The Doors of Beauxbatons

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The Doors of Beauxbatons

by AnnaVesper

Summary

When Beauxbatons hosts the first Triwizard Tournament since the end of the war, the Blanche sisters have different reasons for following the competition.
Loreen wants to win on home ground. Claire reunites with Draco Malfoy after years apart. Angelique must welcome the visiting delegations, including Severus Snape, whose company soon becomes more complicated than a professional obligation. In the arenas, Lory competes for victory against Owen Diggory, who tries to anticipate every challenge, and Milena Vuković, determined to prove she belongs. Outside them, shared classes, music, and conversations around the table begin to bring together students who arrived as rivals.
Then forgotten corridors reappear. Doors open onto places that shouldn't exist anymore. An unknown presence seeks recognition within the school, and those charged with protecting it must decide whom to trust and what they are willing to allow. Amid rivalries, family secrets, and romances that refuse to follow the tournament schedule, life at Beauxbatons goes on. There are letters to write, assignments to finish, and people whose company no one expected to crave.
Some victories fit inside a cup. Others begin when someone makes room at the table.

Notes

A canon-divergent alternate universe in which Severus Snape survives the war.

Chapter 1: Poison and Punctuality



Severus Snape was irritated.

This, in itself, was hardly worth mentioning. Severus had spent much of his life irritated by one thing or another: incompetent students, excessively cheerful colleagues, ministers far too pleased with themselves. On that sweltering June afternoon, however, his irritation had acquired the precision of a freshly sharpened blade.

The clock above the fireplace read seventeen minutes past three. The representative from Beauxbatons was late. Severus glanced at the clock for the tenth time, as though the sheer force of his contempt might compel its hands to turn backwards. It did not. One of Dumbledore's old instruments released a cloud of greenish smoke in the corner of the room, Phineas Nigellus snored in his portrait, and sunlight streamed through the office windows with offensive persistence.

The first Triwizard Tournament since the end of the war. The grand celebration of European peace. A historic opportunity to bring young witches and wizards together in the spirit of cooperation, courage and friendship — phrases that appeared so frequently in documents from the British Ministry of Magic that Severus had begun to suspect they were some form of veiled threat. The last tournament had ended with a dead student and Voldemort's return. Evidently, the solution devised by the wizarding governments had been to organise another.

Beauxbatons' confirmation had not named its representative. Severus was expecting Madame Maxime.

At twenty-two minutes past three, someone knocked at the door.

"Enter."

The word emerged with enough force to intimidate students through three walls. The door opened nevertheless. The sound of heels crossed the office before Severus had a proper look at his visitor. It was not Madame Maxime.

The woman who entered appeared to be in her thirties and possessed the irritating self-assurance of someone who had never considered the possibility of being unwelcome. She wore pale-blue travelling robes, fitted at the waist and fastened up to the neck, although the light fabric betrayed the heat outside. Her very fair hair was gathered into a low bun, with a few loose strands at her temples. She removed her gloves slowly as she surveyed the office.

Her eyes were a vivid blue. They settled first on the peculiar instruments Dumbledore had left behind, then on the potion bottles lining the shelves, and finally on Severus.

"Monsieur Snape, I presume."

Her French accent was subtle. Her voice less so.

Severus remained behind his desk.

"So it says on the door. And you would be…?"

One of her eyebrows rose.

"Angelique Blanche. Deputy Headmistress of Beauxbatons." She approached and offered him her hand without smiling.

Severus looked at her outstretched hand before accepting it.

The handshake lasted no longer than courtesy required. Angelique withdrew her hand.

"I was expecting Madame Maxime."

"She is not well enough to travel. She asked me to represent her."

Severus gestured towards the chair opposite his desk.

"Do sit down, Mademoiselle Blanche."

"Thank you."

Angelique did not sit immediately. She walked to one of the shelves and tilted her head to examine a container in which a dark substance pulsed like a tiny heart.

"Quite a peculiar office."

"Since Dumbledore's death, I have been trying to make it habitable."

"And you decided to start by adding things that breathe inside jars?"

"They seldom sing. That alone is a considerable improvement."

She turned towards him. The beginnings of a smile appeared on her lips, only to vanish before it could fully form. At last, she settled into the chair and took a folder from her bag.

"These are Beauxbatons' plans for the Tournament. Timetables, accommodation, security protocols, transport, and everything else the English typically require before accepting a cup of tea."

"Rules and organisation have never done anyone any harm."

"A very English belief."

"And is punctuality still a discovery the French hope to make one day?"

"I arrived on time."

Severus pointed towards the clock.

"Twenty-seven minutes late."

"The meeting was scheduled for half past three."

He opened a drawer, retrieved the parchment he had received from Beauxbatons and found the relevant line. Half past three.

Severus folded the letter with great deliberation.

"An unnecessary flourish in the handwriting might account for the misunderstanding."

"Naturally. Blame the French and their handwriting. Never your own eyes."

She offered him the folder. As Severus took it, their fingertips brushed once more.

He noticed. Annoyed with himself for it, he tightened his grip on the folder, searching her face for any reaction.

Angelique, too, remained still for a moment. Her eyes dropped to their hands.

"Is there a problem?" Severus asked.

"None."

She released the folder.

Severus decided to check the documents later for concealed enchantments. It was a more useful precaution than dwelling on the contact.

"I imagine your compatriots possess qualities that compensate for their lack of organisation," he said.

"Several."

"Punctuality is not among them."

"Washing their hair is."

The silence that followed seemed to affect even the portraits.

Severus closed the folder.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Asphodel residue," she explained, pointing to a lock of hair near his face. "And something oily. Wormwood, perhaps. Were you brewing potions before our meeting?"

The accuracy of her observation only made the insult worse.

"My appearance has never compromised my competence."

Her blue eyes travelled slowly over his face. She showed none of the amusement Severus had expected.

"No," Angelique agreed. "I suppose it hasn't."

Severus opened the folder before she could explain what she meant. He had no interest whatsoever in the answer.

He began examining the documents.

"Will the outer wards be extended?"

"They already have been. We've added three independent circles, each connected to a different source. If one fails, the other two remain active."

"And the champions' seals?"

"Individual, tamper-proof, and bound to the designated authorities of all three schools."

"'Tamper-proof' is a dangerous word."

"Which is why I've included an entire section explaining every possible way they could be tampered with."

Severus looked up at her again.

Angelique appeared perfectly at ease, but the amusement had left her eyes. She indicated the correct page without consulting the contents.

He read quickly. The plan was meticulous. It included redundancies, emergency protocols and specific safeguards against Confundus Charms, identity forgery and external interference with the selection process.

"You look disappointed," she said.

"Surprised."

"Because I'm French, or because I'm wearing a skirt?"

"Because you spent the first ten minutes discussing my hair."

"And yet I know precisely what's written on every page."

Severus closed the folder for the second time.

"At the last Tournament, every supposed safeguard was circumvented."

"An impostor remained at Hogwarts for an entire year…"

"I was there."

Angelique held his gaze. Then she leant slightly across the desk.

"I know, *Monsieur* Snape. That is why I want your assessment."

Severus reopened the folder.

"Then show me what you intend to do differently."

"Beauxbatons will not allow a fourth champion to be added. We will not allow the seals to be replaced. And we will not allow any headmaster to withhold information from the other two, however inconvenient the truth may be."

"Are you implying something?"

"I am informing you of the conditions under which we agreed to host the Tournament."

"Hogwarts does not take orders from Beauxbatons."

"Excellent. Then you will understand perfectly when Beauxbatons refuses to take yours."

The beginnings of a smile returned to her lips.

Severus realised the argument should have exhausted his patience by now.

It hadn't.

He pushed Hogwarts' memorandum towards her with rather more force than necessary. The document landed on the desk with a heavy thud.

"These are our requirements."

Angelique regarded the hundred and twelve pages.

"Did you write all of this?"

"Personally."

"And here I was thinking you had no hobbies."

She picked up the document and began leafing through it.

Severus waited for a complaint. Instead, Angelique scanned the first page, then the second and third, with astonishing speed.

"Articles seven and nine contradict each other," she said. "You require unrestricted access for delegation supervisors to the competitors' areas, yet prohibit unauthorised adults from entering the accommodation."

"The headmasters will be authorised."

"That isn't specified in the text."

"It's implied."

"Implicit rules are merely future arguments dressed in formal attire."

Severus held out his hand.

"Give me that."

She moved the memorandum beyond his reach.

"I haven't finished."

"I intend to correct the wording."

"Once I've discovered how many other errors there are."

"There are no other errors."

"What delightful confidence."

Angelique continued reading. A faint line appeared between her eyebrows as she concentrated.

So it wasn't a lack of preparation, then. Within minutes, she had identified issues that two representatives of the British Ministry had missed over several weeks.

Severus ought to have felt reassured.

Instead, he began to regard her as even more dangerous.

"The clause concerning surprise inspections is unacceptable," she said.

"It is essential."

"It allows Hogwarts staff to enter any area of Beauxbatons."

"Only during the Tournament."

"Then I assume you won't object if I include an equivalent authorisation for us to inspect Hogwarts."

"That would be unnecessary."

"Because English castles are incapable of concealing dangers?"

Before Severus could respond, three firm knocks sounded at the door.

Angelique glanced at the small watch on her wrist.

"Now we really are late."

The door opened.

The man who entered was tall and looked to be in his forties. His wavy brown hair was beginning to turn silver at the temples. A close-cropped beard followed the line of his jaw. When he smiled, fine lines deepened at the corners of his eyes. He wore dark red beneath a heavy travelling cloak, and his face bore the serene expression of someone who knew he would be welcome anywhere.

"Forgive me," he said in impeccable English. "The staircases at Hogwarts seem to harbour a particular hostility towards foreigners."

Angelique placed the open memorandum on the desk and stood.

This time, her smile appeared in full.

"Benedikt."

The newcomer crossed the office, took her hand and bent to kiss it. The gesture was formal. The familiarity in his eyes was not.

"Angelique. Still arriving before me simply so you can complain."

"Someone has to preserve tradition."

Benedikt von Veltheim, Headmaster of Durmstrang, turned to Severus.

"Headmaster Snape. We meet at last."

Severus shook the offered hand.

"Headmaster von Veltheim."

Benedikt sat beside Angelique. She handed him a copy of the documents, and the two exchanged a few quick words in French.

Severus waited for them to finish. When Angelique added another remark, he cleared his throat and drew the memorandum to the centre of the desk.

"The inspections clause remains unresolved."

Benedikt opened the folder.

"What is the difficulty?"

"Hogwarts requires access to areas of Beauxbatons," Angelique replied. "I asked whether the authorisation would be reciprocal."

Severus removed the lid from the inkwell.

"It will be. We need to define which areas may be inspected and who may carry out the inspections."

Benedikt drew his chair closer to the desk.

"On the same terms for all three schools."

"Obviously."

Angelique turned the page and pointed to the relevant paragraph. Severus followed the line with his quill.

At least the objections would be made in English from now on.

Chapter 2: Sweets and Other Indiscretions



Beauxbatons was offensively beautiful.

Severus reached this conclusion before he had even crossed the entrance hall. The palace looked as though someone incapable of choosing between architecture and ostentation had built it: pale columns reflected the afternoon light, enchanted fountains sent silver water cascading over the gardens, and tall windows let sunlight flood entire corridors. Hogwarts at least had the decency to conceal its excesses beneath centuries of soot.

A young woman in blue robes escorted Severus to the Deputy Headmistress's office and announced his arrival. Before she could finish, a voice answered from the other side of the door:

"If he's in a foul mood, make him wait five minutes."

Severus opened the door.

"Too late."

Angelique Blanche sat behind a desk covered in parchment. Her fair hair fell loose over one shoulder, and the sleeves of her robes had been rolled up to her elbows. She showed no embarrassment at having been overheard.

"Monsieur Snape. What a delightful intrusion."

"I sent three owls informing you of my arrival time."

"I received all three."

"And yet you instructed your employee to leave me standing in the corridor."

"Only if you were in a foul mood. I see she should have obeyed."

The young woman by the door bit her lip to suppress a smile. Severus gave her a look, and she disappeared down the corridor. Angelique gestured towards the chair opposite her desk.

"Do sit down. I promise not to insult your hair for the first ten minutes."

"Your generosity is touching."

A month had passed since their meeting at Hogwarts. During that time, Severus had received seven letters from Angelique: four strictly professional, two containing infuriatingly pertinent corrections, and one in which she had written only that clause twelve remained "as insufferable as its author". He had replied to every one of them. Strictly out of administrative necessity.

Severus placed a folder on the desk.

"The British Ministry has added new requirements to the security protocols."

Angelique regarded the document.

"Naturally."

"Some of them were recommended by me."

Angelique opened the folder and began to read.

Severus settled into the chair. Her office was very different from his own. Pale walls were covered with maps, runic diagrams, and neatly arranged shelves. White flowers sat by the window, and a glass bowl held little sweets wrapped in blue paper. Nothing smoked, breathed or appeared capable of killing a student. It suggested a worrying lack of personality.

Angelique turned a page.

"The seals being bound to the designated authorities' signatures is insufficient," he said. "An authorised person can be coerced, Confunded or replaced."

"How reassuring to know what you think of us."

"I think any system that depends on human infallibility is doomed."

"On that, we agree."

Angelique separated two pages and placed them side by side.

"Your proposal adds a fourth signature."

"No. It adds a lock. It belongs to no one and only releases when two schools authorise the same action."

"What prevents two authorities from agreeing on a disastrous idea?"

"Nothing. Architecture is no substitute for judgement. It merely prevents any one of us from altering or withdrawing a champion alone."

Severus leaned across the desk.

"The alternative is to place blind faith in three people simply because they hold respectable titles."

"Which would be dreadful, considering how many criminals have already run Hogwarts."

He slowly raised his eyes.

Angelique was still examining the document. "Including those who were acquitted," she added.

"How considerate."

"Don't mistake candour for hostility, Severus. When I'm being hostile, you'll know the difference."

It was the first time she had used his name.

"Headmaster Snape," he corrected.

"We're alone."

"My title does not depend on the presence of witnesses."

"What an exhausting life you must lead."

Severus ignored the remark.

"The lock would record agreement, nothing more. It would have no identity of its own, would not track champions and would grant no access."

Angelique reread the relevant paragraph.

"That could work."

He waited for an objection. "Is that all?"

"Would you like me to disagree so you can feel at home?"

"I'm trying to understand why you agreed so readily."

"Because it's a good idea."

She took a quill from its holder and made a note in the margin.

"My sister will have to incorporate the lock into the structure."

"Your sister?"

"Claire. She designed the runic architecture of the seals. She also works with ancient runes and hereditary protections. She's better than any specialist in the Republican administration and considerably less tedious."

"I shall examine the final version before it is bound to the champions."

"Naturally. Claire wouldn't allow otherwise either."

Angelique took a sweet from the bowl and unwrapped it.

"Would you like a sweet?"

Severus looked at the small blue object between her fingers.

"No."

"It's sweet."

"I had deduced as much from its location in the sweet bowl."

She popped it into her mouth.

"I thought a little sugar might improve your mood."

"Dumbledore spent years trying to test that theory."

The words came out more quietly than Severus had intended.

Angelique stopped smiling. For a moment, she said nothing. She simply pushed the bowl aside, away from him.

"Then I won't insist."

The absence of teasing unsettled him more than the teasing would have.

She continued reading.

"The accommodation clause has been amended," Angelique said. "The Hogwarts students will stay inside the palace, in the west wing."

"The carriages would be easier to protect."

"And much easier to isolate."

"Isolation can be an advantage."

"Not in a competition whose official purpose is to bring the schools closer together."

"The official purpose is to spare the governments from admitting that they miss dangerous spectacles."

Angelique laughed. It was a brief, unguarded sound.

"I'll have a plan of the west wing sent to you," Angelique said.

"With the boundaries of the wards marked."

She noted the request and laid down her quill.

"Will you join me for tea after the meeting? Without discussing the Tournament."

Severus indicated the pages still left in the folder.

"We haven't finished."

"I noticed."

Angelique resumed reading.

When she closed the folder, Severus stood.

Angelique came around the desk to hand him the documents. Before giving them back, she removed something from his collar. Her fingers brushed the side of his neck.

He caught her wrist.

Angelique opened her hand. A single white hair lay in her palm.

Severus released her.

"Hair is far too useful an ingredient for a witch to collect it casually."

Her smile vanished. She set the folder on the desk and laid the hair on its cover.

"Then keep it."

"Do not touch me again without permission."

"Very well."

There was no irony in her reply. Angelique took a step back.

Severus picked up the folder.

"The next meeting will take place at the end of August," Angelique said, returning to her desk. Her voice had regained its formality. "Some wings of the palace will be closed while we reinforce the wards. The headmasters and technical representatives will be staying at my family's estate."

"That won't be necessary."

"It will. The arrangements have already been agreed with Madame Maxime and the Republican Commission for Magical Security."

She took an envelope from a drawer and placed it before him.

"Your presence will also give you the opportunity to meet Claire and review the proposal for the agreement lock with her."

Severus picked up the envelope.

"Who will accompany Durmstrang?"

"Benedikt hasn't decided yet."

He tucked the invitation inside his robes.

"I shall send my confirmation."

"Bring enough clothes for a few days. The estate is some distance from the school."

"I am perfectly capable of understanding the word 'accommodation'."

"After the incident with the meeting time, I'd rather not make assumptions about your grasp of simple words."

Severus walked towards the door.

"*Mademoiselle* Blanche."

"*Monsieur* Snape."

His hand was already on the door handle when her voice stopped him.

"Severus."

He looked over his shoulder. Angelique stood behind her desk, her hands resting on its edge.

"About the tea," she said. "I meant it."

There was no smile to accompany the words.

Severus held her gaze for a moment. Then he opened the door.

That evening, he sent confirmation of his August visit. He confined himself to the dates.

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