead, they wore long black robes lined with different colours. Stitched on the left side of their chest was a symbol, obviously the school's crest.

The crest on Hermione's robe was a mighty golden lion on red background. She also wore a golden badge, which spelled Head Girl. So she was the Head Girl of her school, but what kind of school might that be?

"Actually I'm not attending any school right now," explained Hermione. "If things had gone normally I would have graduated this summer. But something came up, or I should say, someone: Voldemort!" She spoke the name with a shudder of both fear and contempt.

"Is he the one, they call the Imperial Wizard or the Dark Lord?" Ophelia wanted to

know. "They said he is the supreme ruler of all witches and wizards."

"This wizard is pure evil. He has seized power over our world, spreading terror everywhere. He destroyed our government, our laws and our society! He is...." She broke off. "Oh dear, I'm starting to sound like Ron...."

"You're fighting against this Voldemort guy, aren't you?" Thomas asked with an excited sparkle in his eyes. "You are brave heroes saving the world! Just like on TV!"

"Oh, well..." Since Hermione took her time to answer, things were probably a little more complicated than that. "Actually we're just a bunch of children who want to see their parents again. But I'm afraid you're right: it means saving the world. As long as Voldemort rules, nothing will ever be the same again."

"But there's one thing I still don't understand," Ophelia wondered. "What's all of this got to do with us?"

"You two and all the others are children with the ability to use magic. Although your parents are Muggles - that means entirely non-magical people - you, Ophelia, are a little witch and you, Thomas, are a little wizard. And the Dark Lord fears you. He wants to have power over all witches and wizards so that no one can prove a danger to him."

"Even the children?" Ophelia asked, catching her breath as she took this in.

"Especially the children," Hermione answered her. "You see, it was a child who defeated Voldemort a long time ago... seventeen years ago, to be exact. And this child was much younger than you or Thomas. He was only a baby at the time."

She smiled mischievously. "You'll get to meet him soon enough. Harry Potter is our leader."

* * *

Above a great lake, its borders lost in the nocturnal darkness, the brooms finally came to a halt.

"You'll get food and rest very soon," Hermione assured the children. "We're almost there: only one tiny obstacle is still in our way." She pointed to the black glittering surface of the water. "Our hideout is down at the bottom of this lake."

A pudgy girl with a friendly round face and two blond plaits flowing over her shoulders flew from one person to the other, handing out something. Ophelia saw that her school uniform was different from Hermione's; it was lined in yellow instead of red and the school crest on her robe showed a badger, instead of a lion. As she came closer, Ophelia could also see what she held in her hand; it was some strange, green plant with slimy, tentacle-like leaves.

It smelt like sea weed and the blond girl didn't seem to like the taste either. "We really should think of something to make it taste better," she suggested to Hermione.

"No, Hannah, we really shouldn't. We can't afford to waste any of it," Hermione protested brusquely. "You need to chew the gillyweed very carefully," she explained to Thomas and Ophelia. "It'll make you grow gills to breathe under water. Don't be scared, it won't hurt at all, and they'll be gone again soon."

And so it happened that, only a few minutes later, Ophelia felt a strange tickling on both sides of her neck and when she touched it, there were strange slits behind her ears. "Hold on tight, you two," Hermione warned. "And don't be scared of the water, you can breathe it just like air!"

Down and down the broomsticks raced, finally breaking through the surface of the water. Ophelia shuddered as she felt her clothes getting soaked in the cold water; she closed her eyes tightly and held her breath. Hopefully this would be over soon. She didn't dare to breathe underwater, it was much too scary. This just couldn't work.

However, she wouldn't be able to hold her breath for a long time.

She heard a bubbling sound, when Thomas started to cough desperately and a moment later she couldn't hear anything anymore, for she was coughing and bubbling herself. As wonderful fresh oxygen filled her body, she felt her panic disappear and the cold along with it.

Carefully she opened her eyes. Like a swarm of fishes, the broomsticks were gilding between rocks, sea plants and coral reefs.

Darker and darker it became around her, until soon there was no more starlight

glinting through the surface of the black water. But the tips of the many wands shone like candles, a shimmering ribbon leading downwards into nothingness.

It couldn't take them that much longer to reach the bottom of the lake....

Shadows were gliding around them; giant fishes the size of humans, but what if they really were humans? Glowing eyes. Glistening scales. A flow of dark green hair, almost brushing her face. Or had it been sea weed and she was just imagining things?

Ophelia tightened her grip on the broomstick and the soft fabric of Hermione's robes, yet she resisted the temptation to close her eyes. This new world was much too fascinating to shut it out. Although she was hurt and tired, for the very first time she felt she was a small part of a big adventure. And who could know how it would end?

When they finally came to a halt, everything was dark around them, so dark that they were probably inside an underwater cave. One of the boys was hovering just above the ground; Ophelia could make out his dark silhouette reflecting against the soft light of his wand. But all she could see was a robe with a head on top, and on top of the head a mass of ruffled black hair. There was so much hair surrounding that head, it would have been enough for another three heads.

With the tip of his wand, the boy touched the ground below him. Probably he was using some kind of incantation as well, but being underwater, she couldn't understand any of it. All she could hear was a bubbling sound.

The sands parted, revealing a trap door in the ground. A tiny trap door, no bigger than a cat flap, but Ophelia didn't have much time to wonder how they were going to get through. Everything started to grow around her, but maybe it was because she was shrinking. So did the broom, Thomas and Hermione.

The broomsticks formed a line, speeding through the trap door. Hermione's broom was last to disappear in the strange darkness before them. As soon as they had flown through, Hermione turned the broom around, reached for a tiny golden key inside her robes and stuck it into a keyhole on the inside of the door. The door vanished again...no wait, it was transforming. It was transforming into a cloud.

A cloud?

They were underwater no longer. Instead they were hovering in a picture perfect blue sky, above a group of houses, which were made of wood and pastel-coloured paper.

Huddled closely together, the buildings were surrounded by a beautiful garden; delicate stone pathways winding around blooming shrubs and unknown miniature trees proudly raising their branches into the air. Tiny streams and trickles of water made their way between flowers and strangely shaped rocks, all leading to a large pond, covered in water lilies.

There seemed to be a plank leading from the shore to the middle of the pond, but when they flew closer, she saw that it was actually a set of wooden squares with different heights. To get across them, you had to jump from one to the other, and that was exactly what a group of playing children were doing down there. More children and teen-agers could be seen everywhere in the garden, walking, playing, socializing or testing magic spells with their wands. When they saw the newcomers up in the air, they started to smile and wave at them, shouting out greetings.

"This is sooo beautiful..." Ophelia sighed, gazing in awe at her surroundings. Little Thomas almost forgot to shut his mouth.

Hermione smiled at the children, pride shining on her face. "Welcome to New Hogwarts."

* * *

When Ophelia opened her eyes, she didn't have any idea where she was or how she'd got there. She wasn't lying in her bed at home, but on a soft tatami mat inside a strange room, that she couldn't remember ever having seen before.

Around her, there were more of the mats serving as bedsteads for the other children. Most of her roommates, including little Thomas, were still sleeping soundly, but some lay awake, staring glassy-eyed at the ceiling. Others had sat up, drinking something hot and steamy from the big round tea bowls they were holding in their hands.

Slowly and gradually, Ophelia started to remember the strange dream she had had last night. Scary people in red and black robes, wands, flying broomsticks ... Harry Potter....

"Are you feeling all right?" asked an unknown voice.

She turned around to see two young girls walking from bed to bed, handing out tea

bowls to the children. The tea bowls were floating in front of the girls, like a flock of birds. The strange thing about those girls was that they looked both exactly the same; long dark braided hair, olive-brown skin, oval faces. Only their school uniforms differed: one wore the same as Hermione and the other one was clad in blue-lined robes, showing the crest of a bronze eagle.

"My name's Parvati Patil and that's my twin sister Padma, she's a Ravenclaw, I'm a Gryffindor," one of the girls explained. Obviously she had noticed Ophelia taking a good look at the different school uniforms.

Gryffindor? Ravenclaw? She was still wondering about those strange words, when Parvati continued: "We're just making sure, you guys are okay."

"Are you doctors?" Ophelia wanted to know.

The girls smiled nervously. "Well not really, but we're trying to specialise in healing spells," Padma explained. "We don't have any teachers right now, but we're trying our best..."

"But don't worry, we never bewitched anyone to grow a third kidney," Parvati joked as she seemed to sense Ophelia's uneasiness.

"So, when we're all well again, can we go home?" the small boy on the mat next to Ophelia's asked eagerly.

The sisters exchanged a silent glance, neither of them wanting to speak the answer aloud.

* * *

A few hours later, all the children were awake. They had had something to eat and to drink; it seemed that all the food consisted of plants and animals from the outside lake. Their injuries had been taken care of, wounds and strained muscles had been treated with spells and healing potions. Also, they had received school uniforms, even the ones who were too young for school.

"You don't have to wear them, if you don't like them," Parvati assured them. "If you

prefer your normal clothes, that's totally okay. We wear these uniforms because for us they represent a strong bond with our old school. However, since you have never been to that school, it's probably not important for you. If circumstances were normal, you would also attend a school for witches and wizards ... but everything is sort of complicated right now...."

"What do the animals on the robes mean?" Ophelia wanted to know. She had noticed that the children's uniforms did not have the different colours and there were no animal crests on the robes.

"Hogwarts was divided into four different houses," Padma explained. "This was because the school was founded by four different witches and wizards. The animals are the crests of the different houses." She pointed to her robe. "The eagle is Ravenclaw's symbol, the lion represents Gryffindor, and Hufflepuff has the badger. The different houses also represent certain virtues that were important to the respective founder, but if I try to explain that, it gets a little complicated...."

"In Hogwarts," Parvati added, "we had the Sorting Hat, a magic hat that sorted the children into the right houses. Here we have to find a different solution. After a while, when we all know each other better, we can decide together who fits best in which house."

"What if we don't want to be in any house!" a small boy with cropped hair yelled. "I don't care about all this rubbish; I just want to go home!"

Again, the sisters exchanged a nervous glance. "Like Parvati said, you don't have to wear a school uniform," Padma tried to calm him, her voice shaking a little. "You don't have to take part in the lessons or the activities. No one is forced to do anything around here. However you can't go back to your home. You don't want your family to get hurt, do you?"

The little boy averted his face and clenched his hand to a fist, digging his teeth into the skin.

A little girl waved her hand, as if she were in school. "Please, Ms. Parvati, I have a question!"

"Yes, of course."

"You said there were four houses in your school. But here, you've only got three. What

happened to the fourth one?"

Again the nervous glance from one sister to the other. By now, Ophelia had figured out, that there were things these people did not want to talk about. "Well, you must know...the whole Slytherin thing is sort of complicated..."

"No, it's not!"

Hermione Granger had entered the room, followed by a group of fellow Gryffindors. "The house of Slytherin chose to be on Voldemort's side without question. Many of the students' parents had been his followers since the first time he came to power."

"It's not like the Slytherins ever had a choice. Not like we did."

At first, Ophelia hadn't noticed the dark-haired boy with the green eyes, but now she recognized him; he was the one who had attacked Steve Pinch, and he had also opened the door to the secret hideout. When Hermione heard him speak, she opened her mouth to argue with him, and at once, all the others gave loud sighs, rolling their eyes at the two of them. It seemed they already knew this argument too well, and the red haired boy, the one the girls had called 'Ron' gave a loud howl of protest: "Hermione! Harry! Can't you just shut up, and let got of it for once! I can't stand this any longer!"

"Okay, Ron, just take it easy." While Hermione covered her ears, protecting them from Ron's shouting, Harry grinned apologetically. "We'll just save the fighting for later, when you give us another one of your presidential speeches."

He turned to the children and his face was serious again. Ophelia had to admit that there was something about him, something she could not explain. She saw him joke with his friends and yet it seemed that this happiness reached only a part of him. Even when his face smiled, his eyes didn't. A deep sadness lay hidden in these eyes, a dark sorrow she couldn't even begin to understand.

"Actually I came here to tell you a couple of things. I'm not that good at speeches, but these things just need to be said."

As he walked through the room, his gaze travelling from one child to the next, Ophelia couldn't explain how, but she had the feeling that he wasn't looking at their faces, but directly into their hearts.

And it was to their hearts that he directed his words. "No one gave you a choice, whether you wanted to be witches and wizards. You were simply grabbed and ripped out of your normal life and nothing makes sense anymore. And you keep thinking: 'This isn't fair! This isn't fair at all!'"

Harry Potter paused in his steps, now standing directly in front of the small boy with the cropped hair. "And you're totally right about it. This is the most unfair thing that could happen to anyone of us."

The little boy took his hand out of his mouth and raised his head to look at Harry.

"This you can believe, we understand how you feel. Not because we're especially smart or clever people, but because we feel the exact same things in the exact same way. What has happened to you has happened to us as well. And all we want is to go home and be with our families again."

He gave a nod to his friends. "Hermione hasn't seen her parents since last Christmas and she doesn't dare visit them, because she fears to attract the attention of Voldemort's troops. Ron's parents are wizards in another resistance movement, just like his five older brothers and he has not heard from any of them, since Voldemort came to power. He doesn't know, if they're hurt or taken captive or even worse. And every one, each and every one of us, misses their families and friends. Just like you, we were grabbed and ripped out of our lives and nothing makes sense anymore. And sometimes all we want to do is to hide in some dark corner and cry. And yes, sometimes that's exactly what we do.

"But if we want to see our families again, if we want to have our lives back, we must fight for them. As long as Voldemort rules over the realm of magic, heritage is all that matters in a witch or wizard, and there's no such thing as character. Values such as love, friendship and compassion are stepped on and trod into the ground.

"Wisdom: the wisdom to understand about right and wrong, to make the right choice even in difficult times - that wisdom is represented by the eagle of Ravenclaw.

"Bravery: the bravery to stand up for what is right, no matter how harsh the sacrifices are - that bravery is represented by the lion of Gryffindor.

"Loyalty: the loyalty to always stand with your friends and to never ever turn your back on them - that loyalty is represented by the badger of Hufflepuff.

"We believe in these virtues and that is the reason we wear them on our robes. So we can always see them right in front of our eyes, especially in those moments when we want to hide in dark corners and cry. We may be desperate at times but we are never without hope. We know that the day will come when we can be home again."

Harry Potter smiled and this time, his eyes smiled with his face. "Home with the ones we love."

Tsuzuku (... to be continued)

Dark night, nothing to see
Invisible hand in front of me
Scared to death there's someone near
Scared to move but you can't stay here

You know me, evil eye
You know me, prepare to die
You know me, the snakebite kiss
Devil's grip, the Iron Fist

* * *

extra Extra EXTRA!!!!

"Look, we're on!"

"Look, that's us!"

"Hmh *clears throat* Welcome, gentle viewers, welcome to Fred and George's radio show. I am Fred and he is George!"

"No, you're totally wrong! You are Fred and I am George. Don't mix it all up again!"

"Whatever. Okay, how about we start today's broadcast by convincing you that we are mostly harmless."

"So, to show you all, we're awfully nice people, we're gonna tell you lot something about the second episode. Just like the first one, it will feature a rescue mission. And since we're not only awfully nice, but also awfully smart, we already know who the damsel in distress is."

"In episode 2 brave, brave Sir Harry and his merry men must hasten to the rescue of poor unfortunate Muggles, which are - oh wait, of course I mean: who are - being held in good old 'Old Hogwarts', so the students can use them for practising curses. Boy, school has really changed since our days, hasn't it? And later, in the B-part of the episode, our heroes will encounter an old acquaintance. One they are not pleased to meet, but we won't tell you who it is. Because we're mean!"

"So, stay tuned for:"

*

Amicus Draconis - 1st Cycle: Cycle of the Badger - Episode 2: Encounter at Hogwarts

Coming soon to a Fanfiction Archive near you

*

"Say, Fred?"

"Yeah, George?"

"Are we done yet?"

"Yes, I mean no. We forgot the tag line!"

"But we don't have any tag line!"

"Then we shall make one! How about: I send you the waves of love!"

"That's the Wedding Peach tag line, dumb brother! Why don't you try: 'The gate of adventures has opened!'"

"That's Digimon 02, you freak! Oh well, let's just settle for: 'The moonlight carries the message of love!'"

"No, you moron, that's Sailor Moon. We will never get a decent tag line by taking other shows' taglines. I don't want our absolute destiny to be the apocalypse. *sings* Zettai Unmei Mokushiroku!"

"We need something cool...."

"Something wicked...."

"Something Hogwarts...."

"Might as well stick with the classic!"

"Okay *whisper* on three...."

"One, two, two and a half,"

"Two and three quarters.... "

"Draco Dormiens Nunquam Titillandus!"

"Say, Fred?"

"Yeah, George?"

"Are we done yet?"

"Yeah, we'll shut up now!"

