Lost and Found - Hogwarts Edition

by sollardragon

Summary

Adrian (Harry) begins Hogwarts with his friends. What awaits the new Slytherin students? What happens when, instead of Draco being spurned in first year, it's Ron Weasley? Warning! Creature inheritance, Bad Dumbledore, Eventual Adrian/Draco pairing. Does NOT follow the books - at all!
Prologue

A/N: I had actually intended for this to be a simple 1 chapter story... it seems to have grown from that due to continued posts that I add to the story, so, I got to thinking and decided to change it into a chapter story instead.

The first two stories are already posted and this prologue is only a recap for those who are new to this storyline. Please look for them if you wish to read them. The titles are as follows:

Lost & Found

Four year old Harry runs away from his family so he won’t be sold to a pedophile. After several days of wandering, sick and feverish, he’s found by none other than Severus Snape.

Snape adopts Harry, renaming him Adrian Snape. Since Harry didn’t know his name in the first place, it’s not that much of a change for the boy. He meets the Malfoys for the first time and makes friends with Draco... after a little tiff.

Adrian’s first friend!

Lost and Found - Adrian Snape or Harry Potter

Adrian has an ability that is apparently extremely rare: he can speak to any and all animals. Unfortunately, this ends up giving more grief than one would think…

As he starts primary school, he makes friends with others: Pansy Parkinson, Theodore Nott, Vincent Crabbe, Gregory Goyle among them.

Dumbledore tells Adrian that once he begins Hogwarts, he’s going to have to go by the name he was born with: Harry Potter.

Needless to say, Adrian doesn’t give two cents about what Dumbledore wants. He’d rather make his father, Severus, proud. He tells Dumbledore what he can do with his order. His name is Adrian Snape and Harry Potter is dead because of his relatives.

Things are compounded when Adrian is placed in Slytherin.
Adrian sat on the same beach where – ironically enough – he’d run away from his relatives all those years ago. Madreca had been training him for a few weeks now – since he’d gotten his wings, in fact – on how to tap into the power inside him so that he could slowly integrate with the creature he would inherit on his seventeenth birthday… or sooner if what the Spaniard was saying was true as well as other ways to fight if he needed it.

His father’s friend had then decided on taking things a step farther: teaching a few other choice future students how to spar… magically and other hand-to-hand combat techniques. It had turned out completely different from what Adrian had expected. It was hard but definitely fun.

Eventually, Madreca wanted to teach them wandless magic but it would have to wait until they’d started learning more spells at school.

It was decided, since it was a nice day, that the group would go to the beach so they could practice in the fresh air and a change of scenery before school began. It was mere coincidence that it happened to be the same one where it had all started for him. Some of the kids were playing in the surf, laughing as they tossed each other around in the water.

Adrian didn’t join them – not yet, anyway – but just watched from the beach, sitting in just about the same spot as he had when he was four. The difference this time, instead of the too big clothes, he wore swim trunks like the rest, displaying the wing tattoos he had on his back.

The tattoos served a dual purpose: it hid his scars and they looked cool. Adrian liked them.

“Hey, Adrian,” Theodore Nott panted as he dropped down on the sand beside him, water dripping off his wet body. “Aren’t you going to come join us?”

“In a bit, Theo. I just want to sit for a little.”

“Suit yourself.” But he didn’t leave and Adrian’s eyebrow rose in silent question. “Well, it’s just that…” the other boy hesitated, as if he wondered how his words would be taken. “You’re really quiet today – more than usual, I mean – and I just wondered why.”

Adrian frowned in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“Well, the others and I wondered if maybe it was just that you didn’t like us being around,” Theo said with a slight shrug. “The only one you really talk to for any length of time is Draco.”

“Ah,” he murmured in understanding. “It’s not that I don’t like you guys, but I like to listen to what others say more than I like to talk. It’s nothing you guys did or anything. I just,” Adrian shrugged, wondering how to put his feelings into words without offending the other boy. He really didn’t mind being around them anymore. He’d gotten used to them after the years in school. “I don’t know. I just like listening. Everyone’s backgrounds are so different that it makes conversations interesting to listen to. Does that make sense?”

Theo thought about that for a few seconds before nodding. “I guess that makes sense. Don’t wait too long before you join us because I think your father and Professor Venger are going to start our lesson
soon. Besides, I think Draco might need back-up,” the boy added with a mischievous smile as he looked out at the water where three of their friends began circling the blonde boy.

“Well,” Adrian murmured in amusement, “we can’t let that happen, now can we?” He and Theo looked at each other with identical grins before they jumped to their feet and pelted towards the water just as one of the circling boys tried to grab hold of Draco from behind.

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Adrian laughed as Goyle tackled him from behind, sending him under the water… when he came up for air, he froze in fear and confusion. The water was empty of people, even the beach. Where had everyone gone?

The sky was darkening drastically, the clouds rolling in from a sky that had once been clear and sunny. Thunder could be heard in the distance. He shivered as a gust of wind struck him, freezing the water on his skin. “Draco?” he called out, turning around in a circle but it didn’t produce his best friend… or any of the other kids he’d been playing with. “Where is everyone?” He had a bad feeling about this.

A dry crack of thunder boomed closer, making him cringe and decided it was time to get out… Something wrapped around his left ankle and he was suddenly pulled under.

“Neither can live while the other survives,” someone, a man older than his father said with a grave voice laced with satisfaction as if it were a joke...

“Harry!” a woman screamed in fear from a distance with a flash of green...

Adrian opened his mouth and screamed, bubbles floating away from him as he was dragged deeper and deeper...

“Adrian!” Draco said loudly as he shook Adrian awake.

The dark haired boy jerked awake, gasping for air, shivering in fear. Looking around, Adrian became aware that they were actually at the beach of his dream… the same one he’d escaped from his relatives on.

Laughter erupted from the group in the water as they wrestled with each other. It looked like they were having a war game, to see who could dunk who and how many times. Everything was normal and calm. Adrian shivered, feeling cold despite the heat from the sun.

“Was it the same dream again?” Draco asked him softly, sitting closer to his friend.

Adrian nodded as he hid his face in his knees, trying to push the dream away. What was wrong with him? Why was he being plagued by this dream?

“Have you spoken to your father about it?” the blonde boy asked finally, when it seemed Adrian had
calmed a little.

“What good would it do? It’s just a dream.” When Draco said nothing, Adrian turned to look at his friend. He wasn’t really surprised to see the ‘are you kidding me’ look on Draco’s face. “Alright, I’ll talk to him about it.”

“Good.”

“Boys!” they heard Severus’ voice boom from beside them, cutting through the noise in the water easily. The ones in the water turned to look at the beach, groaning when he gestured for them to come out. “Time to begin.”

“After the lesson,” Adrian amended with a smirk.

* * *

The punch came from nowhere.

Adrian reeled back even as his friends closed rank around him with Crabbe and Goyle in the front. Draco and Pansy caught him before he could fall to the sandy ground. Adrian winced as he shook his head, trying to clear the stars he was seeing and only making the pain worse.

“That’s for ruining my life, Freak,” Adrian heard and he realized he knew who this was. Dudley Dursley.

“What do I know you?” he asked because he truly didn’t want to deal with Dudley… in fact, he wondered how his luck could be so bad that his cousin would find him on this particular beach. He knew he didn’t really look as he had when he was a child because his father had done a blood adoption three months after the papers had been signed. The next day, Adrian had noticed some changes to his features. He’d taken more of the Snape family characteristics than the Potter family.

Even his eyes which had been emerald green before were now, funny enough, lighter. Malachite Green, Draco had described it once. They’d actually talked Narcissa into taking them to find something with that specific colour. Ironically, it had been her birthday gift to him this year: a pendant with that particular stone. The colour actually matched his eyes. At one point, his sight had begun to change, enough that he would’ve needed glasses, but Severus had allowed Adrian to get them corrected. He really didn’t want to wear glasses.

Oh, sure he still had the messy hair, but his father had said that if he allowed it to grow out, it would settle down and behave. Adrian was still resisting it, though. Maybe he should take his father’s advice…

“Don’t give me that, Freak!” Dudley yelled, bringing him back to the present, and Adrian noted that his face was turning purple, reminding him of his uncle, Dudley’s father.

“Adrian, do you know this imbecile?” Nott drawled, sneering at the boy that stood in front of them.

Dudley had lost a lot of weight and didn’t look like he was in good health. His skin had a yellowish tinge to it. If Adrian had cared at all for the cousin who’d made his life hell, this incident cured him of it.

“No, actually,” Adrian lied smoothly, looking Dudley up and down. “Obviously he’s deranged and thinks I’m someone I’m not.”

“Don’t lie!” Dudley roared angrily and tried to bodily shove Crabbe and Goyle aside. It wasn’t even
a contest. “I know who you are, Harry and I’m going to make you pay for ruining my life!”

Adrian’s group looked at him in confusion before they started laughing. “He is crazy. Who the heck is Harry? Come on, Adrian,” Pansy murmured dismissively, wrapping her arms around one of his, turning him away from Dudley. “Before we catch whatever this kid has.”

Even as she spoke, Dudley was trying to go around Goyle, but Goyle’s arm snaked out and shoved Dudley to the sand with very little effort. Dudley simply bounced up and tried to go around Crabbe with the same results.

“What is the meaning of this?” Severus asked, coming up behind them, an eyebrow rising in question, looking impassively at Dudley, who still struggled to get past the two burly boys. Then he looked at Adrian and his eyes snapped with anger as he saw the purpling bruise on the side of his son’s face.

“Get back here, Freak!” Dudley screamed, eyes wild.

“You will desist this foolishness, boy,” Severus growled, stepping forward, blocking Dudley’s view of Adrian. Dudley looked up at Severus and gaped like a fish as he recognized this man. Severus sneered, his nose wrinkling as Dudley soiled himself in fear. “Honestly, boy. There are better places to relieve yourself than in front of others. Go find your parents. Now!”

Dudley turned, crying and screaming, running away from them.

“Who was that, Professor Snape?” Crabbe asked curiously. “And why did he seem to think he knew Adrian?”

“Yeah, he called him Harry. Who’s that?” Goyle asked, waiting expectantly.

“It doesn’t matter. He obviously thought he’d found an easy target to attack and didn’t expect the support or supervision he met up with,” Severus murmured dismissively, turning away. “That boy apparently gets his way too often. Time to leave.” He herded them away from the crowd that had gathered when the altercation had begun.

“Are you alright, Adrian?” Severus asked, stopping him, tilting Adrian’s head so he could look at the bruise better.

“Yeah, I just didn’t expect the blow, is all,” Adrian shrugged, looking at the others, glad they were too busy playing with each other to listen in on their conversation. “Of all the rotten luck, huh?”

“Indeed,” Severus murmured, frowning slightly. “We’ll take care of this when we get home.”

“Yes, Father.”

“Who was that, Uncle Severus?” Draco asked, having stuck close to his best friend.

“Dudley,” Adrian whispered close to Draco’s ear. “Remember?”

Draco shot him a look of shocked surprise. Adrian had told him about his cousin, in fact, he’d told Draco everything during their first potion making… right after their first and only real fight. He nodded as he saw the recognition in Draco’s eyes before he glanced back at where they could see Dudley with his parents.

“Let’s go before they decide to come over here for a confrontation, Father,” Adrian murmured as they watched Vernon scan the area for whoever had made his son cry. They moved quickly to a
That night, Adrian told Severus about his nightmares. “I’d wondered about that,” Severus murmured with a frown. “You were looking kind of tired lately. How have you been sleeping after the nightmare?”

“It takes me a while, but I eventually go back to sleep. What does it mean?”

Severus sighed and got up to pace. This told Adrian that something was up. His father only paced when he was agitated. “The Potters, your parents, and yes, even you, were targeted by the Dark Lord. Remember what I told you about their death?”

Adrian nodded. Voldemort had been intent on killing him because of something someone had said: a Prophecy. His father had told him that it was his fault the Dark Lord had found out about it. He’d been confused that his father would do something like that, but he understood that it had happened before he was born and held no grudge against the man who was raising with love and security.

Yes, he was sad that his real parents were dead, but how could you miss someone you didn’t know? And how could he hate Severus Snape for doing what he thought was right? He also knew his father had at least tried to save his mother.

“What I didn’t tell you was that the Dark Lord was only after you. He could’ve cared less about your real parents. It was you whom he saw as the threat to his life. You were the one he wanted dead. That’s how you got your scar.”

Adrian reached up to touch his forehead where the scar had once been. At first, his father had cast a strong glamour on it, but two years later, he’d removed it from his forehead. He could still feel something there, but the scar itself was gone.

Severus was nodding. “Your mother is the reason you’re still alive. If she hadn’t stood between you and the Dark Lord, you would not be here.”

“So…” Adrian began, frowning as he turned the information over in his mind. “The woman I hear screaming, that’s my mother?”

“Yes.”

“And the other voice? The man?” Adrian asked in confusion.

“I’m not sure. Adrian, I want you to know that this dream of yours,” Severus began, kneeling before Adrian, his hands resting on the boy’s knees. “It’s just a dream. It can’t hurt you.”

“I know, Father,” he smiled trustingly into his father’s face. “The dream worried Draco more than me, actually. Probably because it’s the same one almost every night.”

Severus nodded, a small smile on his face. Adrian knew he would never tire of seeing his father happy. He was glad Severus Snape had adopted him as his son. They needed each other, after all. “Go on up to bed,” Severus murmured.

Adrian slid down the seat slightly and threw his arms around his father’s neck. He didn’t show affection often, but he knew Severus liked it when he did. Like now, he knew his father’s smile had grown in pleasure when his arms came around Adrian, hugging him back. “I love you, Father.”

“I love you, too.”
“Better be… Slytherin!”

The words still echoed in Adrian’s ears as he sat beside Draco, laughing and joking with his new house mates as they ate supper. With the sorting done, everyone could relax. He could feel Dumbledore’s gaze burning into the side of his head, but he refused to look up at the head table. He also knew there was another person glaring at him, but from the Gryffindor table. It seemed Ronald Weasley did not take rejection well… Adrian just didn’t know if it was him or Draco the red-head was targeting. It probably didn’t matter now.

This was their first night as first years and Adrian was determined to enjoy himself.

After supper, everyone was led down to the dungeon to their common room. Once they were settled, Adrian and Draco made their way to the couch. They hadn’t been sitting long when the others joined them, including Fred and George.

“Hey, Pansy,” Adrian began, waiting until he had the girl’s attention, which also made everyone look at him curiously. “Why were you giving me that weird smile on the train?”

The twins snickered as Draco flushed, glaring at those who dared to grin at the question.

“Oh, no reason, really,” she drawled innocently as she shot Draco an amused look. “Draco was only wearing a hole in the floor wondering if you’d missed the train. We finally had to kick him out to go look for you and sent Crabbe and Goyle to make sure he didn’t get picked on during his search.”

No one seemed to be intimidated by Draco’s death glare as they laughed outright, made worse when he shoved Adrian away from him for laughing with everyone.

“Well, I’m glad you found me,” Adrian teased playfully. “Who knows what would’ve happened to me sitting with a soon-to-be Gryffindor. I might have died of boredom!”

Everyone laughed at that, Draco included. Afterwards, the students settled down, talking quietly amongst themselves, before going to check out their dorm rooms. Adrian picked the bed beneath the window, happy when Draco chose the one on the other side of his. Blaise took the one across from Draco’s and Crabbe and Goyle took the beds closest to the door.

He’d seen the disappointed look in Nott’s eyes when he realized he would have to bunk with others of their year mates but they’d told the other boy that he was welcome to join them whenever they weren’t sleeping.

The only other door in their room led to their own private bathroom.

Adrian was happy. He was with his best friend and the rest of their gang…

* * *

Three weeks after school began, everyone was interrupted at supper. Curious, Adrian and Draco looked at each other before looking around them, wondering if anyone knew what was going on. Dumbledore never stood up unless it was something good…

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Dumbledore began, smiling benignly at everyone. Adrian blinked as the old man seemed to rest his gaze on him a few seconds longer than everyone else. “I’d like to introduce you to a new student.”
That got everyone’s attention.

“A new student?” Adrian murmured to Draco in surprise. “That’s unusual. Students don’t usually get accepted at school after it’s started.”

Draco shrugged unconcerned. “It’s still early in the year.”

Adrian made a noise of agreement before turning his attention back to what Dumbledore was saying.

“…found in a small muggle town but is back where he belongs,” Dumbledore said pleasantly. “Let me introduce you to Harry Potter.”

There was a stunned silence as a tall beefy boy walked from the side door, came around the Head Table and stopped beside Dumbledore’s podium. Adrian felt Draco’s eyes whip to him but he was too shocked to see a boy using his birth name grinning at everyone as if he were, indeed, Harry Potter.

This! This was the Headmaster’s plan since he wouldn’t become Harry? Was he kidding?

Adrian shook his head in confusion before he realized something… This let him off the hook for being Harry Potter. He looked over at Draco and smirked in amusement. He saw the surprise in Draco’s eyes. He hadn’t expected this reaction from Adrian. “That takes care of my problem,” Adrian whispered to him.

His smile grew as Draco’s eyes widened slightly as he realized what Adrian was saying, then he, too, smirked. “I guess so.”

“Gryffindor!” they heard the hat say and ‘Harry Potter’ went over to the appropriate table, welcomed by Weasley, Seamus Finnegan, Dean Thomas and the others sitting around the red-head. Let them keep the fake Harry, Adrian would be glad for the break.

When Adrian looked back at Dumbledore, he saw the rage in the old man’s eyes. Apparently he hadn’t expected the reaction he got. Well, wasn’t that just too bad for him!

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The next few weeks, the Slytherins made fun of the new boy whenever he failed in the classroom. “You’d think he was a Squib or something.” Nott snickered from his side of the Potions classroom. The other Slytherin students smirked in amusement, watching as the new boy struggled with keeping up with what was being taught.

Adrian laughed with them.

He was surprised at how easy people had been fooled by this boy. It was apparent, if you knew what to look for, that the boy’s features had been tampered with, but no one seemed to think it was unusual.

Ron kept trying to coach ‘Harry’ on what to do with his potion but he wasn't any better at it than his new friend. Goyle looked at his fellow Slytherin and everyone watched gleefully as an ingredient was tossed into their cauldron when they bent to pick up something that had fallen onto the floor.

Adrian cringed as the cauldron exploded, splashing Ron, Harry and some of the surrounding students in sticky goo. Predictably – Severus, who had taken an instant dislike of this boy – swooped in, sneering at the ineptitude of some people.
While he was dressing them down for incompetence, he was waving his wand, cleaning up the mess around the two boys. “Clean yourselves and your section up. Fifty points from Gryffindor for not paying attention to what was added to the potion,” he growled angrily.

“Fifty!” Ron exclaimed incredulously.

*Oh,* Adrian thought with a slight wince. *Bad idea to speak up when he’s angry.*

“Each,” Severus added, eyes snapping in warning, but it seemed that while Ron had learned his lesson, Harry hadn’t.

“Each?!” Harry almost screeched, eyes nearly popping out of his head.

“Not enough?” Severus sneered at the two boys, eyes narrowed as he regarded them with contempt. “Detention tomorrow night. Seven o’clock.” He waited to see if anything else would be said.

“But that’s not fair!” Harry snapped out angrily before Ron finally managed to whisper urgently in Harry’s ear and it seemed both had realized that the more they said, the worse the punishment became.

With a satisfied smirk, Severus walked to the front of the class. “For the next class, everyone is to write a three foot essay on every ingredients used in the current potions and why it is unwise to take your attention off your cauldrons, curtesy of Mr. Potter and Mr. Weasley.”

Everyone groaned and threw Ron and Harry dirty looks at that. This meant extra work for everyone.

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Adrian was lost in thought as he made his way to the library to join Draco and the others. He needed to look up an ingredient or two from the potion… he thought he had them right, but he wanted to be sure. The time he’d fallen asleep in primary class had taught him not to leave his assignments ‘til the last minute.

Draco was of the same mind, it seemed.

He gasped in surprise as he was shoved roughly into the wall and was surprised to look into the eyes of the fake Harry. At this close range, he could see the coloured contacts the other boy wore to make his eyes seem emerald.

“What do you want, Potter?” he growled, to cover his disgust at the obvious disguise.

“I have a message from the Headmaster,” Harry growled back, glaring at Adrian as if he was supposed to be intimidated. “Become who you’re meant to be or things will get hairy for you.”

Adrian’s eyebrows rose in amusement. “Oh, really?” he mocked, seeing a movement behind the boy pinning him to the wall. Without knowing who it was, he didn’t want to say too much.

The other boy frowned when he didn’t get the reaction he’d been looking for. “Yes.”

“Mr. Potter,” Professor Venger drawled from behind Harry. The dark haired boy stiffened in surprise. “Twenty points from Gryffindor for accosting a fellow student. Now, I suggest you release Mr. Snape immediately, unless you want a second detention in less than twenty four hours.”

Harry moved back quickly, releasing Adrian, looking from the teacher to Adrian and back again. “Professor Venger,” Harry murmured, nodding politely.
“What was the reason for your attack?” Madreca demanded softly, looking at Adrian as he straightened his clothes before looking back at Harry.

“Nothing,” Harry muttered, refusing to meet the teacher’s eyes.

“Mr. Snape, I assume you were heading somewhere?”

“Yes, Professor,” Adrian answered, pulling his book bag higher on his shoulder. “I was going to the library.”

“Go. Mr. Potter and I have things to discuss.”

“Yes, sir.” Adrian felt Harry’s gaze on the back of his head as he walked away, smirking to himself. Busted!

* * *

Halloween was the one holiday Adrian had always liked. He felt like he’d been munching on too much candy for an entire day, though the day had just begun and he hadn't had one sweet yet. His friends found this amusing, though, teasing him about it.

“So, Adrian,” Fred asked teasingly.

“This’ll be the first year you’ll be spending Halloween at Hogwarts. Are you excited?” George continued, a big grin on his face.

“I don’t know. I liked it at the Manor, too,” Adrian said, bouncing on the balls of his feet, a big smile on his own face.

His friends laughed at the change in him especially as he suddenly grabbed Draco, pulling him into a tight hug. “It’s Halloween!! I love this day!”

“Get off me!” Draco mock-growled as he shoved Adrian off him, grinning at his best friend’s antics and shaking his head in exasperation. He knew this was Adrian’s favourite holiday. Not even Christmas excited his friend as much as Halloween. “Have you been in the candy again?”

“Nope! I’m always like this on Halloween!” Adrian laughed as he picked himself up off the floor. “I don’t know why, but I love it!”

“It’s definitely a change,” Pansy laughed mischievously as she draped herself on Draco. “It’s too bad tomorrow is Friday because something tells me that when he crashes, he’s really going to crash.”

“You don’t know the half of it,” Draco said with a crooked smile. Yes, tomorrow, Adrian would be crashing big time. They’d never figured out why he got so hyper on this particular day and then had no energy the next day.

Adrian shrugged dismissively. “I-“

“Love Halloween!” the others finished for him, then laughed as he pouted at them. “We know.”

“And just think, he’s actually going to get worse,” Draco drawled in amusement as Adrian began bouncing around again.

“Worse?!” Nott asked incredulously.

“Oh, yes. As it gets closer to midnight, he won’t be able to sit still. I think Professor Snape hates this
night out of all the year because he doesn’t get much sleep. Then about a half hour after midnight, Adrian crashes.”

They all looked at him closely to see if he was pulling their leg. They blinked when they realized Draco was serious. “Wow.”

Grinning, having missed this last part as he went to stand at the window beside his bed, watching as a fish swam by, Adrian jumped between Crabbe and Goyle, throwing an arm around their broad shoulders. The others smiled indulgently. This was the most animated they’d ever seen this boy and it was shocking and highly amusing.

“Come on,” Draco said with an exasperating sigh. “Let’s go talk to Professor Venger. Maybe he’ll know why you get so hyper on Halloween.”

“Okay!” Adrian quipped amicably. They left the room to the sounds of snickers and laughs.

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Madreca frowned as Draco explained what was happening, his eyes tracking Adrian as he bounced around the room. Knowing this boy as he did, having taught him the last few months, he knew this behaviour was highly uncharacteristic.

“Yes,” he murmured in amusement. “As an Oscuro Endriagos, or Shadow Dragon as he is known in English, Adrian is more in tune with the veil between life and death. I’m assuming that as the veil grows thinner and thinner as midnight approaches, he’s more sensitive to it. It's natural as the darkness calls to him, giving him more energy than his body can handle quietly. It will not harm him.”

“So there’s nothing we can do to help him calm down enough to go to classes?” Draco asked with a sigh. He was beginning to dread Halloween because Adrian couldn’t calm down enough to pay attention in classes. It wasn’t so bad when this day fell on a weekend, but during the week…? He couldn’t imagine how Severus dealt with his friend at home. “No Calming Draughts?”

“Unfortunately, no. It must run its course.”

“Yippee,” Draco said sarcastically.

Sure enough, Adrian had a hard time focusing in his classes as the day wore on. Draco and the others kept careful notes for their friend to have once Halloween ended and Adrian was back to normal. The one class they had the most problem with at the end of the day was Potions.

“Adrian,” Severus snapped softly after the third time the boy interrupted his lecture. He was currently standing beside his son’s desk, a calming hand on his shoulder. It seemed to ground him for a few seconds, but just.

“I’m sorry, Father,” Adrian whispered apologetically, trying to still himself. It wasn’t working.

Sighing in resignation, Severus looked at Draco. “Take him back to the Common room. Meditation exercises, Draco. It helps him calm down slightly.”

“Yes, sir.” Draco packed their things because it was obvious Severus couldn’t release Adrian or he would begin disrupting the class again. “Come on,” he whispered, pushing Adrian out the door. They almost made it to their Common room before Adrian started again, bouncing ahead of Draco.

He managed to get him into their dorm room and sitting on Draco’s bed. He even managed to get
him to begin meditating… It lasted all of fifteen minutes.

He managed to get Adrian to change his clothes not long after they got to the dorms and now, instead of school robes, Adrian was dressed in his everyday clothes: semi-formal black pants and a pale green button down shirt. It was one of Draco’s favourites, though he never admitted it to anyone but Adrian.

As the afternoon wore on, Draco was getting more and more irritated with his normally sedate friend. He didn’t remember Adrian being so bad last year…

Even the appearance of an Ogre after supper wasn’t enough to dampen Adrian’s mood. Draco and the others formed a barrier around the hyper boy so that he had no choice but follow where he was led.

At ten thirty, he’d managed to coax Adrian into changing into his pyjamas. Sometimes it was a chore being Adrian’s friend… but no matter how much he griped about it, Draco wouldn’t trade it for anything.

As midnight drew nearer, however, Adrian seemed to be coming down from his ‘sugar’ rush… which shouldn’t have been happening yet. “Get Professor Snape,” he told Crabbe, turning to look at the tired student. Crabbe blinked in surprise and confusion even as Draco sighed impatiently. “I think we’re going to need him soon.”

Without questioning Draco any further, Crabbe left quickly.

“I thought you said this was normal for him,” Blaise said with an arched eyebrow, pointing at where their year mate stood facing the window, still for once since the day had begun. Though, by the peculiar look coming over their friend’s face, it wasn’t a good thing.

“He shouldn’t be coming down for another hour. Twelve thirty is the earliest he’s ever calmed down enough to sleep.”

They’d managed to contain Adrian to their room after supper… it hadn’t been easy, but they’d done it.

“Draco?” Severus asked as he entered the room… and stopped in surprise when he saw Adrian simply standing there. “What happened?”

“Nothing yet, sir. He’s been standing like that for at least ten minutes. It’s too soon,” Draco said worriedly.

Severus made a sound of agreement and carefully walked over to his son. “Adrian?”

**

Adrian heard his father but as if from a distance. As he watched the floor-length window beside his bed, he couldn’t seem to get enough air in his lungs. The window seemed to ripple and weave even as he watched it and was fascinated that it didn’t let the water through. He knew it shouldn’t be doing that at all…

“Father?” he finally managed to whisper out as he blinked sluggishly when the man suddenly appeared beside him. “It’s not right.”

“What’s not right?” Severus asked gently, kneeling beside him.
Adrian shook his head in confusion, unable to come up with the words to explain. His eyes were drawn back to the window, a hand coming up to rub at his suddenly throbbing forehead. His other hand came to rest on Severus’ shoulder, needing the stability of something solid. “It’s not right,” he whispered again before his knees gave out.

His world seemed to whirl into darkness for a few seconds. He didn’t even realize he was screaming or of anyone else as he was whisked away from his room.

*He suddenly became aware again, but he wasn’t where he’d been standing in front of the window. He was in a strange place, trees all around him, watching a man talking to himself…*

“But, my Lord, are you sure?”

“Do you dare question me, Quirrell?” another voice demanded with an angry hiss.

“No, my Lord,” the man quaked, head bowed. “It’s just that… they’re going to realize what’s going on if you keep killing them. You’re too weak right now to fight them off.”

“If we can’t get at it, it won’t matter, now will it!” the other voice snapped angrily before it turned to a cackle as the other man groaned painfully. “Or would you rather give me your body, my loyal follower? I’m sure that would suit my purposes just as well.”

“F-forgive me, my lord,” the man before him stuttered, gasping, and dropped to his knees on the hard ground, groaning again in pain.

“Then do as I said. You’ve already failed me once tonight with your little stunt, Quirrell,” the voice growled viciously. “I don’t suggest you do it again. I need you at the moment; your continued usefulness will be determined by how well you serve me. Now find me another one of those beasts!”

“Yes, my master.”

*He watched the stranger walk away and wanted to follow. But already the man was getting further ahead of him…*

“Who are you?” he heard right beside his ear, the voice menacing and dark. Adrian jumped in fear, looking around for the origin of the voice, but no one was there. He felt invisible hands shove him back, felt a root hook behind his left foot and he screamed as he was suddenly falling backwards…

He gasped as he became aware of his room again, of his father holding him, making calming noises. “Father?” he whimpered, his head feeling like it was going to split in two, his stomach rolling unpleasantly.

“Adrian,” Severus said in relief, but quickly released his son when he realized Adrian was going to be sick. Adrian ignored the other students as he ran for the loo, making it just in time before he threw up his supper.

He felt a soothing hand rub his back, waiting patiently for him to finish before a cold cloth was pressed against his forehead, washing the sweat and any evidence that he’d been sick off his face. He collapsed back against the strong arms of his father, eyes closed as he tried to will the pounding in his head away. A cool glass was pressed to his lips and he allowed the cold water to fill his mouth, swallowing a couple of mouthfuls before he turned his head away.

He felt himself be picked up and carried… somewhere – his bed, he assumed.
He didn’t open his eyes to see what the rest of his friends were doing or anything. He couldn’t think past the pounding in his head. He whimpered slightly when his father laid him gently down on his bed, the move jarring his head. “Draco, stay with him. I’ll be back shortly.”

“Yes, sir.” He felt Draco climb into his bed and lie down against his back, arms wrapping tenderly around Adrian, pulling him against his chest.

He heard the curtains drawn, hiding him from the rest of the room. “The rest of you, to bed. Now!” Severus ordered sternly.

Adrian didn’t hear anything beyond the rustling of blankets as the students obeyed their Head of House. There were no words exchanged beyond the tired groans as they pulled their blankets up. It wasn’t long before the sounds of snoring drifted towards them… unfortunately, it aggravated Adrian’s pounding head.

He felt Draco move against him but couldn’t make sense of what his friend was doing until he heard a quiet Silencing spell cast around them. Adrian sighed in relief as silence descended around him. It helped calm the ache he was feeling.

“What happened, Adrian?” he heard Draco ask gently, running his fingers in Adrian’s hair.

Adrian tried to smile, finding it funny that while Draco acted all cool and collected, even distant, when the others were around or could hear him, and when they were just the two of them, he was all tender and open.

“I don’t know,” Adrian whispered, not wanting to aggravate his headache. “One minute I was fine and the next… I can’t explain it. Everything just felt… wrong. Now my head hurts.” He shuddered slightly, taking comfort from his friend.

“It almost sounded like you were having a nightmare, but you were still awake.”

“It’s what it felt like.”

The curtains were suddenly drawn open, effectively breaking the Silencing spell, and Adrian blinked blearily up at his Father. He was tired now, more than he should be. He watched as his father sat beside him. “What happened, Adrian?” Severus asked softly after casting another Silencing spell so they wouldn’t disturb the other students.

Adrian felt sorry for them now, since they’d been kept up longer than they were used to.

“I don’t know, Father, but whatever it was, it hurts,” Adrian murmured, a hand coming up to rub at his forehead.

“Open,” his father ordered and Adrian obediently swallowed the potion his father tipped into his mouth. It took only a few seconds before the pounding in his head finally began dulling. His father tipped another potion into his mouth and he swallowed without complaint. This one he recognized as a Calming potion. “What happened after you fell?”

So he told his father what he’d seen. He’d seen the surprise on his father’s face when he’d mentioned Quirrell’s name. “Do you know who that is, Father?” he asked when he was done.

“Yes, I think so. The Professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts is named Quirrell. I don’t know if it’s the same person, though. Try to sleep, now,” Severus murmured, carding his fingers through Adrian’s hair. Adrian smiled in pleasure at the feel of his father’s steady fingers, eyes closing of their own volition. It was almost as good as when Draco did the same thing.
“Draco, it’s up to you if you want to stay with him or sleep in your own bed. I don’t think the others would begrudge you making sure your friend is alright.” Adrian wanted to open his eyes to see Draco’s reaction, but now that they were closed, they didn’t seem to want to open again.

“Thank you, Uncle Sev.”

“Good night, Adrian,” he heard his father say, running his fingers through his hair one more time. Adrian smiled tiredly, sighing happily. It was all he could do because he couldn’t even answer his father. Slumber finally had a hold of him and it wouldn’t let him go now. He felt his father’s weight leave his bed, heard the curtains close and then nothing more.
Adrian finally pried his eyes open the next morning… but not because he wanted to. Draco simply wouldn’t allow him to miss classes on a Friday.

“Come on, Adrian,” Draco said insistently as the blonde boy dragged him from his comfortable and warm bed. “If you don’t get up now, you’ll be late for class.”

Adrian groaned tiredly but allowed his friend to drag him into the shower… and then yelped as the cold water hit his skin. He hadn’t even noticed when Draco dragged his clothes off, nor heard the snickering of his fellow dorm mates. “What are you trying to do!? Make me sick?” he demanded, naked body pressed against the wall opposite the shower. The wall was cold, yes, but not as cold as the spraying water.

“I’m trying to wake you up,” Draco smirked in satisfaction. “Now that you are, I’ll leave you to wash up so we can go for breakfast.”

Adrian glared after the blonde, thinking dark thoughts, which included all the other traitors sniggering in the other room. When he finally emerged from the washroom, clean and dressed… and, unfortunately, awake, the others were still waiting for him.

“How are you today?” Blaise asked, eyeing him carefully.

“Calmer than yesterday, but tired,” Adrian said with a shrug. He knew his behaviour the previous day was out of character for him but he’d learned long ago to not be bothered by it. “I may love Halloween, but the drawback sucks.”

“At least you had fun,” Crabbe said with a grin before he frowned. “Until you crashed. Was that what Draco meant when he said you would? Crash, I mean.”

Adrian sighed and followed his fellow Slytherins as they got to the common room, heading for the Great Hall. “No. Last night was a first and hopefully a last. Usually when I crash, I just get extremely tired and curl up on the closest object that’s comfortable enough to sleep on.”

“So then what happened last night?” Goyle asked curiously, nodding to Nott as he joined them at the portrait hole.

“Heck if I know. Shall we go to breakfast?” Adrian asked to distract everyone from the subject.

“We need to work on our Potions, Charms and Transfiguration assignments tonight,” Draco murmured as they neared the stairs. “And I’m sure your father will want to talk to you at some point today.”

“Yippee,” he grumbled darkly. Yup, everything was back to normal…

Even when they entered the Great Hall showed that everything was indeed back to normal. The usual Gryffindor group was glaring at them. It seemed Ron had found his new cash cow as he whispered with Potter, Finnegan and surprisingly enough, Wood. Usually the older years didn’t mix with the younger years.
“Hey, Neville,” Adrian murmured as he passed the shy boy in their year. No one had been more surprised than Neville Longbottom when he was sorted into Slytherin. Adrian had heard his grandmother had shown up at the school to demand he be resorted, that no grandson of hers could be a Slytherin. Unfortunately, the hat had still put him in Slytherin.

He felt for the boy, he really did. It couldn’t be easy being placed into a house that your family despised. Motioning for Neville to join them, he saw the surprise and wariness in the other boy’s eyes, but he got up and followed them anyway.

Adrian had come to the decision that Neville needed friends and he was going to make sure he had some. The other Slytherins also looked to Draco for direction before allowing the change to take effect. The others simply accepted his decision when Draco only sneered at Adrian’s choice but said nothing. Adrian knew that Draco was fast becoming the leader for their year… as well as some of the older years. That was fine by him because he had no interest in being their leader and Draco mostly let Adrian do whatever he wanted… within reason.

“Really?” Draco asked softly as the group began piling food onto their plates. The placement of the group had changed, however. Before their seating arrangement had been Crabbe, Adrian, Draco, and Goyle on one side with Nott, Blaise and Pansy on the other side. Now the other side had Neville sitting beside Pansy. The twins didn’t sit with them because they were older than them and the older years sat lower down at the table than the first years. “Longbottom?”

Adrian shrugged slightly. “Call it a feeling. Neville will be a good ally.”

Draco rolled his eyes but didn’t say any more. He knew Adrian well enough to know he’d get his answers when they were alone. He also knew that once Adrian took someone ‘under his wing’ – figuratively speaking – that nothing would change his stand. It had better be a damn good explanation.

Once the last meal of the day was done, they quietly made their way to the common room to complete assignments, the twins joining them with their good-humoured manners. It became obvious early in their study session that Neville was struggling so, with Draco looking at him pensively, Adrian began coaching the other boy on what he didn’t understand.

It became apparent to his friends that Adrian actually liked teaching Neville by the passion with which he spoke as he explained what Neville was confused about. By the time bedtime arrived, Neville was much more confident in his assignments.

As they got ready for bed, Draco leaned over to Adrian so no one else would hear. “I understand now.”

Adrian smiled, pleased that Draco would support him in accepting Neville to their group. The boy obviously only heard disparaging remarks from everyone else. It was also obvious that he’d blossomed at the attention Adrian had given him, encouraging him instead of bringing him down. With a slight nod, they climbed into bed, Adrian yawning widely, feeling his body collapse bonelessly under his blanket.

Neville had been accepted into their circle.

The start of year had found the first years of every House in the Great Hall for a weekly group ‘study session’. Adrian had seen these before. Dumbledore figured this was the best way to see which student needed more instruction than everyone else. Each year had to do this, but on different days.
By the time December rolled around, he and Draco, along with their friends, were well used to these sessions. It wasn’t so bad… unless you already had your assignments done. As it was, they were whispering softly between each other as they reread their assignments. Everyone in their group was bored, especially since they did their assignments when they were given. Doing so meant they didn’t have to worry about being late and rushing to complete them.

Today, Severus was one of three teachers walking around in case there were questions. Professor Venger was another teacher walking around and so was Professor McGonagall. The Professors took turns at doing the rounds.

The old woman had already tried to give them trouble for talking but when each one had shown her their completed assignments. She’d huffed in irritation but walked away.

“Are you all going home for Christmas?” Adrian asked, eyes shining with excitement.

“My father managed to reserve a place in Spain for the Holidays,” Pansy said with a smirk. “I won’t have a white Christmas, but I can live with that as long as it’s warm.” They chuckled softly at her answer, knowing she didn’t like the cold.

Crabbe and Goyle shrugged indifferently. “We have a lot of family coming over every year so it makes it hard to go away, but yeah, we’re going home for the Holidays.”

“Yeah, though we’ll probably be spending time at his or my houses. Our fathers are so close they should’ve been brothers,” Goyle finished.

“Most of my relatives live in Italy so that’s where I’ll be this Christmas,” Blaise said with a crooked grin, shrugging in resignation. “What about you, Adrian? I know Professor Severus will be at the school until a day or two before Christmas. Are you staying here with him?”

“Nah, every year Father stays at school during the day and joins me at Malfoy Manor every night,” Adrian said with a small smile. “I don’t mind.” Anymore, he added silently. At first it had bothered him, but then he’d been insecure back in those days. He knew, now, that his father would come for him and he enjoyed spending time with Lucius and Narcissa. They were his family and they loved him. “Besides, we might have extra company with Professor Venger, though I’m not quite sure. He might have family for all I know. What about you, Neville?”

Neville looked at them in surprise, looking at everyone nervously. “Um, I-I don’t know what’ll happen this year, but we usually have Gran’s friends come around. It’s boring actually. None of them have children for me to play with.”

“Write to me if you get too bored,” Adrian said with a gentle smile. “Maybe your Gran will let you come over for a visit.”

Neville smiled nervously but didn’t agree or disagree. That bothered Adrian, but he let it go, not wanting to put the boy into a position of feeling anymore uncomfortable than he already was.

“You know,” they heard the annoying voice of Hermione Granger come from the table across from them. “This is a study session, not a chatting session.”

“Mind your own business, Granger,” Pansy sneered, glaring at the Muggleborn witch. “No one wants to hear your know-it-all voice.”

“You’re distracting those who want to study,” she snapped just as Professor Venger was walking by. The girl turned beet red in embarrassment as the Professor stopped to look at her with his cool gaze.
“I must say, Miss Granger, that it is you who is a distraction to your fellow students by speaking. Seeing as I am walking here and I could barely hear them, but I can hear you clearly. Fifteen points from Ravenclaw for disrupting your fellow students.”

“Sorry, Professor,” Granger mumbled, looking down at her books.

“Seeing as your group is done with their assignments, you are dismissed,” Madreca murmured to Adrian and his friends. The group of Slytherins were smirking at her blunder though they didn’t say anything until Madreca had passed them by, packing their books, papers and quills before quietly leaving the Great Hall.

Talking softly with Draco, Adrian noticed the dirty looks Potter and his little gang shot their way. He smirked knowingly because it was apparent they were struggling with their assignments. Draco looked in the direction Adrian was looking and smirked at them too.

This was the reward for doing their assignments early and it was obvious the Gryffindor group, Potter and Weasley especially, didn’t like the ‘special’ treatment.

* * *

Before school had started – right after the beach incident, in fact – Adrian had decided to let his hair grow. Now, three days before Christmas, it was long enough to drive him nuts. “Uncle Lucius, how can you stand having long hair?” he asked finally in exasperation. “It simply seems to get in the way and never stays tied back.”

Lucius smiled at Adrian and pulled him in front of him to face the mirror in the hallway, placing his ever-present cane on the table in front of him. “There’s a trick to keeping hair from flying around until it’s all the same length, child,” Lucius murmured softly as he combed his fingers through Adrian’s thick locks, pulling it back to Adrian’s nape in a way that tucked the shorter strands under the longer ones. Once all the hair was away from his face, Lucius tied it in place, making sure every strand was back. “See?”

Adrian turned his head from side to side, critically examining his reflection for any stray stands. He smiled in satisfaction when nothing appeared out of position. “Thank you,” Adrian said, turning to give Lucius a hug.

“You’re welcome. Now go play,” Lucius said in amusement, pushing him towards where Draco waited impatiently for Adrian.

“You’re good with him, Lucius,” Narcissa murmured, wrapping an arm around the tall blonde’s waist when Adrian was out of earshot. “I’m glad.”

“It’s not hard to love him, my dear,” Lucius murmured, his own arm coming around her slender shoulders, kissing her cheek, making Narcissa smile in pleasure. “He tries hard to be good and he’s decent with Draco.”

“What would you say if we tried for another child?” she asked hopefully. Lucius didn’t wince as she said it – but just. After Draco, he’d had to deal with Narcissa after two miscarriages. The last one had just about shattered his lovely wife. Afterwards, he’d had Severus make him a potion that he took religiously so he wouldn’t accidentally impregnate her. He didn’t think he would survive if he lost her… which had come close to happening with the last miscarriage.

“Cissa, I know you’d like to give our little dragon more siblings, but I don’t want to do it at the risk of your health or sanity,” he murmured finally when he realized she was waiting for a response. He
turned to look at her, his fingers gently coming up to caress her smooth cheek. “It would kill me if I lost you.”

She smiled tremulously, leaning into the caress. “Just one more try?”

He sighed, knowing he was going to give into her pleas… and looking into her beautiful blue eyes, he caved. “Alright,” he said finally, loving the way her eyes lit up with pleasure. “But,” he added sternly. “I want a Healer to check you regularly and if you lose this child, that’s it. I won’t put you through it again no matter how much you beg. Understand?”

“Yes, Lucius,” she whispered, leaning up to kiss his lips.

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Christmas finally arrived and they were waiting to open presents in the main sitting room. Adrian sat on the floor beside Severus’ feet, grinning as Draco hovered impatiently by the tree, waiting for Lucius to say he could start handing out the presents.

He liked this holiday because they didn’t have school and because he could make fun of Draco without embarrassing his friend in front of ‘strangers’… and his father was there. At the moment, Severus was carding his fingers through Adrian’s hair and if everyone wouldn’t have looked at him strangely – and he could’ve pulled it off properly – he would’ve purred in contentment.

Instead, he sighed, closing his eyes so he could concentrate on the feel of the strong fingers going through the strands. He’d left his hair loose this morning, not wanting to take the time to tie it back. Beside Severus sat Madreca, who’d opted to spend the day with them, bringing his mate, a lovely little Spanish lady named Gladys, with him.

Adrian frowned suddenly as he realized that his father had no one but him for the holidays. He wondered if Severus felt uncomfortable around the two couples…

He felt a gentle tug on his hair and looked back to see his father looking at him with an eyebrow raised in silent question. Sighing, he rose to his feet and stretched out beside Severus so his head rested on his father’s shoulder, seeking for – and getting – a hug as he lay against his father’s side. “Are you happy being alone?” he asked finally, hearing Draco ask Lucius for the fifth time if he could ‘begin now?’

Both eyebrows rose at the question. “But I’m not alone, Adrian,” Severus murmured gently as he tightened his hold on the boy. “I have you.”

Adrian rolled his eyes, but there was a pleased smile playing on his lips, even as he played with a button on his father’s robes. “That’s not what I meant, Father,” he said in exasperation. “I mean, everyone else has a partner but you. Don’t you miss having someone to help you out and be there just for you?”

Severus sighed, thinking about how to answer Adrian’s question. “Truth told,” he murmured with a smile. “No. Before you came into my life, I had no one. I’m happy enough having you to love. I don’t need more at the moment.”

“Allright, Adrian,” Draco drawled, bringing Adrian’s attention to where the blonde boy stood with hands on his hips, looking much put upon. “If you’re done pawing Uncle Sev, it’s time to open presents.”

Both Snipes rolled their eyes at the blonde, but with a kiss to his forehead from his father, Adrian pulled away to sit on the floor again. It was time for the fun to begin.
Adrian sighed, lost in thought as he exited the Slytherin common room. The twins had kept him there longer than he’d expected and now he was far behind the others who were probably halfway to the Great Hall by now. He’d also thought the twins were going there too, so he wouldn’t be walking alone, however that hadn’t been the case.

He didn’t like roaming the halls by himself. Other students liked to pick on Slytherins above all other students. For example, three second years had been jumped in the last three weeks. One a week. And nothing was being done to protect them from these attacks. It seemed Dumbledore was turning a blind eye to these attacks…

He was jerked out of his thoughts when a hand landed on his shoulder, grabbing a handful of his robes. Startled, he looked up… into fake green eyes. He stopped himself from rolling his eyes… barely.

“What do you want, Potter?” he sneered, noticing Weasley, Finnegan, and Wood standing on each side of Potter.

“What do you think, boys?” Potter drawled, a malicious glint in his eyes. “Should he be our next target?”

“Do it,” Weasley growled from Potter’s left, smirking in satisfaction.

Adrian realized that these people had to be the ones targeting Slytherins and it seemed he was their next target. Before they could surround him, however, he twisted out of his robes, leaving Potter holding them. Adrian didn’t mind because with them on, he was limited in movement. Madreca’s lessons were floating in his head.

"Lesson one: make sure you’re not cluttered by unnecessary clothes. If what you’re wearing isn’t billowing around you, they can’t grab it as easily to stop you fighting back."

With his robes gone, that was one problem solved.

"Lesson two: always keep your opponent in sight. If you can see them coming, they can’t get you from behind."

With four against one, Adrian knew the wall was his only ally. With the wall at his back, none of them could grab him from behind, so he manoeuvred himself until the wall was indeed behind him.

"Lesson three: know your surroundings. If you’re aware of what’s around you and where you are, you can figure out if and where you want to go or if you really want stay and fight."

The Great Hall or the Slytherin Common room were his only choices but with the way they’d surrounded him, he had neither.

Weasley was the first one to move… big mistake. If Wood had moved first, he might have been able to overpower Adrian – being on the Quidditch team and all – but because Weasley was stockier it made him slower than Adrian, who was light framed.

"Lesson four: know your strengths as well as your opponents. If they’re bulkier than you, that makes them slower, not by much but maybe enough for you to use to your advantage."

He easily evaded Weasley’s punch, using the momentum to shove him at Wood. The move gave him an out. Adrian rushed through the hole, only wanting to get away. To the Great Hall, he thought as
he realized that was now the direction he was heading. He’d hoped for the common room, seeing as it was closest, but…

"Lesson five: if you’re outnumbered and don’t think you can win, get out of there as soon as you can. There’s no point in staying where you can be hurt. You may know how to fight, but the old adage of ‘there’s strength in numbers’ is said for a reason. Your safety is more important than proving you can wipe the floor with their asses."

He rounded the corner, hearing them running after him and hid. If he could stop at least one, he might have a chance to get away. Wood was the threat in this group. He was older and stronger.

Taking a deep breath, he grabbed the wrist of the first person who rounded the corner, using their momentum to ram them into the wall beside him. As soon as there was an impact, Adrian let go of the wrist, not even looking to see who it had been as he took off again.

He smiled in satisfaction, however, when a howl of pain followed the impact. Good, one down, three more to go. He was almost to the Great Hall, just two more turns and a flight of stairs…

At the bottom of the stairs, he was tackled by Finnegan.

He was trying to push the boy off his legs by the time the others caught up with them. Wood and Potter grabbed hold of his arms despite his fighting them. “In here,” Weasley panted, pushing the closest door open. With Finnegan struggling to hold his legs, they carried him inside the closet, ignoring his screams to be let go.

At this point, Adrian’s mind went blank with panic. They had him cornered.

“Me, first,” Wood growled and Adrian realized that Wood’s nose was bleeding. “This is payback.” His legs were released so Finnegan could take over from Wood holding his arm. The first blow was to his face, snapping his head back, busting his lip, before he was struck in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him. As he was dragging a breath in, coughing slightly, another blow struck his ribs.

He’d been right. Wood was the strongest out of the group and it seemed he liked striking his opponent in the ribs, stomach and chest, though he received a few punches to the face, too.

It wasn’t long before Weasley joined into the beating. Each boy struck a side, sometimes both at the same time…

If he’d been able to get enough breath, Adrian would’ve been screaming in pain, instead he gasped in pain when one of the repeated blows to one side managed to break something. Adrian’s eyes went wide as pain flared through his chest. He barely felt the blow that broke his collar bone through the need to breathe.

With a satisfied smirk, Wood punched his ribs twice more before giving him an uppercut to the jaw. Adrian’s head flew back and the only thing holding him up were Potter and Finnegan’s hold on his arms.

They dropped him then, laughing as Adrian groaned in pain, curling around his ribs, his good arm trying to protect them from further damage. He tried to move his other arm, but when he felt bone moving against bone, which made the pain flare, he stopped.

He felt someone grab hold of his hair and slam his head onto the unforgiving rock a couple of times, making his world explode with stars. Something – a potion – was dumped down his throat, choking him. He felt someone lean down, whispering something in his ear and realized it was Potter.
A present from the Headmaster.

He thought he would pass out then, but someone cast an Enervate on him. “Can’t have you pass out so soon, Snape. The fun’s only beginning.” They laughed as he moaned, trying to move away from them. “Remember, no spells. That way they can’t tell who did it even if he talks.” Then they all joined into the beating. He’d thought he was in pain before… he’d been so wrong.

Something inside him stirred, could feel the creature inside him prowling in anger, howling in fury, trying to find a way out, but there was no way. The creature was clawing at the walls caging it in. It wanted to hurt these upstarts for hurting him, but the barrier held. It just couldn’t get out…

Adrian knew someone broke his wrist, stomping on, it laughing as they heard something crack, then stomping on it a few more times just to be sure something had broken. He screamed at the pain. It was when he tried to turn to crawl away again that the pain became unbearable as someone – two someones if the feet were anything to go by – stomped him in the back, hearing a sickening pop as his hip was slammed out of position.

Another Enervate was cast on him at that point as his world began to dim again, the pain making him sluggish. Though he couldn’t do anything to protect himself from them, it didn’t stop them from injuring him as much as possible. He knew he was bleeding, was aware of blood dripping from multiple cuts on his face. Before anyone could stop him, Adrian screamed as a Cutting curse was cast at him, his back arching in pain – a spell cast by Ronald Weasley.

“No, Ron!” Potter snapped out, grabbing hold of Ron’s wrist. “No spells except for Enervate!”

At that point, they got tired of beating their victim and left, laughing and congratulating each other at their victory. Adrian laid there, breath rasping in his chest, barely conscious of his surroundings and bleeding as the light was blocked by the closed door.

* * *

“Adrian?” he finally heard through the fog surrounding him. He’d lost track of time as he lay there. He’d tried to move but when pain had shot through him, he’d stilled instantly. Had he made a sound to attract attention?

He felt arms push under him, turning him over onto his back and whimpered as it jarred his broken body. “I know, it hurts,” he heard a new voice say and it took him a few seconds to realize he knew who this was. It took a few more seconds for him to place it.

Fred.

He felt himself picked up and cried out when the gentle bump of his body touching Fred pushed against his broken ribs. “Let me take him from you.”

George.

The pressure shifted off his side, but it put it elsewhere, like his hip. He didn’t mind though because now he could breathe again without feeling like his chest was caving in. He felt his limp arm carefully placed on his stomach and winced as he felt bone grate against bone. Right, he thought hazily. Collar bone.

He felt something draped over him and realized it had to be his robes... had that been why they’d found him, then? Had they found his robes in the hallway and come looking for him?

“Get Professor Snape,” George said as he began walking quickly.
“Right.”

Adrian drifted in a painful haze, allowing himself to rest in George’s arms. He was safe. “Who did this, Adrian?” George asked him, bringing him out of the fog again.

Who? Oh, yeah… “Wood, Weasley, Potter and Finnegan,” he rasped out, gasping for breath as his chest bloomed with fire over just talking.

“Don’t talk anymore, Adrian,” he heard, his vision beginning to dim. He thought he heard fury in his friend’s tone, but he wasn’t sure. “Just rest.” Everything was fuzzy and graying around the edges. He was going to pass out… but he wanted… something? Someone? Oh, right. Draco. “Don’t worry about Draco,” George murmured gently and realized he must have said it out loud. “Draco’ll be along as soon as he hears what happened.”

“Okay.”

He didn’t remember anything else after that, feeling like he was floating in a bubble of pain.

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“Madam Pomfrey!” George shouted as he slammed into the infirmary, carrying Adrian over to the nearest bed.

“What’s the-” the Mediwitch began before taking a good look at the student on the bed, gasping in horror and shock. “What happened?”

“Fred and I found him in a closet down the stairs from the Great Hall. I don’t know how long he was there for, but whoever beat him up they’d obviously left him there a while before we found him.”

“Out,” she ordered, glaring at the teenager, who simply folded his arms together and glared back, refusing to leave. “Then stay out of the way.”

She began waving her wand, paling at what she found. “Oh, you poor dear,” she murmured softly, looking over at George, secretly grateful the boy hadn’t left. “Help me turn him over.” She was swearing under her breath as she saw the cuts on the boy’s back, obviously put there by a spell.

She didn’t dare get the teenager to sit the boy up, not with the amount of broken and dislocated bones the poor child had. She knew it was going to be hard on him, especially the hip – which was brutally displaced. He was going to limp every time the temperature changed. There was nothing she could do about that… not now.

Severus chose that moment to barge into the infirmary, Draco and his friends close behind him.

“If you’re all going to stay, then find a place out of the way,” she growled out, finding someone to take her anger out on.

“What the hell happened?” Severus demanded as he came to a halt beside his son’s bed.

With four attacks on his Slytherins, one being his own son, Pomfrey couldn’t blame him for being angry but right now, she had a job to do.

“They beat him up and left him in closet, sir,” George murmured, coming around the bed to stand beside his professor and his twin.

“Later,” Severus growled as he moved to join Pomfrey in healing the injured boy on the bed.
The more injuries they found, the angrier they became. What made Pomfrey’s blood boil, however was the fact that they’d simply left Adrian in a closet where no one would be able to find him for a long time. The poor child’s mind was in shock.

While she cast healing spells, Severus was gently forcing potions down his child’s throat. But it was almost two hours before they had Adrian stabilized enough to take a break. Some of the injuries weren’t life threatening, like the broken leg, wrist and nose, busted lip or the dislocated shoulder and broken collar bone. The dislocated hip, though it had torn muscles, was also not life threatening at the moment, but the broken ribs – one of which had pierced a lung – and the concussion was enough to worry her… not to mention the internal bleeding.

It was the shock Adrian had gone into before the twins had found him… that would be the deciding factor, if they could get him over the shock, he would recover. Typically, Dumbledore decided to show up once everything was done and Adrian was resting as comfortably as possible, his bones set and slowly healing. The boy would be sore for a few days when he was finally released.

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Severus saw red when he saw his child’s broken and bloody body on the bed. How dare someone attack his son!? They would pay once he got his hands on them. As it was, he’d carefully collected the memories from the first three victims when it had become obvious the Headmaster refused to do anything about the attacks. At the moment, the Slytherin children stood around Adrian’s bed, glaring at the Headmaster, denying him access to the boy. He’d never been prouder of his Slytherins than today.

Crabbe, Goyle and the Weasley twins stood behind Severus, baring the old man access to the bed, while Draco, Blaise, Pansy, Nott and Neville stood around the other side and the foot of the bed.

“Severus,” Dumbledore murmured, the concern on his face not reaching his eyes. “What happened?”

Severus gave a stiff jerk of his head to Fred and George, who came to his side instantly. “Who did this?” Severus asked, having calmed slightly while he worked on Adrian.

“Adrian said it was Harry Potter, Oliver Wood, Seamus Finnegan and Ronald Weasley,” George said, glaring angrily at the Headmaster, daring him to say he was lying.

Dumbledore frowned slightly, but it was his eyes that told them everything as they twinkled in amusement, and the three Slytherins knew this incident was also going to be swept under the carpet, just like the others. “Unfortunately, there is no proof, Severus,” Dumbledore murmured finally, managing to make his voice sound grave.

Severus stiffened in fury.

“Actually, Headmaster,” Pomfrey said as she came to stand beside Severus. “There is proof. We can check their wands to see who cast the Cutting Curse.”

Dumbledore’s eyes flashed angrily before they went back to normal. “I’ll check into it, Poppy. If it’s true that they did this, I’ll make sure whoever cast it pays.”

Severus stiffened in anger, knowing that if anything was going to be done, it would only be a slap on the wrist. “If you cannot control your goons, Headmaster, I will see to it that someone else does.”

“Is that a threat, Severus?” Dumbledore asked in mock-surprise. “You wouldn’t want to lose your position as Potions teacher, would you?”
Severus smiled darkly as he took a step closer to the Headmaster, causing the other to stiffen in
surprise. “You would really want to lose me as your only decent Potions teacher?” he drawled softly.
The look of unease in the Headmaster eyes made his smile widen. “I thought not.”

With that, he turned his back to the Headmaster, going to sit beside Adrian’s bed facing Draco, who
held his friend’s hand, still glaring at the Headmaster. The others from their group moved to sit on the
bed behind their leader, refusing to leave him alone.

Everyone ignored when the old man left the Hospital wing, turning their attention to the boy on the
bed. “Professor?” George asked softly standing beside their Head of House. “What do you want us
to do?”

“Nothing. I have things to set in motion that will insure this will end. I simply need to speak to
Adrian. Go back to the dorm and make sure everyone is accounted for. No one travels anywhere
alone until this is resolved.”

“Yes, sir,” the twins said in unison before they left.

“Uncle Sev, what happened to him?” Draco asked finally, looking up at Severus, eyes begging for
an answer that made sense.

“They attacked him unprovoked,” Severus murmured gently. “The injuries will heal, Draco, it’s the
damage to his mind that worries me.”

“When can we take him back to the Dungeons?” Crabbe dared to ask.

“We need him awake before we can make that call,” Severus said as he reached out and caressed his
child’s cheek. Adrian was so pale laying there on the bed, his skin almost as white as the sheets…
but that would change.

Oh, yes, it would definitely change. Lucius Malfoy would not sit still while his godson was attacked
for no reason…

* * *

Two days later, Adrian was lying on the couch in the common room, his head pillowed on Draco’s
lap, eyes closed. The day after the attack had seen him ensconced in the Slytherin Dorms once more,
at Severus sinsistence, feeling that his son wouldn’t be safe in the Hospital wing.

It had taken some doing, but after chasing three Gryffindors out of the infirmary because they wanted
to know if it was true that Weasley was in detention for casting a spell at a ‘no good Slytherin’, she
had finally agreed.

It had helped Adrian because this was where he felt safe… because only the Slytherins could get in.
His father’s and Professor Venger’s quarters were other places where he felt safe but someone was
always with him now. They didn’t leave him to walk alone. He was grateful, actually.

“Adrian?” George asked, gently laying a hand on Adrian’s shoulder to get his attention. With a tired
sigh, he turned to look at the Weasley twin. “Professor Snape wants to talk to you.”

Sitting up, he smiled when he heard Draco’s book close and knew his friend was going with him.
Most of his injuries had healed, though he still had a bandage around his wrist and his arm was in a
sling. Ironically enough, it was his hip that bothered him the most and his ribs were still sore. The
headaches had stopped this morning so at least that was something.
With his new escort of Crabbe and Goyle, Adrian and Draco made their way to Severus’ quarters without incident, thought they caught sight of Potter and his gang rounding the corner ahead of them. They hadn’t had any new targets thanks to the new arrangements in Slytherin House.

At the moment, Adrian was glad because he had enough to deal with than that boy and his friends. He rubbed at his hip as he limped beside Draco. When they got to Severus’ rooms, Adrian knocked politely, waiting for his father to open the door.

Just because Severus Snape was his father didn't mean he would barge into his father's rooms now that he was a first year... They waited patiently for Severus to open the door, ushering Adrian and Draco in.

Inside, he was surprised to see Lucius Malfoy standing by the fireplace. Draco moved quickly to stand beside him, a smile on his face. “An hour,” he heard Severus murmur to Crabbe and Goyle, making Adrian turn in time to see the two boys nod, before his father closed the door. So, they would return to collect them in an hour.

Good. This meant they wouldn’t be walking back to the common room by themselves.

“Adrian,” Lucius murmured and Adrian blinked, startled when he realized the tall blonde was standing in front of him. Instinctively, he took a step back, wincing as it jarred his hip. “How are you?” he asked, bending so he wasn’t looming over Adrian anymore. He smiled, though it was shaky and he could feel tears welling up in his eyes. When Lucius pulled him into his arms, Adrian lost it.

Lucius Malfoy was the one person Adrian knew who didn’t show any emotions to anyone unless he had no choice. Initiating contact was even rarer than with Severus. For him to actually hold Adrian meant he was very upset with what had happened.

“Don’t worry,” Lucius whispered in his hair as Adrian buried his face in his godfather’s shoulder, allowing the tears to fall. “I’ll make this better.” He felt Lucius’ hand come up to caress his head while the other one pressed against his back, careful of his sore ribs, giving him comfort until he had cried himself out. When he was calm again, Lucius pulled him away with an encouraging smile. “Better?”

Not trusting his voice, Adrian simply nodded, wiping his face on the handkerchief that was presented to him. “Thank you, Uncle Lucius,” he whispered softly.

“Come sit with me.”

Adrian followed Lucius to the couch, wondering what else was going on. “Adrian,” his father said from beside the fireplace. “What I want to do is get your memory of the attack, from right before the attack to after they left you in that closet. With this, Lucius will take it to whomever he deems appropriate so we can get this to end.”

“The Headmaster isn’t going to do anything, is he?” Adrian asked as he leaned into Lucius – one because he needed the contact from someone he trusted and two because his hip was hurting from the pressure of sitting on it – smiling slightly when he felt his uncle’s arm come around him, holding him closer.

“No,” Severus sneered angrily. “According to him there is insufficient evidence to expel the students, though Weasley managed to earn a minor detention for having cast the Cutting Curse.”

“In other words,” Draco drawled, anger flitting in his eyes, turning his grey eyes to flint. “It becomes
their word against Adrian’s with that man.”

“Exactly,” Lucius murmured. “One attack would be understandable, but four in three weeks is intentional. Something must be done to stop this.”

“Are you ready for this?” Severus asked Adrian, moving closer to him. Taking a deep fortifying breath, Adrian nodded. Thinking of the assault from when he’d left the common room ‘til they’d left him in the closet, Adrian shuddered, pressing himself closer to Lucius’ side. He felt his father’s wand at his temple, pulling the memory from his head, putting it into a small vial and corking it carefully before handing it to Lucius.

Adrian watched as Lucius pocketed it, hearing it clink against more glass. His father had to have given him the other memories already and was simply awaiting his. At least they had other memories to show than only his.

They sat there, talking quietly until there was a knock on Severus’ door. Moving quickly, Lucius stood, looking at Severus questioningly. Had it really already been an hour? It hadn’t felt like it. Walking over to the door, Severus opened it, nodding to the two students waiting there.

“Time to go, Adrian. You need to rest for tomorrow.”

Draco helped Adrian up from the couch and they each gave Lucius one last hug before walking over to Severus. Adrian watched as his father gave a jar of healing cream to Draco with the instructions to message some on Adrian’s hip, ribs and shoulder. “Good night, Father,” Adrian murmured as he gave his father a hug.

“Sleep well. I’ll have some Pain Relieving potions for you tomorrow morning.”

“Alright,” Adrian smiled at his father before leaving with his friends, tired but content.

He was amused but grateful when Draco did massage the cream onto his shoulder and ribs. But when it came time to put some on his hip, however, that was the most painful. It took Crabbe and Goyle to pin him down before Draco could even begin massaging his hip because he couldn’t remain still. He barely manage to clamp down on the scream that wanted to escape, however, his tears soaking his pillow as pain shot through him, even though the touch had been light.

He was panting harshly by the time it was done, blessed numbness spreading through damaged tissue. The two burly boys hesitated slightly with releasing him, and did so slowly. “You alright, Adrian?” Goyle asked finally, watching him with a frown.

“I’ll be fine,” Adrian murmured after a few seconds, prying his fingers out of his blankets. “I’m just sore, is all.”

“Are you sure?” Crabbe asked quietly.

Opening his eyes to look at his dorm mates, he was surprised to see worry in their eyes. “Yeah. Thanks for helping.”

“Alright.” Goyle finally moved away from him, though neither boy lost their frown or their worry.

“If you’re sure.”

They weren’t surprised when Adrian woke them up in the middle of the night, whimpering for ‘them’ to stop. They let Draco deal with him, however, knowing how close they were. They didn’t even comment when Draco curled himself around his friend, holding him soothingly.
The next few days brought more nightmares, then insomnia. The others suspected, but it wasn’t until Draco woke up one night to find Adrian sitting on the floor by the window, watching the fish, squid and a few mermaids go by, that they had proof of the boy not sleeping. After four days of no sleep, which in turn meant his body wasn’t healing properly, Draco had had enough of his friend’s listless manner and no appetite. On the fifth day, he finally mentioned it to Professor Snape.

“Draco tells me you’re having nightmares again,” Severus murmured, sitting with Adrian in his quarters. Since the attack, Adrian seemed to have become clingy again.

A mark that he was afraid.

He wanted to go find the four students and torture them for doing this to his child, but knew that he couldn’t afford to retaliate as he wanted to. He needed to give Lucius time to work his magic.

At the moment, Adrian was laying on the couch with his head in Severus’ lap, eyes half closed. He’d noticed the dark circles beneath Adrian’s eyes, too. He hadn’t done this since he was six. He watched as Adrian’s eyes widened slightly at his words, curling tighter against Severus’ side… a sign of his distress.

“It might help if you talk about it,” he murmured, a hand on Adrian’s chest, rubbing soothingly.

At first, Severus didn’t think Adrian would say anything – and he knew from experience that pushing would only make his son clam up even more – and waited while his son debated. “At first it was about the attack,” Adrian began haltingly. That was expected but…

“And now?”

Adrian looked up at his father, eyes full of fear. “I forgot that they gave me something during the attack. Potter whispered something to the effect of ‘a gift from the Headmaster’.”

Severus pulled Adrian onto his lap, curling his arms protectively around his child. Adrian had always been so light but with his lack of appetite lately, he had lost weight he couldn’t afford to lose. “What happens in your nightmares, Adrian?”

“He attacks me, Father,” Adrian choked out, tears starting to run down his cheeks. “And not always with spells, either. He says he won’t stop until I become Harry Potter again. Most of the time, I can fend him off, but it’s getting hard and I’m so tired…"

The Headmaster had dared administer a potion to his son using someone else! He knew the potion, too. Somnium Incuro. Dream Attack potion. It was illegal to give to a child because their psyche hadn’t fully developed to the point where it could protect itself adequately.

Using his wand, he accio’d a Dreamless Sleep potion. Tipping Adrian’s head back, he showed it to the boy. “This’ll help you get some sleep right now.” He shook his head when he saw the panic in Adrian’s eyes, feeling the young body tense with dread. “No,” he said, trying to soothe his son’s fears of an attack. “The Headmaster won’t be able to get to you using this. I need for you to sleep so you can recover from your injuries. You’ll remain here until you wake up. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian said trustingly and he opened his mouth for Severus to pour it in, swallowing it instantly. He held his son until he was asleep before laying him down on the couch.

Going to his cupboard, he began rifling through it. He growled when a knock interrupted his hunt. He blinked in surprise when he saw Draco, Crabbe and Goyle standing at his door. He’d forgotten that they would be here for Adrian.
He ushered Draco in and told the other two to go back to their common room. He would send for them when they were needed. “Stay with him, Draco,” Severus ordered as he went back to his cupboard. He needed three ingredients to put into a potion, but the three combined would break whatever hold Dumbledore had on Adrian.

He found what he was looking for an hour later. Grumbling about the state of his cupboard, he proceeded to brew the potion he would need. By the time it was ready for Adrian to take, it was well past curfew, almost midnight, in fact. Draco had fallen asleep beside Adrian, stretched out beside his friend. He placed a few potions on the coffee table; he would need them shortly.

Severus knew he needed to get them to the common room soon so he woke Draco up first. He waited only long enough for the blonde boy to be alert before he handed him two potion vials, leaving the rest there. “Follow me,” he ordered as he picked Adrian up. He carried his child into the bathroom because as soon as he administered the counter to the Dream Attack potion, he was going to need to throw up.

Sitting on the toilet, he cradled Adrian before taking a mild version of the counter to the Dreamless Sleep potion. He needed to wait for Adrian to be awake and aware so that when he was sick, he wouldn’t choke, but he also needed his son to be able to sleep tonight. “Father?” Adrian mumbled, blinking sleepily up at him.

He helped Adrian to sit on the toilet before taking the potion from Draco. “This will purge the potion you were given but you’re going to be sick. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

He watched as Adrian drank down the potion, gaging as it went down, paying close attention to the boy’s reaction. He frowned when nothing happened but soon, Adrian was scrambling for the lid of the toilet, throwing up an oily brown liquid. Severus began to worry when blood came out mixed with the substance, but soon realized that it was because Adrian’s nose had started bleeding from the pressure of throwing up. He quickly grabbed Adrian when he started shaking uncontrollably, getting weaker as he kept throwing up.

It ended as quickly as it had begun.

From one minute to the next – though it felt like forever – Adrian was done, collapsing into Severus’ hold. He gently picked up his child, realizing then that Adrian had passed out, blood trickling from his nose. He took the handkerchief Draco was holding out with a grateful look, wiping Adrian’s face before taking his wand out and cleaning whatever mess hadn’t landed in the toilet. He even cleaned out Adrian’s mouth for him.

Once he was sure everything was taken care of, Severus carried him to the couch, not surprised when Draco followed behind him.

“He’s going to be exhausted and sore tomorrow. Make sure you carry some Pepper-Up and Pain Reliever potions with you,” Severus told the blonde boy, gesturing to the coffee table where the required vials had been placed during his search of the ingredients. “I’ll walk you back to the common room.”

“Yes, sir.”

Severus blinked in surprise when he found Crabbe and Goyle sitting on the couch in the common room, asleep. He got Draco to wake them and sent them off to bed. He wasn’t surprised when the two boys frowned at Adrian’s sleeping form in his arms, but they went without a word. Severus
carried Adrian all the way to his bed, tucking him under the blankets, careful not to wake Blaise, who was snoring softly in his bed. “I want you to come get me if anything happens, or for any reason.”

“Is it alright if I sleep with him?” Draco asked worriedly.

“It might be best if you did. If anything happens it’ll wake you up faster.” With that, Severus rose to his feet and left his godson and his son to sleep. Adrian was going to have a rough day tomorrow. It might even be worse than the day after Halloween, but he would be better the day after.

He had a letter to write to Lucius. This could be used against the Headmaster as well.

A month went by before anything was heard back from Lucius. At least it was good news.

Seeing as Oliver Wood had been the one to lead the assaults of at least three attacks, he had been expelled. When the older boy was questioned under Veritaserum as to why the attacks hadn’t been stopped, it was found out that the attacks had been endorsed by Dumbledore. In fact, they had been encouraged to attack the Slytherins with the hopes that they could get to Adrian.

As for Dumbledore, the Governors were allowing him to finish the year as Headmaster before formal charges were laid against him. This was to be his last year at Hogwarts.

Everyone assumed that McGonagall would be headmistress, but it seemed the Board of Governors were bringing in someone else instead: someone from outside the school itself.

No one knew who it was yet as everyone on the Board was being tight lipped about it, Lucius included.

The Slytherins breathed a sigh of relief as the attacks stopped… of course, they took no chances. They still traveled in groups of no less than three. Those who had started the year with no friends now had some.

Potter and Weasley were still seen sneaking around, but with no one to back them up or even join their little group like Finnegan and Wood had, they didn’t stick around to pick on students. It also helped that detentions had been assigned to the three remaining bullies.

Adrian had heard about the altercation in the Forbidden Forest. It seemed Potter had been attacked by what had been described as a ghost. It was possible, he figured, considering a lot of creatures called that particular forest home… but he doubted it.

He didn’t put much thought into it until the end of the school year when Potter, Weasley and Finnegan had been discovered on the third level – the level they’d been forbidden to go into at the start of the year, conveniently enough.

But the toll had been steep.

Whomever they had followed had been foiled in whatever it was he had been attempting to do… which no one could understand what it was. He had, however, killed Finnegan in his attempt to gain whatever he was looking for… or maybe it was in a fit of rage. Potter and Weasley weren’t talking.

Adrian wasn’t the only one to notice Dumbledore missing from the Head Table at the end of year
feast. He didn’t mind, really. Potter and Weasley were pissed and kept glaring at him and his friends from their table.

Adrian rolled his eyes and spent the evening determined to ignore the two boys.

The next day, on the train ride, everyone sat in the same compartment, including Fred and George who seemed to have appointed themselves their guards. Adrian would’ve laughed at the start of the year, but not now…

“Are you guys going to come over to visit this summer?” Draco asked pulling him from his thoughts, noticing his best friend’s eyes glinting in excitement.

“Can’t see why not,” Pansy said, flipping her hair over her shoulder with a look of indifference on her face. They knew, however that it was an act. She was as excited as everyone else to be going home.

Crabbe and Goyle looked at each other over Draco and Adrian’s heads and shrugged. “Yeah,” Crabbe answered for the both of them.

Neville looked a little down, and Adrian frowned in confusion. “What’s wrong, Neville?”

“My Gran refuses to let me get closer to any Slytherins… well,” he said with a confused frown. “Any more than I have this year, anyway. She’s hoping the new Headmaster will re-sort me and I’ll go somewhere else next year.”

“I doubt that’ll happen,” Draco said with a disdainful sniff. “You’ve already been given two tries and the Hat made the same decision both times.”

“I know, but you don’t know Gran,” Neville said quietly, looking depressed. “When she gets something into her head, there’s not much chance of changing it.”

“Don’t worry, Nev,” Adrian said, laying his hand comfortably on his friend’s hand. “Things will work out, you’ll see.”

“Well, as for visiting, we’ll definitely be coming over as often as we can,” George piped up cheerfully, trying to change the somber mood in the compartment.

“Yeah,” Fred added, winking at everyone. “We might actually have to get away from our younger brother.”

“Maybe you could practice some of your ideas on him,” Adrian said cheekily, shifting slightly in his seat. His hip was still bothering him and sitting for so long didn’t help. He was grateful when Draco reached over and began to massage the sore muscles. “What better way to perfect them?”

Everyone laughed in amusement.
Chapter 3 - Medlesome Old Man

A/N: WARNING!! Brief underage non-con. There will be one scene further in the story after this chapter, though not in detail. If parts like that offend or bother you, please forgive me, but the story seemed to want it added in.

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 3 – Meddlesome Old Man

Adrian smiled peacefully as the air whipped his hair around his face. This was the first time he’d been able to go flying – without a broom, anyway – since school began. His wings had come out easily and spreading them to fly had been a relief.

Madreca was sitting below in the garden, waiting for them to come back down. “Come on, Adrian,” Draco teased, flying beside him on his broom. “Let’s do some stunts!”

“You know what Madreca said,” Adrian shouted back, grinning at his best friend.

Draco made a disappointed face but sighed, leveling off his broom so he was beside Adrian. Adrian had been warned not to overstretch himself, seeing as this was the first time he was flying with his wings. This was only to help gain strength in his muscles, get himself used to using the wings.

Truth told, however, Adrian was beginning to feel the strain in his shoulder muscles. It was great and all, but he was going to have to go slowly. Maybe he could fly a little longer every day?

“Fine, let’s go back down,” Draco grumbled, aiming his broom for the ground. About two hundred feet from the ground, something seemed to happen to Draco’s broom and he was suddenly plunging down towards the ground.

Without thought or hesitation, Adrian plunged after him, grabbing his hand and pulling up… He screamed as his back muscles protested the extra weight when he spread his wings to stop the fall. He managed to pull Draco up against him but they still hit the ground hard.

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Brown eyes glinted with anger as he watched the dark haired boy catch the blonde, wings wrapping around both of them when it became apparent they would hit the ground. He’d finally managed to suck the magic out of the broom, as ordered… He didn’t know why his boss wanted the blonde boy injured. He didn’t care. He had a job to do.

He was going to have to find a different way to go about this task…

The old man was not going to be please.

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“Now you’re more like Harry Potter should be,” Dumbledore murmured, a pleased tone in his voice.

“Good. There’s no point in trying to be someone I’m not if I can’t back it up with evidence.” Harry smirked at himself in the mirror, turning his head this way and that, examining himself critically. “No more contacts for me, now.”
And now to begin the second part…

Adrian opened his eyes, groaning in pain as he tried to push himself up to a sitting position. He was quickly pushed back down. He frowned up at his father who knelt above him, clouds floating above him. He frowned, trying to remember what had happened. “Draco?” he asked groggily.

“He’s fine. You’re the one who received most of the impact. How do you feel?”

Adrian’s frown deepened as he took stock of his body. “My back hurts where the wings are. What happened?”

“I don’t know.” He watched as his father looked to one side and Adrian turned to look in the same direction. Draco was sitting on the ground a few feet away, white as a ghost and shaking. Madreca was talking to him. “Draco said it felt like the magic keeping the broom in the air seemed to vanish and he was falling out of the sky. If you hadn’t caught him, he could’ve been seriously injured.”

“Um, Father?” he asked in amusement, waiting for Severus to look at him before he allowed his eyebrows to rise slightly. “Can I get up now?”

“Are you sure you weren’t injured?” Severus asked, pulling his wand out, casting a quick diagnostic scan. He seemed satisfied with whatever information he got because he nodded for Adrian to sit up.

It wasn’t until he went to stretch out his wings, testing them out, however, that he realized some damage had been caused by the fall after all. He hissed in pain when the left wing only extended a few inches before pain would shoot down his back, hanging limply.

Severus moved quickly, touching lightly to see what was wrong. “Looks like you might have broken it. I think you’ll have to pull them in, allow the wing to mend.”

“Yes,” Madreca murmured as he and Draco moved closer. “But don’t worry,” he smiled at the look of disappointment that crossed Adrian’s face. “It should be mended within the day.”

“Really?” Adrian asked with a pleased smile.

“Yes. You must realize that as a Shadow Dragon, the darkness is your friend. It will allow you to recuperate faster than normal.”

Adrian frowned as something flitted to the surface… something to do with the beating he’d received. “Is that why I wasn’t worse than I could’ve been when they left me in that dark closet?”

Concentrating slightly, he felt the wings melt back into his back and he sighed in relief as the pain also melted away.

“Yes. The darkness is a part of your creature,” the Spaniard murmured as they walked over to the table in the garden, smirking at the groans both boys emitted as they moved stiff bodies before joining the adults. “In it, you will heal… at least in theory.”

“Has there really not been many Shadow Dragons?” Draco asked as he reached for a biscuit to go with his tea. He was fascinated with what he was hearing. Adrian shook his head in amusement at his friend.

“Since not many know the signs of a maturing one, no. I suspect many die because they have no one to help them cope with the changes.”

“And since I’m weird already,” Adrian quipped, ignoring the disapproving glare his father shot at him, “I can cope better with the changes.”
“Adrian,” Severus softly chided, making Adrian look down at the table in chastisement. “You may be different, but you are still loved. In fact, your differences seem to attract others to you because you’re more apt to look past their differences. Never consider yourself weird.”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian mumbled, risking a look at his father, his lips twitching mischievously. “I love you, too,” he said cheekily, laughing when Severus reached out to playfully pinch his ribs.

“Cheeky brat,” Severus said fondly.

“Besides, I don’t mind that I’m different. I like what I can do, right, Jax?” he asked the dog that lay beside his chair.

The big wolf-hound looked up at him, ears perked up. The others laughed when the dog barked once, as if in agreement. The dog’s attention was swiftly caught by something in the distance. *Young master, you have company*, Jax said, looking back up at Adrian.

Adrian looked in the direction Jax had been looking and noticed a fox sitting there, watching them. “Is he the one, then?” Adrian asked, looking back down at the dog.

*Yes, he led me to you that day.*

“Cool,” he whispered, smiling as he rose to his feet.

“Adrian,” Severus asked, frowning as he saw the fox. “What is it?”

“That’s the fox that led Jax, Inana and Lily to me when I was four,” Adrian said, turning to smile at his father. It wasn’t until he saw the worry in Severus’ eyes that he hesitated, smile faltering. “Do you think it’s alright if I go speak to him?”

Severus hesitated slightly before he nodded. “Take Jax with you.”

His smile returning, Adrian hugged his father before he began walking towards the fox, Draco and Jax falling into step with him. He was slightly surprised but touched when Inana and Lily showed up out of nowhere.

So, young human, the fox began when they were close enough to hear him. *I see you managed to survive. That’s good.*

“Yes, I understand you were one of the animals to help me get here,” Adrian murmured as he sat on the ground a few feet from the fox. He knew that wild animals didn’t like to be crowded and wanted to respect the boundaries. “Thank you.” The three dogs lay beside the two boys, relaxed.

He missed his time at the animal shop, but since he’d started at Hogwarts, he hadn’t had the time to spend there.

The fox seemed pleased to hear this. *I was. The raccoon will be pleased to hear you haven’t forgotten his help as well.*

Draco cleared his throat, gaining Adrian’s attention, an eyebrow raised in silent question. “Oh, sorry. Draco this is… I’m sorry. Do you have a name?”

*Roma* the fox answered, dipping his head in a nod.

“This is Roma. Roma, this is my best friend, Draco.”

*Tell the young human I say hello.*
“He says hello,” he obediently repeated to Draco.

“Hi,” Draco said with a hesitant smile. “What was he saying before?”

“He said he was glad I hadn’t forgotten him or the raccoon that helped me get to Father’s property,” Adrian explained with a smile. “He’s also glad I survived the fever and injuries I had when I got here.”

*How many other animals can you understand, young human* Roma asked, tilting his head to one side. Adrian knew this meant he was curious. He’d seen the gesture often enough with the dogs.

“Actually, I haven’t met any that I don’t understand.” The look of surprise was evident in Roma’s eyes. “Yeah, I know it’s not common,” Adrian said with a dismissive shrug. “I’m fine with that, though.”

“Excuse me,” Draco said, shifting beside Adrian, feeling silly for talking to an animal. “But why did you wait so long before coming to check on Adrian?”

*Actually, Jax has been letting me know how things have been going. I just wanted to check for myself,* Roma said with a canine smile.

“Apparently he and Jax have been talking since I was found. He just wanted to see if Jax was lying,” Adrian said with a laugh.

“Adrian! Draco!” Severus called out, gesturing for the boys to join them.

“I’m sorry,” Adrian said to Roma, turning back to face the fox. “Father is taking us out for the afternoon. I’m glad you came for a visit, though.”

*We will speak again, young human,* Roma told Adrian before he lopped off, disappearing through the hedges.

“You have odd friends, Adrian,” Draco said in amusement as they walked back to Severus and Madreca.

“Doesn’t say much about you, now does it?” Adrian smirked at the blonde boy, laughing when Draco pushed him in mock-anger.

“It’s only because I know you wouldn’t have any friends at all that I put up with you,” Draco sniffed disdainfully.

At one time, Adrian knew he would’ve taken Draco literally, but not anymore. When Draco said anything, it wasn’t the words you listened to, but his body language and his eyes. That was how he knew his best friend was teasing or if he was serious, and right now, he was teasing.

“Oh,” Draco murmured in a matter of fact tone of voice. It was odd enough that Adrian looked at his friend in concern. “Mother told me yesterday that I might be getting a brother or sister soon.”

“Really?” Adrian asked happily, looking over at Draco to see if he was only joking.

“Yes,” Draco said with a pleased smile. “Seems the baby will be born sometime in September… unless something happens,” Draco added, frowning slightly. “I hope nothing happens.”

That last was whispered, but Adrian heard him anyway. “Has something happened before?”

Draco sighed sadly. “I remember when I was three, Mother was pregnant, but three months before
she was due, the baby came too early. Something was wrong. I could hear her screaming from my room. Father didn’t think I heard her, but I did. She was in so much pain.”

“What happened?” Adrian asked softly, reaching out to hold Draco’s hand in comfort. He didn’t like when his friend was distressed.

Draco shook his head but when he looked up at Adrian, his eyes were haunted. “Father was comforting Mother, Afterwards, and neither noticed me sneaking into the room. I wanted to see my sibling. The baby was so still and blue. If she had lived, I’d have a little sister now, but something went wrong. She didn’t make it.”

Adrian stopped his friend so he could wrap his arms around him. “I hope Aunt Cissa has a healthy baby this time,” he whispered in Draco’s ear, holding the blonde boy tightly.

**

Severus allowed Adrian’s friends to come over – if not daily, then every other day – so they could continue with their training with Madreca, though anything that had to do with Adrian’s Inheritance, they kept to themselves. Each day, Adrian’s wings and back muscles grew stronger and stronger, able to keep him in the air longer. Sometimes he went flying by himself, other times, Severus, Madreca or Draco went with him. Adrian made sure he kept to his father’s property, not wanting to be seen flying – by either muggles or wizard kind.

No one had had to mention to him to be careful. It came naturally to him. He enjoyed flying, feeling free as the wind rushed through is hair. Sometimes, birds would fly with him, fascinated that he flew with them or that he understood them. The best was when the birds of prey came up to him, curious about the strange creature flying in their sky. Three of them came regularly, joining him in his aerial stunts.

They showed him tricks and he did the same. One time, he even saved one of them when the bird in question tried to show off and it went bad. Adrian caught him before he could hit ground. Soon afterwards, Adrian became aware that everywhere he went on the property, the same three raptors followed.

Adrian climbed into the tree they had roosted in and asked them why they followed him. *It is a matter of honour, young master* one finally told him. *You were willing to risk yourself for one of us. We can do no less.*

“Allright, but please don’t attack my friends when we spar. We do it so we can become better fighters,” Adrian told them as his friends looked on nervously.

*Very well, you may tell the mice that they are safe. These ones at least.*

Laughing, Adrian climbed down and rejoined his friends. When he related the message, his friends were glad that they wouldn’t be attacked, but they didn’t seem to like being called ‘mice’.

“It’s only because you’re scared of them,” Adrian told them dismissively as Madreca called them back to their lesson.

* * *

The days blurred into one another as the Slytherin group practiced together, either at Snape Manor or Malfoy Manor, laughing and joking… celebrating birthdays, as well. They were also taken out on several outings, even to the beach they’d encountered Dudley on last summer.
One day out of the week, Adrian went to work in the pet shop again. He’d missed this and happily chatted with the animals… discretely, of course. He’d rolled his eyes when Severus had given him a portkey with the instruction that if anything ever happened, he was to use it.

Adrian loved his father – the man gave new meaning to the word ‘paranoid’ – but took it anyway, if only to give his father peace of mind. He’d been ecstatic when Uncle Lucius had declared that it would do Draco good to learn about the workings of a store… and despite Draco’s protests that he really didn’t need to know about manual labour, the blonde boy was soon working alongside Adrian.

“Oh, come on, Draco,” Adrian teased when Draco sent him a glare for the third time in a half-hour. “It’s not that bad and you can honestly say you have experience no one else in our group has.”

“Ha!” Draco snapped angrily. “This is entirely your fault! I can’t see what good this’ll do. I’m not going to have to work for a living!”

Adrian’s grin grew at his friend’s grumblings. “It would be more fun if you just relaxed,” he murmured beside Draco’s ear. He laughed as Draco slapped his arm, though there was no strength in the blow. “I’ll tell you all the funny stories they tell me, if you want.”

He knew he had his friend by the look of intrigue on Draco’s face. “You’d better,” the blonde boy grumbled, glaring at Adrian again.

Neither boy noticed the calculating blue eyes that followed them through the shop as they joked together. No one realized how long he was standing there, watching Adrian and Draco interacting with the animals. “Can I help you with anything?” they heard the manager ask, and turned to see a man standing by the snake cages.

“I’m looking for food for my snake,” the stranger said, smiling pleasantly.

Adrian dismissed the stranger as the manager dealt with him and looked at Draco, who was frowning at the stranger. “What’s wrong?”

Draco shook his head and gestured for Adrian to move ahead of him, out of hearing range of the stranger. “He seems familiar, but I can’t quite place him,” Draco murmured as an owl flew to Adrian’s shoulder.

Adrian shot a look over Draco’s shoulder, reaching out behind his friend to make it look like he was getting something while he watched the stranger. There was… something, indeed familiar about this person.

Adrian frowned, realizing that maybe his father wasn’t just being paranoid…

“Let’s go to the back,” Adrian murmured, reaching up to pet the owl. “Would you be willing to take a message to my father?” he asked the bird.

Of course, young master, the bird hooted agreeably.

Adrian smiled. “Michael, we’re going to take a break,” he called out to the manager, who waved his acknowledgment.

After the message had been sent, they watched from the back room – parting the curtain only enough to peak out – as the stranger wandered out the door, but he didn’t go far: only across the street.

“I have a bad feeling about that one,” Draco murmured in Adrian’s ear. “What do we do?”
“There’s still two hours before our shift ends and Father comes to pick us up,” Adrian said with a sigh. He didn’t like this situation, either. What would happen if they left early? They’d have to walk to the Cauldron to use the Floo, then, with no one to escort them… The only real options they had: either finish their shift or use the Portkey. “What do you want to do?”

“Go home,” Draco said without hesitation.

“Should we tell Michael first, in case Father shows up after we’ve used it?” Adrian asked as he pulled out the Portkey.

Draco instantly reached for the beaded bracelet, then looked back towards the inside of the shop, debating with himself, but they both knew that if Severus showed up and they weren’t there, the Potions master was *not* going to take it well… especially if they were safe at home. “Tell Michael.”

With a nod, Adrian reached for the curtain… right as the back door was kicked open. Going by instinct, Adrian pulled out his wand and tapped the bracelet, instantly activating the Portkey… and went flying backwards by an unexpected spell.

In his surprise, he let go of the bracelet, watching as Draco’s horrified face vanished, hand reaching for him. He flew through the curtain, hitting the floor hard enough to knock the breath out of him. He heard his wand clatter when he released it on impact. The force was enough to slide him across the cluttered floor and right into the mice counter.

He didn’t move, seeing stars and struggling to breath.

“Now, see here,” he heard Michael growl as if from a distance. He blacked out for a bit, but he became aware of hands on him, roaming over his body. He struggled, panic filling him when he realised his hands were bound behind his back and his robes had been removed… and he was gagged.

“Let’s go before someone comes in,” he heard a man growl angrily, shoving the man pawing him and grabbing his arm roughly.

“Stupify!” Adrian’s head jerked up as he recognized the voice. Severus Snape!

“Father!” His voice was muffled by the gag, but he struggled with his captor, trying to get away. He screamed as he felt that hook behind his navel, indicating the one holding him was Apparating… and they were gone.

* * *

Severus cursed as he stared at the spot his son had stood before being taken away, eyes snapping dangerously. He turned his attention to the man he’d Stupified and his anger grew. Quickly casting a spell, he bound the attacker before checking on the manager.

He was alive.

Moving quickly, he walked over to the bound man, created a Portkey from the necklace the man wore and sent him off to one of Lucius’ holding room. It was the best place for the stranger and no one but he and Lucius would know he was there.

When that was done, he turned towards the only other person in the shop, stopping when he noticed a wand resting on the floor beside Adrian’s discarded robes. Picking it up, he realized it was Adrian’s. Pocketing it, he turned and cast an Enervate on the manager. He needed to know where Draco was and where his son had been taken but he needed to deal with this man first.
“Where’s Adrian?” Michael asked unsteadily, a hand going to his head. “What happened?”

“Adrian was taken by some strangers. Where’s Draco?”

“Um… I think he vanished before they got Adrian,” Michael murmured, sitting hard on the chair behind the counter.

“You look like you could use some time off. Close up the shop and take a couple of days to recover,” Severus murmured as he headed for the door.

“Wait! Where are you going?” Michael asked urgently. “Should I alert the Aurors?”

Severus stopped at the door, looking back at the manager’s pinched and worried face. “Contact the Aurors. I’m going out to look for my son.”

* * *

Adrian came to again, groggy and disoriented, gag still in place, lying on a rotten mattress. He didn’t know where he was or why they’d taken him. Looking around, he realized that he was in a type of dungeon-looking room: stone walls and a small table and chair. That was all there was.

It was cold, darkish and damp. Adrian couldn’t help the shiver that went up his spine as fear clawed at him. What were they going to do to him? He tried moving around, to see if he was tied to the bed or if it was simply his hands that were still tied behind his back. He felt relief when he could move, rolling onto his side, facing the room. He needed to get out of here… if he could.

The creak of the door opening had him looking in that direction.

“Good, you’re awake,” one of his captors murmured as he walked over to Adrian’s bed. He was roughly pulled out of it and dragged over to the table, the room swaying dizzily around him, until he was lying on it. “I’d hate to do this if you weren’t aware enough to respond properly.”

Adrian froze in horror, fear clearing his head. He couldn’t mean to… his mind faltered just thinking of it.

When he felt the stranger’s hands on his pants, Adrian began to fight, screaming for help behind his gag. It didn’t stop the stranger, however. He simply pinned Adrian down with a hand on his back when he tried to rear up and continued what he’d been doing. His pants were pulled down until they were below his bum.

He felt the stranger’s movement behind him and fought harder. “I wanted your friend, really. I could see him on his knees with his mouth on my cock, but you’ll have to do,” the stranger grunted and Adrian felt the stranger move closer to him.

He screamed as something hot and thick was forced into his body, pain lancing through him the further in it went, not stopping until he could feel the man’s hips against his backside. “Oh, fuck, yes,” the man groaned in pleasure as he began to move, shoving Adrian harder into the edge of the table beneath him. His feet didn’t even touch the floor and swung uselessly with each thrust.

He knew the edge of the table would leave bruises on him but couldn’t bring himself to care.

Adrian closed his eyes tightly, tears flowing freely as he tried to ignore the sounds the stranger made as he raped him, whimpering in pain each time the man moved in him, just wanting it to end. It felt like forever before he felt something hot flood into his body and the stranger was grunting, pushing into his hips hard.
“Good boy,” the man laughed, as he pulled out. He felt the Cleaning spell brush against him before his clothes were put back in order. “Wouldn’t do for the others to know,” the stranger said as if this was their little secret before Adrian was place on his cot again.

He wanted to die.

He felt so dirty and used…

He stared sightlessly at the stone wall, feeling something inside him coil. The room seemed to fade slightly, giving everything a shadowy tinge. It was as if he had no emotions, as if he wasn’t even in his own body… the pain seemed to melt away, which was fine with him…

It was hours before anyone else came in, making him aware of his surroundings again, and he tensed, thinking it was his rapist again. “String him up,” he heard and his eyes went wide. He knew who this was! He whipped his head in the direction of the voice and sure enough, there stood Dumbledore with the fake Potter.

He was flipped over onto his stomach so they could untie his hands… but the freedom was short lived as they tied his wrists together in front of him. They dragged him to the center of the room and his wrists were suddenly tied to a rope that was conjured from the ceiling.

“Now, my boy,” Dumbledore murmured pleasantly as he was hoisted up so his whole weight was on his wrists, making him groan in pain. “This is how it’s going to go. You’re going to do as I tell you or you’ll never leave this room. And just to show you how serious I am I’ve brought someone here who wanted to get… reacquainted with you.”

His attention was drawn to the door where Vernon and Dudley were now standing. Adrian was shocked. He’d thought Dudley looked sickly the last time he’d seen him but now he looked even worse… what was wrong with the boy he’d called cousin?

“He’s all yours,” Dumbledore said before he led everyone else out of the room, leaving him with the two who had been his family.

“I’m going to enjoy this, boy,” Vernon growled darkly as he advanced on Adrian, Dudley cracking his knuckles behind his father. Oh, this was going to be bad…

* * *

Severus was beyond pissed.

Three weeks! Three weeks his son was missing! And all the Aurors could come up with was nothing.

The man in the Dungeons of Malfoy Manor had been less than helpful. They’d gotten a location from him, but it had already been abandoned… if that was even where they’d held Adrian. The Aurors now had hold of him.

They’d had to sedate Draco quite a few times during those three weeks when the blonde boy had become hysterical. Madreca seemed to think it might be because of the bond between the two would-be mates.

“We can’t keep sedating him, Severus,” Madreca murmured as he looked down at the blonde child, who was curled up on the couch, twitching slightly. “It’s not making this better.”

“You think I don’t know that?” he snarled at the Spaniard before sighing. “Sorry.”
“I know you’re worried. I am as well, but until we hear something concrete, there’s nothing we can do but wait.”

* * *

Adrian lay on the cot, body broken, bruised and bleeding, eyes swollen shut. He no longer had the strength to fight them. His stomach had stopped rumbling some time ago when they’d refused to give him food… probably tired of cleaning it up off the floor when he threw up after each beating…

He also no longer had clothes since Dudley and Vernon had ripped them from his body the first day saying he didn’t deserve the fine quality they were. He’d also lost track of time. Nothing mattered down here, only pain.

What probably should’ve concerned him was when he couldn’t remember everything that had happened… Okay, so there was actually a lot of it which seemed to be blank if he thought about it… which he tried not to.

He could feel the dark creature inside him prowling, as if biding its time… but it was too much effort to concentrate on it.

“Are you ready to do as you’re told, Mr. Potter?” Dumbledore asked politely as he came to a halt beside Adrian’s cot.

“M not Po’er,” he forced out of his battered throat.

“Hm,” he heard as Dumbledore straightened. “A few more days might change your tune.”

“What happens to me once he takes the persona again?” he heard Potter ask.

_Hadn’t thought about that, had you?_ Adrian thought viciously, not having the energy to smirk at the stupid boy.

“You’ll still be useful for what’s needed,” Dumbledore murmured, and Adrian could feel the old man’s eyes on him. “Come, there’s somewhere we need to be… and his cousin want another chance at… reuniting with his lost family member.”

Potter laughed as he followed the old man out of the room. Adrian didn’t move as his cousin sauntered into the room. Adrian was dimly surprised that they didn’t truss him up like usual. “Hello again, _Freak,_” Dudley sneered, punching Adrian in the ribs, making him cry out as it aggravated already broken bones… and from the feel of it, adding another one to the list.

After a particular vicious punch to his face, however, the creature stirring inside him burst free. It had had enough of the brutality of these mortals. Adrian screamed hoarsely as he felt his body shift painfully, the change making every broken bone grind and shift painfully together. It made the pain even worse than before… then he was sucked down into darkness.

He heard a terrified scream and he suddenly was looking at Dudley as he crouched on the floor in the shadowed corner of his cell. His eyes were no longer swelled shut. He didn’t know or remember how he’d gotten there.

He watched from unexpectedly clear eyes as Dudley took a few seconds to gather his courage before advancing on him again. He growled angrily at his cousin, waiting until he was close enough before pouncing.

His sharp teeth sank into the sallow flesh of his cousin, the claws of his fingers digging easily into the
skin between the ribs. Warm blood flooded his mouth and he blew out, splattering the blood out onto the floor. Dudley couldn’t even scream, his eyes wide with horror and shock as he twitched in Adrian’s black skinned arms.

When the twitching stopped, he threw the body onto the other side of the room, grinning maliciously at the sickening thud of body meeting stone wall.

He growled as two men came running into the room, gasping in shock at the huge, black creature in front of them. It didn’t stop one from attacking him, however… and Adrian realized this was the same man who had raped him every night since his capture. His eyes flashed in rage as the man shot a spell at him, which deflected harmlessly off his… scales?

Pushing that thought out of his mind, he lunged at his rapist, grinning in satisfaction as his claws hooked into the man’s Adam’s apple, ripping it out to bounce off the wall and land on his cot.

Retreating into the corner where the shadows were the thickest, Adrian growled at the remaining stranger before he sank down. For a second, he panicked. What was going on!? Then he noticed that the place he’d entered seemed to be a darker version of the room he’d been kept in… only there was no one in it.

Hesitantly standing up, Adrian became aware of voices in the shadows. He couldn’t make out what they said… but they were soothing.

He panicked again when the shadows surrounded him, covering him up. “We’ll help you,” he heard beside his ear and he surrendered, having gone through enough for now. His mind shut down as the shadows carried him wherever they wanted…

“Take me home,” he whispered finally, tears of relief falling from his eyes. He was safe… "Draco…"

* * *

Severus had moved so he could look out the window, lost in thought. He was tired but couldn’t sleep. He wanted Adrian home where he was safe… of course, he’d thought his son was safe at the pet store as well.

He felt guilt come up to choke him but shoved it down ruthlessly.

Madreca was sitting on the couch beside Draco, who was staring into space. All they could do was wait and hope Adrian was able to come home soon before they lost the blonde boy to depression or insanity. It was just as Madreca had predicted. If they couldn’t save Adrian, they would lose Draco as well.

But what could they do-?

A screech from upstairs tore him out of his thoughts and alerted everyone to something happening. They tore up the stairs… and came up on Timzy who was running from a room down the hall. “What’s wrong?”

“Master, come quick!”

They were led to one of the unused bedrooms and came to a quick halt. There, on the floor, lay a bleeding and battered naked body. Draco was the first to come out of his shock as he recognized the body. With a muffled whimper, he rushed over to the body, cradling it in his arms, rocking back and forth as he cried in relief, not seeming to realize he was doing so.
“Severus!” Madreca snapped, finally penetrating the haze Severus seemed to be in. He tore his eyes from his son’s body to look at the Spaniard. “Get Madam Pomfrey. Now!”

That seemed to snap him out of it and he turned quickly, rushing into Adrian’s room, which ironically enough was only two doors down, and did as he’d been told. With his wand, he flicked it at his son’s bed, pulling the blankets down to the foot so that when Madreca brought him in, everything would be ready.

Just as the Mediwitch came through, Madreca was placing Adrian’s body onto the bed. Without waiting for an explanation, Madam Pomfrey set to work, casting Diagnostic scans. When she paled, Severus knew it wasn’t good. “We have to take him to St. Mongo’s, Severus. There’s too much damage for me to repair.”

His first instinct was to say no, but he knew this woman well enough to know that if she said she couldn’t save Adrian, she meant it. With a terse nod, he moved over to the bed, snagging Adrian’s dressing gown as he passed his son’s favourite chair. As gently as he could, he wrapped the boy into the cloth before picking him up.

The boy didn’t even stir… that worried him, but he pushed it out of his head so he could do what was needed.

“Madreca, bring Draco,” he ordered as he walked to the fireplace. Pomfrey was already there, a handful of Floo powder in her hand. At his nod, she threw it in, saying: “St. Mongo’s.” As soon as the flames turned green he walked into them and was enveloped in them.

When he exited the fireplace at St. Mongo’s, it took only seconds for someone to take Adrian from him. Pomfrey had to have Floo called ahead for them to be ready for him. A hand was planted in the center of his chest when he made to follow his son’s stretcher. He glared at the Mediwitch who had dared bar his way.

“Professor Snape, the Healer needs to examine your son and it’ll be easier if he’s not tripping over you when he does so. I have a series of questions to ask you so that we can ascertain the best way to help the child,” the old Mediwitch said pleasantly, undaunted by the glare.

He felt Madreca’s hand on his arm, squeezing warningly. “Very well,” he growled angrily.

“Do you know how he acquired his injuries?”

“No,” Severus snapped impatiently. “He was abducted three weeks ago. We just found him a few minutes ago.”

“The Aurors are aware?” the Mediwitch asked and nodded at the raised eyebrow. “Good.” The woman motioned to a man. “Contact the Aurors and alert them that Professor Snape’s son has been brought in. They’ll have questions for the family, I’m sure.”

The man cast a furtive look at Severus before he rushed off on his errand. It was obvious by the look on the poor man’s face that he was glad he wasn’t the one on the receiving end of Severus’ death glare. “The fact that you found him so quickly will help us counter whatever shock he might go into,” the old woman murmured as she looked back at the notes the quill had taken. “Is he allergic to anything?” she asked, looking up at Severus.

“He had an adverse reaction to Nettle when he was six.”

“Nettle?” the Mediwitch said in surprise. “Really?”
Severus was well aware that an allergy to Nettle was extremely uncommon, but he thought it might be more the creature inside the boy that had the reaction and not Adrian… but he wasn’t about to tell that to this old woman. “Yes, he and my godson were making a Babbling potion to try out.”

The woman blinked at the Potions master before looking back at his papers. “Um… anything else?”

“Yes, some type of muggle medication called Codeine. Apparently it’s used as a sedative.”

“Well, then,” the woman murmured pleasantly. “It’s a good thing we don’t administer muggle medicine. Is there anything else the Healer should know? Has something like this occurred before?”

“He was attacked at school this year,” Madreca murmured when Severus couldn’t seem to answer, his eyes drawn in the direction his son had been taken. “Madam Pomfrey attended him at the time.”

“Injuries?”

“Broken collar bone, ribs on the right side and left arm, dislocated shoulder and hip, concussion. They also cast a Cutting curse on his back.” The woman looked at him, horrified that a child could receive so many injuries from one beating. “They were determined to cause as much damage as they could,” he said, smiling gently at the woman. “I’m sure Madam Pomfrey would be willing to share the list of injuries from his medical file with you if you ask her. Where can we go until they’re done with young Adrian?”

“Mediwizard Valerian will show you where you can wait. I’ll go deliver this to the Healer and procure a copy of his school medical records.”

“Thank you,” Madreca murmured as the Mediwitch gestured for the Mediwizard mentioned to come closer. “Go with him,” she murmured beside Severus’ ear. “I’ll get the Malfoys.”

“Lead them to the waiting room on level three, please,” she told the young man. “The Aurors are going to want to talk to them so make sure you lead them to the family.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

**

In the waiting room, Severus paced impatiently, wondering what was happening. Had there really been that much damage?

He didn’t even hear Madreca come back with Lucius and Narcissa. When he turned around, however, he was surprised to see them there with Draco, who was crying – rather hysterically, in fact – in Narcissa’s arms.

“What happened?” Lucius asked softly as he went to stand beside Severus. “How did he manage to come home?”

“I don’t know. Timzy found him in an empty bedroom. Three weeks, Lucius,” Severus whispered, allowing the anguish to show. “Three weeks they had him. I fear what they did to him and what state he’s going to be in when he regains consciousness.”

“The main thing is that he’s found and he’s safe. Have the Aurors spoken to you?”

Severus nodded sharply, eyes glinting in anger and frustration. “They consider the matter closed. They just want to interrogate Adrian before they close the case completely. They seem to think he simply ran away, got into something he shouldn’t have and come home with his tail between his
“Don’t worry,” Lucius murmured, resting a hand on Severus’ shoulder. “When we find out who did this, we’ll make sure they pay for daring to even look at him.”

“Professor Snape?”

They turned to see a man in Healer robes standing at the door, looking at each man inquiringly. “How is he?” Severus asked, moving closer to the Healer.

“My name is Healer Browning,” he said, shaking Severus’ hand, ignoring his inquiry for the moment. “It was a little touchy, but we managed to heal some of his injuries. There’s a few things that are slowly healing, but they are healing. We’ll have another go at healing him in a few hours. He’s stable at the moment and we’re just waiting for him to regain consciousness. I was reading in his file that you had a Mind Healer looking after him when he was younger. You might want to contact him to talk to Adrian.”

“Is he awake?” Severus asked, frowning in confusion.

“No, we’re keeping him under for right now. We gave him some Dreamless Sleep to counter any nightmares he may have over his ordeal. I know you like to see the reports so I brought you a copy of his injuries,” Healer Browning said, casting a look at Draco before looking back at Severus.

With an eyebrow raised, he took the papers – three sheets worth – from the Healer, wondering just what they were going to say that couldn’t be said in front of the blonde boy. Both eyebrows rose as he read the lists, fingers tightening on the papers. It took everything in him not to react any further to the list of injuries his son had received at his captors’ hands.

He closed his eyes when he reached the one word he’d prayed he wouldn’t find: rape, repeated. The mention of a Mind Healer made sense now…

“Merlin,” Lucius whispered and Severus realized his friend had been reading over his shoulder.

“I insisted they place an Aurors to guard his door just in case whoever did this to him tries to get him.”

“The Aurors,” Severus sneered in disgust, “think he brought this on himself by running away.”

“That would be true,” Healer Browning murmured with a deep frown, his voice low as he spoke, causing Severus to bristle. “Except that we can tell this was done mostly by adults, not other children. Some of the injuries indicated someone taller that this boy. There are also stress fractures on his wrist bones that indicate they pulled him up quite a distance and for long periods of time. Children wouldn’t do that, but adults would. I quickly disabused them of that notion.”

Severus felt vindicated by that, though he winced at the thought of what Adrian had endured. It seemed more likely now than ever that he would have to contact Mind Healer McKay…

“If you want, I can show you to his room,” the Healer murmured, indicating the hallway.

Severus nodded and the group followed behind the Healer. Severus sat on the edge of Adrian’s bed, reaching out to hold Adrian’s hand in his, careful so he didn’t harm the boy, as the door closed softly behind Madreca, but didn’t look back. He heard Narcissa gasp in horror as they looked at the boy lying so still and bruised on the bed. His wrists had been bandaged and he had cuts and bruises the size of watermelons where they could see skin. His face was slightly swollen where the healing hadn’t taken.
With a sob, Draco climbed onto the bed and laid down beside his best friend, an arm going around Adrian’s chest, though he was careful not to squeeze, just in case. Adrian shifted in his potion induced sleep, whimpering as he tried to curl himself into Draco’s body as if he craved the comfort of his mate.

Severus looked at Madreca knowingly. That was exactly what this meant.

Looking back at the papers in his hand, he continued reading. He stiffened when he reached the last page where there was one thing that stood out from everything else. The Healer probably missed it, not realizing what it meant, but Severus had seen it before with Timothy. Adrian’s serotonin levels were extremely high.

“Madreca,” he said harshly, looking up at the Spaniard.

Frowning, Madreca went to look at what Severus was pointing at and paled, eyes wide. “No, it’s too soon. Off the bed,” he ordered sharply, pulling his wand out. Lucius had to pry Draco away from Adrian but with a stern look, the boy settled sullenly beside his father, watching his friend.

They listened as Madreca murmured the words of a complex spell, waving his wand in a wide circle in front of him, aiming it at Adrian. The air around the boy shimmered and changed colours. Something happened then, the colours shimmered into one colour: black, before settling over the injured boy like a blanket… and was gone.

Madreca swore long in Spanish as he stood there. “We need to take him home before they realize what this means, Severus. If this doesn’t kill him, we’ll be lucky.”

“What’s wrong with him?” Narcissa asked in concern. No one stopped Draco from climbing back onto the bed or from wrapping himself around the injured boy, daring anyone to pull him off again.

He gestured for the adults to move closer and cast a strong Silencing spell. “What they did to Adrian has triggered his change. I suspect it was the rape that started it, but the beating he suffered at this unknown person or persons has forced the change to his body that shouldn’t have begun until he was older.”

“What do you mean?” Lucius asked, frowning at the two boys on the bed.

“Adrian’s creature Inheritance has burst through the natural confinement that shouldn’t have weakened until he came of age,” Madreca said with a sigh, running a hand through his hair in agitation. “I wondered after the first beating he underwent at school, if perhaps it had started a chain reaction, but when nothing else happened to Adrian, I assumed the creature would settled down to await its proper time.”

“You think that this second attack on its life partner has set it free, don’t you?” Severus asked, hoping the Spaniard would tell him he was wrong.

“Unfortunately, there’s no ‘guessing’ involved. The spell I used is designed to identify a creature within. If it had been contained, it would’ve settled into a ball above Adrian’s chest.”

“But it settled over Adrian like a blanket,” Narcissa whispered as she realized what Madreca was saying. “The creature inside Adrian is fully aware, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” the Spaniard murmured with a shrug. “Draco’s reactions now make sense. The Shadow Dragon was calling to its mate. That’s why Adrian came home. If Draco had been at Malfoy Manor, chances are that would’ve been where Adrian would’ve popped up. It wanted its mate and somehow found its way to him. Unfortunately, Adrian is nowhere near ready for this to happen to him. There’s
no telling how this will affect him.”

“There’s a problem, though,” Lucius murmured thoughtfully as he glanced towards the door, indicating the Auror parked outside the room. “How do we get Adrian home without arousing attention?”

“I think the best place for Adrian right now is here,” Severus murmured as he frowned at the floor, trying to think this through. “Tomorrow will be time enough to bring him home. Healer Browning said not all his wounds had healed. It could be that there was just so much damage to his body that once the critical injuries had been treated that the rest of him just shut down and refused to allow any more to be done.”

“Are you sure that’s the wisest course of action, Severus?” Madreca asked, the concern clear on his face.

Severus sighed tiredly. “I think we have no choice. I need to put Adrian’s health first. Once I’m sure that coming home won’t result in worse consequences, I’ll insist on taking him home. Also if we take him out of here before the Aurors have talked to him, it’ll look like we’re trying to hide something. Best err on the side of caution this time. Besides, the healer indicated that they would be doing more healing every hour or so.”

“Alright,” Narcissa murmured much to the surprise of the men as she brushed imaginary wrinkles from her dress, despite the baby bump that could be seen, straightening her shoulders. Being Seven months pregnant hadn’t stopped the woman in the least. “Severus, contact the Mind Healer, then go home and get some rest. Madreca go with him to make sure he actually sleeps,” she said in an authoritative manner, ignoring the looks on their faces. “Lucius, you have to work in the morning so you’ll also have to go home later. I’ll stay here with the boys.”

The men looked at each other, hiding smirks of amusement at her take-charge attitude. “Yes, Mother,” Severus murmured playfully, leaning forward to kiss her cheek, liking the way she blushed as she realized what she’d sounded like.

“Go,” she laughed, pointing at the door. Severus and Madreca obeyed… Severus only looked back twice before the door closed.

Lucius wrapped an arm around his wife as they turned to look at the two boys asleep on the bed. Somehow, Adrian had turned completely onto his side so that Draco could cradle him in his arms, his back to Draco’s front. “It looks like Madreca might be right about the bond between these two,” he murmured softly, frowning thoughtfully when Adrian shivered and Draco’s arms tightened in response.

“But they’re so young, Lucius. What can we do?” Narcissa asked sadly, hand on her stomach, feeling the baby move.

“Support them,” Lucius told her simply. “Nothing more we can do. Come sit down. You know you tire quickly.” Narcissa smiled and kissed his cheek before she sat down in the only other chair in the room, sighing appreciatively when Lucius transfigured it into a more comfortable one.

Soon, thought it was time for Lucius to take his leave… “I’ll leave you with them. Kimmy will be listening for you, if you need anything.”

“Thank you, my love.”

* * *
Narcissa came awake all at once as she felt small hands on her stomach. “Hello baby,” she heard and blinked her eyes open to see Adrian’s head close to her stomach, whispering to the baby inside her. She watched as he smiled sweetly when the baby kicked his cheek in response. “It’s good that you’re strong. Your mama’s going to need you to be.” She smiled softly as she heard the boy’s soft laugh as the baby kicked him again, as if to prove that it was indeed strong.

Reaching out, she threaded her fingers through his thick hair, startling him. “I’m sorry, Aunt Cissa,” he whispered, trying to straighten up but she stopped him, pulling him closer to her so she could embrace him. “I didn’t mean to wake you up.”

“It’s alright, Adrian,” she whispered into his hair, shutting her eyes tightly so she didn’t start crying. Even injured, he thought of others first… “Sweet, sweet child,” she crooned softly when he returned the hug, leaning into her warm body.

She felt him tremble against her and held him tighter. “I have you, Adrian,” she told him comfortably, kissing the top of his head. “Nothing will happen while I’m here.”

She held him while he allowed it, humming a lullaby as he rested against her, his tears wetting the front of her dress but she didn’t mind. He was home.

She didn’t know when he stopped crying, but he didn’t pull away from her, his small hand caressing her stomach again. “He’s going to survive this time, Aunt Cissa,” he told her and she tried not to hope his words were true. She’d been disappointed too many times in the past.

But…

Something in Adrian’s voice said he knew what he was saying was true. “You think so, sweetheart?”

He looked up at her, smiling happily. “Yes, he told me so.”

“Who told you?” she asked, smiling down at him as the baby kicked Adrian’s hand.

“I don’t know,” he told her, frowning in confusion. “He also said you weren’t ready before, but that doesn’t make sense… does it?”

“Who knows, Adrian,” she told him, kissing his forehead this time. “I’m just glad he’ll live. The rest doesn’t matter. How are you feeling?”

“Tired and sore,” he whispered. “Maybe a little pain, but I don’t mind.”

“Well, let’s get you back into bed. I’m sure the Healer will be around soon to check on you.”

She struggled out of her chair and smiled gratefully when Adrian helped her up and she helped him back into bed where Draco was just rousing.

“Adrian!” the blonde boy exclaimed, latching onto him tightly, making Adrian wince.

“Draco,” she admonished softly. “Let go of him this instant. He’s not fully healed.”

Blushing to the roots of his hair, Draco let go instantly. “Sorry.”

“Ah,” they heard from the door. Narcissa automatically stood in front of Adrian, protecting him with her body before she realized that this was a Healer – though not the one who had treated Adrian all of last night. “I’m glad to see you awake, young man.”
“Healer, it would be appreciated if you were to knock before barging in,” she said coldly, glaring at the Healer. At least he had the decency to look embarrassed.

“I apologize, Mrs. Malfoy,” he murmured and moved to the foot of the bed, rolling his eyes as the Auror, hearing that Adrian was awake, opened the door. “No, Auror, it does not mean you can ask him questions.”

With a disappointed sigh, the Auror closed the door, resuming his post.

She frowned at the Healer, wondering how he knew who she was. There was nowhere in Adrian’s file that said who she was. Startled out of her thought, she felt Adrian take her hand as he moved closer to her. “Don’t let him touch me, Aunt,” he whispered softly.

“What do you have left to do, Healer?” she asked, putting a gentle hand on Adrian’s back, feeling his heart pounding hard.

“A scan to make sure he’s healing properly. Maybe a few more Healing potions,” the Healer murmured with a smile, his hands behind his back.

Looking down at Adrian, she could see the fear in his eyes. She didn’t understand it but her instinct told her not to trust this man. “I think we’ll wait for his father to arrive before we administer anything else,” she told him, her face remaining cold.

“I’m afraid I’m going to have to insist,” the Healer murmured and she was suddenly flying backwards, into the wall from the wand now aimed at her.

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Severus was nearing Adrian’s hospital door when the Auror rushed in. He heard screams from inside and rushed in to find a man in Healer robes holding Adrian, wand to his throat. On one side of the room, Narcissa lay against the wall, Draco beside her, as she tried to breathe through the pain as she clutched at her belly.

Inside, between the bed and the door lay the Auror, unconscious.

“One more step, Professor Snape and I’ll cut his throat open,” the man growled threateningly.

Severus froze, his eyes flicking down at Adrian petrified face before going back to the man’s. “What do you want?”

“What I was promised,” the man grinned, rubbing his cheek against Adrian’s head. “Close the door.”

Severus felt his heart drop even as he obeyed the order. There was no way this… man was getting his hands on his son. A low growl could be heard, like the sound of far off thunder.

Obviously the man wasn’t paying attention to it as he moved to the corner facing the door and away from the light of the window. Thinking quickly, knowing what Madreca had said about Adrian’s creature having been set free, he moved back against the wall, hands out. He felt the switch against his back and moved just… so.

The lights went out, startling the attacker, but it seemed to be enough for Adrian. He watched in morbid fascination as his child’s eyes began to glow slightly and change, becoming slitted – like a dragon’s – his skin changing to black, the growl becoming louder. Without a word, they sank into the shadows before anything else could be said.
Severus cursed slightly as he rushed over to where Narcissa still lay, panting hard.

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Adrian’s eyes began to glow slightly once the lights went out, his skin morphing to black as the shadows embraced him. He would teach this upstart a lesson…

They sunk into the floor, entering the world of shadows… the whispering greeting them as soon they entered.

“Who’s there?” the man demanded, brandishing his wand in front of him, his hold on Adrian tightening.

“You can’t hurt me here,” Adrian growled, though his voice sounded deeper… older. He stepped away from his attacker, laughing when the hold tightened even more. He raised his hand and sank his clawed fingertips into the skin of the arm holding him.

The man screamed in pain, releasing him quickly. “Incarcerous!”

Adrian stepped gracefully further away, his back to the human, laughing when nothing happened. He could smell the fear now, smell when the little insect realized he was truly fucked. “I told you,” his voice rumbled deep, far deeper than a human voice could, reverberating around them as he looked coyly over his shoulder at the man standing there, injured arm cradled against his chest. “Your wand can’t do you any good here, human.” He drew out the word ‘human’, the word repeating over and over again until one could feel it vibrating in their ears.

The human screamed in pain, hands over his ears, dropping his wand without seeming to realize it.

“Stop!” the human screamed, his heart thundering in Adrian’s ears like water over rocks. It sounded delicious… He closed his eyes, savouring the sound, laughing again, walking around the little human, his own body growing, distending until he was the size of a juvenile dragon, his tail swishing in amusement.

“Is he for us to play with?” a voice out of nowhere whispered ominously from the darkness.

This caught the human’s attention, eyes huge as he took in Adrian’s form. “Who’s out there?” he whimpered fearfully.

“Hm,” Adrian rumbled, pondering the shadows’ question. “I’m tempted to let you have him… if he’s worthy of your attention.”

“Please,” the human whimpered in fear. “Let me go.”

“No!” they heard from several directions. “Ours!”

Adrian looked around him as the shadows began to undulate around them but they didn’t dare rush at the human without permission. His answer would be what doomed or saved this insect. Looking at the human, he shrunk himself until he was slightly taller in height than the man, though he retained his black scales and tail.

“I just want to go home,” the human whispered pitifully.

Adrian smiled coldly at the man, seeing him flinch instinctively when he raised a hand to caress the cheek before him. “Is that not what the boy told you while you watched as they broke his body? Watching as if he were a science experiment?”
The man whimpered in fear, eyes wide, his bladder choosing that instant to relieve itself.

“Now,” Adrian murmured, ignoring man’s blubbering. “Let’s see what else is inside you…”
Looking him directly in the eye, images seemed to pop up between them… this man beating a young girl of six, tying her to a post so he could whip her easier just to see how long she lasted before passing out… a baby left in the cold to see how long it would survive before freezing to death… atrocity after atrocity flitted between them as if he were watching a film.

He tsked mockingly, smiling wide enough to show extremely sharp teeth, causing the man to tremble in terror. “If I let you go, you won’t have learned your lesson.” His words caused the man to whimper and cry but he was done listening to him. He backed up a few steps, eyeing the human with pity. He knew the shadows weren’t forgiving, nor would they stop. They would use his terror to feed themselves, drawing his pain out as much as possible and as long as they could… and do to him what he’d been doing to so many innocents.

Only there would be no end for him…
He didn’t care.

“He’s yours,” he whispered to the voices. He laughed as the man screamed, the shadows taking turns lunging at the man, ripping his clothes off piece by piece. Once naked, the man was forcefully bent over a shadow version of a table, wrists tied to the corners but Adrian had already lost interest in what they were doing to the human.

Adrian’s head jerked up when he heard a woman scream and a baby wail in distress over the screams and pleading of the man even as the crack of a whip sounded over all of it. Turning from the shadows, he pushed himself up… and into the room he’d exiting earlier. He saw the woman writhing in pain, clutching at her distended belly, could hear the baby wail again as he struggled within her.

He ignored the man and the boy as he walked over to her, head tilted curiously to the side. He knelt beside the woman with a frown… he knew this person…

He crooned softly just as the baby wailed again, getting weaker. Carefully putting his hands on each side of her belly, he crooned again, softly singing to the distressed child, the innocent soul yet to be born. He waited for the baby to stop struggling, listening to his song, before laying his head on the belly, smiling lovingly. When the song was done, the baby was asleep, no longer in any pain…

He looked up at the woman, still smiling. He flinched when she reached out to touch his face, her fingers gentle as she smiled at him. “Thank you, Adrian,” she whispered softly.

He looked over at the blonde boy kneeling beside the woman, noticed the resemblance between the two and moved closer, closing his eyes in pleasure as he smelled the boy. He knew who this was… his mate. He was pleased when the boy reached out and caressed his face, showing no fear of him. Adrian purred as he leaned closer, rubbing his cheek against the other boy’s.

“Adrian?”

He stopped, eyes opening at the sound of the only man in the room. Pulling back, he looked at the man beside him, who was looking at him in wonder. Tilting his head to one side, he regarded this one curiously. He recognized him, too… almost like a dream.

With narrowed eyes, he lunged at the man… surprised when all the man did was hold him gently. There was no fear in him, only… love? Reaching up, Adrian placed a hand against the man’s face, careful of his claws and stared into the dark eyes in front of him…
He saw a lot of dark things in the man’s mind and he wanted to take him down for the Shadows to have… until something else began to play…

He jerked slightly in surprise as he watched this man care for a child not his own… teaching him things… loving him. That was when he realized who this was. He was the boy's father... He felt the boy stir and come to the surface, allowing him to take over as he realized there was no danger here.

“Daddy,” he whispered as he curled into Severus’ lap, his body shifting back to normal, his skin losing the blackness of his creature as he closed his eyes, sobs tearing through his light frame. He was home.

He felt firm arms close around him, holding him close…
Chapter 4 - Sleep Little Dragon...

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 4 – Sleep Little Dragon…

Ten days after the incident at St. Mongo’s, Severus stood at the window of Adrian’s room at Malfoy Manor, lost in thought. After a brief check-up, Narcissa had been cleared and told to go home. She’d told the Healer that the only way she was leaving was if she took Adrian with her since their security was so easily circumvented. If they wanted to keep treating the boy, then they could send a Healer with them.

Severus and even Lucius – alerted that something was wrong by Tammy and arrived minutes after Adrian broke down in Severus’ arms – had backed her up. A Healer was assigned to Malfoy Manor for the next few days.

Funny that, after a few brief questions from the Aurors, the morons seemed to think nothing more of all the injuries his son had received, closing the case without investigating further… not the one who’d been guarding the door, but the Auror in charge of the case.

But he and Lucius hadn’t been satisfied with that… so the blonde aristocrat had launched his own investigation into the matter. A week later, when the Head of the Auror department had confronted him, Lucius had simply stated that it was apparent the incompetence of his men when they could not be relied upon to investigating cases involving abused children. To say the Head Auror was livid would be an understatement.

After hearing the details of Adrian’s case, he’d left to launch his own investigation, agreeing that it didn’t seem right what he was hearing. The lead investigator on the case – the one who’d closed it – had been fired for accepting a bribe to drop the case.

A new one was currently underway… though they didn't think it would go very far.

“Uncle Severus?” Draco asked hesitantly, pulling him from his thoughts. He looked back to where the blonde boy sat on the bed with Adrian who had promptly curled himself up against him, head in Draco’s lap, practically purring in contentment. It was as if Draco didn’t know what to do with himself anymore. It wasn’t as if he could stop worrying about his friend, after all…

He’d actually been surprised when the blonde boy hadn’t said anything about the change Adrian had made or of what he’d done to help ease his mother’s distress. “Yes, Draco?” he asked, turning to face his godson, a book lying discarded on the bed beside him.

“Is that what Adrian’s dragon is going to look like?”

He blinked at Draco, thrown by the question. That hadn’t been the reaction he’d expected. “Probably not,” he said with a sigh as he moved to sit on the other side of Adrian’s bed. “It’s probably a more manageable size for him.”

“What does this mean?” Draco asked, frowning down at his friend, his fingers brushing the thick locks back. “His creature showing up now, I mean. Isn’t it too soon?”

“Yes,” he answered honestly. “I don’t know what this will mean. We’ll have to keep an eye on him and help him however we can.”
“Father?” Adrian mumbled, blinking sleepily at him, moving to curl up against the older man instead of his mate.

Severus smiled at him, pulling his child onto his lap, feeling a panicked twinge at how much lighter Adrian felt. It was obvious they hadn’t fed him... and he’d barely eaten anything once at home. He wrapped his arms protectively around the boy, somewhat at peace for the first time since Adrian had been taken. His child was home, where he belonged. Adrian had never called him ‘daddy’ before. That day had been the first time...

He didn’t know what to make of it.

“How do you feel, Adrian?” he asked softly into the top of his son’s head.

“Safe,” Adrian slurred tiredly.

“Draco, I think your father is with your mother,” Madreca murmured as he entered the room carrying a plate. “Could you ask him to join us and then remain with your mother for a while? I think she’d appreciate your company.”

Draco looked like he was going to argue, but with an angry huff, he left the room.

“What’s going on?” Severus asked as he looked at the Spaniard.

“Let’s wait for Lucius.”

The blonde Aristocrat wasn’t long coming into the room, a look of curiosity on his face.

Madreca nodded. “Ward the room, please, Lucius.” With a frown, Lucius did as asked, moving closer to the bed. “Severus, give this to Adrian. It’s a Draught of Peace potion.”

Frowning in concern and knowing there had to be a point to all of this... and also knowing it wasn’t normal for someone to wake up only to go to sleep seconds later, he took the potion from Madreca. He tipped Adrian’s head back, worried when he saw his eyes were closed. “Adrian?”

It was a few seconds before the boy answered him. “Hm?”

“Open your eyes, child,” he coaxed gently, watching as Adrian’s eyes fluttered heavily, seeming to be an effort to open. After a few seconds, he smiled as green eyes looked up at him. “I need you to take this potion. Do you think you can do that?”

“Okay,” Adrian breathed tiredly. He tipped it into his son’s mouth, watching as it was dutifully swallowed.

“Lay him on the bed and step away, Severus.”

Hoping the Spaniard came to the point soon, he did as told, laying Adrian lengthwise on the bed so they could watch him. He was surprised when he realized the plate in Madreca’s hand held a raw steak. “Adrian doesn’t like meat much, let alone raw,” he said, stopping the plate from being deposited on the bed.

“Do you trust me,” Madreca asked, an eyebrow raised. It took a few seconds but Severus nodded and released the Spaniard’s wrist. “Adrian may not like raw meat, but the creature inside him does. We need to rouse it in order to speak to it,” Madreca murmured in explanation as he deposited the plate inches from Adrian’s nose. “It’s killing Adrian as it tries to remain awake. He’s not magically or emotionally ready for this. He’s also made weaker still from the beating he received at the hands
of his captors. Something needs to be done before it’s too late.”

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They were watching him again.

He could feel their eyes… though his mate wasn’t there this time.

Then Adrian’s nose twitched as the delicious scent of blood wafted to him. Adrian managed to pry his eyes open… but his eyes were slitted, just like that day at St. Mongo’s. He regarded the three men standing at the foot of the bed warily before looking down at the steak, liking his lips hungrily.

“It’s for you,” the one in the middle said, encouraging him to eat it.

Hesitating briefly, Adrian grabbed hold of the steak, tearing into it, ignoring the blonde man’s wince as he pulled it off the plate, blood dripping onto the blanket. He growled in pleasure as he chewed the delicious meat, closing his eyes to savour the explosion of tastes. He was disappointed when it was all gone, the gnawing hunger still there…

“More,” he demanded harshly, voice deep with hunger – too deep to be the boy’s, though he could feel him sleeping inside. He had done this earlier… during all the pain. The creature had known even then that he needed to protect the boy from what was happening. But he knew these men… didn’t he?

“Before I give you more,” the man in the center said, leaning closer on the bed until his fist rested on the blanket. “I want to make you a bargain.” Yes, this man he remembered vaguely from the boy’s memories.

Adrian turned his head slightly away from the man, though his eyes never left him, thinking about the words. “Bargain?”

“Yes, a deal,” the man said, nodding once. “You were awakened years too soon. You are killing your host by remaining aware simply because he’s still learning how to control his own magic. He needs you to go back to sleep so he can continue learning. If we promise to keep this child from further harm, are you willing to go back to sleep until he is ready for you?”

“Brutality woke me,” Adrian growled angrily, turning so he was looking the man head on, glaring.

“It was unfortunate, but the one who did this is not someone here. This boy is loved and cared for, you know this or you would not have allowed this man to remain alive,” the man said, pointing at the man on the right. This man he knew. He was the boy’s father.

In a flash, Adrian was on the man in the center, forcing him to straighten up. He was pleased when he showed no fear, his hands out at his side to show he meant no harm nor would he stop him. He placed a hand on the side of the man’s face, looking deeply into his eyes and saw…

His eyes widened in surprise. “Old,” he whispered as image after image flashed quickly through his mind, right up until he got to when this man had begun to teach Adrian about his creature heritage.

“And you?” he asked as he looked over at the blonde man, eyes narrowed. He looked like his mate, though older.

“I’m Adrian’s godfather. Draco’s – your mate’s – father,” Lucius said, holding still, following Madreca’s example. Adrian latched on to him next, blinking weakly before looking into the blonde man’s soul, the same as he’d done to the man in the center. He saw atrocities in him, just like the
father… but then he saw this man with his mate, with Adrian, teaching them – together or by themselves – it pleased him, what he saw…

Adrian swayed slightly when he pulled back, blinking as the room swam dizzyingly. “Hungry,” he whispered as he fell back. The blonde man caught his arm but he still fell onto the bed, perhaps not as hard as he would have otherwise, but it was still painful. His wounds weren’t healing… in fact some of the bones that had been healed had reverted, as if they’d never been healed in the first place, because of the strain put on his host…

When a new plate was held out to him, the scent of blood making his mouth water, he snatched it up, devouring it quickly, barely sitting up to eat. He was too tired to put in any effort to even do that. It made things better, but there was still a gnawing hole in his stomach…

“I know you’re tired,” the man in the center murmured, running his fingers soothingly through Adrian’s hair. “You can sleep soon, but we need to know what state your host’s mind will be in when you leave. Will he need help to get over everything that happened?”

Adrian yawned tiredly before blinking over at the boy’s father. He crawled over to the man, knowing that this man could be trusted after what he’d seen in his mind, after everything he’d done for the boy. This one, out of the three, loved the boy the most, would do just about anything for him…

When the man reached out to help steady him, he crawled up to drape himself against him, his head resting tiredly on his shoulder. “He won’t remember everything,” he whispered close to the man’s ear, closing his eyes as the room tilted again. “I made sure he wasn’t there for some. Help him.”

“Thank you,” the father whispered, rubbing his back soothingly. “Is it possible to get the memories of the ordeal to give to the authorities?”

He thought about that but everything was going fuzzy with fatigue so he nodded. “But hurry.”

The father nodded to the older man and in seconds, the memories had been extracted. “Go to sleep now,” the father murmured, smiling gently at him. “We’ll see each other again when the time’s right.”

Adrian smiled sleepily, feeling extremely heavy now that he was allowed to go back to sleep. “Love you, Daddy,” Adrian whispered, his voice his own once more.

* * *

The next four weeks passed by fairly smoothly after that. There were days, of course, when the backlash of the attack cropped up – but the adults had expected that. The injuries sustained were finally mending, though slowly.

After Severus found Adrian staring blankly at the wall of whatever room he was in, panting and trembling in fear, for the fifth time – this would usually happened after a night of bad nightmares – he took Adrian to speak with Mind Healer McKay again.

It was suggested by McKay, that in order to get over some his – and even Draco’s – fear of a new attack, that someone the boys trusted remain with them until they were comfortable being at the pet shop without supervision. They were glad when Severus or even Madreca accompanied them to the Pet Shop, staying the entire shift with them.

The children who came for training were cautioned not to mention anything about Adrian’s disappearance. They didn’t want all the work of getting Adrian over the ordeal, getting him to open
up about what he remembered happening to him, to throw him back into the situation because someone was careless with their words.

The memories taken from Adrian’s creature were duplicated and a copy sent to the Auror in charge of the investigation. Another copy was sent to McKay as his Healer.

Adrian even took up his flying again with the accompaniment of the raptors and sometimes Draco.

Yes, things were slowly getting back to normal.

The third week in August saw Lucius and Madreca with the boys in Diagon Alley to get their school supplies. That morning, Severus had gone to Hogwarts for a special meeting with the new Headmaster, so he wasn’t home yet. Apparently the new Headmaster was from the States, though Adrian couldn’t remember where from exactly. At least this man wouldn’t be prejudiced against the Slytherins… he hoped.

The boys spoke to some of their fellow students, joking as if nothing had ever happened… until Adrian spied someone in the crowd.

He surprised Lucius with the abrupt mood shift as he suddenly clung to his hand. The tall Aristocrat was concerned when it looked like the child couldn’t breathe. “What is it?” the blonde man asked, bending in front of him, an eyebrow raised in surprise. To observers, the look he gave Adrian seemed cold, even mocking but Adrian knew better. He tore his eyes from whatever had caught his attention and Lucius was startled and alarmed at the panic in the boy’s eyes.

“I want to go,” he panted, eyes wide with fear, clutching Lucius’ shoulders. “I want to go, please.”

Looking up at Madreca, he realized the Spaniard was scanning the crowd in the direction Adrian had been looking. Standing up and dislodging Adrian’s hands, he did the same… and saw a boy with green eyes sneering at Adrian, glaring spitefully. Bending down so his head was beside Adrian’s ear, as if by design, the move making his hair block the sight of the boy from Adrian, he spoke softly to the boy. “Do you believe you’re safe with us, Adrian?” he asked the boy gently.

Adrian clutched at Lucius’ arm as he thought about that, his eyes scanning the crowd to the right of Lucius as if someone else would be there… Lucius didn’t know who it could be, but whoever it was, it seemed to make Adrian’s panic go up a notch when he didn’t find them. Finally, Adrian nodded jerkily.

“Do you need a moment to gather yourself?” Lucius asked, noticing they were – ironically enough – in front of the pet shop Adrian and Draco worked in.

“Please,” Adrian whispered tearfully.

They led the children into the shop, Adrian seeming to slowly relax as the animals around them called out their greetings. Lucius nodded to Michael as he led them further in. A quick glance out the window showed the green eyed boy stopping there, watching his godson with a hate-filled look, Lucius decided to something else to distract Adrian.

“Why don’t you show me which creatures are your favourites in the store?” he asked Adrian pleasantly, blocking Adrian’s view of the window and making a mental note to send this information to the Aurors about this stalker. He remembered seeing this same boy in Adrian’s and even in the creature’s memories of the attack.

Looking at Draco with the raise of an eyebrow, he inclined his head slightly towards the window in silent question. His son mouthed the name ‘Harry Potter’. The other eyebrow rose to meet the first.
Really, he drawled to himself. He was going to have to look into this…

“Uncle Lucius,” Adrian asked, drawing Lucius’ attention back to him as he took hold of the tall man’s hand and practically dragged him towards the back corner where the snakes were set up. “Do you think Father would mind if I brought home a pet?”

Lucius smirked as he looked at all the animals in the back: the snake tanks, the spiders and the toads. “I can’t see why not,” he murmured in amusement. “Which one’s caught your attention?”

“Well, actually, there are three animals, two of them snakes and one kitten, that I find interesting, but I don’t think Father would like it if I took all three home,” Adrian said in a normal excited voice, the one before the attack. This was the child Lucius knew… and hopefully would see again soon. He didn’t like the skittish way Adrian had whenever he was unsure or scared. Even at four, the boy hadn’t done that… besides, a child shouldn’t have to live in fear for their lives.

“And why not?” Lucius asked, looking down at the animated face of his godchild. Yes, this was much better.

Adrian frowned thoughtfully, looking back at the snakes that looked back at him. “I don’t know. I never actually thought to ask him about it. Well, we do have the dogs, but I don’t think Father would appreciate me bringing a cat into the house. Do you think he’d mind?”

Lucius liked the way Adrian looked up at him, his face full of inquiry, begging him to say it was alright. Smiling gently down at the boy, he suppressed a chuckle as he saw a look of longing on Draco’s face. “Let’s make this even, shall we?” he drawled, looking back at Michael, who was grinning from the counter. “Adrian, you pick out the ones you like and Draco can pick one for his own. If your father doesn’t want you to keep them, it’ll simply be a matter of bringing the animals back. Do you think that’s fair?”

“Yes!” both boys exclaimed in excitement and he watched as they discussed between the two of them which animal Draco should have as the two snakes Adrian liked the best slithered up towards the top which Madreca help open for them.

He was impressed when they turned out to be fairly small and realized that they could serve a dual purpose of protector and pet for the boy, especially when Adrian’s two slithered themselves around him, one going around his neck while the other disappeared underneath the collar.

Adrian began giggling, writhing a little before settling. “Stop that,” he murmured, moving his arm a little away from his body. “That tickles.”

Lucius figured that meant the second snake was there. “Have you chosen, Draco?” he asked his son, waiting as Draco consulted with Adrian again.

“Yes, Father,” he said finally as the boys looked up at him. “I really want one of the kittens.” Adrian spoke to his snakes and Lucius watched curiously as the snake peaked out of Adrian’s collar and slithered over his shoulder and onto Draco’s, settling itself around his son’s neck. “I told him that Draco couldn’t talk to him like I can, but to be patient with him because he was my friend,” Adrian said with a smile. “He agreed that if he had a problem that he would wait to talk to me before biting. That’s alright, isn’t it, Uncle Lucius?”

“That’s perfect, Adrian. Now, what about these kittens?” He knew Severus would go berserk when he saw what Adrian brought home, but would accept it because the boy’s happiness was what mattered most to his snarky friend.
Adrian led them towards the front window. Thankfully the other boy was nowhere to be seen. “Oh, they’re still here,” Draco whispered softly as they approached a large cage with five kittens curled up, sleeping.

“Are you sure Severus will allow this?” Madreca asked softly from beside Lucius, a frown on his face.

“If it makes Adrian happy, probably,” Lucius answered just as softly. “Do you really think he’ll deny the boy such a simple thing as a pet?”

Madreca sighed but didn’t respond. Behind them, Michael moved around, gathering tank and food for the snakes Adrian had chosen.

“Which one was it that seemed taken by you again?” they heard Draco ask Adrian as they leaned against the cage, looking at the kittens. One opened an eye to see who was looking at them before disentangling itself from the group. It padded silently to the grate where Adrian had stuck his fingers through so it could smell him, his face more animated than Lucius had seen it since the attack. Yes, Severus Snape would put up with the creatures if only to see his child smile again.

**

So, you’re back, the cat mocked as it came over to the grate. Have you chosen which one of us is to go with you, then?

“My uncle said I can, but I don’t know if my father will allow it. If I choose one to go home with me, would you be terribly offended if I have to bring you back?” Adrian asked as he put his fingers into the holes, letting the cat sniff his fingers.

No, we understand that the young of your species aren’t the decision makers, the cat said, eyes half lidded before it yawned again. Adrian knew by now that it didn’t mean the cat was tired, but that it was bored. There wasn’t much to do in the cage, after all. Is your friend to take one of us with him as well?

Adrian blinked in surprise. “Uncle Lucius said he could have one and he really likes you guys. Let me ask.” He turned to look at Draco, knowing his friend had said he wanted one, but not quite sure if he was really taking a kitten home or not. “He wants to know if you’re taking one home too,” he asked his friend.

“Actually, I think I will. After all, we can’t have only one of them hanging around or they’ll get bored by themselves,” Draco said with a sly grin.

Adrian laughed before opening the cage door. At the sound of the latch being released, the other kittens opened their eyes, their attention on the door. The one who’d been sitting padded out of the cage, jumping down to the floor, the others following close behind him.

The boys sat on the floor so they could see the kittens better and laughed as they were swarmed. Each one was different, there was a pure black with light blue eyes. Another was orange with yellow eyes. The third one was brown with brown eyes. The fourth one was black with gray stripes and blue eyes a shade darker than the pure black. Then there was Adrian’s favourite: pure white with black stripes and jade eyes. This one reminded him of a picture he’d seen in a magazine when he’d lived with the Dursleys. It had been about animals in zoos which were endangered. A Siberian white tiger. At the time, Adrian had been in awe of the beautiful animal.

This was his way of owning something so beautiful that he could touch.
I like you, the white kitten purred as it stood up between Adrian’s crossed legs licking at his face while Adrian laughed. You taste of bacon! Does this mean I’m going home with you? he asked suddenly, pulling back to look up at him with extremely intelligent eyes.

“Yes. Do you have a name?” Adrian murmured as he reached out to scratch behind the kitten’s ear. He chuckled softly as the eyes seemed to cross in pleasure, closing to enjoy the caress better.

Oh, yes, he moaned, pressing back against his fingers, purring loudly. Right there. Oh, don’t stop..

We don’t have names. Our owners will give us one. Of course it’s up to us if we actually answer to it, the brown one said in amusement.

“What did they say about the names, Adrian?” Draco asked as he picked up the black kitten, who looked back at him with eyes that didn’t look like she was very impressed at being picked up without permission.

“No, whoever buys them will give them a name, though they might not answer to it if it doesn’t suit them.”

“I like you,” Draco murmured into the kitten’s fur as he held her close, rubbing his fingers into the thick fur of the kitten’s neck. He was pleased when the kitten began to purr. “I think I’ll name you Kaida. It means Dragon.”

Mm, the black kitten said thoughtfully, eyeing Draco. I suppose that’ll do.

Adrian laughed, looking up at his friend in time to see a hurt look in his eyes. “I’m sorry,” he apologized reaching quickly for Draco’s arm. “I wasn’t laughing at the name you chose. I like it, it’s nice. It’s just what she said. She likes the name.”

“Oh,” Draco said with a pleased smile. “I’m you glad you both like it. What are you naming yours?”

“Kanen,” Adrian whispered, sighing in contentment and relaxed even further.

“If you boys are done,” Lucius said suddenly from behind Draco. “I think we should keep going. We have a lot to do today.”

“Yes, Father.”

“Yes, Uncle Lucius.”

They helped the remaining kittens back into the cage and made sure it was secured before carrying their choices in their arms, they followed Lucius to the counter to show what was being taken out to Michael. “So, Adrian,” Michael said with a fond smile, winking playfully. “Have you finally talked someone into letting you bring some pets home with you?”

“Yeah,” Adrian said with a grin. “I don’t know if Father will let me keep them, but…” He shrugged away that concern. “I also have two of the smaller snakes: a black Glossy Crayfish snake and a powder blue Flying snake from last week’s shipment.”

“Allright, I’ll write it into the books as sold. Here’s a tank and some food for the snakes. Did you need anything else?”

“We probably should grab a second tank and things to put into them. I don’t think Aunt Cissa would appreciate it too much if we just left them loose in the Manor… Should we grab one for Malfoy Manor?” he asked, looking up at Lucius.
“That would be fine. We can leave one tank in your room at the Snape Manor and the second at Malfoy Manor,” his uncle agreed. “If you’ll pick out what you want to add to the tanks, we can go on with our shopping.”

Soon, with the two tanks shrunk and inside a bag, they exited the shop. Adrian looked around for Potter and was relieved when he was nowhere to be seen.

“Adrian! Draco!” they heard from the other side of the street. Looking over, Adrian smiled as Fred and George came over to them. “What are you two up to today?” George asked as they nodded to Lucius and Madreca.

“Shopping for school supplies. You?” Adrian asked pleasantly, unable to stop himself from scanning the crowd again. When a third person passed too close to him, he moved to stand between Madreca and Lucius for protection. Ever since the attack, he didn’t like people getting too close to him. It made him uneasy.

“Same,” Fred murmured with a slight frown. Adrian knew the boys had noticed the move but was glad when they made no mention of it. “Who’s this?” the older boy asked, pointing at the kitten on Adrian’s shoulder, looking at everyone walking around.

“This is Kanen. Uncle Lucius said it was alright if I got a pet… though I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep him. Father might not want more pets at home.”

“You never know,” George said with a wink. “He might let you keep him. What’ll be interesting is if you’ll be able to bring him to school with you.”

“I-“ Adrian blinked in surprise. “I never thought of that. I’ll have to talk to Father and see if he can ask the new Headmaster.”

“We’ll see you later, though. Our parents don’t like it when we’re out of sight for too long.” Adrian grinned as they rolled their eyes at the clinginess of some parents. “See you in a few days.”

“See you,” he and Draco called out as the twins left, walking down towards the Apothecary for whatever supplies they needed for Potions class.

The rest of the day passed fairly quiet and soon they were back at Malfoy Manor. They’d gone briefly to Snape Manor so that one snake tank could be set up in his room, placing it on one of his empty shelves. Things were added inside it for the snakes to slither over and under. They seemed to like it. He’d also taken the time to introduce Kanen to the dogs and asked if they could please not fight.

The animals had agreed… grudgingly.

At Malfoy Manor, Adrian and Draco placed the second snake tank in his room there and Adrian set it up the same way he had at home. Currently, the snakes were enjoying the tank as they explored their new home and the space inside it.

“Look, Aunt Cissa,” he said in excitement, holding the kitten out for Narcissa to see. “Uncle Lucius said I could have him. Isn’t he beautiful?”

“He’s very beautiful, Adrian,” she murmured with a smile. He didn’t see the questioning look she sent Lucius or the head shake he sent back in answer because he was looking down at the kitten. “What did you name him?”

“Kanen. He reminds me of a picture I saw in a muggle magazine on wildlife. There was a picture of
a Siberian white tiger that looked just like Kanen. Draco got one, too.”

He watched as her eyes flicked over to Draco, who held the kitten in his arms. “I named her Kaida.”

“Which means… Dragon in Japanese, if I’m not mistaken?” she asked questioningly.

“Yes, Mother. It seemed appropriate.”

“Indeed,” she murmured, running her fingers over his hair so she wouldn’t muss it up. “Why don’t you go settle them into your rooms?”

“Alright!”

They ran off to play as told.

**

Narcissa waited long enough for the sound of their feet to fade before she turned to Lucius with her eyebrows raised in silent question, a hand on her gravid belly.

“Adrian had a slight panic attack while we were shopping when he saw someone in the crowd,” Lucius told her mildly. “I figured I needed to change his thoughts and this was the best solution. It seems we have a child in their year going around calling himself Harry Potter.”

“Really?” she asked in surprise then frowned thoughtfully. “Do you think he might have something to do with what happened to Adrian?”

“I thought of that as well,” he told her with a nod as he helped her over to the couch so she would be more comfortable. “I plan on talking to the Aurors later today.”

“I can’t wait for Adrian to get over this incident,” she said with a tired sigh. “If this kitten helps him, then I’m sure it’ll be worth it. Does Severus know about him yet?”

“No, but the way Adrian lights up when he talks about the kitten will ensure that Severus won’t complain too much about it. Even the snakes can serve a dual purpose.”

“Snakes?” she demanded, eyebrow raised as she saw him wince. “Lucius Malfoy, what else have you forgotten to mention?” she asked sharply.

“When we went into the pet shop, I saw the same boy glaring at Adrian from outside the window,” Lucius murmured as he poured them each a cup of tea, fixing hers as she liked. “So I asked him to show me which animals he liked the best out of all the ones in the shop. He looked so hopeful and animated when he asked if he could have some of the animals – just like before the attack – that I didn’t have the heart to say no.”

Narcissa sighed and shook her head at her husband. “You know for someone who can be a real hard ass, you are such a pushover,” she said with a fond smile as she caressed his cheek. His eyebrow rose at her choice of words but he smirked and kissed her palm.

**

That night, Severus Flooed to Malfoy Manor from his quarters at Hogwarts. He only wanted to gather up his son and go home. He was so tired…

When he entered the living room, he was greeted with Adrian and Draco on the floor playing with kittens. “Look, Father,” Adrian said in excitement as he jumped to his feet, holding out the kitten for
him to see. “Is it alright if I keep him? And the snakes?”

Severus stopped dead in his tracks, blinking blankly at the animal Adrian was showing him. “When did you get that?” he asked cautiously, taking in the animated way Adrian had as he showed him the kitten. He really didn’t want any more pets. A kitten? And snakes?

Lucius had to be behind this.

“Uncle Lucius said I could bring them home but that I had to ask you if I could keep them,” his son said, confirming his guess, and he watched as some of the excitement dimmed from the beautiful green eyes. “I can take them back if you want.”

He was going to kill Lucius. It was that simple. “How about you play with Draco while I go speak with Lucius and Narcissa,” he murmured instead of answering, smiling reassuringly as Adrian cuddled the kitten, who purred comfortingly.

“Yes, Father.”

As Adrian went back to where Draco sat, Severus glared at the smug look on Lucius’ face, holding out a Scotch for him.

“I see you’re just as much a softy as I am,” Lucius murmured in amusement.

Severus sighed as he accepted the glass, taking a sip of the alcohol, enjoying the burn as it slid down his throat. “What happened today?”

He frowned as he listened to Lucius report about the Potter boy and Adrian’s reaction to the bully. “Something’s got to be done about that boy,” Severus growled darkly, glaring out the window at the shining sun. “Dumbledore set him on this path. One would think he’d be happy to play Harry Potter and leave Adrian alone to be who he wants to be.”

“This is the most I’ve seen him act like his old self since the kidnapping, Severus,” Lucius said softly, watching the boys play with the animals. Even the snakes were playing with them, twisting around first Adrian then Draco as if they were playing a weird game of tag with the kittens.

Severus turned to watch as well, amused by the animals. The game made the boys laugh as they watched the kittens pounce after the snakes, pretending to try to catch the tails slithering out of their reach.

“Has he really been like this all afternoon?” he asked finally, knowing he was going to give in. This was for Adrian… and the snakes could act as bodyguards.

“Only since we got home. He still doesn’t like to be crowded, but then, only time will take care of that. When’s his next appointment with the Mind Healer?”

“In two days,” Severus said with a tired sigh, draining his glass. “And it seems it’s going to be a colleague or something. Mind Healer McKay told me last week that he had a symposium he had to attend this week.” He frowned as a thought occurred to him. He needed to go to Gringotts tomorrow… He needed to check on the Potter Vaults. Something told him that this Potter boy might have tried to access them. He needed to put a stop to that if he had. He couldn’t see the Goblins allowing that to happen, but one could never be too careful. He needed to transfer the name to Adrian’s so that no one would be able to take them from his son.

“Do you think you and Narcissa could watch Adrian tomorrow?”
Lucius looked at him in surprise. “Of course. Where are you going?”

“This business with the Potter boy reminded me that Adrian’s inheritance from the Potters might be accessible to this boy. I think it’s time to investigate where this boy came from because we both know that his real name isn’t Potter.”

Lucius turned that over in his head. “Does it really matter if it means Adrian isn’t targeted by Dumbledore? It’s not like he’ll be able to do anything to him this year, especially with the old man no longer in the school.”

“Let’s just say I want to cover all my bases,” Severus said as he put his glass down. “Adrian, it’s time to go.”

“Actually,” Narcissa said as she entered the room from behind the two men, smiling as they jumped in surprise. “Why don’t you let Adrian sleep over tonight?”

“I wanted to spend some time with Father, Aunt Cissa,” Adrian said quietly as he came to stand beside Severus, almost burying himself into his side, kitten sitting beside Adrian’s feet. He felt like cursing himself for his reaction to the animals now. Before Adrian had been back to his normal self but since his hesitation, it seemed Adrian had reverted back to his skittish and insecure ways.

Severus sighed instead as he carded his fingers into his child’s hair. He understood now why Lucius had given into the animals now. If it helped Adrian get over this fear of his, he would allow the boy to keep the three new animals.

“Why don’t we both sleep over,” he asked, smiling gently down at Adrian’s surprised look. He knew Adrian hadn’t expected this. Slowly, the boy nodded, though he didn’t leave Severus’ side. He accepted a second glass of Scotch from Narcissa before leading Adrian over to the couch.

As they sat there, Adrian curled up against his side, he watched curiously as the kitten padded over to his son to rub his head against Adrian’s chin, purring loudly. He frowned as Adrian reached out and ran his hand over the animal’s head but made no move to cuddle it as he had earlier.

“So,” he asked gently as he draped his arm over Adrian. “What did you name him?”

He felt Adrian hesitate a few seconds before looking up at him. “Kaden. It means fighter.”

“If you intend to bring him with you to school, you’ll have to write to the Headmaster and get permission. I know the snakes won’t—” he had to stop as Adrian launched himself at him, hugging him tightly.

“Thank you, Father,” he whispered, his voice muffled by Severus’ robes.

He held Adrian as long as the boy allowed it, cradling him against his chest as he had when Adrian had been four. He rolled his eyes when Kaden crawled between them a look of determination in his eyes, before laying down on Adrian’s chest, purring in contentment.

Adrian giggled in amusement.

“You think that’s amusing?” Severus drawled, lips twitching. Adrian’s smile widened before he nodded. “Oh, really?” he queried before he began tickling the boy, feeling his heart lighten when Adrian’s giggle turned into a full blown laugh, dislodging the kitten, who glared at them from the other side of the couch.

“S-s-stop!” Adrian finally begged when he could finally drag in enough air to speak.
With a contented sigh, Severus held him tighter for a few seconds. “If you write your letter to the Headmaster, I’ll take it to him tomorrow.”

Adrian looked up at him questioningly. “Are you sure about this, Father? About keeping the kitten?”

“Yes, Adrian. I’m sure. Now go write your letter.”

“Yes, sir.” Adrian hesitated a few seconds before kissing Severus on the cheek before bouncing off the couch to write his letter.

* * *

“So Albus Dumbledore has tried to access the Potter vaults using this boy, then,” Severus asked, frowning at the paper the Goblin had handed to him. “Is there a way to change the name on the vaults?”

“It is possible, though not necessary. The name on the account was changed when you filed the custody papers so that no one but you and the boy can access the vaults.”

Severus was surprised by that information. “So then, the name on the vaults is Adrian Snape?”

“Yes. My predecessor thought it wise to change the name on the access so that when young Adrian Snape is able to inherit the vaults, he wouldn’t have any problems.”

“Well, that’s good.”

“If you don’t mind my asking, why is the Headmaster of Hogwarts bringing in a boy with the name of Harry Potter here in the first place? Especially when the boy doesn’t even have the Potter magical signature on him.”

“Albus Dumbledore is no longer Headmaster of Hogwarts. He was sacked when he openly allowed this boy and some of his friends to attack other students in the school,” Severus informed the Goblin. The only sign of surprise he could see was the raised eyebrow. “Has he been passing himself off as Headmaster?”

“Yes, it seems he was in a couple of weeks ago. I’ll have to investigate this…”

* * *

Severus and Madreca sat in the waiting room while Adrian sat with the colleague of Mind Healer McKay inside the room they sat beside. He’d glared angrily when he’d been told he couldn’t go in but Madreca had calmed him down enough to sit down and wait. He also hadn’t liked the look of fear in Adrian’s eyes as he’d been led into the room.

This was a stranger and to the boy, this meant an unknown, someone to fear because he didn’t know what to expect. He should’ve followed his instincts and rescheduled the appointment until McKay got back-

The door was suddenly swung open and a panicked Mind Healer stood there, unsure what to say.

With one look, Severus rushed into the room… to find Adrian sitting on the floor, rocking back and forth, gasping for air. Around him was a mess of broken items and books. It looked like a war zone.

“What in Merlin’s name did you do to him?” Severus snarled as he turned on the Mind Healer as Madreca rushed over to the boy though he didn’t dare touch Adrian.
“N-nothing,” the Mind Healer said in fear at the fury on Severus’ face. “He was fine until I tried a new technique.”

“Severus!”

Madreca’s tone pulled him away from the idiot cowering against the door. He rushed over to his son, cursing the stupidity of some people. “What’s wrong with him?”

“His mind’s in shock.” Madreca rose to his feet, glaring at the Mind Healer. “What exactly did you do to him?”

The man in question gulped in fear, clutching at the door behind him like it could protect him from the rage flashing in the older man’s eyes. He couldn’t even speak, he was so afraid.

Severus ignored them, looking at Adrian in worry. “Adrian,” he murmured softly, not liking the glazed look in his child’s eyes. “Look at me, child.”

Adrian whimpered, reaching up to clutch at his hair, fingers turning white from the effort as he tugged hard on the dark locks. Severus placed his hands on top of his, stopping him from trying to rip the hair out. The touch seemed to bring the boy out of whatever shock he’d been in and he glanced up at him with wide eyes. “It’s alright,” Severus coaxed, smiling encouragingly at him. “Take a deep breath.”

It took a few tries but Adrian finally managed to do as he was told, dragging in a deep breath before letting it out but then he was back to panting in panic.

“Good,” Severus murmured, not releasing his head or hands. “Another.”

By the time Adrian’s breathing began to slow down, tears were flowing down the boy’s face. Severus felt the tension slowly ebb from his body. He didn’t dare touch him more than he was until Adrian was ready for it. He didn’t want to send him spiraling into a full blown panic attack… which, from the state of the office, looked like it had already happened.

Finally, he collapsed in Severus’ hold and he pulled his son to him, cradling his trembling body to his chest. “It’s alright, I’m here,” he whispered into the thick dark hair.

Once Adrian had calmed enough, Severus picked him up. He worried about Adrian’s weight because he knew a twelve year old child should weigh enough that he shouldn’t be able to pick him up without a Lightening spell, but he didn’t need it with Adrian’s light frame. He hadn’t quite recovered from his kidnapping and consequent awakening of his creature, which had whittled even more weight off the boy’s body… weight he could ill afford to lose in the first place.

“You had better have a good lawyer,” Madreca told the trembling man at the door. Severus didn’t know what he’d seen in the Mind Healer’s memories, but for him to be angry enough to delve into another’s mind without asking first, it had to be bad.

Before the Mind Healer could say anymore, they Apparated away.

At Snape Manor, Severus made his way to the couch, still cradling Adrian against him as his son sobbed, his body trembling from the effort to suppress them. He wanted to know what the idiot had done to his child but first he needed to comfort Adrian before he began hyperventilating.

Sitting down, he resisted the urge to roll his eyes as Kanen jumped up onto the couch, silently padding his way over to Adrian, who was curled up against him. The kitten purred comfortingly, the sound just about rattling the animal’s bones apart. When that brought no response, Kanen moved
further up, looking up at Severus warily before ignoring him to lick at the boy’s face.

Severus winced, knowing just how rough a cat’s tongue could be but Adrian didn’t seem to mind. Funny enough, it seemed to calm Adrian down until the boy was down to occasional hick-ups. “Do you want to talk about it?” Severus asked, not really expecting him to say yes.

Adrian clung to him and shook his head vigorously.

Not wanting to push him, Severus simply held his son for a long time, wondering what the Mind Healer had done to push him into a panic attack. From now on, he would wait for McKay to be there seeing as the man already knew how to handle Adrian. He didn’t know where Madreca had disappeared to and at the moment, he didn’t care. His child needed him and he would be there for him.

He lost track of time as he held Adrian. He didn’t even know when the boy had fallen asleep, but when he saw that, he moved so he could lay Adrian on the couch, Kaden curling up beside his head to watch over him.

The cat was turning out to be as good as a guard dog.

Tea appeared on the coffee table beside him when he’d settled Adrian on the couch, a throw blanket covering his slight frame. With a sigh, he settled at the foot of the couch with a cup of tea. He knew he had to get Adrian to talk about what that idiot had done, but not at the expense of his son’s sanity. The idiot had done enough damage…

Madreca entered the living room, sitting in the chair. “Proceedings are in play to sue the idiot Mind Healer,” the older man growled angrily.

“What did he do, Madric?” he asked, using his friend’s nickname. It wasn’t a name he used often…

“He tried to dominate Adrian’s mind,” Madreca snarled, eyes flashing, “trying to drive a wedge into his shields so he could gain access to what he’d been through during his captivity. He almost destroyed Adrian’s mind in his zeal to try something new.”

Severus stared at his friend in shock. “He could’ve driven Adrian insane by doing that!” To invade a child’s mind – or any mind, for that matter – was a gross invasion of privacy. One just didn’t go into someone else’s mind on a whim. Permission was needed in order to do so successfully without having nasty side effects to the person on the receiving end.

“Which is why I’m going to see to it that the moron loses his license for attempting such a thing on a child without the consent of the parent,” Madreca said with a vicious smile. By the time the Spaniard was done with the Mind Healer, he’d be lucky if he had any money left let alone a reputation.

Good.

* * *

It took almost seven visits –three a week – from Mind Healer McKay to undo the damage the other Mind Healer had done. Five of those visits had been at Snape or Malfoy Manors because Adrian would have panic attacks at the mere mention of the words ‘Mind Healer’.

He also wouldn’t go into the office alone.

McKay had been furious at his colleague’s bungling. It had taken him almost the entire first session just to get Adrian calm enough to remain in the same room as the Mind Healer, even with Severus in
the room. It had been an uphill battle, but it had finally paid off with Adrian slowly opening up about his ordeal.

With school starting soon, Severus was glad because he didn’t know what Adrian would do if the nightmares persisted, which had started again after the Mind Healer’s attack. “I’ll come to the school twice a week so we can continue to work on this,” McKay murmured with a disappointed sigh. “I can’t believe Serand did what he did… using a mind attack on a patient.” McKay shook his head in displeasure.

Finally, three days before school began, a happy distraction happened: Narcissa went into labour.

The boys had hoped she would before they had to go back to school because they wanted to meet the new addition to the Malfoy family when he was born. Currently, Adrian was sitting with Draco in the blonde’s room, keeping him company while the baby was being born.

It wasn’t until Lucius came into the bedroom – sometime after lunch – to tell them that they could come see the baby that they actually got to see him, though. Adrian crawled up onto the bed to curl up against Narcissa’s left side as she held the newest addition to the family. He smiled over at Draco, who was on the other side of his mother.

The baby had blonde hair, just like Draco’s but his eyes were blue, like Narcissa’s. He was so small.

“He’s beautiful, Aunt Cissa,” he whispered against her shoulder as he reached out and caressed the baby’s soft cheek. He smiled when tiny fingers reached up to curl around the tip of his finger, blue eyes peering up at them in curiosity.

“What’s his name, Mother?” Draco asked softly.

“Caelum Aries Malfoy,” Narcissa answered, smiling lovingly at the little boy she was holding. Draco sighed in contentment. Adrian knew his friend was glad to have a sibling even though by the time Caelum was old enough to play with, they would be too old to really appreciate him… but then they would be able to take him out on trips instead.

He couldn’t wait. He had a new cousin to play with.

* * *

Adrian could feel the panic trying to overwhelm him as he stood on the platform leading to the train. There were simply too many people pressing in on him…

A hand touched his shoulder, making him jump, and he looked up at Lucius. “Are you ready?”

He became aware of Narcissa standing on the other side of him, smiling comforting. “Come on, Adrian or we’ll be late,” Draco huffed impatiently… though Adrian caught the look of caution in the blonde boy’s eyes. He had a feeling Draco knew he was uncomfortable with the over-crowded platform.

He tried to smile but it didn’t quite make it before it dropped. He wished his father had allowed him to Floo to Hogwarts with him but Severus had told him this was a kind of rite of passage for students: to come to school by train.

The comforting weight of Kanen on his shoulder helped a little… but his legs felt frozen in place until he was shoved from behind. He whirled around with a look of fear, ignoring the claws digging into his shoulder as it jostled the kitten.
“It’s alright, Adrian,” Narcissa said soothingly as she moved closer to him. “It won’t be so bad once you’re on the train.”

He allowed himself to be led to the doors, their presence insuring that no one would crowd too close to him. Draco grabbed his hand and pulled him onto the train when he hesitated again. He could feel tears burning in his eyes as everything overwhelmed him again. The press of bodies making his panic go up another notch.

He was relieved when Draco pulled him into a compartment facing the platform so they could wave goodbye to the Malfoys, shutting the door on all the noise. Draco pulled him over to the window, pushing him down onto the seat. “Deep breaths, Adrian,” he coaxed softly as he sat beside him after waving to his parents. “The worst is over.”

“Until we get to school,” Adrian said with a slightly hysterical laugh, a tear falling down his face. Kanen jumped off his shoulder and onto the bench between them as he wrapped his arms around himself, bending so that his head rested close to his knees as he tried to breathe through the panic. He didn’t see the frown of concern on his friend’s face.

The door to their compartment opened and some of their friends entered, laughing and joking… until they saw Adrian. “I’ll be back,” he whispered to Draco as he got up. He needed to use the bathroom, his stomach cramping painfully.

He didn’t realize Kanen followed him until he closed the door to the loo, making it before he was sick. He didn’t even have time to lock the door. When he was done, he splashed water in his face, trying to not look at himself in the mirror. The glamour he’d cast before leaving the house had fallen as he threw up and he didn’t want to see the effects of so much weight lost.

His cheeks were sunken and his clothes hung on his frame but what could he do when every time he panicked whatever he’d eaten came back up? Nutrient potions only did so much…

Kanen meowed beside his feet. Are you feeling better? he asked as Adrian picked him up, glad the Headmaster had allowed them to bring the kittens with them to school. Kaida had stayed in the compartment with Draco, which was alright since she was his anyway.

“No, but it doesn’t matter,” Adrian whispered as he rubbed his cheek against the soft white fur. With a sigh, he took out his wand and re-cast the glamour spell so no one would see how bad he looked. “Let’s go back.”

He was surprised when he realized Goyle was standing at the door, back to him, glaring at anyone who dared try to enter. Adrian was grateful for the protection. He smiled slightly as he placed a hand on the heavy shoulder. With a nod, Goyle led the way back to the compartment, glaring at a first year who dared get in his way.

No one said anything when Adrian entered again, simply nodding as he sat down. Looking out the window, he smiled at Narcissa, waving briefly just as the train began to move. Lucius looked worried, but he nodded and smiled thinly before they were out of sight.

“-she’s the last of us Weasleys,” Fred was saying jokingly, grinning at the others.

“Well, I for one am glad there won’t be any more,” George quipped pleasantly, eye glinting mischievously.

“How’s that?” Blaise asked curiously.

“Can you imagine if Weasleys were to start school every year?” Fred asked with his eyebrows
raised. “Pretty soon, the whole school would be overrun by us!”

Everyone but Adrian laughed, though he did smile. *Try to sleep, young master,* Kanen murmured as he draped himself on Adrian’s shoulders, watching everyone carefully. He didn’t think he could but the gentle swaying motion of the train soon had his eyes closing… and he was so tired….

”*Give this to someone in first year,*” a man’s voice murmured.

”*Does it matter who?*” a younger male voice asked.

”*No. It’ll do the rest of the job. Just make sure you’re not caught giving it to the first year.*”

**

Adrian woke up slowly, becoming aware that he was laying down with his head pillowed against someone’s side, someone too tall to be Draco. This was the first time in days that he hadn’t had a nightmare…

Frowning, he opened his eyes, surprised to hear hushed voices from his friends. Opposite from him sat Pansy, Blaise, Nott, Crabbe and Goyle, which left Draco, Neville and the twins. It took him a few seconds more to realize Draco was sitting beside his feet, which were now on the bench with Neville sitting under the window, reading a book.

With a sigh – not really wanting to move but deciding he had to – he pulled his feet out from behind Draco and pushed himself into a sitting position. Apparently Fred had decided to be his pillow and George sat on the floor under the window by the door beside his brother. “Have a nice nap?” Fred asked, serious for once.

Adrian nodded and smiled at his friend. “Thanks.”

”*We’ll have to change soon,*” Draco said from beside him as he got up to collect his robes, gaining the group’s attention.

”*Well,*” Pansy said with a sigh. “*That’s my queue to go change in the bathroom. I’ll leave you boys to get dressed. I’ll wait outside until the curtains open up.*”

By the time everyone had changed, Adrian felt tired again. Lack of food, he knew, was the reason behind it. He blinked in surprise when Draco held out a couple of potions for him to take. “Pepper-up and Appetite Enhancer. Uncle Sev’s orders. Then you’re to eat the food he sent.”

He downed the potions without comment and accepted the bag of grapes, cheese and Honeydew melon Draco gave him. Adrian was grateful to his father for sending him something, though he wasn’t hungry. He’d been too wired before they left the Manor to even think of bringing anything to eat. “*Thanks.*”

”*Any time,*” Draco said with a smirk as he sat beside him. “*Did you bring the snakes, too?*” he asked as Adrian popped a grape into his mouth.

He shook his head as Kanen crawled onto his lap, sniffing appreciatively at the bag. Adrian broke off a piece of cheese and gave it to the kitten then broke off another for Kaida who was looking at him with a slighted look. “*Father took them with him this morning along with the tank and food,*” he finally said after he’d swallowed the food, glad when it didn’t try to lodge halfway down. “*They should be in our room when we get there.*”

”*Kaida, stop begging,*” Draco said in amusement as the black kitten licked her mouth, eyeing the bag
of food in Adrian’s hand with interest.

*But that was so good,* she said, looking up at Adrian in silent demand for more.

She was soon joined by Kanen. *Mm, more, please.*

Adrian laughed as he gave them both another piece of cheese. “She likes the cheese,” he explained to his friends.

“It’s not for her, though,” Draco said in exasperation as he snagged a grape from the bag, popping it into his mouth.

“Sure it isn’t,” Fred said as he pulled his robes on, grinning in amusement.

“What?” Draco asked in confusion. Everyone laughed as Adrian shook his head and popped another grape into his friend’s mouth before eating another one. It didn’t bother him to share with Draco and the kittens because there was no way he was going to eat all of it anyway.

Severus Snape insisted Adrian snack during the day until he worked his appetite up again and regained some of the weight he’d lost. He was to see the Mediwitch after supper. Madam Pomfrey insisted.

Just so he could honestly say he’d had some of each, he ate three more grapes, a piece of cheese, sharing a second between the kittens then a couple pieces of Honeydew melon before he was done. He put the rest into one of his pockets after popping another grape in his mouth. He’d have some more later… maybe.

“Did anyone see Potter at the station?” Nott asked curiously before he became the target of several people’s glares. Adrian paled at the mention of the name, inhaling abruptly just as some of the juice from the grape slid down his throat.

He began to choke.

He was up and rushing for the loo when he couldn’t get control of the coughing, feeling the food coming back up. He didn’t quite make it, though he was at least in the bathroom when it decided to come out. He heard the door close behind him but couldn’t concentrate enough to turn and see who it was.

By the time he got his breathing under control, his stomach was empty again. He accepted the glass of water that was offered to him and gratefully rinsed out his mouth before collapsing back against the wall, sliding down to sit on the floor.

“Well, so much for eating,” Draco said from across the tiny room.

Adrian shrugged tiredly, clearing his throat. “My own fault,” he croaked out before clearing his throat again. “Went down the wrong tube.”

“Come on,” Draco sighed as he held out his hand to Adrian. “Let’s go back to the cabin where it’s more comfortable.”

Adrian allowed his friend to help him up off the floor, noting absently that the mess had been cleaned up, and back to the compartment where the others waited… except for Crabbe and Goyle, their ever-present guards. He collapsed onto the seat, closing his eyes so he could relax and not watch the scenery whizzing dizzyingly by, his forehead pressed against the cool window…
Draco waited for Adrian to be asleep before he cast a Silencing spell around the boy. Then proceeded to tear into Nott for the thoughtless question.

“You just had to ask, didn’t you?” Pansy demanded angrily before he could, when she was sure she wouldn’t wake up the boy across from her.

“I didn’t think,” Nott apologized quickly, eyes wide. “I’m sorry!”

“It is a good question, though,” Neville murmured softly. “If anyone saw Potter at the train station, it means we’ll have to keep an eye on him so he doesn’t hurt Adrian again. It was just poor timing that he’d been eating when Nott asked the question.”

Draco sighed as he looked at his friend, feeling the anger melt away. After all, Adrian had pretty much said the same thing. “Neville’s right. Besides, we can’t keep avoiding the subject around Adrian. He’s going to be seeing that bully for the entire year at school. He’s going to have to get used to Potter being around.”

“So what do we do?” Crabbe asked with a frown.

“We make sure he’s never walking around the school alone,” George answered with a shrug. “Aside from that, there’s nothing much we can do. Potter and Ronald are going to be pain in the asses but without Dumbledore there to back them up, this year should be fairly quiet.”

“Exactly,” Fred agree. “The real test is going to be if we can keep him from bolting when he’s crowded.”

“If we keep him in the center, we should be able to keep people at a proper distance until he’s used to it again,” Draco said, rubbing at his forehead. Severus had foreseen something like this happening – well, the reaction to the name Potter, anyway – but he hadn’t counted on the crowd factor… or maybe he had.

“Let’s make him more comfortable, then,” George murmured as he picked Adrian up. He motioned for Draco to sit by the window and he propped the sleeping boy against him, head on Draco’s shoulder as the blonde boy wrapped his arms around his friend. His legs were propped up against the seat before the twins sat down, using their bodies to keep Adrian on the seat as he slept.

They knew that with their help, their friend would get better… if they could keep Potter away from him.
Chapter 5 - Snakes And Dogs And Friends Oh My!

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 5 – Snakes And Dogs And Friends… Oh My!

When Adrian awoke this time, he felt better though no less tired. Instead of leaning against the window, though, he was reclining against Draco. Someone had moved him so that his legs were resting against the back of the seat. George was sitting on the edge of the seat beside him.

Two potions were presented to him again. “Let’s try this again,” Draco murmured with a wry look. “We’re about three hours from Hogwarts. Uncle Sev wants you to take another set when we get there so you can eat supper.”

Sighing in resignation, he took the phials from Draco and downed them obediently before pulling the bag of food from his pocket. The thought of eating made his stomach turn after being sick twice in one day, but he knew his father was insisting he eat so he would do it for him.

He laughed as the kittens crawled out from under his legs at the sound of the bag, blinking sleepily up at him. Can we have some more cheese? Kanen asked in interest as he climbed Adrian’s legs to get closer to the bag.

Adrian winced as the claws dug through the cloth on his legs. “Claws, Kanen,” he complained with a hiss. “That hurts.”

Sorry, the kitten apologized with a look of contrition in his eyes as he pulled most of his claws out of the material, leaving out just enough to climb without gouging the skin. Better?

“Yes, thank you,” Adrian smiled, giving a piece of cheese to each kitten. He rolled a grape between his fingers, looking at it with little interest.

“Eat,” Draco admonished gently near his ear. “You won’t get stronger if you don’t eat.”

Sighing in resignation, he popped it into his mouth, chewing slowly. He managed to eat the same amount as before, breaking off pieces of cheese for the kittens as he ate. By this time, he was sitting properly on the seat, giving the others more room to sit. Neville sat beside him, still looking through the book in his hands.

“What’re you reading?” Adrian asked him curiously.

“It’s a book on herbs and their effects in potions. It’s actually quite interesting,” Neville said with an excited look on his face. “My Gran got it for me when she saw that my marks were higher in Herbology than any other subject.”

“How is your Gran dealing with you being in Slytherin?”

Neville shrugged indifferently. “When she saw how well I was doing in my classes, she unbent enough to allow me to remain in this house. I think she worried that I would be picked on or something.”

“I’m glad.” Adrian said with a genuine smile. He liked this boy. He was quiet but a good friend. The rest of the ride passed fairly quietly. Everyone began joking and teasing each other, relaxing enough to enjoy the solitude.
When they got to Hogwarts, Adrian was relieved when his friends used their bodies to shield him from the worst of the pressing bodies when they left the train and mounted the carriages that would take them to the castle. Those who couldn’t fit in the carriage mounted a second one. The kittens crawled over to whoever was closest to the windows and stared outside in open curiosity.

“Here,” Draco said with a sigh, holding out two more phials. Smiling in thanks, Adrian downed the potions, feeling better with his friends helping to protect him than he had since leaving the Manor that morning.

At the castle, they waited for the other carriage before attempting to enter the crowded entrance.

Adrian was placed on one side of their group, the others deflecting most of the crowd away from him – which he was grateful for – until he was grabbed from behind. A hand hauled him away from his friends. He didn’t even have time to panic, just managing to grab futilely at Draco before he was yanked back. In his surprise, however, he dropped Kanen, who protested loudly, following close behind him with an angry growl, Kaida on his heels.

“Don’t think you’re going to get away without doing what the old man wants,” Potter growled in his ear. “I think it’s time for a… heart to heart talk,” Potter smirked evilly, before he yelped loudly as two kittens sunk their teeth and claws into one of his legs, gaining the attention of those around them.

“What is the meaning of this?”

Minerva McGonagall had never been such a gods send as she did now as Potter attempted to drag Adrian into the castle…

“Nothing, Professor McGonagall,” Potter murmured pleasantly as Adrian tried to pull his arm out of his hold, Draco and the rest of their group coming to a halt beside him, glaring at Potter.

“Then I suggest you release Mr. Snape and get to your table,” she said sternly, glaring at the boy. “And Potter,” she said before he could get too far. “That’ll be ten points from Gryffindor for accosting a fellow student.” She turned to look at Adrian, never losing her stern mask, though she reached out and squeezed his shoulder in comfort. “Get inside,” she said gently as the rest of their group crowded around him.

With that, the Gryffindor Head of House nodded briskly before she continued on, reprimanding a few other students. “I never thought I’d see her take points off her own house,” George said in surprise, having caught that part before they’d reached them.

Following the older woman’s order, Adrian and Draco picked up their kittens before making their way into the Great Hall. Severus was standing inside the doors, glaring at stragglers who dared bar the entrance. When he saw Adrian and the others enter, he gestured for Draco to remain behind.

Hesitating slightly, Adrian followed the others to their table, cuddling the kitten closer. “Thank you,” he whispered into Kanen’s ear.

No one touches what’s mine, Kanen grumbled, still out of sort and glaring at those around them.

Quite a few people stopped to look at the kitten as Adrian walked over to the table, Crabbe and Goyle bracketing him. He wasn’t surprised when an empty space was left between himself and Goyle. This would be for Draco when he was done.

A few minutes later, Draco slid into the space beside him with a sigh. “Your father wants to talk to you when you’re done with Madam Pomfrey.”

Adrian’s eyebrow rose as he looked at his friend, fingers digging into the thick fur of Kanen’s neck.
The purr of happiness was loud, even with all the people talking loudly. “Did he say why?”

“No, you know how he is.”

With a sigh, Adrian settled for listening to the Sorting, hoping for this to go quickly so he could go down to the common room and then bed. Despite the naps he’d had, he was still tired… of course, he tired quickly right now. He couldn’t wait until he was better again.

“Good evening,” the Headmaster said from the podium, smiling pleasantly at everyone. “My name is Richard Anderson and I’ll be replacing Albus Dumbledore as Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I hope you’ll behave yourselves this year.”

Everyone clapped politely, looking interested in what the Headmaster had to say.

“First of all, to the first years, please be advised that the Forbidden Forest is names thus for a reason. Please stay away from it. Now there are also some changes made to the teachers of this wonderful school. History of Magic will now be taught by my wife, Professor Irene Anderson.”

The cheering at this pronouncement was loud. They would actually be learning something!

“Some classes are going to be doubled up to give some certain teachers some much needed help. In Potions class, all first, third, and fifth years will be taught by Professor Weathervane and the other years will be taught by Professor Snape as usual.” As he named the classes, the teachers rose to their feet with a smile… well the new teachers, anyway. Each introduction brought a round of applause to greet the new people. Adrian could tell that his father was glad for the help by the way his mouth didn’t tighten up when the new Potions teacher was introduced.

“Transfiguration will be done the same with Professor Ramira Variel teaching first, third and fifth years and Professor McGonagall will teach the other years.” The new teacher, Professor Variel, rose to her feet nodding pleasantly to the room.

”Defense against the Dark Arts with be taught by Professor Sezja Sigmund for first, third and fifth years and Professor Venger will teach the other years. As for First year Herbology, you’ll be starting with Professor Jaclyn Fargrove. She’ll help out Professor Sprout with the other years as needed.

“Now, there’s going to be some classes added to the schedule that not everyone will recognize but will be mandatory for every year but don’t worry, your schedule will reflect these changes. So those who would’ve gotten a free period will have it filled with the new classes.”

There was a lot of whispering at that, but everyone quieted quickly when they realized that Headmaster Anderson was waiting for them to listen. “If there’s any question about your schedules, please don’t hesitate to speak to either myself or any of the Heads of House. Enjoy your supper.”

Food appeared on the tables indicating the start of the feast. Across the hall, Adrian could see Potter and Weasley glaring in their direction… no big change there.

Surprisingly enough, the last Weasley, Ginny, had been placed in Slytherin along with a girl named Luna. He thought she was a little odd, her eyes vague and dreamy. If there were two least likely to be Slytherins it was those two, but if the Hat said that was where they belonged, then who was he to argue?

Draco nudged him when he didn’t fill his plate, jarring him out of his thoughts. So what are we having for supper? Kanen asked as he peered over the edge of the table from his seat on Adrian’s lap. I smell meat.
Without a word, Adrian picked up a drumstick and placed it on the seat beside him for Kanen, then another one for Kaida when she huffed. Really? she said in disgust. Is it so hard to remember me?

“Sorry, Kaida,” he murmured softly as he ran his fingers over her back.

“What did she say?” Draco asked as he watched his kitten lick delicately at the meat before ripping the skin off.

“She’s annoyed because I keep leaving her out of whatever I give Kanen.”

Draco laughed at that, running his own fingers over her sleek fur. “I’m sorry, too, Kaida.” They were ignored as both kittens tore into their respective supper. Adrian placed some food onto his plate, though when compared to everyone else’s plates, it was very little.

He managed to eat some potatoes, two or three bites of meat and a couple forkfuls of vegetable before he felt full. He spent the rest of the time toying with his fork and sipping from a glass of pumpkin juice.

“Adrian, where did you get the kittens?” Nott asked after they’d been sitting for a while.

“The pet shop I work at during the summer had them,” he told the other boy with a proud smile.

“Really?” Pansy asked in interest. “Where’d they come from?”

“I’m not quite sure,” Adrian said with a frown. “Michael, the shop manager, said a lady wanted to make money off them so she sold them to him.”

“So was black and white the only colours you could get?” Blaise asked, stuffing a chicken leg into his mouth, fat, bone and all.

Adrian shuddered at the move, feeling his stomach flip uneasily. “Um… no, there were three others but I liked Kanen when I first saw him. He reminded me of a picture I saw when I was little of a cat being held in captivity at a zoo. They’re called Siberian White tigers or Bengal tigers.”

Blaise seemed to realize what he’d done and smiled sheepishly. “Sorry,” he apologized as he picked up a new drumstick, picking the meat off it instead of gnawing the meat off like he had the previous piece. “So what were the other colours?”

“There was an orange one, a brown one and a black with grey stripes. As far as I know, those ones are still at the shop.” He smiled when Kanen crawled onto his lap so he could see above the table. “Did you want more chicken?” he asked the kitten.

No, but I could use something to drink.

“Oh,” Adrian said as he picking up the jug of milk, pouring some into his empty plate and putting it between the two kittens. “Sorry about that.”

“Do you really understand them?” Pansy asked as she watched him, fascinated by the interaction.

Adrian looked around them uncomfortably, not wanting to answer that question. He didn’t want to advertise the fact that he understood animals. There was no telling how some people would react. He was saved by Draco, who hissed sharply at the girl. “Not here! Some discussion should remain private.”

Pansy clamped her mouth shut on her next question, nodding in understanding as she looked around
her, her cheeks tinting at her slip.

It wasn’t soon enough for supper to be done for Adrian because conversation was slightly strained after that. “I’ll see you when you get back to the common room,” Draco told him as they waited a little for the crowd to thin out before leaving the Great Hall.

“You’re not coming with me?” he asked quietly, trying to quell the fear rising in him at the thought of going somewhere by himself. He knew he was relatively safe in the school… but then he’d thought he’d been safe in first year then he’d gotten beaten up.

“I’ll be taking you,” he heard from behind him and felt relief flood through him as he recognized his father’s voice. “Come along, Adrian.”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian murmured as he picked up Kanen before standing up.

“We’ll see you later, Adrian,” Blaise called out as his friends melted into the crowd.

The halls were nearly empty when they made their way up the stairs towards the infirmary. “Did you eat on the train?” Severus asked him gently. He pulled out the bag to show his father before putting it back in his pocket. “That’s not what I asked you, Adrian.”

Adrian sighed as he rubbed his cheek against the kitten, taking in the comforting warmth of the animal in his arms. “I did eat a little but then I was sick when I choked on a grape,” he said finally, knowing his father was waiting for an answer. “I did eat more after a nap, though, and it did stay down.”

Severus nodded in approval. “And this morning?”

Adrian was distracted – on purpose – from answering him when Kanen decided he wanted to climb onto his shoulder but when he risked a look at his father, he knew he wasn’t getting out of answering him. “I ate a little.”

“But?”

“I was sick before the train left the station,” he said quietly.

“It’s alright to tell me this, Adrian,” Severus murmured after a few minutes of walking and no comment was made. “I know it’s going to be hard for you to get used to crowds. You simply have to remain calm and not let your nerves get the better of you. It will get better as time progresses.”

“Yes, Father.”

“I heard that Potter grabbed you when you arrived at the Castle. What happened?”

“He said the old man isn’t giving up. He also wanted to have a ‘heart to heart’.”

Heart to heart my ass, Kanen growled angrily. He’s lucky all we did was bite his leg!

Adrian’s lips twitched at the language and saw his father’s eyebrow rise at the kitten’s growl. “What else happened, Adrian?”

“The kittens didn’t like the fact that he was dragging me away from everyone so they bit his leg. His scream drew McGonagall’s attention. She took points from her own house for it.”

“Really?” Severus drawled in amusement as he pushed the door to the infirmary open, gesturing for Adrian to go ahead of him. “Perhaps it was a good idea to get you the kitten after all.”
“Ah, Mr. Snape,” Pomfrey said as she came out of her office, smiling gently down at him. “I thought perhaps you’d forgotten your appointment.”

“No, Ma’am,” he said quietly.

“So serious,” she sighed as she led him towards a bed. “Tell your cat to hop down, please. I need to run some diagnostic scans.” She made a sound of amusement when Kanen hopped off Adrian’s shoulder, sitting on the bed beside him with great dignity. “Thank you,” she murmured to the kitten, laughing when the kitten dipped his head slightly before proceeding to wash his front paw.

Pulling her wand out, she cast several spells, each one producing a sheet of paper for her to read. Once read, she handed them over to Severus to read. “Well,” she said after the fifth scan, smiling in satisfaction at whatever the papers said. “You’re recovering well. Still a few lingering pains, but then that’s to be expected with the amount of damage you had. How is your hip feeling?”

“It hurts when I’m tired, making me limp but, other than that, it doesn’t really bother me.”

“Any other pains?”

Adrian hesitated, looking up at his father in silent question. At his discreet nod, Adrian cancelled the Glamour he had on himself. The Mediwitch looked slightly surprised at his appearance. “My dear boy,” she murmured softly, running her fingers through his thick locks, eyes sad, noticing when he flinched slightly. “How has your appetite been?”

“I’ve been working with him to get his appetite up to normal again but it’s been an uphill battle,” Severus answered for him as Adrian put the Glamour back on, averting his eyes from the woman. “When he panics, his stomach is usually the first thing to act up.”

“When was the last time you were sick, child?” the woman asked softly as she pulled a chair closer, careful not to crowd him.

“Three or four hours before we got here,” he told her, his fingers clutching at his pants fretfully.

“Did you eat after that?”

He nodded jerkily. “A few grapes, a piece of cheese and two pieces of honeydew melon.”

“That’s better than nothing,” she said with a smile. “Now, I’m going to give you a note to carry with you and I want you to have fruit of some kind on you at all times. You’re going to have to eat several times a day as well as eating as much as possible at meals. If you eat one bite more than the last meal, we’ll have you eating properly in no time. Do you think you can do that?”

He swallowed thickly at the thought of forcing more food down than necessary. He was having a hard time now and she wanted him to eat more?

“Talk to me, Adrian,” she told him softly, covering his hand with hers before Severus could stop her, hoping to comfort him, but he felt himself tense up. Since the attack, he didn’t like being touched out of turn.

He jumped up, wincing as he knocked his heel on the metal frame, but he ignored the pain to move away from the woman, eyes wide with fear, having a hard time drawing breath.

“I’m sorry,” she apologized immediately, holding her hands out in front of her to show she meant him no harm but the damage was done. Adrian’s stomach, which hadn’t settled after Blaise’s gross display, decided it had had enough of all the ups and down of his nerves and he was rushing for the
bathroom to be sick.

He didn’t hear the conversation that took place while his stomach heaved. Soon he felt strong arms come around him, holding him up when his knees refused to hold him when he was done. “I have you,” his father murmured, cradling him against his chest. He closed his eyes as he was carried back to the bed, feeling tired again. When a phial was pressed against his mouth, he opened obediently, knowing his father wouldn’t allow him to take just anything. It seemed to ease his stomach, telling him it was a Calming potion.

“I’m going to recommend that he carry Calming potions on him at all times,” Madam Pomfrey murmured with a saddened sigh. “Adrian,” she said softly, though she didn’t touch him. He opened his eyes to look at her. “I want you to try eating more, but don’t force yourself if it’ll make you sick, alright?”

He nodded slowly. Talking was too much of an effort at the moment.

“I want to see you again after supper every night until I’m satisfied that you’re gaining weight.” She held some potion phials out to him. “These you’re to take before your meals, not your snacks but meals,” she stressed. “It’s stronger than the Appetite Enhancer you’re to take with your snacks.”

Adrian heard Severus make a sound of protest as he took the phials from her but he didn’t move to look up at the man.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said with a nod to Severus. The kitten followed behind them as his father helped him out of the infirmary but instead of heading down to the dungeons, he was led elsewhere.

“Where are we going, Father?” he asked tiredly, only wanting to sleep.

“The Headmaster wanted to talk to you,” Severus said, tightening his hold on his arm when Adrian struggled slightly in panic. “No, I won’t leave the room. This needs to be done, Adrian. He won’t harm you while I’m there.”

He sighed in relief as he realized what his father was saying. He would remain in the room with him. His father held out another phial to him and he took it without question. The Pepper-Up potion went down easily and he felt a little better.

At the top of the stairs to the Headmaster’s office, Severus knocked once. They didn’t have to wait long as the door swung open, revealing a very different room. Gone were all of Dumbledore’s weird objects, replaced with shelves of books against the wall. Adrian had never realized just how cluttered the room had been until now.

“Ah, Professor Snape,” Headmaster Anderson murmured pleasantly, shaking his hand. “I assume you’re Adrian, then?” He smiled as he held out his hand to shake Adrian’s. He hesitated slightly, unsure of this man but his manners wouldn’t allow him to be rude so he shook the hand in front of him, moving unconsciously closer to his father when he released it.

“Yes, sir,” he answered politely, smiling slightly at his wife, Irene. “Ma’am.”

“I won’t keep you long,” the Headmaster murmured as he sat down. “Tea?” He didn’t seem offended when they refused. “I understand there’s a problem between you and Mr. Potter. I hoped you could clarify why that is.”

“Headmaster,” Severus began with a frown. “The boy seems to have an unhealthy obsession with Adrian for reasons only his delusional mind can understand.”
He stopped when the Headmaster held up a hand. “Adrian?”

“He seems to think I’m someone I’m not, sir,” Adrian began softly. Telling the man this cost him nothing and would pave the way for anything Potter told anyone else, making the boy a liar. “For some odd reason, he seems to think I’m Harry Potter even though that’s his name and not mine.”

“Is that what the altercation was about tonight? I hear Professor McGonagall had to get involved.”

“Yes, sir,” he whispered, his grip tightening on Kanen until the kitten protested. “Sorry, Kanen. He said he wanted to have a ‘heart to heart’ talk with me. The last time, he and his friends beat me up and left me in a closet. I don’t think talking was on his mind.”

The Headmaster looked thoughtful as he turned over this information in his head. “Interesting.” What exactly he found interesting, Adrian didn’t know. “I also heard about a little adventure you had this summer. How are you feeling?”

Adrian paled at that. He hadn’t thought anyone outside his family and friends had heard about that. He dimly heard his father answer sharply. “That will be enough, Headmaster.”

“Severus, a word if you please?” the Headmaster murmured as he rose to his feet, gesturing for Severus to move away a bit.

Adrian couldn’t seem to get enough air as he wondered what was going around the school if the Headmaster knew of his abduction. He knew the Aurors hadn’t believed him when he’d told them he’d been taken against his will…

“Breathe, child,” Irene murmured, reaching out to touch his leg. Adrian jumped out of the chair, ignoring the growl from Kanen as he dropped the kitten in his haste to get away from the woman. He saw her lips move but couldn’t make out what she was saying through the buzzing in his ears. He backed away from her as she moved towards him, whimpering in fear when he encountered the wall.

The last thing he saw before the room went dark was Kanen standing between them, hair standing on end, glaring at the woman, refusing to let her near him.

**

Severus followed Headmaster Anderson a little ways from where his child sat, panting in fear. “You will desist on trying to rile my son into a panic attack, Headmaster,” he growled angrily after he felt the Silencing charm cast.

“I need to see just how far he can be pushed and what the consequences are if he does have a panic attack, Severus,” the American said calmly. “Would you rather he harms some of the students?”

“All you are accomplishing is traumatizing my son. Adrian would never harm anyone and his friends will help make sure he’s not pushed into a panic attack,” Severus told him stiffly, watching as the woman went to sit beside Adrian. He moved quickly – but not quickly enough – as she reached out to touch him. “Damn it,” he snarled as Adrian jumped to his feet and backed away from her.

Before he could do anything, he watched as the kitten placed himself between Adrian and the woman, growling menacingly, tail swishing angrily. “Don’t touch him,” Severus ordered as he moved to his child’s side just as Adrian’s eyes rolled into the back of his head, glamour breaking with the stress. “Are you satisfied?” he snarled angrily as he picked Adrian up off the floor.

“This was not my intent, Severus,” Headmaster Anderson said with a sigh of regret as they watched Adrian collapsed. He saw the look of horror on Irene’s face as they got a good look at what Adrian’s
captive had done to the boy.

“The last time someone tried something that was supposed to help him, they nearly drove him insane. I will thank you not to use him as a goddamn guinea pig again. Come, Kanen. Good day, sir.” With that, he stalked out of the Headmaster’s office, carrying Adrian in his arms.

**

“What do you think?” Irene asked softly a few minutes after the Potions master had left, having gotten over the shock of Adrian’s appearance.

“I think we miss judged just how much stress that child can take,” Richard said with an unhappy sigh. “I don’t think he’ll trust me again after this, however.”

“We needed to know if he was a danger to the school,” Irene murmured soothingly. “Especially with the visit from that Auror warning us about the Potter boy’s obsessions with young Mr. Snape. There were also too many rumours flying around about wild magic in some of the students and we know firsthand how destructive it can be.”

“Did we?” he asked, running a hand through his hair. “Did we really need to know that badly? As far as we know, he’s never displayed any sign of wild magic and the Auror didn’t go into specifics. There’s no telling if he even has any wild magic in him.”

“That we know of,” she corrected him. “It could simply be that he’d require more to drive him into using it.”

“I won’t be putting him through that again. It’s Mr. Potter we’ll have to keep an eye on. I agree with Severus and the Auror,” he said as he pulled her into his arms, seeking comfort. “He does have an unhealthy obsession with the Snape boy.”

“Him and the red-headed boy who sat with him at supper,” she corrected him with a soft smile. “At least the boy has enough people willing to stand up for him.”

“Hm.”

* * *

Severus stalked all the way to his quarters, bypassing the Slytherin common room to make sure the idiot Headmaster hadn’t caused lasting damage to Adrian’s psyche. Mind Healer McKay was not going to be happy with this…

Once in his rooms, he placed Adrian on the couch before casting an Enervate on the child. With the way he’d panicked before fainting, he didn’t dare hold him before he was aware of who was holding him. He barely spared Kanen a glance as the kitten jumped up onto the back of the couch, watching Adrian intently.

“Enervate,” he murmured softly, watching his son closely. He smiled encouragingly as beautiful green eyes were revealed as Adrian blinked in confusion at him. “How do you feel?”

Adrian frowned as he looked around. “Tired. What happened?”

Severus froze momentarily, wondering if Adrian’s creature had awakened again because of all the ups and downs in Adrian’s reactions. He wanted to sigh in relief as Adrian’s eyes widened as he remembered what the Headmaster and his wife had put him through. He was relieved, however, when Adrian crawled into his arms and cried. This was the reaction he had hoped for. This told him
there would be no lasting effects to what had happened in the office.

He held the boy, making comforting sounds, but otherwise remained silent. He knew the only reason Adrian hadn’t been sick in the Headmaster’s office was twofold: one, he had nothing left in his stomach and two because of the Calming potion he’d given him after throwing up in the infirmary.

It was quite some time before Adrian was calm enough, his crying reduced to the occasional hiccup, though he remained curled up on Severus’ lap. “Feel better?”

Adrian shook his head. “Why?” he asked brokenly.

Severus wanted to curse at the stupidity of some people as he held Adrian tighter. “They wanted to see if you were a danger to the other students. I told them not to do it again.” He felt Adrian shudder slightly but didn’t move again.

It was quite some time before he managed to rouse Adrian enough to lead him to the Common room, glamour firmly back in place, where his friends waited anxiously for him. “I’ll see you in the morning. Remember to eat.”

“Yes, Father.”

Severus hesitated slightly, recognizing the tone. Adrian was done with food for the day. Hopefully Draco would manage to get him to eat something. He gave a brief nod to Draco, satisfied when the blonde boy nodded back, and left his child in the capable hands of his friends.

**

Draco frowned worriedly as he watched his friend sit beside him, distracted and listless. What the hell had they done to Adrian to change him so drastically? He managed to coax the dark haired boy to eat a little.

Later that night, after everyone had gone to sleep, Draco frowned sleepily as he felt someone climb into bed with him. It took him a few seconds to realize who it was. With a sigh, he turned over and wrapped an arm around Adrian’s shoulder, pulling him closer to him.

“What happened, Adrian?” he asked softly after waving his wand to draw the curtains and cast a Silencing charm around them. Kanen and Kaida grumbled slightly as they settled at the foot of the bed, laying together with sighs.

“I had another panic attack while we were talking to the Headmaster,” Adrian said after a few minutes of silence. “How could they know about what happened this summer?”

“I don’t know. Maybe someone told them?” Draco murmured next to his ear. “Try to sleep. It’s going to be a long day tomorrow.”

“Alright,” Adrian whispered, curling into a ball. They were quiet for a few minutes, enough that Draco thought maybe his friend had fallen asleep. “Thanks, Draco.”

“You’re welcome.”

* * *

Six days after the fiasco in the Headmaster’s office, the man stopped by their table as they sat discussing assignments after breakfast. “Excuse me, Mr. Crabbe,” Headmaster Anderson said with a kind smile. “Could I trouble you to sit on the other side of your friends so I may speak with Mr.
Casting a questioning look at Adrian, Crabbe waited to see what he would say. Adrian hesitated a bit before nodding sharply, moving back until he was against Draco. Out of sight of everyone, Draco placed a comforting hand on Adrian’s leg, to let him know he wasn’t alone… then there was Kanen, who sat between him and the Headmaster. He knew nothing short of shoving him off would make the kitten move and with the way the tail was swishing in irritation, it wouldn’t be without a fight.

Without a word, Crabbe got up and sat on the other side of Goyle. With his friends watching avidly, he shuddered slightly as the Headmaster sat facing him with a sigh. From day one, this man had never dressed like Dumbledore had, there were no colourful robes, no extravagant patterns that made your eyes water when you looked at them. No, he dressed simply: functional pants and shirt with robes over them. In essence, he dressed like the students did, like he was trying to blend in instead of being a target.

“Adrian, I want to apologize for the other day in my office. I didn’t mean to push you like I did,” the man began. “Do you understand why I had to?”

“No, sir,” he whispered, clutching at Draco’s hand. He’d hoped to like this man after the treatment he’d gotten from Dumbledore, but it had turned out he’d switched one tormentor for another. “If you wanted to know something, why didn’t you just ask?”

Headmaster Anderson sighed as he thought about that for a minute. “It’s not like I could come out and ask you such a question, Adrian. I needed to see just what would happen if you were backed into a corner. I didn’t take into account everything you’d been through recently. I didn’t mean to panic you like I did. Do you believe that?”

“No,” he said honestly. “I understand you wanted to see if I was a danger to everyone here, but you should trust my father in knowing if I’m a danger or not. Do you really think he would allow me to come to school if I was?”

The Headmaster smiled slightly at that. “I guess I never thought of it that way. Ah, Severus, I was just apologizing to Adrian about the other day,” he said with a smile as the Potions master came to a halt beside him.

“Headmaster,” Severus said cautiously, eyeing Adrian before looking at the Headmaster, face unreadable.

“Headmaster Anderson,” Adrian began, taking courage from his father’s presence to say what he wanted to say. “I’ve survived three attacks – one which lasted three weeks and a second by someone who was ‘supposed’ to help me. ‘For my own good,’ they said. It seems to be the same reasoning you had that night, but please know this. I just want to be left in peace. I don’t want to be on guard every time I turn around because I’m afraid someone’s going to beat me up or whatever else they want to do. I’d hoped I could trust you because I couldn’t trust Dumbledore. I was wrong. You proved that.”

“But Adrian, you can trust me-” he began earnestly, stopping when Adrian shook his head slowly.

“No,” he cut him off, wondering at his audacity, especially when he heard someone gasp softly. “I can’t. You broke that trust. I read in a book once when I was young, I forget which book, but it said ‘trust is something given freely, but once broken, it has to be earned again’.” He saw the sorrow in the Headmaster’s eyes and almost gave in… almost. “I’m sorry, sir, but I don’t trust you. I will never go see you without my father there. You’re going to have to earn my trust before I do and all because you couldn’t trust me or my father.”
“Adrian,” Severus murmured softly, a finger touching him on the shoulder. Adrian knew and appreciated the fact that his father didn’t automatically reach out to touch him until he could feel more comfortable with himself. “Madam Pomfrey wanted to see you after breakfast and then you have assignments that need completing.”

“Yes, Father.” The group rose to their feet, silent after the tension and they walked with Adrian out of the Great Hall. Draco caught him when his knees gave out just after they passed the doors. They led him to an empty classroom and helped him sit down. He sat there for a few minutes, eyes closed, just breathing.

“You were great,” Draco praised softly.

Adrian looked up at him in surprise. “You think he got the message?”

“Probably not, he’s an adult, after all, but still,” Draco smiled lopsidedly. “It was interesting to listen to.”

“Yeah,” Fred said jovially, jabbing him gently on the shoulder. “Didn’t think you had it in you.”

Adrian smiled slightly, running a hand through his hair before attempting to get up. He was glad to see that his legs would support him now. Picking Kanen up, he followed the others to the infirmary for his daily check-up.

* * *

“It’s going to be an uphill battle getting him to trust me again, isn’t it?” Headmaster Anderson asked Severus after the group had left.

“May I be frank, Headmaster?” Severus asked, frowning thoughtfully. He wanted to smile when the Headmaster nodded. With a flick of his wand, he cast a strong Silencing charm around them so they wouldn’t be overheard. Oh how he was going to enjoy this… “Adrian has been through a lot in his short life. He doesn’t trust easily though he does forgive given time. I, on the other hand, do not forgive easily. If you hurt my child again, I will see to it that the proper authorities know it. I put up with Dumbledore tormenting him for longer than I should have. I will not do so again.”

“I really didn’t mean for things to play out as they did, Severus,” Headmaster Anderson murmured as he rose to his feet, looking him squarely in the eyes. “I will work to regain his trust because as Headmaster, I need for all my students to believe I’m here to protect them. Know one thing, however, if any of them are a danger to others, I will remove them. Without hesitation.”

“I’m well aware of Mr. Potter’s unhealthy obsession and I have others keeping an eye on his activities,” Anderson murmured as he looked pointedly over at the Gryffindor table. It seemed Potter had gotten another new following. As they watched, the dark haired boy had his head bent and whispering something to the three students he seemed to have talked into joining his little entourage.

“I’m well aware of Mr. Potter’s unhealthy obsession and I have others keeping an eye on his activities,” Anderson murmured as he looked back at Severus. “I hope you’ll inform me of anything untoward happening where any student is concerned. Good day, Severus.”

“Headmaster,” Severus murmured with a slight bow as the American walked away from him, breaking the Silencing spell.

* * *

Days melted into weeks as everyone fell into the routine of school life once more. Adrian slowly
began to regain the weight he’d lost, gaining a more healthy look which means he didn’t need the Glamour anymore. He still had traces of the ordeal, but they weren’t as pronounced as before.

Intermixed in the whole thing was a voice he could hear but no one else could. He’d tried to puzzle it out, but aside from telling Draco, he kept it to himself, especially when nothing happened.

Halloween came quickly and, as the previous year, Adrian was hyped up. It was a welcome change to his friends. At least this year, Halloween fell on a weekend so that Adrian would be able to sleep in after the day was done.

True to form, everyone laughed and joked about Adrian’s ‘sugar rush’ as he practically bounced off the walls. They even took him to the Quidditch pitch to try and burn off some of the excess energy, breaking out into an impromptu Quidditch match with the older Slytherins. It was disorganized and hilarious.

All in all, it was a rather relaxed and happy group that trooped back into the castle later that afternoon. They were heading down to the dungeons when Adrian heard it again. It was strange. He stopped, looking up at the walls as he listened, his energy burst subdued for the moment.

“What’s wrong, Adrian?” George asked as he stood behind the smaller boy.

“Don’t know,” he murmured, frowning as the voice moved off. “I need to follow this.” He didn’t see the weird look the others exchanged as he took off down the hallway, the others quickly following him.

“Adrian!” Draco said in exasperation, lifting the broom up for the fifth time. “Where are we going?”

He stopped so abruptly that Draco had a hard time stopping himself. As it was, he bumped into his friend. “Everyone,” Adrian said urgently, a look of realization coming onto his face. “Look down and whatever you do, don’t look up.”

The group looked at each other in surprise, shrugged and did as instructed… just as a huge snake came slithering up on them.

Hmm it hissed, tongue flicking out to taste the air. Food for me.

Please, Great One, Adrian hissed back, watching as the big body reared back in surprise. We mean you no harm but humbly ask that you not harm us in return.

You speak!? it – she – hissed in shock. It was then that Adrian realized the Basilisk was female by the tone of the hissing.

Yes, Great One. I’m what our kind call a Shadow Dragon, Adrian hissed back, knowing no one else would understand him but the snake. I can speak to many animals.

Truly? she hissed and Adrian risked looking up quickly to see the eyes half-lidded as she regarded him curiously. My creator was one as well… Very well, you may gaze upon me without fear, child.

Looking quickly at his friends to make sure they weren’t looking up, Adrian allowed himself to look into the great big eyes of the Basilisk. “Whatever you do,” he told everyone again, “don’t look up or she’ll kill you with her gaze.”

“Is she what I think she is?” Blaise asked, his voice shaking with fear.

“Yes.” It was all he had time to say as the tongue flicked out again, running one side of his face,
tasting him. *Is there a particular reason why you’re in the school, Great One?* he asked politely, not even flinching as the tongue slid up the other side of his face.

*I was released to do the work I began many seasons ago,* she said, eyeing him once more.

*How did you get in?*

*The human opened a door inside to allow me easier access and a means to be stealthy,* the Basilisk hissed and Adrian got the distinct impression that she didn’t like the way in one bit. *However, I never liked being inside buildings, this one especially. Too many rooms.*

*Then why remain inside, if you don’t mind me asking?* Adrian asked, wondering who had released this giant inside a school full of children.

*My… master bids me to create havoc,* the Basilisk hissed in annoyance. *I confess, however, that I have lost my taste for humans in the seasons since I grew. I simply want to be left to my own devices in my hollow.*

*Great One,* Adrian began with a thoughtful frown. *Nothing says you have to do as you’re told. You are majestic enough that orders from a mere mortal should be nothing more than an inconvenience, meant to be heard then ignored. There’s nothing they can do to you to make you do what you don’t want to.*

*Oh, dear child,* she hissed, eyes heavy lidded once more. *I so do like your sweet tongue… but I believe you’re right. I will go back to my hollow where I can be by myself once more.*

*Allow me and my friends to escort you to the entrance so that you don’t have to go down the same way you came up, Great One.* He waited for the Basilisk to nod before moving. He turned each one of his friends so that their backs were to her, reducing the danger she presented. “We have to clear the corridors until we get to the entrance doors. She wants out but refuses to go back the way she came. I need your help if we’re going to keep everyone safe.”

“She’s not going to eat us, is she?” Goyle asked, face pale and body stiff.

“No, she lost her taste for human flesh. She just wants to go home. Just don’t look her in the eye and you’ll be fine.”

“Alright.”

Slowly, they cast spells to block any doorway from sight as they led the Basilisk towards the main door. “Adrian, stay with her so we can get everyone turned around or at least get them to close their eyes,” Fred said as they neared the main corridor.

*We must wait here, Great One,* he hissed to the snake, hand on her head while she allowed it. *My friends simply want to make sure there won’t be any accidental glimpses and cause a panic.*

*Very well, child. I will allow this.*

*Thank you,* he murmured with a smile before turning to look at Fred’s back. “Go ahead. She agreed to wait until we’re ready.”

“Adrian,” he heard from up the stairs moments later and realized it was his father.

*I’ll be right back. I just have to go speak with my father,* Adrian murmured to the Basilisk, who nodded her big head slightly, before climbing the stairs.
“Adrian!” he heard again, the tone slightly impatient.

“Coming, Father.” At the top of the stairs, he stopped suddenly when he saw several teachers standing there, wands drawn, including the Headmaster, with his friends behind them. Adrian knew his friends weren’t happy as they glared at the backs of the teachers. Well, this wasn’t good…

“We have to take it out while it’s by itself, Severus,” Professor Variel hissed when Adrian was in sight.

“Control yourself,” Headmaster Anderson murmured softly. “What happened, Adrian?”

“Someone opened a door for her to come through. She just wants to go home but through the outside opening not the inside one. Let’s just let her go, sir,” Adrian told him finally. “She doesn’t want to harm anyone.”

“How could this child know anything,” Professor Fargrove asked in slight panic.

“Hold your tongue,” Severus snapped with a glare before turning to look at him. “Are you sure about this, Adrian?”

“Yes, Father. She could’ve hurt us but didn’t. Please,” he said softly. “I told her we didn’t want to hurt her.”

“Very well, Adrian, give us five minutes and then come up with her. She can go out the front door without fear of an attack,” Headmaster Anderson murmured with a reassuring smile.

Adrian looked at him, eyeing him distrustfully. “I’ll hold you to that, sir,” he said quietly before walking back down to the Basilisk.

*What is happening, child?* the big snake asked, rearing up to try and see beyond the top step.

*They need five minutes to make things safe for the students before you can go up.*

She looked down at him, tongue coming out to taste the air. *I taste deceit in the air,* she murmured, eyes narrowing. *Someone out there is not happy and means to try something.*

*Then we’ll have to keep our guard up,* Adrian murmured, pulling his wand out.

"Now, Adrian," he head from upstairs.

"It's safe, Great One," he murmured to the Basilisk.

*Keep close to me, child. No spell can harm me,* the Basilisk hissed angrily, as she slithered up the stairs. True to his word, the Headmaster and everyone else were facing away from where the Basilisk was, leaving the front courtyard free of anyone.

*Be happy, Great One,* Adrian hissed, smiling up at the big snake.

*You as well, child,* she murmured as she moved closer to the door…

When the spell was cast, Adrian reacted on instinct, deflecting the spell harmlessly into the ceiling above him, causing dust to rain down around him. The people closest to them cried out in surprise and fear, ducking slightly, unsure if they were in danger from the Basilisk or not. The Basilisk hissed angrily, rearing up to see who had dared fire a spell at them. *No, don’t worry about me. Go. You’re the one at risk,* Adrian told her pleadingly, a hand on the great body closest to him.
Are you sure? she asked hesitantly, looking down at him.

Yes, he smiled at the snake, reaching up to caress her chin. Thank you for trusting me.

If you ever have need of me, simply sit on the rocks above the drop and I’ll find you.

Adrian nodded and watched as the biggest snake he’d ever seen slithered out the open door and onto the grounds outside, heading for the Forbidden Forest. Severus came to stand beside him, placing a hand on his shoulder. “I’m proud of you, Adrian.”

“Indeed,” Headmaster Anderson agreed, coming to stand on the other side of him. “How is it you could understand it?”

Adrian shrugged as he leaned into his father’s side. “Always could, I guess,” he said softly as he watched the Basilisk’s tail disappear into the woods.

“Now we only need to find out who shot that spell at the snake and endangered us all,” the Headmaster said with a dark frown.

Adrian had a fairly good idea as to who it was, but had no proof, so he kept it to himself as his father led him down the stairs. His friends fell into step around them, heading towards the common room.

“Hey, Adrian,” Draco said with a sly look in his eyes. “I guess we found a cure to your hyperness.” Adrian looked curiously at the blonde as their friends snickered, catching on. “First Quidditch, then confront a big snake. Think we could pull it off every Halloween?”

“Probably… and just think,” Adrian said innocently. “The day’s not done yet.”

Even his father laughed as Draco groaned in realization.

* * *

The rest of the year passed fairly quietly with the usual rivalry. When nothing untoward happened to him after Halloween, Adrian began to relax, slowly reverting to his usual self. Kanen grew… a lot! No longer a small kitten – which had been the size of an adult house cat – to be carried around, he would grumble every once in a while, saying he missed being small.

Already, he was slightly bigger than a medium sized dog.

“Father?” Adrian asked when he was in Severus’ private quarters for his weekly visit, frowning at his cat.

“Yes, Adrian?” Severus asked distractedly as he sat beside him, book in hand. Adrian was curled up against his side, a book of his own in his hand.

Book forgotten, he turned to look up at his father. “What kind of cat is Kanen? How big do you think he’ll get?”

Blinking in surprise at the question, he turned to look at the cat who was curled up at Adrian’s feet, hence the reason they were sitting on the couch instead of the love seat as they usually did. “He is rather large for a cat,” Severus agreed after a few minutes.

Kanen looked up at them, blinking sleepily. Is there a problem? he asked with a bored yawn.

“Ask him if the one who sold him used magic on them when they were kittens,” Severus asked, ignoring the cat’s eye roll as he refused to speak directly to the animal, though he understood the man
Quite clearly.

Really? Kanen drawled in irritation, glaring at Severus, making Adrian giggle. It's not like I'm deaf, you know. And yes, I believe the woman cast spells over us when we were still in the womb. She kept grumbling about some spells not taking a couple of weeks after we were born.

Adrian looked up at Severus, grinning as he saw the raised eyebrow. “Is he grumbling again because I refuse to speak to an animal?”

He giggled before nodding, laughing when Kanen slapped his leg with his paw in retaliation. “He doesn’t expect you to hear him like I do, but he’d like it better if you asked him directly yourself instead of assuming he doesn’t understand you.” He saw the look of amusement in his father’s eyes and reached out with his foot to rub Kanen’s belly.

“What did he say?”

“He thinks she did so when they were still inside their mother. He said the woman was grumbling about some spells not taking.” At the thoughtful look on his father’s face, he blinked in surprise. “What?”

Severus pulled his wand out and cast a spell on Kanen, frowning at whatever it revealed. “It would seem that Kanen has yet to reach his full growth,” came his father’s surprised answer. “There’s something else, as well, though the spell can’t reveal what it is.”

“Is it dangerous?” Adrian asked worriedly. Kanen responded to it and moved up to drape himself over Adrian’s legs, his weight bearing down on him. “You’re getting really heavy, Kanen,” he murmured, though he didn’t mind.

I know, the cat said, showing his really long teeth to him in a smile before leaning forward as if to sniff him… then his tongue came out suddenly, licking him from chin to hairline.

“Kanen!” he yelped in mock-annoyance, laughing as the cat moved further up to do it again. Severus got to his feet, laughing as Adrian fell flat on the couch, giving Kanen more room to crawl over his son. Adrian reached out and grabbed hold of the large teeth, tugging on the big head playfully. “Stop that!”

Adrian knew that the first time he’d done this, his father had been worried he would be hurt if Kanen closed his mouth on his fingers, but Kanen was always careful with him. He would move the cheeks down to cover his fingers but his teeth never closed on them. This was the way the cat played.

Grinning up at the cat, he wrapped his legs around the heavy chest above him, squeezing hard, knowing he wouldn’t hurt the cat and if he did, Kanen would simply tell him. “I got you!” he said triumphantly.

Oh, really? Kanen said in amusement, a wicked gleam in his eyes… and raised himself up on all fours. Adrian squeaked in surprise as his lower body was suddenly higher than his head… then laughed. So, who has who? Kanen asked, chest rumbling as he gave the cat version of laughter, looking at him upside down.

“That’s no fair,” Adrian laughed, reaching up to wrap his arms around the furry neck above him.

“You know you can’t win a wrestling match against him like you used to, right?” he heard Draco ask in amusement and he looked around Kanen to see Draco standing there with Kaida, a raised eyebrow at his predicament. He hadn’t even heard him come in.
“Sure I can,” he said as he pulled himself up so he was cradled against the white belly… then his breath whooshed out of him as Kanen dropped back down onto the couch, his whole weight on him, making Draco and his father laugh. “Alright, maybe not.”

That’s right, Kanen said in amusement, giving him one last lick before getting off him. Time to go back to our room.

* * *

Before they knew it, school was done for another year and summer had just about come and gone, their time eaten up with training and work. This summer had included Ginny Weasley, since Ron was picking on her at home, and Luna Lovegood because… well simply because she was Ginny’s friend and in their house.

Adrian suspected the loony façade was simply an act because sometimes he would catch her looking at him with an odd look before the hazy look came back down… It was kind of spooky, really.

“I can’t believe we’re starting our third year in three weeks,” Blaise said one afternoon as they lazed about. It was one of the few days his father and Madreca allowed for them to do so, actually, since they were getting good at dueling.

This year, at school, he was going to teach them more things in their ‘classes’, like wandless magic and see if they could become Animagi. It sounded promising.

“Are you sure about this, Severus?” they heard from their right. Looking in the direction of the voices, they were surprised to see Severus and Madreca walking their way.

“Yes,” Severus sneered, something Adrian had never seen his father do to his friend, not stopping until he was beside them. “Adrian, I need a word with you in private. Now.” Without waiting, Severus turned and headed back into the Manor.

Confused, Adrian rose instantly from the ground where he’d been reclining against Kanen. “What did I do?” he asked Madreca, who waited for him.

“Nothing, child. He’s simply worried,” Madreca murmured soothingly. “No, Draco, remain out here with the others. Adrian will not be long.”

“Then why is he angry?” he asked the older man, a hand on Kanen’s neck, as they neared the door.

“It’s simply something that has come up, Adrian, and he’s worried about the outcome.” Madreca smiled comfortingly. Adrian knew the older man wanted to touch him on the shoulder or put his arm around him, but until he was more comfortable with those types of expressions again, he and his father would respect his personal space. It was one of the reasons he’d never felt uncomfortable around them.

Inside, they waited as Severus stood by the window. The fact that his father was acting like this worried Adrian, but he patiently waited for his father to explain what was happening. Severus turned to face him, holding out the Daily Prophet to him.

Wondering just what was going on, he accepted the paper, looking at the picture of a deranged man with a number under the poster. “Who is he, Father?” he asked as he skimmed the article.

“Sirius Black has escaped from Azkaban,” he was told, his father’s voice somehow devoid of expression.
Adrian looked up at him, wondering why the name sounded familiar. He frowned as he turned the name over in his head before he made the connection. “Wait, isn’t he the one who allowed the Potters to be found by Him?”

“So everyone says,” Severus said, but his tone told Adrian he didn’t believe it. “I, for one, do not remember ever seeing Black in His presence.”

He looked back down at the picture of the man whom his real parents had placed as his godfather… this should have been the man they could trust to raise him. He’d even made Adrian his only heir. Why would he betray them like that?

“He won’t know me, Father,” Adrian finally said as he looked up at the man who had sheltered and loved him for the last nine years. Did his father think Sirius getting out of Azkaban would change that? That he would want to go live with a man whom he didn’t know or remember? “I’ve changed from the child he thinks is Harry Potter. This shouldn’t affect me. Why are you worried?”

Severus seemed to relax, angering Adrian. “Honestly,” he snapped, throwing the paper on the table in front of him. “Do you have so little faith in me that I would do that to you? Just leave with this man? He doesn’t know me, was never around for me to know. You were. Why is it so hard for you to trust that I won’t leave you because he’s out?” By this time, tears had filled his eyes at the hurt and anger he felt.

“No!” he yelled, moving out of reach. The only thing that stopped him was Kanen as he backed into him. “How can you believe that I would love you and then, after everything that’s happened, think that I would just abandon you and all you do for me? A tear fell, trailing down his cheek as he regarded his father. “You are my father. You’ve been there for me when no one else was. I—” he shook his head, at a loss on how to put into words what was going on inside him.

He loved Severus Snape and knew the man loved him back… what hurt was that his father didn’t believe he would want to stay with him now that Sirius Black was out. Nothing said the man would remain free but that was beside the point. He would never leave Severus for someone who didn’t know him.

Just wanting out, he turned and fled, running out the door to the gardens, shedding his shirt on the way. Once outside, he took to the sky, wings unfurling easily with just a thought. He didn’t see Kanen running after him. He heard his father call after him but for once the call didn’t bring obedience. He just needed space.

* * *

Kanen came to a panting stop beside him a few minutes after he’d landed. Honestly, kid, the cat grumbled as he collapsed beside him, panting hard. You’ve got to learn to stick to the ground.

“I just needed to clear my head,” Adrian said, sniffling as he threw a blade of grass away, looking out over the small cliff.

“I know you’re upset, Kanen began, regarding him carefully. But was leaving the best option?

Adrian shrugged indifferently. “I’m still on the property and the raptors followed, too,” he said as he pointed up at the three birds sitting in the tree above him.

That’s beside the point and you know it, Kanen chided gently as he moved to lay beside him, rubbing his head against Adrian’s body in comfort. You know your father will be worried about
where you are, now, and things will only get worse. It's how he is.

“But how could he ever think that I would leave him to go with Black? I don’t know this man. For all I know, he was the reason why the Potters are dead.” For some reason, he didn’t really consider the couple who had died protecting him as his parents. Severus Snape was his parent... at least by the definition of the word, anyway.

**

In the brush beside him, pale blue eyes regarded him with open curiosity. Interesting. His black fur blended well with the shadows of the woods around him as he watched the boy with the wings tattoo sitting beside the huge cat.

The conversation made no sense to him, having listened in on only part of it… but he’d caught enough from it to know something was up. His name being mentioned and the Potter name had caught his attention. Potter child raised by his worst enemy? That couldn’t be right. Severus Snape would never raise James’ son…

But that was what he thought he'd heard… only one way to find out.

Making a quick decision, he padded out of the shadows behind them, gaining the cat’s attention. In this shape, he could understand other animals and they could understand him. How was it possible for this boy to understand the cat?

Who are you? the cat demanded, growling menacingly, pushing himself to his feet, causing the boy to turn around. He watched as the pale green eyes – both sets – regarded him warily.

Easy, he murmured, keeping his distance from them. He only wanted answers, not a fight. I was just passing by and heard you talking.

“I’ve never seen you around here before,” the boy murmured as he frowned at him. “Where are you from?”

I’m… traveling. Where am I? he asked curiously, moving closer to the boy but watching the cat. If he could simply get closer…

The cat moved to block him, the hackles coming up, barring him from the boy. “About six days’ walk from London,” the boy said, a hand curling in the cat’s fur as he pointed with his head in the south-west direction. “Where are you heading?”

North, he said, knowing that wasn’t really answering the question, but then, if he were a real animal, that would be the answer he would give. He needed to appear to be what he looked like so he didn’t give himself away.

We must go, the cat said, still glaring at him. Your father will worry.
He saw the boy roll his eyes and sigh. “Fine,” the boy grumbled. “It was nice to meet you,” he murmured before he got onto the cat’s back, riding him as if he were a horse until he leaned down against the furred back. Before he could say anything, they were out of sight. He was surprised when three raptors flew out of the tree above him, following after the boy and cat.

He cursed fluently before he continued on his journey. James’ son hadn’t been at the house he was reported to reside in, so his only other option was the school…

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When they got close enough to the house, Adrian sat up as Kanen dropped from a run to a jog then to a walk. He wasn’t looking forward to the confrontation that was coming because he knew he’d handled it badly. He probably should’ve allowed his father to explain…

With a sigh, he leaned back down, taking comfort from the powerful muscles under him. He still couldn’t believe his father would think that he’d take a flake of a man – whom he’d never met! – over a steady home where he was wanted and loved.

*It’ll be alright,* Kanen told him gently, looking back at him lovingly. *He’s still your father no matter what.*

Adrian sighed, digging his fingers into the thick fur and closed his eyes for a few minutes. When he opened them again and sat up, he could see the house clearly… and his father standing there waiting for him.

Despite the fact that he was angry and disappointed in the man, it was like Kanen had said, Severus Snape was his father and Adrian, for one, was glad for it.
Severus Snape stood in the doorway to the house, watching as the cat got closer. At first, he thought Kanen had come home alone so he began scanning the sky, hoping Adrian was up there. He frowned when the sky remained empty. When he looked down at the cat again, he saw his son sitting on the cat’s back before he dropped down to cuddle with the animal.

He knew he’d overreacted to the news of Black’s escape, but he’d been unable to help it. He only hoped he could make it up to his child. That was what had bothered him most about the escape. He’d thought that, with the release of his real godfather, Adrian would want to get to know the man and leave Severus and his life with him behind.

In short, he’d been afraid he’d be left alone again.

It was when Adrian had begun his outburst that he’d realized that the fear was unfounded. He was Adrian’s father because he had been there for the boy when no one else cared. He should’ve known better than to think anything could come between them… even Black.

He watched as the cat came to a halt a few feet from him so Adrian could slide off his back, watched as his child stood gracefully beside the animal, waiting, looking at him in unconscious defiance, shoulders thrown back.

“Adrian,” he said softly. He didn’t know what to say to make things better… he didn’t expect what Adrian did.

**

At the sound of his name, Adrian threw himself at his father, burying his face in the man’s robes, tears falling as arms came around him. This was where he belonged. Nothing would change that.

“I’m sorry I overreacted,” Severus murmured softly, rubbing soothing circles on Adrian's back with one hand while the other rested on his head.

“I overreacted, too,” he whispered against the material, knowing his father would hear him anyway. “I just-”

His father shushed him gently, running his fingers in his thick locks comfortingly. “It’s alright.”

They stood there for a few more minutes, taking comfort from each other before Kanen had had enough of being ignored. He gently head-butted Adrian’s lower back, pushing him further into Severus in order to get his attention, looking pleased when Adrian looked back at him.

*I’m hungry. What’s for supper?*

Adrian rolled his eyes at his cat and huffed in annoyance. “What did he say?”

“He’s wondering what’s for supper. He’s hungry.”

Severus snorted in amusement. “I’m not surprised as supper was an hour ago and you missed lunch. Let’s go in and eat.”
“Yes, Father.”

Everything was back to normal now that the crisis was over. His father held out his shirt to him and he pulled it on without comment, Kanen following along with a smug look in his eyes.

* * *

School began on schedule with the usual people glaring at the Slytherin table – well, at Draco, Adrian and the rest of their group to be accurate – from the Gryffindor table but they’d gotten used to that and simply ignored that end of the table, simply wanting to enjoy the welcoming feast.

With Kanen and Kaida sprawled on the floor behind them, Adrian had never felt more protected…

And from the looks of the Head Table, they had new additions to the teaching roster.

“Good Evening, students,” Headmaster Anderson murmured from the front podium, smiling genially at everyone. “We have a few changes to announce. First, the Forbidden Forest is restricted to everyone and for good reasons. Also, Professor Sigmund has opted to teach Law instead of Defense Against the Dark Arts, which meant we will be welcoming a new teacher for the Defense class, Professor Remus Lupin.”

A movement from the head table caught Adrian attention and he looked over at his father. Curiously he realized there was a weird look on his father’s face. He realized his father had to know who this man was and it was obvious he didn’t like him one bit. Adrian didn’t understand what the problem was, but he trusted his father to know things he didn’t.

“There are also five new courses added to our roster this year. Please welcome Professor Ernest Heming who will be teaching Religions, and no it doesn’t mean one religion but all the ones out there.”

Everyone applauded politely, though most were confused. Religions? Really?

“Then there’s Professor Virgil Sprite who’ll be teaching Wizarding customs. Professor Eric Newton will teach survival skills, Professor Sean Wilks will teach languages and Professor Arthur Lucas will teach Theory of the Dark Arts so that everyone can learn why certain spells are labeled dark while others aren’t. Now, please bear in mind that these new classes are electives, not mandatory. Anyone wishing to take these classes will be able to. The school will provide you with the books needed for these classes this year. Please be polite and make the new teachers feel welcomed.”

More classes? That was interesting and a refreshing change. At least they would learn more than the standard classes, anyway.

“Also, please be advised that there will be added security while the escaped criminal Sirius Black is on the loose. If you don’t bother them, they will not bother you. While we don’t believe the man will come here, one can never be too cautious with the safety of students.”

With the announcements done, food appeared on the tables. Adrian placed a half-empty plate of chicken on the floor for the cats to share before putting food onto his plate. It wasn’t as much as what Draco put on his but it was better than the start of year feast last year…

* * *

The first class with Professor Lupin was definitely entertaining to say the least.

“Can anyone tell me what’s inside this wardrobe?” Professor Lupin asked, an apple in his hand as
hands were raised, some certain and others not so much. “Mr. Thomas.”

“That’s a Boggart,” Dean Thomas answered as everyone jumped when the wardrobe jumped and shook angrily.

“Very good,” Lupin said with a smile. “Five points to Gryffindor. And who can tell me what a Boggart looks like?” Adrian had never come across a Boggart before but raised his hands as he remembered something he’d read a while back. “Mr. Snape.”

“No one knows what a Boggart looks like because it takes the shape of whatever the person seeing it fears the most,” Adrian answered promptly, ignoring the disgusted looks Potter and Weasley shot his way.

“Perfect, five points to Slytherin.” Adrian smiled at Draco, feeling pleasure fill him at the praise, not letting Draco’s eye roll or shake of his head bother him as Lupin taught them the spell to get rid of the boggart.

“How about a demonstration,” Professor Lupin murmured as he scanned the crowd. “Mm… Mr. Weasley.”

“Yes?” Weasley squeaked as he jumped looking at the wardrobe as it bounced around again.

“What is it you fear the most?” Lupin asked with a gentle smile, gesturing with his apple for the redhead to come closer. Adrian watched as the Professor brought the apple close to his mouth but didn’t take a bite, waiting for Weasley to answer.

It took a couple of tries before Weasley finally managed to choke out what he was most afraid of. “Sp-spider, sir.”

Everyone laughed, causing the boy to flush an unattractive shade of red and he glared at everyone. Lupin chuckled softly before leaning forward and whispering something in the boy’s ear. When he pulled back, his eyebrows went up and he nodded in encouragement. “Yes?”

Swallowing thickly, Weasley nodded, looking worriedly at the wardrobe.

“Weas!” Lupin instructed, waiting until Weasley’s wand was aimed at the closet before flicking his own at the door. The Boggart exploded out of the door, taking the shape of a giant spider. Adrian figured he was probably the only one who wasn’t afraid of it, but then no one else would be able to speak to it if it was real...

Weasley whimpered in fear before doing whatever Lupin had instructed him to do. “Riddikulus!” he called out with a wave of his wand. Adrian laughed along with everyone as the spider fumbled around with the roller skates on its feet.

“Form a line and everyone can have a chance at the Boggart,” Lupin called out above the noise. He stood back, reclining against the wall and watched as student after student gave it a try, a record player bouncing out a jolly tune beside him. Adrian stood with his friends, highly amused as he watched, finding it interesting to see what his fellow students were afraid of.

When it came to his turn, though, the Boggart couldn’t seem to make up its mind as to who or what to become... It flitted from one thing to another, too quickly for anyone to make out who it had started turning into. When it finally settled down, it seemed to be a grotesque mixture of several people. He could make out Dumbledore, Potter, Weasley, the man who’d assaulted him, Dudley, Vernon, the Mind Healer and the man at the hospital... He backed up in horror, wand falling from numb fingers as the... thing approached him.
The class was deadly quiet as they stared in fear at the Boggart.

He was startled when Professor Lupin slid in front of him, arms out. The Boggart shifted again, becoming a moon partially covered in clouds. Adrian couldn’t make his mind work enough to even wonder why the Boggart chose that shape before it became a balloon, whizzing around the room to land inside its cupboard.

With a flick of his wand, the Professor closed the door on the creature and dismissed the class. “Adrian, please remain behind,” the Professor said gently. “Mr. Malfoy, you can wait for him outside.”

“I can’t, Professor,” Adrian dimly heard through the buzzing in his ears. “Adrian is to have someone he trusts with him at all times. Professor Snape’s orders.”

“Very well,” Professor Lupin murmured.

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Lupin waited for the class to empty, casting concerned looks at the boy standing there so still and pale. Adrian’s wand still lay on the floor beside him, forgotten for now. He thought he’d seen something in the boy’s features that reminded him of… but that was impossible. Just as impossible was the boy calling himself Harry Potter, though Remus’ wolf instinct told him it was a lie.

He gestured for Draco to move away a bit and cast a Silencing charm around them. “Can you explain to me just what that thing was?”

Draco looked towards the dark haired boy and sighed. “Two summers ago, Adrian was kidnapped and tortured for a number of days. I suspect some of that were the people who had him.”

Remus sensed that there was more to it than that but the blonde boy would say nothing more. He carefully kept his features pleasant though he was horrified that a child could go through something like that with his mind intact. “Is there anything else you can tell me? Like the reason why you have to stay with him?”

“Adrian had a hard time getting over the panic attacks unless someone he trusted remained with him. Professor Snape hasn’t changed the pattern from last year yet which tells me that Adrian’s still not comfortable being with strangers by himself.”

Remus nodded and cancelled the charm. He was going to have to talk to Severus Snape about this development seeing as this was his child. He flicked his wand, summoning Adrian’s wand to his hand before moving in front of the boy.

“Adrian,” he called gently, smiling when the boy looked up at him, eyes blank with shock. Usually he would’ve reached out to a student in his state, but knowing the boy had gone through hell already, he refrained from touching him out of respect.

He watched as the boy blinked at him, features telling him Adrian was confused. He looked over to Remus’ right and he blinked uncomprehendingly at Draco.

“His knees should give out here soon,” Remus murmured to Draco in warning. As predicted, Adrian began to fall forward as his knees gave out. They caught him easily and Remus conjured a chair for the boy to sit in. He could feel him shaking in reaction to his scare.

He waited as Draco took care of Adrian, whispering softly to his friend. This close, his wolf was going nuts as it recognized this boy as James and Lily’s son. After all, he’d been there for the first
year and a half of this child’s life. His wolf recognized the scent despite the physical changes to Adrian.

What he didn’t understand, however, was why he was going by the name Adrian Snape instead of Harry Potter or why there was another boy going by that name instead of Adrian. He was going to wait and speak to Snape…

“Would you like a cup of tea, Mr. Snape?” he asked pleasantly when it seemed Adrian had regained his sense of balance. “You as well, Mr. Malfoy.”

“What about class, sir?” Adrian asked, face still pale, making his green eyes stand out even more.

“Don’t worry about that,” Remus said with a gentle smile and gestured for them to follow him upstairs. The next half hour was spent in silence as Draco kept glancing at Adrian worriedly when the boy stared at his cup. It was obvious the boy wasn’t really seeing it.

“So, Adrian,” Remus began softly, startling the boy at the sudden noise. “How is your father?”

Adrian blinked at him in confusion. “My father?” he asked dumbly before shaking himself from whatever stupor he’d been in. “He’s fine, sir. Why do you ask?”

Remus took a sip from his cup before diving into what he wanted to know so badly. “Well, I haven’t seen Severus in several years and wondered that he had a son. I wasn’t aware he’d even married.”

“Ah,” Adrian said and Remus was confused by the shuttered look on the boy’s face. “My father adopted me when I was four, sir, and as far as I know, he’s never married.” He watched as the boy put his cup down, untouched. Draco followed suit and they both stood, though the blonde boy seemed confused by the change in his friend. “I’m sorry, Professor Lupin but if you want any more information on my father, perhaps you should speak to him. We have to go. Thank you for the tea.”

With that, Remus watched as the boys left his room, walking down the stairs and out of the classroom. Well, that hadn’t gone the way he’d expected… Perhaps it was time to confront Severus and find out just what was going on.

* * *

“Professor,” Severus drawled, drawing the word out more than necessary to gain Lupin’s attention as he met up with the Defense teacher in the hallway. Draco had just told him of the odd conversation between Lupin and Adrian after class and the events that had led to that talk. Adrian, being the peacekeeper that he was, hadn’t said anything to him about the event.

He wasn’t angry at Lupin for teaching the students about the Boggarts, oh, no. What had him mad was the fact that the werewolf would pump his son for information about their lives.

“Professor Snape,” Lupin said with a pleasant smile. “I was just coming to find you. Could we talk in private?”

Severus nodded once, sharply and followed Lupin to his class, since it was closest. He held himself in check until they were alone in Lupin’s quarters. “You will desist from asking Adrian questions about our lives. If there’s anything you want to know you will direct your questions to me.”

Lupin turned to glare at him, eyes hard. “What are you doing with James and Lily’s son and why is he going by a different name?”

“Adrian is his name, Lupin,” Severus said as he glared in turn. “If you ask Adrian, he’ll tell you the
same thing he told Dumbledore. Harry Potter died of an extremely high fever after being abandoned
by his muggle relatives.”

The werewolf was quiet as he digested the information. Severus had the niggling feeling that
Dumbledore might have kept this man in the dark for a purpose… “And the boy going by the name
of Harry Potter?” Lupin asked quietly.

Severus sighed and sat down in the chair beside him, rubbing at his forehead. “Before I answer, why
have you never checked on the boy when he was at his relative’s residence?”

A tea set appeared between them and Lupin poured them both a cup, passing one to him before
settling back. “Dumbledore kept me busy doing other things,” the werewolf began, shaking his head
slightly. “Usually, I was sent so far away that by the time I got back, he’d have something else for
me to do. He said there’s been rumours that you-know-who might be coming back.”

Severus nodded as he turned that over in his head. It seemed Dumbledore wanted the boy isolated
from the Wizarding world even then. “So then I assume that you knew nothing of his treatment by
those… *muggles*,” he sneered in disgust.

“No, and by the time I managed to go to Privet Drive, it seemed they had moved away from that
house. I spent considerable time trying to find them, but it was as if they’d fallen off the map.”

“That would more than likely be around the time I adopted Adrian.”

“You said he had an extremely high fever? How long was he sick?” Lupin asked in concern.

“It was about four days before I got the fever under control.” He left out the fact that the Dursleys
had been poisoning Adrian from day one. There was nothing the man could do and torturing him
with the knowledge – though it would delight Severus– it wouldn’t help Adrian.

Severus raised an eyebrow when Lupin shot him a confused look after sitting quietly for a few
minutes. “Why would you adopt your worst enemy’s child?”

“He’s not James’ son, he’s Lily’s. It was also what she wanted,” Severus murmured, taking a sip of
his tea. It prevented him from laughing in Lupin’s face at the expression on the man’s face. “I also
have something for you from the Potters,” he said finally, holding out a piece of paper.

Lupin’s eyebrows shot to his hairline. “They gave me this?!” The paper stated that the person
bringing it in with the proper identifications was to receive the amount listed.

Severus nodded, finally allowing himself to smirk. “It would seem they wanted you to inherit
something if they passed. Dumbledore went against their wills. When I brought it up with the
Goblins at Gringotts, they were quite incensed and insisted I fulfil the terms of the will.”

“So what happens now? Especially with Sirius out?” Lupin asked thoughtfully.

“Nothing.” He rolled his eyes when Lupin looked at him doubtfully. “Even if Black were somehow
found innocent, the papers I sighed when I adopted Adrian say that they are final. There will be no
fighting them. Lily’s wishes.”

“And the boy going by the name of Harry Potter?” Lupin asked again.

“Dumbledore doesn’t take too kindly to being foiled by a child,” Severus murmured as he refreshed
his tea. “When Adrian refused to conform to the old man’s demands, he brought in another child to
take his place in the hopes that Adrian would argue that *he* was Harry Potter. It didn’t go according
Lupin chuckled at that. “Has he been happy, then?”

“Yes,” Severus said simply.

“Good. Is it alright if I get to know him personally?” Severus hesitated, looking at the werewolf closely. “I promise to be careful, Severus. I don’t want to hurt the child.”

With a wary sigh, Severus nodded. “Don’t push him to reveal more than he’s ready to, Lupin. He’s had a rough time the last couple of years, first with the Potter boy, then with Dumbledore. He’s also determined that no one find out that he’s supposed to be Potter. He told Dumbledore he doesn’t answer to that name because he was never called that. From what I gathered from his relatives, that’s pretty accurate.”

“Was Dumbledore behind the kidnapping Draco was telling me about?” At Snape’s look of surprise, Lupin smiled apologetically. “Adrian had a slight meltdown in class today. It was sort of grotesque, actually. The Boggart couldn’t seem to settle on just one fear so it mixed them all together. I had to interfere.”

“Yes, Draco mentioned that to me earlier,” Severus said, staring into his cup. “Dumbledore was there, we know that much. We also know the Potter boy was there as well. His uncle and cousin caused most of the damage he received during his captivity and we also know his cousin is dead, as well as at least one attacker, but we can’t prove any of it.”

“I’m surprised he survived it all with his sanity intact,” Lupin said with a shake of his head.

“He almost didn’t,” Severus told him with a sigh. “He was seeing a Mind Healer for a while until the nightmares stopped. As of August, he hasn’t had to go see him, which is a good sign.” They spoke for a while longer before the gong rang telling everyone it was time for supper.

* * *

At the same time as Severus and Lupin were having their discussion, Adrian and Pansy sat in the library, Kanen lay on the floor beside him while they worked on their Potions assignment. Draco had abandoned him to go talk to someone. The rest of his friends – minus Crabbe and Goyle, of course – were outside taking advantage of the unseasonably warm weather.

Adrian figured he was safe enough with the cat and Pansy for protection.

Frowning down at his paper, he got up from the table, smiling slightly when the girl looked up at him curiously. “Just need a book. Be right back.” Pansy went back to her paper with a soft sigh as Kanen padded along beside him.

The spell caught Kanen first, then Adrian, from behind as they were heading back to the table… Kanen slid into the nearest shelf, catching – ironically enough – Adrian when he would’ve done the same thing, though the cat was unconscious before he even hit the shelf. Struggling to get up, Adrian became aware of… someone. All he could see before he blanked out was a dark figure, but couldn’t make out any features.

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He became aware of voices first… then the dampness… then the cold against bare skin. He shivered as he pushed himself up, blinking blearily around himself. Where was he?
The room was wet and cold.

Along the path he lay on were two rows of snakes with their mouths open. It took him a few seconds to realize these were statues and not real snakes.

"-And I’m telling you the tattoos mean something!" That voice he recognized. Potter.

Just what was going on? Looking around as he shivered, he spotted Draco lying on the other side of the path, unconscious. Looking over at the two boys arguing in front of a big stone face, he crawled over to his friend, checking to see if he was still breathing. He felt a wave of relief fill him when he felt the steady heart beat under his fingers. “Draco,” he whispered urgently as he shook the blonde boy.

Fingers suddenly tangled in his hair, yanking him away from Draco. Adrian gasped in surprise and pain as he was dragged towards the strange boy. “This is the one you’ll use to come back. Not that useless Hufflepuff!” Potter growled angrily as he shoved Adrian between them.

That was when he became aware of another person in the room. A young Hufflepuff boy lay on the floor to one side, where he hadn’t been able to see him. Adrian didn’t recognize him but realized that this boy had to be the one who’d released the Basilisk in the school last year.

He looked over at the boy Potter was arguing with. “Why should I listen to you?” the boy – teenager, for this stranger had to be sixteen or seventeen – demanded harshly as he glared at Potter. “I’ll use whomever I want and there’s nothing you can do about it!”

Potter walked over to the Hufflepuff, yanking the book out from under the boy’s arm, thrusting it out at Adrian. “Take it,” he ordered sharply.

Adrian looked from the teenager to Potter and shook his head. “No.” He managed to duck out of reach when Potter swung the book at his head to smack him with it.


“No and you can’t make me.”

“It doesn’t matter anyway, Potter,” the teen mocked, head held high. “I’m already tied to the boy on the floor. I’ll do your dirty work for you this time, but don’t expect to make a habit of it. You might want to go before I call her.”

Adrian spied his wand sticking out of Potter’s robe pocket and watched as Potter glared at the two of them, threw the book on the floor and stomped away. As Potter hit into him passing by, Adrian managed to slide his wand out of Potter's robes without giving himself away, shoving it into his back pocket before even the teenager realized what had happened.

If it came to a fight, Adrian was fairly sure he could hold his own… as long as he had his wand, anyway.

He watched as the teenager walked over to the face, hand held out in front of him. Adrian’s eyebrow rose in amusement… which faded as he listed to the boy hiss to the face. “Open and release your prize,” he heard, feeling the hair on the back of his neck rise.

As he watched, the mouth opened and the Basilisk slid out, looking at the two of them before glaring at the teenager. So I see you’re back, she hissed in irritation. Adrian was surprised to see three smaller snakes slide out of the mouth. She had babies! He was actually happy to see that she
wouldn’t be the last of her kind… though he hated to see what the male of her kind would look like. I told you not to return… and to bring others with you!? she demanded in outrage.

“Hello again, Great One,” Adrian hissed with a smile before she could really work herself up to a rage. The teenager whirled around to stare at him in shock as the Basilisk slid past him and towards Adrian. He held out his hand to rub her chin when she ducked down to flick her tongue against his face, smelling him.

Ah, she said in amusement as she finally recognized him. I remember you. The polite child. This was not what I meant when I said we would see each other again, you realize.

“It wasn’t my intent, Great One. I see you have children with you this time. How wonderful.”

“As touching a reunion as this is,” the teenager sneered angrily, wand in his hand. “I will not have anyone else telling my pet what to do.”

What do you need me to do, young one? she asked, ignoring the teen boy glaring at them.

“Protect my friend?” he asked, as he pulled out his wand while she blocked the first spell fired at him.

My little ones are already there, she told him as she turned to glare at the teenager. They are too young yet to petrify anyone, she told him when she saw Adrian look over at Draco with a slightly worried look in his eyes. He could see his friend beginning to rouse and didn’t want him hurt. He was happy that the babies would protect Draco without harming him. You will desist this fighting with my friend, she ordered as she blocked the teenager’s view of Adrian again.

“Back to your hollow, Snake,” the boy ordered harshly, as if that would do anything with a snake that stood sixty feet long from nose tip to tail. Adrian wasn’t surprised to see her eyes narrow down to slits at the fact that someone would dare to order her around.

“It’s alright, Great One,” he told her soothingly. “If I can’t beat him, I’ll let you know.”

He found it comforting that she actually hissed at the rude teenager, knowing that if he needed help, that she would give it freely.

When she moved out of the way, it was a different sight that greeted the teenager. Adrian’s wings were out and he stood proudly, wand in hand. “Let’s do this if you’re so determined to do your master’s bidding,” he taunted.

The teenager growled angrily, eyes practically flashing with hatred. “I do no one’s bidding but my own,” he snarled finally. Adrian raised an eyebrow at that statement, reminding his opponent that Potter had ordered him to kill.

When he didn’t say anything more, the teenager began firing spells at him in rapid succession. Adrian danced around, whirling back and forth. His wings deflected some of the spells he didn’t manage to avoid. Sometimes it was a good thing being a Shadow Dragon, especially since the wings retained some of the abilities of the creature.

He wasn’t really worried about simply avoiding spells cast at him, because the teenager couldn’t remain still himself, avoiding the spells Adrian was casting his way. He hissed softly as a spell sliced across his lower back when his wings were protecting his front.

He became aware of something crawling around him, hissing but staying out of his way. The smallest of the babies seemed to want to join in the fun as it blocked three spells aimed at Adrian’s
legs. “Thank you, friend,” he hissed at his little helper. He saw the amusement lighting the reptilian eyes as it looked back at him.

By the time he managed to disarm the teenager, sweat was pouring off him and he was panting with exertion.

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Draco became aware of the sounds of taunting. He also became aware of two snakes standing guard over him. Where the hell was he? What was going on? Then the duel began, spells were cast left and right, some legal and some he was pretty sure weren’t. He watched with his heart in his mouth as Adrian faced off with a teenager, wings sweeping around him as they deflected spells he didn’t manage to avoid. There was dust and debris flying everywhere around the two of them, telling him the two opponents were fairly well matched.

Whatever spell were accidentally shot his way were absorbed by the two snakes in front of him. Were they actually protecting him?! It took him a few seconds to realize this had to be Adrian’s doing.

To one side of the path, the Basilisk stood guard, watching the fight, though she didn’t interfere. What was she waiting for?!

He jerked in surprise as he heard a wand clatter to the floor, hoping it wasn’t Adrian’s. He sighed in relief as he noticed the teenager glaring as he rubbed at his wrist. Looking over at Adrian, he was awed at what he saw.

Adrian twirled one last time, his wings spread around him like a flowing cloak enhancing the fact that he had no shirt, hair blowing back as if there were a wind around him, with a smaller snake swirling around his feet. It was black on black and made quite the striking portrait.

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Get the book and bite it as many times as possible,” he softly instructed to his little protector, knowing that even as an infant, Basilisk were quite venomous. He’d come to the realization during the battle that the book was important. After all, the teenager had been keeping an eye on it for a reason. It had to mean something. With a flick of his wand, he called the other to him, wanting to make sure the teenager couldn’t attack him again.

“Are you done, now?” Adrian asked, walking away from the snake, circling around the teenager who glared at him.

“What are you?” the teen demanded.

“Doesn’t matter. Who are you?”

“Lord Voldemort,” the teenager said proudly, frowning at the blank look Adrian threw him. “The most powerful Dark Wizard of our world.”

Adrian’s eyebrows rose in amusement, displaying Voldemort’s wand. “Not so powerful if you ask me,” he mocked, bowing slightly.

Voldemort hissed in irritation. “If it wasn’t for the Basilisk, you would not have won,” he sneered contemptuously.

Adrian shrugged indifferently. He knew this boy was trying to anger him so he wouldn’t think
clearly and do something stupid. “Actually, it’s because I know how to show proper respect for something more powerful than I am,” he said as he held up a hand, smiling when the Basilisk’s nose came down to touch his palm. “She’s powerful. You’re not.”

“How-” the teenager began before he screamed in pain. Looking over the teenager’s shoulder, he watched as the small snake chewed through the book, long teeth piercing the leather easily. He backed up a couple of steps as the teenager began to show holes inside him, light pouring through them. The more the snake chewed, the more holes appeared until the teenager finally imploded.

The Hufflepuff on the floor gasped in shock, arching up suddenly.

“Close your eyes and keep them closed,” Adrian ordered sharply, actually surprised when he was obeyed. “Thank you, Great One, but how do we get out of here?”

_I will take you up the outside wall so you may go back to the school,_ the Basilisk told him as she slithered over to the mouth, which was still opened. _When you are ready, simply climb in. You will find a tunnel to one side of the room. Follow it. I will await you outside._

Adrian waited until she and the babies were gone before he moved over to Draco’s side. “Are you alright?” he asked as he untied Draco’s hands.

“Yeah,” Draco murmured, rubbing his wrists. “What was that all about?”

“Stalling for time. I knew the snake needed time to get to the book.”

“How did you know about the book?”

Adrian shrugged but grinned at his friend. “It was something Potter said. I found it odd that he wanted me to take the book, said ‘this is the one you’ll use to come back’ but the teenager told him he was already tied to the Hufflepuff boy. It took me a little while, but I managed to put it together by the time I disarmed him.”

“Madreca would be proud of you,” Draco said finally with a smirk as he stood up. Adrian looked at him blankly. “The training he’s been putting us through came in handy and you disarmed a boy older than you.”

Grinning, Adrian looked back at his wings, watching as they melted into his back, becoming tattoos once more. When they went to get the Hufflepuff, he spied his shirt and robes on the floor. Grateful for the clothes, he hissed as wet material encountered bare skin. “Is this your wand?” he asked his friend as he held it out.

Draco stared at it in surprise before he took it from him. “Yes. How did you know he had my wand?”

“Well, I figured he had to have someone’s wand, especially if he came from the book,” Adrian explained as he cast a drying spell on his shirt and robes before putting the robes on. Bending down, he picked up the book, turning it over in his hands. “I couldn’t see him coming out with one.”

He blinked at the words on the back of the book, surprised that it was actually a name. Tom Marvolo Riddle. Was that the name of the teenage boy? Shrugging, he shoveled the book into one of his inside pockets. He would show it to his father. Maybe he could tell him what it meant.

“Come on,” he said as he hauled the Hufflepuff to his feet and shoved him towards the rocky face. “She’s waiting for us outside.”
“We’re going to see that big snake again?” the Hufflepuff said in a shaky voice, face paling drastically.

“She’s going to take us up to the castle. Hurry.”

They had to drag the boy between them as they made their way through the tunnel to the outside, surprised to see trees. Looking up, Adrian realized they had to be on the backside of the school. They could see lights cutting through the darkness above them and they realized they had no choice but to go straight up.

Hurry, young ones. I can hear people searching the grounds for you.

“She says to hurry. There are people looking for us up there,” Adrian told them as he pushed the Hufflepuff forcefully up onto the Basilisk’s back. The ride up wasn’t as bad as Adrian had feared it would be. Instead of going straight up and risking sliding off her scales, she went up at angles so that the ride was smoother. She stopped three feet from the top so she wouldn’t be visible to the searchers.

This is as far as I dare to go, young one, she told him as they slid off her back. If you go further, there is a path that leads up. You will be safe then.

“She said to go further on foot, there’s a path that’ll take us up to the grounds,” he told his companions before turning to look up at her. “Thank you, Great One.” He smiled as she dipped her head so it was beside him and wrapped his arms – or as much as he could, anyway – around her snout, giving her a hug.

You are welcome, she murmured lovingly. Maybe next time our encounter will be different.

“I hope so as well,” he waved at her as he followed Draco and the Hufflepuff. It wasn’t until they were coming down the other side of the hill that they were spotted, though they could see everyone clearly from where they’d crested the top.

Adrian was engulfed in Snape’s arms when he got closer, Kanen on his heels, feeling himself relax instantly. Looking to his left, he was surprised to see Lucius and Narcissa there, though on second thought maybe he shouldn’t have been.

When he stepped back to look up at his father, he saw the relief in his eyes. “We’ll talk later,” he told him softly.

“If asked, do I tell the truth?” he asked seriously.

“One should never lie,” his father admonished gently, keeping an arm around his shoulders as they walked over to the Malfoy family.

“Thank goodness we found you without injuries,” Headmaster Anderson said, smiling at the three students. “What happened?”

“I was stupefied from behind so I don’t know,” Draco said with a shrug as his hand threaded its way through Kaida’s fur as he reassured her he was alright. “I woke up in a cave with Adrian and him,” he added with a jerk of his finger towards the Hufflepuff.

“Adrian?” the Headmaster asked when the Hufflepuff shrugged in confusion.

“Potter had us in a cave below the castle, sir,” Adrian answered truthfully. “The Basilisk brought us up after he left us there.”
The Headmaster jerked in surprise as he looked at him, probably knowing that there had to be more
to the story than Adrian was telling but he didn’t push for more information… yet.

“Let’s go inside,” the man said with a strained smile, ushering everyone towards the castle.
“Severus, we need to talk,” he said when he was beside the Potions master.

“You’re welcomed to join us in my quarters, Headmaster,” Severus murmured politely, nodding to
Lucius and Narcissa. He didn’t have to ask them, they would follow him downstairs anyway, if only
to make sure the boys were alright.

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In the shadows of the rocks, the dog’s eyes narrowed as he heard the boy he’d met during the
summer accuse another of trying to kill three students. It wasn’t possible! He was going to have to
look further into this, maybe talk to the boy with the wings tattoo again.

He slinked further into the shadows, waiting for the adults to melt back into the school before
making his move. There was another path into the school. He would bide his time and find the boy,
ask him what he thought he was doing…

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Adrian sighed in relief as they entered his father’s quarters, knowing he was safe here. Kanen had
stuck close to him, nearly tripping him a few times, which would’ve been alright if he hadn’t been on
the stairs at the time.

“What really happened, Adrian?” Headmaster Anderson asked when the door closed behind the
last person.

Adrian looked over at his father as he sat on the couch beside the Malfoy family, waiting for a nod
before looking at the Headmaster. “I was in the library with Pansy when I was attacked. I’d gotten
up to get a book so I could finish one of my assignments. I didn’t realize that it would be a
dangerous thing to do, especially with Kanen there as protection.” Kanen pushed up against him,
looking for comfort as he whined in apology. “It’s alright, Kanen. It wasn’t your fault,” he
murmured as he dug his fingers into the thick fur of the cat’s neck. “Whoever attacked us did so
from behind. We never saw it coming.”

“Pansy said she went looking for you when you didn’t return and found Kanen unconscious against
one of the bookshelves, a book beside him. She though he was dead at first,” Severus told him with a
nod, confirming Adrian’s story about the library. “She packed everything up after she woke him up
and came to find me. We went looking for Draco but couldn’t find him either.”

Adrian nodded, knowing that they wouldn’t have found his friend because he’d been in the cave with
him. “When I woke up, I was in a cave. It was damp and cold. My robes and shirt had been taken
off.”

“Why would they do that?” the Headmaster asked, frowning in confusion.

Adrian saw the sharp look his father shot Madreca but he addressed the Headmaster instead of
drawing attention to the two men. “Don’t know. He was arguing with another boy. I heard him say
something about my tattoos.”

“You have tattoos?” the Headmaster asked in surprise, shooting a look at Snape. Probably
wondering why he would allow his child to have tattoos at such a young age. If only you knew,
Adrian thought in amusement, though he kept that to himself.
“Yes, wings.”

“Who was the other boy?” Lucius asked, frowning slightly.

“Tom Riddle,” he said simply. They didn’t need to know it was really Voldemort… at least not until the Headmaster left. Then he would tell them everything.

“What happened then?” Madreca asked softly, as an eyebrow rose in slight amusement, as if he knew there was more to the story than Adrian was revealing.

“Potter ordered the older boy to fight me and then left. He wanted me dead.”

That brought sighs of disgust from the adults. “Will that child never learn?” Lucius asked no one in particular.

“Apparently not, Uncle Lucius. I managed to snag my wand from Potter’s pocket when he went by me. The Basilisk came out then and helped protect Draco with her babies.”

“Babies?” Headmaster Anderson asked with a tired sigh, rubbing at his forehead as if he had a headache. “There are more in the castle?”

“Don’t worry, sir. She won’t let them come up here,” Adrian told the American seriously. “So, Tom and I fought and I won, thanks to one of the babies.”

“Yeah,” Draco said with a snort of amusement, gaining everyone’s attention. “Tom tried to lord it over Adrian that he was the most powerful wizard out of everyone else in the room and Adrian wiggled the wand Tom had been using, which he’d called to his hand at the end of the fight. ‘Not that powerful’ he told the boy, which pissed him off.”

Adrian shrugged with a crooked grin. “What can I say? If you’re going to brag that you’re more powerful, you better make sure you’re not the one who just lost the fight.”

The adults managed to hide their grins at his logic. “What else happened?”

“Tom left us trapped in the cave. The Basilisk offered to take us up and dropped us off about three feet from the top because she didn’t think it would be safe enough for her to stick around with everyone searching for us.”

“Wise decision.”

“The rest you know, sir,” Adrian finished, sitting further back on the couch, hissing in pain as it pulled at the gash Riddle had given him during the fight. He’d forgotten about that in all the excitement. He sighed and resisted the urge to roll his eyes when his father gestured sharply for him to stand and turn around.

He was helped out of his robes and heard the gasps when they saw blood on his school shirt. Gentle hands pulled his shirt out of his waistband and up. “When did this happen, Adrian?” Severus asked harshly as he carefully pulled the shirt over Adrian’s head, not wanting to take the time to unbutton it.

“During the fight,” Adrian told him, wincing slightly as his father touched around the cut. “I’d forgotten about it, actually.”

He felt the cooling touch of his father’s magic and realized he must have pulled his wand out to heal it. Adrian sighed in relief, not having realized until now that it had been bothering him. “Thank you,
"Father," he murmured as he looked over his shoulder to at the Potions master.

“What do you plan on doing, Headmaster?” Severus asked after squeezing Adrian’s shoulder. While he waited for the American to answer, Adrian pulled his shirt back on, knowing the Headmaster had to have seen his wings while his father healed him.

“For the moment, it might be better to let the boy think he got away with attempted murder. We’ll keep all the information we need and when we have enough to charge the brat, I’m going to make sure the Aurors charge him for everything,” the Headmaster said with a hard glint in his eyes. “Adrian, if you’ll give me the memory of Potter saying he wanted you dead, I’ll keep it somewhere safe.”

Adrian nodded and watched as his father extracted the memory for him, giving him only what the Headmaster had asked for… no fighting, not even the taunting he’d thrown at Tom Riddle. It wasn’t needed for what the Headmaster wanted to do.

When the Headmaster had left, everyone looked at Adrian expectantly. He simply pulled out the book from his pocket and held it out to his father. Severus took it, hesitating slightly as he looked at him questioningly.

“The boy I fought was inside this,” he told the adults. Severus looked at him in shock. Adrian watched as his father flipped the book over, seeing the name ‘Tom Marvolo Riddle’ written in gold letters on the back.

He handed it over to Lucius before he began pacing in front of the fireplace. Lucius looked it over as well, even flipping it open, examining the pierced pages. Both men were frowning thoughtfully, Severus at the floor and Lucius at the ruined book. “I seem to remember my father saying something about a boy in Slytherin with this same last name,” he murmured finally. “The reason he found it so odd was because it was the first time he’d ever heard of a half-blood being placed in that house”

“And I seem to remember hearing about a man with that name applying for the position of Defense Against the Dark Arts when Headmaster Dippet was in charge,” Severus murmured as he came to a stop.

“Was that the same year Merryweather retired?” Madreca asked in surprise.

Adrian watched as the adults talked amongst themselves, ignoring the fact that he and Draco were there. Feeling bored and knowing Kanen needed reassurance, he took his shoes off. Kanen, who had lain down in front of his feet during the interview purred when he began dragging his feet over his sleek fur. Adrian smiled in amusement and pleasure and looked over at Draco, who was leaning into Narcissa as his fingers ran through Kaida’s fur.

“I believe so,” Severus answered with a shrug. “I wonder where this thing came from.”

Adrian frowned as he looked at the book in Lucius’ hand, something was bugging him… something to do with the book…

"Give this to someone in first year,” a man’s voice murmured.”

The memory came to him out of the blue, half-forgotten in a haze of pain and panic… Of course! He knew that voice! Why hadn’t he recognized it before? “Father?”

When the adults ignored him, he rolled his eyes and got up, careful not to step on Kanen. Grabbing Snape’s hand as he paced by him, he forced his father to a stop. The Potions master looked at him in surprise. “What?”
“It just occurred to me that I have seen this book before.” That caught their attention. “I dreamt that Dumbledore gave it to Potter and told him to give it to a first year. That it would do the rest.”

“When was this?” his father asked in surprise.

“On the train ride to Hogwarts beginning of last year. It was right after we left the train station.”

“You had a vision?” Madreca asked with a frown. “Why had you not mentioned it before?”

“Because at the time, I didn’t know that’s what it was and I was going through a tough period at the time. I didn’t even remember it until now.”

“If this is Dumbledore’s doing, then how did he know about the book?” Lucius asked in confusion. “Why would he even want to bring him back? He was always against the Dark Lord.”

Severus looked down at Adrian thoughtfully, gently clutching at the small hand in his. “Because it would force Adrian to get involved. If it proved that the boy he’s been passing off as Harry Potter was an imposter then people would begin to look for the real boy. As it stands now, the boy everyone calls ‘Harry’ has been able to get away with taking his place, but that’s all he is. A substitute.”

“Why is he so intent on me becoming Harry Potter, Father?” Adrian asked quietly, shoulders drooping tiredly.

“According to what I know, there’s a prophecy that links you with the Dark Lord. Do you remember me telling you about it?” Adrian nodded. He remembered this as Severus had told him it was the reason the Potters – he simply couldn’t think of them as his parents, especially since he didn’t even remember them – were dead, because this man had told Voldemort about what he’d overheard. Even now, Adrian bore no ill will towards the man he considered his father. The circumstances his father had been in had dictated his actions. He’d tried to save his mother, in the end, but had been unsuccessful. “Dumbledore told me once that what I’d heard was only part of it. There’s more to the prophecy than I know.”

“But, Father,” Adrian began with a frustrated sigh. “If Harry Potter had never existed before school began, why would he now? It’s stupid to bring in a boy and expect him to become someone he’s not. Just so he can fulfil a prophecy that only the old man knows? Honestly.”

Severus shrugged indifferently. “No one ever accused Albus Dumbledore of being anything but manipulative. There was a reason he wanted you to take up that mantle. There’s no telling what would’ve happened if you had.”

“That doesn’t solve the problem of what this book represents,” Madreca murmured as he looked at the book in Lucius’ hands. “The real question is how did the old man know what this book could do? How did he get his hands on it?”

“Wait,” Lucius murmured thoughtfully. “I seem to remember the Dark Lord giving me a diary before his disappearance. Said ‘just in case’ but then didn’t explain further. I sold it to Borgin and Burkes not long after the Dark Lord’s disappearance and the Ministry was searching homes for dark artifacts. Perhaps he bought it from them?”

“You sold something the Dark Lord asked you to keep safe?” Madreca said in amusement. “And you didn’t think anything about selling it?”

Lucius shrugged indifferently. “It didn’t seem important enough to jeopardize my position at the Ministry over.”
“Alright. Is that everything that happened?” Severus asked, seeming to realize it was getting late. “How did you destroy the diary?”

“I told one of the Basilisk babies to bite it as many times as possible,” Adrian told the adults with a shrug. “It seemed to be the best solution at the time.”

“And effective.” Draco drawled with a roll of his eyes. “Riddle exploded into a shower of lights.”

They watched as Severus did a Tempus to see just what time it was. “It’s time you went back to the Slytherin Common Room. Curfew is in ten minutes.”

“Yes, sir,” the two boys answered without hesitation.

Adrian smiled as he was pulled into a hug, knowing that after the scare his father had gotten over his disappearance, that he needed the contact to assure himself that Adrian was fine. He watched out of the corner of his eye as Draco gave Narcissa a hug and moved to give her one, too.

It just proved how much the Malfoys had been worried when even Lucius gave them each a hug before they left Snape’s quarters. The cats walked on each side of them - the boys in the middle - making sure nothing could get at them.

A strange noise from their left as they passed an unused corridor had them looking down it in confusion. It took a few seconds for their eyes to get used to the dimness of the corridor, but soon they could make out the outline of Blaise making out with another student. A gasp drifted down to them and they looked at each other in surprise and amusement before they continued on their way, giving their friend some privacy.

They waited until they were out of earshot before they started laughing softly.

* * *

Time passed quickly, as it usually did when one was busy doing things. Soon it was Halloween, much to Adrian’s friends’ annoyance when he woke them up early with his inability to sit still. But seeing as it was a Sunday, despite all the grumbling, it worked out fine for everyone. Also, seeing as the previous year’s Quidditch game had worked wonderfully to calm their friend, by the time the afternoon hit, they took Adrian down again to play.

This, however, gave the older boys the idea that perhaps some of the younger years should try out for the team. So, with that in mind, the team went down with the second and third years and did an impromptu try-out for them.

Those who were the best would replace the ones leaving that year and since they were currently short three members, it opened it up for three new recruits. The extras would be training with the rest though they wouldn’t play this year.

There was a lot of excited chatter as they waited, cloaks wrapped tightly around their bodies as the wind bit at them. Soon, however, they were up in the air and each one was given a chance at each position. Some were completely hopeless at the game, but had fun trying out anyway.

It seemed that only seven out of the group had the qualifications to be in any of the positions. Adrian and Draco being amongst them, Crabbe and Goyle were better as beaters, Blaise, Neville and Nott had gracefully bowed out when they couldn’t get passed the first position. Ginny was good as Seeker, surprising her brothers, though Adrian and Draco seemed to be better at it than she was, however she was also good as Keeper. Pansy didn’t even try, saying it was an uncivilized game and that it would mess up her hair… Adrian and Draco had rolled their eyes at her.
“Alright, listen up,” Flint growled out, glaring at the students. “We’ve made our choices and a list will be posted in the Common Room at the end of the day with the times and days for practices and games. Those of you chosen will be expected to show up. Those who don’t will be automatically kicked off the team and someone else chosen in their place.”

With that, the group was dismissed, though some remained behind to play the game Adrian and his friends started after the dismissal. It was even more chaotic than the previous year, though no less fun. By the time the feast began, Adrian was far calmer than usual and actually enjoyed his evening for once.

* * *

The dog waited until the majority of the students had left for the feast. Slipping into the Slytherin Common Room behind someone leaving. He slunk into the shadows, confident that his black fur hid him from anyone lingering behind.

When he was sure there was no one in sight, he used his nose to locate the boy’s scent and followed it into the last room. Making his way to the last bed, he became aware of movement on the second bed on the right. He wrinkled his nose as the scent of sex came to him even as he heard a soft sigh and gasp.

He sank down into the deepest shadows, waiting for the students to come back, ignoring the sounds coming to him. Soon, the two bodies on the bed – a girl and boy – rose and left the room to join the festivities. He’d tried to speak to the dark haired boy during the last few weeks, but he was never alone long enough to approach undetected.

This would be his only chance before he tried to get to the other boy… The rat would pay for his betrayal and soon, he would be the one to deliver it.

It seemed like forever before the boys residing in the room came back. He’d managed to doze fitfully, not daring to sleep deeply in case he was caught. He watched as the boys got ready for bed, but while the others climbed tiredly into bed, the blonde and dark haired boys with the cats did not. That caught his attention.

He watched as the dark haired boy seemed to bounce around the room, laughing as the big male cat played with him. That started an impromptu wrestling match – which was definitely unmatched – and lasted until the boy was pinned under the animal’s body, laughing and sputtering as the cat licked his face.

“You taste of sugar,” the cat rumbled in amusement before he pulled back, licking his lips before yawning hugely.

“Stop it, Kanen!” the boy giggled, turning his head this way and that to get away from the tongue, using his hands to try and push the big head away, causing everyone to laugh at them when the cat seemed to increase the licking, purring in contentment.

You taste of sugar, the cat rumbled in amusement before he pulled back, licking his lips before yawning hugely.

“But I didn’t have any sweets tonight,” Adrian protested through his laughter.

Is it time for bed, yet?

“No, not yet,” the boy said with a sigh.

“What did he ask, Adrian?” the boy from the second bed on the right – the one who’d left late – asked with an amused smile. That was when he realized that while the boys had gotten ready for bed, none were actually laying down, simply watching the one with the cat and waited… what
“If it was time for bed yet,” the boy on the floor – Adrian – answered as the cat got off him with one last lick. So, now he had a name for this boy. He heard the others groan and collapse on their beds before some sat up again.

“How much time is left?” the boy closest to the door asked, turning his head on his blankets to look at Adrian.

The boy pulled out his wand and waved his wand. “Another hour and a half,” he answered with a shrug. Adrian grinned at the groans that met his answer. He watched as the boy began to scratch at his arms, feeling the hair stand on the back of his head. There was something happening here. He could sense the wrongness of it.

He noticed the blonde watching Adrian with keen eyes. Could he see it too?

**

Draco watched as Adrian began to scratch at his arms as if he were breaking out in hives or something. This was new. What was happening now? He nodded sharply at Goyle, gesturing with his head to get their Head of House.

When he turned back to look at Adrian, his friend was looking out the window, like last time before Kanen and Kaida distracted him, bouncing playfully in front of him.

**

Adrian watched as the cats got into a wrestling match, laughing in amusement as he rubbed his arms, feeling like fire ants were crawling on his skin. It burned slightly and itched and reminded him of something… but he was distracted by the cats playing.

He didn’t even hear his father enter the room as he blinked at the swaying cats, finally holding still. “No, no, no,” he whimpered softly, panting as he grabbed hold of fur as the room moved again, his skin burning uncomfortably. He wasn’t feeling good now and his eyes kept going blurry.

“What’s wrong, Adrian?” Kanen asked as he looked up at him, making Adrian’s eyes close as his face distorted. It was like looking at a person through a weird magnifying glass. He made a sound of distress and whimpered again when hands caught him, making his body ache in pain.

“What did you have to eat, Adrian?” he heard his father ask but refused to open his eyes as he felt his body burn even more while the room spun behind his eyelids.

“He ate what all of us did, sir,” Blaise answered helpfully when Adrian said nothing. He couldn’t have answered even if he wanted to. He was afraid that if he opened his mouth, he’d be sick. It also didn’t help that his head began to throb painfully.

Once, just once, he would like to spend a quiet year at school where he didn’t have to worry about being hurt or getting sick or… whatever. He felt himself being led somewhere but trusted his father enough not to panic.

A phial was pressed against his mouth and he obediently opened it, swallowing whatever his father was giving him. “This is to help you throw up,” he was told softly and he made a sound of distress, cracking his eyes open to see he was standing in the bathroom.

“Uncle Sev, Blaise got some babbling drop yesterday from his mum. I think he might have given
Adrian one at supper,” Draco said quietly from somewhere on his right. It sounded like his friend was standing by the door. Then he lost interest in anything else as his stomach heaved unpleasantly.

“Stay with him until I return, Draco,” Severus ordered gently when he was done, helping him sit against the wall. That was good because Adrian didn’t think he was done being sick just yet.

Draco sighed as he pulled his friend against him. “I’m starting to hate school,” Draco murmured against his hair.

Adrian barked out a harsh laugh as he began to shake. “You and me both. I don’t remember having this much trouble in primary school,” he said through clenched teeth so he could get the words out without his teeth clicking together. Oh, yes, he remembered this now. When he’d been four, he and Draco had made a Babbling potion. Nettle. He had an adverse reaction to Nettle. First came the itching and burning, then the sores before throwing up and lastly the chills and fever. That was what the text books gave as description. It completely skipped over the magnifying glass outlook or the nauseating swaying of the room or even the pain… just gave the strict basics of symptoms.

He’d never touched the stuff since that day. “Blaise must’ve slipped me a drop during supper,” he whispered through chattering teeth, a shiver tearing through him despite the fact that Draco’s warm body was causing his own internal temperature to skyrocket.

“Mm,” Draco murmured distantly. “I don’t think he realized just how it would affect you, though. I thought they were all a little too interested in watching you drink your pumpkin juice tonight.”

Adrian made a sound of distress as he scrambled for the toilet, throwing up again. When he was done, his father was back, waiting patiently with another potion. He understood why his father had given him the first potion. He wouldn’t have to deal with the sores this time. He’d expelled the Nettle quickly enough to save himself that wonderful experience.

He downed the phial his father gave him, recognizing the Calming draught instantly, then he was helped to bed because there was no way he was getting there under his own power. “No,” he protested, when they tried to lay him against his pillow. “Kanen.” With an impatient sigh from his father, he was helped until he lay propped against the cat, head against his shoulder.

Kanen licked his forehead once, purring in comfort. He felt a blanket draped over him but he was too sleepy to do anything more than sigh, burrowing more comfortably against the cat.

**

“Let him sleep in tomorrow,” Severus told Draco as he ran his fingers through Adrian’s hair, earning a sleepy smile from the boy. He knew Adrian was in for a rough night. The nightmares Nettle created for him weren’t pleasant and there was nothing he could give Adrian to stop them. Dreamless Sleep didn’t block them because it was in his system and had to work its way out.

“He’s in most of my classes, anyway, so I can keep notes for him,” Draco told him with a shrug, stifling a yawn. “He’ll probably end up sleeping with me later tonight.”

“I’m really sorry, Professor,” Blaise said with a pale face. “I thought it would be a harmless prank… actually I didn’t think it’d worked since he was already hyper.”

“It’s alright, Blaise,” Severus murmured as he straightened up with a tired sigh. “Just don’t give him any again. He’s allergic to Nettle.”

“Yes, sir.”
“To bed, all of you,” he ordered as he swept out of the room. His words were met with sighs of relief and tired groans as they obeyed instantly.

* * *

He’d never seen anyone with such bad luck as this kid. He bit back a groan as he finally moved, feeling his bones creak in protest as they were finally moved to a different position. The boys and cats had finally fallen asleep some time ago and he felt it was safe enough to stand and stretch now.

He would wait until morning, after everyone had left for class before he talked to the boy. He’d only have to deal with the cats then. His ears perked up when Adrian whimpered, twitching in his sleep. Within a few minutes, the boy jerked up, panting with fear. He watched as the boy pushed the blanket off him and silently padded over to the blonde boy, the Malfoy boy.

Without a word, the boy moved over and wrapped his arms around Adrian. They settled down and went back to sleep. A few more times, the boys woke up during the night, every time, they went back to sleep within a decent amount of time.

When the boys finally roused themselves from their beds, they moved quietly around the room, careful not to wake Adrian up. Soon, the boy was left by himself with the two cats. He still waited, wanting the boy to wake up on his own instead of waking him up himself.

It was another three hours before the boy roused enough to be alert. That’s when he decided to make his move. He pulled himself out of his corner and padded out into the open, repressing the groans at moving. It was cold here same as it had been in the other place, but it was dryer at least. He padded into the light so the boy would see him, gaining the cat’s attention instantly.

He waited patiently while the boy went to the washroom, sitting by the bed closest to the door so the boy couldn’t bolt out of it before he could ask his questions. They growled at him, watching intently from the bed. He kept his distance, not wanting to be attacked.

When the door opened and the boy came out, he froze in the doorway when Adrian saw him. Hello again, young one, he said, nodding his head in greeting.

“How did you get in here?” the boy asked, slowly inching his way towards the cats.

I came in by the portrait hole, of course, he told him with a bark of laughter. How else would I come in?

“Why?”

Straight to the point, huh, he thought in amusement. He liked this kid. I was hoping to speak with you.

“About?”

By this time, the boy was back at the bed, looking at him over the big male cat’s shoulder, a hand resting on his back. The male’s muscles rippled at the touch, but aside from the swishing tail, he didn’t move, eyes intent on him.

I was wondering why someone would try to kill you, he said, his head dipping down in a slight shrug. At least, that’s what I heard you tell the adults the day they were searching for you and your friend.

Adrian frowned at him. “Who are you?” he asked instead of answering him. “I know you’re not an
animal. They don’t have that kind of memory unless it was extremely memorable or affect them directly. The affairs of humans don’t concern them.”

Well, he thought in surprise, the boy was sharp. He hadn’t thought he’d have picked up on that. Did he risk changing to his human shape or did he bluff his way out of it? Looking into the boy’s eyes, he made a quick decision and changed into his human shape.

The boy inhaled sharply, stiffening as his eyes grew wide in fear and panic.

**

Adrian hadn’t thought he’d been right about the dog. He’d bluffed, actually… sort of. He’d been honest about animals not caring what happened to humans unless it affected them directly. He stared as the dog melted into the shape of a tall man with tattoos on his body. He knew who this was!

Sirius Black!!

Why was he there? Did he know who he really was?

No, if that was the case, Adrian wouldn’t have been questioned about his accusation of Potter. So then, what exactly did this man want? He wanted to bolt, find his father, but Black was blocking his only exit.

He relaxed when the cats moved in front of him, tense and ready to attack should the escaped convict try to make a move towards him. “What do you want?”

“I want to know why you’ve accused my godson of trying to kill not just you but two other students as well,” the rough looking man said, hands held up to show he had no weapons on him. He kept glancing at the cats warily, holding still. Good, so he knew he was in danger if he tried to make a move towards him.

“You’re godson?” Adrian said with a mirthless laugh. “He’s not your godson, Mr. Black.”

That confused the convict. He frowned at him. “Of course Harry Potter is my godson.”

“Oh, yes. Harry Potter is, but that boy isn’t.”

“What do you mean?” the man asked and the look he shot Adrian told him that Sirius Black honestly thought Adrian was trying to pull one on him.

“Dumbledore brought him in to take Harry Potter’s place because the boy born with that name doesn’t want to play his games.” Adrian smiled without humour as he reclined on Draco’s bed. “If you really want to know more, ask the imposter or even ask Professor Lupin. Either one will tell you the truth… well, Professor Lupin will, anyway. I doubt Potter could tell the truth at this time without landing himself in Azkaban for life.”

He watched the man flinch at the mention of the prison he’d escaped from. “Who are you?”

“Adrian Snape,” he introduced himself, bowing mockingly. “You might want to go, though. The others are going to be down here in a bit to get me for lunch.”

“Will you keep this between the two of us?” the man asked, hesitating as he looked at the door, knowing Adrian was right.

“It’ll depend on what you do,” Adrian said softly, looking at the floor for a second before pinning the
convict in place with his anger. “Don’t come near me again without my father’s permission and stop following me. After you get your answers, it might be wise for you to leave the school, though.”

The tall man hesitated again, looking like he wanted to ask him something else, but he sighed as he opened the door slightly and melted into his dog shape. With one last look back, the dog slipped out of the room.

*That was very dangerous, Adrian,* Kanen said, looking back at him. *Are you really going to let him go?*

“Yes,” Adrian said as he climbed back into bed, waiting for Kanen to jump on before cuddling against the big male. “As long as he goes after Potter, he’ll never find out about me.”

*I agree with Kanen,* Kaida said as she reclined on the other side of him, covering his feet. *It’s a dangerous gamble you’re attempting.*

“We’ll see,” Adrian said with a huge yawn, pulling the blanket over his shoulders from behind him. He was still freezing from last night’s debacle. Usually he’d be over the effects of Nettle but it seemed to be lingering longer this time. Hopefully he’d be over it by lunchtime or he’d never be able to keep any food down…

He was jerked out of his nap by someone sitting hard on the bed beside him. “Come on, Adrian,” Pansy said with a haughty tone that grated on his nerves right now. “It’s time for lunch.”

“Pansy,” Draco drawled in annoyance from the doorway, moving out of the way so the others could enter the bedroom. “How many times do I have to tell you not to jump on my bed?”

Pansy rolled her eyes but got off his bed, saving Adrian the effort of telling her off. “So why weren’t you in classes?”

“None of your business, Pansy, dear,” Adrian growled angrily, glaring at the girl. The fact that a chill made him shiver didn’t help his mood one bit.

“Professor Snape said he could skip classes today,” Goyle said before Pansy could give a retort, as he entered behind Draco. “Let’s go eat. Breakfast was a long time ago.”

Now, why was it that Pansy’s question irritated him but Goyle’s comment didn’t? In fact, he found Goyle’s comment amusing.

Draco threw some clothes beside him on the bed without comment and pointedly looked at Pansy with an eyebrow raised. With a huff, the girl took the hint and left the room to allow Adrian to change his clothes. “Uncle Sev said you have the day off to recover from last night’s mess. How are you feeling?”

“Same as last night,” Adrian said with a shiver. He was warmer when he leaned against Kanen because the cat gave off a lot of heat. He’d been fine when he’d woken up earlier but after a while, he’d felt the cold creep up again.

“Still feeling cold?” Crabbe asked with a frown.

Blaise touched a hand to his forehead and Adrian watched curiously as the other boy’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “But you feel hot!”

“It’s one of the side effects of the allergy,” Adrian said with a shrug as he pulled his pants on, trying to suppress the shivers. “First my body feels like it’s crawling with fire ants and itches like crazy.
Then I get sick and throw up. Lastly, I feel cold but my body’s boiling and the fever kicks in. Usually I get hives along with the itching and crawling.” By this time, his teeth were chattering again.

“That’s only because Uncle Sev brought something to make you throw up. If it wasn’t for that, you’d have sores all over your body,” Draco told him as he helped Adrian pull a warmer shirt on since he was shaking too much to do it himself. “Maybe they’ll have soup with lunch,” he said with a sigh.

They made it to the Great Hall and had Adrian sitting on the bench before standing would’ve been a problem, but now he felt like he was broiling in his shirt. Sweat was beading on his forehead but his hands were ice cold.

“This isn’t catchy, is it?” Nott asked as he slid into the seat facing him, frowning in concern.

“No,” Draco answered for him. Adrian smiled slightly as he spied a pot of soup amongst the potatoes and meat. After spilling soup for the third time, Crabbe pushed his hand off the ladle and dished some out for him.

When he would’ve gone for a second ladleful, Adrian shook his head, smiling slightly. “Thanks,” he murmured as he grabbed a roll to dunk into the hot liquid, taking a small bite of the soppy mess in his hand. Knowing from experience, he didn’t want to fill up too much. If he didn’t eat too much, it might stay down. He’d eat more at supper if he felt better, but right now, he didn’t want to tempt fate too much.

“How do you feel, Adrian?” he heard his father ask from behind him. He looked up at the Potions master with feverish eyes and smiled thinly. “Still?”

“Yes,” he whispered, resting against the edge of the table. He didn’t want his lunch now. He just wanted sleep. Sleep was good.

“Try to eat what you have in your bowl,” his father murmured as he reached out to touch his forehead, much as Blaise had, a frown of concern on his face.

“Yes, sir.” He turned to look at the bowl in front of him and forced himself to dunk another piece of the roll. After a third bite, he lost interest in the food and rested his head on the edge of the table, closing his eyes for a little. He was tired now and just wanted to sleep.

“When you’re done eating, Draco, take him back down. I’ll check on him in an hour. If he isn’t better, I’ll inform Madam Pomfrey,” he heard his father murmur softly. He hadn’t even realized his father was still standing there.

“Yes, sir.”

* * *

“Are you sure, Severus?” Adrian heard, making him frown. He’d been drifting somewhere between sleep and wakefulness for the last few minutes… when the whispering had begun, actually. He didn’t remember the trip down to his room, just that he was lying against Kanen. The steady heartbeat under his ear and the comforting heat told him that was where he was.

“Positive. I made sure last night,” he heard his father say, could hear the concern in his voice and smiled drowsily, snuggling further into Kanen’s side. “I watched him eat a little at lunch. A few bites of bread with his soup.”
“Soup?” the Mediwitch asked in confusion. “What soup? There was no soup at lunch.”

“There was soup in front of him when I stopped to talk to him,” Severus said and Adrian could almost see him frowning at the woman, though he kept his eyes closed.

“If there was soup at his table, his was the only one,” the woman murmured and Adrian felt cool fingers brush the hair out of his face. They felt good on the heat of his skin. “I need him where I can watch him, Severus.”

The blankets were pulled off him and Adrian frowned as the cold air surrounded him, making him shiver after the warmth of the blankets. He winced as he was picked up. His father murmured an apology against his forehead, seeming to know how much it hurt to be picked up…

He tried to stay awake during the walk to the infirmary but it seemed too much effort to concentrate and soon he was dozing against his father’s shoulder. The pain dragged him out of it, however, when he was placed on the bed, shivering at the cold feel of the blankets. It was a drastic change from Kanen’s warmth, which he was lying against once more.

He frowned in confusion, but soon, he was drifting again. Trying to figure out why he should be concerned about being in the infirmary was too much effort and the soothing darkness of sleep was beckoning…

Sleep won.
Chapter 7 - Sirius Black Pt. 2

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 7 – Sirius Black Pt2

Sirius had tried to talk to the Potter boy during the weeks he was at the school, but he was even harder to talk to than the Snape boy. He was ready to tear his fur off in frustration. It wasn’t that the boy was surrounded by friends. On the contrary, he only seemed to have two or three friends and they weren’t always around except for the red-head.

No, what made it difficult was that he seemed to disappear somewhere in the unused corridors of the school. He’d tried following the boy only to lose him around a corner.

That was how he’d come to be in the corridor when Pomfrey and Severus had walked up the stairs carrying Adrian, trailed by the big male cat. Curiosity got the better of him and he’d decided to follow them, wondering what was happening to the boy now.

The boy was pale, more so than that morning. He could feel something moving inside the boy, as if it were struggling with something… and loosing. He snuck into the infirmary behind the two adults, sneaking behind a partition so he wouldn’t be seen. Even the cat didn’t seem to notice him as he jumped up onto the bed and the boy reclined against his front shoulder. Pomfrey left first, then Snape, probably going back to his classes.

It was quite a while before anything happened after that.

The creak of the door opening alerted him to someone coming in. The hair on the back of his neck rose when no one came in however, though the door closed quickly, as if someone had come in. It was a few seconds later that he realized what was wrong. He watched as, in front of the window closest to the Snape boy, a wand tip appeared, stunning the cat.

An invisibility cloak! It had to be!

He padded quietly around whoever was there, ready to move if he had to. The cloak came off, tossed on the floor for the moment. Potter!? Moving quickly, he pulled the cloak under a partition so the Potter boy wouldn’t be able to use it to escape.

He moved quickly, then, padding around the perimeter of the beds closest to Adrian so he could see what Potter was doing. He watched in confusion as a phial was pulled out of a pocket, a bit of its contents poured into the sleeping boy’s mouth.

Adrian frowned and moaned as if in pain, tossing fitfully.

He’d seen enough. He didn’t know what was in the phial but it was obvious it was harmful to the boy. With a growl, he moved out of the shadows, his hackles rising as Potter froze in surprise and fear. He backed up quickly when Sirius snarled once in warning.

“What’s the meaning of this?” he heard as the door to Pomfrey’s office opened. He quickly backed up into the shadows as Potter whirled around, looking for the cloak. “Mr. Potter?” the Mediwitch asked with a dark scowl, noticing when Potter’s hand whipped behind him, trying to hide the phial. “I’ll take that,” she told him sternly, holding her hand out for the item in his hand. With a scowl, Potter grudgingly gave the phial over to the woman. “My office, now.”
He stomped into her office, glaring darkly. She looked over at the boy on the bed before casting a scan on him. Frowning at the results, she quickly moved into her office. In minutes, the man he’d seen sitting in Dumbledore’s usual seat in the Great Hall arrived, Severus not long behind him.

He managed to slink out of the infirmary without detection, grabbing the cloak on his way out the door. With the adults there, he wasn’t sticking around to get caught.

**

“Just what is in this phial?” Headmaster Anderson asked as he picked up the phial off Pomfrey’s desk. When the boy sitting in the chair, sulking, remained stubbornly silent, he handed it over to Snape.

The Potions master opened it and sniffed delicately, eyes flashing dangerously as he recognized the scent. “Nettle. Pure Nettle,” the man growled, glaring down at Potter.

“Pure?” Pomfrey asked, face draining of any colour.

“What’s the significance of Nettle? It’s just a potion ingredient.” He looked from a pair of glaring dark eyes to the concerned ones of the Mediwitch. “Right?” he asked uncertainly. Was he missing something?

“I find it curious, Headmaster, that this boy would be caught giving my child Nettle… something he is deathly allergic to. Why would he do that unless he was trying to kill him?”

An allergic reaction to Nettle? Really? Anderson frowned as he tried to remember if he’d ever come across anyone ever being allergic to such an herb. He came up blank. “How would Mr. Potter even know that?”

“Albus Dumbledore would’ve known that. It was in Adrian’s medical records,” Pomfrey told him quietly before she jumped to her feet. “I need to check on my patient.”

Anderson sighed as he looked at the boy in the chair and nodded as he came to a decision. He could no longer allow this to continue. “I think it’s time to involve the Aurors,” he murmured. The boy’s head jerked up, the fear and panic clear in his eyes.

“But I didn’t do anything!” he yelled suddenly, face reddening when Snape’s eyes landed on him.

“Poisoning is a serious crime, child,” Anderson said, placing a hand on Snape’s arm when he would’ve blasted Potter. “I’m afraid it’s out of my hands. Severus, see to Adrian, I’m going to contact the Aurors.”

Severus looked at him calculatingly before he nodded, more a jerk of his head than anything else, and left him alone with Potter. He walked over to the flames and threw in a handful of Floo powder into it. After talking to the Auror in charge, he stepped back, allowing the woman to come through.

“This is the boy?” she asked with a frown.

“Yes. Here’s the phial he was giving to the student,” he murmured as he handed the phial. It was a sad day when a student tried to kill another fellow student. He also held out all the other proof he’d been amassing on Potter: memories and papers. “He was caught giving this to a boy who’s deathly allergic to the contents. Here’s the rest of the information I’ve gathered on his other attempts. I’m sure if you talk to his partner in crime, Ronald Weasley, you’ll find out more.”

“Really?” the woman asked in surprise and unease, accepting what was given to her. “This has been
“It would seem the previous Headmaster encouraged him to do as much damage as he could,” he smiled sadly. “I, however, will not put up with students attacking students. It’s bad for a learning environment, besides, we’re here to teach them how to survive after school, not encourage them to become criminals.”

The woman stared at him in shock before she shook herself out of it and took Potter by the arm. “We’ll take care of this immediately, Headmaster,” she said sharply and left with her charge.

He sighed again, running a hand through his hair. When he’d begun collecting incident reports on the Potter boy, this had not been what he’d been intending to do with the information. He’d intended to expel the boy at worse, not send him with an Auror to be charged with attempted murder. He didn’t know what the old Headmaster had been up to when he was here, but this was as much his fault as Potter’s. If he hadn’t encouraged the boy to become a bully, things would’ve worked out differently.

With another sigh, he exited Pomfrey’s office and was greeted with a sight of frantic movements. Adrian was so pale lying on the bed. The cat was no longer on the bed and the boy was laid flat on his back as they worked on him.

He moved closer in concern when he realized Pomfrey had cast a spell to help the boy breath. Was he really that allergic to Nettle that he would go into respiratory distress? He’d seen the boy sitting at the table at noon. He’d looked tired and feverish… not like he was now.

He’d spoken to Severus earlier and been told that a friend had given him candy without his knowledge and was suffering the backlash of an allergic reaction. He hadn’t been told what the boy was allergic to at the time. What was the difference to now? Then he realized what made this different: this dosage had been pure, not diluted by whatever he’d ingested previously.

“What can I do?” he asked when nothing seemed to help the boy.

“We need a full Healer,” Severus growled out as he poured a potion into Adrian’s mouth, massaging his throat to get him to swallow. He seriously doubted Pomfrey had even heard him as she concentrated hard on her task.

Rushing into the Mediwitch’s office, he quickly contacted St. Mongo’s. They sent a Healer immediately, a hefty man with a balding head. Working in unison, the three before him worked on Adrian, finally administering something that flushed his system of impurities. By this time, the boy’s friends were either standing or sitting around the room, staying out of the way.

He waited long enough to make sure Adrian was recovering and had spoken to the other adults before leaving the infirmary. He had a report to write and send to the Auror on the boy’s state now. Since the attack had failed, the charges against Potter wouldn’t be murder, at least. It would remain to see if things improved now.

**

“What happened, Uncle Sev?” Draco asked worriedly as he sat beside Adrian’s bed. His friend was lying so still on the bed. In fact the white sheet under him had more colour than Adrian did at the moment.

“Potter was caught giving him pure Nettle,” Severus murmured softly, looking exhausted as he sat on the edge of the bed. “He was taken to the Ministry for questioning.”
“Well,” Draco growled angrily, eyes flashing. “At least this Headmaster’s willing to do something about that menace.”

“Hopefully this won’t have any adverse effects on Adrian’s… development,” Severus said softly, looking into his eyes. Draco frowned at the odd phrasing before his eyes widened as he realized what Severus was saying. Since it wasn’t really Adrian who had the allergy to Nettle but his creature, this might have harmed the Dragon inside him.

“What do we do?”

Severus shook his head, sighing tiredly. “Nothing we can do but wait and pray nothing comes out of this. Potter failed, which means Dumbledore failed. I think he’s given up on his quest and decided the best thing to do is eliminate the obstacle.”

“Oh,” Draco whispered numbly. So now, instead of trying to get Adrian to take his place as Harry Potter, the old man was going to take him out of the running. That wasn’t good…

“When he wakes and is strong enough, we’ll take him down to the dungeons. Tonight, I’ll teach you a spell to detect Nettle in anything,” Severus told him, looking towards where the Healer and Mediwitch were deep in discussion before looking at him again. “Make sure nothing he ingests has it or it might kill him next time.”

Draco nodded, determined no one would hurt his friend again.

The days passed quickly, days in which Adrian recovered from the attempt on his life. Potter had been allowed to come back to school while they investigated his case, but he wore a bracelet that couldn’t be removed by anyone but the caster and every time he so much as looked in Adrian’s direction, it zapped him.

Even though Adrian enjoyed the yelps of pain, he didn’t go out of his way to torture the boy. He just wanted to forget everything that had happened because of Potter and simply concentrate on school. As it was, with Christmas around the corner, Adrian was getting tired of the constant monitoring – apparently Madam Pomfrey had cast a monitoring spell on him so he didn’t have to remain in the infirmary – which would resume once school was back in session unless he was recovered enough to go without. She wanted to see him when the holidays were over, saying he should be better by then. If he wasn’t, the monitoring would resume until he was pronounced fit enough.

He tired easily but that was expected after his brush with death. He didn’t remember any of it, really…

Quidditch was fun, though.

In their team, they had Marcus Flint, who was obviously team captain, but was also a Chaser. Draco was made Keeper. Crabbe and Goyle were the reserve Beaters since the Weasley twins were already in that position. The other two Chasers were Montague and Bulstode. There were three others in reserve for Chaser, but Adrian didn’t know them. And he had been made seeker for the team.

After they’d won the first game, in which he hadn’t had to do much but fly around looking for the snitch, he hadn’t been fit enough afterwards to celebrate with the rest of the team. In fact, he’d slept through it. At least he’d made it back to the Common Room under his own power… barely.

The Christmas holidays saw them at Malfoy Manor. In this case, Severus allowed them to use the
Floo after lunch instead of going home by train. Adrian was more grateful this year for it than any other year. As it was, he was almost spit out of the fireplace, sprawling onto the floor of the Manor.

Draco helped him to his feet, looking him over critically. With a satisfied nod, he led Adrian towards the living room where Narcissa waited for them.

“Welcome home, boys,” Narcissa murmured from beside the basinet, smiling warmly as they made their way over to her for their usual hug. Soon, Adrian lay in front of the fireplace, leaning against Kanen, blinking sleepily at the family playing with baby Caelum.

_Try to sleep before supper, Adrian,_ Kanen murmured, pushing against him with his nose. Adrian smiled tiredly, shifting until he was more comfortable, eyes closing on their own, an arm loosely wrapped around the cat’s neck.

He was startled awake when a hand lightly touched his shoulder. Looking up, his heart pounding in his ears, Adrian was relieved to see Lucius standing there. “Time for supper,” his godfather said when Adrian had relaxed, recognizing where he was.

“Okay,” Adrian murmured, groaning as he pulled himself up off the floor.

“Are you alright?” Lucius asked with a frown of concern, reaching out to help him.

“Yeah, it’s just my hip bugging me today,” Adrian said with a wry smile. “I guess I shouldn’t have slept on the floor.”

“I also heard from Draco about what happened at school. How are you feeling?” the blonde man asked as they walked side by side towards the dining room.

“I still tire easily but at least something is being done about Potter. They placed a bracelet on him to enforce his staying away from me until the investigation is complete. It’s helped.”

Lucius nodded in satisfaction. “Good. Something needs to be done about that menace.”

Adrian was surprised to see his father sitting at the table and hurried over to Snape, smiling happily. “Hello, Father,” he murmured softly. He liked days like this, where everyone was together. They didn’t happen as often as they had before starting Hogwarts but they still occurred.

“Adrian,” his father greeted with a nod of his head. “How was your nap?”

“Refreshing. Are you spending the night?”

“Yes, I believe I will. I have to return to the school in the morning, however, for last minute things.” Adrian nodded, knowing this occurred for two or three more days. This was usually the time when teachers caught up on their correcting.

He hesitated for a minute, knowing his father didn’t like him asking, but he felt the need to do so. “Can I sleep with you tonight?” he asked softly, looking at Severus with hopeful eyes. He didn’t ask often, and usually he took comfort with Draco when he felt the need for security, but tonight he wanted his father.

Severus looked at him with an unreadable look, searching his face for something. “Is everything alright?” he asked instead of answering Adrian’s question.

Adrian looked away, shrugging uncomfortably. How did you explain a feeling? “It’s alright if you say no,” he said quietly, picking up his fork, smiling slightly. “I understand I’m getting too old to be
sleeping with you.”

“What if you sit with me after supper instead?” Severus asked after a few minutes of silence in which Adrian felt his father’s eyes on him. “We both know you’re going to nap again after supper, and it should assuage your need. If it doesn’t, you can ask me again. Would that be alright?”

Adrian thought about it, pushing his food around for a moment. “Alright,” he said finally before putting food into his mouth. He knew his father worried if he didn’t eat, so he ate as much as he could of his supper.

**

“What’s going on, Severus?” Lucius asked as they sat in the living room.

Severus sat on the couch with Adrian reclining against him, a frown on his sleeping face. His son was currently curled tightly into a ball against him, clutching at his jacket. He never wore robes at the Malfoys’ unless company was expected. He wondered what was going on that Adrian needed the extra security. “I’m not sure. What did you find out about the boy?”

“Not as much as I’d hoped.” Lucius murmured before taking a sip of his Firewhisky. “I understand he was from a small Wizarding community in the Isles of Scilly set apart from the muggles living on the neighboring islands. It looks like an abandoned muggle farm, from what I understand. The private investigator I hired said she went there and interviewed a few of the residents.”

“What did she find?” he asked as Adrian shivered slightly. Severus pulled the throw blanket over the smaller body, not wanting Adrian to catch a cold. With his immune system as low as it was, they had to be careful.

“Before she left the island to give me her report, some of the townspeople told her they were well rid of the menace. She said that was the word they used, not her own. It seems he was known there as Peter Raymond, an orphan who liked to pick on the youngsters of the town.”

“Why does that not surprise me?” he asked with a sigh as he frowned down at Adrian, who seemed to be curling up tighter against him. Just what was going on? He knew from Draco that Adrian hadn’t had a nightmare in three days… at least he hadn’t climbed into bed with the blonde boy.

“Mm,” Lucius hummed as he watched the dark haired boy with a thoughtful look. “How has he been?”

Severus shook his head, placing an arm around the boy, which seemed to make him relax slightly. “Draco says he hasn’t crawled into his bed in a few days, but then, he could be hiding the fact that he’s still having nightmares. Without the ability to talk to Kanen, it’s hard to tell.”

“What did he ask you at supper?”

“If he could sleep with me tonight,” Severus said with a worried look in his eyes when he looked at his friend. “He doesn’t ask unless he has bad nights. I’m hoping this’ll help him because he’s really getting too old to sleep with me.”

“Hm,” Lucius said with a frown. “Dreamless Sleep doesn’t work with this problem, does it?”

“With Nettle? No,” Severus murmured as he ran his fingers through the long thick locks of his child. “It’s made even worse because Potter gave him pure Nettle. I worry what this’ll do to his creature.”

“Hopefully, nothing will happen.” Lucius frowned as a sudden thought occurred to him. “How did
“Poppy said she heard a growl coming from Adrian’s area of the infirmary. She assumed Kanen was alerting her to a problem.” He’d already told Lucius all this, needing someone to talk to in order to get his anger under control. Madreca was a good person to talk to, but sometimes he needed someone who understood everything he’d been through with Adrian.

The blonde aristocrat’s eyebrow rose in confusion. “Didn’t you tell me Kanen had been stunned?”

“Yes.”

“Then how could he alert anyone?” Lucius asked, looking him directly in the eyes just as Adrian whimpered in his sleep.

**

He was walking down a corridor, feeling as if he were walking through hip high water, or bogged down by mud. “Hello?” he called out, wondering where he was. He didn’t recognize this place. He could hear laughter ahead of him, two people talking together.

There was no answer to his greeting however.

The voices were getting louder the closer he got to a doorway. He spied a couple sitting down for supper, a small child sitting in a high chair between them. They were laughing together, seeming to enjoy their evening.

Things seemed to speed up and Adrian backed up in fear. It was like someone had pressed fast forward on a movie. When it slowed down again, the woman was saying something to the man over her shoulder, taking the child upstairs.

Adrian looked back at the man, hesitating before following the woman. By the time he was halfway up the stairs, she had already turned to the left talking to the child she carried. He looked down again… just in time for the door to be blasted open.

A man in a black cloak entered just as the man rushed out of the living room to confront him. Behind the cloaked man stood another, clutching at his head, cowering in the shadows. Adrian rushed the rest of the way up, wanting to check on the woman and child.

He heard the man scream from downstairs and fighting could be heard.

Adrian didn’t know what was going on but he moved into the bedroom with the woman. She was clinging to the child, protecting it with her body as she looked in horror at the door. He knew she could hear the fighting but she seemed frozen in place, unable to decide what to do.

“Go out the window!” he screamed at her, gesturing at the open window.

She either ignored him or simply didn’t hear him. He watched in horror as the cloaked man came up the stairs. Finally, the woman moved, running to the door and slamming it shut, casting a locking spell on it. Adrian wanted to shake the stupid woman to make her listen but his legs refused to move.

He watched as she quickly placed the child into the crib, talking soothingly to the child. What the hell was she doing!? Why wasn’t she taking the child and running!? He wanted to scream in frustration and fear.

He cringed and instinctively covered his head as the door was blasted to pieces.
The woman shivered before she got up, wand in hand, to confront the cloaked man.

The stranger gestured for her to move but she simply stood there, stubbornly refusing to move aside. Adrian closed his eyes and screamed when the spell hit the woman...

He opened his eyes, panting hard as he stared into the dark eyes above him, his scream still echoing in his ears. Thinking it was the cloaked man, he began to struggle. It took him a few seconds to get his mind to register someone was talking to him.

“Adrian!” he finally heard and realized it was his father. “It’s alright. It was just a dream.”

Just a dream, he thought, his body shuddering in fear. He allowed himself to be pulled into firm arms, clinging to Snape’s jacket. He didn’t even realize he was crying. When he was calm again, he finally released his death grip on the material, though he kept his eyes closed.

“What did you dream about?” his father’s gentle voice asked, intruding his chaotic thoughts.

“A family being attacked,” he managed to croak out, his throat sore and dry. He cleared his throat and tried again. “She wouldn’t run. She had time. All she had to do was go out the window and she would’ve escaped. Why didn’t she?” he whispered, feeling tears falling down his cheeks again.

“I don’t know,” his father murmured softly, holding him closely.

He finally opened his eyes to look up at the man holding him. “Why would I see that?”

“Perhaps it was a memory, Adrian,” Severus said with a smile, eyes troubled. “Describe what you saw to me.”

Frowning, he did as asked, giving as much detail as he could remember. By the time he was done, his father was nodding. “That sounds like when the Dark Lord attacked the Potters.”

“You told me Sirius Black was the reason the Potters were killed but the man I saw behind the cloaked figure wasn’t Black,” Adrian said with a frown of confusion.

“How do you know it wasn’t Black?” Lucius asked from his chair.

Adrian finally pushed himself up to sit beside Severus. “Because I saw him at the school the day after Halloween,” he told them, knowing he was going to be grilled for information now. He hadn’t been in any shape to tell anyone before and afterwards, he hadn’t even remembered it… until now.

That brought a reaction. “You saw Black?” his father asked in a flat voice. “He’s at the school? What did he say to you?”

“He wanted to know why I would accuse ‘his godson’ of trying to kill me. I laughed and told him to ask Potter.”

“I have to tell the Headmaster that Black is in the school.”

“Does it really matter?” Adrian asked before yawning hugely. “I mean, if he’s only going to go after Potter, maybe we should let him. He might off the kid and save us all the hassle of dealing with the bully.”

“He has a point, Severus,” Lucius murmured in amusement.

“I think it’s time for you to go to bed,” Severus said with a wry smile.
Adrian nodded and hugged Snape. “Good night, Father.”

“Good night, son,” he murmured into the top of Adrian’s hair, making him smile.

“Good night, Uncle Lucius,” he said with a smile as he passed his godfather, leaning down to kiss him on the cheek.

“Good night, Adrian. Sleep well.”

“Good night, Aunt Cissa,” he called out, waving from the doorway, Kanen following close behind him. He wasn’t really surprised when Draco fell into step with him.

“Sleeping in your own bed tonight or mine?” Draco asked with a teasing smile.

“You don’t mind sharing?” he asked, looking at his friend sideways.

“After all these years? Nah, I kind of got used to it,” Draco said with an indifferent shrug. “You know where to find me if you need me.”

“Thanks.” They were silent while they walked up the stairs. “Do you think Potter will learn his lesson?”

“I doubt it,” Draco snorted derisively. “Too stubborn, that one.”

“I just want him to leave me alone,” Adrian said softly as he sighed. “Is that too much to ask?”

Not knowing what to say, Draco reached out and squeezed his arm consolingly. “We’ll figure something out.”

Adrian sat on the floor of his room, watching the snow fall in gentle waves, Kanen lying beside him. Are you going to sleep at all tonight? he asked with a rumbling sigh.

“Probably not,” Adrian murmured with a sigh, turning to look at him. “Why don’t you lie down on the bed? You know that if I’m not in here, I’m either with Draco or my father. I’m safe here.”

Kanen heaved himself off the floor and onto the comfortable mattress with a sigh of contentment. He moved around a bit before finally settling down to sleep. With a tired sigh, the cat allowed his eyes to drift closed, watching Adrian as he went back to watching the snow fall. It was quite some time before Adrian was tired enough to sleep but he didn’t want to sleep in his bed. With a sigh, he silently made his way to Draco’s room and climbed into bed with his friend.

He smiled contentedly when Draco turned over in his sleep, draping an arm over his waist. This was where he slept best. Draco kept the nightmares away… he always had, he thought sleepily…

* * *

It wasn’t until March that something interesting happened. They were just sitting down for lunch when a couple of Aurors walked into the Great Hall. They walked up to the Head table to speak to the Headmaster.

Draco and Adrian looked at each other before shrugging, turning their attention back to their meal. Their whole group was talking about the assignments they had to complete that night. There was a Quidditch game between the Ravenclaws and Gryffindors that weekend and they wanted to make sure everything was out of the way before then so they could concentrate on enjoying the game.

“Adrian,” Headmaster Anderson said as he stopped behind Adrian. Adrian turned to look at the
Headmaster in surprise and realized Severus and an Auror stood behind the man.

“Sir?”

“Would you come up to my office with me?”

“Can Draco come, too?” he asked quietly as he stood up from the table, food forgotten.

The Headmaster hesitated before nodding with a sigh. “I suppose he can since you'll be informing him of what happens anyway. Kanen, however, will stay here.” It wasn’t until they were almost at the doors that Adrian realized that Potter was standing there, waiting for them with the other Auror standing with him.

He looked up at his father but didn’t ask what was going on. He knew they would be told shortly, anyway. The walk to the Headmaster’s office had never seemed so long but soon they were sitting in the office, waiting to hear what was going to happen to Potter.

“The case against Harry Potter has been reviewed by the Minister of Magic and has come to the conclusion that Mr. Potter is indeed fixated on young Adrian Snape. As a consequence, the bracelet placed on Mr. Potter will remain,” the Auror said, glaring at Potter who protested loudly.

“You can’t do that!”

“It will remain on until he has completed his schooling at which point he will be escorted to Azkaban for a minimum of three years,” the Auror said loudly, ignoring the outburst. “During the summer and holidays, he will be escorted to a detention cell at the Ministry. Once his sentence has been fulfilled, he will be released to join the workforce.”

“You can’t do that!” Potter said again, louder as he jumped to his feet. “I did nothing wrong! I’m telling you they’re trying to frame me!”

“Mr. Potter,” the Headmaster shouted over the protesting boy. “You will desist this carrying on immediately. There was a witness to your attempted murder. Or are you saying Madam Pomfrey imagined you hiding the bottle of Nettle you were giving Adrian?”

The boy glared at the floor, knowing he couldn’t deny the accusation. Adrian thought he would feel satisfaction at the verdict, but all he felt was pity and relief. Now he would be left alone. This boy wouldn’t attack him anymore. He knew he was almost recovered from the last attack and that it would, indeed, be the last attack.

“I thought not. Be glad you get to remain here to finish your schooling,” the Headmaster said sternly.

“If anything further should happen to Adrian Snape and it is found that you, Mr. Potter, are behind it,” the Auror continued when Potter had settled down in his chair again. “Whether you did it or had someone else do it, it will be an automatic trip to Azkaban for you... for life. The Minister authorized it. Sign the bottom of the paper,” he said as he produced a document for Potter to sign. “It states that you were told your sentence and that you understand the consequences of further retaliations. As it is a legal document, no one will be able to dispute it later on.”

After a few minutes of grumbling and growling, Potter snatched up the quill produced for him and signed his name to the bottom… his real name, it seemed. “Mr. Potter, signing another person’s name to the paper will not make it less binding,” he was informed impatiently.

Severus jerked in surprise and moved closer to the Auror to see the signature, smirking in dark satisfaction. “Actually, Auror,” he said respectfully, his face suddenly carefully blank. “That is his
“What do you mean?” the Auror asked, turning from the horrified look on Potter’s face to the Potions master.

“Lord Malfoy grew suspicious of this boy when he kept attacking my son, who just happens to be his godson. He launched an independent investigation into the boy’s identity and found out that he’s from a small island in the Isles of Scilly and an orphan. It is unclear why the previous Headmaster chose to bring this boy in to impersonate a different one but…” he left the comment remain unspoken as he glanced over at Adrian, the meaning clear. It had only been to torment his child.

“Why would Albus Dumbledore target a child?” the Auror asked with a frown. “And do you have proof of this boy’s true identity?”

“Lord Malfoy has the papers proving that this boy is, in fact, not Harry Potter. As for why Mr. Dumbledore would target Adrian,” Severus murmured with a confused shrug. “Only he can answer that, I’m afraid. Perhaps this boy could answer that, but I doubt Mr. Dumbledore has revealed that to him.”

“Well, if he’s not Harry Potter, then where is Mr. Potter?” the Auror asked with a huff of impatience.

Severus spread his hands. “That is unknown. He was left with his muggle relatives by Mr. Dumbledore. Perhaps they have him.”

With a sigh, the Auror rubbed at his forehead as if he were getting a headache before looking at the boy sitting there, fiddling with the bracelet on his wrist, looking decidedly nervous. “Fine, sign under your original name the name you’re going by in school so that it’ll be on record.”

Unable to refuse without telling them why, Potter took the quill again and added the name Harry Potter under his own.

“Adrian, Draco, you may return to your meal,” Headmaster Anderson said when everything was done with. “Mr. Potter will remain behind. We need to speak to each other here. Auror, would you remain behind as witness?”

“Oh, Headmaster,” the Auror murmured, eyes narrowed speculatively. “I confess that I now have further questions for this boy.”

Severus quickly ushered the boys out of the office and down the stairs. “Adrian,” he said when they were out of earshot of the Headmaster’s office. Adrian looked over at his father. “I know your appetite is probably gone, but I’d like it if you could finish your supper.”

“Yes, Father,” he said with a sigh. His father was right, he had no appetite now. His stomach felt like it was tied in knots but knew he had to eat in order to keep up his strength. Despite the fact that the monitoring spell had remained off when he’d come back from Christmas break, it wouldn’t take much at this point for him to slip back into the infirmary. His father was simply being cautious.

“Good, I have things to do and will see you in the morning.”

“Good night, sir,” they said in unison and continued on their way to the Great Hall.

* * *

Adrian groaned as he came to. He was aware of two things. He was lying on a hard surface and he was freezing. Where was he? What had happened?
“I can’t do this, Ron.”

That was Potter. What was going on? Where was Draco?

“You don’t have to look at him to do it. That’s the parameters of the bracelet,” Weasley argued with glee.

“No, you idiot!” Potter snapped angrily. “The parameters state that even thinking of harming him will zap me!”

“So I’ll do it for you, no problem.”

He heard someone sigh tiredly. “You know what, Ron, I’m tired of doing that old man’s bidding. I just want to stop all of this.”

“What!” Weasley said incredulously, just as Adrian pushed himself up onto his hands and knees, shivering as a cold gust of wind blew into the busted window he sat beside. In a fit of anger, the red-head stepped up to him and kicked his arms out from under him. Adrian gasped in pain as he landed hard on his arm, pulling it out of place. Not again! “Stay down!” he ordered, face red with anger. “We can end this right now. No one would ever find his body. Not even that prancing faery friend of his.”

“Fine,” Potter said with a defeated sigh. “Let’s get this over with.”

“Good,” Weasley grunted as he stomped on Adrian just for fun. The red-head laughed when a kick to his chest brought on a sickening crack. Adrian cried out in pain, struggling to draw breath as fire bloomed through him from his ribs.

Adrian felt the room begin to darken but the spell that hit him made sure he was aware for a little longer, his body breaking out in pins and needles, his nerves alive with fire and he screamed in pain, his body writhing on the floor.

“That’s enough!” he dimly heard, whimpering as the spell ended abruptly, curling in on himself, cradling his arms against his chest. It was a blessing that the pain stopped. He must have passed out for a while because when he came to again, Professor Lupin was standing there with Black, the two bullies tied and unconscious on the floor.

“Are you sure about this, Remus?” Black asked as he stood there, unafraid of what would happen.

“Yes, meet me at that house and I’ll tell you everything. Leave this to me. Are you sure Potter didn’t want to get involved in this?” Lupin asked with a frown at the two boys before looking back at Adrian.

“Yes, I know he’s awake. Harry was pushed into this by Weasley. Make sure they know that.”

Remus nodded as he walked over to Adrian, helping him to stand. Adrian swayed slightly before he locked his knees to keep from falling on his face. When they looked back at where Black had been standing, he was gone.

“Come on, Adrian,” Lupin murmured as he flicked his wand at the two boys and levitated them out of the room they were in. “I know someone who’s anxiously awaiting your arrival.”

“You mean Father hasn’t torn all his hair out in worry?” he joked, gasping in pain as the move jarred his broken and bruised ribs.
"Madam Pomfrey needs to look at that and I’m sure your father will have a potion for the aftereffects of the Crucius curse."

He was surprised to find himself inside the Shrieking Shack. The walk back to the school was a long and cold one with no cloak… though not as long as it would’ve been normally. He hadn’t known about the tunnel under the Whomping Willow on the grounds.

“Professor,” he said as they neared the end of the tunnel, trying to keep his teeth from chattering.

“Yes, Adrian?”

“I know what you are,” He didn’t want to say exactly what Remus was in case he didn’t want it tooted about the school. “Is that why Father didn’t like you when you first came to the school?”

“Yes, to some extent, though we seem to be getting along splendidly now,” Remus murmured with a slight smile. “I’ve been meaning to invite you for tea again. Your father, of course, has decided to leave it up to you if you want to get to know me or not. I will, too, although I would like to get to know you.”

“Alright, Professor,” Adrian said finally after following quietly behind the Defense Professor. “As long as you don’t push for more answers than I’m willing to give, I’ll give you a chance.”

“That’s all I ask,” Remus murmured with a smile, wrapping his arm and cloak around Adrian’s shoulders when he realized the boy was freezing and they made their way towards the castle gates.

They made it as far as the Great Hall before anyone realized they were there. Severus swooped down from the tables. “Adrian, what happened?” he asked as he noticed Adrian holding his arm.

“Weasley attacked him,” Remus told him as he gestured with his wand to the two who’d been levitating behind him.

“Why, then, is Potter with him?” the Headmaster asked in confusion.

“Potter was brought in by Weasley, Headmaster,” Adrian said, ignoring the attempts of his father trying to get him to leave the Great Hall and wincing as it jarred his ribs and arm. “Father, wait so I can say what’s going on.”

“After you’ve been seen to you can tell the Headmaster what happened but it seems you were injured,” Severus growled as he insistently pushed Adrian out of the Great Hall and towards the infirmary. “Again. Come.”

Adrian rolled his eyes but obediently followed his father without question. “Why,” he asked no one in particular, “do these things keep happening to me?”

“I’ve been wondering that myself since school began,” Draco drawled as he fell into step with him. “Glad you’re alright.”

“Thanks,” Adrian murmured, careful not to take deep breaths. “What happened anyway?”

“Someone came up behind us and slapped something onto your back while we were being attacked,” Draco told him with a sigh. “One second we were fighting some unknown assailants and the next you were being whisked away. Here, you dropped your wand.”

“Thanks.” He took his wand and put it back into its arm holster. “I don’t remember anything, actually.”
Madam Pomfrey made a sound of annoyance when they walked into the infirmary. “Again, Adrian?”

“It’s not my fault,” he protested as he was steered over to a bed. With a few quick swishes of her wand, she had diagnosed the damages and healed them. Adrian sighed in relief. “Much better.”

“I’m sure,” the woman murmured in amusement and handed him a sheet of paper. “Since I know you’ll be heading up to the Headmaster’s office, you might as well deliver the report of the damages.” Then she handed him a phial. “The counter to the Crucius.”

“What?” Severus asked dangerously, eyes snapping with anger.

“That’ll help identify who did the damages, anyway,” Adrian said with a weak smile.

“At least this time the damages weren’t as severe as usual. I want you to be careful, child,” she said gently, reaching out to push his hair out of his eyes.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

They left the infirmary then, heading up to the Headmaster’s office. “Explain to me about the Crucius curse,” Severus ordered softly.

“Weasley kicked me and then I was hit with excruciating pain,” Adrian said, looking around to make sure no one was nearby to hear them. “Black stopped them. I don’t know what happened after that. I kind of passed out at that point. When I came to again, Professor Lupin was there.”

“Are you sure it was Black?” Severus asked, stopping in front of the gargoyle.

“Yes, they were going to meet somewhere to discuss matters, whatever that meant.”

Severus looked thoughtful then. “Let’s go up,” he murmured dismissively. “Don’t mention Black just yet. If he’s left the grounds it won’t matter anyway.”

“Yes, Father.”

Upstairs, Adrian retold his story to everyone in the Headmaster’s office after handing over the sheet of paper Pomfrey had given him. “Weasley was behind the whole thing, sir. Potter just wants to keep to himself and finish school, at least that’s what he said.”

Adrian was watching Mr. and Mrs. Weasley warily. The look on the woman’s face was positively poisonous, but he wasn’t sure if she was angry with him or with Ron. The Headmaster held out his hand for Ron’s wand, casting the spell to reveal the last few spells cast and sure enough, it showed that he had indeed cast the Crucius curse along with a few other dark spells.

“Thank you, Mr. Snape.”

“Snape?” Molly asked in surprise, casting a suspicious look from Adrian to the Potions master. “You mean to tell me he’s Severus Snape’s son?”

“Yes, Madam,” Severus sneered coldly. “He’s my son. That fact, however, has no bearing on the situation your child finds himself in at the moment.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley,” the Headmaster murmured as he reread the sheet of paper in front of him. “But Professor Snape is correct in his assessment of the situation. I’m afraid I cannot allow Ronald to remain in school.”
“What!?” the woman demanded loudly, rising from her chair despite the restraining hand on her arm. “You can’t expel him! How will he earn a living later in life?”

“There is always home schooling… or would you rather I involve the authorities? I’m sure they’d be interested in the fact that your youngest son is talking other students into committing murder.” The woman settled down then, settling for glaring darkly at Ron. Adrian was glad she wasn’t his mother. He didn’t know how he’d have handled her overbearing manner. “Adrian and Draco, you may go back to your dorms. I’m sure your father will escort you there himself.”

“Thank you, sir,” Adrian said softly before he and Draco made their way towards the door, followed by their Head of House. “I’m glad that’s done and over with.”

“Indeed,” Severus murmured tiredly. “Let’s hope the incidents end now. I don’t think I can take any more stress.”

“You and me both,” Draco grumbled sulkily. They were met in the common room by Kanen and Kaida who whimpered and whined until they’d been reassured that all was well.

“Good night,” Severus murmured as he gently squeezed Adrian’s arm.

“Good night, Father.”

* * *

With Ronald Weasley gone everything in the school seemed to fall back into a normal and peaceful rhythm. Even Potter was behaving for a change.

Blaise had taken some good natured ribbing when it was discovered that he was in a relationship with an older Slytherin. It was especially fun when he came back with marks on his neck and a dreamy look in his eyes.

“Aren’t you a little young to be in a relationship?” Pansy asked with a smirk.

“Is it my fault I’m more mature than our other year mates?” he asked with a smirk of his own. “Or that I’m irresistible?” Everyone gaped at him incredulously before they started laughing. Blaise’s face turned red with indignation. “Thanks for the show of support,” he grumbled, arms folded across his chest.

“Someone has to keep you grounded,” Goyle said, slapping the smaller boy on the back, nearly knocking him off the couch.

“I don’t know why I put up with you guys,” he grumbled, though there was a twitch in his lips as he tried to suppress his smile.

“Because you like us,” Adrian said genially, batting his eyes at Blaise until the other boy shoved him into Draco. Draco suddenly reached over and pinched his side, making Adrian squeak in surprise before laughing with the others as he saw the smirk on his friend’s lips.

It was at the end of the year that things fell apart for Blaise, however. “I’m sorry, Blaise, you were a good diversion but my boyfriend wouldn’t appreciate me sleeping with someone else while we’re together. Besides, I’m done school this year and I never did care much for waiting.”

“That was cold,” Nott said softly when the girl was out of earshot.

On the train ride back to London, they tried everything they could to cheer up their friend. “Ah
well,” Blaise finally said about an hour into the ride. “I’m too young to saddle myself with just one
girl.” The compartment was completely silent for a few seconds before someone started to snigger.
Soon everyone was roaring with laughter.

After everything had settled down, Adrian listened to his friends chat amongst themselves, the sound
lulling him into a light doze…

“Are we still having dueling lessons at your place, Adrian?” Fred asked after a while, jerking him
awake and gaining the attention of the others. He’d always hated long silent drives because it always
made him sleepy. Since there was no more room in the compartment than usual, Adrian was
currently reclining against Kanen on the floor. Draco had opted to sit with him leaning against Kanen
while Kaida lay in front of the door.

Fred, George, Blaise and Neville were sitting on one side and Pansy, Nott, Crabbe and Goyle were
sitting on the other. At the moment, Ginny and Luna were with their year mates but they usually sat
with them for a while during the trip. It made it a little tight, but no one seemed to mind.

“I think so,” Adrian said with a yawn. “Father didn’t say anything but he’ll let me know sooner or
later.” He always seemed to sleep better when Draco was beside him and now was no exception.

“Try to sleep a little,” Draco murmured as their friends broke up into small groups again. “You know
you never sleep well the night before we get on the train.”

Adrian smiled tiredly and turned towards his left… then changed his mind. Every time he slept on
that side, his hip hurt afterwards, especially if he was on the floor. He turned towards Draco, laying
his head on his friend's shoulder, sighing in contentment when he felt his friend’s fingers comb
through his hair. The gentle, calming motion of Draco’s fingers, along with the rocking of the train,
helped to lull him to sleep.

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“Why does he always curl up with you, anyway?” Nott asked when he was sure Adrian was asleep.

Draco shrugged indifferently. “Because he’s comfortable with me. Are you jealous, Nott?” he asked
with a smirk.

“No,” Nott said with a shrug. “I just find it curious because he’s known us almost as long as you,
maybe a year or two less, actually, but he doesn’t crawl into bed with us.”

“Adrian’s always had things hard,” Draco said after a few minutes of thinking how to answer Nott
without giving too much away. “He doesn’t trust easily, but when he does, he’s loyal. You
remember how long it was before he would allow any of you to get close to him.” He laughed
mirthlessly at the understatement as he looked up at everyone. “Even talking to you seemed to take
forever.”

“I asked him about that before first year,” Nott said slowly. “He said it was because he liked to listen
to what we had to say, that it was interesting because of all our different backgrounds.”

Draco gave a bark of laughter. “That sounds about right. The first time we met, when we were four,
I picked on him because I felt he was encroaching on what I considered mine.”

“Professor Snape?” Pansy asked knowingly.

Draco nodded as he looked over at his best friend. “I knew it was wrong even then but I couldn’t
help it. He was an interloper and I wanted things to go back to the way they were. I waited for an
hour for him to say something so I could pounce but he remained quiet.”

“How did you become friends then?” Blaise asked. This was something none of them had been told before. Oh, they knew Adrian was adopted, but not how he and Draco had become friends and close ones at that.

“I showed him how to make a potion. When I saw he had the same interest in it I did, I figured he couldn’t be that bad.” They didn’t need to know exactly what had happened between him and Adrian that day. That would reveal too much about Adrian and raise questions no one wanted to answer.

“That’s how you bonded?” Pansy asked incredulously, amusement clear on her face. “By making a potion?”

Draco shrugged indifferently. “It’s what happened. It’s also how we found out he was allergic to Nettle.”

“About that,” Fred said with a frown. “I’ve never heard of anyone being allergic to Nettle before. What happened on Halloween night?”

“That was my fault,” Blaise said in embarrassment. “My mother sent me some Babbling drops. We wanted to see if it would do anything to Adrian so I slipped a couple into his pumpkin juice at supper. I didn’t think anything was going to happen. In fact, I was almost tempted to slip him some more when nothing happened but Draco was watching us too closely for me to do it.”

“Count yourself lucky,” Draco growled angrily, glaring at Blaise.

“And the next day?” George asked, interested in how this had played out.

“We had some soup that was on the table at lunch,” Crabbe said then. “Adrian was making a mess taking some because he was shaking so much so I helped him put some into his bowl. No one realized that there was no soup anywhere else but our section of the table. Seems someone laced it with Nettle, though we still don’t know if it was Potter who was behind it or simply a mistake the house-elves made.”

“Then Madam Pomfrey caught Potter giving him pure Nettle. Diluted Nettle is bad enough. Adrian described it to me once. First, it’s like fire ants are crawling all over your body, biting you, then you break out in hives or lesions, then everything you looks at is distorted, kind of like looking through a magnifying glass at close range, then the fever and chills kick in. Usually that signals the end of the effects. But pure Nettle is worse. It nearly killed Adrian. Uncle Sev said he stopped breathing at one point. That’s when the Healer stepped in.”

“Wow,” the twins said in unison.

“We didn’t think it would be that bad,” George murmured, a sympathetic frown on his face.

“We knew he was sleeping a lot after he’d landed in the infirmary but no one said why,” Fred said, his face mirroring his twin’s. “Had that ever happened before?”

“His reaction to pure Nettle?” Draco asked, sighing when the twins nodded. “No. When Uncle Sev realized Adrian was allergic to Nettle, he began to make sure whatever Adrian ate didn’t contain it,” Draco said as Adrian moved closer to him with a small smile on his face. He looked so peaceful when he was sleeping. Without thought, Draco pulled him closer so that he was sleeping against his chest. Adrian sighed happily, his right hand resting against Draco’s heart.
“Aw,” the twins cooed suddenly, bringing Draco back to reality. “Aren’t they cute!”

Draco glared at them while the others snickered, trying not to wake up the boy asleep against Draco. If he could only get away with moving without waking Adrian, he would hex the twins as they made goopy eyes to each other, sighing lovingly.

That sent everyone into fits of coughing as they struggled to keep it down. “You realize, do you not,” Draco drawled dangerously, an evil glint in his eyes, “that I will get you back when you least expect it and probably with help, right?”

The only reaction he got was the twins’ eyes flick over to look at him for a couple of heart beats before they shrugged indifferently. “What’s the worse you can do?” Fred asked flippantly.

“Flutter your eyelashes at us?” George finished playfully.

Deciding he’d had enough –even if it woke Adrian up – Draco’s wand was suddenly in his hand and he threw a stinging hex at the twins’ heads before they even registered he had his wand. Their yelps had a definitely satisfying ring to them… but the sound woke up Adrian, who jumped at the unexpected sound.

“What’s going on?” he asked, frowning blearily at everyone, pulling away from Draco with a huge yawn.

“Nothing!” Fred said hurriedly, smiling innocently at them, the look mirrored on George’s face.

“Uh-huh. Then who woke me up?” he asked with an eyebrow raised in amusement.

They were spared the need to answer when Ginny came in in a huff followed by Luna. “What happened?” Blaise asked, pulling her to the seat beside him as Luna sat beside Neville.

“Potter and some of his new friends sought us out. Seems that since he has to leave Adrian alone, it means he can focus on someone else,” she said while she glared at the floor.

“Don’t worry,” Luna smiled in her breezy way that actually annoyed Draco. “It won’t be for much longer.”

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Adrian frowned at the blonde girl, a niggling thought bugging him at her words. It reminded him of something… “Luna, do you see the future?” he asked suddenly as things finally fell together in his mind.

She smiled slightly, her hazy eyes actually clear for a few seconds. “Of course not.”

Adrian blinked at her, wondering if he’d imagined the amused look he’d caught. He decided to ask her again when they were alone, figuring if she was a seer. Perhaps she simply didn’t want to advertise that fact…

The rest of the trip was fairly quiet… quiet enough that Adrian fell asleep again.

Adrian waited weeks to ask Luna the question again. It wasn’t until he was alone with Luna, which came when she arrived early one morning – before anyone else, actually – to ask her about his suspicions again. “So do you see the future?” he asked her when she didn’t answer right away.

“Since I know you won’t say anything to anyone,” she said finally with her head tilted to one side.
“Yes.”

“I wondered,” Adrian said with a slight nod. “Why do you act all spacy?”

She smiled at him, a shrewd look in her eyes. “When you want to redirect attention from you, it’s usually best to act as people would least expect. By acting like I’m always daydreaming, no one asks questions when I say something weird. I’m surprised you saw through it.”

Adrian smirked at her as others came trickling into the back yard, signalling an end to their conversation and a beginning to their summer training. They were learning more now than before. In fact, Madreca had started teaching them wandless magic along with wordless casting.

It certainly made things interesting.

* * *

“You can’t be serious, Remus,” Sirius Black exclaimed angrily. “There’s no way Severus Snape would consent to raising James’ son.” He was currently pacing the floor of a decrepit and abandoned house on the outskirts of a shitty little town he didn’t even know the name of. “Torture him, for sure, but not raise him as his own.”

“I’m telling you, Sirius, Severus has changed from when we knew him in school,” Remus said with a tired sigh. They’d been going at this for a few hours and quite frankly he was getting tire of trying to convince his best friend that what he was telling him was the truth. “He’s taken Harry in and changed his name. I talked to Tonks and she checked into it. The papers she found state – in a roundabout way – that Adrian is or used to be Harry. It also seems like there won’t be any way to change that, either. The papers are final.”

“And where’s Dumbledore in all this?” Sirius asked, rounding on his friend with a confused frown. He’d known something was wrong when he’d gone to number four Privet Drive and the Dursleys hadn’t been living there… but for Severus to be raising James’ son?

“He was dismissed for incompetence two years ago. There’s something else you need to know,” Remus said hesitantly, watching Sirius warily.

“Well?” Sirius demanded impatiently. He knew he wasn’t being fair to his friend, but he was agitated wondering just what dastardly things Severus was doing to his godchild in order to take revenge for what had been done to him in school.

“The reason Severus took Adrian in is because he doesn’t consider the boy as James’.”

Sirius frowned in confusion. “What are you talking about?”

“When I asked him about taking James’ son in, he said he hadn’t. He took in Lily’s.” Remus sighed when Sirius simply rolled his eyes at him. “He’s justified to himself that the reason he’s taken Adrian in and is raising him as his own is because he’s Lily’s child, not James’. I think he finds it easier to cope with it if he thinks of it that way.”

Sirius began pacing again as he turned all the information over in his head. Could it really be that Severus Snape was taking care of Harry – Adrian… whatever! – willingly? The boy had seemed content with the snarky bastard. Severus had even looked concerned, too, but that couldn’t be right. It had to be a trick…

Finally, he sighed and turned to look at the man sitting in one of the two chairs conjured when they’d gotten to the house. “Is he happy?”
“From what I’ve seen, yes,” Remus said with a soft smile. “I’d say talk to him, but I don’t think Severus will be voluntarily hosting a party for your return. Should I ask Tonks to begin an investigation into your incarceration?”

Sirius began pacing again. He knew Dumbledore was behind him being thrown into Azkaban without a trial. That man could’ve saved him twelve years in that place if he’d only interfered with Crouch, forced a trial and proven his innocence.

Finally, he dropped into the chair to look at his friend. “Do it. Tell her that if she can get me a trial, I’ll voluntarily submit to Verita Serum. I want my name cleared.”

Remus nodded in relief. “Where are you going to go?”

“I think it’s time to go home,” Sirius said as he pushed his hair back. “I need to rest and recover. Then I’ll make up my mind as to what I’m going to do. Who knows,” he said with a tired smile. “I might go visit my godson again.”

“Don’t push him, Sirius,” Remus cautioned warily. “He’s been through a lot and I’m not sure how he’ll react to you knowing the truth. Right now, he knows you’re looking for a boy named Harry Potter and that’s not him. There’s also something inside him… something dark, though not evil.”

“Yes, I sensed that, too when he was sick. I wondered about that.” Sirius sighed and shook his head. “Yes, alright, I won’t push him but I need to get to know him. I’ve missed so much…”

Oh, no, he wouldn’t be pushing the boy… he had something else in mind…

* * *

It was a nice and warm day in July so they were eating outside at Malfoy Manor instead of inside. Adrian was happy for it. Being at Malfoy Manor meant they had a day off of training and he got to play with Caelum again. “It seems,” Severus said at lunch one day. “That the school is to host the Tri-Wizard tournaments this year.”

“What’s that?” Adrian asked curiously, looking up at his father, food forgotten.

“A very dangerous and deadly tournament,” Lucius answered with a frown. “I hope they plan on putting a limit on who can enter those games.”

“What makes them dangerous, Father?” Draco asked before taking a bite of his food.

“Eat, Adrian,” Narcissa gently admonished, tapping his arm with a finger. Adrian smiled guiltily as he looked down at his barely touched plate. “People have died in these games. It’s not something taken lightly.”

“Father,” Adrian asked, looking up at Severus with a hopeful look in his eyes. “Can we go to Flourish and Blotts later today?” When Narcissa tapped his arm again with a look at his plate, a delicate eyebrow raised in reminder, Adrian popped a potato into his mouth before looking back at his father.

“Yes, I think so. I needed to pick up some more potion ingredients.”

That brought a different look of excitement from the boys. “Bring the list,” Adrian ordered, pointing at Draco.

The adults blinked in confusion, looking from one boy to the other. “List?” Lucius said as Severus
frowned at them. “For what?”

“Draco found a potion he wanted to try out. It’s called…” Adrian frowned in confusion. “What’s the name again?” he asked his friend, who rolled his eyes at him.

“Honestly, Adrian, were you even paying attention when I read it out to you?” Draco huffed in annoyance, rolling his eyes again when Adrian simply shrugged apologetically. “It’s called Exploding Snap Caps. The book we found the potion in said that if you dry them into small round disks and throw them, they’ll make exploding sounds. Kind of like Exploding Snap cards.”

“Alright, as long as it’s not something you consume, at least not without running it by me first,” Severus warned Adrian sternly.

“Yes, Father,” Adrian said with a grin before rolling his eyes again when Narcissa tapped him on the arm once again, reminding him to eat.

“You know,” she murmured mildly, which was probably why she gained everyone’s attention. “This makes me wonder how you get any eating done when you’re at school,” she continued, looking at Adrian with a raised eyebrow as she took a bite of her lunch.

Adrian’s eyebrows shot up, loosing track of what he’d been about to say in his surprise. “But I do eat, Aunt Cissa!” he protested then blushed when she looked down at his plate, which was still barely touched. He heard Draco snicker from the other side of the table. “I’m just not really hungry today,” he said with a sheepish look before he took a bite of his vegetables.

“I have noticed your appetite isn’t what it is usually,” Madreca murmured with a thoughtful frown. “Are you feeling well?”

“Yes,” Adrian said a little too quickly.

“But you have been tired a lot lately,” Draco said before he yelped when Adrian kicked him under the table. The blonde boy glared at him before he shrugged in apology.

“Adrian.”

The warning tone of voice Severus used caused Adrian to hunch in on himself before he looked up at his father. “It’s nothing,” he whinged with a sigh, then relented. “I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want you to worry.”

“How long?”

“Three weeks?” he whispered, risking a look up at his father and wincing at the glare his father threw him.

“Loss of appetite and tired,” Madreca asked, trying to pull Snape’s anger from the boy. “Anything else?”

Adrian shrugged as he frowned at his plate. “It’s not really loss of appetite. I’m craving something. I just don’t know what it is yet.”

He missed the look his father and Madreca exchanged. He heard the snap of fingers and then a pop as a house-elf appeared. “Master?”

“Bring Adrian a small steak please, medium rare,” Madreca ordered, causing Adrian to look up in confusion as he nibbled on another vegetable. He’d always like broccoli – they reminded him of
trees – especially when there was cheese on it.

“But, Madreca, you know I don’t eat steak,” he said in surprise.

“Humour me,” the older man murmured as a steak appeared on the table beside Adrian.

He wrinkled his nose at the smell, never having really acquired a taste for steak… but with a sigh, he cut a small piece off and chewed it, gagging at the taste that flooded his mouth. He managed to choke it down though all he wanted to do was spit it out but he refused to touch the rest of it, his stomach rebelling at the thought of swallowing any more.

“So, not yet,” Madreca said cryptically with a sigh, going back to his lunch.

When Narcissa tapped his shoulder to get him to eat more, Adrian shook his head and sat back in his chair, the piece of meat sitting like lead in his stomach. He knew if he ate anymore, it would all be coming back out and he didn’t want to tempt it.

He closed his eyes so he wouldn’t have to watch the others eat, a hand on his forehead. He could feel the beginnings of a headache pounding behind his eyes. “May I be excused?” he asked his father, wanting to go lay down until they left for Diagon Alley.

Severus looked at him in concern, reaching out to touch his forehead with the back of his hand. “Go take a nap. I’ll wake you in an hour.”

Adrian nodded and left the backyard, heading for his room. He smiled tiredly when the snakes hissed a greeting from their tanks and he groaned as he crawled onto the bed, using Kanen as a pillow. He couldn’t help it, especially when he could hear the steady beat of his heart under his ear. What’s wrong? the cat asked, opening one eye to look at him.

“Just tired,” Adrian murmured, eyes closed, the pounding beginning to increase. “Headache,” he mumbled. If Kanen said something, he didn’t hear it, asleep in seconds…

Adrian blinked in confusion as he watched an old man creep up the stairs of an old abandoned house. He didn’t know where he was, or why he would be following the old man… actually following wasn’t the right word. It was as if he were observing everything from the old man’s shoulder.

At the very end of the passage they were in, a door stood ajar, and a flickering light shone through the gap, casting a long sliver of gold across the black floor. The old man edged closer and closer, until they were able to see a narrow slice of the room beyond.

A fire, they now saw, had been lit in the grate. This seemed to surprise the old man, who stopped moving and listened intently, for a man’s voice spoke within the room; it sounded timid and fearful.

“There is a little more in the bottle, my Lord, if you are still hungry.”

“Later,” a second voice said. This too belonged to a man - but it was strangely high-pitched, and cold as a sudden blast of icy wind. Something about that voice made the hairs on the back of Adrian’s neck stand up. “Move me closer to the fire, Wormtail.”

The man in the corridor turned his right ear toward the door, almost like he was having a hard time hearing. There came the clink of a bottle being put down upon a hard surface, and then the dull scraping noise of a heavy chair being dragged across the floor. Adrian caught a glimpse of a small man, his back to the door, pushing the chair into place. He was wearing a long black cloak, and there was a bald patch at the back of his head. Then he went out of sight again.
“Where is Nagini?” the cold voice said.

“I - I don’t know, my Lord,” the first voice said nervously. “She set out to explore the house, I think…”

“You will milk her before we retire, Wormtail,” the second voice said. “I will need feeding in the night. The journey has tired me greatly.”

Brow furrowed, the old man inclined his good ear still closer to the door, listening very hard. Adrian was getting frustrated. He wanted to either get in there or get away but he was stuck where he was. There was a pause, and then the man called Wormtail spoke again.

“My Lord, may I ask how long we’re going to stay here?”

“A week,” the cold voice said. “Perhaps longer. The place is moderately comfortable, and the plan cannot proceed yet. It would be foolish to act before the Quidditch World Cup is over.”

Adrian frowned as the old man inserted a gnarled finger into his ear and rotated it.

“The - the Quidditch World Cup, my Lord?” Wormtail said. The old man dug his finger still more vigorously into his ear, as if to clear it so he could hear better. “Forgive me, but - I do not understand - why should we wait until the World Cup is over?”

“Because, fool, at this very moment wizards are pouring into the country from all over the world, and every meddler from the Ministry of Magic will be on duty, on the watch for signs of unusual activity, checking and double-checking identities. They will be obsessed with security, lest the Muggles notice anything. So we wait.”

The old man stopped trying to clear out his ear. He tightened his hold on his walking stick once more, and listened more closely still. Adrian was grateful because all his moving around was making him nauseous.

“Your Lordship is still determined, then?” Wormtail said quietly.

“Certainly I am determined, Wormtail.” There was a note of menace in the cold voice now.

A slight pause followed - and Wormtail spoke, the words tumbling from him in a rush, as though he was forcing himself to say this before he lost his nerve. “It could be done without the boy, my Lord.”

Another pause, more protracted, and then -

“Without the boy?” the second voice breathed softly. “I see…”

“My Lord, I do not say this out of concern for the boy!” Wormtail said, his voice rising squeakily. “The boy is nothing to me, nothing at all! It is merely that if we were to use another witch or wizard - any wizard - the thing could be done so much more quickly! If you allowed me to leave you for a short while - you know that I can disguise myself most effectively - I could be back here in as little as two days with a suitable person -”

“I could use another wizard,” the cold voice said softly, “that is true…”

“My Lord, it makes sense,” Wormtail said, sounding thoroughly relieved now. “Laying hands on the boy would be so difficult, he is so well protected -”

“And so you volunteer to go and fetch me a substitute? I wonder…perhaps the task of nursing me
has become wearisome for you, Wormtail? Could this suggestion of abandoning the plan be nothing more than an attempt to desert me?"

“My Lord! I - I have no wish to leave you, none at all -”

“Do not lie to me!” the second voice hissed. “I can always tell, Wormtail! You are regretting that you ever returned to me. I revolt you. I see you flinch when you look at me, feel you shudder when you touch me…”

“No! My devotion to your Lordship -”

“Your devotion is nothing more than cowardice. You would not be here if you had anywhere else to go. How am I to survive without you, when I need feeding every few hours? Who is to milk Nagini?”

“But you seem so much stronger, my Lord -”

“Liar,” the second voice breathed. “I am no stronger, and a few days alone would be enough to rob me of the little health I have regained under your clumsy care. Silence!”

Wormtail, who had been sputtering incoherently, fell silent at once. For a few seconds, Adrian could hear nothing but the fire crackling. The second man spoke once more, in a whisper that was almost a hiss.

“I have my reasons for using the boy, as I have already explained to you, and I will use no other. I have waited thirteen years. A few more months will make no difference. As for the protection surrounding the boy, I believe my plan will be effective. All that is needed is a little courage from you, Wormtail - courage you will find, unless you wish to feel the full extent of Lord Voldemort's wrath -”

“My Lord, I must speak!” Wormtail said, panic in his voice now. “All through our journey I have gone over the plan in my head - My Lord, Bertha Jorkin's disappearance will not go unnoticed for long, and if we proceed, if I murder -”

“If?” the second voice whispered. “If? If you follow the plan, Wormtail, the Ministry need never know that anyone else has died. You will do it quietly and without fuss; I only wish that I could do it myself, but in my present condition…Come, Wormtail, one more death and our path to the boy is clear. I am not asking you to do it alone. By that time, my faithful servant will have rejoined us -”

“I am a faithful servant,” Wormtail said, the merest trace of sullenness in his voice.

“Wormtail, I need somebody with brains, somebody whose loyalty has never wavered, and you, unfortunately, fulfill neither requirement.”

“I found you,” Wormtail said, and there was definitely a sulky edge to his voice now. “I was the one who found you. I brought you Bertha Jorkins.”

“That is true,” the second man said, sounding amused. “A stroke of brilliance I would not have thought possible from you, Wormtail - though, if truth be told, you were not aware how useful she would be when you caught her, were you?”

“I - I thought she might be useful, my Lord -”

“Liar,” the second voice said again, the cruel amusement more pronounced than ever. “However, I do not deny that her information was invaluable. Without it, I could never have formed our plan, and for that, you will have your reward, Wormtail. I will allow you to perform an essential task for me,
one that many of my followers would give their right hands to perform…”

“R-really, my Lord? What -?” Wormtail sounded terrified again.

“Ah, Wormtail, you don’t want me to spoil the surprise? Your part will come at the very end…but I promise you, you will have the honor of being just as useful as Bertha Jorkins.”

“You…you…” Wormtail’s voice suddenly sounded hoarse, as though his mouth had gone very dry. “You…are going…to kill me, too?”

“Wormtail, Wormtail,” the cold voice said silkily, “why would I kill you? I killed Bertha because I had to. She was fit for nothing after my questioning, quite useless. In any case, awkward questions would have been asked if she had gone back to the Ministry with the news that she had met you on her holidays. Wizards who are supposed to be dead would do well not to run into Ministry of Magic witches at wayside inns…”

Wormtail muttered something so quietly that Adrian could not hear it, but it made the second man laugh - an entirely mirthless laugh, cold as his speech.

“We could have modified her memory? But Memory Charms can be broken by a powerful wizard, as I proved when I questioned her. It would be an insult to her memory not to use the information I extracted from her, Wormtail.”

Adrian’s hair stood on end at the cold and calculated talk of murdering a woman, a witch, at that. And he was looking to kill someone else. As if it was an everyday occurrence? He pitied whoever this man’s target was… but he wanted to go now. Why wasn’t the old man leaving? Why couldn’t he leave the old man, for that matter?

“One more murder… my faithful servant at Hogwarts… the boy is as good as mine, Wormtail. It is decided. There will be no more argument. But quiet… I think I hear Nagini…”

And the second man’s voice changed. He started hissing and spitting without drawing breath. The sound made Adrian freeze in surprise. No! It couldn’t be! Then he realized what he’d missed before in his annoyance with the old man. This was Voldemort! Voldemort was back!

There was movement in the dark passageway behind the old man. He turned to look, and found himself staring at a site that paralyzed the old man with fright.

Something was slithering toward them along the dark corridor floor, and as it drew nearer to the sliver of firelight, he realized that it was a gigantic snake, at least twelve feet long. Horrified, transfixed, the old man stared as its undulating body cut a wide, curving track through the thick dust on the floor, coming closer and closer - What was the old man to do? His only means of escape was into the room where the two men sat plotting murder, yet Adrian knew if he stayed where he was the snake would surely kill him… before the old man had made his decision, the snake was level with him, and then, incredibly, it was passing; it was following the spitting, hissing noises made by the cold voice beyond the door, and in seconds, the tip of its diamond-patterned tail had vanished through the gap.

Adrian tried to yell at the old man to leave, run while he still could but with sweat on his forehead, and the hand on the walking stick trembling, the man stood there, unable to move just yet. Inside the room, the cold voice was continuing to hiss.

It was obvious the old man didn’t understand what was going on or the danger he was in, but Adrian knew. As the old man stood there shaking and trying to master himself, the cold voice
switched abruptly to English again.

“Nagini has interesting news, Wormtail,” it said.

“In-indeed, my Lord?” Wormtail said.

“Indeed, yes,” the voice said, “according to Nagini, there is an old Muggle standing right outside this room, listening to every word we say.”

Adrian slapped himself in the forehead. The old man didn't have a chance to hide himself. There were footsteps and then the door of the room was flung wide open.

A short, balding man with graying hair, a pointed nose, and small, watery eyes stood before them, a mixture of fear and alarm in his face. Adrian felt the colour drain from his face as he recognized this man. He was the one in the other dream he’d had, the one where his mother had been killed! This was the traitor!!

“Invite him inside, Wormtail. Where are your manners?”

The cold voice was coming from the ancient armchair before the fire, but Adrian couldn't see the speaker. The snake, on the other hand, was curled up on the rotting hearth rug, like some horrible travesty of a pet dog.

Wormtail beckoned the old man into the room. Though still deeply shaken, the old man took a firmer grip on his walking stick and limped over the threshold.

The fire was the only source of light in the room; it cast long, spidery shadows upon the walls. Adrian stared at the back of the armchair; the man inside it seemed to be even smaller than his servant, for Adrian couldn’t even see the back of his head.

“You heard everything, Muggle?” the cold voice said.

“What's that you're calling me?” the old man said defiantly. Adrian wanted to slap the old man in the back of the head, but his hand passed right through him without connecting. Stupid old man.

“I am calling you a Muggle,” the voice said coolly. “It means that you are not a wizard.”

“I don't know what you mean by wizard,” the old man said, his voice growing steadier. “All I know is I've heard enough to interest the police tonight, I have. You've done murder and you're planning more! And I'll tell you this too,” he added, on a sudden inspiration, “my wife knows I'm up here, and if I don't come back -”

“You have no wife,” the cold voice said, very quietly. “Nobody knows you are here. You told nobody that you were coming. Do not lie to Lord Voldemort, Muggle, for he knows...he always knows...”

“Is that right?” the Muggle said roughly. “Lord, is it? Well, I don't think much of your manners, my Lord. Turn 'round and face me like a man, why don't you?”

“But I am not a man, Muggle,” the cold voice said, barely audible now over the crackling of the flames. “I am much, much more than a man. However... why not? I will face you... Wormtail, come turn my chair around.”

The servant gave a whimper.
“You heard me, Wormtail.”

Slowly, with his face screwed up, as though he would rather have done anything than approach his master and the hearth rug where the snake lay, the small man walked forward and began to turn the chair. The snake lifted its ugly triangular head and hissed slightly as the legs of the chair snagged on its rug.

And then the chair was facing them, and they saw what was sitting in it. Adrian stared in horror at the... thing sitting there, grinning at them. He heard the walking stick fall to the floor with a clatter, heard the old man let out a scream. He was screaming so loudly that he never heard the words the thing in the chair spoke as it raised a wand, but Adrian did.

“Avada Kedavra!”

There was a flash of green light, a rushing sound, and the old man crumpled. He was dead before he hit the floor…

**

Severus walked into Adrian’s room, watching as the boy twitched in his sleep, almost like he was having a nightmare. Was this the cause behind Adrian’s tiredness and not the creature awakening inside like Madreca had first suspected?

He noticed Kanen looking at him before he touched the boy’s head. Severus frowned in confusion. “He had a headache?” he asked softly. If anyone had asked him if he and the cat communicated, he’d have lied and said no. But every once in a while, the cat managed to convey information he needed. The cat’s head dipped down in what he’d come to recognize as a nod.

So, a headache, lack of sleep and no appetite… A vision? Or simply a nightmare?

He was going to have to ask Adrian. The boy never lied to him… withheld information, maybe, but never outright lied.

He was surprised when Adrian jerked awake, obviously choking back a scream and panting in fear. “Adrian?” he asked in concern, laying a hand on his son’s shoulder. “What happened?”

“Voldemort’s alive,” he gasped, shaking in reaction. “He just killed a muggle who’d heard his plans. But he doesn’t look right, Father. He looks… deformed or something. He’s going after someone… a boy.”

“You?” Severus asked in horror, feeling his body go cold.

Adrian shook his head. “I don’t think so. He didn’t mention any names except for a woman. Bertha… um, Jorkins, I think he said. She’s dead, too.” He pulled Adrian to him when the boy shivered again.

“It’s alright,” he whispered into the top of his child’s head wondering how he was going to protect him now… his name would be a bonus. Voldemort wouldn’t know that Severus hadn’t married and had him that way or that Adrian wasn’t illegitimate… as long as no one realized Adrian was Harry Potter, he didn’t care what others thought.

“Listen,” Severus said finally, pulling Adrian back so he could look him in the eyes. “We need to make sure no one speaks of who you were supposed to be. If he doesn’t know, he won’t look for you here. Do you understand?”
“Yes, Father,” the boy whispered, looking up at him with trust in his eyes. He felt pride swell inside him as he regarded the boy he’d adopted so many years ago.

“I love you, Adrian. Never doubt that.” Adrian smiled sweetly up at him, making him smile back.

“Have you had this dream before?”

“Like this, no, but I’ve been getting weird dreams for a while,” Adrian admitted hesitantly, which told him his hunch had been right. Adrian’s lack of sleep was because of nightmares.

“Don’t hide these things from me,” he said sternly. “I can’t help you if I don’t know about it.”

“Yes, Father.”

Severus pulled him close so he could kiss the top of Adrian’s head. “Did you still want to go to Diagon Alley?”

“Yes!” Adrian said eagerly as he bounced off the bed, grabbing hold of Snape’s hand as he tugged him into motion. “Let’s go!” The nap seemed to have done him some good, at least.

**

At Flourish and Blotts, Adrian began perusing the shelves, looking for the new book that was supposed to be coming out on spells. He blinked in surprise when he came across a book on magical tournaments and, with a shrug, pulled it out thinking it could be an interesting read.

He made a sound of pleased surprise when he came across a book on potions that Draco had been wanting and added it to his pile. Another book that made the pile was a book on Animagi transformations.

“Are you just about done?” Draco drawled from behind him, making him jump and drop his books in surprise.

“Jeez, Draco,” Adrian panted, glaring at his unrepentant friend who simply grinned in amusement. “I can’t find the book that I wanted,” he said as he picked up his books from the floor.

“That’s ‘cause it’s at the counter.” Draco made a face when he realized what book he was standing beside. “They still carry this drivel?” he sniffed disdainfully.

Adrian leaned closer to see which book had caught his friend’s attention and snickered as he read the author’s name. Gilderoy Lockhart. “I think if he were to meet up with any of the creatures he writes about he’d probably piss himself instead of remembering the stupid things he’s written about.”

“Let’s get out of here before his stupidity leaches out of the books and makes us both equally stupid,” Draco said as he dragged his friend away from the shelves. Adrian grinned and walked over to the counter, standing behind a couple of customers paying for their purchases.

“Do you think it’ll work the way the book says it’s supposed to?” he asked curiously as they waited patiently for the customers to finish with their purchases.

Draco shrugged indifferently. “I’ve done quite a few of the potions from that book and they’ve all turned out so far. I can’t see why this one wouldn’t.”

“I’m sure the twins will appreciate the joke,” Adrian said with a grin as he placed his books on the counter. “And that book, too, please,” he told the man behind the counter. Once he was done, they made their way out of the store. Adrian began apologizing when he bumped into a man and froze
when he felt something – a hand – brush against his robes.

Moving quickly, he pushed away from the stranger, eyeing him warily as he reached for the pocket the stranger had been touching. He was surprised when he encountered a piece of paper. The stranger smiled at him and was gone before Adrian could react properly.

Draco pulled on his arm to get him moving again, distracting him from his thoughts as he was dragged towards the Apothecary where Severus was waiting for them. It wasn’t until later – much later – that he remembered the incident.

Frowning, he dug the piece of paper from his robe pocket, leaving them draped over the chair he’d tossed them on upon getting home. He threw it onto the bed as he pulled his shirt off with the intention of getting ready for bed.

It was after he’d tossed the shirt into the hamper that he felt the strangeness of the paper. Warily, he hesitantly reached for the paper… and as soon as his fingers touched it, he was whisked away, gasping for air as he realized it was a portkey.

**

He became aware of two things when he came to. One: he was warm and laying on a soft surface and two: there were at least two people in the room with him. He tried not to panic as he remembered the last time he was kidnapped. Would it be a repeat of that time?

“Damn it, Sirius!” he heard someone growl out angrily. “When I gave you the information, it wasn’t so you could kidnap the boy!”

“It was the only way I could get close enough to talk to him,” he heard another man grumble.

He heard the rustle of clothes as someone moved closer to him. “Adrian,” he heard someone call softly, a gentle hand on his shoulder shaking him slightly.

Adrian forced his eyes to open and was surprised to see Professor Lupin kneeling beside him. He frowned in confusion. “Professor?” he heard someone call drowsily. What was wrong with him? He tried to sit up but groaned as the room spun around him and lay down again.

“What did you give him?” Remus asked in exasperation.

“It’s nothing harmful, I swear,” Sirius said defensively, holding out a hand towards Remus, as if he needed to calm the Professor down before he attacked or something. “It’s just something to keep him drowsy so I can talk to him without him taking off on me.”


“It was the only thing I could think of.” Adrian would’ve been amused if he wasn’t so groggy and pissed by the injured tone of voice Sirius spoke in. “I need answers, Remus. What else did you want me to do?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Remus drawled sarcastically. “Maybe talk to him first? Please, please, tell me there was no Nettle in whatever you gave him?”

Oh, Gods no, please not Nettle, Adrian thought dreadfully. He didn’t want to be sick because this man couldn’t contain his… enthusiasm.

“Of course not,” Sirius said dismissively, sounding oddly offended. “I remember what happened in
the boy’s bedroom at school. I know he’s allergic to Nettle.”

Well, thank Merlin for small favours, he grumbled mentally, listening to Remus move away from him, listened as their voices moved out of the room he was in and down what he assumed was a hallway. He had to get out of here… with that in mind, he forced his heavy body to roll over, catching himself on the floor before he could fall on his face.

Gritting his teeth as the room spun again, he began to crawl, hoping he was heading out of whatever room he was in. If he could make it outside, he’d be able to fly his way out… hopefully. It seemed luck was with him as he managed to make it into a hallway without alerting either man. He didn’t know where they were, and hopefully they wouldn’t return before he made it outside.

Using the wall to hold himself upright, he gritted his teeth as each step made the room sway, feeling like he was on a boat. He came to a spot where he either had to go up or down. Praying he wasn’t making a mistake, he headed down the stairs.

Gritting his teeth again, and knowing his legs wouldn’t hold him the entire way down, he sat on the floor instead of walking down the stairs. He made it to the bottom, surprised there was a door there, before he heard a panicked voice from upstairs. Pushing the door open, he was surprised to find himself in a kitchen.

Hearing running feet, he quickly pushed to door closed before anyone saw the light of the kitchen and rested against the wall for a minute, allowing the room to still before he looked around.

There!

With a soft cry of relief, he spied a door opening to the outside world. He quickly made his way to it, wishing the room would remain still. It was starting to give him a headache. He made it outside before he allowed his wings to come out.

It was time to leave.

He pushed off the ground and gasped in surprise and shock as his head began to spin. No!

He whimpered and closed his eyes as the area around him spun faster. He didn’t see the wall he was aiming for, impacting hard against the bricks. He cried out at the impact, the blow sending him back and to the ground with a sickening crunch and his world flared with pain, realizing he’d broken his wing.

He was too focused on the pain to realize the two men stood at the door, watching him in shock. Forcing himself to turn over onto his stomach, he concentrated hard, pulling the wings back into him just as a sound from the door drew his attention.

With a sigh of relief when the pain vanished, he slowly crawled away from the two men. He didn’t make it far before he was picked up. He made a sound of protest as everything spun nauseatingly and clamped his eyes shut, collapsing in the arms that carried him back into the house.

He must have passed out then because the next thing he was aware of was being covered while the two men argued softly. “–the hell was that?” Black hissed angrily.

“Sirius, we have to take him back. He’s not a puppy to keep around. He’s a boy,” Remus whispered with a sigh. The bed sagged slightly as the man sat on the mattress. “Severus is going to be going out of his mind.”

“Who cares about Snivelous,” Black sneered angrily.
“I do,” Adrian said softly, earning a heavy silence for his effort. He forced his eyes open to look at Black with hazy eyes, seeing two of them. “I care because he’s my father.”

“But Harry, he’s not your father.” Whatever else he was about to say froze in his throat as Adrian glared at him, green eyes snapping with fury.

“If Potter is who you want, then go find him in the Ministry and leave me alone. My name is Adrian Snape.” He turned to pin Lupin where he was. “I trusted you, Professor. Is this how you pay back someone’s trust?”

“This wasn’t my idea, Adrian,” Remus murmured tiredly, reaching out to touch him. When Adrian flinched, he sighed and allowed his hand to fall before reaching him. “Sirius, we have to take him back. You have to understand that Adrian is happy with Severus. It’s all he’s known. Would you take that away from him? For what? A life on the run?”

“I won’t always be on the run, Remus. I need to make sure he’s safe and Severus Snape is not who I think of when I think of the word ‘safe’, ” Sirius snapped angrily before he stormed out of the bedroom.

Adrian closed his eyes, curling into himself. “I want to go home, Professor,” he whispered tiredly. “Take me home?”

He felt the hesitation coming from the man on the bed before he sighed, torn between doing what was right and placating his friend. “Let me talk to Sirius again, Adrian,” he finally said as he got up.

When he was alone, Adrian allowed the tears to come. Black was so fixated on Harry Potter that he was never going to accept that Adrian loved his father and wanted to go home. He would wait and bide his time. Twenty-four hours, to be exact. By then his wing would be mended and he’d be able to fly away.

**

“Drink this,” he heard someone say softly in his dream. Thinking something was wrong with him and his father was giving him something to make things better, he obeyed, swallowing the potion trickling into his mouth. He coughed as some went down the wrong way before he was tucked back under the blanket. “Good boy.”

“What did you give him, Sirius?” he heard dimly, feeling like his body was made of lead.

“Just something to help him relax.”

No! his mind screamed in horror. He wasn’t home!

“Sirius, you have to stop this. You can’t keep drugging him to keep him here.”

Whatever the response was, he didn’t hear it as he was dragged down into sleep again.
Chapter 8 Time for Healing

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 8 – Time for Healing

Adrian was alone when he woke up, still feeling groggy and tired. What the hell was Black giving him, anyway? He kept his eyes closed as he took stock of his body. He still felt like he was weighted down though it wasn’t as bad as before.

He heard the door open slightly and held still, pretending to sleep. He was relieved when the door closed again and footsteps could be heard walking away.

He had to get out of here… wherever here was.

Pushing the blankets off him, he slowly sat up, glad when the room didn’t sway like it had earlier. He didn’t know how much time had passed, so he didn’t know if his wing was mended or not. If it wasn’t, he’d have to talk Professor Lupin into taking him home somehow.

Concentrating hard to think past the fuzziness, he gasped in pain as his wings came out so he pulled them back in. It appeared he hadn’t been gone long. Maybe his father hadn’t realized he was missing yet?

“So,” he heard from the doorway and jerked in surprise, looking over to see Black leaning against the frame of the door. “I was hoping you would be awake.”

Adrian glared at the man, realizing he had a phial in his hand. “Whatever you want to ask, ask and then let me go,” he told the man, his words braver than he felt.

Black watched him before nodding, moving into the room to sit in one of the chairs. “The last I heard before I was thrown into Azkaban was that you had been placed with your relatives. Where are they and why aren’t you with them?”

Well, that was blunt, Adrian thought as an eyebrow rose. “You realize that I don’t need to answer to you, right?” He was relieved when Black nodded, even if it was stiffly. “I don’t care that you were named my godfather by the Potters. I don’t know you and right now, I don’t want anything to do with you.”

“I’m hoping you’ll change your mind.”

Adrian snorted at the unlikeliness of that happening now and pulled the blanket around his freezing body. “I was placed with the Dursleys,” he admitted after a few minutes of silence, deciding to give him a condensed version of events. This man didn’t deserve to know what had really happened to him. “I ran away from them when I was four. Father found me and took me in. As for where the Dursleys are, I could care less if they had been dropped into a bottomless pit.”

“Severus Snape isn’t your father. You know that, right?”

“Well, that was blunt, Adrian thought as an eyebrow rose. “You realize that I don’t need to answer to you, right?” He was relieved when Black nodded, even if it was stiffly. “I don’t care that you were named my godfather by the Potters. I don’t know you and right now, I don’t want anything to do with you.”

“Snape isn’t your father. You know that, right?”

“Severus Snape is more a father to me than James Potter ever was,” Adrian snarled, jumping to his feet. He stared as Black also moved, fear filling him as the man crowded him.

“James Potter gave his life to protect you. The least you can do is be grateful,” Black growled out, eyes snapping with anger.
“Grateful?!” Adrian said incredulously as he glared back, forgetting for the moment to be afraid. “James Potter left me to be raised by abusive adults who decided that poisoning me was better than raising me and you want me to be grateful?! You’re insane. The best day of my life was when my father adopted me,” he sneered, looking Black up and down. “But then you’re just an escaped convict so what would you know. You might not be the reason why the Potters were killed, but that still doesn’t make you my godfather.”

Adrian protested when Black pushed him back onto the bed. “Maybe if you see how much you resemble James, you’ll understand why you should honour his memory,” Black growled as he pulled out some scissors.

Despite Adrian’s protests, Black began hacking away at the long strands of Adrian’s hair. After cutting Adrian’s hands for the third time when he managed to put his hands in the way, Black flipped him over onto his stomach, dragging his wrists together before he cast a spell to tie them there.

Adrian screamed in frustration when he couldn’t free himself and pain as he felt the scissors cut through the skin of his head as Black yanked handfuls of hair and sawed through it. When Black was done, he moved off Adrian, smiling in satisfaction, untying him. Adrian gathered some of the strands off the bed ignoring the blood he could feel trickling under the remnants of his hair before he turned to glare at Black. “I hate you,” he growled through clenched teeth. “You think that doing this to me is going to make me listen to you anymore than I was before?” he demanded with a harsh laugh, throwing the hair at the man standing out of his reach. “You’re wrong. James Potter isn’t my real father. Severus Snape is. Nothing you do will change that for me.”

He realized he’d gone too far when Black went deadly still, eyes as hard as stones as he glared into green ones. “Time to sleep some more,” Black growled finally, his voice flinty, shoving Adrian onto the bed once more.

Adrian fought back when he realized the man was going to drug him again. “No,” he cried out, trying to push back the hand that held the phial but it was no contest, especially when Black used his weight to pin his arms down. “Stop this,” he begged before choking on the potion dumped into his mouth.

“Sleep, Harry,” he heard as the world went dark again. He couldn’t fight it as he was forcefully dragged down into sleep.

* * *

He knew he wasn’t alone when he swam out of the darkness this time but even though his mind was somewhat alert, his body refused to obey his commands. He’d lost track of how many times Black had dumped potions down his throat. Even the days seemed to have blurred together…

Why couldn’t they just leave him alone? He felt pleasantly numb. He didn’t care what happened anymore… in fact, he welcomed the potions Black gave him now because it meant he could slip back into more pleasant dreams – dreams of home, of Draco and his father…

“Ah, Adrian,” he heard Remus murmured softly and felt fingers gently card through the remnants of his hair and couldn’t even wince as it pulled at whatever his hair seemed to be tangled with. “I’m so sorry, child. I never meant for this to happen.”

How long had he been there? He thought he remembered several more conversations but they were all blurring together right now…

His stomach was cramping because of the amount of potions swimming in it with no food to soak
them up. But then he didn’t really blame Black for not feeding him, especially after he’d been sick the first time he’d eaten. Black had growled out something about being ‘ungrateful for food’. He hadn’t bothered giving him anything else after that but the potions.

“I have to get you out of here.” The words had been spoken so softly that he wasn’t sure if he’d actually heard them right. The heavy blankets were dragged off his body, making him shiver after the warmth, and felt arms pick him up.

He couldn’t make himself care right now about where he was being taken this time. It would serve them right if he threw up all over them… in fact, it might be the best thing to happen to him.

The air that suddenly hit him made him shiver uncontrollably after the oppressive heat of the house and then they were gone, the sensation of Apparating making his nausea worse and his head ache terribly.

“What happened?” he heard next, mixing with all the other sounds that assaulted him upon landing. There was so much noise after the quiet of Black’s house that he groaned even as he continued to shiver, curling up to get away from it. He felt different arms take him from Lupin. The cold sensation soon left him as he was laid down on a soft surface, a blanket pulled over him. “Move back, Kanen,” Severus ordered as he heard purring beside his head.

“I’m sorry, Severus,” he heard and felt like crying as he realized he was finally home, that it wasn’t just wishful thinking. “I didn’t think he’d do this. I didn’t find out-”


“Sirius brought him home somehow. When he contacted me he already had Adrian asleep on the couch.”

“Adrian?” he heard his father say softly, gentle fingers caressing his face. “What did Black do to him?” he demanded when Adrian didn’t react to the touch.

“I don’t know,” Remus said helplessly. “He kept dumping potions down his throat to ‘make him relax’ is all he’d say. But, Severus, he hasn’t been feeding him.”

“No food?” Severus demanded sharply.

“None.”

He heard his father curse harshly before moving away from him. Adrian wanted to clutch at his father to keep him close but couldn’t move. It wasn’t until a bottle was pressed against his lips that he finally found enough energy to move. “No,” he whimpered, trashingly. “N’ m’re.”

“Be still,” his father snapped, bringing instant obedience. “This’ll purge all you have inside your stomach, Adrian,” his father whispered softly. “We need to get rid of what’s in it before it causes irreparable damage.”

It took a few seconds for his foggy mind to catch up with what he was told and he finally parted his lips, allowing the potion to trickle into his mouth. After he’d swallowed it, he felt his father turn him onto his side, head closer to the edge of the cushion on the couch. It was a good thing because Adrian whimpered as his stomach cramped painfully and he began to throw up.

His whole body shook from the effort and he was grateful when he felt comforting arms come around to hold him until he was done. He was shivering worse than before now, curling his body around the heat of his father’s.
“Madreca, we need Draco here. I need someone to stay with him while I find something to make him better.”

He dimly heard someone moving around the room but concentrating on what was happening around him was just too much effort now... and his head hurt too much to try to figure it out.

“Professor Snape,” a stranger said softly from behind Adrian, seeming to realize that loud noises hurt his head. “We need to ask him questions about what happened. Is there a way to wake him up to ask him?”

“Auror Jenkins,” Severus growled out coldly, making Adrian smile drowsily, “my son has had Merlin knows how many potions dumped down his throat without food for five days. I will not pour more into him without checking what damage has been caused by Sirius Black’s bumbling idiocy.”

“He’s still aware,” Remus murmured placatingly. “Perhaps if you ask him questions he can give you short answers to, you might be able to get something to help your investigation.”

He heard someone sigh in resignation as whoever it was moved around the couch. “Adrian, do you know where you were being held?”

“No,” Adrian frowned tiredly, forcing out his answer, panting at the effort.

“Do you know what he wanted?”

He whimpered as his shaking increased, all the questions Black had asked him, all the arguments, everything swirled in his head, making him cry as it all pressed in on him.

“That’s enough, Auror,” Severus said with a tired sigh. “Any other questions will have to wait until Adrian has recovered enough to speak.”

Someone else made a sound of protest, but it was cut off abruptly. “Of course, Professor Snape, I understand. Mr. Lupin, would you mind answering some questions?”

“Of course not,” Lupin answered easily.

“While you do, I’m going to put Adrian to bed,” Severus murmured. Draco hurried ahead of him and pulled the blankets down so the Potions master could put his friend down. “I want

“Sirius Black happened,” Severus growled out as he walked into Adrian’s bedroom. Draco hurried ahead of him and pulled the blankets down so the Potions master could put his friend down. “I want
you to stay with him, Draco. I need to go brew a Purifying potion to flush more toxins out of his system.”

“Yes, sir,” he said and waited until Severus had left the room to take a book out of his robe pocket, laying it above the pillows. Taking his robes off, he then climbed onto the bed and pulled the blankets over Adrian’s still form. Drawing his friend up against him, a hand coming to rest on Adrian’s chest, he sighed sadly. “I’m going to have to give you a tracking potion or something,” he grumbled against Adrian’s ear, watching as Kanen jumped up on the bed, lying down on the other side, purring comfortingly.

He closed his eyes as he slowly relaxed against his friend. If anyone ever asked him, he’d deny it but he was relieved Adrian had been found fairly quickly. He’d known something was wrong the night he’d gone missing but hadn’t realized exactly what was wrong. It had persisted during the night, keeping him awake, and by two in the morning, he’d finally gone to wake up his father, unable to stand it any longer.

Lucius had been annoyed at being woken up but had finally given in to Draco’s request to be taken to Snape Manor, saying it couldn’t wait. They’d found Adrian’s wand on his night table but no Adrian. He’d tried hard not to panic as he watched Severus contact the Aurors, not knowing what to do. There’d been no clue as to where or when Adrian had gone.

But now Adrian was back and safe.

He allowed the tears of relief to fall, hiding the evidence of them in his friend’s shoulder.

“Draco,” Adrian slurred his hand coming up to rest on top of his. “Home,” he heard his friend sigh happily.

“Yes, Adrian,” he whispered in his ear. “You’re safe at home. Sleep now.”

“Yes.”

Draco pulled Adrian even closer against him, his heart fluttering happily as the other boy curled up, sleeping trustingly in his arms.

At fourteen, Draco knew this fixation he had where Adrian was concerned was confusing… and slightly annoying. He didn’t know when it had changed from friendship to something more but figured it had to be sometime in the last year or so. He’d been aggravated at the twins when they had teased him for doing something he’d always done: comfort Adrian, but it had brought to his attention that he liked it when Adrian snuggled with him. It made him feel needed and wanted in a way he hadn’t realized he enjoyed. Could something more be developing between them or was it all in Draco’s head?

He had planned to ask Adrian how he felt before his disappearance… When they’d gone to Flourish and Blotts last Saturday, Draco had ‘picked’ up a couple of books on certain… sensitive subjects for research purposes but hadn’t touched them since. He’d been too worried about his friend to really enjoy what he estimated was an interesting read.

Anticipating a long and boring wait, he’d brought one of them with him to check out. Without releasing his hold on Adrian, he grabbed the book from above his head and began to read.

It was nearly an hour before Adrian moved again, whimpering and struggling weakly in his hold. “I have you, Adrian,” he whispered in his friend’s ear, putting the book down in order to comfort the dark-haired boy. “Black doesn’t have you anymore.”
“No,” he whispered tearfully, pushing something imaginary away from him. “Don wan ‘nymore!”
he mumbled.

“You’re safe at home. He doesn’t have you anymore,” Draco told Adrian, pulling him tighter against his body, feeling tears sting his eyes at the unfairness of Adrian always being in jeopardy. “Your father will be here in a bit. He’ll fix whatever was done to you.” He figured it was best not to mention Black’s name again seeing as Adrian had reacted negatively to it.

Adrian whimpered again, shaking his head slightly but settled down again when his questing hand made contact with Kanen’s furry head. The cat purred comfortingly, licking at the fingers. Draco nodded thankfully to the cat when Adrian sighed in his sleep, shuddered once before slipping back into peaceful dreams.

Severus chose that moment to come into the room, potion in hand. However, he hesitated in giving it to Adrian. With a sigh, he tipped it into Adrian’s mouth, messaging his throat to make him swallow. “He’ll sleep for a while. It’s late and I’ve already informed your father that you’ll be spending the night. I want you to come get me if anything happens tonight.”

“Yes, Uncle Sev,” Draco murmured softly. He didn’t care if Severus knew he had feelings for Adrian… after all, he was his godfather. He smiled as Severus bade him goodnight and left the room.

* * *

Adrian was sitting up as he stared at the blonde boy sleeping beside him as if he’d never seen him before… almost afraid to believe…

He didn’t know what time it was, but it was still dark outside. He was home?

It had to be the only explanation why Draco was there. He couldn’t see Black kidnapping his friend. There was no logical reason for him to do it… or was he only dreaming again?

Sometime in the night, he must have turned in Draco’s arms because when he’d woken up he’d been facing his friend. He’d thought it was a dream he’d been in when he’d felt Draco’s arms wrap around him, pulling him back against his body. After all, he’d had it several times since Black had kidnapped him but each time had been disappointing when he’d woken up alone in that room instead of home.

He reached out, wanting to touch the blonde boy… but faltered before making contact. If it was a dream, he didn’t want to wake up from it. Holding his breath, he forced himself to make contact and shuddered in relief when he encountered a real person. He felt a tear fall down his cheek but ignored it, blinking rapidly to clear his vision.

Thank Merlin. He was really home.

He was glad when Draco opened his eyes, looking at him with sleepy silver eyes. Draco sat up quickly, smiling widely. He opened his mouth to say something but Adrian threw himself at his friend before any words could come out, wrapping his arms tightly around Draco’s neck, crying brokenly.

“You’re okay, Adrian,” Draco murmured softly as he wrapped his own arms just as tightly around Adrian, pulling him into his lap. “You’re home now.”

Pulling back, he impulsively pressed his lips to Draco’s. Realizing what he’d done, Adrian pulled back, blushing furiously. “Sorry,” he whispered, ducking his head.
Draco pushed it up with a finger under his chin and Adrian realized he was smiling. “I’m not,” his friend murmured before leaning forward to kiss him back, a simple press of lips against lips. Smiling shyly, Adrian returned the light kiss, which quickly dissolved into a heated one. Only when the need to breathe became necessary did they pull back, regarding each other in wonder and happiness.

“Well, that answers my question,” Draco smirked finally.

“Question?” Adrian asked in confusion.

“I was going to ask you how you felt about me, but this answers that question.” The boys grinned at each other. “Want to be my boyfriend?”

Adrian’s smile broadened, feeling unaccountably shy all of a sudden. That confused him slightly. This was Draco, after all, a boy he’d known practically all his life. It felt natural to be with him like this… so he nodded. “I’d like that.”

Draco pushed him back so he was partially on top of him and, for a few seconds, Adrian panicked with the weight on him. He forced himself to relax. This was Draco, not Black. “Are you alright?”

Draco asked, watching him closely.

Adrian took a deep breath before he nodded hesitantly. “Just too many memories,” he whispered quietly but he knew Draco had heard him – he always had when growing up – so he simply smiled shakily.

“We have time, Adrian. I can wait until you’re more comfortable with my weight on you,” the blonde whispered against his ear as he moved some of his weight off. The fact that Draco didn’t know the reason behind his panic but still accepted it made Adrian want to cry in despair.

He’d wanted this since Halloween’s debacle but had been scared it would ruin his and Draco’s friendship and now that it was finally happening, Black had ruined it by his actions. He hid his face in Draco’s shoulder, pushing his body into his friend’s so that they lay side by side. He relaxed as Draco’s hands began to rub his back. He didn’t understand why Draco didn’t card his fingers through his hair but didn’t question it. It still managed to calm his chaotic thoughts and feelings, however.

**

That was how Severus found them, asleep, wrapped around each other.

Frowning slightly, wondering what had happened, he managed to shake Draco awake without waking Adrian… a trick he’d perfected with all the times Adrian had been injured. Draco opened his eyes quickly, looking up at him. “What happened?”

“He woke up and didn’t really believe he was home,” Draco murmured softly. “I think Black did something to him because when I put some weight on him to comfort him, he froze in panic.”

Severus knew Draco was leaving something out but didn’t call him out on it. He knew that if it was worth knowing, his godson wouldn’t hold back on him. He needed to talk to Lupin. He held out the potion – the same one he’d given Adrian the previous night – to Draco. “Wake him up and see that he takes this. Tell him it’s a Purifying Draught. Help him get ready and come down for breakfast.”

“Yes, sir.”

With a nod, he turned and went looking for Lupin. When he got to the room the werewolf occupied, he knocked politely, waiting for Lupin to call out before entering.

“What’s wrong?” Lupin asked groggily, rubbing sleep from his eyes. “What happened?”
“You’re going to tell me exactly what Black did to my son,” Severus ordered, waiting patiently for the werewolf to be more alert to answer him.

“I know he questioned Adrian about why he wasn’t with the Dursleys and why he wasn’t going by the name of Harry Potter,” Lupin murmured as he moved to the chair, sighing as he frowned thoughtfully. “I also know that he didn’t like it when Adrian stood up to him. I believe he also told Sirius that even though James and Lily had named him his godfather that it didn’t make him so. He didn’t react well to that.”

Severus nodded, knowing Black wouldn’t like being rejected that way. As Lupin spoke, he moved over to the other chair, watching as the werewolf thought. “Did he pin Adrian down with his body?”

“Several times from what I was told,” Lupin confirmed with a sigh. “It usually happened when he wanted to dump a potion down Adrian’s throat and needed to stop him from struggling.”

Severus glared darkly… though he wasn’t sure if he blamed Lupin for what had happened or not. “What did you mean last night when you said ‘I didn’t think he’d do this’? How did he even know who Adrian really was?”

“I met up with Sirius at the start of summer and he began demanding answers to some of the information he had. He told me what he knew and I basically told him if he was right or wrong. I also cautioned him to take care with Adrian, that he shouldn’t push him for more than Adrian wanted to give him. I honestly didn’t think he’d try this.”

Severus had figured that was how things had gone, but it didn’t stop him from being livid with the werewolf. “You told him who Adrian was?” he demanded, shaking with fury. “And you didn’t think that a man who’d spent twelve years of his life in Azkaban would do what he did? Are you really that stupid?”

Lupin sat up straight, glaring back at him. “No, I didn’t think he’d go out and kidnap Adrian. I thought at worse that he’d approach the boy and attempt to talk to him. I didn’t think he would try to destroy Adrian in his zeal to change him into Harry Potter. Do you really think I’d be that reckless that I would put his life on the line like that? Even for Sirius?”

Knowing he was being unfair – considering Lupin had finally seen reason and brought Adrian home – Severus allowed him the courtesy of the good action. Besides, it was Black he wanted to see put back in Azkaban – not for the deaths of the Potters – but for what he’d done to Adrian.

“He defended you, you know,” Lupin said, cutting into his thoughts. “Adrian. When I told Sirius Adrian was happy with you, Sirius sneered and called you ‘Snivilous’, asking who cared about you. Adrian said he did, because you are his father.”

Severus felt pride fill him. He’d known Adrian was happy with him because Severus loved him back, taught him things... was there for him. To Adrian, that was all that mattered. “I’m sure that went over well.”

“Sirius was in a fine temper for the rest of the night afterwards... and every time he came back from talking with Adrian after that as well.”

“Yes, Adrian can be very stubborn when he wants to be. Come,” Severus murmured finally, sighing tiredly. He hadn’t slept well that night. He’d kept waiting for Draco to wake him up with some problem or other. “Breakfast should be ready by now and the boys will be wondering where we are.”
When they got downstairs, the boys were sitting in the dining room with Madreca. Severus frowned as he noticed Adrian dressed in heavy woollen clothes, shivering in his chair. “Are you feeling alright, Adrian?”

“Just cold,” Adrian murmured through chattering teeth. He didn’t remember him shivering when he was sleeping…

Food appeared as soon as everyone was sitting and he noticed that while everyone else had eggs, bacon and potatoes for breakfast, Adrian had hot porridge. He was still trembling when they finished. “Adrian will come with me.”

When they were in his study, he closed the door firmly behind Adrian before wrapping his son in a hug. He smiled when he heard Adrian sigh in contentment, despite the shivers that shook his light frame. “I’m glad you’re home,” he whispered softly.

“I am, too,” Adrian murmured just as softly. “I kept dreaming I was home but every time I woke up I was still in that room.”

“How did he get you?” he asked as he led Adrian to the couch.

“Portkey. When we were at Flourish and Blotts, a stranger bumped into me and I felt him slip something into my pocket. Before I could check it out, though, Draco distracted me. I didn’t think of it again until I was getting ready for bed.”

“That would explain why it didn’t alert the wards,” Severus said with a frown. “I’m going to have to fix that. What happened once you were there?”

“I-I don’t know,” Adrian said with a frown. “The next thing I was aware of was Professor Lupin and Black arguing about me being… wherever I was,” he said, waving his hand distractedly. “It was so hot and oppressive in the house. When they left the room, I managed to sneak my way downstairs despite everything weaving around. I figured if I could get outside, I could fly away and get home but I got so dizzy I hit into a building before I could leave the yard.”

“So he took you to his ancestral home,” Severus murmured, eyes narrowed. “I’ll have to tell the Aurors about that.”

“Actually, Father, I think I’d just like to forget it ever happened.”

“If we don’t stop this now, Black will only try again and next time you might not get away at all,” Severus growled with a glare. “This will end now.” He frowned when Adrian laid his head against him without argument. Did this mean he agreed or simply didn’t want to argue the point right now?

“What else happened?”

“He kept asking me why I wasn’t using the name the Potter’s – no, James - gave me at birth. I told him that James may have fathered me but you were my father. I never knew James. He called me ungrateful.” That last was whispered.

“I hope you don’t believe that,” he said, pulling Adrian away from him to look him in the eyes. That was when he noticed how dull his son’s eyes were. He recognized that Black had done more damage than he’d realized. Adrian had actually begun to believe the nonsense he’d been told. “Adrian,” he began gently, begging him with his eyes to believe what he was about to tell him. “Just because you don’t mourn the Potters’ deaths doesn’t make you bad or ungrateful. Do you honestly think they would want you to live your life moping around, never enjoying the life they gave you?”

Adrian thought about that before he shook his head. “No. If I’ve learned anything from what you’ve
told me about them, they’d be happy I was safe and loved.”

Severus smiled approvingly as life seemed to come back into the beautiful green eyes of his child. “Good. Never forget that. Now, Lucius and Narcissa want us to come over later today. I think Narcissa wants to make sure you’re whole,” his smile deepened as Adrian rolled his eyes, though there was a pleased smile about his lips. “So I want you to try to get some more rest or simply relax in your room this morning and we’ll have lunch at Malfoy Manor,” Severus told him gently.

“Yes, Father.”

“What happened to your hair?”

He didn’t like the blank look that came to Adrian’s eyes as he spoke this time. “Black said that if my hair was short, I’d see just how much I looked like James so he pinned me down and cut it. He didn’t seem to care that he was taking skin off with the hair. I didn’t realize it either until this morning when I went to touch it and it came back with blood. Draco told me there were sizeable chunks of skin missing on my head.”

“It’s alright, Adrian,” Severus murmured, caressing his son’s face. “We’ll fix this.”

* * *

Mind Healer McKay stood at Adrian’s bedroom door where Severus had led him. He knew the Potions master was worried about the boy and wanted to make sure Adrian was recovering from whatever had been done to him this time. That was why he’d made the house call… the only one of his patients he’d do this for, in any case. And he honestly liked the boy. However, the boy was currently sitting at the window seat, a blanket wrapped tightly around him, lost in his mind. “Hello, Adrian,” he murmured finally when the boy didn’t look up from starring outside.

He winced imperceptibly when Adrian jumped in fear. “Mind Healer McKay,” he acknowledged hesitantly, probably wondering why he was there. “Can I help you with anything?”

“I was hoping to ask you the same thing,” McKay murmured pleasantly as he moved to sit on the other side of Adrian’s window seat, carefully keeping his distance. He knew from experience that Adrian had a problem with personal space and didn’t want to make the boy anymore uncomfortable than he had to. “I hear you aren’t going outside. Why not?”

Adrian sighed as he looked out the window at where the others were dueling. “Father sent you?”

“I was hoping to ask you the same thing,” McKay murmured pleasantly as he moved to sit on the other side of Adrian’s window seat, carefully keeping his distance. He knew from experience that Adrian had a problem with personal space and didn’t want to make the boy anymore uncomfortable than he had to. “I hear you aren’t going outside. Why not?”

Adrian sighed as he looked out the window at where the others were dueling. “Father sent you?”

“He’s worried, naturally,” McKay said, nodding in agreement. He watched Adrian silently for a few minutes, could see the longing to join his friends but also his hesitance. He realized then what was stopping the boy from joining his friends. It was fear. “I know it seems every time you go out somewhere that someone will harm or take you but it doesn’t always happen, does it?”

“I’m just wondering why it’s always me,” Adrian murmured with a shrug as he pulled the blanket even closer around him. From what McKay had been told, Adrian had been home three days now and despite the heat of summer, he felt cold all the time.

“I’m afraid I can’t answer that,” the Mind Healer said with an apologetic smile. “Do you think you’ll be going outside soon?”

“Maybe when I stop freezing?” Adrian tried to smile, he could see him make the effort, but it didn’t quite make it to his eyes.

McKay frowned as he pulled out his wand. “Do you mind if I run a diagnostic scan on you?” Adrian
appreciated that McKay didn’t just do things but asked him first, unlike so many others, which was why he’d asked instead of doing. When Adrian nodded, McKay swished his wand, murmuring the words to a scan he was sure the boy recognized. He waited as the familiar piece of paper came into being.

He read it through, careful not to frown at what it revealed, knowing that if he did, Adrian would worry. “It seems that your immune system is extremely low. That’s why you’re cold,” the man murmured with a smile. It wasn’t all it revealed, but he would show it to Severus when he was done talking with Adrian. “Maybe some time out in the sun will help you get warm, even if you don’t duel with the others.”

“Maybe,” Adrian murmured, looking outside again.

“You know, Adrian,” McKay began hesitantly, frowning as he watched the boy. “You can tell me anything. I won’t judge you and I won’t repeat it.” That surprised the boy. After all the years of treating him, McKay knew quite a lot about him, more than people realized, in fact, and what he didn’t know, he could guess.

McKay waited, not pushing. He knew pushing Adrian simply made him clam up. He was actually surprised when the boy began to speak, confirming some of his guesses. He didn’t know how long Adrian talked. He simply listened, summoning a glass of water when the boy needed it.

“Sirius Black seems to want me to acknowledge that the Potters died protecting me, and I understand that,” Adrian said finally. “But how am I supposed to be grateful to people I don’t remember?”

“I don’t think you disgrace their memory by living life the way you are, Adrian,” McKay said finally, choosing his words carefully. “I think they’d be proud, in fact, that you have someone who loves and cares for you, no matter who that someone is.”

“You think so?” Adrian asked, and he could see the hope in the child’s eyes. This boy had been through so much already. He couldn’t understand why Black would be angry at the fact that Adrian didn’t live his days mourning the parents he didn’t know.

“I do,” McKay said with an encouraging smile. “If they didn’t, there wouldn’t have been that clause in their will to make sure your father and Black didn’t fight over you. If they didn’t want you to be happy, they would’ve made sure you remained with your mother’s sister instead of going to Severus Snape. What Black did was wrong and I’m sure he’ll realize that, hopefully sooner rather than later.”

“I don’t know if I want him in my life anymore,” Adrian said with a shudder.

They were quiet for a while, then, enjoying the quiet of the Manor. “Do you want to go sit outside with your friends now?”

Adrian looked down at the children outside before looking at him. He could see the fear in the boy’s eyes but he nodded anyway. McKay smiled encouragingly. “Come, I’ll carry the blanket for you.”

He was proud of Adrian for not letting his fear control him but he was going to have to warn Severus that the boy might have nightmares for a while thanks to what Black had done. Trauma wasn’t something easily gotten over and Black had violated more than Adrian’s trust.

He also knew the Aurors wanted to speak to Adrian, but McKay was keeping them at bay for the moment and would continue doing so until he was sure Adrian could survive their questioning without breaking down.

That was the advantage of being Adrian’s Mind Healer. Until he gave the go-ahead, the Aurors
couldn’t come near the boy without getting into some serious trouble.

Once the boy was among the other children, McKay made sure Adrian was well wrapped in his blanket before going in search of Severus. They had to talk about what potions the boy had been given and Severus, being a Potions master, would know more about the effects of them mixed together than he did.

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“What happened?” Severus asked when McKay entered the living room. Without saying a word, he handed the Potions master the sheet in his hand. Frowning in confusion, Severus took it from him, reading what it said. “This is what Adrian was given?” he asked in surprise.

“Yes,” McKay said with a nod. “Whichever combination of ingredients it is, it seems to be causing Adrian’s body temperature to drop.”

“I was going to ask the Hogwarts nurse to come check on him today but this will save me the time.” Looking at the list again, he frowned at what he was reading. Yes, four of the ingredients listed could be the cause behind Adrian feeling cold. They didn’t interact well together and it didn’t matter if they had been combined in the same potion or not. The mere fact that they had mixed together in Adrian’s stomach would be enough… especially since Black hadn’t bothered to give him any food in between potions. “How did it go with Adrian?”

“He’s outside with the others.” He nodded when Severus looked at him in pleased surprise. “We sat upstairs while he talked about anything he wanted to. He told me quite a few things in confidence but his biggest fear is that Black will try to take him again and this time he won’t be able to escape.”

“I figured as much. I’m going to have to figure out a way to ease his fears,” Severus murmured with a sigh. “At least you got him to leave his room.”

“I’ll be going then,” McKay said with a slight smile. “Oh, and expect nightmares for a little while. Contact me again if you need me.”

“Thank you for coming,” he murmured as he led the Mind Healer towards the fireplace, shaking the man’s hand before he disappeared into the green flames. “It seems I’ll be brewing a few potions for Adrian,” he murmured to himself, realizing he wasn’t by himself when he turned to find Lupin leaning against the doorjamb behind him.

“How is Adrian?”

Severus shook his head and walked passed Lupin. “He went outside. If that’s any indication, he’s better now that he’s spoken to McKay. I wish Black would think things through before he did something as idiotic as kidnapping a child. Doesn’t he realize what that does to them?”

“I don’t think he meant it as a means of hurting Adrian,” Lupin murmured, falling into step with him. “I think he thought he was doing him a favour. Are you going to tell the Aurors where he is?”

“Everything in me wants to, but Adrian doesn’t seem to want it,” Severus said in frustration. He couldn’t understand why Adrian wanted to spare Black but he would honour his child’s wish… for now. “We’ll see. If you’ll excuse me, I have a potion to brew.”

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Adrian rested against Kanen with Draco reclined behind him, watching as the others dueled one another, laughing and joking as if nothing had happened. But something had happened. No one
seemed to notice that he didn’t laugh or join in with the good natured ribbing… no one but Draco.

But then Draco knew what he’d gone through with Black. Adrian had told him, so he watched his friend with a worried frown.

Draco finally moved closer as Kaida moved to cover Adrian’s feet, then pulled his boyfriend back until he was leaning against him while they used Kanen as a pillow. Despite the heat of the day, Adrian still shivered. When Draco felt how much his boyfriend shook, he wrapped an arm around him under the blanket using his other hand to tuck it closer around the dark-haired boy’s shoulders.

“How are you feeling?” Draco asked into his ear.

Adrian shook his head, burrowing closer to Draco’s and Kanen’s heat. Being as close as their bodies were, Adrian had to know Draco could feel him shivering. However, their combined body heat seemed to help stave off the chill Adrian felt, warming him up enough that his eyes began to close despite the fact that he tried to stay awake.

Draco knew Adrian was having a hard time shaking this latest attack. Actually, he’d also noticed that it was taking his friend longer to recover after each one. When would Adrian be able to go somewhere without worrying that someone was out to get him?

He watched their friends joke amongst themselves and wondered if they even realized how Adrian was feeling. He’d watched as his boyfriend had begun withdrawing from everyone simply because they didn’t understand what was happening. Draco didn’t know what to do to help him, either. Should he talk to the others or should he let it play itself out?

“Things will get better for him soon,” Luna said softly from beside him and Draco was surprised by how clear her eyes were. He remembered Adrian’s comment on the train, of Luna being able to see the future. Was he right?

She smiled at him before she got up for her turn at dueling with Ginny.

When it came time for Draco to have a second go at dueling however, Madreca passed him, gesturing for Fred to take his place. He was surprised, though when he looked up at the Defense Professor, he realized that he shouldn’t have been. Living at Snape Manor most of the summer, the Spaniard would know when Adrian was sleeping well and when he wasn’t. He sure wasn’t about to wake him up if he finally managed to get some now.

Draco appreciated that.

Lunch was served to them where they were dueling outside. As the others sat eating, they watching curiously as Adrian slept peacefully, seeming to only now realize the smaller boy looked so tired and pale. However, they didn’t see the full extent of damage to Adrian’s head thanks to the glamour he wore constantly, which weakened when he slept. They could see the cut hair, but not the grooves in the scalp.

“What happened this time?” Pansy asked with an exasperated sigh and Draco realized that maybe the others didn’t know about this latest attack.

“That is none of your concern,” Severus murmured as he walked up on them, causing the girl to stiffen in surprise. “Draco, wake him up, please.”

Not really wanting to but not daring to disobey his godfather, Draco shook his friend gently. Within seconds, Adrian was awake, pulling the blanket around him as if the heat he’d gotten previously had never existed, though Draco could feel the heat radiating off his body since they were pressed
“Adrian,” Severus murmured, holding out a potion to him. “To clean out the toxins.” Draco was glad his friend didn’t hesitate to drink it, seeming to know his father wouldn’t knowingly give him something dangerous. At least he still believed that. “Eat something or it’ll make you sick.”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian whispered, looking like he was ready to cry. Draco figured it was because Adrian had had enough of all the danger he always found himself in… but how could he help his boyfriend with that when he didn’t even know how to protect him from it?

Draco gave Adrian half a sandwich, hoping he’d be able to eat at least that much. Instead of smiling, like he normally would’ve, Adrian simply nodded his thanks as he accepted the food, nibbling listlessly at the crust. When Draco held out the other half, Adrian shook his head and huddled under the blanket again, leaning back against him.

The others joked amongst themselves, casting curious looks at Adrian as the boy closed his eyes. Draco was grateful they waited until Adrian was asleep before asking questions. “So what happened?” Fred asked before taking a bite of his second sandwich.

“Adrian fell ill Saturday night and is still trying to get over it. Uncle Sev said he’s still recovering and tires easily,” Draco lied smoothly as he pulled the blanket around his boyfriend, watching the others carefully from the corner of his eye.

As expected, the others were surprised at hearing this. “Adrian was sick?” George asked in surprise.

“That’s why he’s cold right now,” Draco murmured as Adrian moved closer to him in his sleep. “The last bit of illness making its way out of his system. Uncle Sev’s giving him a potion to get over it faster.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell us?” Neville asked in confusion. “We wondered where you and Adrian had disappeared to last week.”

“Uncle Sev wasn’t quite sure what Adrian had and didn’t know if it was contagious,” the blonde boy said with a dismissive shrug. “Since Adrian and I are always together, he wanted to make sure I wasn’t going to get sick, too. That’s why I missed Monday and Tuesday last week. When he and Madreca realized I wasn’t sick or contagious, I was allowed to come back to class. I hear the Healer was here earlier this morning to check on him,” he said, watching the others carefully to see what their reactions would be to that information. He knew McKay wasn’t just a regular Healer, but the others didn’t know that.

“And his hair? Last week it was long and now-” Fred asked curiously.

“It looks like someone took a hacksaw to it,” George finished with a frown.

“In one of his deliriums, Adrian freaked out and cut it,” Draco said with a shrug. “I don’t know what he thought he was doing, but by the time Severus got the scissors away from him, he’d already made a mess of his hair. Now that he’s over the effects of the fever, Uncle Sev hopes his appetite will go back to normal.”

He saw the thoughtful looks on everyone’s faces… except for Pansy who rolled her eyes in annoyance. “I see it hasn’t improved yet,” Pansy said with a slight smirk. Draco frowned, wondering what she found amusing about Adrian’s eating habit. “Big shock there. You would think he’d eat more.”

“You know, Pansy,” Fred said coldly, glaring at the girl. “If you went through as much as Adrian
has, I wonder if your appetite wouldn’t suffer, too.”

“Oh, please,” she sniffed dismissively, crossing her arms across her chest. “You guys even said
Adrian was simply doing it for attention. No one gets into so much trouble for nothing.”

“What in Merlin’s name are you talking about?” Blaise demanded angrily. “We were talking about
Potter, not Adrian.”

“You know,” Draco said as she opened her mouth to say something else but his smooth silky tone
stopped her, her eyes widening in fear. “If you don’t like being around Adrian, then that means you
don’t like being around me either. Perhaps you should go home and not bother coming around
again.”

“I’m not the only one saying it,” she protested weakly as everyone glared at her and she realized she
had no support.

“What amazes me,” Neville piped up, glaring fiercely at the girl. “Is that she would insult our friend
at his own house.”

“Nothing says you have to stay, you know.” That was from Ginny.

Pansy seemed to realize she’d done and said the wrong thing… which seemed to be a reoccurring
theme for her whenever she was being spiteful. “Well, sorry for misunderstanding,” she huffed with
a sneer. “What else am I supposed to think when he keeps snuggling with my boyfriend?” As soon
as the word ‘boyfriend’ was out, she blushed crimson, seeming to realise she’d let something slip that
she hadn’t intended.

“Excuse me?” Draco asked in surprise and undisguised disgust, eyebrows going up to his hairline.
“I’m not your boyfriend, Pansy. Nor will I ever be. I happen to be with Adrian.”

“Since when?” the girl demanded, hand on her hips.

“Since Thursday when Adrian and I talked, not that it’s any of your business,” he sneered at her
while the others watched in surprise. “I’ve told you repeatedly all of last year that I wasn’t interested
in you in that way.”

“But-” she began, shaking her head in denial. “We could be happy together.”

Draco rolled his eyes. “No, Pansy, we wouldn’t. We’d make each other miserable. You know that.
We’re better suited as friends.” When there was no further response from the girl, the others changed
the subject, turning instead to what they were learning with Madreca. Pansy sulked for a while but
soon joined into the conversation.

* * *

By the time supper rolled around, Adrian felt closer to his normal self. He didn’t know what his
father had given him at lunchtime but it seemed to be working. He didn’t feel like he was freezing
anymore. It was awesome. When his father held out a phial to him, he didn’t even hesitate but
downed it instantly.

He smiled thankfully up at his father as food appeared on the table, feeling hungry for once since
he’d gotten home. He was actually proud of himself for eating more than usual.

The problem came later that night…
"I have you now," Black laughed, leering down at him as he struggled to focus on his surroundings. Everything was fuzzy and dark.

He whimpered tearfully. “No! No! No! I don’t want to be here.”

“We’re going to be together forever,” Black told him, holding out a phial for him to take. “We’ll be happy, Harry, you’ll see.”

“Let me go,” he cried out, flailing his arms, trying to knock Black’s hand away from him but his limbs felt too heavy to move. He turned his head away from the phial, pressing his lips tightly together. Black laughed hard, grabbing hold of his arms before he poured the potion over his face.

Adrian choked as the liquid entered his nose, forcing him to open his mouth…

“Adrian!”

His eyes flew open to see his father standing over him, shaking him. His hands were wrapped around Adrian’s upper arms as if he had been trying to stop him from struggling. He gasped in relief as he realized it was only a dream, that he was safe at home.

“It was only a dream,” his father told him gently as he pulled him against his chest. “You’re safe.”

Adrian burrowed against the strong embrace, holding on tightly as tears fell down his face. “Why?” he whispered brokenly. “Why can’t I live in peace? Why won’t they just leave me alone?”

“I don’t know, Adrian,” Severus murmured with a sigh, running his fingers through his mangled hair, careful of the healing scabs. Adrian hid his face against his father’s dressing gown at the mess Black had done of it – both his life and his hair. The hair would regrow, he wasn’t worried about that, but how long before he got over what had been done to him this time? “We’ll just have to work on getting you over what Black did.”

**

Severus held Adrian until the boy fell asleep again before laying him gently down on the bed, pulling the blankets around his child so he wouldn’t be cold. He knew Kanen had watched them from the foot of the bed, but the cat hadn’t moved as Severus comforted the boy.

Only when Adrian had been settled comfortably did the cat move closer, lying against the boy.

“Watch over him, Kanen,” he whispered softly as he reached over and caressed the cat’s head. He wasn’t surprised when the cat purred as he settled against Adrian. He watched as Adrian curled a hand around the cat’s front leg, frowning in his sleep, jerking slightly.

Severus debated on if he should remain with his son or go back to bed. McKay had warned him about the possibility of nightmares… which was why he’d cast a spell on Adrian’s bed to alert him if the boy began to have one.

Sighing tiredly, he rose to his feet and headed towards his room. If Adrian woke him again, he would remain with his son but for right now, he figured it was best for him to sleep by himself with Kanen. Tomorrow he would see if Draco would spend the rest of the week here. Adrian would appreciate that, he was sure.

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Two weeks later, Adrian was sleeping better. After that first night, Draco had slept over for three days, then the odd day now and then, making it possible for him to work through his nightmares.
However, he was currently sitting on the floor of his bedroom trying to control the panic clawing at him as he rocked slightly.

Severus Snape had just told him they were going to Diagon Alley in an hour and he was to resolve himself to going. He’d made it to his room before his knees had given out. He was having trouble catching his breath, his mind blank with fear.

He didn’t want to go out where Black could get at him. He was safe here…

“Breathe, Adrian,” Draco murmured as he appeared suddenly in his line of sight, grabbing hold of his arms. Only then did he realize he was gripping his own upper arms in a bruising grip. “Take a deep breath.” Looking deep into Draco’s grey eyes, Adrian struggled to do as his boyfriend said.

“I can’t,” he wheezed, tears beginning to fall down his face as he shook his head as he fought to draw breath. “Can’t…”

**

Draco watched as Adrian fell apart in front of him. He was glad that Madreca had contacted him with Severus’ plans for the afternoon. He’d arrived before Adrian could work himself into a state of complete panic, but just.

“Do it with me,” he said softly. He nodded encouragingly as he inhaled deeply. Shaking with the effort, Adrian tried hard to follow along with his boyfriend. It was slow progress but seemed to be working…

By the time Adrian had his breathing somewhat under control, his forehead was resting against Draco’s chest. “Why?” Adrian whispered softly. “Why would Father insist I go to Diagon Alley?”

Draco sighed as he pushed Adrian back so he could look him in the eye. “He wants to get you used to going out in public before school begins. The sooner he does it, the less you have to worry about it happening. Want me to come along?”

Adrian looked at him, body shuddering in fear. “Please?” Draco knew that for Adrian to go at all when it was obvious he didn’t want to go at all meant this would help his boyfriend.

“Let’s get your clothes changed then,” Draco smirked, knowing his next comment would make Adrian laugh. “It’ll help you feel more confident if you’re dressed well.” As he’d known, Adrian snorted and rolled his eyes in amusement. Sometimes it paid being known as the most fashionable person in Hogwarts.

**

Their group consisted of Madreca, Narcissa, Draco, Adrian and baby Caelum… and the cats, of course. The two cats alone were enough to keep anyone from getting too close to Adrian, which had been the intention.

Their first stop was at a stylist shop to take care of Adrian’s mangled hair. They’d had to wait so long to get it done because the cuts to Adrian’s scalp had finally scabbed over enough that if anyone touched his head, it didn’t hurt as badly.

When they walked into the shop, no one would have known that Adrian had gone through something as horrible as he had, but that was only because of the glamour he wore. And of course, Madreca volunteered to stay outside with the cats so it wouldn’t be so crowded in the shop.
“Welcome!” they heard as their eyes adjusted to the dimmer light than the one outside. Severus bit back a sigh as Adrian moved closer to him.

He’d expected this.

“Good afternoon,” he murmured pleasantly as he moved over to the wizard who had spoken to them, casting a Silencing spell around them so what he said wouldn’t be heard by the dozen other people in the shop. “My son was attacked by someone a couple of weeks ago and needs his hair fixed so no one will know anything happened. Is there somewhere more private we can do this?”

“Yes,” the man said in surprise, controlling his features expertly. “Please, follow me.” Cancelling the spell, Severus nodded his head for the others to follow. “Make yourselves comfortable,” the wizard murmured, gesturing airily to the chairs along one wall. “Whom are we looking at today?” he asked pleasantly when the door was closed firmly behind Narcissa.

“Adrian,” Severus murmured, gesturing for the boy to come stand beside him. “Cancel the glamour.”

When his child looked up at him, Severus saw the fear in his eyes, but with only a slight hesitation, Adrian did as instructed.

Looking back at the wizard, he didn’t see the reaction he’d expected: horror or disgust. All he saw was a carefully bland expression. “Hm,” the wizard hummed, eyes narrowed thoughtfully. “This way, young sir,” he said with a smile, a hand behind Adrian’s back, though he didn’t touch him, indicating with his other towards the chair in the center of the room.

Adrian hesitated again, looking up at Severus, before allowing himself to be led to the chair. Severus stood to one side where his son could see him, knowing it would help him relax. Severus knew that, which was why he did it. He wanted to get Adrian used to going out, yes, but he didn’t want to push him into a panic attack either.

The wizard tsked as he surveyed the damage done. “Does it hurt you if I touch?” he asked as he placed gentle fingers around different areas of Adrian’s hair.

“A little,” the boy answered quietly, wincing when the wizard touched a particularly bad spot, one of three places Black had cut deeply.

“Sorry, young sir,” the wizard apologized immediately, pulling his fingers back. “Yes, I think I can do something about the hair… maybe create a style that will hide the cuts until they’ve healed. Is it your wish to regrow it to the previous length? I assume it used to be long?” the wizard asked Adrian as he fingered one of the few patches nearly untouched by the massacre.

“Yes.”

The wizard nodded and pulled out a comb and a pair of scissors. If he noticed the way Adrian jumped and shied away from him, he didn’t show it. “Now, I’ll cut it all so it’s the same length and use one of the creams to grow it out a little so it’ll cover the cuts, but it works better if it’s cut first. Is that alright with you, young sir?”

The fact that the wizard asked before beginning seemed to reassure Adrian and the boy nodded, shifting in his seat as the wizard began cutting back the mess of hair so it was all the same length… for the most part. However, it managed to reveal the extent of the damage, too. Severus realized that there seemed to be a couple of cuts still oozing a bit of blood despite the healing that had begun.

The wizard smiled as he put his scissors away, picking up a jar of cream off the table in front of Adrian. He hummed a happy tune as he smeared it lightly through Adrian’s hair, using the comb to
spread it to areas he didn’t dare touch because of the scabs. As they watched, the hair grew an inch, just long enough so that when Adrian combed his hair, it would cover the scabs easily. By the time he was done, nothing of the damage was visible.

“Once the cuts have healed, I would like for him to come back and I can help regrow the hair to any length he likes. I can even take care of any spot that might not regrow,” he told Severus as he moved over to where the Potions master stood. “May I ask how it happened?”

He looked over at Adrian, who now stood with Draco, looking better than he had before. The wizard had done wonders with the boy’s hair, covering any sign of scabs.

“The attacker used scissors to chop off his hair and didn’t seem to care that he was taking skin along with it,” Severus murmured softly. “Are you sure you can repair any damage caused once the scabs have healed?”

“Oh, yes,” the wizard assured him with a thoughtful frown. “Quite easily. If the healing continues as it is, however, they won’t be healed before school begins. Here’s an ointment I use when my students accidently cut a customer. It heals minor cuts instantly and should speed the healing of those cuts enough that, by the time he has to pick up his school supplies, he’ll be ready for what needs to be done to help regrow his hair.”

Severus was surprised by that. He took the jar from the wizard, looking at him closely. “Is there any Nettle in it?”

“Nettle?” the wizard asked in surprise before he thought about it. “No.”

“How much?”

The wizard waved him off. “Don’t worry about that. He’ll be able to help me with proving that it works. That’ll be payment enough for me. I already put some on the cuts that were still opened. Just let me know how fast it worked.”

“If you’re sure…”

The wizard smiled and winked at him before he walked away.

The rest of their shopping trip went better than Severus had hoped with no incidents, though Adrian stuck close to him the entire time. The bookstore had been the true test, however, seeing as how crowded it was... and that this was where the latest attack had occurred.

Severus figured, later that night, that all in all, the trip had been worth it. It had gone a long way towards restoring Adrian’s confidence that nothing bad would happen to him. He also figured they would have to make a few more trips before his son was truly comfortable again with going out.

When they’d gotten home from Diagon Alley, he’d given Adrian a ring that he was to wear at all times. He’d explained that it was a portkey that would activate if he were unconscious because of someone’s interference. He’d seen Adrian relax further as he realized this meant that if Black got him again, he wouldn’t have him for long.

This Saturday would see the boys working at the pet shop again now that Adrian was better. That would be the real test for his child: to work without worrying about being taken.

* * *

Adrian had missed being around all the animals... and it seemed that the animals had missed him in
turn, at least the ones who’d been there the last time he’d worked. He and Draco worked side by side while Adrian translated the stories the animals told him, as promised last summer…

Had it really only been last summer when Dumbledore had had him kidnapped!? It seemed a lifetime ago.

Kanen and Kaida were relaxing in the back, waiting patiently for the boys’ lunch break. He heard the door open but didn’t think anything about it since they didn’t really deal with the customers unless Michael asked them to. They kept working together, laughing and joking as they cleaned cages.

Adrian hadn’t really been surprised to learn that the remaining kittens had sold quickly after he and Draco had chosen theirs but now the question became: when would Kaida have a litter of her own? She and Kanen spent a lot of time together whenever Draco visited Adrian and vice versa but then that had always been the case before, too.

He didn’t see a reason to worry about it, though. It would happen when it happened…

“Excuse me,” he heard from behind him and stiffened in fear as he recognized the voice.

Draco frowned up at him when he straightened up in his haste, staring blankly ahead of him as memories assailed him. “Adrian?”

No! It can’t be! his mind screamed as he struggled to breath. He turned around woodenly as Draco stood up, repeating his name but he didn’t answer him. Behind him stood a tall man. If he’d met him on the street, he never would’ve recognized him, but it was the eyes that were familiar. The same blue eyes that haunted his nightmares now. Black!

He stumbled back against Draco as he tried to move away from the man he feared would take him away again. “Stay away from me,” he whimpered, feeling Draco’s come up to steady him. The animals reacted instantly to his fear… the birds and owls bristled, moving forward as if they would attack, even the spiders and snakes tried to get out of their tanks to join in.

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Sirius froze in surprise, hands out to show he had nothing in them, warily eyeing the animals. “I just want to talk, I swear.” He didn’t understand what was happening or why the animals were suddenly acting in this manner.

“Maybe you should’ve thought of that before you tried killing him,” the blonde boy who was with James’ son growled out as he pulled the black haired teen behind him, placing himself between them as if that would stop him. Sirius wanted to laugh. This boy had the look of Malfoy, meaning this had to be his son.

“I wasn’t trying to kill him,” Black growled back, glaring down at the boy. As he watched, Adrian closed his eyes as he wrapped his arms around Draco, head coming to rest against the blonde. This wasn’t what he’d come here for. He knew he’d messed up and was trying to make up for it by showing the boy he could be trusted not to hurt him… and was failing in his effort.

He could see the pain he was inflicting on his best friend’s child and sighed, taking a step back, burying his anger for the sake of the boy. “Harry-” he began but stopped when he saw the boy flinched at the name. “Adrian,” he tried instead. “Can we talk?” he asked simply. “Anywhere you want.”

“Not now, just-” Adrian whispered tiredly. “Not now.”
Sirius wanted to protest, but when the boy had laid his head on the Malfoy boy’s shoulder he noticed something strange on Adrian’s head, neatly hidden in the hair. He tried not to wince as he realized it was where he’d cut into the boy’s skin. Oh, yes, he knew about that. He’d been horrified when he’d cleaned up the room and found bits of flesh tangled in the hair. He didn’t know what had gotten into him that he would do something like that. “Alright. When you want to talk, Remus will know where to get a hold of me.”

Adrian made no sign that he’d heard him so he sighed, nodded and left the pet shop. The next move would be the boy’s.
Chapter 9 – Let the Tournament Begin…

Severus walked down Diagon Alley with the intention of taking the boys out for lunch. Because this was the first day since the kidnapping that he’d been back, he was impressed with the level of progress Adrian was making. By going to work at the shop, it proved to both himself and Severus that he would recover from what Black and even Dumbledore had done to him. If this didn’t stop him, nothing would.

And as long as Adrian believed that, it would be so.

He was working hard to help Adrian recover and was proud at the fact that his son had accomplished as much as he had despite the adversity he seemed to face with people from the Potters’ past.

Entering the pet shop, he nodded politely to Michael who was helping a customer. Without missing a beat, Michael gestured towards the back. Severus frowned at that, knowing it was unusual for them to be in the back unless it was a break… and it wasn’t yet time for one.

“You’re safe,” he heard Draco say softly when he pushed the curtain back and stepped through. “He’ll stay away for a while now.”

“I just want to finish this day so I can go home,” Adrian murmured with a tired sigh. “Today was going so well, too.”

“What happened?” Severus asked from the door, frowning in confusion. They turned to see him standing there watching them.

“Father,” Adrian murmured with a small smile that didn’t reach his eyes, his head on Draco’s shoulder. He looked so tired, as if he hadn’t slept the night before, even though Severus knew that was false. Adrian’s sleeping habits were slowly going back to normal with the odd nightmare cropping up now and then. McKay had informed him that it was normal and that, as his son worked through this latest stress, the nightmares would eventually fade away.

Draco’s next words had him stiffening imperceptibly. “Black was here.”

It explained the boys’ comments, then, if Black had been here. What had he wanted now? “And?”

“He’s going to stay away from me until I’m ready to talk to him.” Severus’ eyes flicked up to look at Draco who nodded slightly in agreement. “It’s at least one person I don’t have to worry about.”

Severus simply stood there, watching his son, wondering what the correct course of action was in this case. With Black willing to back off for a while, it meant Adrian didn’t have to worry about being taken away at any time… at least not by him. But should he allow the boy to go home and rest or stay and finish his shift?

Finally he sighed and held his arms open for Adrian to come to him. He smiled slightly when his son didn’t hesitate but moved over and wrapped his arms around Severus’ waist. “Let’s go for lunch,” he
said after kissing the top of the messy black hair, careful of the healing skin. The cream was working wonderfully and Severus figured that, by the end of next week or later the week after that, he’d be able to take Adrian to get his hair regrown to the length it had been before the attack.

“Are we taking the cats with us?” Draco asked as Kanen and Kaida shifted to their feet with a hopeful looks in their eyes.

Severus hesitated before he nodded. Where he planned on taking the boys had an outdoor terrace… which would be better for Adrian in the long run. “Michael, the boys will be back in a couple of hours,” he said as they passed the store manager.

“Have fun,” he called out with a grin.

They walked down the Alley towards the new restaurant. It looked like it was a two level with a terrace on the top. Going in, they were stopped when the cats entered. “I’m sorry, sir, but this establishment doesn’t accept animals. Health codes.”

“They’re for protection,” Severus murmured as Adrian made a sound of protest. “We’re willing to sit on the terrace in order to keep them.”

The lady at the door hesitated until an older gentleman stepped up. “Severus Snape. Finally decided to take my offer, have you?”

“Gregory,” Severus murmured, shaking the man’s hand. “Seems we have a problem here or we would be.”

“Problem?” Gregory said with a short laugh, taking in the two boys and the cats. “I see no problem. I have just the room for you.”

They were led upstairs to a fourth level that was covered with glass and was private. The boys gasped at the view of London from their height, which made it seemed as if there were more than three levels to the establishment, towering over the Alley easily. In this room, they were completely alone, being only big enough for three tables. It almost had the feel of a conference room.

“Please, enjoy your meal,” Gregory murmured, gesturing for them to sit. “I’ll even make sure the cats have something to eat. Anything in particular you boys wanted?” he asked with a pleasant smile.

“Surprise us, Gregory,” Severus answered for them, seeing as the boys weren’t paying attention, looking down at the street below.

Gregory laughed and clapped Severus on the shoulder before leaving them alone, closing the door behind him to give them even more privacy. “This is great, Uncle Sev,” Draco said in awe as he moved to sit at the table. Adrian nodded as he sat across from Severus, closer to Draco… which he found intriguing. Had it already begun? He wanted to ask but didn’t want to interfere if their bond was beginning to take effect.

“So,” he began with an arched eyebrow. “How is your day going, Adrian?”

“Good. The cages are nearly all cleaned and the animals are happy and well fed,” Adrian said with a shrug. “I’m having that nightmare again, the one with the weird man-thing, but I’ve been practicing my Occlumency like you suggested. It seems to keep them at bay.”

Severus nodded, knowing that Adrian was having visions again because his child had been under enormous amounts of stress. Of course, it didn’t help that his immune system had been out of whack. “The Aurors want to know if you’ll speak to them now that you’re better. I figured I’d leave that to
you since McKay said you won’t break down if you talk about your ordeal. It’s up to you what you tell them but don’t lie.”

“Tomorrow would be alright,” the boy murmured with a tired shrug. He knew this was also another point that was stressing him out. The Aurors kept sending owls every day asking if he was ready to talk to them and it was starting to wear on him. “I’d like to get it over with if possible.”

“I’ll let Auror Jenkins know,” Severus said after he’d nodded in agreement. “Next week is your birthday, Adrian, have you decided what you want to do?”

“Not really,” Adrian murmured rubbing at his forehead. A headache was coming on again. He knew his son wanted some peace and quiet for a while so he wouldn’t bother throwing a big party… not that he would’ve anyway. Maybe the usual crowd that came to the house and the Malfoys would be enough to celebrate Adrian’s fourteenth birthday. He figured the boy’s inheritance should be coming out soon, especially if their bond was taking hold… maybe next year or the year after. It was hard to tell with the tampering the Dursleys had done.

“We could just do a small celebration,” Draco suggested, echoing Severus’ thoughts.

“Maybe,” his son said with an indifferent shrug.

“In a couple of weeks, you boys will be looking to pick up your school supplies. Are you ready for that?”

“Yeah,” the boys answered, Draco more enthusiastic than Adrian, but then he figured it was probably because of Black popping into the shop today that was bringing him down. Usually, Adrian was more enthusiastic about shopping… maybe not clothes, but different things.

Food was brought in about that time. He watched Adrian push his food around his plate and decided it was time to change Adrian’s thoughts. “Did you finish reading that book you picked up on tournaments?”

“Yeah,” his child said, life slowly coming back to his eyes as he smiled in excitement. “Did you know that for the Tri-Wizard tournament, if a player puts his name in then decides afterwards that he doesn’t want to play all he has to do is refuse to take his name from the official? Or that someone can stand as witness for a person entered who didn’t put their own name into the goblet?”

“Really?” Severus murmured with a smirk, knowing he’d succeeded when Adrian nodded enthusiastically, taking a bite of his food. “That’s interesting to know.”

“It’s fascinating. There are also a lot more magical tournaments out there than the Tri-Wizard, too.”

The rest of their meal was spent discussing other magical tournaments, the subject enough to distract Adrian from what was happening in his life at the moment. Severus knew there was a world Quidditch game going on soon… He wondered if Lucius would take the boys to it. He had no liking for the game beyond the one at Hogwarts but figured his son might welcome the excitement it provided.

He’d have to talk to the Aristocrat and see if he would be going…

* * *

“It seems Fudge has invited the Malfoy family to the Quidditch World Cup tournament in three weeks,” Lucius murmured a week later as they had supper over at Malfoy Manor.
Severus bit back the smirk he knew wanted to come out. Smooth, Lucius, he thought to himself, having spoken to the man a few days earlier about that particular subject. Very smooth. As expected, he gained the full attention of both boys with those three words. “Are you going to accept?” he asked as if he hadn’t seen them perk up.

“I’m not quite sure, yet.” Severus noticed the knowing gleam in Lucius’ eyes and fought hard not to chuckle. That man knew exactly what he was doing by mentioning the Quidditch game at suppertime. “I told him I’d have to think on it and give him my answer in a few days.”

“You know, Father,” Draco piped in, trying to look unaffected by the news. “It would be a great way to meet new people. I hear that there will be people from Ireland and Bulgaria there and probably further abroad.”

“Yes, I’m sure there will be,” Lucius murmured with a slight nod.

Draco frowned down at his plate, wondering what else to say to convince his father without coming right out and asking to go. Sometimes watching them dance around subjects was almost as entertaining and amusing as if they fought over things. A quick glance at Narcissa told him that she was enjoying the show just as much as he was. Beside him, Adrian didn’t say anything, simply watching father and son dance around the subject.

Madreca had, for once, declined the invitation to supper, going home instead to spend time with his wife. The Spaniard was going to be sorry to have missed this entertainment.

“Also, Uncle Lucius,” Adrian finally said, deciding to help his friend out. “With the Tri-Wizard tournament coming up, they’ll need someone they know at the school to help them navigate the classes and everything. This would be the perfect opportunity to meet some of the students who should be attending the tournament.”

Oh, that was nicely done, Severus thought in amusement, wanting to laugh at the innocent smile the boy threw at Lucius. The perfect excuse to go to a game.

Lucius tilted his head to one side as if he were considering it and Severus wondered if his friend had thought of it that way or not. From the intrigued look on his face, it seemed he hadn’t. “That’s a good point, Adrian,” he murmured as he turned back to his meal. “I’ll inform Fudge that we’ll be going. Would you like to accompany us, Adrian?”

“Yes, sir.” Severus was impressed by the composure his son displayed even though he had to be wanting to bounce around in glee. “I’d like that.”

“Done.”

He coughed to disguise his laughter when the boys exchanged grins and congratulatory looks when they thought the adults weren’t looking at them.

* * *

“Ah, Fudge,” Lucius said, holding out his hand as he reached the Minister of Magic who was already in the box at the game. “How are you? I don't think you've met my wife, Narcissa? Or our son, Draco and his friend Adrian Snape?” He also noticed the Weasley family sitting there with the Minister.

Draco and Adrian greeted the Weasley twins with grins as they waited to sit down. He also noticed the boy who’d caused Adrian so much pain sitting there with a strange girl he didn’t know and assumed this was the know-it-all Draco had told him about, Hermione Granger, who was a
Muggleborn witch. It was a few seconds before he realized there was also an Auror standing beside
the Weasley family, probably for Potter.

“How do you do, how do you do?” said Fudge, smiling and bowing to Mrs. Malfoy. “And allow me
to introduce you to Mr. Oblansk - Obalonsk - Mr. - well, he's the Bulgarian Minister of Magic, and
he can't understand a word I'm saying anyway, so never mind. And let's see who else - you know
Arthur Weasley, I daresay?”

It was a tense moment. Arthur and Lucius looked at each other with obvious dislike. Lucius’ cold
gray eyes swept over Arthur, and then up and down the row. “Good lord, Arthur,” he said softly.
“What did you have to sell to get seats in the Top Box? Surely your house wouldn't have fetched this
much? And to bring a convicted delinquent like Potter who needs Aurors to make sure he doesn't
harm others? When I thought you could sink no lower.”

Fudge, who wasn't listening, cut off whatever Arthur would've replied with. “Lucius has just given a
very generous contribution to St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, Arthur. He's
here as my guest.”

“How - how nice,” said Arthur, with a very strained smile.

Lucius’ eyes had returned to Hermione, who went slightly pink, but stared determinedly back at him.
The Malfoys prided themselves on being purebloods; in other words, they considered anyone of
Muggle descent, like Hermione, second-class. However, under the gaze of the Minister of Magic,
Lucius didn't dare say anything. He nodded sneeringly to Arthur and continued down the line to his
seats.

Draco shot Potter, Ron, and Hermione a contemptuous look, though Adrian ignored them, then
settled himself on the other side of his mother so he and Adrian could chat with the twins who’d
moved to sit closer to them. Ginny remained seated beside Hermione, though from the look on her
face, she really wanted to join them.

**

“Slimy gits,” Adrian heard Ron mutter as he, Potter, and Hermione turned to face the field again, but
ignored his comment. He only wanted to cause a scene and Adrian wasn’t going to indulge him by
giving it. Draco opened his mouth to sneer at the red head but Adrian placed a hand on his wrist and
shook his head. Behind them, he noticed a house-elf trembling like a leaf, eyes covered with its
hands, sitting on one of the seats. Saving a seat for someone, he figured with a frown, before
dismissing the little creature.

Next moment, Ludo Bagman charged into the box.

“Everyone ready?” he said, his round face gleaming like a great, excited Chihuahua. “Minister -
ready to go?”

“Ready when you are, Ludo,” Fudge comfortably said.

Ludo whipped out his wand, directed it at his own throat, and said “Sonorus!” and then spoke over
the roar of sound that was now filling the packed stadium; his voice booming into every corner of the
stands.

“Ladies and gentlemen… welcome! Welcome to the final of the four hundred and twenty-second
Quidditch World Cup!”

The spectators screamed and clapped. Thousands of flags waved, adding their discordant national
anthems to the racket. The huge blackboard opposite them was wiped clear of its last message (Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans - A Risk With Every Mouthful!) and now showed BULGARIA: 0, IRELAND: 0.

“And now, without further ado, allow me to introduce… the Bulgarian National Team Mascots!” The right-hand side of the stands, which was a solid block of scarlet, roared its approval.

“I wonder what they've brought,” Fudge asked, leaning forward in his seat. “Aaah! Veela!” The Ministry turned to grin at the people closest to him.

“What are Veela -?” Adrian heard Potter ask Weasley, stopping mid-sentence when a hundred Veela glided out onto the field, and his question was answered for him.

Veela were the most beautiful men and women anyone had ever seen… except that they weren't human. If they were human, their skin wouldn’t shine moon-bright like that, or their white-gold hair wouldn’t fan out behind them without wind.

The one at the front of the line closest to them seemed to jerk slightly at something and began scanning the crowd. When he looked up at their box, his eyes seemed to zero in on Adrian.

His eyebrows rose and he pulled back slightly in confusion. That couldn’t be right. Why would he be the focus of a Veela? It had to be someone else in the box the Veela was looking at… He watched as the Veela’s head turned to look at the one beside it, saying something. That one looked up at the box as well before nodding his head slightly.

This puzzled Adrian for a moment while he tried to guess what exactly could be happening; but then the music started, and Adrian blinked in surprise as he watched the Veela start to dance. It was beautiful dancing, but dancing none the less. Adrian didn’t understand what was so exceptional about…

As the Veela danced faster and faster, he watched in astonishment as Potter rose to his feet, looking like he wanted to jump from the box into the stadium. As he looked around, he realized that a lot of the crowd seemed to be affected by their dancing. He nudged the twins when they shifted dreamily in their seats, bringing them out of whatever enchantment they were under. They smiled gratefully at him as their cheeks pinked slightly in embarrassment.

He wondered why they didn’t affect him the same way… maybe it was because of the creature he had inside him? Looking to his right, he noticed that Draco was also unaffected by the Veela’s dance.

“Harry, what are you doing?” Hermione's voice intruded into Adrian’s confusion.

The music stopped.

Potter seemed to realize he was standing up, and one of his legs was resting on the wall of the box. Next to him, Ron was frozen in an attitude that looked as though he were about to dive from a springboard. Adrian and Draco exchanged looks, laughing at the Gryffindor boys... Despite the fact that Ron had been kicked out of school, Adrian couldn’t help but think of him as a Gryffindor.

Angry yells were filling the stadium. The crowd didn't want the Veela to go. As he and Draco watched, Ron was absentmindedly shredding the shamrocks on his hat. Mr. Weasley, smiling slightly, leaned over to Ron and tugged the hat out of his hands.

“You'll be wanting that,” he said, “once Ireland have had their say.”
“Huh?” said Ron, staring open-mouthed at the Veela, who had now lined up along one side of the field, talking amongst themselves.

Hermione made a loud tutting noise, dragging Adrian’s attention from the Veela puzzle. She reached up and pulled Potter back into his seat. “Honestly!” she huffed in irritation. Adrian hated to admit it but he agreed with her and rolled his eyes at the two boys.

“And now,” roared Ludo Bagman’s voice, “kindly put your wands in the air… for the Irish National Team Mascots!”

Next moment, what seemed to be a great green-and-gold comet came zooming into the stadium. It did one circuit of the stadium then split into two smaller comets, each hurtling toward the goal posts. A rainbow arced suddenly across the field, connecting the two balls of light. The crowd oohed and aahed, as though at a fireworks display. Now the rainbow faded and the balls of light reunited and merged; they had formed a great shimmering shamrock, which rose up into the sky and began to soar over the stands. Something like golden rain seemed to be falling from it -

“Excellent!” yelled Ron as the shamrock soared over them, and heavy gold coins rained from it, bouncing off their heads and seats. Squinting up at the shamrock, Adrian realized that it was actually comprised of thousands of tiny little bearded men with red vests, each carrying a minute lamp of gold or green.

Adrian reached out like Draco was and caught a few of the coins falling down, smiling when he realized they were real coins. Pulling out his wand, Adrian swished in a pattern that gathered the ones on the box floor around them and brought them up to him without having to move. He’d always wanted to try the spell but never had had the chance to do so. He shared them between Draco, himself and the twins, who smiled their thanks.

“Leprechauns!” he heard Mr. Weasley say over the tumultuous applause of the crowd, many of whom were still fighting and rummaging around under their chairs to retrieve the gold.

“There you go,” Weasley yelled happily, stuffing a fistful of gold coins into Potter’s hand. “Now you’ve got to buy me a Christmas present, ha!”

The great shamrock dissolved, the leprechauns drifted down onto the field on the opposite side from the Veela, and settled themselves cross-legged to watch the match.

“And now, ladies and gentlemen, kindly welcome - the Bulgarian National Quidditch Team! I give you - Dimitrov!”

A scarlet-clad figure on a broomstick, moving so fast it was blurred, shot out onto the field from an entrance far below, to wild applause from the Bulgarian supporters.

“Ivanova!”

Zograf! Levski! Vulchanov! Volkov! Aaaaaaad - Krum!”

“That's him, that's him!” Ron yelled, following Krum with his Omnioculars. Adrian and Draco rolled their eyes before turning back to the players. Behind Krum was a kind of screen that showed him in close up.

Viktor Krum was thin, dark, and sallow-skinned, with a large curved nose and thick black eyebrows. He looked like an overgrown bird of prey. It was hard to believe he was only eighteen.

Seven green blurs swept onto the field. These players were the best of all the teams out there. Adrian spun a small dial on the side of his Omniculars and slowed the players down enough to read the word “Firebolt” on each of their brooms and see their names, embroidered in silver, upon their backs. With a sigh, he turned the dial back to normal and put them down until the game began.

“And here, all the way from Egypt, our referee, acclaimed Chair-wizard of the International Association of Quidditch, Hassan Mostafa!”

A small and skinny wizard, completely bald except for a mustache, wearing robes of pure gold to match the stadium, strode out onto the field. A silver whistle was protruding from under the mustache, and he was carrying a large wooden crate under one arm, his broomstick under the other. Adrian watched closely as Mostafa mounted his broomstick and kicked the crate open - four balls burst into the air: the scarlet Quaffle, the two black Bludgers, and (Adrian saw it for the briefest moment, before it sped out of sight) the minuscule, winged Golden Snitch. With a sharp blast on his whistle, Mostafa shot into the air after the balls.


It was Quidditch as Adrian had never seen it played before and he enjoyed every second of it!

* * *

“We'll be spending the night here,” Lucius informed them as he indicated the tent to one side, especially close to Fudge’s, in fact. Wordlessly, they followed Draco’s parents into the tent, looking around in awe at the amount of room inside. It had seemed so small from the outside. There was a house-elf putting around inside, putting food on the table for them. “I have some duties to attend to and expect you boys to listen and behave while I’m gone.”

“Yes, Father,” Draco answered immediately.

“Yes, Uncle Lucius,” Adrian answered as he leaned into Narcissa from the safety of the tent. In here, no one could see them so it was alright to seek comfort from the only mother figure he had. She wrapped an arm around him, rubbing his back in a way that had him relaxing further into her. He’d always liked her hugs. Now was no exception.

Lucius smiled as he laid a hand on both boys’ shoulder. “I’ll be back when I’m done.”

“I think it’s time to eat,” Narcissa murmured when Lucius was gone, leading Adrian over to the table. “By the time you’re done, you two should’ve unwound enough to sleep a bit.”

Caelum had remained at the Manor, hovered over by the army of house-elves while they were here. Adrian could appreciate that, seeing as how much noise there had been here today. It would’ve only aggravated the little boy.

After supper, Adrian and Draco were joking together to take Adrian’s mind off the fact that the cats hadn’t been allowed to come. This was the first time since they’d gotten them that the animals hadn’t been with them. It made it kind of strange.

“Alright, you two,” Narcissa said with a laugh. “Time-”

The boys looked up at her when she stopped mid-sentence. “Aunt Cissa?” Adrian asked, blinking in
confusion as he noticed the look on her face was the same as Potter had had on his face at the start of the game: dreamy. He and Draco looked at each other before they got to their feet. “What’s wrong with her?”

“Nothing is wrong with her,” A voice said from the doorway. Looking over, they saw several Veela standing there watching them, unarmed. “We’ve simply placed her in a temporary stasis. No harm will come to her.”

As they watched, three more came in, keeping their distance from the boys. “What do you want?” Adrian asked, trying to keep the panic from his voice. He frowned as singing came to him, thinking it was coming from outside but the world around him was going slightly fuzzy…

“Come to me, Child of Shadows,” the leader murmured softly, the voice hypnotic when mixed with the singing…

He shook his head, feeling like he was under water, everything becoming sluggish the longer the singing continued. He looked up, feeling his breath catch in his throat as he locked his gaze with the Veela at the door. It became hard to look away, everything slowing down to a crawl…

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Draco watched the Veela warily as they moved further into their tent, seeming to ring the perimeter. It took him a few seconds to realize Adrian was moving… his eyes blank. “Adrian!” he cried out, reaching out for his friend but a hand grabbed hold of him, pulling him back. He shook free but when he tried to step forward again, two Veela stepped in his path, refusing to let him get closer.

He glared at them before turning his attention back to where Adrian was shuffling woodenly forward, becoming aware that someone was singing softly. The leader – the one who had searched out Adrian in the crowd – held a hand out to Adrian but he wasn’t the one singing. It was the two standing behind him who were actually singing, he realized. He didn’t know what was going on but he hoped they didn’t hurt his boyfriend. Adrian had had enough trouble for a long while.

“Get out of my way,” he growled, glaring at the two Veela again as Adrian shuffled closer to the leader but they refused to move, watching him carefully so he didn’t try to get around them.

“Be still, child. We won’t hurt him,” the one behind him growled impatiently.

It seemed like forever before Adrian stood in front of the leader, his hand in the Veela’s as they looked at each other. He could see the leader’s mouth moving but no sound drifted to Draco so he didn’t know what was being said. The leader nodded to the other Veela standing there and four moved forward.

“Draco?” his mother asked in confusion. “What’s going on?”

“I don’t know, Mother,” he told her, glad she was out of whatever the Veela had done to her, not taking his gaze off Adrian.

Draco frowned when his boyfriend fell backwards, caught by the four Veela, eyes closed. At first he thought that maybe they’d hurt him but he noticed that Adrian’s eyes were moving under his eyelids as his head tipped back, lips parted slightly, hands draped across his stomach and chest, as if he were asleep. The Veela bore his weight easily, one of them frowning at how light he seemed to be as they lifted him just below chest height.

The four Veela moved around so that Adrian’s head was towards the leader who leaned closer to Adrian’s forehead, eyes closed and a hand on each side of his friend’s head, lips still moving. Draco
shuddered uncomfortably as the heat inside the tent suddenly began to mount, becoming almost oppressive.

Adrian moaned softly, shuddering slightly as the leader unbuttoned his robes and then his shirt, pulling both off his boyfriend’s body. The clothes were held there by the Veela holding the dark haired boy, however. The leader’s hands slid under the material, allowing the other Veela to release the clothes, one at a time, letting them fall to the floor before their hands returned to their original positions. Draco was surprised to note that they were being extremely gentle with Adrian.

They struggled, however when Adrian suddenly arched up in their hold, whimpering in pain as his wings slowly pulled out of his back, shimmering with the effort… What the hell was going on?! “What in Merlin’s name is going on here?” Lucius Malfoy demanded angrily as he entered the tent just as Adrian cried out, face contorted in agony. Before Draco could warn him, however, the Veela had his father surrounded, glaring warningly at him.

When Lucius looked at him, Draco shook his head slightly before turning to look towards Adrian. The leader hadn’t even paused at the interruption. He heard one of the Veela curse softly as his boyfriend suddenly went limp, panting hard, wings trailing limply to the floor.

The heat became worse, then, making sweat trickle down Draco’s back and bead on his forehead. It took him a few seconds to realize that the Veela holding him were sweating as well, that Adrian’s body seemed to be dripping with sweat… and something else that was oily black and disgusting looking. After a bit, the Veela seemed to be having trouble holding on to Adrian, their hands oily with whatever was dripping from the teen’s body.

Ice cubes appeared out of nowhere and was rubbed gently against Adrian’s lips several times during this process. If the leader felt the heat, he didn’t show it as he spoke against Adrian’s forehead. All of a sudden, the heat melted away as if it had never existed, making the air seem cold at the suddenness of the change.

Adrian sighed peacefully, his wings melting back into him easily.

“It’s done,” the leader murmured with a pleased smile and nodded to the Veela holding Adrian up. They moved over to where the beds were, gently placing him on one of them to sleep. The two Veela guarding Draco moved back before leaving the tent, as did the other Veela… all but the leader.

Draco made his way to his boyfriend, climbing onto the bed with him. Adrian smiled in his sleep, his head turning in his direction.

“What did you do to him?” Lucius demanded coldly, glaring at the Veela leader.

“We helped purify his body. What he had inside him was slowly killing his creature. It needed to be done before the changes of Inheritance takes effect,” the Veela murmured, unfazed by Lucius’ anger. “We’ve done all we can to help.”

When the leader left, they were alone. Draco watched as Lucius moved over to where Adrian’s clothes lay on the floor, frowning down at them. Whatever was on them didn’t come off when he swished his wand over them so he simply vanished them.

Narcissa came over, then, with one of Draco’s extra shirts, helping him put it on the thinner boy. That’s when they became aware of the screaming. Lucius went over to the door to see what was happening and cursed at whatever he saw. "We have to go. Wake Adrian up, Draco."
“Adrian,” Draco whispered in his boyfriend’s ear, watching as Adrian frowned, blinking up at him as he pried his eyes open. “We have to go. Something’s wrong outside.”

“Okay,” Adrian slurred, smiling tiredly. Well that couldn’t be good… Adrian’s eyes closed and he was out again. Draco sighed in annoyance as he tugged the dark haired teen into a sitting position.

Lucius strode over and picked him up easily. “Stay close,” he ordered sternly, leading the way out of their tent, standing still for a moment before he cursed softly. He moved quickly away from the screaming and towards the woods with one glance over his shoulder to make sure Draco and Narcissa was following him.

A blast sounded to their left and Draco fought not to run in the opposite direction like everyone else was. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the Weasleys, Potter and Granger come spilling out of one tent, ducking with the next blast. He caught the twins’ eyes and nodded towards the forest.

Their father was saying something to them but they nodded, grabbed hold of Ginny and ran for the forest. That was as much as Draco saw as they neared the woods in the darkness. “Stay here with Adrian,” his father ordered as Adrian was propped up against a tree between two bushes, which effectively hid him from sight especially when his father’s cloak was thrown around the dark haired teen’s shoulders. “We’ll be back as soon as we find out what’s going on. Stay out of sight,” Lucius said, a hand resting against Draco's cheek and neck.

“Don’t worry about us. We’ll be safe,” Draco told him with a determined nod. His father smiled proudly before he nodded and they were gone. Draco knelt down next to Adrian, pulling his friend against him as he watched the flashes and explosions from beyond the woods.

“What happened to Adrian?” George asked as he suddenly appeared next to them, Fred and Ginny beside him.

“Nothing. I'll explain later. Are you guys alright?”

“Yeah, we got into the woods before the real fighting started,” Fred said with a grim look on his face, looking out at the destruction taking place.

The sound of Ron Weasley yelping in pain stopped whatever else they would've said. Draco looked over to the edge of the woods and rolled his eyes. “Stay with Adrian. I don’t want them finding him unconscious. There’s no telling what those two will do to him while he can’t defend himself.”

The twins nodded and pulled Ginny closer to Adrian to get her out of sight.

“What happened?” he heard Granger say anxiously, stopping so abruptly that Potter walked into her. “Ron, where are you? Oh this is stupid - lumos!” She illuminated her wand and directed its narrow beam across the path. Ron was lying sprawled on the ground.

“Tripped over a tree root,” he said angrily, getting to his feet again.

“Well, with feet that size, hard not to,” Draco drawled from behind them.

He watched as Potter, Weasley, and Granger turned sharply. Draco was standing alone nearby, leaning against a tree, looking utterly relaxed. With his arms folded, he made it seem as if he’d been watching the scene at the campsite through a gap in the trees. It was, of course, all for show.

Weasley told Draco to do something that he knew the red-head would never have dared say in front of Mrs. Weasley.
“Language, Weasley,” he said, his pale eyes glittering. “Hadn't you better be hurrying along, now? You wouldn't like her spotted, would you?” He nodded at Granger, and at the same moment, a blast like a bomb sounded from the campsite, and a flash of green light momentarily lit the trees around them.

“What's that supposed to mean?” Granger said defiantly.

“Granger, they're after Muggles,” Draco said as if that were obvious. He’d caught a glimpse of the muggle family the Death Eaters had been holding aloft like they were balloons. “D'you want to be showing off your knickers in midair? Because if you do, hang around…. they're moving this way, and it would give us all a laugh.”

“Hermione's a witch,” Potter snarled.

“Have it your own way, Potter,” Draco said, grinning maliciously. If they were angry with him, they wouldn’t ask about Adrian. “If you think they can't spot a Mudblood, stay where you are.”

“You watch your mouth!” Weasley shouted. Everybody present knew that “Mudblood” was a very offensive term for a witch or wizard of Muggle parentage.

“Never mind, Ron,” Granger said quickly, seizing Weasley’s arm to restrain him as he took a step toward Draco. He was almost tempted to tell her to let him go. He’d like nothing better than to teach this twerp a lesson on taking on someone who could defend themselves in a fair fight.

There came a bang from the other side of the trees that was louder than anything they had heard. Several people nearby screamed. Draco chuckled softly. “Scare easily, don't they?” he said lazily. “I suppose your daddy told you all to hide? What's he up to - trying to rescue the Muggles?”

“Where're your parents?” Potter demanded, his temper rising. “Out there wearing masks, are they? Or Snape? Hiding in fear? Snape is good at doing that, isn’t he?”

Draco turned his face to Potter, still smiling, hiding his rage at the big bully’s words. “Well… if they were in there with the attackers, I wouldn't be likely to tell you, would I, Potter? As for Adrian, just remember you have to stay away from him, Potter, or... zap!”

“Oh, come on,” said Granger, with a disgusted look at Draco, “let's go and find the others.”

“Keep that big bushy head down, Granger,” Draco sneered maliciously.

“Come on,” Granger repeated, and she pulled Potter and Weasley up the path again.

“I'll bet you anything his dad is one of that masked lot!” Weasley said hotly, not quite out of earshot. Draco sighed in irritation as he rejoined the others, wincing as another blast sounded, this one even closer.

“Are you sure it’s safe here?” Ginny whispered softly, not wanting to be heard.

“As safe as anywhere else,” Fred told her as he put his arm around her protectively. “Don’t worry, it won’t be long now.”

The blast that hit nearly on the other side of their hiding spot finally roused Adrian from whatever stupor he had been under. He still wasn’t completely alert, but at least he wasn’t sleeping anymore. “What's happening?” he asked groggily.

“Death Eaters are attacking the celebration,” Draco told him, moving closer so he could look at him
better. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” Adrian said with a frown. “Like I haven’t slept in days. What happened?”

“The Veela did something to help you. I’ll tell you later, when it’s safe.” They heard screams from somewhere in the woods saying something about the sky. Looking up at it, they became aware of the skull with the snake coming out of its mouth like a tongue. Things were quiet now.

“Think it’s safe enough to come out now?” George asked, peeking around the trunk of the tree.

“Yeah, I reckon it is. Let’s go back to our tent,” Fred said, peeking on the other side. Everything was now dead silent. “Draco, Adrian, we’ll see you in a couple of days.”

“See you guys,” Adrian nodded. When they were gone, he turned to look at Draco. “Do we stay here or do we go find your parents?”

Draco frowned, looking at their surroundings. He conjured a piece of paper and quill. He quickly penned a note saying they’d gone back to the tent and stuck it to the trunk of the tree they’d been told to stay at. “I think it’s better to get you inside. Can you stand?”

Adrian pulled himself to his feet, weaving slightly as a dizzy spell hit him. “What the hell did they do to me?”

“Here, lean on me,” Draco murmured. With Adrian against him, they made their way slowly through the mess that had been tents. He could feel his friend getting tired quickly as they made their way further into the encampment and Draco now wished they’d waited for his parents at the tree. Adrian needed sleep in order to heal from whatever the Veela had cleared him of.

They came up on a figure crying, huddled in the mud.

Adrian stopped him, frowning at the small figure. “Who’s there?” he asked softly. Even to Draco’s ears, his voice sounded weak.

“Winky be here,” they heard then a sniffle. “Oh! What Winky do now?” the house-elf wailed pitifully, the tone telling them it was female.

“What happened Winky?”

Draco vaguely remembered this house-elf. She had been shaking on one of the seats in their box…

“Winky given clothes!!” She wailed loudly, throwing herself back down onto the ground.

“Stop that!” Draco snapped angrily, getting irritated by the noise.

“Winky, if you follow us to our tent, I’ll see if my father will bind you to our service when we get home,” Adrian said, tiredly, panting with the effort of staying upright. “We really need to go.”

“Master would do that?” she asked in surprise and shock. Adrian nodded, sagging against Draco.

“Let’s just go,” Draco growled as he began dragging Adrian towards the direction of their tent.

They hadn't made it far when Adrian made a sound of distress. "I don't feel good, Draco," he whispered weakly.

"Hold on," Draco panted, feeling Adrian's weight increase even more. "We're almost there."
“There you are,” he heard his father say as he came towards them moments later, wearing his cloak, telling Draco his father had gone to the tree to collect them. Draco had never been happier to see him in his entire life. Finally! Help! He was very grateful when Lucius picked Adrian up, taking his weight off him. His boyfriend may be light but after a while, he got heavier and heavier. “Why is there a house-elf in our tent?”

“Adrian claimed her. Seems she was given clothes so he’s going to ask Uncle Sev to help bind her to him,” Draco said when Adrian didn’t answer. Looking at his friend, he realized that he’d passed out again. They went into the tent, meeting Narcissa at the door.

“Thank goodness,” she murmured in relief as she saw them both. “Did he wake up at all?”

“For a little but he was really weak. I hope he’s better tomorrow or Uncle Sev will wonder what we did to him,” Draco told her as he followed his father over to the bed. “Winky,” he ordered as he spied the house-elf in the corner, wringing her hands in worry. “You’ll have to wait until tomorrow for your binding. Just stay there until Adrian wakes up.”

“Yes, Master,” the house-elf whispered, ears drooping worriedly. At least she wasn’t crying anymore.

“Get some sleep, Draco,” Lucius murmured as he pulled a blanket over Adrian. He didn’t even attempt to change him. “It’s going to be an early morning.”

“Yes, Father,” Draco said, crawling onto the bed beside Adrian with a tired sigh. He dragged the blanket over himself as he cuddled up to his boyfriend. He smiled when Adrian sighed and rolled closer to him. He closed his eyes, content that Adrian would be alright.

* * *

“What happened last night?” Severus asked as he frowned at Adrian, who was walking kind of stiffly.

“It seems the Veela decided to help me out,” Adrian said as he groaned, sitting down on the couch. “Seems not everything was taken out with the potions you gave me. I just wish they’d found an easier way of doing it. I feel like I’ve been run over by the Hogwarts Express.”

“And the game?” he asked as he sat across from his son.

“The game was fun. Potter and the Weasleys were there,” he said with a shrug, groaning in pain when Kanen jumped up on the couch and proceeded to lick his face, trying to climb on his lap. “Kanen, you’re too big for me to take on my lap,” he laughed as he dug his fingers into the thick fur. The cat’s eyes nearly crossed in pleasure before he collapsed beside him, head on his lap, purring loudly. “It was actually pretty entertaining when Potter and Weasley tried jumping out of the box when the Veela began dancing. Seems Draco and I are immune to them.”

“Well, at least those two are good for something,” his father smirked. “And after?”

“ Heck if I know,” he said with a shrug. “The Veela came in, I passed out. I remember Draco waking me at one point but it’s kind of hazy. Then I woke up in the woods with the twins, Ginny and Draco. I... huh... kind of acquired a new house-elf.”

“You... acquired?” Severus asked in surprise. “How?”

“We came up on her in the mud after the attack,” Adrian explained with a slightly sheepish smile, hoping his father wasn’t going to be mad at him. “She said she was given clothes and had nowhere
to go so I told her we’d bind her here?”

He watched as his father pinched the bridge of his nose. That wasn’t good. “And where is this house-elf?”

“Winky,” he called out. Instantly, there was a pop at the end of the couch.

Severus’ head snapped up in surprise. “Barty Crouch’s house-elf?”

Adrian shrugged in confusion. He didn’t know this person. “Winky, this is my father, Severus Snape. If he agrees, he’ll bind you to us.”

Winky’s ears perked up. “Master would do that?” she asked hesitantly.

“I need answers first. Why did your last master let you go?” Severus asked sharply.

Winky trembled where she stood, her ears drooping slightly as her eyes grew wide. “Master tell Winky stay in tent. Winky scared and run away.”

Severus’ eyebrow went up at that. “And why should I bind you to my family if you can’t follow orders?” he asked, he held up a hand when Adrian opened his mouth to protest so he clamped it shut again, knowing his father had to make sure about the house-elf’s loyalties.

“Winky not want to be free. Winky wants family,” the house-elf sniffled, tears welling up in her luminous eyes. “Winky rather die than be free.” That last was whispered. “Please, sir, Winky serve good. Always loyal.”

Adrian watched as his father refrained from rolling his eyes and knew he would bind her to their service. “Fine, but she’s yours,” Severus said finally, looking at Adrian sternly. “If anything goes wrong, you’ll deal with it.”

“Thanks, Father.”

The binding only took a few minutes and then Winky was his servant. Just knowing she was bound seemed to do her good. “Change your rags,” Adrian told her. “And keep them spotless.”

“Yes, Master Adrian,” she gushed and then she was gone.

“I hope you know what you’re doing and what you’re getting yourself into.”

“She’ll be alright, Father,” Adrian said dismissively, spying the Daily Prophet on the table. The headline caught his attention.

SCENES OF TERROR AT THE QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

It came complete with a twinkling black-and-white photograph of the Dark Mark over the treetops.

He bit back a groan as he tried to move to grab it, sighed in irritation and used his wand to levitate it to him. “Ministry blunders… culprits not apprehended… lax security… Dark wizards running unchecked… national disgrace…? No wonder you looked worried when I came home. What a load of rubbish! Who wrote this, anyway? Of course… Rita Skeeter.” Adrian rolled his eyes before he scanned the article.

If the terrified wizards and witches who waited breathlessly for news at the edge of the wood expected reassurance from the Ministry of Magic, they were sadly disappointed. A Ministry official emerged some time after the appearance of the Dark Mark, alleging that nobody had been hurt, but
refusing to give any more information. Whether this statement will be enough to quash the rumors that several bodies were removed from the woods an hour later, remains to be seen.

Adrian laughed and groaned as it jarred sore muscles. “What a bat. There were no bodies taken out. Uncle Lucius said this morning that the only damage caused was to the Muggle family the Death Eaters had in the air like some kind of macabre balloon floats.” Adrian shook his head slightly in consternation. “Draco said it looked kind of gross, actually. Especially the two kids.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear that no one was hurt. Does anyone know why they attacked?”

Adrian shrugged. “Uncle Lucius didn’t say but then the investigation is still ongoing. I’m going to go soak for a while,” he murmured as he pushed himself to his feet, trying not to wince. “Maybe then I’ll feel like I’m still human.”

Severus chuckled as he held out a potion for him. “Pour it into your bath. It’ll help.”

“How did you know?” Adrian asked in surprise.

“Lucius sent me a message while you were having breakfast,” his father said with an amused smirk.

Adrian rolled his eyes even as he sighed. “Thank you, Father,” he grumbled faintly. As he passed him by, he dropped a kiss on Severus’ cheek, unable to stay angry with the man. Kanen followed behind him, keeping pace easily. By the time Adrian reached the top of the stairs, he was winded and groaning.

Are you going to be alright? Kanen asked in amusement.

“Gods, I hope so. I’m tired of being in pain,” Adrian said with a tired sigh.

He was pleasantly surprised when he got to his room and a bath had been drawn for him with a cup of warm tea steaming beside it on a high table. Oh, this was going to work out just great! He poured the potion into the hot water, went back into his room to give the potion time to even out in the tub and reached for one of his new books… and frowned at what he found. This wasn’t one of his.

Flipping through it, he was surprised at what was in it. This had to be one of Draco’s because he didn’t remember getting a book on sex… He felt his face heat up just thinking of paying for a book like this.

He slowly walked back into the bathroom, propping the book on the permanent spell he’d tied to the tub. It essentially acted like a table and prop for whatever book he was reading so he didn’t have to worry about accidentally dropping it into the water and ruining it. All he had to do was move his finger in the air as if he were turning a page and the spell magically did it for him so he could keep reading.

It was a spell he’d made up and had actually been surprised when it worked. At Draco’s insistence, he’d done the same to his tub… though his was way bigger than Adrian’s.

He threw his clothes into the hamper and climbed in, moaning at the nice heat that soaked into his sore muscles. Despite the interesting subject of the book, Adrian soon drifted off to sleep, lulled by the hot water.

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He frowned as he became aware of a rough tongue sliding up the side of his face… repeatedly. He turned towards it just in time for the tongue to be dragged from chin to forehead. “Argh! Kanen!!” he
sputtered, glaring at the cat who sat back watching him with a pleased gleam in his eyes. Adrian was sure that if cats had expressions, he’d be smirking at him. As it was, Kanen’s mouth was showing his teeth to him – a cat version of a laugh.

“Well that’s definitely one way to wake up,” Draco drawled in amusement from the doorway. Adrian’s glare transferred to him and realized his boyfriend was laughing at him.

“You could’ve stopped him, you know,” Adrian grumbled as he stirred, pleasantly surprised that his body didn’t hurt anymore, pulling the plug.

“Yeah,” Draco said from where he stood before moving in to grab a towel for him. “But it wouldn’t have been as entertaining,” he laughed, expertly side-stepping the water Adrian flung his way.

“Tell me again why I put up with you?” Adrian grumbled, though he wasn’t angry anymore.

“Because you love me,” Draco quipped flippantly, holding out the towel. Adrian rolled his eyes as he dried himself, draping the towel around his hips. “I see you found my book. What do you think of it?”

Adrian looked over at the book in question and picked it up. “I didn’t get far into it, actually. Did you finish it?”

“I did,” Draco said, shrugging slightly. “The night you came back from Black’s place. I needed something to distract myself so I brought it to read.”

In his room, clothes had been laid out for him and he smiled as he began to pull them on. Yes, he was definitely not regretting taking Winky on as his house-elf. It wasn’t to say that Timzy didn’t do a good job, but he was usually busy doing other things around the Manor.

“What did your father do about Winky?” Draco asked as he dropped down onto the bed, watching Adrian pull his pants on before grabbing his socks.

“He bound her to me. She’s my responsibility now.” Adrian sighed as he straightened up from putting his socks on. “She used to be Barty Crouch’s house-elf, apparently. Why would he let her go just because she didn’t stay in the tent? I mean, wasn’t the tent the worst place to be with all the spells being tossed around?”

“Maybe Crouch hoped she’d be killed?” Draco said with a shrug. “It’s hard to say. From what I heard, that man’s so stiff he makes a walking cane look bent.”

Adrian snickered before he sighed and shook his head, then frowned as something occurred to him, looking over at his friend. “Not that I don’t like it when you visit, but why are you here?”

“Probably,” Draco said, drawing out the word as he rolled his eyes, “because I haven’t spent any time alone with my boyfriend and intent to take advantage of the fact that no one is here demanding our attention?”

Adrian smirked at him, eyebrows rising slightly. “Is that right?” he drawled in amusement, laughing when Draco shoved him back, pinning him down onto the bed. This time, however, Adrian didn’t feel the panic he had when Draco had pinned him down the first time. No, this time, he welcomed it.

Draco leaned down to kiss him… and started laughing as they began sliding off the bed. “Maybe we should move up on the bed, though.” Laughing together, they managed to push themselves further up on the bed so that they could kiss properly without falling to the floor.
Adrian managed to work his hands underneath Draco’s shirt by the time they were interrupted. “Adrian-“ they heard Severus say before he came at a dead stop in the doorway, blinking at them as they looked up at him.

He didn’t even feel embarrassed when his father’s eyebrow rose in amusement but simply smirked at the man as he looked at him upside down. “Yes, Father?” he asked breathlessly.

“I see you’re feeling better.”

Adrian grinned as he looked back at Draco. “Better by the minute.”

Severus snorted and rolled his eyes. “Time for lunch,” his father said before he left them alone.

“It’s too bad he showed up,” Draco murmured in his ear before nibbling on it then rolling off Adrian, feeling pleasantly frustrated. Adrian groaned and mentally cursed his father’s timing. He’d been working himself up to… something. He wasn’t quite sure what that was yet, but his lower body was protesting the end of their fun and he’d wanted to explore it further.

Oh, well, maybe next time. He’d have to finish Draco’s book soon.

With another groan, he sat up in bed and finished getting dressed. Draco hadn’t even given him time to put his shirt on or zip up his pants. He pushed his feet into the shoes on the floor and, hand in hand, he and Draco went downstairs for lunch.

* * *

The rest of the summer was – thankfully – quiet and restful for everyone. Black kept his distance, as promised, Draco and Adrian worked at the pet shop and they all trained with Madreca. In fact, the whole group had even taken on more training in potions, spellwork and Dark Arts.

It was actually nice for a change.

Adrian’s hair had, as agreed, been regrown to its regular length and none of the scars left by Black’s blunder were visible anymore thanks to the talented stylist.

“So!” Anderson said pleasantly at the opening feast, smiling around at them all. “Now that we are all fed, I must once more ask for your attention, while I give out a few notices.” A respectful silence fell over the Great Hall. “Mr. Filch, the caretaker, has asked me to tell you that the list of objects forbidden inside the castle has this year been extended to include Screaming Yo-yos, Fanged Frisbees, and Ever-Bashing Boomerangs. The full list comprises some four hundred and thirty-seven items, I believe, and can be viewed in Mr. Filch’s office, if anybody would like to check it.”

The corners of Anderson’s mouth twitched in amusement, knowing how Filch was hated by the students. “As ever, I would like to remind you all that the forest on the grounds is out-of-bounds to students, as is the village of Hogsmeade to all below third year. It is also my painful duty to inform you that the Inter-House Quidditch Cup will not take place this year.”

“What?” Adrian asked in surprise. He looked around at his fellow team members of the Quidditch team. They were all gaping in shock. Quidditch, as far as Adrian knew, had never been cancelled before.

“This is due to an event that will be starting in October,” the Headmaster continued, looking at everyone. “And continue throughout the school year, taking up much of the teachers’ time and energy - but I am sure you will all enjoy it immensely. I have great pleasure in announcing that this year, Hogwarts is to have the honor of hosting a very exciting event over the coming months, an
event that has not been held for over a century. It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Triwizard Tournament will be taking place at Hogwarts this year."

“You're JOKING!” said Fred Weasley loudly.

“I am not joking, Mr. Weasley,” Anderson said, grinning at the shock on the older students’ faces. “Some of you wouldn’t know what this tournament involves, so I hope those who do know will forgive me for giving a short explanation, and allow their attention to wander freely. The Triwizard Tournament was first established some seven hundred years ago as a friendly competition between the three largest European schools of wizardry: Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang.

“A champion was selected to represent each school, and the three champions competed in three magical tasks. The schools took it in turns to host the tournament once every five years, and it was generally agreed to be a most excellent way of establishing ties between young witches and wizards of different nationalities… until, that is, the death toll mounted so high that the tournament was discontinued.

“There have been several attempts over the centuries to reinstate the tournament, none of which has been very successful. However, our own departments of International Magical Cooperation and Magical Games and Sports have decided the time is ripe for another attempt. We have worked hard over the summer to ensure that this time no champion will find him or herself in mortal danger.

“The heads of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang will be arriving with their short-listed contenders in October, and remaining with us for the greater part of this year. I know that you will all extend every courtesy to our foreign guests while they are with us, and will give your whole-hearted support to the Hogwarts champion when he or she is selected. The selection of the three champions will take place at Halloween. An impartial judge will decide which students are the most worthy to compete for the Triwizard Cup, the glory of their school, and a thousand Galleons personal prize money.”

“I'm going for it!” Fred Weasley hissed down the table, his face lit with enthusiasm at the prospect of such glory and riches. He was not the only person who seemed to be visualizing himself as the Hogwarts champion. At every House table, Adrian could see people either gazing raptly at Anderson, or else whispering fervently to their neighbors. But then Anderson spoke again, and the Hall quieted once more.

“Eager though I know all of you will be to bring the Triwizard Cup to Hogwarts,” he said, “the heads of the participating schools, along with the Ministry of Magic, have agreed to impose an age restriction on contenders this year. Only students who are of age - that is to say, seventeen years or older - will be allowed to put forward their names for consideration. This -” Anderson raised his voice slightly, for several people had made noises of outrage at these words, and the Weasley twins were suddenly looking furious - “is a measure we feel is necessary, given that the tournament tasks will still be difficult and dangerous, whatever precautions we take, and it is highly unlikely that students below sixth and seventh year will be able to cope with them. I will personally be ensuring that no underage student hoodwinks our impartial judge into making them Hogwarts champion. Therefore I beg you not to waste your time submitting yourself if you are under seventeen. That will be all. Everyone have a good night."

There was a great scraping and banging as all the students got to their feet and swarmed toward the double doors into the entrance hall. George and Fred glared at the door Anderson had left by before they turned to follow the rest of their table out. “They can't do that!” George growled angrily. “We're seventeen in April, why can't we have a shot?”

“They're not stopping me entering,” Potter growled as they got close to the doors. Adrian rolled his eyes in exasperation. Of course, Potter would want to get into the tournament… “The champions'll
get to do all sorts of stuff you'd never be allowed to do normally. And a thousand Galleons prize money!

“Yeah,” said Dean, a faraway look on his face. “Yeah, a thousand Galleons…”

“Come on,” Hermione said, “we’ll be the only ones left here if you don't move.”

Their voices faded as they moved away from the group and Adrian was glad for it. Beside him, Kanen snorted in amusement. I doubt that one would survive the tournament if what I heard is true. Even what you read to me makes the hair on my back stand on end. I'm glad you can't enter the tournament.

“Who says I would if I could?” Adrian murmured softly, not wanting to be heard over the noise of the other students.

Fred and George, however, were debating the ways in which Anderson might stop those who were under seventeen from entering the tournament.

“Who's this impartial judge who's going to decide who the champions are?” Adrian asked curiously, loud enough for the others to hear.

“Dunno,” said Fred, “but it's them we'll have to fool. I reckon a couple of drops of Aging Potion might do it, George…”

“Anderson knows you're not of age, though,” Blaise said with a shrug.

“Yeah, but he's not the one who decides who the champion is, is he?” Fred said shrewdly. “Sounds to me like once this judge knows who wants to enter, he'll choose the best from each school and never mind how old they are. Anderson's trying to stop us giving our names.”

“People have died, though,” Pansy said with a frown on her face as they walked down the stairs towards the Dungeons.

“Yeah,” Fred said airily, “but that was years ago, wasn't it? Anyway, where's the fun without a bit of risk? Hey, Adrian, what if we find out how to get 'round Anderson? Fancy entering?”

“No, thanks,” Adrian said with a decisive shake of his head. “I know enough about this tournament that I definitely don’t want to enter it. Besides, Father would kill me if I actually did.”

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Soon, October arrived, thankfully without confrontations from Potter, and everyone eagerly awaited the unveiling of the Goblet of Fire and to see who would be here from the other two European magical schools. Supper couldn’t come fast enough and the day seemed to drag by because of it. Eventually, supper arrived and everyone settled down to await the schools’ introductions.

Draco and Adrian laughed at the looks of lust on every male face in the room as the Beauxbatons ladies came into the room, unaffected for the most part. They may be in a relationship, but it didn’t mean they didn’t appreciate beauty when they saw it.

They were awed when Durmstrang produced their students. Adrian knew this school had been better rounded in its education than Hogwarts, but not anymore. They could now rival the Bolivian school, easily, now that they had more classes in various subjects.

The students from Beauxbatons chose seats at the Ravenclaw table. They were looking around the
Great Hall with glum expressions on their faces. Three of them were still clutching scarves and shawls around their heads.

Krum and his fellow Durmstrang students were still gathered around the main doors, apparently unsure about where they should sit. "Why don’t you sit with us at the Slytherin table?" Adrian said when he realized several students had passed by them and not even offered them seats at their tables. Draco smirked and nodded.

"Thank you," Krum murmured with a slight smile as he and his fellow Durmstrang students followed them to their table and settled themselves down. He saw several of them cast looks at Kanen and Kaida but didn’t comment at having animals in the Great Hall. Adrian could see Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle looking very smug about this and realized they were looking across the room at something. Seemed Potter and his cronies were sitting, glaring at them. Well, they should’ve invited them if they wanted the students to sit there.

The Durmstrang students were pulling off their heavy furs and looking up at the starry black ceiling with expressions of interest; a couple of them were picking up the golden plates and goblets and examining them, apparently impressed.

Up at the staff table, Filch, the caretaker, was adding chairs. He was wearing his moldy old tailcoat in honor of the occasion. Adrian was surprised to see that he added four chairs, two on either side of Anderson’s.

"But there are only two extra people," Adrian murmured with a frown. "Why's Filch putting out four chairs, who else is coming?"

Draco shrugged, unconcerned with what happened at the front of the room. His boyfriend turned and struck up a conversation with the new students, speaking to them in their native language. Adrian smirked as he listened to their conversation. He was glad, now, that his father had insisted that he learn other languages.

When all the students had entered the Hall and settled down at their House tables, the staff entered, filing up to the top table and taking their seats. Last in line were Professor Anderson, Professor Karkaroff, and Madame Maxime.

When their Headmistress appeared, the pupils from Beauxbatons leapt to their feet. A few of the Hogwarts students laughed but Adrian understood why they stood. It was respect for their Headmistress. The Beauxbatons party appeared quite unembarrassed at the laughter, however, and did not resume their seats until Madame Maxime had sat down on Anderson’s left-hand side. Anderson remained standing, and a silence fell over the Great Hall.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, ghosts and - most particularly - guests,” Anderson said, smiled welcomingly around at the foreign students. “I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to Hogwarts. I hope and trust that your stay here will be both comfortable and enjoyable.”

One of the Beauxbatons girls still clutching a muffler around her head gave what was unmistakably a derisive laugh. Obviously those ones were used to a warmer climate. They’d get used to it eventually.

"The tournament will be officially opened at the end of the feast,” Anderson said. “I now invite you all to eat, drink, and make yourselves at home!” He sat down, and Adrian saw Karkaroff lean forward at once and engage him in conversation.

The plates in front of them filled with food as usual. The house-elves in the kitchen seemed to have
pulled out all the stops; there was a greater variety of dishes in front of them, including several that were definitely foreign.

The Great Hall seemed somehow much more crowded than usual, even though there were barely twenty additional students there; perhaps it was because their differently colored uniforms stood out so clearly against the black of the Hogwarts’ robes. Now that they had removed their furs, the Durmstrang students were revealed to be wearing robes of a deep blood-red.

Eventually, the two remaining empty seats were filled by two men and Adrian realized he knew them. He’d seen them at the Quidditch game. Ludo Bagman was now sitting on Professor Karkaroff’s other side, while a severe looking older man was sitting next to Madame Maxime.

“What are they doing here?” Adrian asked in surprise.

“They organized the Trivizard Tournament,” Krum said from across the table from Draco. “Did they not? I suppose they wanted to be here to see it start.”

Adrian shrugged in acknowledgement before going back to his supper. It made sense, he guessed. When the second course arrived they noticed a number of unfamiliar desserts too. Adrian examined an odd sort of pale blancmange closely. He took a small piece to try. He always liked trying new thing… sort of.

Once the golden plates had been wiped clean, Anderson stood up again. A pleasant sort of tension seemed to fill the Hall now. Adrian felt a slight thrill of excitement, wondering what was coming. Several seats down from them, Fred and George were leaning forward, staring at Anderson with great concentration.

“The moment has come,” Anderson said, smiling around at the sea of upturned faces. “The Triwizard Tournament is about to start. I’d like to say a few words of explanation before we bring in the casket just to clarify the procedure that we’ll be following this year. But first, let me introduce, for those who do not know them, Mr. Bartemius Crouch, Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation” - there was a smattering of polite applause - “and Mr. Ludo Bagman, Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports.” Adrian and Draco exchanged a look as they realized this was who had been Winky’s last master, the one who had probably hoped she’d be killed in the attack last summer.

There was a much louder round of applause for Bagman than for Crouch, perhaps because of his fame as a Beater, or simply because he looked so much more likable. He acknowledged it with a jovial wave of his hand. Bartemius Crouch did not smile or wave when his name was announced. His toothbrush mustache and severe parting looked very odd but suited the man perfectly.

“Mr. Bagman and Mr. Crouch have worked tirelessly over the last few months on the arrangements for the Triwizard Tournament,” Anderson continued, “and they’ll be joining Professor Karkaroff, Madame Maxime and I on the panel that’ll judge the champions’ efforts.”

At the mention of the word “champions,” the attentiveness of the listening students seemed to sharpen. Maybe Anderson had noticed their sudden stillness because he smiled as he said, “The casket, then, if you please, Mr. Filch.”

Filch, who had been lurking unnoticed in a far corner of the Hall, now approached Anderson carrying a great wooden chest encrusted with jewels. It looked extremely old. A murmur of excited interest rose from the watching students.

“The instructions for the tasks the champions will face this year have already been examined by Mr.
Crouch and Mr. Bagman,” Anderson said as Filch placed the chest carefully on the table before him, “and they have made the necessary arrangements for each challenge. There will be three tasks, spaced throughout the school year, and they’ll test the champions in many different ways: their magical prowess - their daring - their powers of deduction - and, of course, their ability to cope with danger.”

At this last word, the Hall was filled with a silence so absolute that nobody seemed to be breathing.

“As you know, three champions compete in the tournament,” Anderson went on calmly, “one from each of the participating schools. They’ll be marked on how well they perform each of the Tournament tasks and the champion with the highest total after task three will win the Triwizard Cup. The champions will be chosen by an impartial selector: the Goblet of Fire.”

Anderson now took out his wand and tapped three times upon the top of the casket. The lid creaked slowly open. The Headmaster reached inside it and pulled out a large, roughly hewn wooden cup. It would have been entirely unremarkable had it not been full to the brim with dancing blue-white flames.

Anderson closed the casket and placed the goblet carefully on top of it, where it would be clearly visible to everyone in the Hall.

“And any who wish to submit themselves as champion must write their name and school clearly upon a slip of parchment and drop it into the goblet,” Anderson said. "Aspiring champions have twenty-four hours in which to put their names forward. Tomorrow night, Halloween, the goblet will return the names of the three it has judged most worthy to represent their schools. The goblet will be placed in the entrance hall tonight, where it’ll be freely accessible to all those wishing to compete.

“Finally, I wish to impress upon any of you wishing to compete that this tournament is not to be entered into lightly. Once a champion has been selected by the Goblet of Fire, he or she is obliged to see the tournament through to the end. The placing of your name in the goblet constitutes a binding magical contract. There can be no change of heart once you have become a champion. Please be very sure, therefore, that you are wholeheartedly prepared to play before you drop your name into the goblet. Now, I think it’s time for bed. Good night to you all.”
Chapter 10 - Tournament Gone Wrong

A/N: There are several parts in this chapter that was taken from JK Rowling’s book. I’ve tweak them a little to fit the story but felt it was best to mention it anyway. This should be the last chapter that I have to do that with, actually. Enjoy!

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 10 – Tournament Gone Wrong

In the Slytherin common room, Draco realized that Adrian wasn’t really participating in the discussions. In fact, he seemed to be staring thoughtfully into the flames. “What’s wrong?” he asked, pulling his boyfriend back to lean against him.

Adrian sighed, allowing himself to be re-positioned, but shook his head. “Later.”

“I know what we can do to make this night livelier,” Pansy said with a mischievous look in her eyes. “Let’s play a game!”

“What kind of game?” Blaise asked, looking interested.

“Truth or dare? Or I never?” she said with a shrug. “Does it make much difference?”

“Let’s play truth or dare,” Marcus Flint said with a gleam in his eyes. Draco didn’t like the way the older boy had of watching Adrian this year. It seemed Kanen was of the same mind because his head came up to glare at the boy. Of course, Marcus Flint looked the same way at any of the boys of Adrian’s build…

“Sure,” Fred said with a bored shrug. “It’ll be better than doing nothing. You playing, Adrian? Draco?”

“No,” Adrian murmured, shaking his head before getting to his feet. “Coming, Kanen?”

The cat pulled himself off the floor and padded quietly after his owner. Draco sighed, wondering what was going through his boyfriend’s mind now. He declined playing, following behind Adrian, who had headed to their dorm room.

“What’s wrong, Adrian?” he asked as he sat beside the dark haired teen, watching him closely. He’d gotten rid of his robes before climbing on his bed. Now, Adrian’s head was resting on his knees as he looked out the window.

With a flick of his wand, Adrian cast a strong Silencing spell around his bed. “What happened with the Veela?” he asked finally, turning to look at him. “You never did explain.”

“After you came back from Black, you were full of different ingredients,” he began, having finally understood what the Veela had done when he’d seen all that stuff being sweated out of Adrian. “Uncle Sev gave you potions to get rid of them but you never tried using your wings after that, did you?”

Adrian shook his head.

“It seems that not all the ingredients were flushed from your system,” Draco began, remembering what the Veela had done that night after the Quidditch match. “I guess some of them were still
swimming inside you. It was slowly killing your creature. What they did - however they did it – it
took it all out of you. I watched as your wings were forced to come out. At first, I thought they were
hurting you, but your wings were taking a long time to come out. Not like before when they'd come
out quickly. By the time they were done, your wings looked healthier and retracted at a normal
speed.”

“That was why I was so sore the next day, then,” Adrian murmured, nodding as things began to
make sense. “I wondered about that and had guessed at some.”

“Is that all that’s wrong?”

“No,” Adrian said and this time there was a cunning look on his face that made Draco wary. “We
never did repeat what my father interrupted.”

Draco blinked in surprise before he started to laugh. “Well, we’re going to have to fix that, aren’t
we?” he murmured seductively, moving over Adrian, forcing him to lie down onto the bed. With a
flick of his wand, his boyfriend slid the curtains shut, blocking everything out… everything but the
big window on the other side of Adrian’s bed.

“I’ve wanted to do this in sight of this window since right after Halloween last year,” Adrian
whispered softly before their lips met in a heated kiss.

Draco knew Adrian still hadn’t finished the book he’d found in his room though he figured he’d
probably read more than half of it by now. He wondered dimly if his boyfriend had read enough to
expect what he was about to try…

Draco groaned as he pushed down against Adrian’s hips with his own, trying to get even closer and
meeting up with Adrian’s half hard erection. At the first touch, Adrian gasped in surprise, arching up
in pleasure, breaking the kiss. “Oh!”

“Like that?” Draco panted as he pushed up again, thrusting up into the boy lying under him,
watching his reaction for a bit. He saw the surprise and the wonder in his boyfriend’s eyes as he
rubbed against him.

“I-” Adrian gasped before moaning, eyes wide as he moved against him without thought. With a
wicked smile on his face, Draco bent down and his lips latched onto his boyfriend’s arched neck.
“Draco!”

Now they were both very hard and they strained to make contact with each other. He shifted on the
bed so he could arch his hips up into Draco’s even as Draco wrapped his fingers in Adrian’s hair and
held his head still so he could claim his lips again.

Draco slid his tongue into the wet cavern of Adrian’s mouth and set out to explore its depths. Adrian
moaned low in his throat as their mouths met in the hungry kiss and he savored his taste and the
feeling of warmth and pleasure it brought.

Soon, it wasn’t enough. He frowned as he pressed harder against Adrian. When his boyfriend’s legs
opened to wrap around his waist, they both cried out in pleasure as it pushed their hard lengths
together in a way neither had realized they had been craving.

Draco was drowning in the sensations, enjoying Adrian’s kisses but craving the pressure between
them more as he pressed down harder, groaning as it build up to… something. His fingers were now
twined in Adrian’s hair not allowing him to pull away even if he had wanted to. They were pressed
against each other with no room to spare.
He spare a brief thought of regret that there were far too many layers between them, but it didn’t last long, because despite the clothes he could feel the hot, hard length of Adrian’s cock pressing against his own pulsing erection. It felt damn good as they rubbed against each other trying to generate more of the friction that was engulfing them both in such pleasurable sensations.

He felt Adrian’s hands under his shirt and realized his boyfriend had tugged his shirt out of the waistband of his trousers then slid his fingers underneath the material. The smooth, soft skin of his hands slid around the hard muscles of Draco’s chest.

As his fingers found and slid across Draco’s nipples, Draco pulled away from his mouth so he could gasp for much needed air. The sensations were incredible and he could tell Adrian was enjoying the feel of Draco’s skin under his wandering hands. He leaned up and tease the length of Draco’s neck even as his hands gently teased his sensitive nipples.

Draco pressed into Adrian even more; his head flung back to make things easier for his boyfriend to worship his neck and pressed his hips harder into Adrian’s.

“Oh gods, this feels so good, Adrian,” Draco moaned. He felt lost to sensation and was sure that was about all the coherency he had left.

“I can’t…” Adrian begged breathlessly as his head tipped back as it fell to the bed, exposing his throat to Draco this time. “Oh, please…” Draco wondered if he even knew what he was begging for, but the thought didn’t linger long.

The pleading and the sounds Adrian was making along with the pressure against his own erection was doing something to him. Looking down at the boy under him, he gave in to the impulse and licked his way up the arched neck to gently suck on the lobe of Adrian’s ear. “This feels so good,” he whispered in a seductive voice, barely recognizing it as his own. He groaned, hips rocking fast as the pressure built further.

He knew something had to give soon, but he wasn’t sure what that meant… until he felt something inside him let go and he arched his hips into Adrian’s, feeling liquid erupt from his cock. Adrian arched with him, crying out, too. Draco felt warm liquid soak through both their pants and he gasped in pleasure, collapsing on top of Adrian.

They were both panting and trying to catch their breath.

“That,” Adrian panted in wonder. “That was... wow,” he whispered in his ear. Not really wanting to break the spell they seemed to be under, Draco pulled back and gave him a lingering kiss, smiling gently down at the awe that was in Adrian’s eyes.

“Yeah,” Draco said, still panting slightly. “But next time, maybe we should try this without so many clothes.”

Adrian laughed, wrapping his arms around Draco’s back, pulling him closer.

* * *

The next morning, being a Sunday, some of the students were sitting in the Great Hall eating breakfast. Adrian kept looking at Fred and George with an unreadable look on his face. He worried for his friends, knowing they only wanted to put their names in the Goblet of Fire because they wanted the money to start a business. He couldn’t help but think that something would go wrong, however, if they succeeded.

“What?” Fred finally asked, coming to sit beside him. George stood beside him, watching Adrian
with a frown.

“Don’t do it,” he said finally, frowning as the twins looked at each other before looking back at him. “Don’t put your names in the goblet. I know you want to do this so you can start a business but I have a better way.”

“How so, Adrian?” George asked, face serious for once in his life. “There’s no other way to get money like that.”

“Actually, there is,” Adrian whispered, turning so he was facing them, leaning closer so it was more private. It meant being rude to the Drumstrang students, but there were enough students keeping them occupied that it wouldn’t be as bad. “I’ve been thinking of this since you two showed interest in this tournament.”

“Go on,” Fred said, leaning closer while George knelt beside his brother.

“What if I give you the start-up money you need?” Adrian saw the hesitant looks on the boys’ faces. He knew they didn’t like charity but this was helping friends out, not charity. Aside from Draco, these two were his oldest friends and they treated him like a brother. He’d never had siblings, but he figured this was what they would do for each other.

“I don’t know, Adrian,” Fred murmured with a shake of his head.

“We don’t really want to owe you if this doesn’t pan out,” George added with a shrug.

“Then consider this an early investment. If you don’t make it, so what,” he said with a dismissive shrug. “I have more than enough money to do this and it’ll help you guys out. I might even have a lead on a building once you decide to start an actual physical business. Father’s been teaching me about the family finances and I pretty much know everything we own by now. I may not be ready to take over from him, but that’s alright. I don’t want to anyway.”

The twins were still hesitant, though.

“Think about it, at least, before you do anything drastic,” he begged, pleading with them to at least do that much.

The twins looked at each other and nodded, sighing softly. “Alright, we’ll think about it.”

“Thanks,” Adrian said with a small smile. “That’s all I can ask.” Afterwards, Adrian stopped the Headmaster as he went by their table. "Sir, I was wondering if you'd read up on the Tri-Wizard tournament before the start of the year."

"I have," the Headmaster murmured pleasantly. "Why do you ask?"

"When Father told me about the tournament taking place this year, I bought a book on all different kinds of tournaments held in the wizarding world. There is a way of getting around not competing."

"I am aware of that, Adrian," the Headmaster said with a smile. "But can you imagine how many people would put their names in the cup if they knew they could back out at any time? If we tell them that they have to compete, then they're more likely to think carefully before putting their names in it. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, sir. I just wondered." Adrian nodded his thanks, realizing that his friends hadn't heard their quiet conversation. Perhaps it was for the best?
Draco hated Halloween… especially when it landed on a weekday like this year… Monday of all days!

It made everything so much longer than usual because Adrian couldn’t sit still. This year, they couldn’t take him out to the Quidditch pitch to work it out of his system either, not with classes going on. The Halloween feast was even worse! It was pure torture!

The Drumstrang students didn’t know what to make of Adrian either. Of course, it could also be that, like everyone else in the Hall – judging by the constantly craning necks, the impatient expressions on every face, the fidgeting, and the standing up to see whether Anderson had finished eating yet – they all simply wanted the plates to clear and to hear who had been selected as champions.

After what felt like forever, the plates were cleared and there was a sharp upswing in the level of noise within the Hall, which died away almost instantly as Headmaster Anderson got to his feet. On either side of him, Headmaster Karkaroff and Madame Maxime looked as tense and as expectant as everyone. Mr. Bagman was beaming and winking at various students. Mr. Crouch, however, looked quite uninterested, almost bored.

“Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision,” Anderson said loudly enough for everyone to hear him. “I guess that it needs a minute more to make its decision. Now, when the champions' names are called, I would ask them to please to come up to Head Table and go through into the next chamber,” the Headmaster said, indicating the door behind said table, “where they’ll receive their first instructions.”

He took out his wand and gave a great sweeping wave. At once, all the candles except those in the carved pumpkins were extinguished, plunging the room into a state of semi-darkness. The Goblet of Fire now shone more brightly than anything in the whole Hall, the sparkling bright, blue-whiteness of the flames almost painful on the eyes. Everyone watched, waiting breathlessly… A few kept checking their watches…

The flames inside the goblet suddenly turned red. Sparks began to fly from it. The next moment, a tongue of flame shot into the air, a charred piece of parchment fluttered out of it causing the whole room to gasp in surprise and anticipation.

Anderson caught the piece of parchment and read it by the light of the flames, which had turned back to blue-white now. “The champion for Durmstrang,” he read, in a strong, clear voice, “will be Viktor Krum.”

“No surprises there!” someone yelled as a storm of applause and cheering swept the Hall. The Slytherins smirked as Viktor Krum rose from their table and walked confidently toward Anderson; he turned right, walked along the Head Table, and disappeared into the next chamber.

“Bravo, Viktor!” Karkaroff boomed so loudly that everyone could hear him, even over all the applause. “I knew you had it in you!” Draco knew Adrian didn’t like that man. Heck, even he didn’t like him. He didn’t… feel right. Something was definitely off. Every time you looked at the man, he always had a smug look, like Dumbledore used to have, like everything was a joke and only he knew about it.

The clapping and chatting died down. Everyone's attention was focused again on the goblet, which, seconds later, turned red once more. A second piece of parchment shot out of it, propelled by the flames.
“The champion for Beauxbatons is…” Anderson said as he turned the parchment over in his hands. “Fleur Delacour!”

The girl who so resembled the Veela from last summer’s Quidditch game got gracefully to her feet, shook back her sheet of silvery blonde hair, and swept up between the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables.

“Oh look, they’re all disappointed,” Hermione said in amusement over the noise from where she sat at the table across them, nodding toward the remainder of the Beauxbatons party. ‘Disappointed’ was a bit of an understatement, Draco thought with a roll of his eyes. Two of the girls who had not been selected had dissolved into tears and were sobbing with their heads on their arms.

When Fleur Delacour, too, had vanished into the side chamber, silence fell again, but this time it was a silence so stiff with excitement you could almost taste it. The Hogwarts champion was next!

And the Goblet of Fire turned red once more; sparks showered out of it; the tongue of flame shot high into the air, and from its tip Anderson caught the third piece of parchment. “The Hogwarts champion is…” he called out loudly, “Cedric Diggory!”

The uproar from the Hufflepuff table was too great. Every single one of them had jumped to his or her feet, screaming and stamping, as Cedric made his way past them, grinning broadly, and headed off toward the chamber behind the teachers’ table. Indeed, the applause for Cedric went on so long that it was some time before the Headmaster could make himself heard again.

“Excellent!” Anderson called happily as at last the clamour died down. “Well, we now have our three champions. I’m sure I can count upon all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. By cheering your champion on, you’ll contribute in a very real –”

But Anderson suddenly stopped speaking as some of the teachers stared over his shoulder, two of them actually walking down the steps, the confusion clear on their faces. The Potions master was one of them and it was apparent to everybody what had distracted them. The Headmaster whipped around to look at the goblet. The fire in it had just turned red again. Sparks were flying out of it. A long flame shot suddenly into the air, and borne upon it was another piece of parchment.

Automatically, it seemed, Anderson reached out and seized the parchment. He held it out and stared at the name written upon it like he’d been petrified. There was a long pause, during which Anderson stared at the slip in his hands, and everyone in the room stared at Anderson before he cleared his throat and read out…

“Harry Potter.”

There was no applause.

A buzzing, as though angry bees had made their way into the Great Hall, was starting to fill the Hall; some students were standing up to get a better look at Potter as he sat, unsurprised, in his seat. Draco thought he caught a slight look of triumph before it was gone. It happened so fast that he doubted what he’d seen. Had the boy tampered with the goblet somehow? Had someone else done it for him?

Up at the top table, Karkaroff began to sputter angrily. Madame Maxime’s mouth opened and closed, unable to produce sound, she was so stunned. Potter, however, turned to look at Dean Thomas. Beyond his new partner in crime, Draco saw the long Gryffindor table all watching him, open-mouthed.
Draco could see Potter say something to Thomas but couldn’t make out what was said. He could see the anger begin to fill Thomas’ eyes, as if Potter had betrayed him or something. At the top table, Professor Anderson had straightened up, looking through the crowd for Potter.

“Harry Potter!” he called again, clearly angry but trying to hide it. “Harry! Up here, if you please!”

Potter got to his feet and set off up the gap between the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables. You could feel the shift in the mood of everyone in the room. It wasn’t good. Draco was sure Potter could feel hundreds and hundreds of eyes upon him, but it didn’t look like it was bothering him one bit. The buzzing grew louder and louder, until you could hear words like ‘cheater’, ‘he’s underage’ and ‘get away with it’. Draco didn’t envy him one bit, but it served him right. Maybe he’d get what he’d wanted all along…

“Well…” Anderson said, clearly at a loss at what to do as he held put the piece of parchment. He wasn't smiling. “Through the door, Mr. Potter.”

Potter accepted the paper from the Headmaster and Adrian laughed and shook his head. Draco knew that by accepting the parchment, Potter had just accepted the binding contract of the goblet. This proved that the kid had somehow had something to do with it. If he’d only refused the name, then he wouldn’t be bound to the games as he was now. Everyone watched as Potter disappeared through the door where the other champions had gone.

“I guess we won’t have to worry about him again,” Draco drawled in amusement as he rose to his feet.

“I almost feel sorry for him,” Adrian said with a sigh. “From what I saw, even Thomas is against him now.”

“Good, it’s about time he got back what he dishes out,” Blaise said with a nod.

Adrian shook his head but didn’t comment as they walked down to the Dungeons where assignments were waiting to be completed. Nothing like a tournament to turn everything upside down in a school.

* * *

“Professor,” Adrian asked softly one day after class. Technically, he didn’t have Lupin as a teacher this year, but he’d made his way to his classroom with Kanen anyway during a break, telling Draco he’d see him at their next class. “Can we talk?”

“Of course, Adrian,” Lupin said pleasantly, gesturing for him to follow behind him. When they were settled with a cup of tea, Lupin stared at him, waiting patiently.

“I was wondering why you didn’t stop Black when he had me in his home,” Adrian said finally, putting his cup down on the table, untouched.

Lupin sighed as he stared into his own cup, probably wondering how to answer this. “When Sirius contacted me, asking me to come over that first day, I had no idea he’d taken you. I tried to talk him into taking you back, but it was like he was possessed or something. Nothing I told him seemed to register with him. All he could say was ‘James’ son’ this or ‘James’ son’ that.”

The Professor sighed again, shaking his head sadly. “Then I got an urgent note saying someone needed to talk to me, so I left, hoping to come back and Sirius would’ve come to his senses and taken you back. When I came back the next day, he told me he’d cut your hair so you’d see you were James’ son and not Severus’. I told him I had to see you but he refused to give me access to the
room. He’d locked it magically so you wouldn’t get out and only he could go in.”

“So then you did try to get me out?” Adrian asked hesitantly. He hadn’t wanted to believe that this man, who’d professed to like him all last year, had abandoned him to Sirius’ whims on purpose.

“Yes, Adrian,” Lupin said with a sad smile. “I tried everything I could think of to break his Locking spell but he used something I’d never seen before. I spent quite a lot of time in the Black library when he was sleeping. It took me five days to finally find what he’d used. When I finally got into the room and saw how bad you were, I knew I had to get you out of there, even if it cost me my friendship with Sirius. I knew you didn’t deserve what he was doing to you.”

“At least you got me out,” Adrian whispered with a shaky smile, feeling tears gather in his eyes. “I’m going to go, sir. Thanks for talking to me about this.”

“Adrian,” Lupin said, stopping him at the door. “Anytime you want to talk, I’m here.” Adrian nodded, his back to Lupin, before he walked out of the office with Kanen. He didn’t think he’d be able to face the man without breaking down just yet, memories of his time with Black flooding through his mind.

He managed to find an empty room before the tears slid down his face, sliding down the wall to bury his face in Kanen’s fur. **Now you know he didn’t leave you there on purpose,** Kanen murmured, curling a paw around Adrian’s back in comfort. **But maybe we shouldn’t stay here. I don’t like it when the others aren’t around. Potter or any other Gryffindor usually like to attack you when you’re by yourself.**

“You’re right,” Adrian whispered, rubbing his face to erase the signs of his tears before they continued down the stairs. Instead of going to the common room, however, he turned and headed for his father’s quarters. The Potions master was currently in class so he simply said the password and opened the door. He didn’t want to go to class right now… maybe once he’d composed himself.

Sighing, he looked around his father’s sitting room, looking at all the pictures of himself with either his father, Draco, Madreca, the Malfoys, even some with his friends. This was where he was safe. This was where he was loved. Smiling in contentment, he made his way to his father’s bedroom, lying down on the mattress, inhaling the scent that was uniquely his father’s.

Yawning tiredly, he snuggled against Kanen, a pillow clutched in his arms, and fell asleep with that comforting scent surrounding him.

**

Draco showed up in the potions class right before lunch, looking a little frazzled. “Is something wrong, Draco?” Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.

“I can’t find Adrian. I was hoping he was with you,” Draco said, frowning slightly. However, it was very apparent that Adrian wasn’t anywhere in the classroom. “He’s not in the common room, our dorm and he wasn’t in class.”

Severus frowned thoughtfully, rising to his feet. “What was he doing the last time you saw him?”

“He said he needed to talk to Professor Lupin about something and that he’d see me in class,” Draco told him. “I just came from Lupin’s classroom and he said Adrian had come and gone already.”

Frown not leaving his face, the Potions master was followed out of the classroom and down the corridor by Draco. “I think I might have an idea,” he murmured as he neared his quarters. He murmured the password and entered, Draco close on his heels.
Adrian wasn’t in the living room, that much was obvious, but his backpack was sitting by the door, which meant he was here somewhere… Spying the open bedroom door, Severus’ eyes narrowed as he walked towards it. Was his son so distressed that he’d needed comfort but hadn’t wanted to disturb his class to get it?

Sure enough, they found him sleeping on the bed, curled up around one of his pillows, Kanen lying behind him. “I’m going to kill him,” Draco grumbled behind him.

Sighing, Severus moved closer to the bed, sitting on the edge. “Adrian,” he said softly, a hand on his back. Adrian gave a long contended sigh, stretching out like a cat, refusing to release the pillow, a small smile on his face. “Time to wake up, child.” It took a few more seconds before Adrian finally opened his eyes. Severus smiled gently down at his son. “How do you feel?”

“Good,” he murmured with a sleep roughened voice. “I just needed a nap.”

“Come have lunch, then,” Severus murmured, running his fingers through the thick locks. “And then you can finish going to class.” He chuckled when Adrian sat up quickly, eyes wide.

“Class! Draco!” Adrian exclaimed, glancing over Severus’ shoulder where Draco lounged against the door frame. “I’m sorry! I just… couldn’t go to class, not after talking to Professor Lupin.

Draco rolled his eyes as he sighed in exasperation. “What happened?” the blonde boy asked as he came over to sit beside Severus.

“I asked him why it took him so long to take me home,” Adrian whispered, crawling over to lean against Severus’ side. He willingly wrapped his arms around his child’s body, giving him the comfort he seemed to crave right now. “It seems Black was more deranged than he’d thought. He put a Locking spell on the bedroom door so I wouldn’t get away. It took him that long just to break it.”

“Well, it’s good to know that he didn’t leave you there on purpose,” Draco growled, scowling darkly.

“How do you feel knowing this?” Severus asked, watching his son carefully. What he tried to hide with his face usually didn’t work if his child was agitated but right now, Adrian was calm. This meant he was alright with the information he’d gotten.

“Better now, but I was a mess after talking with Lupin, which is why I came here. I’m safe here.”

A truer statement had never been spoken. No one could come in here unless Severus had invited them in, and those people were few and far in between. “Alright, let’s go have lunch before it’s too late.”

“Yes, sir,” they said in unison.

* * *

A few days later, Adrian shook his head as Draco began distributing pins to the students. Each pin flashed *Support Cedric Diggory – The real Hogwarts Champion!* And when you pushed on the front, it switched to *Potter Stinks!*

“Do you really have to hand them out?” he asked with a sigh of exasperation as Draco pinned one to his robes.

“Yes.
The whole school wore them with glee just to get back at Potter for getting into a tournament that was supposed to be only for three people – hence the reason it was called a *triwizard* tournament! The Slytherins howled with laughter at all the pins being worn. Each of them pressed their badges until the message *Potter Stinks* was shining brightly as Potter walked past them. They could see the heat rise in his face and neck.

“Oh, very funny,” Alicia Croons, Potter’s new girlfriend – and probably the only friend he had now – said sarcastically to Pansy Parkinson and her gang of Slytherin girls, who were laughing harder than anyone, “really witty.”

“Want one, Croons?” Draco asked, holding out a badge to the girl. “I’ve got loads.”

It was just dumb luck that the Potions master was walking by when Potter slapped the badge out of Draco’s hand, the badge striking the man in the process. Adrian cringed mentally as he waited for the fireworks to begin.

“Let’s see,” his father said, in his silkiest voice, coming to stand beside Potter. “Fifty points from Gryffindor and a detention, Potter. Now get inside, or it’ll be a week’s worth of detentions.”

Potter’s ears were turning red in embarrassment and fury. He passed Severus with Croons to the front of the classroom, and slammed his bag down onto the table. Croons looked worried as she sat beside Potter. On the other side of the dungeon, Draco turned his back on Severus and pressed his badge, smirking. *Potter Stinks* flashed once more across the room.

Adrian rolled his eyes and pulled the blonde teen to sit beside him. “Honestly,” he whispered as their other friends sat around them. “Don’t you think he’s in enough trouble?”

“Antidotes!” said Severus, before Draco could answer him, looking around at them all, his cold black eyes glittering unpleasantly. “You should all have prepared your recipes now. I want you to brew them carefully, and then, we will be selecting someone on whom to test one…”

Severus’ eyes met Potter’s, and Potter seemed to know what was coming. Adrian knew his father enough to know that if he could make Potter’s life a living hell at school in retaliation to all the misery he’d put Adrian through, he was going to do it. Potter assumed the Potions master was going to poison him… and his father wasn’t going to disabuse him of those thoughts even if he had no intentions of doing so.

Well into their brewing, a knock on the dungeon door cut through Adrian’s concentration. It was Colin Creevey; he edged into the room, beaming at Potter, and walked up to Severus’ desk at the front of the room.

“Yes?” Severus said curtly.

“Please, sir, I’m supposed to take Harry Potter upstairs.” Severus stared down his hooked nose at Colin, whose smile faded from his eager face.

“Potter has another hour of Potions to complete,” Severus said coldly. “He will come upstairs when this class is finished.”

Colin went pink. “Sir - sir, Mr. Bagman wants him,” he said nervously. “All the champions have got to go, I think they want to take photographs…”

“Very well, very well,” Severus snapped. “Potter, leave your things here, I want you back down here later to test your antidote.”
“Please, sir - he's got to take his things with him,” Colin squeaked. “All the champions…”

“Very well!” Severus snarled. “Potter - take your bag and get out of my sight!”

Potter swung his bag over his shoulder, got up, and headed for the door. As he walked past the Slytherin desks, *Potter Stinks* flashed at him from every direction.

It was going to be a long year…

* * *

The first task came and went. Every champion managed to get their eggs from their dragons… though how Potter got his was still unclear. There were speculations that someone helped him, but because there was no proof, nothing was done about it. They simply knew that the dragon was found dead at the bottom of the ravine.

The Yule ball was next and there was a heightened sense of excitement in the school. Even Adrian was excited. It meant he would be able to dance with Draco… He couldn’t wait.

The night of the ball, everyone stared as Hermione Granger walked past them with Viktor Krum, looking so very different from usual. She had done something with her hair; it was no longer bushy but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an elegant knot at the back of her head. She was wearing robes made of a floaty, periwinkle-blue material, and she was holding herself differently, somehow - or maybe it was merely the absence of the twenty or so books she usually had slung over her back. She was also smiling - rather nervously, it was true - but the reduction in the size of her front teeth was more noticeable than ever. Adrian didn’t really care about when she had gotten them fixed. He didn’t want to know.

Watching her being escorted by Krum, however, Adrian realized that the champions of the tournament were standing to one side. Krum was in the lead with Granger, followed by Fleur Delacour and her escort… Adrian forgot what his name was but then he wasn’t that interested in knowing him either, Cedric Diggory with Cho Chang, and lastly Potter with his girlfriend Alicia.

Most of their friends snickered as they saw the uncomfortable look on Potter’s face. It wasn’t reflected in the other champions’, however, which was why they enjoyed making fun of him. The walls of the Hall had all been covered in sparkling silver frost, with hundreds of garlands of mistletoe and ivy crossing the starry black ceiling. The House tables had vanished; instead, there were about a hundred smaller, lantern-lit ones, each seating about a dozen people.

Once everyone else was settled inside the Hall, everyone in the Great Hall applauded as the champions entered and started walking up toward a large round table at the top of the Hall, where the judges were sitting.

Potter was so stiff as he concentrated on not tripping over his feet, it made everyone laugh when he actually did stumble a little. The only one who seemed to be enjoying herself was Alicia as she beamed around at everybody, steering Potter forcefully.

Anderson smiled as the champions approached the top table, but Karkaroff wore a sulky expression as he watched Krum and Granger draw nearer. Mr. Bagman, tonight in robes of bright purple with large yellow stars, was clapping as enthusiastically as any of the students; and Madame Maxime, who had changed her usual uniform of black satin for a flowing gown of lavender silk, was applauding them politely. But Mr. Crouch, Adrian realized as he looked around, was not there. The fifth seat at the table was occupied by Percy Weasley.
Then the food was served and Adrian smiled at Draco as they sat side by side, Kanen and Kaida lying on the floor behind them. He made sure to give them some food and water as they ate so they could also share in the festivities.

Once everyone was full, the tables were moved back for the first dance. It was quite entertaining to watch Potter struggle with Alicia as he tried to keep up with the beat. The end of the first dance signalled the beginning of the party.

Everyone enjoyed themselves… well, almost everyone.

Adrian enjoyed quite a few slow dances with Draco, allowing his boyfriend to lead. Out of the corner of his eye, Adrian noticed Percy sit beside Potter and talked Draco into going to sit for a bit. He wanted to know how Potter got along with the rest of the Weasley family. From the look on Potter’s face, however, it was apparent that the two of them didn’t get along.

That was odd, considering Percy had been tripping over himself when at school to make nice with the other boy. Adrian saw Mr. Bagman kiss Professor McGonagall's hand and make his way back through the crowds, at which point Fred and George accosted him.

“What do they think they're doing, annoying senior Ministry members?” he heard Percy hiss in annoyance, watching Fred and George suspiciously. “No respect…”

Mr. Bagman shook off Fred and George fairly quickly, however, and, spotting Potter, waved and came over to their table. “I hope my brothers weren't bothering you, Mr. Bagman?” Percy said at once.

“What? Oh not at all, not at all!” said Bagman. “No, they were just telling me a bit more about those fake wands of theirs. Wondering if I could advise them on the marketing. I've promised to put them in touch with a couple of contacts of mine at Zonko's Joke Shop…”

Percy didn't look happy about this at all. Apparently Fred and George’s plans had grown even more ambitious lately, if they were hoping to sell to the public. Adrian wanted to applaud them because they were trying to make their dream a reality. Bagman opened his mouth to ask Potter something, but Percy diverted him.

At that point, Adrian lost interest in what was happening with Potter as Draco leaned closer under the pretense of whispering something in his ear and began nibbling on it. “How about we find somewhere quiet for a little?”

There was a flash from behind them and they turned to see a smirking Rita Skeeter standing there, a nasty gleam in her eyes. “How stirring,” she murmured mockingly, her ever present quill and pad floating behind her. Adrian rolled his eyes at her. “Quite romantic.”

“And what of it?” Draco drawled in a bored tone. “It’s not like it’s news that school kids get together, you know.”

“It is when you’re a Malfoy,” she said with a look of mock-innocence. “I’m sure daddy dearest would love to know that his only heir is with another boy.”

Adrian frowned worriedly when Draco rose to his feet and sauntered over to her, the ever present Malfoy smirk on his face. “Miss Skeeter,” he murmured softly when he was closer, leaning close as if he were about to impart something important. “I suggest you stick to the Tri-Wizard champions and leave me out of your rag or I’ll make sure you’re out of a job by morning.”

Adrian smirked as Skeeter jerked back in shock. “You can’t threaten me,” she hissed angrily.
Draco’s smirk grew at the obvious fear in her eyes. “I’m not threatening, Miss. Skeeter. I’m simply stating a fact. If you really want news,” he said, lowering his voice even more, forcing her to get closer in order to catch what he was saying. “I suggest you concentrate on Potter. I hear he enjoys bullying the other students. Apparently the Aurors have him in their sights and keep him locked up when he’s not at school. After all, it’s not every day you have a student accused of trying to murder another student... I’m sure you can find you way to not mention my name when you write your article.”

“Of course,” she murmured with a vicious smile as she moved away from them, her quill speedily writing in the pad behind her. Adrian wasn’t one bit envious of the boy who’d taken his place as Harry Potter. His life was just about to get even more complicated...

Smirk not leaving his face, Draco led Adrian back to the dance floor. “I thought we were going to find an empty classroom?” Adrian asked in confusion.

“She kind of ruined the mood. Maybe after a few dances, I’ll be in the mood again,” Draco murmured as he led him in a waltz.

By the time the evening drew to a close, Draco was curled around him, fast asleep, with Kaida and Kanen sleeping on Draco’s bed. Adrian had gotten his make-out session an hour after leaving Skeeter to write her article and pester Potter for more information. For all that he was bone tired, Adrian couldn’t seem to shut his mind down enough to drift off into peaceful dreams.

The second task was fast approaching but Adrian didn’t really have any opinion as to who would win. Quite frankly, the tournament was beginning to wane in its excitement. He would be glad when it was over with.

Karkaroff seemed to be spending an awful lot of time pacing the halls outside his father’s office, but whenever Adrian would visit, the strange man would smirk at him and walk away. He didn’t like the man. He creeped him out.

“I’m not imagining this!” he heard Karkaroff growl one day as he and Draco were entering the Potions classroom. The creepy man was standing at the front of the classroom with his sleeve pulled up, showing something to Severus.

“Put your sleeve down,” Severus hissed out, glaring at the Headmaster from Drumstrang, glancing back at the students filing into the classroom. Karkaroff glared as he yanked his sleeve down and stalked towards the door of the classroom... and stopped beside Adrian just as Potter walked in, skulking to his seat with his girlfriend.

“I was unaware Snape had a son,” he murmured as he examined Adrian closely. He knew the man was looking for any kind of resemblance to Severus Snape... which was more apparent than it had been before the blood adoption. He knew he had his father’s features, especially with his hair as long as it was. He still bore a minute resemblance to James Potter, but most of that was being eradicated as he grew older.

“Yes,” Adrian murmured, not elaborating that he was adopted. “I didn’t know you knew my father, sir.”

“Severus and I go... way back,” he said with a knowing smirk, his bad teeth showing slightly and Adrian forced himself not to sneer in disgust.

“Good day, Karkaroff,” Severus growled from behind him as the students shifted uneasily, waiting for the class to begin. Karkaroff looked back over his shoulder, smirk widening, turned to look once
more at Adrian before leaving the classroom.

With a flick of his wand, the door closed behind the man. “Instructions are on the blackboard. Results will be tested at the end of class to see how well your potions work.” He smirked at the groans that erupted from most of the students… except for the Slytherins, of course. “Come over after supper,” Severus murmured as he turned to face the front of the class. “We need to talk.”

“Yes, Father.”

They all took the time to write the instructions down before heading up to the front to collect the ingredients needed for the potion. Everyone was to work on their own today. Adrian had always loved potions, ever since Draco had shown him his first one, and now was no exception. He knew he would excel at this the same as he did with most of his classes.

He jumped when a cauldron suddenly went up and looked over to the other side of the classroom where a Gryffindor boy was covered in green slime. Severus descended on the poor student with a look of unholy pleasure, sneering insults about the inattention of some people. He shook his head as he turned to smirk at Draco before going back to his potion.

They were just about done their potion when Draco finally spoke. “Are we still on for Hogsmeade this weekend?” he asked him, attention still on his cauldron as he stirred it one final time.

“Yeah,” Adrian murmured softly as he pulled his potion off the fire to cool. “Are we all going, then?” he asked the others curiously.

“Not me,” Blaise said with a secret smile. It seemed Blaise had found himself another conquest this year, though he refused to say who it was.

“Suit yourself,” Goyle said with a smirk as he dropped the last ingredient into his cauldron. “Crabbe and I are planning on going to Zonko’s and then maybe Honeydukes.”

“Are you coming with me tonight?” Adrian asked softly as their friends rattled off where they were planning on going in Hogsmeade. Draco nodded sharply as he pulled his own cauldron off the flames to cool, sitting back with a sigh.

**

“I want you to avoid Karkaroff,” Severus said when they gathered in his quarters that night and Adrian wondered just what his father was worried about.

“Headmaster Karkaroff has never had any interest in me before, Father,” he said, frowning in confusion. “Why would he be interested in me now?”

“I suspect he’s gotten suspicious of Potter and is looking for someone else who would fit the criteria for defeater of the Dark Lord.”

“He cannot suspect Adrian, Severus,” Madreca murmured as he stood beside the fireplace. Even Lupin was there, which meant this was serious. “He wouldn’t even know that you have adopted a child.”

“The last time he saw me, I had no son,” Severus explained with a sigh. “Today, when he looked at Adrian, he suspected something. I just know it. He was looking at him too closely.”

“But, Severus,” Lupin said tentatively. “Even if he suspects Adrian is adopted, there’s not much resemblance to James… Maybe a little bit of Lily but James is no longer part of his features. I suspect
you did a blood adoption at some point?” Severus nodded and Lupin smiled in satisfaction. “Then if they do a paternity test, it’ll only show you as his father and not James. He’s protected.”

“Regardless, this summer we’re going to have to train you in using your wings, strengthening them up until you can carry someone. With more strength, they’ll be able to take more abuse.”

“Do you think it’s going to come down to a fight, Father?” Adrian asked with a frown, head tipped to one side as he regarded the Potions master.

“It’s simply a precaution,” Lupin said soothingly, smiling gently when Severus didn’t answer him.

Severus sighed as he pinched the bridge of his nose. “If Karkaroff does reveal you as Harry Potter, he’ll do it when it’s most advantageous to him. I have to agree with Karkaroff, however,” he began as he finally looked at everyone. “The Dark Lord’s Mark is getting more pronounced. It means he’s coming back. If that’s the case, he’ll eventually be coming for Adrian. Once he realizes Potter is an imposter, he won’t stop until he locates the real Harry Potter. Have you had any more weird dreams? Headaches?”

“Not really. Not since the last time,” Adrian said with a shake of his head. “You know I’d tell you if I had.”

“Of course,” Severus murmured with a slight smile, though Adrian could tell he was worried.

He got up and went to sit beside his father on his chair. Despite the fact that he was fourteen now, he didn’t take up any more room than when he’d done this two Christmases ago, cuddling up to his father. The chair had more than enough room for the two of them. His father wrapped him in a hug, holding him close. “You don’t have to worry about me,” he murmured with a sigh, relaxing against the man he loved. “I’ll be alright.”

“It’s my job to worry, Adrian,” his father chided gently, smiling to take the sting out of the words. “If I didn’t, I’d be a poor father. Just remember to stay away from Karkaroff and everything should be fine. If the Dark Lord comes back, we’ll deal with it then.”

“Yes, Father.” Adrian watched the others, content to stay where he was. “Oh,” he said as he remembered something. “I think Michael can stop worrying about kittens. I saw Kanen and Kaida together a few months ago. She was actually starting to show a month and a half ago.”

“I’m sure Michael will be pleased to hear about that,” Severus murmured against the top of his head. His father showed no more willingness to lose the contact than he did. “Quite a few people have put their names down for some if they come in. He’s already contacted the others who bought the remainder and they’ve agree to have them sold at the shop when they became available. I didn’t think they’d be that popular.”

Adrian hummed in response, feeling quite secure and happy where he was. He sighed in contentment, snuggling closer and closing his eyes. He’d always loved his father’s scent: an earthy tone with hints of dark leather and something else uniquely his father’s. It had always had the ability to soothe him no matter his mood. Now was no exception.

“I think it’s time to go to bed,” Severus murmured in amusement when he noticed this. Adrian groaned in disappointment. “Go on, I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Yes, Father,” he grumbled as he reluctantly peeled himself out of the chair. He gave the man a kiss before he and Draco left the adults to discuss the Dark Mark’s reappearance.

* * *
February the twenty fourth dawned to reveal an extremely cold day… too cold to go play in the water but it appeared that that was where the second task was to take place. Adrian found the hour they waited above the lake extremely boring. Then Krum came up first with Granger. A few minutes later, Diggory came up with Chang. The last one to come up was Potter with Thomas and one of the girls who’d come with Madame Maxime.

“Stupid merpeople,” he heard Potter grumble as they climbed out of the water. “Insistent, though I was only supposed to help one.” Adrian had the feeling that he was one of only a few to hear him over the cheering and screaming going on around them. A look at Draco revealed that he, too, had heard him. As it happened, Potter seemed to have gained second place even though he’d come in last, and only because he’d come out with two people instead of only one.

On the shore, he and Draco made their way back to the castle, cutting through the Forbidden forest in their trek. Kanen and Kaida had opted to stay on the beach to wait for them during the tournament and now padded at their sides. It took Adrian a few steps to realize they weren’t alone anymore.

Eyes followed them as they made their way through the forest.

“Draco, we’re being followed,” he whispered, not really surprised to see Draco already scanning the trees around them. For some reason, they seemed to be the only two in the area. Where were the others?

“Mm-hm.” They slowed down, the cats growling threateningly as they, too, scanned the trees around them.

*Fresh meat to add to the pack,* Adrian heard from their right. When Draco didn’t react to the voice, he realized that this had to be an animal.

“Who’s there!” he called out, making sure his voice didn’t shake. “I know you’re there. I can hear you.” Draco jerked next to him, looking at him in surprise.

*So, young wizard,* a voice growled from ahead of them and a huge wolf padded out of the shadows. *How is it that you can understand us?*

“That doesn’t matter. Please let us pass. We’re just passing through on our way back to the school.”

The wolf yipped, a dog’s version of a laugh, followed by four more. *You’re in our territory, young wizard. Which means you’re ours now.*

“What’s going on?” Draco whispered, pressing against him in order to make them a smaller target.

“They say we’re theirs.” Adrian frowned as he took in the size of the wolves and something occurred to him. “They’re werewolves!” That seemed to startle their attackers.

“Great!” Draco said, his voice heavy with sarcasm.

*Adrian, use your wings to get out of here. Kaida will follow you in front and I’ll bring up the rear,* Kanen told him as he moved to block the lead wolf, body puffing up to make himself look bigger than he really was… or maybe this was what his father had sensed in the cats?

“No, Kanen, I can’t leave you here!” Adrian argued, pulling his wand from its holster.

“Translation?” Draco demanded in exasperation.

“He wants us to leave him here while he brings up the rear,” Adrian growled as he glared at the
approaching werewolves.

“Take your robes off, Adrian,” Draco ordered suddenly. When Adrian shot him a funny look before turning back to the werewolves, his boyfriend gave an impatient sigh. “Fewer clothes for them to grab,” Draco explained in exasperation.

It made sense, Adrian guessed and allowed his robes to slide down his arms and to the ground. Draco grabbed them and tied them to Kaida’s back along with his own. “Go,” he ordered Kaida. “We have to go, too, Adrian. Kanen’s right. We can’t win against werewolves.”

Adrian turned to glare at him in shocked anger. “I’m not leaving Kanen here to fight them all!”

Go! Kanen ordered, roaring in anger as the first of the wolves attacked, earning a face full of claws for its trouble. Get out of here!

Adrian closed his eyes in indecision, not wanting to leave his cat to defend their retreat but knew he was right. With a choked sob, he forced his wings out, ignoring the fact that they ripped through his shirt. Draco grabbed hold of him around the neck and Adrian pushed off the ground, spreading his wings quickly.

Because he wasn’t used to the unaccustomed weight, he couldn’t go as high as he wanted, so he simply glided under the lowest branches, escaping the teeth of the wolves by inches as he flew them out of there.

He could hear the yowls of anger and the whimpers of pain as Kanen fought the wolves for a long while but soon the sounds were lost to him. Just before he burst through the trees and onto the Hogwarts grounds, his back muscles began screaming in unaccustomed strain. He quickly landed, releasing Draco to look back at the woods.

He had to go back and help Kanen!

**

“Adrian! No!” Draco screamed as Adrian pushed off the ground, aiming back towards the woods. He watched powerlessly as Adrian got out of reach… only to be knocked to the ground by Kaida who bounded out of the trees before he got more than ten feet from Draco. Her heavy and unexpected weight was enough to knock the breath out of the teen as he hit the hard frozen ground.

“Get off me!” he screamed finally as he struggled to get out from underneath the heavy furred body, not even registering that Kaida had somehow pinned him down. She was using her considerable weight to keep him there… barely. Her front paws were on his shoulders, preventing his boyfriend from getting away.

“Adrian!” Draco yelled above his screaming as he tried to claw his way out from under the cat, leaving bloody trails as he split his fingers and nails on the ground. “Stop!” Cursing fluently, Draco managed to stun him. He closed his eyes as sadness filled him when he heard the howls of triumph, signalling that they’d managed to over-power the big cat.

Draco shook himself and quickly worked to take their robes from Kaida, pulling his own on with a sigh of relief, only now registering the cold air. “Lay down beside him. I’ll pull him on your back so we can take him to Uncle Sev.”

He may not be able to communicate with her the way Adrian could, but he could still work with her. He managed to push his boyfriend onto her back, draping his robes over him to hide his wings. With a sigh, he walked beside her, a hand on Adrian’s back to make sure he didn’t fall off.
When they reached Severus’ quarters, he prayed to every God and Goddess in existence that the Potions master would be there because he didn’t think he’d be able to control Adrian once he came out of his stupefaction.

Luck seemed to be with him. Severus answered the door after the first knock. “Draco? What happened?”

“Kanen’s dead,” he whispered, feeling his eyes fill up with tears as he said the words. He was quickly ushered in and Adrian was gently taken from Kaida’s back.

“What happened?” Severus asked again as he laid Adrian onto the couch, angling him so he didn’t lie on his wings. As they watched, the wings slowly melted back inside Adrian's back. Well, Draco thought with a sad sigh. At least we don't have to worry about the wings now.

“We were walking back from the lake when we were surrounded by werewolves. Kanen told him to fly me out of there and he would bring up the rear. I heard them howl in triumph. They killed him, Uncle Sev.” Draco couldn’t hold the tears back anymore. He felt Severus’ arms come around him and buried his face in his robes. He knew what this was going to do to Adrian and there was nothing he could do to prevent it.

“Werewolves don’t usually attack. I wonder what’s got them riled up,” Severus murmured with a deep frown.

**

Adrian was riding on the back of an eagle owl, soaring through the clear blue sky toward an old, ivy-covered house set high on a hillside. Lower and lower they flew, the wind blowing pleasantly in Adrian’s face, until they reached a dark and broken window in the upper story of the house and entered. Now they were flying along a gloomy passageway, to a room at the very end... through the door they went, into a dark room whose windows were boarded up....

Adrian had left the owl's back now... he was watching, as it fluttered across the room, into a chair with its back to him... There were two dark shapes on the floor beside the chair... both of them were stirring...

One was the huge snake from before... the other was a man... Wormtail! He was wheezing and sobbing on the hearth rug.

“You’re in luck, Wormtail,” a cold, high-pitched voice said from the depths of the chair on which the owl had landed. “You’re very fortunate indeed. Your blunder has not ruined everything. He’s dead.”

“My Lord!” the man on the floor gasped. “My Lord, I’m... I’m so pleased... and so sorry...”

“Nagini,” the cold voice said, “you’re out of luck. I won’t be feeding Wormtail to you, after all... but never mind, never mind... there’s still the boy...”

The snake hissed. Adrian could see its tongue fluttering.

“Now, Wormtail,” said the cold voice, “perhaps one more little reminder why I will not tolerate another blunder from you...”

“My Lord... no... I beg you...”

The tip of a wand emerged from around the back of the chair. It was pointing at Wormtail.
“Crucio!” the cold voice said.

Wormtail screamed, screamed as though every nerve in his body were on fire, the screaming filled Adrian's ears as the scar on his forehead seared with pain; he was yelling too… Voldemort would hear him, would know he was there…

Adrian woke up screaming, clutching at his head, feeling as if it were splitting in two. It took him a few minutes to realize his father was talking to him but, with the pain lancing through his head, he couldn’t make himself concentrate enough to make out the words.

“Adrian!” he finally heard as his head settled down to an insistent pounding. “It’s only a dream!”

He shook his head and regretted it immediately as his stomach rebelled and he threw up on the floor. He whimpered as he was rolled back onto the cushion. However, he didn’t hesitate to open his mouth as a phial was pushed against his lips.

The effects were almost instantaneous as the pain dimmed to a dull throbbing. He cracked his eyes open to find he was laying in his father’s quarters with Draco hovering behind his father. “What did you see?”

“He killed someone. He’s still going after a boy. No, I still don’t know who but I think I have an idea who it could be. He was torturing Wormtail again for ruining something.”

“Do you know who he killed?” Severus asked with a frown.

Adrian carefully shook his head, wincing as it made his head throb harder. “I think he’s after Potter. It makes sense since his name was put into the goblet,” Adrian murmured before he rolled his eyes at himself. “Actually, it’s kind of obvious now.”

“How are you feeling?”

The careful way his father asked that caught his attention. He looked sharply at the man sitting beside him and then up at Draco. It wasn’t until Kaida moved into his line of sight that he remembered the incident in the woods. “He’s dead, isn’t he?” he asked softly.

Draco hesitated a little before he nodded sadly. Adrian closed his eyes in sorrow, feeling tears fall down his face. Strong arms pulled him against a hard chest and he broke down, crying for the friend who’d always been loyal to him since he’d taken him home two years ago.

**

Draco watched as Severus held Adrian, sighing sadly. Kanen had given his life to protect them… and he didn’t know what to do to help his boyfriend.

Kaida whimpered sadly and pressed herself against him, looking for comfort of her own. He bent down and buried his face in her fur as he wrapped her in his arms. At least they would have something of Kanen’s, he realized when Kaida’s belly moved under his hands.

“Adrian, how long before Kaida has her babies?” he asked, hoping to give his boyfriend something else to focus on.

He watched as the other boy looked at him over Severus’ shoulder, eyes red and swollen. “She says about two more weeks,” he whispered dully, going back to curling up in Severus’ arms. Draco felt disappointment fill him. He’d been sure Adrian would take more of an interest…
It would only be a matter of time… he hoped.

* * *

It was more like two and a half weeks before Kaida went into labour in their dorm room, curling up beside Adrian, who sat staring out the window. Draco was sitting on his boyfriend’s bed watching them, glad it was a Saturday instead of a week day. Adrian’s interest in everything had taken a back seat as he mourned Kanen and nothing Draco did helped him, except at night.

Instead of Adrian crawling into his bed, it was Draco crawling into bed with the dark haired boy. Adrian would cling to him with a ferocity that worried him but he didn’t say anything, simply held his boyfriend as they slept.

He didn’t know what else to do. He hoped that Kaida’s kittens brought his boyfriend out of this depression because nothing else seemed to work… and his grades were beginning to suffer for it.

He moved closer as he watched the kittens – big kittens... they were easily twice the size of normal kittens – being born… even Adrian seemed to take a slight interest. Six kittens soon were suckling at Kaida’s belly and it became very obvious who the father was. Two of the kittens looked exactly like Kanen, a male and a female, while the other four were of various colours: one black, one brown, one dark grey and one multi-coloured.

Once the kittens were born, however, Adrian went back to staring out the window. Draco sighed softly in irritation, at a loss as to what to do now.

* * *

It had been a couple of weeks since Kaida had given birth and Adrian wanted nothing to do with kittens now that he’d seen them. He knew it was irrational, but the two who looked exactly like Kanen were the reason for it. It hurt too much to look at them…

He knew Draco didn’t like this. He didn’t talk to their friends anymore unless he had no choice and if it wasn’t for his boyfriend, Adrian doubted he’d leave their room at all. His appetite was also suffering. He went through the motions but it felt like losing Kanen had sucked the joy out of his life…

Who are you?

Adrian jumped at the unexpected question and turned from the window. At two in the morning, no one should be up.

He realized that three of the kittens were looking at him with open curiosity. The female Kanen look-a-like, the dark grey and the multi-coloured were sitting there, waiting for an answer. The dark grey one turned his head sideways quite suddenly, jumping in a mock pounce. Unfortunately, he misjudged the distance between himself and the window and smacked his head into the solid object, yowling in surprise and pain.

Adrian chuckled, unable to help it, and helped the kitten straighten up. “My name’s Adrian,” he told them softly, mindful of the others sleeping nearby. Even Draco was asleep on his bed where Adrian had left his boyfriend after the blonde teen had fallen asleep.

Come get some more sleep, children, Kaida called out gently from the other side of the window seat.

Yes, Mama.
With a sad sigh, he turned back to the window. He found peace in the murky depths of the water on the other side of the window. It seemed to suit his current state…

He was surprised when he felt claws dig carefully into his pants and he raised an eyebrow as the dark grey kitten climbed up to sit precariously on his knees, staring at him intently. *Why are you so sad?* he asked curiously.

“I lost one of my best friends not long ago,” Adrian said as he leaned back against the wall. “I miss him.”

*Mama says no one really leaves as long as we keep them in our heart,* the kitten said, shaking his head suddenly and tumbled down into Adrian’s lap in a heap with a sound of protest. He stared up at Adrian from the weird angle he’d landed in with an aggravated sigh.

He helped the kitten right himself and began running his fingers through the thick fur. He smiled as the kitten’s eyes crossed before sliding shut in pleasure, purring loudly. *Oh, don’t stop,* the kitten groaned, pushing up into his hand.

They sat there for a while before Adrian sent him back to Kaida to sleep. With a yawn, he rose to his feet and joined Draco on the bed, sighing tiredly as he cuddled against his boyfriend. His eyes snapped open as he felt a warm furry body settle itself behind his back, head on his neck. Despite the fact that it wasn’t Kanen, he smiled and closed his eyes again. It wasn’t long before he was asleep.

**

Draco smiled as he watched Adrian with the kitten, first when they were sitting beside the window – which was an accomplishment on its own seeing as Adrian had refused to go near them – and then after he’d laid down with Draco. Adrian, it became apparent, didn’t seem to realize he wasn’t really sleeping, but pretending as he observed him.

He’d watched then as the kitten had made a determined bee-line for the bed, ignoring the soft croon Kaida had sent his way and climbed up the blanket. He’d come up right beside their feet. The kitten had been quite proud of himself, too.

Draco had had to force himself not to laugh as the kitten had pranced up behind Adrian’s back, head held up, and plunked himself down against his back. Now, both of them were asleep, the kitten’s head cradled against Adrian’s neck, whiskers twitching in his sleep. Adrian still bore the small smile he’d had after the kitten had laid down.

He hoped this helped his boyfriend, because nothing anyone did was doing any good. Even Severus was at his wits end as to how to help Adrian…

Sighing softly, he settled himself down to sleep. Tomorrow would tell how this would go.

***

The next morning, Severus noticed the difference right away. He was sitting at the Head Table eating breakfast and was watching Adrian closely. His son hadn’t been the same since Kanen was killed. Hagrid had confirmed it on one of his rounds. All that had been found were patches of white fur splattered with blood… of course there had been blood everywhere, but the worse of it had been the surrounding area.

Hagrid had told him that whatever had attacked Kanen hadn’t escaped unharmed. “Too much blood fer one cat,” had been his assessment. So Kanen hadn’t gone down easily. He hadn’t told Adrian that. He had enough problems keeping his son’s interest in school at the moment.
Looking down at the table, he noticed a beetle walking across it. Sneering in disgust, he put his middle finger against his thumb and flicked the insect hard, flinging it towards the far wall. He thought he heard it scream but dismissed it immediately as he focused on Adrian again.

His son seemed to be eating more, though he didn’t participate in the conversations around him. He blinked in surprise when a dark grey furry head popped up between Draco and Adrian. He was even more surprised when he watched Kaida stalk into the Great Hall, glaring darkly. His eyebrows went up when she padded over to the boys, reached between them and came back with one of her kittens. She shook it slightly when it struggled, settling with a mutinous look in its eyes.

She made her way back out of the Great Hall, probably heading back down to the Slytherin dorms where the rest of her brood was waiting for her. So, two weeks old and already attached to one of the boys… it made him wonder if Adrian was going to adopt another cat…

If he did and it brought him out of his funk, Severus was all for keeping the cat.

Shaking himself out of his thoughts, he pushed away from the table. Time for class… which, ironically enough, was with the fourth year Slytherins and Gryffindors. Double potions.

When he got to class, some of the students were already waiting for him in the hallway. He waited until the students were working before approaching Adrian. “I’d like for you to come over after supper,” he murmured softly, pretending to be inspecting the potion he and Draco were working on. He didn’t worry about their work. They always excelled, even with Adrian’s lack of interest lately. Today, however, he seemed to have more interest in his class.

“Yes, Father,” he murmured as he sprinkled some root powder into the potion before looking at him. Adrian didn’t smile, but at least he was alert and paying attention, despite the dark circles under his child’s eyes.

* * *

But Mama, Adrian heard when he dragged himself into his room after class. He was so tired and decided that he’d take a nap before having to visit his father.

No, she scolded, glaring down at the dark grey kitten. You are too young to be off on your own. There are a lot of dangers out there that you’re not ready for. You need to wait a bit longer before you can follow the human boys around. Now this is the fourth time I’ve had to go after you. Do I have to have Adrian tie you in this room?

The kitten grumbled softly to himself, earning himself a paw to the back of his head for his effort.

No, Mama, he grumbled louder. I’ll stay in here until you tell me I can go out.

His lips twitched when the kitten slapped his paw on the floor in anger and irritation.

“Are we working on some of our assignments?” Draco asked him softly, wrapping an arm around his waist. That seemed to bring the kitten’s attention to them quickly.

Adrian sighed, knowing he wasn’t going to get any sleep now. “Sure,” he murmured as he dragged his book bag to his bed. They pulled out books, parchment, ink and quill to work on their assignments. It was a few minutes before either of them realized that the dark grey kitten was playing with a bug on the floor.

He’d jump on it, bat it around a bit before trying to bite it.

They were surprised when it suddenly turned into a woman when the kitten managed to catch it on a
sharp claw. Their wands were out instantly. “What the hell do you want now?” Draco demanded sharply as he recognized her.

Rita Skeeter turned to look at them, seeming surprised that they were there. “Oh, my,” she simpered, not fooling the boys at all.

“So,” Adrian drawled, eyes snapping angrily. “An Animagus. This explains a lot of the articles you write but then, this makes me think that you’re unregistered, otherwise a lot of people would guard against the possibility of you snooping around.”

Her mouth opened and closed unattractively as she struggled to come up with a suitable lie. “I was simply hoping to get an interview or maybe a quote on your thoughts about Mr. Potter.”

“Why don’t you sneak into their tower and see what you can find out?” Draco demanded. It didn’t escape her noticed that their wands were still pointed directly at her. “And remember what I told you during the Yule ball. Now we have the added ammunition that you’re an unregistered Animagus.”

She smiled at them, though it didn’t reach her eyes, and they followed her out of their territory.

“I can’t believe her.” Adrian growled as they entered their room again, stopping at the door when he realized the grey kitten was lying on Adrian’s pillow, looking quite pleased with himself.

“I guess you’ve made a new friend,” Draco murmured hesitantly. Adrian sighed as he looked at the kitten. He didn’t know what to think. That morning he’d sent the kitten back to Kaida and left for breakfast. The animal had somehow made his way up to the Great Hall and right beside him.

Kaida had been grumbling as she’d come up behind them, grabbed the little escape artist, shook him when he fought her to stay and taken him back to their room. This little animal seemed to have attached himself to him for some reason.

Adrian didn’t know if he should be aggravated or amused. With a sigh, he sat down to work on his assignment, leaving the kitten where he was.

* * *

“How are things going in your classes?” Severus asked Adrian after supper, watching the boy carefully. He looked ready to fall asleep at any moment…

Adrian shrugged. “Alright, I guess.”

He frowned at the listless way Adrian sat on the couch with Draco. Flicking his eyes at the blonde boy, he wasn’t surprised when Draco shook his head slightly. “Should I contact Mind Healer McKay?”

“Why does it always have to come back to that man?” Adrian growled out angrily, glaring at him.

Severus’ eyebrow rose at the uncharacteristic show of temper. He sighed as he came to a decision. Rising to his feet, he looked at Draco, flicking his eyes to the door when he was sure he had the teen’s attention. With a soft sigh, Draco rose to his feet and left them alone. Taking the seat vacated by the blonde teen, he pulled a slightly resistant Adrian into his arms. “I know you miss him, but this isn’t going to bring Kanen back,” he whispered against the top of his child’s head when Adrian was finally lying against him.

“I don’t know what to do,” Adrian finally whispered tearfully.
“It’s been four weeks now and you seem to be getting better. You were more alert in class this morning.” He hesitated, not knowing what kind of reaction he would get by mentioning what he’d observed that morning. “What’s going on with the kitten that was sitting between you and Draco this morning?”

Adrian shrugged and snuggled closer to him. “Seems like he’s attached himself to me for some reason,” his son said finally when it became apparent Severus was waiting for an answer. “I don’t know if I want another animal like Kanen, though.”

“I know it won’t replace him, but maybe it’ll make it easier to get over the loss,” Severus murmured softly.

“I’ll see,” Adrian murmured finally.

“I’ll walk you back to the dorms,” he said after they’d been sitting for a while. It took a few minutes to get his child to move but finally the boy was in the Slytherin common room with his friends… “Try to sleep.”

“Yes, Father.”

*

Draco watched over the next few weeks as Adrian tried unsuccessfully to keep the kitten from joining him whenever he was in the Snake Pit. He actually found it hilarious to watch, truth told. Adrian would scold the animal for climbing onto him… lap, shoulders, even his chest or back when he was lying down.

It didn’t seem to dissuade the little creature from doing it, however. Even Kaida had given up on restricting the little furball from leaving the dorm room, as long as he stayed inside the common room.

He and the others had a bet going as to how long it would take before Adrian gave into the inevitable. All their friends knew the dark haired teen would be adopting the kitten, it was simply a matter of time…

“Ha!” George crowed one day when Draco walked into the common room one evening, startling him with the suddenness. “We won the bet!”

“He caved?” Draco asked with a look of glee on his face, rubbing his hands in anticipation.

“As of five minutes ago,” Fred bragged smugly.

“Let’s see that means… Blaise, Pansy, Nott, Crabbe and Goyle owe us money!” the blonde smirked, looking around the common room for the people he’d just mentioned. “Time to collect.”

“It’s nice to know I added to your entertainment,” Adrian said from behind them, arms crossed, with the kitten at his feet.

All three of them froze before turning to face the boy in question. Draco searched his boyfriend’s face, trying to determine if Adrian was angry at them. He began to worry at the shuttered look on his face… until he looked into the green depths and saw amusement dancing there.

“So what did you name him?” Draco asked with a grin, walking over to pull him against him for a kiss before walking over to the couch so they could relax.
“Well I was going to call him Shadow, because of how he can sneak around without being detected, but I thought that would be too predictable,” Adrian said with a dismissive shrug as he settled himself against Draco. “So I decided to go with Shade. It basically means the same thing.”

“Fitting,” Fred said with a nod.

“Oh, Adrian,” George said from the other side of his twin. “Fred and I were talking and—”

“We’ve decided to take you up on your offer,” George finished with a knowing grin, casting a look at Draco.

He frowned in confusion. Offer? “What offer are they talking about?” he asked guardedly.

“It’s nothing. Just something I proposed to the twins before the name drawing. If it pans out, I’ll tell you about it,” Adrian said with a casual shrug… a little too casual?

Shade chose that moment to jump on the couch, dropping down beside Adrian with a smug look. Draco almost had the impression that the kitten thought Adrian had been hiding from him and that he was smug because he’d found him. He rolled his eyes in amusement but didn’t say anything.

Talk turned to the final task until the others from their group trickled in, happily accosted by Draco and the twins so they could collect their winnings.

* * *

The mood in the castle as they entered June was excited and tense again. Everyone was looking forward to the third task, which would take place a week before the end of term.

Potter sat at the Gryffindor table with a strange red-headed tall man and Mrs. Weasley in the Great Hall for the evening feast. Mr. Bagman and the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, had joined the staff table now. Bagman looked quite cheerful, but Cornelius Fudge, who was sitting next to Madame Maxime, looked stern and was not talking. Madame Maxime was concentrating on her plate, and Adrian thought her eyes looked red. Maybe she was worried about Fleur’s safety in the last task?

At one point, the tall red-head got to his feet, smiling easily and made his way to the Slytherin table, to sit beside the twins. On his way, he stopped to chat with Ginny, giving her a quick hug before he continued on his way. So, this had to be one of the older brothers, Adrian thought as he noticed the resemblance between all of them.

There were more courses than usual for supper, but Potter, who was starting to look really nervous now, didn’t eat much. As the enchanted ceiling overhead began to fade from blue to a dusky purple, Headmaster Anderson rose to his feet at the staff table, and silence fell.

“Ladies and gentlemen, in five minutes’ time, I’ll be asking you to make your way down to the Quidditch field for the third and final task of the Tri-wizard Tournament. Will the champions please follow Mr. Bagman down to the stadium now?”

As Potter got up, the Gryffindors all along the table were applauding him; Mrs. Weasley and Alicia wished him good luck, and he headed off out of the Great Hall with Cedric, Fleur, and Viktor.

The noise in the Great Hall was loud now as everyone began talking at once. “Adrian, Draco, we’d like you to meet our older brother, Bill. He’s a curse breaker with Gringotts,” George said over the din, as the twins moved down the table.
“Nice to meet you,” Bill said with a curious look on his face as they greeted the man politely, smiling in welcome.

“Is something wrong?” Adrian asked, pushing Shade down on the seat. The kitten protested, wanting to see what was happening around them.

“No, you’re just not what I expected,” Bill murmured as he sat down, the twins on each side of him. They wore an identical smirk… that alone was slightly worrisome.

Draco and Adrian exchanged blank looks. That was actually supposed to mean something? “I’m sorry, but what does that mean?” Adrian asked finally, unable to contain his curiosity.

“Oh, Ronald has been bending Bill’s ear with tales of how the evil Slytherins are always out to get him and Potter,” Fred said with a laugh.

“Yeah, seems Bill’s been watching you lot all day and realized that what he’s been told doesn’t add up to what he's seen so far,” George finished, chuckling when Bill shoved him away from him in retaliation, though it was good natured and not malicious.

“I've always said you should never judge someone until you’ve met them,” Bill said with a huge grin on his face.

Five minutes later, everyone began to file out of the Great Hall, walking down to the Quidditch field, which was now completely unrecognizable. A twenty-foot-high hedge ran all the way around the edge of it. There was a gap right in front of them: the entrance to the vast maze. The passage beyond it looked dark and creepy.

The stands filled up quickly, the air full of excited voices and the rumbling of feet as the hundreds of students filed into their seats. The sky was a deep, clear blue now, and the first stars were starting to appear. Hagrid, Professor McGonagall, and Professor Flitwick came walking into the stadium and approached Bagman and the champions. They were wearing large, red, luminous stars on their hats, all except Hagrid, who had his on the back of his moleskin vest.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the third and final task of the Triwizard Tournament is about to begin! Let me remind you how the points currently stand! Tied in first place with eighty-five points each: Mr. Cedric Diggory and Mr. Harry Potter of Hogwarts School!” The cheers and applause sent birds from the Forbidden Forest fluttering into the darkening sky. “In second place, with eighty points: Mr. Viktor Krum of Durmstrang Institute!” More applause. “And in third place: Miss Fleur Delacour of Beauxbatons Academy!”

Adrian could just make out Mrs. Weasley, Bill, Ron – who had been allowed on the grounds for the final task – and Alicia applauding Fleur politely, halfway up the stands. He saw Potter wave up at them, and they waved back.

“So… on my whistle, Harry and Cedric!” said Bagman. “Three - two – one!” He gave a short blast on his whistle, and Potter and Cedric hurried forward into the maze.

The towering hedges cast black shadows across the path, and, whether because they were so tall and thick or because they had been enchanted, they were gone from sight as soon as it closed behind them.

Adrian wasn’t surprised when his father sat down beside him, forcing Goyle to move down the bench to accommodate his Head of House. “How are you feeling?” his father asked him which made him frown slightly at the odd question.
“Alright, I guess. Why?” he asked slowly, not minding Shade’s weight on his shoulder. The kitten had moved there so he could see above the students’ heads when Adrian had sat down.

“I think we should go,” his father murmured loud enough for him to hear, his voice not carrying further as he looked at the people around them. Just what was going on?

Without a word, he nudged Draco as he stood up, making his way down the row and out of the stands, his father right behind him. “What’s going on, Father?” he asked once they were out of earshot of the pitch, heading up to the castle.

“The Dark Mark’s been throbbing all day,” Severus explained grimly. “Something tells me that we don’t want to be surrounded by people when whatever happens, happens.”

“Father,” Adrian began, noticing the beetle hanging off the back of his robes. Skeeter hadn’t learned her lesson it seemed. “Do you trust me?” Severus stopped suddenly and looked back at Adrian with a weird look on his face. “Just turn to face the castle and don’t move, no matter what.”

It was a measure of how much his father had faith in him that he turned his back on Adrian and stood still. “Shade?”

*I see it. Nasty creature,* the kitten growled, readying himself to pounce… before he could, however, the beetle fell… straight into the jar Draco had conjured during his distraction. With the lid on, Skeeter was truly stuck.

“You can turn around, Father.”

“What in Merlin’s name is *that,*” the Potions master demanded as he blinked at the beetle scurrying around the jar looking for a way out.

“Rita Skeeter,” Draco murmured, giving the jar a good shake, watching as the beetle knocked around the jar with a few satisfying smacks. “I’m going to let you out, you’re going to transform to your human self and you’re not going to try to escape because I’m sure Shade would just love to bat you around a bit when we get inside.”

*Most definitely,* Shade murmured, licking his lips for emphasis.

*Alright!* Skeeter shrieked in fear.

Adrian nodded to Draco and the blonde did exactly as he’d promised. When Skeeter stood in front of them, a few bruises on her forehead and shoulder where her outfit didn’t cover, Severus hit her with an Obliviate.

“You’re going to go back to the tournament as if you were there the entire time and forget what you heard the three of us discuss here tonight. Now, go!”

They watched as, with a hazy look in her eyes, Skeeter made her way down to the stadium to await the verdict of who was going to win the tournament with everyone else.

Just about that time, Adrian’s scar began to twinge. “I think something’s happening, Father,” he said with a wince, reaching up to rub his forehead.

“Inside, quickly,” Severus ordered, leading them up to the castle.

Adrian’s world was sucked down just as the door to Severus’ quarters closed. He didn’t even see Madreca or Lupin waiting for them… didn’t even know what was happening.
Potter and Diggory were fighting about who had reached the cup first. As Adrian watched, Diggory punched Potter, knocking him down to the ground. The older boy was about to lean down to hit him again when a noise distracted them. From above his head, he heard a high, cold voice say, “Kill the spare.”

A swishing noise and a second voice, screeched the words to the night: “Avada Kedavra!”

A blast of green light blazed in front of Adrian, and he heard something heavy fall to the ground beside him; the pain in his scar reached such a pitch that he wanted to retch but couldn’t, and then it diminished; terrified of what he was about to see, he opened his stinging eyes.

Cedric Diggory was lying spread-eagled on the ground beside him. Potter lay a short distance away and looked scared out of his mind, frozen in place, unable to move. Diggory was dead.

For a second that contained an eternity, Adrian stared into Cedric’s face, at his open gray eyes, blank and expressionless as the windows of a deserted house, at his half-open mouth, which looked slightly surprised. And then he watched as Potter was forcefully pulled to his feet.

The short man in the cloak had put down his bundle, lit his wand, and dragged Potter toward a marble headstone. Curious, Adrian followed until he saw the name upon it flickering in the wand light before the frozen boy was forced around and slammed against it.

Tom Riddle

The cloaked man was now conjuring tight cords around Potter, tying him from neck to ankles to the headstone. Adrian could hear shallow, fast breathing from the depths of the hood; Potter finally came out of his shock and struggled, and the man hit him - hit him with a hand that had a finger missing. And Adrian realized who was under the hood. It was Wormtail. “Let me go!” Potter gasped in his panic, eyes wide. “You’ve got the wrong guy! The one you killed was the one who won!”

But Wormtail, who had finished conjuring the ropes, didn’t reply; he was busy checking the tightness of the cords, his fingers trembling uncontrollably, fumbling over the knots. Once sure that Potter was bound so tightly to the headstone that he couldn’t move an inch, Wormtail drew a length of some black material from the inside of his cloak and stuffed it roughly into Potter’s mouth; then, without a word, he turned from Potter and hurried away. The bound boy couldn’t make a sound, nor could he see where Wormtail had gone; he couldn’t turn his head to see beyond the headstone; he could see only what was right in front of him.

But Adrian could see everything. He watched as Wormtail made his way to the side of the grotto he’d come out of and began tugging something heavy out of it. Looking around, he could see what he’d missed at first...

Cedric’s body was lying some twenty feet away. Some way beyond him, glinting in the starlight, lay the Tri-wizard Cup. Potter's wand was on the ground at Cedric's feet. The bundle of robes that he’d thought was a baby was close by, at the foot of the grave. It seemed to be stirring fretfully. Adrian watched it, and his scar seared with pain again… and he suddenly knew that he didn’t want to see what was in those robes... he didn't want that bundle opened.…

A noise at Potter’s feet drew his attention from the bundle on the ground. He looked to the side and saw a gigantic snake slithering through the grass, circling the headstone where the boy was tied. Wormtail’s fast, wheezy breathing was growing louder again as he pushed a stone cauldron to the foot of the grave. It was full of what seemed to be water - Adrian could hear it slopping around - and it was larger than any cauldron he’d seen, a great stone belly large enough for a full-grown man to
Adrian shook his head in confusion as he watched the man struggle with the cauldron, wondering why he hadn’t simply levitated it into place.

The thing inside the bundle of robes on the ground was stirring more persistently, as though it was trying to free itself. Suddenly there were crackling flames beneath the cauldron. The large snake slithered away into the darkness.

The liquid in the cauldron seemed to heat very fast. The surface began not only to bubble, but to send out fiery sparks, as though it were on fire. Steam was thickening, blurring the outline of Wormtail tending the fire. The movements beneath the robes on the ground became more agitated. And Adrian heard the high, cold voice again. “Hurry!”

The whole surface of the water was alight with sparks now. It might have been encrusted with diamonds. “It is ready, Master.”

“Now…” the cold voice said.

Wormtail pulled open the robes on the ground, revealing what was inside them, and Adrian let out a yell that was strangled, instinctively closing his mouth to prevent the sound from being too loud. Somehow, he knew he shouldn’t scream. Potter was making enough sound to cover even the small noise that had escaped him, however, screaming behind his gag in horror.

It was as though Wormtail had flipped over a stone and revealed something ugly, slimy, and blind - but worse, a hundred times worse. The thing Wormtail had been carrying had the shape of a crouched human child, except that Adrian had never seen anything less like a child. It was hairless and scaly-looking, dark, raw, and reddish black. Its arms and legs were thin and feeble, and its face - no child alive ever had a face like that - flat and snakelike, with gleaming red eyes.

The thing seemed almost helpless, however, as it raised its thin arms, put them around Wormtail's neck, and Wormtail lifted it. As he did so, his hood fell back, and Adrian saw the look of revulsion on Wormtail's weak, pale face in the firelight as he carried the… thing to the rim of the cauldron.

For one moment, he saw the evil, flat face illuminated in the sparks dancing on the surface of the potion. And then Wormtail lowered it into the cauldron. There was a hiss, and it vanished below the surface. Adrian heard its frail body hit the bottom with a soft thud.

Let it drown, he thought with a whimper as his scar burned almost past endurance, please… let it drown….

Wormtail was speaking. His voice shook; he seemed frightened beyond his wits but he didn’t falter in his task. He raised his wand, closed his eyes, and spoke to the night. “Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son!”

The surface of the grave at Potter's feet cracked. Adrian watched as a fine trickle of dust rose into the air at Wormtail's command and fell softly into the cauldron. The diamond surface of the water broke and hissed; it sent sparks in all directions and turned a vivid, poisonous-looking blue.

And now Wormtail was whimpering. He pulled a long, thin, shining silver dagger from inside his cloak. His voice broke into petrified sobs. “Flesh - of the servant - w-willingly given - you will - revive - your master.” He stretched his right hand out in front of him - the hand with the missing finger. He gripped the dagger very tightly in his left hand and swung it upward before he could lose his nerve.
Adrian realized what Wormtail was about to do a second before it happened - he clamped his hands over his ears as tightly as he could, but he couldn't block the scream that pierced the night, that went through him as though he'd been stabbed with the dagger, too. He heard something fall into the cauldron with a sickening splash. Adrian couldn't stand to look... but the potion had turned a burning red; the light of it shone through his closed eyelids…

Wormtail was gasping and moaning with agony. Adrian watched, unable to move, as Wormtail breathed in anguish as the rat faced man stumbled his way over to Potter. “B-blood of the enemy... forcibly taken... you will... resurrect your foe.”

Potter could do nothing to prevent it, he was tied too tightly.... Squinting down, struggling hopelessly at the ropes binding him. That was when Adrian realized that it should be him tied there instead of Potter. He saw the shining silver dagger shaking in Wormtail’s remaining hand. He watched its point penetrate the crook of Potter’s right arm, blood seeping down the sleeve of his torn robes as Potter screamed in pain behind his gag. Wormtail, still panting with pain, jumbled in his pocket for a glass vial and held it to Potter's cut, so that a dribble of blood fell into it.

He staggered back to the cauldron with the blood and poured it in. The liquid within turned, instantly, a blinding white. Wormtail, his job done, dropped to his knees beside the cauldron, then slumped sideways and lay on the ground, cradling the bleeding stump of his arm, gasping and sobbing.

The cauldron was simmering, sending its diamond sparks in all directions, so blindingly bright that it turned all else to velvety blackness. Nothing happened…

Let it have drowned, Adrian thought, let it have gone wrong…

And then, suddenly, the sparks emanating from the cauldron were extinguished. A surge of white steam billowed thickly from the cauldron instead, obliterating everything in front of him, so that he couldn't see Wormtail or Cedric or anything but vapor hanging in the air….

It's gone wrong, he thought desperately, it's drowned… please… please, let it be dead…

But then, through the mist in front of him, he saw, with an icy surge of dread, the dark outline of a man, tall and skeletally thin, rising slowly from inside the cauldron. “Robe me, Wormtail” a high, cold voice from behind the steam said, and Wormtail, sobbing and moaning, still cradling his mutilated stump, scrambled to pick up the black robes from the ground, and pulled them one-handed over his master's head.

The thin man stepped out of the cauldron, staring at Potter… and Potter stared back with so much fear his face had lost colour. Adrian figured Dumbledore hadn’t shared this part of his plan with this boy before sending him to school this year… if he even knew about it. The man in front of Potter was grotesque in his appearance: whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils…

Lord Voldemort had risen again!!
Chapter 11 - Harry Potter is Dead?

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 11 – Harry Potter is Dead?

Voldemort looked away from Potter and began examining his own body. His hands were like large, pale spiders; his long white fingers caressed his own chest, his arms, his face; the red eyes, whose pupils were slits, like a cat's, gleamed still more brightly through the darkness. He held up his hands and flexed the fingers, his expression rapt and exultant.

If this had been any other situation, Adrian would’ve rolled his eyes and told him to get a room so he could play with himself, as it was, he felt his stomach turn in revulsion…

Voldemort didn’t seem to take the slightest notice of Wormtail, who laid twitching and bleeding on the ground, or of the great snake which had slithered back into sight and was circling Potter again, hissing. Voldemort slipped one of those unnaturally long-fingered hands into a deep pocket and drew out a wand. He caressed it gently too; and then he raised it, and pointed it at Wormtail, who was lifted off the ground and thrown against the headstone where Potter was tied; he fell at the foot of it and lay there, crumpled up and crying. Voldemort turned his scarlet eyes upon Potter, laughing a high, cold, mirthless laugh.

Wormtail's robes were shining with blood now; he had wrapped the stump of his arm in them in an effort to stanch the flow… it didn’t seem to be working. “My Lord…” he choked, “my Lord… you promised… you did promise…”

“Hold out your arm,” said Voldemort lazily, looking down at the figure that was Wormtail with amusement lighting his eyes. Adrian couldn’t help the shiver that shook him at the indifference in the snake-faced man before him.

“Oh, Master… thank you, Master...” He extended the bleeding stump, but Voldemort laughed again.

“The other arm, Wormtail.”

“Master, please... please...” Wormtail whimpered pitifully as Voldemort bent down and pulled out his left arm. He forced the sleeve of the downed man’s robes up past his elbow, and Adrian saw something on the skin, something like a vivid red tattoo - a skull with a snake protruding from its mouth - the image that had appeared in the sky at the Quidditch World Cup! The Dark Mark! Voldemort examined it carefully, ignoring Wormtail's uncontrollable weeping.

“It is back,” he said softly, “they will all have noticed it... and now, we shall see... now, we shall know...” He pressed his long white bony forefinger to the brand on Wormtail's arm. Adrian’s forehead seared with a sharp pain again, and he heard Wormtail let out a fresh howl as he clutched at his head, trying to control the pain... Voldemort removed his fingers from Wormtail's mark, and Adrian gasped in relief as the pain lessened, blinking a few times as something trickle into them, wiping sweat from his forehead.

It wasn’t until he wiped his hand across his mouth that he realized he was bleeding. Staring in shock, he touched his forehead again. It came back sticky and wet. It seemed that the place where his scar should be was bleeding. He’d forgotten about it after his father had removed it when he was younger...
Shaking himself out of his stupor, he looked up to see what Voldemort was doing. There was a look of cruel satisfaction on his face when Voldemort finally straightened up. He threw back his head, and stared around at the dark graveyard. “How many will be brave enough to return when they feel it?” he whispered, his gleaming red eyes fixed upon the stars. “And how many will be foolish enough to stay away?”

He began to pace up and down before Potter and Wormtail, eyes sweeping the graveyard all the while. It was making Adrian nervous, especially when the snake-like eyes ghosted over him, making him feel like Voldemort could see him but he couldn’t move to hide or anything… but each time, his gaze would continue on.

After a minute or so, he looked down at Potter again, a cruel smile twisting his snakelike face. “You stand, Harry Potter, upon the remains of my late father,” he hissed softly. It took a few seconds for Adrian to realize Voldemort was slowly confirming what he and the others had guessed about Tom Marvolo Riddle… “A Muggle and a fool… very like your dear mother. But they both had their uses, did they not? Your mother died to defend you as a child… and I killed my father for his neglect, and see how useful he has proved himself, even in death….”

Voldemort laughed again. Up and down he paced, looking all around him as he walked, and the snake continued to circle in the grass. “You see that house upon the hillside, Potter? My father lived there. My mother, a witch who lived here in this village, fell in love with him. But he abandoned her when she told him what she was…. He didn’t like magic, my father...” Voldemort’s voice was almost a whisper when he said that last part.

Adrian found it funny how much like Uncle Vernon Tom’s father sounded… Would he have turned out like this man if he’d stayed with the Dursleys?

“He left her and returned to his Muggle parents before I was even born, Potter, and she died giving birth to me, leaving me to be raised in a Muggle orphanage, of all places… but I vowed to find him… I avenged myself upon him, that fool who gave me his name... Tom Riddle…” Still he paced, his red eyes darting from grave to grave. “Listen to me, reliving family history…” he said quietly with a mirthless laugh, “why, I’m growing quite sentimental... But look, Harry! My true family returns….”

The air was suddenly full of the swishing of cloaks. Between graves, behind the yew tree, in every shadowy space, wizards were Apparating. All of them were hooded and masked. And one by one they moved forward… slowly, cautiously, as though they could hardly believe their eyes. Voldemort stood in silence, waiting for them. Then one of the Death Eaters fell to his knees, crawled toward Voldemort and kissed the hem of his black robes.

“Master… Master…” he murmured.

The Death Eaters behind him did the same; each of them approaching Voldemort on his knees and kissing his robes, before backing away and standing up, forming a silent circle, which enclosed Tom Riddle’s grave, Potter, Voldemort, and the sobbing and twitching heap that was Wormtail… and indirectly, Adrian.

From his vantage point somewhere to Potter’s left, Adrian could see them all clearly and he didn’t know what to think. The Death Eaters had left gaps in the circle, as though waiting for more people. Voldemort, however, didn’t seem to expect any more. He looked around at the hooded faces, and though there was no wind, rustling seemed to run around the circle, as though it had shivered.

“Welcome, Death Eaters,” said Voldemort quietly. “Thirteen years… thirteen years since we last met. Yet you answer my call as though it were yesterday, we are still united under the Dark Mark,
then! Or are we?” He put back his terrible face and sniffed, his slit-like nostrils widening. “I smell guilt,” he said. "There is a stench of guilt upon the air.

A second shiver ran around the circle, as though each member of it longed, but did not dare, to step back from him.

“I see you all, whole and healthy, with your powers intact - such prompt appearances! And I ask myself... why did this band of wizards never come to the aid of their master to whom they swore eternal loyalty?” No one spoke. No one dared moved except Wormtail who was still sobbing over his bleeding arm.

“And I answer myself,” Voldemort whispered, "they must have believed me broken, they thought I was gone. They slipped back among my enemies, and they pleaded innocence, and ignorance, and bewitchment... And then I ask myself, but how could they have believed I would not rise again? They, who knew the steps I took, long ago, to guard myself against mortal death? They, who had seen proof of the immensity of my power in the times when I was mightier than any wizard alive.

“And I answer myself again, perhaps they believed a still greater power could exist, one that could vanquish even Lord Voldemort... perhaps they now pay allegiance to another... perhaps to that champion of commoners, Mudbloods and Muggles... Albus Dumbledore?” At the mention of Dumbledore's name, the members of the circle stirred, and some muttered and shook their heads. Voldemort ignored them. “I confess myself... disappointed.”

One of the men suddenly flung himself forward, breaking the circle. Trembling from head to foot, he collapsed at Voldemort's feet. “Master!” he shrieked, “Master, forgive me! Forgive us all!”

Voldemort began to laugh. He raised his wand. “Crucio!” The Death Eater on the ground writhed and shrieked; Adrian was sure the sound must carry to the houses around them... Let the Aurors come, he thought desperately... anyone... anything... If only to stop this insanity!

Voldemort raised his wand. The tortured Death Eater lay flat upon the ground, gasping. “Get up, Avery,” Voldemort said softly. “Stand up. You ask for forgiveness? I do not forgive. I do not forget. Thirteen long years... I want thirteen years' repayment before I forgive you. Wormtail here has paid some of his debt already, have you not, Wormtail?” He looked down at Wormtail, who continued to sob. “You returned to me, not out of loyalty, but out of fear of your old friends. You deserve this pain, Wormtail. You know that, don't you?”

“Yes, Master,” moaned Wormtail, “please, Master... please...”

“Yet you helped return me to my body,” Voldemort said coolly, watching Wormtail sob on the ground. “Worthless and traitorous as you are, you helped me... and Lord Voldemort rewards his helpers....” Voldemort raised his wand again and whirled it through the air. A streak of what looked like molten silver hung shining in the wand's wake. Momentarily shapeless, it writhed and then formed itself into a gleaming replica of a human hand, bright as moonlight, which soared downward and fixed itself upon Wormtail's bleeding wrist.

Wormtail's sobbing stopped abruptly. His breathing harsh and ragged, he raised his head and stared in disbelief at the silver hand, now attached seamlessly to his arm, as though he were wearing a dazzling glove. He flexed the shining fingers, then, trembling, picked up a small twig on the ground and crushed it into powder.

“My Lord,” he whispered. “Master... it is beautiful... thank you... thank you...” He scrambled forward on his knees and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes.
“May your loyalty never waver again, Wormtail,” said Voldemort.

“No, my Lord… never, my Lord…” Wormtail stood up and took his place in the circle, staring at his powerful new hand, his face still shining with tears. Voldemort now approached the man on Wormtail's right.

“Lucius, my slippery friend,” he whispered, halting before him. Adrian shook his head in denial. His uncle wouldn’t be a part of this group… there had to be a mistake… “I am told that you have not renounced the old ways, though to the world you present a respectable face. You are still ready to take the lead in a spot of Muggle-torture, I believe. Yet you never tried to find me, Lucius… Your exploits at the Quidditch World Cup were fun, I daresay… and yet you did not kill or capture Harry Potter for me… but might not your energies have been better directed toward finding and aiding your master?”

“My Lord, I was constantly on the alert,” came Lucius Malfoy's voice swiftly from beneath the hood. Adrian wanted to cry, but fought the urge, wishing… hoping there was an explanation. His godfather wouldn’t do these things. Wouldn’t want him dead! He loved Adrian! He knew that with every fiber of his being… “Had there been any sign from you, any whisper of your whereabouts, I would have been at your side immediately, nothing could have prevented me -”

“And yet you ran from my Mark, when a faithful Death Eater sent it into the sky last summer?” said Voldemort lazily, and his uncle stopped talking abruptly. “Yes, I know all about that, Lucius… You have disappointed me…”

“Forgive me, my Lord. I thought keeping pretenses within the Ministry was of better use to you than staying to bask in the glory of your impending return.”

“You have a point,” Voldemort murmured, watching Lucius carefully. “However, I expect more faithful service in the future.”

“Of course, my Lord, of course… You are merciful, thank you….” Lucius hesitated slightly. “My Lord, forgive me, but Severus managed to send word to me shortly after your summons that he is unable to come to you due to the new Headmaster of Hogwarts. He did not dare raise suspicions with the man so not to reveal your return to us.”

Voldemort shot him a look of surprise. So, he hadn’t known, or hadn’t believed, Dumbledore wasn’t Hogwarts’ Headmaster anymore… Either that or he had believed he’d lost Severus Snape as his servant… “Indeed…”

Adrian frowned because he knew his father had been heading for his quarters before this had all gone down. Was this proof that his godfather wasn’t the cruel man Voldemort claimed him to be? He hoped so.

Voldemort moved on, and stopped, staring at the space - large enough for two people - that separated Lucius and the next man. “The Lestranges should stand here,” Voldemort said quietly. “But they are entombed in Azkaban. They were faithful. They went to Azkaban rather than renounce me… When Azkaban is broken open, the Lestranges will be honored beyond their dreams. The Dementors will join us… they are our natural allies… we will recall the banished giants… I shall have all my devoted servants returned to me, and an army of creatures whom all fear….”

He walked on. Some of the Death Eaters he passed in silence, but he paused before others and spoke to them. “Macnair… destroying dangerous beasts for the Ministry of Magic now, Wormtail tells me? You shall have better victims than that soon. Lord Voldemort will provide….”
“Thank you, Master... thank you,” Macnair murmured.

“And here” - Voldemort moved on to the two largest hooded figures - “we have Crabbe... you will do better this time, will you not, Crabbe? And you, Goyle?”

They bowed clumsily, muttering dully. “Yes, Master...”

“We will, Master...”

“The same goes for you, Nott,” Voldemort said quietly as he walked past a stooped figure in Mr. Goyle’s shadow.

“My Lord, I prostrate myself before you, I am your most faithful -”

“That will do,” Voldemort said. He had reached the largest gap of all, and he stood surveying it with his blank, red eyes, as though he could see people standing there.

“And here we have six missing Death Eaters... three dead in my service. One, who cannot return for fear of discovery... one, who I believe has left me forever... he will be killed, of course... and one, who remains my most faithful servant, and who has already re-entered my service.”

The Death Eaters stirred, and Adrian saw their eyes dart sideways at one another through their masks.

“He, too, is at Hogwarts, that faithful servant, and it was through his efforts that our young friend arrived here tonight... Yes,” said Voldemort, a grin curling his lipless mouth as the eyes of the circle flashed in Potter's direction. “Harry Potter has kindly joined us for my rebirthing party. One might go so far as to call him my guest of honor. There will also be honor beyond dreams for the one who destroys the old man for me.”

There was a silence. Then Lucius stepped forward and spoke from under the mask. “Master, we crave to know... we beg you to tell us... how you have achieved this... this miracle... how you managed to return to us...”

“Ah, what a story it is, Lucius,” said Voldemort. “And it begins - and will end - with our young friend here.” He walked lazily over to stand next to Potter, so that the eyes of the whole circle were upon the two of them. The snake continued to circle.

“You know, of course, that they have called this boy my downfall?” Voldemort said softly, his red eyes upon Potter. The close proximity to Adrian, however, made his head begin to burn so fiercely that he almost screamed in agony. He tried to move back, to put some distance between them, but it was as if his feet were glued to the ground. “You all know that on the night I lost my powers and my body, I tried to kill him. His mother died in the attempt to save him - and unwittingly provided him with a protection I admit I had not foreseen... I could not touch the boy.”

Voldemort raised one of his long white fingers and put it very close to Harry's cheek. “His mother left upon him the traces of other sacrifice... This is old magic, I should have remembered it. I was foolish to overlook it... but no matter. I can touch him now...”

“Hello, Tom,” Adrian heard from his left and suddenly, Dumbledore was there, watching them with his usual smirk and twinkling eyes. “I see I haven’t missed anything yet.”

“Dumbledore,” Voldemort sneered, turning to face the old man, ignoring the way Potter struggled against his bonds. “How did you find us?”
"I followed our mutual friend there," the old man murmured, pointing at Potter.

Adrian wondered if Dumbledore would tell Voldemort that the boy he’d used to bring himself back wasn’t who he’d thought it was... the funny thing? It seemed anyone – not necessarily Harry Potter – could’ve been used to give him a body... so then why had he absolutely wanted the boy he thought was Harry Potter? There had to be more to the blood used than simply bringing him back...

Something flitted to the surface, something about Wormtail saying he could get any witch or wizard to complete the ritual... So then why...? Then Adrian realized what it was, it allowed the Dark Lord to bind himself to his enemy even more than before, or maybe it was simply an ironic use. He didn’t really care.

"Impossible," Voldemort scoffed impatiently.

"Is it?" Dumbledore murmured mockingly, angering Voldemort further. "As soon as I heard from one of my contacts that the Tri-Wizard tournament would be held at Hogwarts, I knew you’d attempt something. It’s in your nature, after all. Did you really think putting the boy’s name into the cup would hide the fact that you intended to use him to come back? Or that if I had really wanted, I could’ve stopped your... servant when I saw him tamper with the goblet? I also knew that the new Hogwarts Headmaster wouldn’t know about the clause that would’ve allowed the boy to renege the honor of joining the champions. Had the boy simply refused to take his name, he wouldn’t have been added to the roster."

"Is there a point to your ramblings?" the snake-faced man pacing back and forth demanded. It was obvious to Adrian that he didn’t like Dumbledore being there.

"Only that you’ve made a serious mistake," the old man began, smiling in amusement. "What would you have done had his name not been accepted? The change to the goblet would’ve been pointless and you would’ve gotten one of the other champions instead." To make his point, he turned to look at Diggory’s body. “You’ve gambled poorly on this gambit, Tom.”

Voldemort barred his teeth in annoyance. Adrian realized this maniac didn’t want anyone knowing who he really was: Tom Marvolo Riddle. He felt like smacking himself in the head as he remembered the diary and the brief problems it had caused him.

"As for this boy, he’s of no further use to you," Dumbledore said, bringing Adrian’s attention back to what was happening. Dumbledore was pointing at Potter, but Voldemort was beyond wanting to listen to anymore of the old man’s drivel...

“I’ll say when his usefulness is done with, old man,” he growled, coming to a halt close to Potter... which, unfortunately meant he was closer to Adrian. His head flared again and he missed what Dumbledore said next but behind Voldemort, Lucius had taken off his mask so the old man could see him glare at him in hatred.

“There’s nothing you can tell me that will change what I’m about to do, old man,” Voldemort growled out... and laughed as a jet of green light flew over his shoulder and struck the old man in the chest before he even realized what was happening.

Adrian was shocked.

Dumbledore’s eyes were opened wide in shock as well as he was thrown backwards, mouth open though no sound came from it. Within seconds, the old man lay dead on the ground. Whatever he’d been about to say would never be heard.

Over Voldemort’s shoulder, Adrian saw his godfather with a look of satisfaction on his handsome
“Well done, Lucius,” Voldemort said in a pleased tone, turning to look at him before turning back to look at Potter. “Very well done indeed. Now, where was I? Oh yes, Potter…” Voldemort raised one of his long white fingers and put it very close to Potter's cheek again. “I can touch him now.” He grinned evilly as he finally touched the bound boy… and nothing happened. His grin fell when the tied boy didn’t shriek in pain, his eyes so wide it was a wonder they didn’t pop out of his head…

“This,” he hissed angrily, “is not Harry Potter!”

Adrian expected Voldemort to rip the gag out of the boy’s mouth and demand answers, but it seemed he was beyond reason now that he’d been denied his chance at revenge… He stepped back and the look on his face was terrible. “Avada Kadavra!” he roared out, the spell striking the boy in the chest. Unable to avoid the spell, the boy who’d been pretending to be Harry Potter died, the light leaving his eyes instantly…

“That,” he hissed angrily, “is not Harry Potter!”

Adrian came to himself again then, screaming in pain, his head feeling like it was splitting in two as he clutched at it. “It’s alright,” Severus murmured gently as his eyes snapped open, looking up at the man, gasping for air. He quickly rolled over onto his side as his stomach rebelled and he threw up over the side of the couch.

When he was done, he collapsed against his father, panting for breath as the mess was magicked away, eye closed. He moaned as he was moved back onto his back, the room swaying behind his eyelids. A cloth was pressed against his forehead where the scar should’ve been but he didn’t want to open his eyes to see if he was bleeding like he’d been in… wherever he’d been.

He swallowed the potions pressed to his lips without fuss, feeling instant relief as it took the edge off his pounding headache and his body began to relax minutely. “Adrian,” his father whispered softly. “What did you see?”

“He’s back,” Adrian croaked out, squinting up at his father, coughing as his throat hurt. A glass of water was held to his lips… which was a good thing because he didn’t think he’d be able to hold it… not with the way he was shaking. “He killed Potter,” he continued hoarsely when he’d had enough water, his throat feeling slightly better.

“He killed Potter,” he continued hoarsely when he’d had enough water, his throat feeling slightly better.

“Lucius should be here shortly. Did you see him there?”

Adrian nodded carefully, his head pounding slightly with the movement. “A lot of people were there. Uncle Lucius killed Dumbledore,” he whispered, his eyes tearing up. “Why would he willingly do that?”

“To keep you safe,” Madreca said from behind Severus. “You understand what would’ve happened if the old man had been allowed to reveal who you truly are?” Adrian nodded hesitantly, not having thought about it that way. “Did he realize the boy wasn’t who he pretended to be?”

“That’s why he killed him. He’s going to be looking for me now.” Adrian knew there was fear in his eyes… he couldn’t help it. He’d seen what the madman would do to get his way. As soon as he found out who Adrian really was, he was going to die as well.

Severus pulled him up and held him close until he’d stopped shaking. By that time, Lucius had arrived, looking worse for wear but whole. “I bought us some time,” his uncle was saying to
Madreca and Lupin. “He’s sent some of the others to look for clues as to where the real ‘Harry Potter’ could be, but nothing will be found.”

“What about Adrian’s adoption papers?” Severus asked with a frown. “They’ll give away Adrian’s true identity since I added it in.”

“Nothing will be found,” the blonde aristocrat reiterated with a gleam in his eyes. “When the Mark began to get clearer and I realized what it meant, I made sure any mention of the adoption was… vanished. There is no mention of his adoption anywhere at the Ministry and you said the Goblins have already made sure that the names on Adrian’s vaults are all under his adopted name and not the Potters’. Everything is taken care of.”

Adrian felt relief flood him. He’d always known his uncle was good. He hadn’t wanted to believe what Voldemort had said. This was proof that he’d been right to trust this man. When he opened his mouth, Lucius seemed to guess what he was about to ask him and shook his head slightly. Adrian nodded in response… he would wait until they were alone.

“Actually,” Lupin said, wincing slightly as he remembered something. “Tonks know.”

“How?” Severus demanded angrily.

“I asked her to check on it after you told me about the adoption. I’ll fix it,” he promised grimly. “I can erase it from her mind. I’m supposed to meet her tomorrow.”

“You’d better.”

Shade meowed as he crawled onto Adrian’s lap. *What happened?*

“Vision,” he whispered as he looked down at the kitten, noticing Kaida sitting on the floor by Draco. Pulling away from his father, he moved Shade so he could crawl over to his boyfriend, curling up beside him.

Most of the time he wanted to cuddle with his father, but right now… right now, he needed Draco. Without comment, Draco reclined on the couch and held him against his side as the adults moved to one side of the room, giving them some privacy. Shade huffed in annoyance and padded his way over to Adrian again.

“How are you feeling?” Draco asked softly, Adrian’s head resting on his chest.

“Tired and achy,” he murmured, closing his eyes, “like I’ve gotten a few Bludgers to the head.” He felt the kitten settle himself on his hip and smiled when he purred comfortingly. It just so happened it was his bad hip, but with everything else hurting, his hip just wasn’t that much in pain. “At least I don’t have to worry about two attackers now.”

“No, now you only have one,” Draco drawled sarcastically as he ran his fingers through Adrian’s hair. It was extremely soothing and felt wonderful, pushing his headache to some deep corner where he could ignore it. It also occurred to him then that this had to be how pets felt when people did the same thing to them. “Try to sleep,” Draco murmured softly.

“Mm.” He was already drifting, the rhythmic feel of the fingers hypnotic in their movement…

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“I’m assuming that he was sucked down the link as soon as Potter was taken to the graveyard,” Lucius murmured with a sigh. He’d arrived in Severus’ quarters a few minutes after Adrian had
collapsed and soon afterwards, the Dark Mark on his arm had begun to burn. He’d gotten out of there as soon as he’d been able to without raising the Dark Lord’s suspicions.

“Probably,” Severus murmured, rubbing his forehead as he thought about what had happened. “I managed to get him in here before he went down. Tell me what happened?”

“The Dark Lord spoke to some of us, but only Avery was stupid enough to anger him,” he said as he looked over at the two boys curled up together on the couch. Adrian had angled himself so that he was propped up against Draco’s side. “Has it begun, then?” he asked, nodding at the boys.

“Yes,” the Potions master sighed. “It’s too soon, but then not really unexpected given the situation.”

“I also set it up so the Dark Lord thinks you didn’t show up because of the new Headmaster,” Lucius said, shaking his head and turning the conversation back to the subject at hand: Voldemort’s return. “This way he won’t be trying to kill you on sight.”

“I appreciate that,” Severus drawled wryly.

“So now that Dumbledore and the imposter are dead, this eliminates two potential threats to Adrian’s safety. What about Black?”

“Sirius has agreed to stay away from Adrian until he’s ready to speak with him,” Lupin murmured with a nod. “He also realizes that it’s going to be a while before that happens.”

“I wonder why?” Severus growled sarcastically but no one commented. Everyone knew it was going to take long time before Adrian was willing to speak to Black and why. Adrian was still afraid of the man and nothing was going to make him change his mind… of course, no one was going to push him to change it either. “What else happened?”

“I think Karkaroff might be targeted for his treachery… if that was who the Dark Lord was speaking of when he said ‘one has left me forever’ but would die.”

Severus nodded, not really surprised. “He’s been real fearful since the Dark Mark became more pronounced. I wouldn’t be surprised if he tried to make a run for it. Anything else?”

“Nothing. I assume Adrian’s already told you of Dumbledore’s and Potter’s death?” He nodded when the others nodded in affirmation. “I have to go. Narcissa is going to be beside herself with worry,” Lucius told them with a sigh. “I’m usually home by now. Bring Adrian over one night. I know he’s got questions for me and I’d rather answer them before he gets the wrong impression on the events he witnessed.”

“Tomorrow is Saturday. We’ll come over for lunch,” Severus agreed thoughtfully. “I’m sure they’ll be glad for the change of scenery before they have to board the train next week.”

Lucius hesitated marginally, feeling slightly protective of his godson… of course, some would speculate that it could be because if Adrian was safe, Draco would be protected as well, though it was far from the truth. He’d accepted the boy as his godchild for a reason and that was why he was protective. “Should I take them for the night? It might be better for Adrian to be in a place he knows is safe.”

He watched as Severus frowned at that, looking over at the boys before he nodded. “I’ll give you some potions for Adrian. He’s going to need a Dreamless Sleep potion for tonight so he’s not plagued with nightmares. I’ll get Poppy to check on him tomorrow after he’s rested a bit.”

As the Potions master moved to gather what was needed, Lucius moved over to the couch. “Adrian,”
he said gently. He watched as the boy struggled to open his eyes, blinking dazedly up at him. He smiled softly. “I’m going to take you both to Malfoy Manor for the night. It’s time to get up.”

“Alright,” Adrian mumbled but it was a few more minutes before he moved, groaning in pain. Lucius helped him to his feet, holding him while he swayed in place. Draco picked up the kitten and followed him to the fireplace. He nodded to Severus as he accepted the phials, placing them in his robe pocket for safety.

“Draco, you come next,” he murmured as he held Adrian against him, just to make sure the boy didn’t fall on his face on getting to the Manor, or fall out of the wrong fireplace. Draco nodded sharply and waited as Madreca threw some powder into the fireplace. “Malfoy Manor!”

Once home, he helped Adrian out of the fireplace and waited for Draco before leading the boy upstairs. “Here are some potions for him if you need them,” he told Draco after Adrian had been settled on the bed, looking as if he was going to be sick. “Adrian,” he said as he sat on the edge of the bed, holding two phials in his hand: a Calming draught and the Dreamless Sleep potion. “Your father wants you to take these.”

“Okay,” Adrian whispered, taking first the Calming Draught then the Dreamless Sleep potion. “Thanks, Uncle Lucius.”

“Try to sleep,” he said gently, pushing the dark locks out of the boy’s face. He stayed until the green eyes closed before turning to look at his son with a soft sigh. He was actually impressed that Draco showed no jealousy for his friend. Of course, being raised together probably helped… “The rest of the potions are for tomorrow if he needs them. If you have any problems, Draco,” he said finally, “any at all, come wake me up.”

“Yes, Father.”

“Good night,” he murmured as he kissed Draco’s forehead before going in search of his wife. Tomorrow was going to be a very trying day…

* * *

Adrian woke up feeling refreshed, draped across Draco’s chest, with Kaida and Shade sleeping at the foot of the bed. “It’s about time,” Draco drawled and he looked up into amused grey eyes. “You’ve been making some interesting sounds. What were you dreaming of?”

“Us,” he murmured with a small smile, beginning to lean in for the kiss he could see promised in Draco’s eyes…

“Draco,” Narcissa said as she opened his door. The boys pulled apart quickly, biting back curses. Adrian buried his face in the pillow to hide hid his burning face. “It’s time to get up.”

“Yes, Mother,” Draco murmured, his voice not betraying his annoyance at being interrupted.

“Come on, Adrian,” she said when he didn’t move. “Your father will be here in a few minutes and expects you to greet him when he shows up.”

“Yes, Aunt Cissa,” he grumbled, sighing in resignation before he grunted in surprise as an unexpected weight settled on his back. “You know, Shade, for a kitten, you’re awfully heavy.”

*I resent the implication that you’re trying to tell me I’m getting fat,* the kitten said with a growl of annoyance, and Adrian had the feeling that his pet was glaring at him, which was confirmed when Narcissa laughed suddenly. *I’ll show you heavy,* the cat growled again, bouncing on Adrian’s back.
Adrian grunted at the sudden move but then laughed with Draco and Narcissa, sitting up and dislodging Shade from his back. The kitten squeaked – actually *squeaked!* – in surprise as he tumbled off Adrian’s back to land in a heap on the blankets.

Before the kitten could retaliate, however, Kaida had him pinned under a heavy paw and began to wash him. *Mama!* Shade protested, trying to claw his way out from under the heavy limb. *I’m busy here!*

Adrian laughed as Kaida ignored the protest and continued to wash her only remaining kitten with an amused gleam in her eyes… just because she could.

“I’ll leave you boys to wash up,” Narcissa said in amusement, giving them each a warning look. “Breakfast is in a half hour and Severus will be here in twenty minutes;”

“Yes, Mother,” Draco muttered in exasperation.

“Yes, Aunt Cissa,” Adrian said with a sigh. “See,” he told Shade when the door closed behind the woman. “You’re not the only one who can’t get away without taking a bath.”

*This is so humiliating,* he grumbled with a sigh as he glared ahead of him, waiting impatiently for Kaida to release him. *Come on, Mama, I can take a shower with them!*

*Not this morning,* she told him.

Grinning, Adrian followed Draco into the bathroom, shaking his head. He figured if a cat physically could, Shade would’ve been drumming his fingers on the blanket in impatience and annoyance.

“What was going on there?” Draco asked him.

“Kaida decided she was giving him a bath and he was telling her he could take a shower with us,” he told the blonde teen as they pulled their clothes off, throwing them into the hamper. “She told him not today. He finds it humiliating when she pulls the mother card, especially if he’s playing with me.”

“You know,” Draco murmured as they stepped under the spray. This was not unlike the showers in the dorm so being naked together didn’t bother either boy… of course, they’d been taking showers like this for years. Why should it matter now? “I don’t think I’ve ever heard a cat squeak before.” The boys looked at each other and laughed.

“It’s too bad Aunt Cissa interrupted us,” Adrian said with a sigh and only the knowledge that his father would walk in on them stopped him from trying to continue what he’d tried to start earlier.

“There’ll be other times,” Draco said with a shrug but Adrian could tell his boyfriend was disappointed as well.

However, by the time they were dried, dressed and potions taken, Adrian was depressed again. Voldemort was back. His uncle – the one who’d taught him so much – had been accused of torturing people and enjoyed doing it. Had the snake-faced man been right? Was Lucius a murderer or a torturer?

Exactly twenty minutes after Narcissa had left them, Adrian was waiting for his father in the foyer. He was leaning against the wall but he didn’t have to wait long. His father had never liked being late – or have others be late – and now was no exception. “Good morning, Father,” he murmured as the Potions master stepped out of the fireplace.
“Adrian,” his father murmured, regarding him closely. “How did you sleep?”

“Good,” he said with a shrug. “The Dreamless Sleep potion helped.”

Severus nodded as he moved closer. Adrian gave him a hug as he drew closer to the door and they walked towards the dining room together. “You haven’t spoken to Lucius yet, have you?”

Adrian shook his head. “Probably after breakfast.”

“What are you thinking?” his father asked, stopping in the hallway before they could enter the room where everyone was waiting for them.

“I don’t know what to think, actually,” he said truthfully. “I don’t want to believe that Uncle Lucius took pleasure from someone else’s pain, but I also know that this was thirteen years ago or more. People usually change. Do you think he’d do the same thing now as he did then?” he asked, looking up at his father.

“Yes, people change, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse,” Severus murmured with a sigh as he looked at him. Adrian could see the truth in his father’s eyes. This man wouldn’t lie to him… hide things, sure, but not lie outright. “I believe that Lucius has changed for the better. When we were younger, we were both full of anger. I’m sure he’s worked through a lot of that by now. I know I have. Let’s wait and allow him to speak for himself, alright?”

“Yes, Father,” he sighed and they walked into the dining room together.

* * *

“What did Voldemort mean when he said you ‘hadn’t renounced the old ways’,” Adrian asked finally when they were sitting in the living room an hour later. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to know this anymore, but everyone was waiting for him to speak.

Draco was sitting beside him, not crowding him but being supportive. Adrian watched Lucius carefully. His godfather and his father had taught him that it was better to watch a person’s body language or eyes in order to know what someone hid from everyone.

“The old ways were good because it gave us all a base in what it truly meant to be witches and wizards, especially pure-blood witches and wizards,” Lucius began. “I don’t know if you are aware of how much of our history was discarded by Dumbledore when he took over as Headmaster but the students lost out in what it meant to be a true witch and wizard.”

Adrian and Draco nodded. Hadn’t Severus complained often enough about the fact that students were losing a lot of what it meant to be a witch and wizard? Adrian knew that if Dumbledore had continued on as Headmaster, more students would’ve suffered from a lack of tradition.

“That’s where the new headmaster is a vast improvement because the students are now learning the traditions Dumbledore sneered at as being obsolete. The Dark Lord, as well, got to a point where he didn’t care about traditions anymore. He was more interested in killing as many people as possible and dealing a blow to the old man.”

“Now, when I first came into the Dark Lord’s service, I was told by my father that there was great honor in joining and in the beginning, there was, but then everything began to change. The Dark Lord changed. Instead of trying to make things better for witches and wizards, to ensure our way of life didn’t disappear, we were to kill muggles and muggleborns. He didn’t give any explanations as to why, just that we had to.
“Of course, once you ally yourself with the Dark Lord, it’s not so easy to leave... alive at least. The only way to leave is to die and usually it’s by the Dark Lord’s hand. I know of at least three such killings and from what was said last night, there will be another one soon. “

“We already know it’ll be Karkaroff for his part in placing several of his followers in Azkaban in order to secure his own freedom,” Severus murmured with a nod of his head.

“And what about the comment he made about ‘still ready to take the lead in a spot of Muggle-torture’?” Adrian asked after he’d taken it all in. It made sense when laid out like that. “Would you really go back to what you did before he was… vanquished isn’t really the right word since he came back… left?”

“What you have to understand, Adrian, is that no one denies the Dark Lord if they wish to live. If he were to order me to do so, I would, simply because I wouldn’t be the one to pay for saying no. He tends to go after loved ones. If I told him no, Draco, Caelum and Narcissa would be the ones to pay for it.”

“Father?” he asked as something occurred to him. “Would you follow his orders, too?”

“Adrian, there is a reason why Lucius made sure the Dark Lord won’t find your adoption papers. If he were to learn who you were, he would torture and kill everyone you love most in the world simply to watch you suffer before doing the same to you. If it means keeping you safe, yes, I would follow orders.”

Adrian nodded in acceptance that these two men would be the only thing standing between them and Voldemort. They would do what it took to protect their children until Voldemort was killed or they were... in which case, it would fall to Draco and Adrian to follow in their footsteps. What a grim thought.

“I assume we have to return to school?” he asked with a sigh, not looking forward to the train ride home.

“Unfortunately, yes, as you still have one remaining week of exams and your friends will wonder why you weren’t at school last night. Is everything put to rest?” Severus asked, watching the two boys carefully.

“Just one more thing, Father,” Adrian said with a frown. “Well, two things, actually. One, with how Dumbledore was intent on me taking on the role of Harry Potter, would it be possible that he... I don’t know... tampered might be the best way to describe it... with Black in some way? I mean, the last time he’d seen the old man, he’d been the leader of the fight against Voldemort.”

He was surprised when the adults winced at the use of the name. What was that about? “Don’t use his name, Adrian,” his father admonished gently. “We’ve learned that to use his name brings about torture. Call him you-know-who or the Dark Lord.”

Adrian blinked in curiosity but nodded. His father knew better than he did, after all. “But it doesn’t make sense for Black to go completely mental one week and then revert to being remorseful about his actions the next. Unless he went to find the old man and something was done to him. It fits, doesn’t it?”

Severus and Lucius looked at each other in surprise. It was obvious they hadn’t thought about it that way... “I’ll talk to Lupin,” his father murmured with narrowed eyes. “What’s the other thing, Adrian?”
“Karkaroff.” That seemed to surprise his father. “I’m wondering why he would suspect that Potter wasn’t the boy the Dark Lord needed. Everyone else was taken in, why not him? And then there’s his history of giving up information to save his own skin. What happens if he tells the Dark Lord that I’m the boy he’s looking for? Would he be believed despite the lack of evidence? He’s got to have a reason for suspecting both me and Potter. The real question is why?”

“Let me worry about that,” the Potions master murmured, running a hand through his hair in agitation. “All I want you to concentrate on is your schooling. This summer will begin your training with your wings and I think your friends should learn about them. They can help you to learn how to fight with them.”

Adrian shrugged and nodded. “If you think it’ll help,” he said, remembering his fight with young Tom Riddle… which reminded him. “You know, when he was waiting for the Death Eaters to show up, he was telling Potter an interesting story. He also confirmed the things we’d figured out when I met up with the Tom from the diary. Uncle Lucius, you were right. He is a half-blood wizard.”

That stunned the two men. “He openly admitted that?”

“Yes,” Adrian said as he sat up in his excitement. “As a matter of fact, I figured out which cemetery he held his ritual in. The tomb Potter was tied to had the words Tom Riddle written on it. Wormtail also said ‘bone of the father forcefully given’. Then he went on to say that his father left his mother because he couldn’t handle the fact that she was a witch.”

“That explains his intense dislike of muggles,” Lucius said thoughtfully. “If his mother was a Marvolo, that would mean he was a direct descendent of Slytherin. If she fell for a muggle, it would stand to reason that his father leaving his mother would probably mean she would die of a broken heart if she’d truly been in love with him. His father would want nothing to do with an offspring from a witch so he would go to an orphanage. If that orphanage turned out to be a muggle one, it would be even worse, because he would be either ostracized or picked on.”

They were quiet as they thought that through. Voldemort’s attitude made perfect sense now… though why he would turn to torturing wizard kind as well as muggles made no sense. “Well, we must go back to Hogwarts,” Severus murmured with a shake of his head. “We can discuss this at another time.”

They nodded.

“Thanks for explaining things, Uncle Lucius,” Adrian murmured as he escorted them to the foyer. “I appreciate it.”

“I’m glad you asked instead of jumping to conclusions,” the older man murmured with a grateful smile. “Don’t worry too much about everything. You’ll be here next week as usual.” Adrian grinned and hugged his godfather before stepping into the fireplace.

* * *

Severus laid in wait in the shadows later that morning, watching for Karkaroff who was now avoiding him. The Drumstrang and Beauxbatons groups were set to leave in a couple of hours. He smirked as the man in question stalked past him, eyes flicking everywhere. Good, it meant he knew he was targeted for death…

He struck from the darkness. “Stupefy” he whispered, pointing his wand at the man’s back. With a quick lightening spell, he managed to get him into the empty room behind him. He wanted to do the same to him as he had done to Adrian’s kidnapper, create a portkey and whisk him away to one of
the dungeons in Malfoy Manor, but because Karkaroff was Headmaster of Durmstrang, he needed to be on the ship heading home before it activated.

So instead, he created a portkey that would activate when the man was alone in his cabin. Later that night, he and Lucius would question him. At least there would be no fear of someone walking in on them and once he was sure of Karkaroff’s answers, he would give the traitor to the Dark Lord after Obliviating certain things.

Lucius would help him extract the information from the former Death Eater. Of course, the boys would know nothing about this… it was better this way.

When he was done, he placed Karkaroff into the hallway, on his feet, after making sure no one was around and made it seem as if nothing had happened. He watched the ex-Death Eater saunter off as if nothing was wrong.

He was going to learn differently when he headed home…

* * *

On the train ride home, Adrian sat in a closet with Shade, trying not to cry. How could things have gone so wrong?

It had happened an hour after leaving for London. Someone had begun circulating rumors that Adrian had slept with a girl while going out with Draco. He’d denied it of course. Girls just didn’t interest him that way…

But then the girl had come into their compartment demanding Adrian do what was right, that she’d hidden her pregnancy as long as she dared and couldn’t hide it any longer. She had looked to be about seven months pregnant. He’d been at a loss for words. How the hell could he be the father if he’d never slept with her?

He’d looked at Draco in shock and had seen the anger on his boyfriend’s face. “How could you do this?” he’d demanded harshly.

“But I didn’t!”

Nothing he’d said had helped, though, and Draco had simply walked out saying he needed time by himself. Adrian had fled then, unable to remain with all the others. He’d managed to lock himself in one of the closets with the kitten. What would he do now? How could Draco believe her lies?

The door was suddenly busted open and three older boys stood there, looking at him with weird looks in their eyes. “So,” the one in the lead sneered at him. “You forgot already, have you?”

“Forgot?” he asked, standing up so he didn’t have to look up at them.

“Don’t play dumb, Snape. You agreed if it took that you’d marry her. Now you have no choice.”

Adrian was confused. “What are you talking about?”

“We’ll make sure you remember this time,” the one in the back growled as the three boys advanced on him, pinning him to the back of the closet. Adrian’s scream of pain was muffled by the hand pressed against his mouth as something sharp dug into his side. Blood soaked his pants but he couldn’t move. Shade’s sharp teeth and claws caused one of his attackers to curse.

The kitten yowled softly as he was flung into one of the walls when the boy shook him off.
“If we don’t hear from you by the end of August, Snape, when the baby’s born, we’ll use it against you.”

He was released then, and Adrian slid down the wall, gasping in pain as he pressed his hand to the cut. “Don’t try to heal that magically because it won’t work,” he was informed with a laugh. “The potion I put on the blade will see to that. Oh, and if you even think of telling your little friend, we’ll make sure he dies. Talk to you real soon, Snape.”

The door closed with a soft thud. Adrian crawled over to Shade, gathering him in his other arm. “Are you alright?”

_Damn but that hurts_, the kitten grumbled in irritation. _Let’s get back to the compartment. At least there, no one can hurt you._

Adrian silently agreed, though he wasn’t really looking forward to facing Draco again…

Pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket, he pressed it against his cut… then something occurred to him. “Winky,” he called out. The house-elf appeared instantly. “There’s a girl on this train who’s pregnant. I want you to keep an eye on her without revealing yourself. Do you think you can do that?”

“Of course, Master.”

“Good, find me when she gives birth. I need to know where she is. Go.”

He made sure the blood was covered, since he didn’t want to arouse suspicions with his friends and made his way back to the compartment… where Draco angrily ignored him. Without comment, he sat beside Blaise, starting out the window, not looking at anyone.

The whole compartment was silent the rest of the ride to London and when they got off, instead of following Draco to Malfoy Manor, Adrian simply went home to Snape Manor. When he got there, he curled up on his bed and didn’t move until his father came in.

Shade was lying against him, giving him comfort, but nothing mattered right now. He felt numb.

“What happened, Adrian?” Severus asked quietly as he sat down in one of the chairs.

“I don’t know, Father,” he whispered, eyes tearing up. “Everything was good until a girl started to say I had slept with her. I didn’t but Draco believes her because she’s pregnant. Why would she lie?”

“There were those two hours you said you were in the library by yourself,” Severus murmured thoughtfully. “I seem to remember you telling me Professor McGonagall sent you there because you were disrupting class on Halloween.”

“I think I’d remember something like sleeping with a girl,” he said dismissively but then hesitated. “WASN’T I?”

“Not if they made you forget about it. Now the question becomes, why?” Adrian sighed and pushed himself into a sitting position and winced as the move pulled against the cut. “What happened?”

Adrian pulled his hand away to reveal the blood staining his shirt. “Three older boys gave me this with a warning not to tell Draco or he would die. They also said it won’t heal magically.”

“Follow me,” Severus murmured and led Adrian down to the potion lab in the house. “Sit down.” Adrian watched as his father worked on something. When he was done, he placed the cream into a
jar before turning to apply some on his cut. Adrian hissed as it stung slightly but grit his teeth until his father was done. “It won’t heal all of it at once but slowly and will leave a scar. There’s nothing I can do about that. When you duel be careful until it heals.”

“Yes, Father,” he murmured softly accepting the jar from him.

“As for Draco, I can’t tell you what to do. This has to run its course,” Severus murmured, caressing Adrian’s cheek. “Be patient with him.”

“I just want him with me,” he whispered with a tremulous smile.

“His birthday is in three days. Maybe things will be better by then.”

* * *

That night, Lucius and Severus were standing in the shadows watching the man in the cell walking around. It was actually the only thing he could do, really. There were no windows to look out of with very low lighting.

Finally, they decided they needed answers and moved out of the deeper shadows, looking as if that was how they’d gotten into the cell. Karkaroff whirled around to face them, sneering in contempt.

“So, has the Dark Lord decided to make an example out of me?”

“The Dark Lord doesn’t know where you are, actually,” Severus murmured, face carefully blank. “Though I’m sure he has someone looking for you. You know you’ve disappointed him for the last time and will pay for putting several of his Death Eaters in Azkaban to save your own skin. It’s inevitable.”

“Bah!” he scoffed, though they could see the fear in the man’s eyes. “The Dark Lord knew his Death Eaters would do whatever they could to escape that place. Look at you,” he sneered again, looking Severus up and down in contempt. “I’m sure he has something special planned for you as well, Severus, for betraying him to Dumbledore.”

“Actually, Severus was acting on the Dark Lord’s orders,” Lucius drawled, smirking at the look of disbelief on their prisoner’s face. In point of fact, he was lying, but Karkaroff wouldn’t know that… “How else do you think he got to the Potters?”

“You lie!”

Lucius’ eyebrow rose and his smirk grew. “Really? Did the Dark Lord hold you in such high esteem that he would reveal his plans to you?” Karkaroff flushed an ugly red at the implication that he wasn’t that valuable or highly placed a Death Eater enough to be privy to certain plans of the Dark Lord… not like Lucius and Severus had been, anyway.

“So then why am I here?” Karkaroff spat angrily, glaring at them.

“What made you suspicious of Harry Potter that you would thing that he wasn’t who he claimed to be?” Severus asked, getting to the point. “I mean, everyone – even the Dark Lord – believed he was Harry Potter?”

Karkaroff looked at them with narrowed eyes before he smirked at them. “So, from the way you asked the question, my suspicions were correct. The upstart was not Potter after all.”

“It would seem so,” Lucius murmured in a bored tone. “The Dark Lord was not pleased to find out about it. So the question remains, why did you suspect it?”
“His attitude when his name came out of the goblet,” Karkaroff said grudgingly. “His reaction said he had expected it to happen. When that happened, I hired someone to investigate him. I found out that he had an obsession with your son,” he said, nodding to Severus. “It made me wonder why he would.”

“And simply because he had an obsession with Adrian, you suspected he wasn’t Harry Potter?” Severus mocked in contempt. “Others have noticed this obsession and not concluded he wasn’t who he claimed to be.”

Karkaroff hesitated, watching them carefully. “I followed him one night. He met up with Dumbledore in Hogsmeade. They were stupid enough to discuss some of their plans in the Three Broomsticks… of course a well-placed spell on the boy allowed me to hear everything they were careful not to allow anyone else to hear. The old man even gave him Gillyweed for the second task.”

“And Adrian? Why did you think he was the real Potter?” Lucius asked, examining the snake on his cane. Severus knew this was just an act, meant to lull an opponent into thinking the tall blonde didn’t think you were a threat and beneath his attention.

It worked.

Karkaroff sneered at Lucius in contempt, his hatred out for everyone to see. This man had always been jealous of Lucius’ position – first in the Dark Lord’s ranks then in the Ministry – but he’d earned the positions. “Why else would the boy hate the Snape kid if he wasn’t the real Harry Potter?”

“That’s your reasoning behind Adrian being Harry Potter? The hatred the impostor had for my child?” Severus mocked incredulously, his eyebrows raised contemptuously. It was best not to show how accurate Karkaroff’s guess was. “If that were true, then it would make Ronald Weasley and Oliver Wood Harry Potter want-a-bes as well since they enjoyed causing Adrian pain.”

That brought Karkaroff up short, looking at them with a blank look on his face. “But I was sure-”

“That Adrian was the real Harry Potter? Do you really think Severus would allow his greatest tormentor’s child to reside in his home without exacting some kind of retribution? That he wouldn’t present James Potter’s son to the Dark Lord now that he’s returned?” Lucius chuckled darkly, making Karkaroff flush in embarrassment. It wasn’t a pretty sight.

“I think we should make the Dark Lord a present of Karkaroff,” Severus murmured, a hard look in his eyes. “I’m sure he’d love to kill off the traitor himself.”

Karkaroff paled in fear, his body trembling visibly. “No! I beg you, Severus, don’t do this. I admit I was wrong about your son being Harry Potter. Just… let me go. You’ll never see me again!”

The two men smirked darkly as they turned and walked out of the cell. They didn’t breath easily until they were on the main floor, Karkaroff’s pleading echoing in their ears though there was no sound coming from the dungeons.

“Well, at least we know how and why,” Lucius murmured as he poured them each a glass of scotch. “What do you want to do?”

“Give him to the Dark Lord,” Severus murmured, taking a sip of his glass. “It’ll cement our loyalty to him easier than anything else – short of giving him Harry Potter would – and the Dark Lord will be in a better mood for it.”

“Agreed. I’ll make the arrangements and let you know when we’re to bring Karkaroff to him.”
Lucius hesitated, however, looking into his glass. Severus’ eyebrow rose in curiosity. “What happened between Adrian and Draco?”

Severus sighed as he rubbed at his forehead. “It seems a girl – an older one – was going around the train saying that Adrian slept with her and the results of it made her pregnant. Adrian denies it, of course.”

“I thought their bond would make it so that this couldn’t happen?” Lucius asked with a frown.

“Their bond won’t really take effect until Adrian’s Inheritance comes in. They’ll obviously want to be together, for sure, but even without the bond, Adrian is loyal. I can’t see him doing that freely. I hope this gets resolved soon, however.”

Lucius made a sound of affirmation, shaking his head. “Hopefully we won’t have to get involved.” Severus fervently agreed with that… they had enough to deal with.

* * *

Draco’s birthday saw Adrian hanging back slightly. He’d placed his present for his friend with the other ones but he wasn’t sure what to do now…

Before, he’d have simply gone over and talked to the blonde but as soon as Draco had seen him, he’d glared at him before ignoring him. Adrian was at a loss as to what to do…

It wasn’t until an hour into the party that Draco finally acknowledged him. They were alone for a little and Draco still looked pissed. “I have to tell you,” he began maliciously before Adrian could tell him about his father’s theory. “I think we should go our separate ways. I’d rather not have to deal with used goods.”

Adrian drew back as if he’d been slapped, paling at the words. Had Draco found out about what had happened during Dumbledore’s kidnapping? He hadn’t told anyone about what the guard had done to him…

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Adrian drew back as if he’d been slapped, paling at the words. Had Draco found out about what had happened during Dumbledore’s kidnapping? He hadn’t told anyone about what the guard had done to him…

It didn’t matter. Something inside him seemed to break, curling up into a ball of misery. “I don’t blame you,” he heard someone say and realized it was his voice he was hearing, the words pushed past numb lips. He saw a brief look of surprise and concern flash through Draco’s eyes before they became wary. “I wouldn’t want someone who’s as damaged or used as I am around either.” He watched as Draco’s mouth opened but he didn’t want to hear any more right now so he turned his back on the blonde. “Good bye, Draco.”

He heard Draco say something behind him, but the buzzing in his ears made it impossible to hear it as he walked away. He kept the tears at bay until he got home. He didn’t even think of Shade who had been outside visiting with Kaida or to say anything to his father… he just left.

He didn’t remember the trip, but made it to his bedroom before he collapsed on his bed, gasping as the drop jarred his cut, but otherwise ignored it, finally allowing the tears to flow. When no more tears would come, he pushed himself listlessly up and locked the door. He hesitated slightly before adding an obscure locking charm on the door. He’d found it in the spell book he’d bought right before all the hell Black put him through, but he wanted privacy from everyone. He couldn’t remember ever locking his door in the ten years he’d lived here… it didn’t matter.

Nothing mattered anymore.

He curled up in a ball in the middle of his bed, looking out the window as rain began to pelt the glass, mirroring how he was feeling perfectly…
He ignored the food Timzy brought up to his room, simply sighing, grabbing the jar and smearing some of it onto his cut, gritting his teeth at the tenderness of the wound. It was supposed to be making it better, but he didn’t think it was. He’d talk to his father about it later… maybe.

* * *

“What did you say to him?” Severus demanded angrily four days later as he showed up at Malfoy Manor.

“What do you mean?” Draco asked warily. His uncle didn’t get mad often but right now he was livid. Just what was going on? Had Adrian told this man he’d done something to hurt him? If anyone should be angry and hurt, it should be him. He’d trusted the dark-haired teen. He’d been the one to betray Dracos loyalty not the other way around…

“At your birthday party,” the Potions master growled out. “He was a little apprehensive about coming but now he’s locked himself in his room and refuses to come out. Even Shade isn’t allowed in. What. Did. You. Say!”

“I told him we should go our separate ways,” Draco said, feeling a twinge of guilt that his former best friend had locked himself in his room but that had nothing to do with him… right? “That I’d rather not have to deal with used goods,” he finished in a whisper.

He watched as his godfather closed his eyes, a flash of pain crossing his face. “I really wish you hadn’t said that,” Severus murmured with a sigh. “But it makes sense now. We need to talk, Draco.”

Rolling his eyes behind the older man’s back, he followed him into his father’s office, sitting heavily down in one of the chairs.

“I don’t know if Adrian ever told you about what he went through at Dumbledore’s hand?” It was phrased as a question so Draco shook his head, wondering what the time Adrian had been missing for three weeks had to do with his comment. “It seems that the old man wasn’t… selective of whom he used as guards. One or more of them raped him several times during his captivity.”

Draco blinked in shock at his godfather. He now understood Adrian’s reaction to his words… he’d assumed Draco knew about this and was referring to that incident. “But I didn’t know!” Draco finally managed to say. How could he? “I was talking about him sleeping with the girl while we were together!”

“Yes, as for that, I think I know what happened,” Severus murmured tiredly. “Remember Halloween? Adrian was sent to the library by McGonagall because he was disrupting class?”

He nodded, frowning thoughtfully. Yes, he remembered that… “Are you saying that he was forced to sleep with the girl and then made to forget about it?” he asked as things clicked: the time, the missing memories… It made sense since Adrian insisted he didn’t remember doing it… and it fit the calculations as well. That would make the baby due sometime towards the end of August.

“Yes. Now I need your help to undo the damage your thoughtless words have cause.”

Draco sighed, rubbing his face with his hands. It actually made sense now that he pushed past the anger. Adrian had never lied – to him or anyone else, it wasn’t like him to do so – and on the train he’d tried to tell him he didn’t remember sleeping with the girl but Draco had been so hurt that it could happen at all that he’d refused to listen. “Alright.”

At Snape Manor, Draco stopped outside Adrian’s bedroom door. Did he simply go in or knock and hope his friend opened the door…? Taking a deep breath, he knocked hesitantly while Shade glared...
at him from the floor. There was no answer from the other side. He hadn’t expected one, really but…

Frowning, he tried the handle, not really surprised when it didn’t open. Pulling his wand from its sheath, he flicked it at the lock. “Alohomora,” he whispered. He wasn’t really surprised when it didn’t work. Surely his godfather had tried that spell already with similar results…

Then he remembered Adrian telling him about a spell he’d found in a book he’d bought the previous summer. It had both locking and unlocking charms listed, something extremely obscure and no longer used… Would Adrian really use it? With a sigh, he drew a deep breath. “Solvo Foris,” This time he was surprised as he heard a click from the door. It worked!?

As soon as he opened the door, Shade rushed in and Draco followed, watching as the kitten padded his way to the far corner. It seemed Adrian was trying to hide in the shadows cast in his room as darkness crept in.

“Adrian?” he asked softly, unsure if he was welcomed or not. There was no movement from the other side of the room, however. He frowned as he moved closer, squinting to see his friend better. It seemed Adrian was asleep with a jar near him. Picking it up, he screwed the lid back on and put it on the bedside table beside him. He was shocked when he turned back to his friend, horrified at the gaunt features, telling him Adrian hadn’t been eating… or maybe he had been eating but hadn’t been able to keep anything down? That usually happened when Adrian was stressed… and this time it was because of him.

With a sigh, he picked the other boy up. Something inside him tightened painfully when he didn’t have to struggle to lift him. He carried him over to the bed and stretched him out, worried when Adrian didn’t even open his eyes.

Shade climbed up on the bed, still glaring at Draco. He was slightly amused when the kitten began to growl and complain, slapping his hands where they rested on his owner, though he didn’t use his claws, which meant he was annoyed with Draco but not to the point where he wanted to hurt him.

“Yes, I know,” he sighed as he moved to sit on the bed, pushing the kitten out of the way. “Adrian,” he called out, pushing the hair out of his face. He thought he saw a flutter of eyelids, but in the fading light, he wasn’t sure. “Adrian, wake up,” he tried again. This time, he was sure there was movement as the eyes opened, blinking in confusion as he looked up at him. He didn’t smile. There was too much pain between them right now for either boy to smile. “I’m sorry for what I said,” Draco said finally. “I didn’t mean it.”

“Yes, you did,” Adrian whispered. “And you’re right. I am used goods.”

Draco sighed, looking down at his fingers. “No, you’re not. You can’t help what Dumbledore had someone do to you anymore than I can. You didn’t go out looking for someone to do that to you. I just wanted to hurt you the way you hurt me.”

“It’s okay, Draco,” Adrian said with a tired sigh, his eyes closing again. “You don’t have to worry about it anymore.”

Draco’s eyes looked up in surprise. “What does that mean?” he asked, frowning when Adrian didn’t answer him. His fingers shot to the boy’s neck, checking to see if he was still alive. It was faint but it was there. In his panic, he forgot all about house-elves as he ran out of the room shouting for Severus Snape as loud as he could. “Something’s wrong!” he said quickly as his godfather came hastily up the stairs.

Severus cursed as he rushed into Adrian’s room, taking in the still form on the bed. He turned the
light on, and only now did Draco see how pale his friend was. Just what was going on? He watched as his godfather pulled out his wand and waved it in a funny pattern before he cursed again. Draco frowned as Severus reached out and touched Adrian’s side. There was a curious brown spot on Adrian’s shirt that reminded him of... something. Was that... blood!

His godfather pulled the material up and Draco gagged at the smell as it pulled at what was obviously an infected cut. Just what the hell had Adrian thought he was doing?! “Get Madam Pomfrey,” Severus ordered sharply as he moved to the bathroom.

Draco was frozen in place until Shade’s claws dug into his shin. The pain gave him something to focus on and he rushed to the fireplace and threw in some Floo powder calling out the school’s name and department. “Professor Snape needs you,” he told the woman as soon as he saw her.

In her no-nonsense way, she hurried to gather some things before she went through the fireplace, appearing in Adrian’s room instantly. “What happened?”

“He received a cut on the train and now it’s infected,” Severus said, ignoring Draco for the moment as he used a wet cloth to soak the wound.

Adrian had been cut? How could he not know that? Sure the boy had been pale and drawn but Draco had attributed it to being caught cheating on him...

“I gave him some cream a week ago when I got home, but it seems he stopped using it,” he heard as if from a distance. “It also can’t be healed magically.” He watched as Severus grabbed the jar Draco had placed on the bedside table, opening it and frowning at the contents. “It would seem he has been using it.” There was confusion in his godfather’s voice as he showed the contents to the Mediwitch.

“We’ll deal with that later. How did this happen?” Pomfrey asked as she moved closer to Adrian, not bothered by the smell of rot that seemed to come from the cut. She cast a few spells and Draco watched as the green stuff that had been leaking from the cut vanished, revealing an ugly red cut that was obviously infected.

Hoping he was helping, he went and opened the window to allow the warm air to circulate into the room, changing the scent around them. Then he sat on the window sill, out of the way, when nothing was said. “Come over here, Shade,” he called out when Pomfrey nearly stepped on him for the third time.

He could hear the kitten grumbling as he padded petulantly over to the window seat, jumping up to sit beside him. First he shot Draco a dirty look, probably blaming the blonde for the state Adrian was in now, before turning to stare intently at the teen on the bed.

Draco was surprised when Pomfrey cast a binding spell on Adrian, tying him to the bed before pulling some potion phials from her kit, placing them at the foot of the bed. Opening one up, Pomfrey took a deep breath before pouring some into the infected wound.

He winced as Adrian screamed, arching up in pain, watching as the wound fizzed and bubbled ominously. Draco didn’t think he’d ever forget that sound. It would haunt his nightmares for a long time. He’d never heard that kind of sound come from anyone before… “No!” he begged tearfully as the two adults struggled to pin him down to the bed, not wanting him to do more damage to himself. ”Stop!”

Madreca rushed in, alerted by the screaming and moved to help Severus keep the smaller body down as Adrian fought to get away from the pain. It was a struggle. Draco hadn’t thought Adrian was strong enough but he’d been wrong.
Gritting her teeth, Pomfrey poured more of the potion into the wound, watching carefully as the potion continued bubbling ominously. The top of the foamy bubbles had taken on a greenish-black tinge to it that didn’t look good, even to Draco, and the smell of putrid meat filled the room again. As he watched, the bubbles overflowed from the wound and onto the thick cloth Pomfrey had put under Adrian’s back.

“Draco, get in here and help calm him,” Madreca ordered harshly as Adrian arched up again with another scream of pain.

“Father, please!” he wailed which turned into a scream as more potion was poured into the wound. “Make it stop!”

“This needs to be done, Adrian,” Pomfrey said over his voice, though it was apparent that he wasn’t listening to her as he screamed again when she poured more of the potion into the wound.

Draco knew how high of a pain tolerance Adrian had, so for him to even say anything showed how much pain he had to be in…

Moving quickly, he leaned onto the bed and began to whisper in Adrian’s ear, treading his fingers into the thick lock in order to help his friend. He closed his eyes to stop his own tears from falling, as he leaned closer to Adrian’s head. It seemed to be working, calming the thinner boy… but just.

By the time the wound was cleaned, they’d been at it for an hour. They were all mentally and physically exhausted, but Adrian was sleeping peacefully once more. Draco was thankful that the skin around the cut now looked healthier, the angry red colour was gone but Pomfrey warned them that it could change depending on how far into the bloodstream the blood poisoning had traveled.

They left Draco there with Adrian, telling him to try to sleep. “I’ll let your parents know that you’ll be spending the night,” Severus murmured tiredly.

“Thanks, Uncle Sev.” He sat down in Adrian’s favourite chair, watching his friend sleep and wondered how he could’ve betrayed his best friend the way he had. He’d actually believed Adrian would knowingly betray him when he never had before. He should’ve believed his friend but he’d been more willing to believe the lies spouted by some girl than trusting in Adrian...

He didn’t know what to do. How could he fix this?

Watching his friend – no his boyfriend – he knew, no matter what, he had to try. He owed it to Adrian. With a tired sigh, he pushed himself out of the chair and crawled into bed with Adrian, pulling the smaller teenager closer, careful not to hurt him. “I’m so sorry,” he whispered into his hair, allowing the tears to flow now that they were alone.

There was no answer, not even any movement from the dark haired boy, but then he hadn’t expected any. He would make this right. He had to… he just needed the chance to do so.

* * *

It took three more sessions before the infection was gone. Draco was relieved because he didn’t think he could take anymore of Adrian screaming in pain.

“Why are you here, Draco?” Adrian croaked out, tired but finally awake, his fever finally broken.

Draco was sitting in Adrian’s chair, not knowing if he’d be welcomed on the bed. He sighed as he looked at his clenched hands, elbows resting on his knees. “I came to say I was wrong about believing the girl,” he finally said, looking into hazy green eyes. “I should’ve believed you when you
said she was lying. I just…” he sighed as he shook his head at his own stupidity. “Why didn’t you say anything about the cut?”

“Because you didn’t want to hear about it,” Adrian said in a matter-of-fact tone of voice and Draco tried not to wince at the truth of it. He’d been too angry and hurt to believe anything that would’ve come out of Adrian’s mouth before today. “And I couldn’t tell you or they’d kill you.”

Draco’s head came up in surprise. “Who?”

Adrian shrugged and winced as it pulled at his wound. “Three older boys… I don’t know their names. I’m assuming they were her brothers or some of her friends.”

Draco’s eyes narrowed as he thought about that. He was going to have to talk to his father… he would do something about them. “Do you think the baby is yours?” he asked finally.

“Doesn’t matter,” Adrian murmured, blinking slowly. “All they have to do is register the birth parents as me and the girl and it makes me the father.”

“What did the boys want?”

“They want me to marry her.” Adrian shook his head as Draco looked at him first in shock then in curiosity. “No, I won’t do it. I’ve got Winky watching her right now. She’s going to tell me when the girl has the baby. I won’t allow them to use an innocent child like that. I’m just not sure what I can do yet.”

Draco nodded, not really surprised by his boyfriend’s response. His upbringing wouldn’t allow for him to stand by while a child was abused, no matter the reason. “Can we… I’d like it if we were together again,” Draco whispered, looking hopefully up at the boy on the bed.

“I’d like that, but, Draco,” Adrian murmured, making the joy he was feeling freeze in his chest. “It’ll take time before it was like before. I’m tired of being hurt. I don’t want to be on guard all the time. You believing I could sleep around while I was with you hurt because you didn’t trust me enough to know she was lying.”

“I know I messed up,” Draco murmured, looking at his hands again. “I know I’ll have to make it up to you but I don’t want this to be between us either. I will work to make it up to you, Adrian, I promise.” He looked up at the injured boy, showing him with his eyes everything he couldn’t say with words. “I… I love you. That’s why it hurt so badly when I thought you’d cheated. I know it’s not an excuse, but-”

He was surprised into silence when Adrian touched his mouth, stopping the words, and looked into shinning green eyes. “I love you, too, Draco,” he said with a sad smile and Draco realized that he’d really hurt the one person he loved most in the world. He was a fool… “Hold me?”

With a choked sob, Draco carefully climbed onto the bed and gathered his boyfriend into his arms, closing his eyes in contentment when Adrian’s arms came around him as well.
Chapter 12 – Inheritance

Under Pomfrey’s expert care, Adrian recovered quickly. The cut healed enough to scab over within a week. It would leave a silvery scar since it had to heal by itself, but Draco knew Adrian didn’t mind. It just proved to him that he had survived… again.

Apparently there had been an added component to the potion used on the knife that had interfered with the cream his father had given him which was why the wound had gotten infected so badly in such a short amount of time.

As soon as Draco was sure Adrian was mended enough that he wasn’t in any danger of being sick by going anywhere, he wanted to take his boyfriend out. He had a special stop to make. He just needed the perfect day to go…

It came three days later, when it was raining too much to train… which meant they had a day off. Draco took advantage of the time to themselves without their friends by taking Adrian out to Diagon Alley. This place still could bring on panic attacks for Adrian, but with the cats, along with Madreca and Severus, as protection, he’d managed to keep it at bay… barely.

Adrian looked at Draco in open curiosity when he led them to the jeweler’s. The blond smirked as he opened the door for him. “What are we doing in here?” he asked softly as they looked around at the necklaces and bracelets lining the top of the display cases. Inside the cases were ornate and expensive rings and pendants. But what he wanted was with the Jeweler…

“You’ll see,” was all Draco said as he led them further into the shop. The Jeweler smiled as they reached him. “I received an owl that my order was in.”

“Oh wow,” Adrian whispered as he took in the gold and silver colours. “But… why?” The look of awe on Adrian’s face at what he saw made the wait worthwhile. He’d told his boyfriend he’d make his mistreatment up to him and this was the first step. The two rings sitting in the box showed two dragons entwined lovingly together.

“This,” he murmured with a hard glint in his eyes, “is to show that we won’t be bullied into doing what they wanted. They’re promise rings for us to wear for everyone to see.”

Adrian was touched. “It’s fitting, isn’t it?” he murmured softly as he looked down at the two beautiful dragons. Draco nodded. It was why he’d had them made, after all. One dragon was to represent his name and the other Adrian’s creature Inheritance…

He slid one onto Adrian’s finger and the other onto his own. “Perfect.” He nodded to the Jeweler, knowing his account would be settled with Gringotts without him having to worry about it. “Thank you for another perfect piece of jewelry, Mr. Fidel,” he murmured, shaking the Jeweler’s hand. “I’ll be sure to send you more business.”
“Any time, Mr. Malfoy,” the Jeweler said with a pleased grin. “I’m glad you and your friend liked them.”

“Now, for the rest of our shopping,” he murmured when they were outside again…

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Two days later found the whole group outside, training like they never had before to make up for the two days of rain they’d gotten. Wandless magic was still a chore for some of them, but they were getting better after two years of training. Adrian had begun flying again, carrying objects of various size and shapes, working his way up the weight scale until he was finally ready to carry a small enough person.

They’d also started him dueling while his wings were out. It was harder than he remembered. The fight in the Chamber of Secrets had been vastly different. He hadn’t had time to think then and he’d been pumped full of adrenaline. With his friends taking turns dueling him, he found it exhausting enough that he went to bed sore and tired.

Now, being mid-July, they were outside Malfoy Manor for a change of scenery. “Alright, Adrian,” Madreca murmured as he surveyed the group calculatingly. “I think Ginny is the right weight and height for you to try now.”

He nodded to Ginny as the girl moved closer with a wry smile. “As long as Draco doesn’t blast me for touching what’s his,” she teased. They could joke about that now. It wasn’t a touchy subject now that things had been worked out…

“Just don’t you forget it, Weasley,” Draco growled in mock-anger, making the group laugh. True to his word, Draco tried to show Adrian he was willing to work to regain his trust, courting him in a way Adrian had never thought of before.

“Hold on tight,” he murmured as he wrapped his arms around the girl’s waist. Hers went around his neck, standing on her toes to do so. He pushed up as his wings gave a downward stroke that propelled them into the sky. He knew the drill by now. He would go up about two hundred feet, do a quick lap around the yard and then come back. He’d done this so many times that Madreca didn’t have to tell him the course anymore.

He didn’t feel the burn in his muscles until he was nearing their landing spot and was impressed that his endurance and strength were improving… now if he could only improve in the dueling part. The landing was a little rough…

“That was good, Adrian. We can work on the landings as you get used to the weight increase. Now, everyone spread out and we’ll see how well you’re doing with the Animagus training.”

The others groaned while Adrian sat at the table, wings gone for now. Later would come more dueling but for now he had a break. Because of his creature Inheritance, he wasn’t expected to do the Animagus training. Madreca had explained that because of it, he wouldn’t be able to change into any animal. Adrian was fine with that.

He laughed as Ginny managed to morph into a young dog, yipping and bouncing in place in excitement. Seemed she was the first one to finally get it. “I did it!” she squealed as she shifted back to her human self.

“Good job. You can go sit down with Adrian,” Madreca said with a smile.

The next one to get it was Draco… which turned out to be a beautiful white wolf with silver eyes.
Adrian couldn’t take his eyes off him. With a smirk, he turned back to his human self, watching Adrian in amusement. “Like what you see?” the blonde drawled in amusement as he sauntered over to sit beside him.

“I do,” Adrian said honestly. He’d never thought that white and silver would be attractive, but it worked for Draco. “I just figured you’d be a dragon, given your name.”

“Thanks,” his boyfriend drawled, sarcasm dripping from his voice as he rolled his eyes and pushed him gently.

“You two are hilarious to listen to,” George teased as he stood beside his brother, who’d turned into a reddish-brown ferret.

“Yeah, yeah,” Adrian teased back. “Let’s see if you match Fred in your Animagus shapes as much as you do in your human shape.”

They laughed when George stuck his tongue out at him before concentrating like Madreca had shown them… and sure enough, his Animagus shape was also a ferret, though he was darker than his brother. “Well, at least we’ll be able to tell them apart,” Adrian quipped, laughing as Fred jumped up on the table beside him.

_It'll be the only way_, Fred squeaked playfully.

“You’re right about that,” Adrian agreed with a laugh as he put a hand up when Fred jumped at him, catching him mid-jump. “Now, now, be nice,” he chided as he put him on the ground.

Fred and George were laughing when they changed back to their human shapes. “That was fun!” they said at the same time as they settled at the table with those who’d succeeded.

By the end of the lesson, Luna had turned into a snowy white owl, Blaise was a snake, Crabbe and Goyle were bulky dogs and Nott was a spider. “Oh, it’s too bad Weasley isn’t at school anymore,” the boy moaned once more in his human shape before he started to laugh. “Especially since we all know how terrified of spiders he is!”

“Now I wish that’s what our Animagus shape was,” Fred laughed.

“Yeah,” George agreed, nodding vigorously. “If only to get back at Ronald!”

“Alright,” Madreca ordered sharply when they were all back to their human shapes. “Time to duel. Adrian and the twins, you’re up.”

“With or without the wings?” Adrian asked curiously.

“With, of course. The more practice you have, the better.” Without a word, they moved into position, waiting for the signal to begin. “Go.”

* * *

It was nearly midnight on the night before Adrian’s birthday that things seemed to come to a head. It saw him pacing his room, Draco watching him in amusement and confusion. “What’s wrong tonight?” his boyfriend asked with an eyebrow raised. Adrian could only shake his head, tearing his shirt off as his body heat spiked, growling in irritation. “Um, should I get Uncle Sev?” Adrian shook his head again, unable to answer him. “Timzy!” he called out when Adrian didn’t answer.

It was too hot in the room for him.
“Get Severus, please,” he heard Draco say as soon as the little creature appeared in the room. He shook his head as a haze began to slowly descend on him, making things look funny… though it wasn’t as bad as when he had an allergic reaction to Nettle. In fact, it was kind of like when you looked in the distance on a really, really hot day and everything got a watery haze-like look to it.

“Yes, Master,” the house-elf squeaked and was gone.

“Draco, is something the matter?” he heard his father ask some time later, coming to a halt a short distance into the room. He managed to register that much but the heat was starting to annoy him, making him irritable. “Adrian?”

He growled again as he glared at the man standing there, causing Severus’ eyebrow to rise in surprise. Draco didn’t say anything, simply watched them. His father moved slightly so that on Adrian’s next pass, he had to stop because the man was in his path. “What’s going on?” he asked, hands resting lightly on Adrian’s arms.

“Too hot,” Adrian growled, frowning in confusion as he looked up into Severus’ eyes. There was worry in Severus’ eyes as he looked into his green ones. “It’s happening already,” he murmured with a sigh. “Allow your wings to come out, Adrian.” His frown deepened but did as instructed. “Don’t worry,” his father said with a small smile. “This is normal.”

“It is?” he asked softly, wondering what Severus was talking about. “What?” He could hear the confusion in his own voice but he couldn’t hold on to it for long as the heat spiked again.

“His Inheritance is coming in already?” he heard Madreca ask from the doorway and blinked at him in surprise. Hadn’t he gone home for a few days? He was sure the Spaniard had said so just that morning… hadn’t he?

He blinked and shook his head, trying to get his thoughts organized but the mist had deepened so that everything was chaotic in his mind. What was happening? “Should this happen outside instead of in here?” he heard his father ask from a distance and he blinked again, trying to bring everything into focus… if only it would cooperate…

He gasped in relief as sudden cool air hit his skin and closed his eyes to enjoy it, feeling his blood sing in his veins. He could feel the trees around him… hear the water running in the stream close by… the night animals calling to each other in the darkness…

Wait… when had he gone outside? He blinked in confusion, forcing his eyes to focus on his surroundings. He was, indeed, outside. “Father?” he whispered in slight fear.

“I’m right here, Adrian, you’re alright,” his father answered from close by. It took him a few seconds to see him through the fog, but he was standing in front of him… Where was the fog coming from? “We brought you outside. Isn’t this better?”

“Yes,” he groaned as the breeze blew against his too warm skin, and he closed his eyes to better concentrate on the feeling. “Better.”

“It’s nearly time, Severus,” he heard Madreca say, but he couldn’t concentrate on the meaning of the words as the night seemed to come alive around him, the sounds getting louder and louder until he had to cover his ears to try and block it out. He whimpered when it didn’t help, screwing his eyes shut. “No, don’t touch him, Draco. Not yet.”

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Draco watched as Adrian pressed his hands hard against his ears, but Madreca had a hold on his arm so he wouldn’t go to his boyfriend. “Not yet.” Easy for him to say, it wasn’t his boyfriend who was in pain…

It happened all at once, so quickly that he couldn’t help the gasp that escaped him as the surge of power hit Adrian, throwing his arms out as he gave a tiny cry of pain. Even his wings were spread as far as possible. As they watched, Adrian drifted up about a foot, the light around him getting brighter and brighter.

Draco threw up a hand, trying to see through it but even squinting didn’t help. He thought he saw something surround Adrian but he wasn’t sure. In seconds, the light imploded, leaving his boyfriend swaying on his feet, looking dazed and confused.

When Madreca released him, he rushed over, catching Adrian just as his knees gave out. They both grunted at the impact, slight though it was, and Draco knelt down with him. He was worried when Adrian’s head lulled onto his shoulder, the wings vanishing back into his back.

“It’s done,” Severus murmured as he took the dark haired boy from him, cradling him gently against his chest. “Let’s take him upstairs. He’ll be sore in the morning but he’ll be alright.”

Draco followed the two men into the house and to his boyfriend’s room. Once his godfather was sure Adrian was settled, he and Madreca left, closing the door gently behind them. Groaning, feeling tired now that the excitement was over, he crawled into bed with Adrian and pulled the blankets over them both, Kaida and Shade settling themselves at the foot of the bed. He smiled as he watched Kaida pull the four month old kitten up between her front paws and Shade willingly laid his head on her neck with a sigh, eyes closing.

With a sigh of his own, he pulled Adrian closer against him and closed his eyes. Tomorrow was going to be a long day…

* * *

Adrian sighed as he burrowed deeper into the warm blankets. He was content right where he was and had no intentions of moving unless he absolutely needed to. If he didn’t move, his muscles wouldn’t spasm. No pain was good…

“Good morning,” Draco whispered in his ear. The blonde teen chuckled, his hold tightening around him, as Adrian groaned in disappointment. This would mean he had to get up… until the blonde pushed insistently against him, his hands roaming over his bare chest... He distantly noticed that Draco must’ve undressed him sometime in the night in anticipation of this morning because both wore nothing. “I meant to give you a more personal present last night but things kind of got out of hand.”

He moaned in pleasure, loving the feel of Draco’s hands on him. He gasped as lips latched onto his throat, sucking pleasantly at the pulse beating there. “Gods, yes,” he whispered, reaching back to touch his boyfriend, forgetting about pain as pleasure coursed through him.

He whimpered as the lips nipped their way to his ear, biting gently on the flesh. He’d never thought his ears were sensitive… but then this was Draco doing it to him. His hips rocked back against Draco, groaning in pleasure as he felt the hard length pushing against him.

With a growl of impatience, Draco turned Adrian so he could lay on top of him. They gasped at the same time as hot flesh met with hot flesh. After the first time, they’d both come to the decision that they should take things slow. Oh, sure, there’d been plenty of kissing and heavy petting, but nothing
like the first time…

Adrian had missed this. He arched up into Draco, grinning when the blonde’s arms snuck under his back at the same time as his own wound around Draco’s. Lips met in a heated kiss as they moved against each other, Adrian’s legs wrapping around Draco’s narrow hips, bringing them into closer contact.

They lost track of everything as they moved together, panting and gasping but soon it wasn’t enough…

Adrian tore his mouth from Draco’s for some much needed air, the pressure building between them. “Draco,” he panted, frowning slightly. “I…” His voice trailed off as he arched up into the boy on top of him, gripping his sides as if it was the only thing holding him down.

Draco groaned, sucking hard on Adrian’s neck, causing the pressure to burst. With a soft cry, Adrian’s hips jerked as he spilt between their entwined bodies. Draco followed seconds later. They lay there, panting hard, eyes closed in bliss.

“Happy birthday,” Draco smirked, pulling back finally to look down at him. Adrian laughed, leaning up to kiss his lips lightly. “Let’s go take a bath before your father decides to show up,”

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They were sitting outside having breakfast, just the four of them, enjoying the quiet before everyone showed up for the party – intimate though it would be – while they could.

“Father,” Adrian finally said, looking up from his plate, a frown on his face. “What happened last night?”

“You came into your Inheritance,” Severus murmured and Adrian nodded. He’d figured that was what had happened, but it was all hazy to him right now…

“I’ve come to a decision,” he told them after a few more minutes of silence. “And it’s going to affect everyone here.”

“Which decision is that?” his father asked with a frown and Adrian saw the confusion on all their faces.

“Draco, I think you’ve already guessed at part of this,” he said with a sigh, putting his fork down as he sat back. “I want to bring the baby here when he or she is born… preferably without the girl knowing about it.”

He’d been ready for the shock he knew they’d feel at his decision, but he was surprised when Draco recovered first, a thoughtful look on his face. “Why?” he asked. Adrian was glad his boyfriend wasn’t angry or ranting about being stupid. He was accepting of his decision.

“We all know I’m not going to marry her even if the child is really mine,” Adrian began, rubbing at his forehead as he tried to put his thoughts in order.

“And if you don’t marry her, they’ll use the baby against you,” Draco said, nodding in understanding. “If they don’t have it, then they can’t hurt it.”

“Exactly.”

“And what do you intend to do with a baby?” Severus asked, frowning slightly. “You’re not
equipped to raise a child and finish school.”

“Well, we know that as soon as the baby vanishes from wherever they are, they’ll come looking for it here,” Adrian murmured, bracing for his next words. This was sure to cause an outburst… “And Aunt Cissa can’t watch over it until things die down enough, but Black might be willing to care for the baby for a few days.”

The silence was so deafening that not even the birds dared twitter around them. “You seriously want Black of all people to take care of a baby?” Severus sneered angrily.

“Who else do we know that they wouldn’t, Father?” Adrian reasoned with a sigh. “Do I really want to rely on that man for this? No. Do I have any other choice? Unless you can give me another alternative, no, I don’t.”

He watched as his father’s jaw tightened in frustration but Adrian knew he was right. “I’ll talk to Lucius and Lupin,” Severus finally growled out. “If Lucius can’t think of anyone else more qualified, then I’ll get Lupin to talk to Black.”

“Actually, I’d like to ask Black myself,” Adrian said softly, which reminded him… “Did Professor Lupin manage to check if Dumbledore had tampered with Black?”

Severus sighed, rubbing the side of his head, as if he had a headache. “As a matter of fact, there was evidence of tampering. Black finally admitted to tracking the old man down and confronting him. Seems he invited the old man over to Black Manor for it. That’s about all he remembers of that visit actually, the old man arriving and them sitting down in the parlor.”

“And I think he might have been there the first night Black had me but I’m not sure,” Adrian nodded, his theory proven. “If you can set up a meeting with Black, Father, we can get this settled before the end of August.”

“Is that when the baby will be born?” Madreca asked curiously.

“That’s what those boys told me. I’ve got Winky following the girl. She’ll come get me when it’s born,” Adrian affirmed with a nod. “This means I’m going to need help accessing the powers I got from my Inheritance.”

“That’s how you’re going to get the baby, isn’t it?” Draco asked, a slow grin filling his face along with an evil gleam in his eyes.

“Exactly,” Adrian smirked in satisfaction. “This is how they won’t know I’ve got the baby. And on the plus side, without proof of a baby, they won’t be able to complete their plans for me.”

“Very sneaky,” Madreca said with a small smile and an approving gleam in his eyes.

“Tell me, Adrian,” his father asked silkily, telling him that the man was angry with him. “Just how are you going to raise a child and complete your education?”

“That’s only if I keep it or if it’s mine,” he reminded his father. “I figured that during the school year, Aunt Cissa could raise him or her with Caelum while I’m at school and Winky can help her during that same time and me during the summer and vacation times,” he explained with a shrug. “I know I’m too young to raise a child, Father, but the other alternative is to leave this baby with her and whatever her buddies decide to do to him or her. Is that what I should do? There’s no telling what they plan on doing with this child. He or she didn’t ask to be born in this situation so why should it pay for someone else’s mistakes?”
“You realize that all they’d have to do is a paternity test to see if it really is your child?” his father asked with a raised eyebrow.

Adrian nodded… then shook his head as he thought that through. “I’d actually forgotten about that, but what if it turned out to be mine? Then what?”

“I think the better question would be: what if it isn’t yours?” his father countered.

“There is a way for you to find out without a paternity test,” Madreca murmured before Adrian could respond. They turned to look at the Spaniard, who smirked at them. “Adrian, because of your creature, you can come and go in the Shadow world at will. All you have to do is enter it and ask if it’s yours.”

They blinked in surprise. “I can actually do that?”

“Yes,” the Spaniard said before he shrugged. “It requires you learning how to access your creature but it is possible. A witch or wizard may be able to alter another person’s memories, but the shadows see everything and cannot be altered.”

“Show me,” Adrian said firmly. He needed this resolved. “But if I find out this child isn’t mine, what do I do? They’re going to torment this baby, blame it for everything.”

“Since you can go into the shadows, you can go in and take the child from them,” Severus reassured him with a nod. “I’m sure Lucius could find a good home for it. I just don’t want to see you take on someone else’s responsibilities needlessly.”

“I understand.”

That morning was spent learning how to access his new abilities. He knelt in the garden, shirt lying on the grass beside him. He gasped the first time he changed and was a little – alright, a lot – alarmed by the black scales, Dragon-like eyes and claws. The wings he was used to, not this. This was the first time he’d seen the changes… though Draco told him he’d done this before, when he’d come back from his kidnapping by Dumbledore and was at St. Mongo’s. His surprise caused him to lose the connection to his abilities, however.

“Is the creature the reason I don’t remember most of that captivity?” he asked his father in curiosity.

“Yes, those three weeks broke the binds keeping your creature dormant. It chose to interfere so you wouldn’t lose your mind. Once it was sure you were safe, it gladly went back to sleep.”

Adrian nodded and went back to meditating. Now that he knew what to expect, he looked himself over in open curiosity… and liked the changes. He stepped into the shadows under the nearest tree and grinned as he realized that, if it wasn’t for the clothes, he’d be nearly invisible.

“Well, that’s an advantage,” Draco laughed when Adrian commented on it. “When you go into the shadows to find your answers, can I come too?”

Adrian looked over at Madreca, hoping he could answer the question. The Spaniard shrugged indifferently. “I can’t see why not, especially since you two are together. I’m sure it won’t be the last time Draco will be going into the shadows with you.”

They looked at each other and grinned eagerly… and Adrian gasped as he suddenly sank into the shadows. He froze in surprise as he came to a stop, looking around him. He realized nothing had really changed from where he’d been, it was just like the ‘normal’ world, only there was no one there but him and it had no colour… only shadows with light spots.
He blinked in surprise as a memory flitted to the surface. He remembered this place… this was where he’d gone to escape from Dumbledore!

It took him a few seconds to register the voices. They were soft and welcoming, surrounding him lovingly. Welcome back, he heard out of it.

“Thank you,” he whispered back, smiling as he got a feeling of safety. “I’ll be back, I have to go get someone who’s going to help me. Please don’t hurt them.”

He felt them weighing his words before he got a feeling of agreement. Going on instinct, he pushed up… and was glad when he emerged exactly where he’d gone in. “What happened?” Draco asked in panic. “Where’d you go?”

“He was in the Shadow world,” Severus murmured with a calculating look in his eyes. “It would seem you’ve found your trigger, Adrian.”

Adrian grinned in excitement. “The shadows are my friends,” he laughed.

“Indeed.”

“So let’s do this,” he said, straightening his shoulders, looking at the three standing before him. “Who’s coming down with me?”

“I’m coming,” Draco said without hesitation, grabbing hold of Adrian’s hand.

“Are you coming as well, Severus?” Madreca murmured as he stepped closer to Adrian. Severus shrugged and joined the group. “I think if we all touch, Adrian will be able to bring us all down.”

When they were ready, Adrian took them all down into the shadows… The other three were surprised at the look of the Shadow world, looking around at the differences compared to their own world. They grew uncomfortable, however, when they registered the whispering.

“Don’t worry,” Adrian told them as he turned to look around them as well, seeing the shadows moving slightly. “They promised to leave you alone. They know you’re helping me with something.”

“Very well, Adrian,” Madreca murmured, a hand on Adrian’s shoulder. “Close your eyes and concentrate on when this happened. Think of it as seeing it on some kind of screen right… there.” Adrian looked over at where the Spaniard was pointing and nodded.

With his eyes closed, he allowed his thoughts to go back to last Halloween. They watched as McGonagall looked at him in exasperation before ordering him to the library to write out an assignment on the spell they were supposed to learn in class. The memory progressed past when he’d gotten to the library… but then went blank.

“That’s all you remember?” Severus asked as he frowned. Adrian nodded, looking back at his father. “Play the walk to the library again.” Without comment, Adrian did as ordered, watching his father walk closer to where the memory was playing. “There.”

Sure enough, behind the Adrian in the memory, you could just make out a quartet following him, talking softly amongst themselves. He froze the memory and moved closer to see them better. “Those are the three who cut me on the train. They look like Ravenclaws, except for the Gryffindor in the back.”

“Agreed. What else can we find out about the incident?” Severus asked, turning to look at Madreca.
They jerked back as the ‘screen’ began playing again, showing the quartet standing around a Stupified Adrian in an empty room, arguing on how to do it. The only one who didn’t seem to be on board with their plans was the girl. “I’m the one who’s going to be disfigured carrying this… thing, not you,” she snapped finally. “If that’s the case, I’d like to enjoy it.”

“Fine,” one of the boys growled out. As they watched, the three boys took turns sleeping with the girl. Adrian thought he was going to be sick and shuddered, unable to watch anymore.

“Well, I guess that means it’s not mine,” he finally choked out, turning his back on the scene. “That’s so gross.” The scene vanished into thin air. “What do we do about the baby? They’re going to mistreat it for sure, especially when they realize I know it’s not mine.”

“Let’s get out of here and sit down to discuss this information,” Severus murmured, holding on to Madreca and Draco.

Adrian nodded in agreement, bowed slightly to the shadows around him… and straightened in surprised as the ‘screen’ started playing once more, making everyone freeze where they were.

As they watched, it showed them the scene on the train where the girl and her friends had confronted Adrian.

The girl sauntered into their compartment, followed by two of her female friends. “Adrian, it’s time you do what’d right. I’ve hidden my pregnancy, like you asked, as long as I dared, but I can’t hide it any longer.”

Everyone looked at the girl’s belly. She had to be about seven months pregnant. Then they turned to look at a completely horrified and shocked Adrian for answers. Behind the girl, out of sight of the people in the compartment, one of the girls pulled out her wand, aiming it at Draco’s stiff back, murmuring words too low to make out.

As she did so, Adrian turned to look at Draco in shock. The girl’s eyes had shown her satisfaction at the look of anger on the blonde boy’s face. “How could you do this?” he’d demanded harshly.

“But I didn’t!” Adrian protested, his eyes pleading with Draco to believe him.

“Let’s give him time to process this,” the girl with the wand murmured, a hand on the pregnant girl’s arm.

“I’ll be waiting for your answer, Adrian.”

There was complete silence as the scene vanished.

“Well,” Severus murmured finally. “Draco’s reaction now makes sense.”

“What do you mean?” Madreca asked, a frown marring his features.

“I wondered why Draco would believe Adrian would do something so completely out of character. The girl with the pregnant one cast a spell on him to make him believe Adrian truly did cheat on him.

Adrian shook his head as he took hold of Madreca and Draco, pulling them all with him out of the shadows and into the warmth of the garden. As they sat down, a tea serving appeared on the table. Adrian’s body was normal once more, though he felt a little edgy now, as if he had too much energy inside him.

"Now that I'm not going to go along with their plans, they're going to take it out on the baby,"
Adrian said with a sigh.

“As a Shadow Dragon, you cannot allow such an event to happen to an innocent soul,” Madreca began as they each prepared their own cups of tea. “It is going to seek a way to correct the imbalance. Severus, we have to help him maintain that balance or it’ll tear Adrian apart trying to get to that child.”

Severus sighed and nodded in acknowledgement. “I agree. I’ll have Lucius inquire about adoptive parents. You said you had Winky following the girl?”

Adrian nodded, sitting back in his chair. “She’s to tell me when the girl goes into labour. I can always go there and wait in the shadows until an opportunity to take the baby presents itself.”

“Alright, now that it’s settled, I want you to go upstairs and get ready for your party. Your guests should be arriving soon.”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian grumbled as he and Draco headed into the house to get ready. All the way to his room, his edginess grew more and more until they reached his room. Noting that the animals weren’t there, he closed the door, looking at the blonde teen before him with a hungry look in his eyes. He hadn’t put his shirt back on, and now he simply tossed it aside.

“Adrian?” Draco asked in confusion and wariness, backing away from him a bit. Taking his wand out without thinking, Adrian cast his Locking charm on the door and a Silencing spell on the room. Once that was done, his wand fell to the floor as he advanced on his prey. “What are you doing?”

“Mine,” he purred seductively, grinning as he watched Draco shiver at the sound. By the sudden light of interest in the blonde’s eyes, Adrian knew Draco wasn’t afraid of him, though he still backed away from him. As he moved, he allowed the rest of his clothes to fall to the floor… only intent on watching Draco…

He growled suddenly as he watched the blonde back up to the bed, his breath hitching as he watched Adrian. Inhaling the air as he stalked his boyfriend, Adrian could taste Draco’s excitement and it fed the flames burning inside him. He was going to make this boy his… now!

“Sit on the bed,” Draco whispered breathlessly, eyes turning molten silver as he responded to his mood. “Let me show you what to do.”

Adrian nodded, eyes intent as he watched Draco quickly pull his clothes off. It was as if they were both responding to something beyond their control… but he couldn’t keep the thought in his head long enough to worry.

When Draco looked back at him, gloriously naked, he noticed a jar sitting on the bed…

Where it had come from, neither of them knew… he saw the surprise and confusion in the blonde’s face when he looked back at Adrian, but then it was instantly gone. Adrian knew this should worry him, but all he could think of at the moment was claiming what was his… and returning the favour.

He watched intently as Draco got on the bed, on his hands and knees. Adrian groaned as he watched the blonde open the jar, setting it beside him, spreading lube over his fingers before he looked back at Adrian over his shoulder.

“I wanted to wait until you were ready for this before I asked you to do this, but now is as good a time as any,” the blonde whispered as he stretched his hand under him until he had a finger at his own entrance, eyes on Adrian.
Neither boy could keep the moans from escaping their lips as Draco’s finger slowly slipped inside, sliding gently in and out a few times. The blonde quickly added a second finger, scissoring his fingers, gently stretching himself, eyes shifting downwards to Adrian’s hard cock. Adrian watched intently, not realizing how much lust was on his face, but the intense pleasure on Draco’s face was admittedly a huge turn on.

As he watched, Draco quickened his movements as if he were anxious to feel Adrian inside him. He panted as Draco swiftly added a third finger, stretching himself quickly now. That was as much as Adrian could take…

He heard Draco gasp in surprise and pleasure as he moved, pushing the fingers out of the way but Draco stopped him from slipping in, smearing lube on his hard length before capping the jar, throwing it to one side. “Now, Adrian,” he begged, wiggling his hips in invitation. With a growl, Adrian pushed in hard, freezing when Draco gasped in slight pain.

“Go slow,” the blonde panted finally, pushing back in example. Adrian picked up the rhythm quickly, giving slow and even thrust into the body in front of him, but he didn’t stop until he was completely seated inside Draco. “Wait!” Draco pleaded, wincing slightly.

Adrian groaned in pleasure, forcing himself to keep still. He didn’t feel when his wings came out, but they were half spread out behind him. “Okay, move,” Draco gasped, moaning when Adrian began to fuck him in quick thrust back and forth, moving on instinct.

He closed his eyes to feel it better, his body slowly shifting to that of his Dragon’s as he claimed the teenager. He growled as he sped up his movements, wanting to fill his mate, mark him as his as soon as possible…

He felt the pressure build quickly and looked down at the pale back in front of him, watched as it rocked with him. He became aware of Draco screaming as he clawed at the blankets. It was enough to push him over the edge. He bent down and bit Draco on the shoulder, hard enough to leave a mark. “Mine!” he growled out possessively as he filled Draco’s hole.

He heard Draco whimper as he pulled out of him, liquid dripping from his body, but Adrian wasn’t done just yet. Pushing Draco onto his back, he opened the jar to put lube on his mate’s still throbbing cock and lined himself up. He knew this was going to hurt, but it was what he needed right now…

He frowned as he realized that didn’t make sense, but he was too far gone right now to stop. He gasped as he pushed down, taking Draco into him. Draco arched up into him with a choked scream, eyes wide as heat enveloped him slowly.

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Draco watched as Adrian hovered above him, skin black and wings out. He knew this should worry him but couldn’t think past what was happening right now. When his length was fully in, Adrian moaned, head thrown back in pleasure even as he began to rock. Draco clutched at his legs as he moved with him, begging for more.

He closed his eyes as they moved together, but he soon opened them again to watch Adrian. It was a wonder to see, his wings opening and closing as he moved, his eyes glowing with pleasure. He didn’t last long, especially after Adrian had pushed him nearly to the brink. Something told him to sit up and without hesitation, he pushed himself into a sitting position.

Adrian groaned in pleasure, head falling to Draco’s shoulder where he licked at the mark. Draco cried out in pleasure, his whole body feeling electrified. It pushed him past thinking and he leaned
down, without thinking or hesitating, and bit down hard on Adrian’s shoulder, leaving a clear mark on his skin…

Adrian screamed in pleasure, jerking against Draco. It was all he needed… “Fuck,” Draco screamed as he arched up into Adrian’s body, feeling like his orgasm was ripped from him. “Mine!” he parroted Adrian’s earlier claim, not even realizing he’d said it, but there was a sudden flash in the room and then Adrian was collapsing against him.

It took him a few minutes to get his mind to focus enough to analyze what had just happened. It had begun as soon as Adrian had closed the door. He’d seen the eyes glow softly, but something had happened to distract him… There had been a scent in the room that had excited him beyond reason. He’d wanted Adrian to make him his. He was tired now, his shoulder throbbing pleasantly.

Lying back with a slight groan, he held his boyfriend against him before rolling them onto their sides. When he managed to pry his eyes opened, he blinked in surprise as he realized Adrian’s skin was normal again and his wings were gone.

His boyfriend’s eyes were closed and his breathing was evening out in sleep, so Draco figured it was alright to rest for a little… then he could puzzle this out.

* * *

Lupin arrived early for the birthday party and sat down with Severus and Madreca outside to await the boys. “I had Poppy check Sirius over to make sure nothing lingered from the tampering but she said whatever was used, it’s run its course.”

“Dumbledore is damn lucky he’s dead,” Severus growled angrily.

When an hour passed without either boy coming out of the Manor, Severus began to wonder what was going on. Adrian was usually punctual… especially when he knew he had company coming. “Well, the others should be here soon and the boys are still upstairs,” he murmured finally. “I’d best get them moving.” Severus stopped at the door to Adrian’s room, frowning when he couldn’t open it. He sighed impatiently, wondering what the boys were doing that required locking the door. “Timzy!” he barked out in irritation.

The little creature appeared beside him, wringing his hands worriedly. “Master?”

“Go into Adrian’s room and get one of the boys to unlock the door,” he ordered, glaring at the house-elf.

“Yes, Master,” Timzy squeaked in fear and was gone.

He didn’t have to wait long. Adrian opened the door with a look of confusion on his face, squinting up at him as he pulled on his dressing gown. “Father?”

“What have you two been up to that requires locking the door?” he asked, spying the bite mark on his son’s shoulder. Reaching out, he pulled the material back to reveal the mark. So, he thought as he realized what this meant. The bond is complete. Good.

Normally, he wouldn’t have liked the idea of these two having sex as young as they were but Adrian’s claiming of Draco as his mate would mean that he’d have a steady and reliable presence in his life. The boy needed that right now.

He watched as Adrian frowned in confusion. “I don’t even remember locking it, to be honest.”
“Get ready,” the Potions master murmured, looking at the bed where Draco was just rousing. He could see the mark on his shoulder, too, the mark stark against the boy’s pale skin. “Your guests should be arriving soon.”

“Yes, Father,” Adrian said with a sigh of resignation and gently closed the door. Knowing the boys would be down shortly, Severus turned and headed outside again. Madreca would be interested in hearing about this development…

* * *

Outside, Adrian watched as his friends and family talked and joked together, feeling content and at peace. It had been a long time since he’d felt this way… not since starting Hogwarts, actually. It was great knowing he didn’t have to worry about Dumbledore or Potter anymore. He didn’t know if he should worry about Karkaroff or not, but right now, seeing as the Bolivian Headmaster was on his way home – if he wasn’t there already – he wasn’t going to worry needlessly.

He smiled as Draco’s fingers twined around his, coming to stand behind him, a hand on his hip. “What’re you thinking about?” the blonde whispered in his ear.

“How great it is not to have to worry about two trouble makers,” Adrian murmured, leaning back against his boyfriend. “Six, if you count the three guys and the girl.” Draco snorted at the mention of the latest group trying to claim him.

“At least we know for sure that you’re not the father of her baby. Honestly,” the blonde sneered in contempt, “sleeping with three guys just to get pregnant… how desperate some people are.”

“Their ploy didn’t work and soon they’ll know about it,” Adrian smirked, amused when Draco began leading him towards their friends. “And by the time they do, it’ll be too late to do anything about it.”

“Time to mingle with your guests,” Draco murmured in amusement, sighing in disgust as something caught his attention. “I thought it was only supposed to be family and friends?”

Confused, Adrian looked in the direction Draco was looking in and bit back a groan as he noticed the Minister for Magic coming to join the party following Lucius and Narcissa. Caelum squealed as he ran straight for them, little legs going as fast as they could. For a two year old, the boy sure could move when he wanted. Laughing, he launched himself at Adrian, who scooped him up easily, blowing against his neck to make him laugh.

Grinning at his success as laughter echoed through the back yard, Adrian kissed the little cheek. “Are you having fun, Caelum?” he asked the little boy.

“Yes,” the little boy giggled, but soon wanted down. He sighed as Caelum ran off to chase after Shade, who was waiting impatiently on the other side of the yard.

“Adrian,” Lucius murmured as they came up to him and Draco, the look of contempt was clear for them to see, however as soon as he turned to look at the man trailing along behind him, there was no sign of it on his face. “You remember Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic?”

“Yes,” Adrian murmured with a tight smile, wondering what the man was doing at a private function. “Welcome, Minister.” Holding out his hand to shake the pudgy man’s hand, Adrian nodded to the man who, in a sense, was crashing his party.

“Thank you, Mr. Snape,” the Minister smiled falsely, looking around him in interest. “I’m sorry for intruding on your party—” Not really, Adrian added silently, hating lip service. “But I brought
someone who was inquiring about Lucius and I figured, since I knew he would be here, that it would be alright to bring them here. What a lovely place you and your father have.”

“Thank you, Minister, but you presume too much to assume that my private function would be open to party crashers,” Adrian said pleasantly. He watched as the Minister hesitated, his mouth opening uncertainly. “However, seeing as you are already here, please, conclude your very vital business, sir. I’m sure you have more important things to do than to spend a boring afternoon here at a child’s birthday party.” The way he’d worded it was like a backhanded slap but Fudge couldn’t very well call him on it without looking the fool, so, with a respectful bow, Adrian left the two adults to their business, catching the amused smirk on Lucius’ face.

“Very well played,” Draco murmured when they were out of earshot.

Adrian shook his head and grinned in amusement. “Think anyone’s ever told him to buzz off before?”

“Oh, probably, but he seems to be a man who doesn’t take hints very well.” Draco shrugged dismissively, leading him to the table where snacks had been laid out for the guests. Supper was still an hour away and Adrian was looking forward to it. He was famished!

“Excuse me,” he heard from his left. Adrian didn’t recognize the voice so he turned to face whoever it was with a polite smile on his face… it froze in place when he saw who was standing there. It was the Veela who’d been at the Quidditch World cup game! “Might we speak in private?”

Adrian hesitated slightly before he nodded, gesturing towards the garden facing the party. Catching his father’s eye, he jerked his head in the direction of the garden, grabbing Draco’s hand at the same time. There was no way he was going anywhere – even on Snape property – with a stranger.

“My name,” he began with a thoughtful look in his eyes when everyone had gathered a distance away from the rest of the guests, “is Kosta and I’m sure you remember me from last summer.” He smiled slightly at the obvious statement, so he continued when no one spoke. “So your Inheritance has come upon you already, Child of Shadows,” he murmured in slight confusion.

“Yes,” Severus murmured, answering for him. “It’s not unexpected given the circumstances surrounding Adrian’s upbringing.”

“Truly?” the Veela questioned, though he didn’t seem to expect an explanation. His eyes drifted over to Draco, seeming to know what was going on between him and Adrian. “And with his claimed mate…”

Adrian frowned in confusion, wondering what those cryptic words meant. “I’m sorry, but why are you here?”

“The Veela high council, once they were informed of the happenings of last summer, wanted to make certain that the cleansing ritual worked. If your Inheritance has come upon you without ill effect, then it would appear it was successful,” Kosta said with a pleased nod. “I am also to extend our congratulations to your success in reaching maturity intact. I’m sure you are aware that not many of Shadows’ children make it past their Inheritance…”

Again, his eyes drifted over to Draco and Adrian finally realized what the Veela was saying. Draco was the mate that would allow him to survive his creature bonding with him? Draco was his bondmate? Was that what had happened in his room earlier? The same thought seemed to have occurred to Draco because the blonde moved closer to him, almost instinctively, protectively.
The Veela frowned slightly as he regarded him. “However there might be more to you than even the
council suspects. I sense something… different with your creature. It’s confusing…”

What the heck was that supposed to mean?!

“This is a present from the council. We hope it will be helpful and bring clarity to questions you
might have had before your change,” Kosta murmured, holding out a wrapped box to him, bowing
respectfully.

Adrian hesitated slightly, looking at the box in the stranger’s hands before looking into the man’s
face. One look into amused blue eyes told him that his hesitation had been noticed… but he also
realized that if this man had wanted to hurt him, he wouldn’t have purged Adrian’s body of whatever
was harming his creature. These people had a vested interest in seeing him survive, it seemed.

He took the present from the stranger, murmuring a soft thank you, opening it up to find a book. He
frowned in confusion before he read the title… Shadow Keepers? “Is this…” he asked in shock,
looking up at the Veela.

Kosta smiled at him. “The Wizarding world wouldn’t have anything about your kind because not
enough of you survive in large quantities to make yourselves known anymore. You are the bringer of
balance. We hope this will help you identify more of your kind to bring things back into proper
alignment.” The man bowed again and moved up to kiss him on the forehead in an unusual show of
familiarity. “Be careful who you reveal yourself to. Not everyone sees you as the blessing you are.
Goodbye, Child of Shadows.”

Adrian was stunned as he watched the Veela walk away, joining Fudge beside Lucius. Soon
afterwards, the two men were gone, and a frowning Lucius was walking over to them. “I’m not quite
sure what happened there,” he murmured when he was closer to them. “Fudge stopped mid-
conversation, went vacant eyed and left with the other man. Wasn’t he the one in the tent?”

“Yes, Uncle Lucius,” Adrian murmured softly, looking down at the book in his hands in wonder. He
called Timzy and gave it to the house-elf. “Please put this in my room.”

“Yes, Master Adrian.”

“He had something to do and once he was done, he left,” Adrian continued once the house-elf was
gone. “I think he used Fudge to gain access to me, but it wasn’t in a bad way.”

Lucius looked at him in confusion. “If you say so,” he murmured when he realized he wasn’t going
to say any more. Besides the others were beginning to gather around them and Adrian didn’t want to
say too much, even with his friends. No one knew about his creature Inheritance and he wanted to
keep that to himself for as long as possible.

It wasn’t until later that night, while they sat in the living room, however that Adrian actually had
time to think on what had happened in the garden. “You know,” he said with a frown, interrupting
the soft conversations around him. “I found it funny the way the Veela kept referring to the shadows
as if it were a person. He kept calling me ‘Child of Shadows’.”

“What’s funny about that?” Severus asked from his seat beside Lupin. “It makes sense considering
you use the shadows to travel unseen in.”

“No,” Adrian said impatiently, frowning as he tried to clarify what he was thinking. “It’s the way he
was saying it: ‘Child of Shadows’ and ‘Shadows’ children’. He was saying it like ‘shadows’ was a
person or a sentient being, capable of creating children of its own.”
“I must admit, Severus,” Madreca said with a frown. “I agree with Adrian. Kosta did speak as if the shadows were a living, breathing being… perhaps he’s right.” They all looked at him in surprise, except for Adrian, of course, who agreed with him. “Did we not see things moving in the shadows when we were reviewing the memory of the incident with the girl? Did it not show what really took place without being asked to do so?”

“You mean it showed you what actually happened?” Narcissa asked in surprise, looking at them with open curiosity, Caelum lying at her feet with Kaida, sleeping peacefully, head cradled on the bigger animal with Shade sleeping beside the little boy. “Is the baby Adrian’s then?”

“No,” Severus smirked at the look of slight disappointment that crossed Narcissa face. It seemed she had hoped it was. “It seems she slept with the three boys who attacked Adrian on the train in order to get pregnant, saying since she was be disfigured, she might as well enjoy the act. Have you looked into the matter of adoptive parents, Lucius?”

Lucius nodded, looking at Narcissa in amusement. “I have. My contact should be getting back to me soon.”

“I think Adrian should adopt the baby,” the woman said with a gleam in her eyes.

Adrian’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “Me?!” he squeaked out in shock. “Why?” He knew he’d volunteered to take the baby, but he’d been relieved when it had turned out that he wasn’t the father. His father was right. He wasn’t equipped to raise a child and finish his education.

“Well, since you’re with another boy, it stands to reason that you’ll need to adopt a child in order to keep the Snape line going. I highly doubt Draco will be able to provide you with one, or vice versa. Draco will also need to adopt eventually, but with Caelum growing stronger every day, it stands to reason that there’s no rush in providing a suitable Malfoy heir just yet.”

“Aunt Cissa! I’m only fifteen!”

Narcissa waved dismissively. “The child could remain with me until you’ve finished your schooling and I’m sure Winky would be thrilled to have a child to look after once more.”

Adrian groaned, covering his face with his hands. “I can’t believe you’re serious about this,” he moaned in despair. “What the heck would I do with a child?”

“I’m sure we’d help you with that, Adrian,” she said with a pleased smirk.

“Where did you get this idea in the first place?” Adrian asked with a hint of hysteria in his tone, looking at her in desperation.

“I think that’s my fault,” Draco said, smiling slightly in apology. “I kind of let it slip to Mother during the party what you’d planned on doing. I didn’t get to the part about the baby not being yours. She didn’t give me time before she took off, mumbling something under her breath.”

“I do not mumble,” Narcissa said with great dignity. “But this still could work, Adrian. You’ll need an heir eventually and how many babies do you think are out there waiting to be adopted into a good family?”

Gods, he couldn’t believe this. Did she really want him to be a father at fifteen? If the determined look in Narcissa’s eyes was any indication, it seemed he would be. “We’ll see, Aunt Cissa. We don’t even know if it’s going to be a girl or a boy. If it’s a girl, there’s not much point in me taking it on as an heir, now is there?”
When the woman smirked in triumph, Adrian groaned, burying his face in his hands again. Now he hoped the child turned out to be a girl because he knew she was going to insist on him adopting the baby if it was a boy simply because it gave her a new baby to care for... He couldn’t blame her, really. She was good with children.

Then a thought occurred to him. “But, Aunt Cissa,” he said with a smirk that made Lucius instantly wary. “If it turns out to be a girl, you have to adopt her.” He watched as a light came on in her eyes and he knew what she was thinking. A little girl for her to doll up... now he hoped it was a girl, if only to make her happy.

“Fine.” Everyone hid their grins as Lucius looked at his wife in slight panic, knowing as well as everyone else that once she got something in her head, there was no changing it. If it was a girl, they would be adopting it.

* * *

“Master Adrian!”

Adrian blinked in confusion. “What?” he mumbled sleepily, looking around his room for what had woken him up. He was by himself in his room, Draco having opted for sleeping at home for a few days. Since their bonding, the blonde had been spending even more time with Adrian than usual.

Now, two weeks later, Adrian had a hard time falling asleep without his bondmate.

He’d spent a lot of his alone time reading the book given to him by the Veela council. It answered so many of the questions he and the others had, including a way of finding other Shadow Dragons like him. In fact, he’d been reading the book until just about a couple of hours ago when he’d gotten tired enough to finally sleep...

Sighing tiredly, he began drifting off again when he was shaken roughly. Opening his eyes, he realized Winky was standing on his bed with worried eyes. “Master, baby time!”

Baby time?

He blinked in confusion again. What the- Then his mind cleared enough to make out what Winky was saying. The girl was going into labour! “How long ago?”

“Few minutes, Master.”

“Take me outside the house she’s in. I don’t want them to know I’m there,” he ordered as he jumped off the bed, pulling on the clothes he’d picked out especially for this occasion. He’d talked his father into going to muggle London so he could pick out some cheap clothes that were black. So now he had a black sweater – of which he’d cut off some of the back so he could take out his wings without destroying the material –, black cargo pants and black army boots.

If they saw him, they wouldn’t know it was him, especially once he changed his skin to black. He’d also realized something else. When he was in his Dragon form, his hair was three times as long as normal... it worked out perfectly. He’d also bought a pair of sunglasses that fit his face like a second skin, almost like they were in fact part of him. This was to hide his eyes. In his Dragon form, his eyes were still green, and since not many children had his eyes, it was a dead give-away.

He’d also noticed something else when he was practicing switching his shape, when his creature was out, his eyesight was better than usual, everything bright and crisp, even in the dark. He liked it. And then there was the side-effects... though Draco didn’t seem to be complaining.
When he was dressed and his skin changed, he nodded to Winky. She took hold of his hand and Apparated him to a large farm house. “Go home,” he told the house-elf with a nod. “I’ll make my own way back.”

“Yes, Master.”

Looking around at his surroundings, he noticed two of the boys standing outside on the front porch, talking softly to each other. He moved quickly, ducking into the shadows as soon as he could, moving closer to the front door. “How do you think she’s doing?” he heard one boy asked the other when he was within earshot.

“The woman we hired to help out said she was resting comfortably but the brat wouldn’t stop crying so they decided to do something about it so she could sleep. Seems like Snape isn’t going to fall for our little trick. What do we do now?”

“I’m sure we can come up with something.”

When he was close enough that he would be discovered, he allowed himself to sink into the shadows, walking up the front steps where the two boys had been and pushed through the shadow that would’ve been the door.

In this world, there was no such thing as solid walls, windows or people. It was simply lights and shadows. He walked the house, wondering where to go. He was surprised when he heard a wail come from upstairs. Following the sounds of distress and hunger, he made his way to one of the rooms.

He pushed out of the shadows, frowning in confusion when the wailing stopped. So where had the wailing come from?

In the big bed, he could see the girl sleeping peacefully, but there was no baby beside her… It took him a few seconds to realize there was a crib shoved in one corner of the room. Walking silently over to it, he peeked in and watched as a baby screamed from the small bed… but there was no sound…

Of course! Silencing spell!

Smiling gently down at it, he reached into the crib and caressed the small head, crooning softly at the infant to calm its distress. With the way it was bundled up, he couldn’t tell if it was a girl or a boy but right now that didn’t matter. Calming the poor child was.

His smile widened as the baby’s screaming seemed to diminish with the soft touch, calming enough to open beautiful blue eyes and look up at him. “Hello, sweetheart,” he whispered as he reached in to pick it up, hearing it sniffle and hiccup. He figured the child had been crying for a while and glared angrily at the girl sleeping on the bed. She didn’t deserve to have this child. She was too selfish for that…

“Who the fuck are you?” he heard from behind him and turned to face one of the boys from the train. “What do you think you’re doing?” With a growl and a show of razor sharp teeth, Adrian wrapped his wings around himself and the baby as spells were suddenly thrown at him. He glared at the two boys, pissed because they didn’t seem to care that he held the baby in his arms. Deciding he’d had enough of their uncaring attitudes, he descended into the shadows on the floor, baby held close to his chest.

Adrian looked down at the baby in his arms, waiting for it to begin crying in fear but it only looked up at him with bright eyes. He took the dark glasses off and smiled gently at the small child. “Let’s
It seemed he was hiding out in Lupin’s home for a few days.

Adrian didn’t care beyond the fact that Black had agreed to care for the child until things died down. Suddenly, he frowned down at the baby, curiosity getting the better of him. He had to know if this was a girl or a boy… With a thought, a table appeared beside him and he laid the baby down on it. It whimpered slightly but settled down easily enough when he didn’t move away.

It was as if it knew he wouldn’t hurt or leave it.

Pulling the blanket off, he blinked in amusement. “Uncle Lucius is going to be mad at me,” he murmured as he looked up into the blue eyes watching him. “Come, little girl, let’s get you where there’s food.”

**

“As soon as things are settled down, Lupin will come get her from you,” Adrian told Black, eyeing the man warily. He’d changed his skin back to normal while in the shadows, not wanting to reveal this to Black. He still didn’t feel comfortable around this man but he needed him at the moment.

“You can count on me,” Black said with a nod as he cradled the small body in his arms. “I had Remus bring me some things after you asked me so that I don’t have to go out. I also know to send him a message if I need anything else. She’s in good hands.”

“I’m going to trust you with this, Black,” Adrian said, hesitant to leave the little girl with this man… but knowing he had little options.

“I swear, Adrian. She’s in good hands,” he repeated softly. Adrian looked him in the eyes before nodding. He turned and walked out the door before heading into the shadows, leaving the baby and the man in Lupin’s house and hoped he was doing the right thing…

“Time to go home,” he whispered to himself, surprised when the shadows surrounded him, enveloping him in their darkness. When they parted again, he was shocked to realize that he was in his room. So, he thought in excitement, all he had to do was say where he wanted to go and they would instantly take him there! This was great!

Pushing out of the shadows, he emerged in his room, grinning at his boyfriend who was sitting on his bed. He hadn’t thought he’d been gone long enough for morning to arrive… “Draco,” he murmured, his blood singing in his veins. “When did you get here?”

“Just now,” Draco murmured with a twist of his lips. “Something told me to come. How did it go?”

“The baby is with Black so no one will find her.” He smirked when he saw the surprise in Draco’s eye. “Yes, it’s a girl and not a boy.”

“Thank Merlin,” Draco sighed in relief, falling back on the bed. Adrian’s smirk grew as he walked silently over to the bed and climbed up to straddle his boyfriend’s hips, groaning at the feel of him. Draco reached out and ran his hands up Adrian’s legs to his hips. “Why is it you’re always horny after turning into your Dragon?” he asked softly, his eyes showing his own arousal.

“The book Kosta gave me says it’s because Dragons have stronger sex drives than we do so whenever the change occurs, it sort of gives mine an extra boost,” Adrian moaned, his hips rocking against the ones beneath him. “ Gods, Draco,” he whimpered, head thrown back at the increase in
sensations. “It also makes everything more… intense.”

He allowed Draco to flip him onto his back, gasping when his boyfriend pushed up against him. “I think I’m going to like this little twist,” Draco whispered against his lips before claiming them in a searing kiss. Adrian moaned deep in his throat, beyond thought now.

**

Draco watched as passion lit Adrian’s green eyes when he looked at him, making them brighter than usual. Oh, yes, he could definitely get used to this… It had been a definite turn-on seeing his boyfriend in the snug fitting muggle clothes… he was going to have to talk Adrian into wearing them more often.

But he wasn’t quite sure if he should continue this way or if it would be better to calm his boyfriend down by penetrating him. Deciding to test this out, he pushed down harder into Adrian, groaning when the legs tightened reflexively so their hard lengths were pressed even closer together.

He knew Adrian was worried about having sex so early in their relationship and he would respect his wish to take things slow though Draco couldn’t see the problem with it… but right now, there was just too much clothing between them.

Pulling out his wand, he swished it at the room, casting a Silencing charm so they wouldn’t wake up Severus then again at their clothes, Vanishing them quickly. Their mouths pulled apart with cries of pleasure as warm skin pressed against warm skin. “Oh, yes,” Draco hissed, pushing himself up slightly so he had better leverage to thrust up against Adrian, the friction it was creating felt delicious with a touch of frustration.

“Draco,” Adrian cried out, arching up into him, exposing his throat to him. Unable to help himself, he leaned down and sucked on the mark on Adrian’s shoulder, feeling the body under him shudder even as Adrian screamed in pleasure. “In!” the dark haired boy panted, clinging to him desperately.

“Are you sure?” Draco asked breathlessly, rotating his hips, earning a strangled scream from Adrian.

“In!” Adrian demanded on a growl, eyes glowing slightly. This he remembered. It was Adrian’s Dragon coming through.

“Turn over,” he instructed, forcing himself to rise up so Adrian could comply. With a whimper, Adrian did as Draco said, gasping as Draco pushed down against his back. “Do you like that, Adrian?” he whispered in his ear, liking the way Adrian shivered as his breath ghosted over the sensitive flesh. He pushed up against the body under him, enjoying the sound his boyfriend gave as he teased him.

“More,” Adrian begged, pushing back against Draco. With a flick of his wand, he summoned the tube of lube from his pant pocket, having anticipated – hope, really – this. He took his time pushing a lubed finger into Adrian’s body, watching as the teenager stiffened in pleasure. “Now, Draco,” Adrian pleaded, clinging urgently to the blankets under him.

Apparently this was normal as well. Adrian had told him that Dragons liked rough sex. It seemed to be the ultimate high… Taking the time to lube himself, he pulled one of Adrian’s legs up to give him better access. He gritted his teeth as he pushed into Adrian, hoping he wasn’t hurting him. The first time, neither one had been in their right mind to take things slow and, as a result, it had taken nearly an hour for Adrian to stop wincing every time he moved.

He was surprised when Adrian let out a high pitched keen, stopping quickly, thinking he was hurting
his boyfriend. “Oh, Gods,” Adrian whimpered breathlessly. “Don’t stop!”

Reassured, he began to push in again, gasping in pleasure when he felt the muscles tighten around him. He lost control then, slamming home the rest of the way, making Adrian scream in pleasure. “Yes! More!”

With a growl, Draco began thrusting hard, feeling like he couldn’t get enough of the boy beneath him. He leaned down and bit down on his mark again, causing Adrian to scream and jerk under him. At first, Draco thought his lover was struggling against him, trying to get away, making him growl angrily before he thrust harder into the body beneath him, licking at the mark. It took him a few more minutes to clear his mind enough to realize that Adrian was moving against him, helping impale himself on Draco’s hard length.

They didn’t last long.

The hard pace wouldn’t allow for it. Within minutes, they both cried out as their orgasms hit them at nearly the same time.

It was a few more minutes before Draco could gather enough energy to roll them onto their sides, keeping Adrian against him so he wouldn’t lose his connection with his boyfriend… Frowning in confusion, he allowed himself to pull out, groaning in pleasure and slight disappointment…

He didn’t understand that, but right now, with his mind fuzzy with fatigue and satisfaction, he couldn’t bring himself to care. He managed to grab hold of his wand and cast Cleansing charms on both them and the bed, then dropped it on the table beside the bed, yawning tiredly. “Good night,” he whispered in Adrian’s ear, smiling when he a got a grunt of affirmation for a response. Yes, he could definitely get used to this.

* * *

“According to this,” Adrian said as he sat with Draco on his bed the next night. “It appears that some of the Shadow Dragons can bear young even if they’re guys.” He shook his head. “Yay. Something to look forward to, especially when you don’t know who can or can’t.”

Draco snickered at the sarcasm dripping off the words. He was currently wrapped around his boyfriend, reading his own book. “Does the book really explain more than Madreca and your father know about Shadow Dragons?”

“Way more, but then I’m amazed they knew as much as they did,” Adrian murmured with a tired sigh, stretching with a groan before hissing sharply. He kept forgetting to take it easy with his hip and every once in a while, it would twinge sharply to remind him about it. Sitting cross-legged on the bed for over an hour… not recommended.

“Come on,” the blonde said with an amused smile, pushing him down before he began massaging the abused muscle. “You’d think you’d remember not to sit like that for so long after how many times,” he heard his boyfriend gripe as his talented fingers kneaded the tense and sore muscles. At first, Adrian gritted his teeth at the pain but once past that, he groaned in relief.

“Anyway,” he murmured finally. “What those two men know is only the tip of the iceberg. Apparently, there’s actually a way to find Shadow Dragons while they’re still infants.”

“So then, this means it takes a Shadow Dragon to find another one,” Draco said with a thoughtful frown. “Makes sense in a kind of way. I wonder how long it’s been since there was an adult like you and why they didn’t keep finding the children.”
“Don’t know, I haven’t gotten that far yet but it hints at a devastating event. Maybe someone tried to get rid of them? It’s hard to say,” Adrian said with a shrug.

“Are you done reading for tonight?” Draco asked and the tone used told Adrian he was more than ready for something different than reading.

He smiled seductively at him, reaching out to caress the soft skin of his boyfriend’s arm… and laughed as Shade attacked Draco, pouncing on the blonde’s back, pinning Adrian in place.

_Aha!_ the half grown cat gloated gleefully as he leaned over Draco’s shoulder to lick repeatedly at Adrian’s face. _I can do the kissy face thing, too, you know!_ he said as Adrian tried to push the cat away, still laughing and sputtering in amusement.

“Shade!” Draco growled out in annoyance, shoving the cat off him and onto the floor. “Go find something else to do, you crazy cat. He’s my boyfriend.”

Adrian laughed harder as the cat stuck his tongue out at the blonde before walking over towards where Kaida lay, huffing as he laid down to wash himself. “What did he say anyway?”

“That he could do the ‘kissy face’ thing, too,” Adrian grinned into Draco’s amused eyes. “I think he feels left out.”

“Well, he can find his own playmate. You’re taken,” Draco growled playfully as he swooped down and claimed Adrian’s lips. It had probably been meant as a quick kiss, but just like always between them, once they started, it was hard to stop. The kiss quickly turned heated and everything else took a back seat…
Chapter 13 Where have all the Dragons Gone?

A few days after the baby was taken, the Aurors showed up at Snape Manor, as predicted. “It’s come to our attention that an incident occurred at the Bloxam household. It seems a baby girl, born three nights, was taken while Jennifer Bloxam, the mother, slept. The girl seems under the impression that you might be behind the abduction.”

“Me?” Adrian asked, widening his eyes innocently. “What would I do with a baby, sir? I just turned fifteen. Besides,” he said with a twist of his mouth in apology, “there’s no chance that I’d sleep with a girl, sir. You see, I’m gay.”

“You’re-” The Auror stumbled to a stop as he blinked at him in surprise. “Would you mind, Professor Snape, if we checked your home? Just to say we checked and the young woman in question can’t say we didn’t do our job?”

“Of course, Auror,” Severus murmured with a slight incline of his head, smirking at Adrian behind the man’s back. Adrian returned the smirk as he reached out to pet Shade, the dogs sitting quietly beside his chair. It seemed to make the Aurors nervous as the four animals simply watched them without making a sound.

When they were done, the Aurors came back to the living room. “I apologize for the intrusion,” the man murmured with a tight smile. “It would seem the girl was mistaken.”

“Sir,” Adrian said with a frown as he stood up, making it look like he was hesitating with his actions. “This girl, she didn’t happen to have short brown hair and blue eyes, did she?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact she does. Why?”

“Well, she was going around the train last June saying I was the father of her child and when I didn’t believe her,” Adrian said then hesitated, looking over at his father, looking for all the world as if he were nervous about revealing what had happened.

“Yes?” the Auror asked, gentling his tone, trying to put him at ease… which had been Adrian’s intent.

“She-” He cleared his throat, his brows pulled down as if he was having trouble saying the words. “Her friends… they… cut me,” he finished with a whisper.

“They cut you?” the Auror asked in confusion and alarm. “Why?”

“They said I had to marry her or else they would kill my boyfriend.” Adrian pulled his shirt up to reveal the cut and looked up tearfully at the man in front of him. “Also, I couldn’t use magic to heal it. It had to heal on its own.”

The Auror looked at the cut in surprise before his eyes hardened in anger. “Do you happen to know who they are?”

“No, but they were older than me. Two of them had Ravenclaw robes on and the third one had Gryffindor robes on, if that helps.”

“I’ll see to it that charges are brought against these people, Professor,” he said, looking up at Severus,
face set in a determined look as he nodded and left.

Adrian didn’t dare look at his father until he was sure the Aurors were gone or he’d start laughing… not a good thing just yet. “Perhaps I should enroll you in acting classes,” his father drawled mockingly as soon as they were sure they were alone. Adrian couldn't hold it back any longer and laughed in amusement. Grinning widely, he turned to look up at his father.

“Sometimes it pays to hang around Draco,” he quipped flippantly before he laughed again. “Do you think he believed me?”

Severus snorted as he shook his head. “You even had me believing it and I know the whole truth!”

Adrian bowed mockingly, giggling as Severus reached out to pinch his ribs. Just them a flustered Draco showed up, looking at them in slight panic. “Were they here?” he demanded harshly.

“They just left. Why?” Adrian asked in confusion.

“They’re at Malfoy Manor looking for the baby. What happened?”

Severus snorted in amusement. “Adrian convinced the Aurors that he was the injured party in all of this. A victim of a ploy the girl concocted with her friends to snare herself a husband.”

“Really?” Draco blinked in surprise. “And they bought it?”

“Yup,” Adrian grinned, pleased with himself. “It helped that I have a scar to use as proof.”

“Indeed.”

“Good, then that means you can go get the baby,” Draco said in relief. “Mother’s getting impatient to meet her.”

Adrian’s eyebrows rose in amusement. “You told her?”

“Of course I told her,” Draco scoffed dismissively. “She was practically climbing the walls with impatience and driving Father crazy in the process. He’s not happy with you at the moment.”

“That’s alright,” Adrian said with a shrug. “Uncle Lucius will get over it quickly once he sees how happy Aunt Cissa is over the little girl.” It was three more days before Adrian was able to retrieve the little girl, but soon she was in her new home at Malfoy Manor, happily hovered over by Narcissa and an army of house-elves. Even soon-to-be three year old Caelum seemed happy with the new addition.

Saffron Lilyanna Malfoy was added to the family…

* * *

He nodded pleasantly to the woman passing by him as he walked through Main Street on his way to his post. When he reached the end of the valley, high above the valley, he looked back at the village. Today was the summer Equinox celebration and the whole village was turning out to get the village square ready for the festivities tonight.

It was going to be great!

His partner – a Veela – was planning something special, though he wasn’t saying what the surprise was… Taking a deep breath of the mountain air, he frowned as something came back to him… a feeling of wrongness…
Then it was gone.

Frown deepening, he looked around for any sign of danger but nothing seemed out of the ordinary.
The villagers were going about their business, greeting one another with big smiles, setting up the
tables and chairs for the evening meal…

Arms wound around his waist and he smiled as he recognized the scent of his mate. “How are
things with your sister?” he asked softly as he wound his fingers through his mate’s.

“Same as always,” his mate joked easily, grinning widely. “She says she feels like a whale and can’t
wait for her latest child to be born. Women.”

He laughed, knowing his mate had just rolled his eyes at female antics. “She should be glad she’s
able to have children, Mika,” he murmured a little sadly after a few minutes of enjoying his mate’s
arms around him. They’d been trying for three years without success. This meant that neither was
lucky enough to bear children…

“I know you want a child badly, Tanner, and we’ve tried everything we could think of. It simply
means Shadows has different plans for us than raising our own children. Look at the ones brought
here because their parents don’t know what to do with them? You’ve done wonders with teaching
them to love themselves. They’re thriving because of you, my love.”

Tanner turned in Mika’s arms with a sigh before laughing softly at himself. “I know. We’ve talked
about this before. I was looking forward to having a little carbon copy of you with my eyes running
around, is all. You’re right, though. We do have our own little brood to care for. We don’t need
more.”

Smiling into his mate’s eyes, he leaned forward and kissed him gently…

That was when the screaming began to filter to them. Turning together, they ran for the village,
watching in horror as spells were fired in every direction. “Find the children and get them out of
here!” Tanner ordered Mika as he shifted into his Dragon. Several of the others had already
changed, defending the people who weren’t Shadow Dragons or simply too young to change.

“Be careful!” Mika shouted as a house on the outskirts blew up.

As he neared the fighting, he could see some of the Shadow Dragons fighting, moving as if they were
dancing. Instead of wands – like their attackers – they used swords, using them to either deflect
spells or to cast them. That was about all the time he had to admire the movements of his fellow
Dragons before he fell into a kind of trance, moving fluidly as he fought.

He didn’t even have time to wonder at why they were being attacked, just that they were and he had
to give the others time to save as many of the children as possible…

He glared at the attackers, giving them a feral grin meant to intimidate… it worked. Any who came
at him were felled easily as he moved gracefully from fighting position to fighting position quickly
and efficiently.

“Tanner! The remnants of the villagers are evacuated! We need to retreat!” he heard from behind
him.

“Got!” he called back, not daring to take his attention from the people in front of him. “I’ll protect
your backs!”

One by one, he felt his fellow defenders sink down into Shadows’ embrace until he was the last to
remain. A scream from his left distracted him. A young girl, by the sounds of it, needed help. Turning quickly in the direction of the scream, he ran towards it.

He found her easily, surrounded by three men who were advancing slowly as she coward against the wall. He managed to place himself between them and her, growling menacingly… then gasped as pain sliced through his back.

He blinked in confusion before he gasped again, realizing there was something sticking out of his chest. It took him a few more seconds to realize it was a blade… how?

“Today,” he heard the girl hiss in his ear, “marks the end of your kind’s hold on Wizard kind.” He heard an anguished scream from somewhere but everything was beginning to go dim and he couldn’t draw enough breath into his lungs to push past the burning in his chest…

“Adrian!” Draco called out, and it took him a few seconds to realize his boyfriend and his father were pinning him to the bed.

“What?” he asked in disorientation, blinking up at the two above him. What was going on?

“What in the netherworld were you dreaming about?” the blonde asked as he moved back with a frown. “You were moaning and thrashing around and I couldn’t wake you up.”

“Dreaming?” he parroted, caught somewhere between the fading dream and wakefulness. What had he been dreaming about? He could remember his chest hurting… Without thinking, he reached up and touched the spot where he’d seen the blade pierce him, confused when there was nothing there. “I… don’t know.”

“Is this the first time you’ve had a hard time waking him up?” Severus asked Draco with a worried frown.

“Like this? Yes,” Draco said with a nod. “But he’s woken me up quite a few times with his moaning. He’d usually wake up fairly quickly when I’d shake him out of his dream.”

“How long have the dreams been happening?” the Potions master asked in surprise as he sat on the edge of the bed.

“Since his birthday, I imagine,” the blonde said as Adrian sat up slowly. “At least it’s like this every time I’ve slept over.”

“Still in the room here,” he muttered in slight irritation.

“Do you remember the dreams at all?” his father asked him.

“No. I can only remember… um, fighting,” he said, frowning in concentration. “Something about betrayal and pain… maybe metal? I don’t know. It’s all fading quickly.”

“You’ve been having this dream since your birthday… that means nearly three weeks. I wonder if this has anything to do with you Inheritance…” Severus murmured with a frown as he thought that through. “Try to get some more sleep. In the morning, I’ll talk to Madreca”

“Yes, Father,” he murmured, lying back down with Draco.

“Yes, Uncle Sev,” Draco said with a yawn. Adrian sighed as Draco laid against him, his breathing deepening into sleep quickly… but it took him a while longer to slip back into sleep.
All of Shadows’ children show themselves differently when looked at in the Wizarding world. One is as indiscernible as the next. It is in the shadows that one can tell which are Shadows’ and which aren’t. The signs are subtle to those who are unobservant.

In the shadows, the children will have one of these traits: Dragon eyes or black patchy scales on the skin. Naturally a Shadow Dragon will have to take the child into the Shadow world in order to see these traits. It is also a way of introducing a new Shadow Dragon to Shadows. However, the truly powerful Dragons will be able to sense the children without having to go into the shadow world.

Shadows’ children are there to insure balance is maintained. Without Shadow Dragons, chaos would reign free. If ever Shadows’ justice is not met, if all Shadow Dragons were to vanish for some unknown or unforeseen reason, Shadows would step in and send the Wizarding world a new one...

I worry, however, that there won’t be anyone left to train the new Justice Keepers...

He blinked at the book in confusion. Then he realized what he’d missed with the last paragraphs. The handwriting was different than the whole book. This last had been added in by someone different...

My husband was the last of the elders... one of the few who could find the new children without having to go into the Shadows. The others who fought for the village never returned and my beloved is gone... I felt it. Who will find and train the children now?

I will hopefully be joining you soon, my beloved Tanner...

That was the last sentence and seemed to be added as if someone had used an enchanted quill to write with and hadn’t meant for it to be recorded.

The name was familiar somehow... where had he heard that name before?

“Adrian, are you coming down?” Draco asked from the door to the bathroom, distracting him from his thoughts. “I’m famished and the others should be here soon.”

“Yeah,” he murmured as he closed the book after marking his place. He smirked at his boyfriend as the blonde huffed in irritation. “I don’t know why you fuss so much with your appearance,” he teased playfully as he moved closer to Draco, kissing him quickly. It wouldn’t do to get distracted this early in the morning. His father would simply walk in on them regardless of their compromising position. “It’s not like it’s going to last past the dueling.”

“I figure one of us should at least attempt to look civilized,” the blonde sniffed haughtily, eyes dancing in amusement.

“Is that what you call it? I thought it was an attempt to hide the love bites I gave you last night,” he laughed, dancing out of reach when Draco swung at him, glaring in mock-irritation.

They were heading outside when Adrian felt the pull. Frowning, he stopped in confusion. “What’s wrong, Adrian?” he heard and looked ahead of him where Draco was half turned towards him, an eyebrow raised in curiosity.

“I don’t know. It’s like something’s calling me, but it’s faint.”

“Well, Madreca’s waiting for us outside,” Draco said as he grabbed his hand, pulling him to get him moving. “He said he had something new he wanted to teach us in our muggle hand-to-hand
Smiling indulgently, he pushed the odd occurrence to the back of his mind for now. He’d talk to his father about it later. In the back yard, the others arriving as well, joking together as they took their places at the table where Madreca stood waiting patiently, holding a couple of staves. More were piled on a rack beside him.

Because it was summer and they would be dueling, everyone had come prepared. The boys wore tank tops that were snug against their bodies and comfortably loose pants – though they weren’t too loose – and the girls wore almost the same thing, though their shirts covered more than the boys’ did.

“Today we’re going to learn to use muggle weapons. These staves are going to be used instead of sharper blades until you’re better at fighting with these. Now, from what I understand, this was popular in ancient times and staves were used to introduce children and beginners to the art of sword fighting. I’ll be taking it a step further later on and teaching you to fight with magic as well as the muggle way.”

Everyone murmured in interest and Madreca smirked at them. “You must realize, of course, that you might never use this style of fighting but it’ll be a good exercise in wandless magic. Who wants to help me demonstrate?” He nodded in approval as everyone’s hands shot into the air. “Fred.”

Grinning at Madreca, he took the staff from the Spaniard and stood back about six feet away, each one holding it as if it were a sword. “I’m going to start you off with simple fighting without magic. Once I’m sure you’ve got it down, we’ll progress from there.”

* * *

The next day was a relaxing day for them. Madreca had gone home for a couple of days, so they took advantage of the time to get their school supplies. For once, nothing bad happened, which Adrian was grateful.

Later that night, his father had gone to a meeting with the Dark Lord – not because he wanted to, but because he had to – so Draco had taken advantage of that time to visit with Adrian. “I want you to show me the Shadow world again,” Draco murmured as they lay on Adrian’s bed. They were currently curled up together enjoying the solitude.

It wasn’t as if Severus barged in on them whenever they were alone in Adrian’s room, but it was still nice knowing they were completely alone …

“Alright, but let me tell Winky in case Father comes back before we do. I don’t want him to worry needlessly,” Adrian said with a smirk as he sat up. “Winky!” he called out as Draco rose to his feet, slipping his shoes back on before he walked over to Adrian’s side of the bed.

“Master?” she asked instantly, popping into the room before Adrian was done with his shoes.

“If my father comes looking for me, let him know that Draco and I went into the other world. He’ll know what that means, but make sure he’s by himself when you tell him. The only other people who knows about what I can do are Madreca and the Malfoys.”

“Yes, Master,” Winky said as she bowed before leaving the room.

“Where do you want to go?” he asked Draco as they pulled their cloaks on, just in case.

Draco shrugged indifferently. “Surprise me. We’ve never traveled this way before.” With a gleam in his eyes, he picked up the blanket Adrian kept at the foot of his bed. “Just in case.”
“That because I’m just figuring it out now,” Adrian said with smirk. Draco wound his arms around Adrian’s waist from behind, the blanket between them. With a flick of his wand, he flicked the lights off, creating thicker shadows around them, leaving only the lamp on.

“Let’s do this,” Draco whispered in his ear and Adrian grinned, a hand covering Draco’s as they sunk into the shadows. “Do you think the other Shadow Dragons brought their intended into the Shadow World like this?”

“From what the book said, I don’t think so,” Adrian murmured as they looked around at their surroundings. “Watch this,” he whispered, tightening his grip on Draco’s hands. “Take us somewhere private.”

He heard Draco gasp as the shadows surrounded them, blocking all the lights around them. When they parted, seconds later, they were somewhere else. “Where are we?” the blonde asked and Adrian could feel his heart pounding against his back in panic.

“Let’s find out,” Adrian murmured as he pulled them back to the real world… and gasped in shock as they exited in an area that clearly was abandoned and had been for several years if not longer. Long enough that trees had grown tall and very thick… “Where are we?” he whispered in slight fear. Several buildings had collapsed from years of disuse, but others bore obvious marks of battle.

“Don’t know. Why would the shadows bring us here?”

“Wait,” Adrian murmured with a frown, as he looked closer at the buildings. “This place seems… familiar.”

“Familiar how?” Draco asked as they began walking around the empty houses. It was obvious they had been laid out in a pattern that clearly said it was a village or small town.

Adrian shook his head as he walked quickly down the rows of houses. There was something about this place… When they reached what could have passed for the center of the… village?... he stopped dead in his track as he saw burnt wood covered in thick moss… but instead of the log sticking out of the ground, he saw a table being blasted to bits.

He began to pant in fear, shaking his head slightly as he looked at the surrounding buildings, hearing screams echoing off the rocky faces, heard pounding feet. “No,” he gasped, turning around in a circle in panic. He didn’t hear Draco ask him what was wrong, didn’t even register that his boyfriend was even there as the place overwhelmed him.

Despite the tall grass, he began running, following the sounds of fighting. “Tanner! he heard echoed around him, the sounds bouncing off the remaining walls of the buildings and knew he was almost there. He had to warn him…! The remnants of the villagers are evacuated! We need to retreat!”

“Go! I’ll protect your backs!”

He was getting nearer. He slid to a stop as a scream, a young girl's, echoed suddenly from his left. He knew what that meant. He was too late! Turning quickly in the direction of the scream, he walked in the direction, knowing he wasn’t far now.

He sobbed as a feeling of overwhelming sorrow gripped him, feeling like his heart had been ripped out of his chest. As he neared the area where everything had ended, he fell to his knees, watching as the girl drove a very sharp blade through the man’s back. Watched as he blinked in confusion before he gasped again as she pushed it further through the black scaled body of her protector.

He watched, unable to do anything as the Shadow Dragon looked in confusion at the blade
protruding from his chest, reaching out to touch it as if he didn’t believe it was real. “Today,” the girl hiss in his ear, “marks the end of your kind’s hold on Wizard kind.” He heard a scream of anguish sound from his left but everything was fading and he blinked in confusion at Draco who had knelt in front of him at some point.

“What happened, Adrian?” he asked gently, worry filling his eyes. “Where are we?”

“This was their home,” he whispered, wiping his face and looking around at the sad remnants of a great society.

“The Wizarding world betrayed them because they didn’t like the fact that they couldn’t be corrupted.” The voice came from behind them and they whirled quickly, wands drawn before they recognized who it was.

“Jeez, Madreca,” Draco gasped, breathing in relief. “How did you get here, anyway?”

“My grandfather would bring me here when I was younger so that someone would remember what happened to the Oscuro Endriagos,” Madreca murmured as he knelt beside them. “I wondered when the shadows would bring you here.”

“How did you know they’d bring me here?” Adrian asked as he clung to Draco.

“Let’s go somewhere a little more comfortable,” the Spaniard murmured with a tired sigh. He led them to a tent that had been set up on the outskirts of the buildings. He had them sitting at the table with a hot cup of tea before he sat down, looking older than Adrian had ever seen.

“Is this where you come every summer?” Adrian asked finally, leaning against Draco as he nursed his cup of tea. He remembered his dreams now – the ones he’d been having since his Inheritance had come in – and knew he wouldn’t have them anymore now that he’d seen the place where it had happened.

“One day out of the year, yes. I think the events that transpired here deserve to be remembered by someone.”

“Could we bring it back to what it used to be?” Draco asked with a frown, sitting sideways on the bench so he could pull Adrian against him, rubbing a hand against his back.

“Why would we need to do that? No one has lived here in nearly three centuries,” Madreca asked, though from the look of interest in his eyes, Adrian knew he approved of the idea.

“If we’re going to find more Shadow Dragons, we’re going to need a place for them to live where they can learn from those who have lived through the experiences,” Adrian said softly. “I saw what it used to look like before the Ministry attacked. I also think that spells should be put in place. If we used one to make the place Unpotable, one to keep hostile people from Apparating in, and another one to stop people from using harmful magic against the people living in this community, it might make things safer.”

“Yes,” Madreca murmured as he frowned thoughtfully. “It might be possible. Let me see what I can do.”

“What was the name of this community?” Adrian asked after they’d been sitting there in silence for a while. He was beginning tire now, the emotional roller coaster ride he’d been in since arriving here and the adrenalin draining from his body, taking its toll on him.

“I believe it was called Dragon’s Valley or something like that.”
“Really?” Draco said in a flat tone, clearly not impressed with the name. “Could we rename it?”

Madreca shrugged indifferently. “Nothing says you can’t, but remember that if we’re to make this into a viable community once more, we’re going to have to come up with an address before the spells are in place. Then we have to come up with who’s going to live here besides the Shadow Dragons.”

“Can we tell the others about this place?” Adrian asked, leaning even more heavily on Draco. He blinked tiredly, having a hard time keeping his eyes opened. “Maybe bring them here to practice?”

“I think you need to sleep,” Madreca murmured with a small amused smile. “Did you want to take him home or sleep here?” he asked Draco.

“If we don’t get back, Uncle Sev will be pissed,” Draco murmured with a wary sigh as he placed a hand on Adrian’s neck, cradling his head with a hand so he wouldn’t hit it against the table as his eyes closing of their own accord. He didn’t hear what the solution was as he was dragged into slumber’s embrace.

**

”What have you found out?” Voldemort asked in a silky tone, stroking the huge snake’s head as it rested on the arm of his throne-like chair. “Where is the Potter boy?” Adrian frowned as he stood slightly behind Voldemort’s chair, watching as the Death Eaters gathered around the maniac. What in the netherworld…?

“My Lord,” Macnair murmured, bowing respectfully at his feet. “There is nothing at the Ministry that says where the boy was taken after the Potters died.”

“How…” Voldemort murmured softly, eyes narrowed angrily, “disappointing.” Without warning, Macnair fell to the floor, screaming in pain thanks to a well-aimed Crucio. The sound reverberated around the room, making Adrian’s ears hurt.

When it finally stopped, he was glad. He didn’t understand why he was being dragged back here but he figured it was important…

“Severus,” Voldemort purred, red eyes narrowing on the Potions master. “You were closer to Dumbledore than any of my servants. Did he tell you where he placed the boy?”

Adrian watched as his father moved forward, knelt before the snake-faced maniac, and kissed the hem of his robes. “My Lord, Dumbledore told me once that he had placed the boy with his muggle relatives.”

“And has anyone checked on them?”

“I have, my Lord,” Severus answered, head bowed respectfully. “It would seem that the Dursleys have moved in the time since the boy was dropped on their doorstep.”

Adrian knew this was a lie since he knew exactly where the Dursleys had moved to. This was further proof that his father was protecting him…

“Keep searching, Severus,” Voldemort murmured, gesturing for him to move back. “Lucius, what have your contacts inside the Ministry told you?”

He watched, nose wrinkling in disgust, as his godfather did the same thing his father had, kneeling and kissing the hem. Honestly, this idiot thought highly of himself, didn’t he? Fancied himself royalty
or something? It made Adrian nauseous to watch.

“My Lord, I found records that the Potters were buried in Godric’s Hollow. Perhaps there are some clues there to find?”

“That will be your task, Lucius. Bring me word as soon as you return from your excursion and report your findings.”

“My Lord,” Lucius murmured before he backed away from the… man in the chair. Adrian grew bored as he waited for whatever force had him there to release him, wanting to wander around but his feet seemed glued in place.

He flinched as pain made him aware that Voldemort was suddenly standing in front of him, talking to his Death Eaters. He couldn’t concentrate on what was being said as his head exploded in agony. In self defense and without realizing he was doing it, his body shifted to his Dragon shape and it helped a bit, making the pain more tolerable… barely.

He bit back the whimper that wanted to escape his lips, closing his eyes tightly to control the pain. He crouched down and wrapped his wings around himself, further insulating himself against the close proximity to the Dark Lord…

**

“Open your eyes, Adrian,” Draco’s coaxing voice cut through his head like a hot knife through butter. He managed to crack them open but then instantly regretted it as the slight light of the moon pierced through his aching head so he shut them again with a sound of pain. “Are you awake now?”

Adrian nodded slightly… and regretted it at once. His stomach rebelled and he quickly turned over just in time to throw up. He didn’t even know where they were. He did know he was laying on a hard surface so he was probably still in the valley… He could smell and feel the dampness around him. Unfortunately, it was making his body ache.

When he was done, he groaned as Draco pulled him back to lie against him. “We need to get him home,” Madreca said sharply. “Now.”

Adrian whimpered as he was picked up, the move aggravating his head, stomach and now his hip. When they Apparated, he wanted to die! As soon as they arrived, he threw up again, which made everything worse.

He must have blacked out because the next thing he knew he was being gently laid down on his bed. “What in Merlin’s name were you two doing?” his father growled angrily from above him.

“Adrian and I used the shadows to travel tonight and ended up in a valley,” Draco began. “It just happened to be the valley where the Shadow Dragons lived and were betrayed in.”

“You found their homes?” Severus asked in astonishment.

“We didn’t know that at first but Adrian had a… I don’t know what you’d call it, really.” Adrian could almost see his boyfriend frowning in confusion.

“He relived his dreams, watching what happened during the attack as if he were really there,” Madreca supplied softly. “Then, later, when Adrian fell asleep, I knew something was wrong. When he started whimpering in pain, I took him outside where he could use the shadows to help protect himself in his vision. We watched as he changed into his Dragon, wrapping himself in his wings before he managed to pull himself out of it.”
“It was still a few minutes before he managed to wake up, though,” Draco finished. Adrian felt a weight settle on the other side of his bed, but couldn’t be bothered enough to open his eyes to see who it was… besides, it was the same side that Draco’s voice had been on, so he assumed it was the blonde.

“Adrian,” his father murmured, a hand slipping under the back of his head when he didn’t answer. Even that slight pressure as he lifted him a couple of inches hurt and he couldn’t stop the soft whimper that escaped him. “Here is a Pain Reliever.” He obediently opened his mouth enough to take the potion, swallowing it down, grateful when the aches dulled slightly. “And Calming potion.” Once that one had been dully swallowed, his father laid his head down again. “I need to wait a bit before I give you the next potions,” his father said softly as he sat down beside him.

He didn’t care. At least his whole body didn’t ache and his headache had finally dulled down to a controllable throb. He allowed himself to drift, knowing from experience that if he didn’t move, his head and body would eventually stop hurting… though he couldn’t understand why his father didn’t just give him a Dreamless Sleep potion and allow him to simply sleep.

He was nearly asleep when his father called his name. “Muscle Relaxant.” He obediently opened his mouth and swallowed the potion pressed to his lips. “I’m not going to give you a Dreamless Sleep potion tonight but a modified one instead. It’ll act the same way but it’s not going to knock you out. Do you understand?”

Adrian frowned as he thought that through, finding it hard to push words past his lips. “Okay,” he said finally, too tired to really care right now. He swallowed the potion when the phial was pressed against his lips and he felt his father’s weight vanish from his bed.

“Get some sleep. We’ll talk more in the morning.”

He heard Draco sigh before stretching out beside him. He smiled drowsily when he was pulled closer to the blonde’s body, craving the close contact now that his body wasn’t hurting anymore… though he wanted… something.

He frowned slightly as he tried to make his mind focus, but sleep was dragging him down into its dark embrace and he wasn’t sure if he wanted to fight it anymore…

* * *

Adrian came awake instantly, cackling laughter following him out of his sleep… What had he been dreaming about? How was that even possible when his father had given him a Dreamless Sleep potion? Alright, so it was modified, but still… there should have been no dream at all!

Draco moaned a protest beside him, and Adrian realized his boyfriend was still sleeping. Relaxing against the warm body behind him, Adrian tried to get his breathing under control, not wanting to worry the blonde needlessly. He tried to recall what he’d been dreaming about, but stopped when all he got out of it was a headache… and a deep awareness of Draco’s body pressed behind him.

Sighing softly, he rolled out of bed without waking Draco – a feat he’d perfected over the years of climbing into bed with him – and quietly padded into the bathroom, hoping to calm his raging hormones before he crawled over the blonde and woke him up. He forewent the tub for the shower, smiling down at Shade, who followed behind him.

*How are you feeling this morning?* the cat asked him as Adrian stripped.

“A little edgy but better than last night, but I think something happened after I fell asleep,” Adrian
said with a frown before shrugging it away. “I just don’t know what.”

*Whisps will get better*, the cat murmured as he stretched and padded into the shower stall with Adrian. *Don’t forget behind my ears this time.*

“Yes, your Highness,” he mocked as he poured some liquid soap onto Shade’s dark fur. This was a potion Adrian had made himself when they couldn’t find something suitable to use on animals that wouldn’t make them into a puffball or irritate the skin. With this, he could cast a Drying charm on the dogs’, Shade’s and Kaida’s fur and it would stay down and sleek without making it look like the poor creatures had stuck their tails or noses into an electrical socket.

*And don’t you forget it,* Shade said in a haughty tone, head held high and looking down his nose. Adrian laughed at the cat before rubbing soap onto the fur of Shade’s neck, ears and face, making the cat glare at him through the bubbles. *Ha, ha, very funny.*

Using his fingers to dig through the fur, he smiled as Shade groaned in pleasure, back arching up so he could scratch more surface. When the cat was rinsed off, Adrian knew he was going to get it by the gleam of revenge in Shade’s eyes… and sure enough, Shade shook himself out at the other end of the shower stall – exactly where the boy stood, no less – hosing Adrian down with the water.

With a huff of amusement, Shade walked out of the shower, flicking his back paws out behind him to get rid of any clinging water drops. “Thanks, Shade,” Adrian grumbled as he swiped his hands down his face, taking off as much water as he could.

*You’re welcome,* Shade murmured as he sat on the floor, waiting patiently for Adrian to cast the Drying charm. In seconds the cat was dry but it wasn’t Adrian who cast the spell. It was Draco, who was smirking in amusement.

“What happened to you?” the blonde asked him, taking in his bedraggled state.

“Shade happened,” he growled, daring Draco to laugh at him.

“Well,” his boyfriend murmured as he moved into the shower, closing the curtain behind him. Adrian looked up at him in surprise before catching the gleam of interest in Draco’s eyes as he stood in front of him. “Maybe we should make sure you’re not injured in any way.”

“But what if Father comes in?” Adrian whispered as he moved back against the shower wall, feeling himself respond to Draco’s suggestive look, the edgy feeling returning with a vengeance. He could feel his body heating up at the deep silver of arousal in the blonde’s eyes. He didn’t care if a parade of people came trooping through his bathroom at the moment. He wanted Draco… badly.

“I guess he’ll see more than he thought he would,” his boyfriend whispered in his ear when he leaned closer before his tongue came out to lick at the out shell. Adrian couldn’t help the moan that escaped him as he reached out to touch the silky skin in front of him.

“Draco,” he breathed out as he arched up, wanting to feel Draco’s body against his, but Draco stayed tantalizingly out of reach.

“Slowly, Adrian,” the blonde whispered, nibbling on the tender flesh. “We have time.”

Adrian whimpered in frustration. “Please, Draco. Need to feel you.”

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Draco froze slightly at Adrian’s words. He’d wondered about this last night but when his boyfriend
had simply gone to sleep, he’d assumed that the Dragon’s appearance hadn’t affected the smaller teen. It seemed he’d been wrong. It seemed to have simply waited a bit.

“Your Dragon demanding again?” Draco asked, pulling back to look him in the eyes, frowning as he tilted Adrian’s head back to see better. “Yes, he is,” Draco said with a sigh as Adrian looked at him with dazed eyes, clearly showing him the Dragon slit pupils.

He was going to have to change his tactic now, but this would be a good time to test something out... if he could resist the Dragon’s pull. Making a quick decision, he bent down and claimed Adrian’s lips in a hard kiss that made the smaller teen moan in abandon as he wrapped his arms around his neck.

Draco bent down still further without breaking the kiss, gripping his boyfriend’s legs. Adrian didn’t hesitate, but wrapped them around Draco’s lean hips. From the sound coming from Adrian, it was obvious he couldn’t concentrate on anything beyond what he felt. He was slightly surprised when Adrian pulled out of the kiss before he growled out ‘Mine’ breathlessly before plunging back into the kiss.

Absently reaching out, he shut the water off before he carried Adrian into the bedroom. He didn’t even care that they were damp. He felt a slight twinge of worry at how small and light his boyfriend was but it didn’t hold his attention long. With a sigh of pleasure, he laid the smaller teen down on the bed without breaking the kiss, feeling fingers tangle in his damp locks.

“More, Draco,” Adrian gasped urgently, rubbing enticingly up against him. “Need more.”

He’d wanted to take things slow, make sure Adrian was prepared for him but he knew his Dragon wouldn’t allow for the slow pace. It also didn’t seem to matter that it was rough, in fact, it seemed that the rougher it was, the more turned on Adrian – no, the Dragon – was.

“I know,” Draco whispered between kisses as he lined himself up before he pushed into Adrian’s body with a groan of pleasure. “Hold on.” The sensation of his penetration broke the kiss as Adrian, gasped in pleasure, arching up as Draco pushed deeper into his body.

He watched as Adrian’s mouth opened slightly, as if he wanted to cry out, but couldn’t draw in enough air to make any sound. It wasn’t until fully in him that the moan finally escaped him in one long exhale that sounded almost like a growl of pleasure. Draco smirked in satisfaction just as Adrian opened his eyes, not really seeing the ceiling of his bedroom.

Wanting to make it last Draco began to move, keeping it slow and easy. Adrian’s Dragon might dictate that there was urgency, but he should be able to set the pace by tricking it.

“Draco!” Adrian whimpered, clutching desperately at him. Keeping the pace the same, Draco leaned down, using his tongue to rub the mark on his boyfriend’s shoulder. It felt hot under his mouth and throbbed slightly. It made Adrian’s body arch up and he cried out as it sent shockwaves through his body.

Draco had found that out by accident, how arousing the mark was. He’d sucked on it once when Adrian was dictating the pace and not his Dragon. It had been interesting how sensitive it really was. Adrian had gone wild. Right now, however, he used it to his advantage, pressing in just the right places to calm the Dragon inside his boyfriend for a bit and Adrian settled down with a long drawn-out moan, hands roaming Draco’s back and sides as if they couldn’t remain still for long.

“Adrian,” Draco sighed as he licked his way to Adrian’s lips again, devouring him hungrily. “Love you.”
“Yes,” Adrian hissed dazedly, eyes closing on their own as their tongues glided deliciously against the others. “Love you.” His legs tightened suddenly around Draco’s hips, wanting more. “Faster, Draco,” he groaned then, telling him his Dragon was getting antsy again. Being on top, however, meant Adrian couldn’t do much about the speed.

He cried out as Draco’s hips snapped hard against his, his head falling back, breaking the kiss. With the move, however, Draco began sucking on the skin of his throat, slowly making his way to the mark again. Adrian groaned in frustration as Draco went back to his slow movements before thrusting hard once more.

“Draco,” Adrian growled, lower that was actually normal, telling him he’d drawn it out as long as the Dragon inside his boyfriend would allow and had had enough of his teasing. With a strength he hadn’t believed possible, Adrian shoved him over onto his back. “Enough playing…” the Dragon growled suddenly.

Draco gasped in surprise and interest as Adrian sat up, gasping as it pushed Draco deeper into the teen above him. Wanting to watch this, especially since Adrian didn’t take control often, Draco forced his eyes to remain open. The problem with this, however, was that he could now feel the irresistible pull of the aroused Dragon inside Adrian… and it was impatient.

Adrian groaned, head thrown back. What made this time different from all the other times was the glow in the green eyes. “Fuck,” Draco groaned as the smaller teen began moving, hips rolling enticingly every few strokes. Draco wanted to laugh as Adrian teased them both but that was when the wings came out, spreading open and closed with his movement. “Adrian,” he moaned, pushing up into his boyfriend.

The closer they got to the end, the more Draco realized something was different today. He almost missed it as the pressure inside him built to a peak. Instead of just the wings coming out this time, Adrian’s skin started going darker until he looked like his Dragon. “My mate,” Adrian choked out, back arching as his orgasm tore out of him. The muscles rippling around his flesh forced Draco’s out of him and he arched up into Adrian’s body, clutching at his boyfriend’s legs.

When Adrian collapsed on top of him, panting in exhaustion, he was himself once more. Draco’s arms automatically wrapped around the back above him, holding him close, as they tried to get their breathing under control. “Damn,” Draco heard him groan. “I don’t know if I’m hoping this edginess stops whenever my creature comes out or not.”

Draco laughed breathlessly. “It sure makes our love life interesting and alive.”

Now it was Adrian’s turn to laugh. “To say the least. I suppose we should get up to face the day before Father comes in and catches us like this.” He groaned as he got off the bed, wincing slightly at the soreness.

“Yes, especially since we’re having breakfast at Malfoy Manor with Mother and Father.”

“I’d forgotten about that, actually,” Adrian murmured with a slight frown. “Let’s go shower.”

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Shadows Falls.

That was what they settled on for the name of the valley… named for the multiple waterfalls that provided the water to the valley. Funny thing was, it had been Draco’s idea. Adrian had teased him for it but now that was the name of the valley.
True to his word, Madreca took them all to the valley to train and help clean up the debris. As for the frames that were left in the places where homes had once been, the remaining lumber were simply Vanished to make room for the new buildings. Draco had even talked his father into allowing a few of their house-elves to work on the homes. Things were actually coming along nicely.

So by the end of August, they had four homes up with three more in different stages of completion and whenever they stayed the night, they were allowed to take whichever finished home they wanted. Adrian was amused when the others allowed him and Draco to claim one house as their own while they shared the other three.

“We have good friends,” he murmured one night as he and Draco lay in bed, his father in the next room. Draco grunted in agreement, too tired to answer with words. Madreca had been running them hard these last two days, learning how to duel with staves or wooden swords. “What do you think Madreca is going to teach us tomorrow?” he asked with a yawn. He was drowsy but not really tired enough to sleep… hence the reason why he was keeping Draco awake.

“Don’t know,” Draco slurred, telling Adrian he wanted to go to sleep now. “Sleep, morning comes quickly.”

He smiled in amusement but settled more comfortably in Draco’s arms, wanting to sleep… and couldn’t. He stayed there, however, until Draco was asleep before getting out of bed. He knew if he stayed there, he’d never get to sleep.

Maybe it was because Adrian was too excited about the next day? Since it was a Saturday, it meant both Lucius and Narcissa were coming with Caelum and Saffron – though she was still too small to really play with – to help out around the valley.

He sat on the steps outside looking at the slowly fading moon. Because it wasn’t quite half, it threw enough light to see around him but it wasn’t as strong as it was when it was full…

A sudden movement at the edge of the nearest house caught his attention. Blinking in surprise, he looked in the direction it had come in. Nothing moved. Frowning slightly, he rose to his feet, trying to see through the shadows cast by the moon. Then he saw it again.

A darker shadow mixed in with the normal shadows.

Frown deepening, he took a step towards it… and hesitated, looking back into the house. He debated with whether he should wake up either Draco or his father. They wouldn’t be too pleased if they woke up and he wasn’t there.

When the shadow moved again, he bit his lip as he realized he was going to lose whoever was there. Making a quick decision, he took off after the figure, trying to stick to the shadows himself. It wasn’t easy.

He wasn’t really surprised when he reached the spot where the figure had been and no one was there. Instead of going down the side of the house, however, he snuck the other way, making his way to the other end of the house.

He was confused when no one was there. Where had they gone? Then he saw movement in the trees fifty yards away and quickly darted after it. At first he’d thought it might be one of his friends, but he realized the figure was too tall to be them. Whoever this was, they were even taller than Madreca… if that were possible. But hadn’t Madreca told them that no one knew about this valley?

At the edge of the forest, he hesitated, looking back at the houses. He really shouldn’t be doing this on his own… With a sigh, he turned to follow whoever was in there and stopped short. He blinked
in surprise and a little fear as he realized whoever he’d been following stood right in front of him.

Without meaning to, he took a step back, feeling the hair on the back of his neck stand on end. “Who are you?” he asked, silently cursing the way his voice shook slightly with fear. “How did you get in here?”

The tall man simply pierced him with his pale eyes, taking another step towards him, forcing Adrian to take another step back. He could feel his heart begin to pound in his chest. Something was wrong here, but he couldn’t put his finger on what that was.

Madreca had assured them that he’d placed the spells on the valley and mountains surrounded them on all sides, insuring that no one could accidently stumble inside it. There were no cave systems or paths or anything. In fact, when they’d flown the perimeter, Adrian had realized they were, in fact, inside a gigantic volcano… extinct, it seemed. It had certainly not erupted in thousands of years.

It took a few seconds to realize what felt wrong about this man. When he really began to look for details, he became aware that he could see through the stranger. He took another step back, at the realization that this might be a ghost… “Who are you?” he asked again, his voice weaker than before, fear filling his mouth with a metallic taste. He’d never realized fear had a taste before now, he thought irrelevantly.

Before he could even think of running, the ghost flung itself at him with a scream, sounding like a banshee in search of revenge. All thoughts of running bled out of his mind as he froze in horror and fear. He had enough time to throw his arms up, trying to protect his face from whatever this was… not that it helped. Adrian didn’t realize he was screaming as pain bloomed through his whole body, making his head feel like it was exploding...

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Draco jerked in bed, frowning in confusion. Something had woken him up… but what? When he didn’t hear anything more, he sighed in irritation and reached for Adrian…

He was awake instantly when he didn’t encounter the warm body of his boyfriend. He was out of bed instantly, shoving down the panic he felt. They were safe here. No one could enter the valley without help.

He padded quietly but hastily through the house, looking for Adrian. When he didn’t find any sign of him anywhere in the house, he quickly went and woke up Severus. “I can’t find Adrian anywhere in the house,” he murmured when he was sure his godfather was aware of him.

Severus jerked out of bed with a snarled curse. “Get the others.”

When everyone was standing outside, they all fanned out, looking for Adrian. When every building had been searched, they all met up in the village center. “Anything?” Severus asked with a frown.

“Nothing, sir,” Ginny said with a slight shiver as a gentle yet slightly cold breeze snaked around them. “Do you think he went into the forest?”

They all turned in the direction of the forest, though they couldn’t see it through the burnt husks of the old homes and the new partially constructed ones. Madreca was the one who moved first, but instead of heading for the edge of the village, he moved towards Draco.

“Close your eyes, Draco,” the Spaniard instructed, gesturing impatiently when Draco gave him a weird look. “Trust me.” With a slight shake of his head, Draco did as instructed. “Now, look inside yourself. There should be something there that shouldn’t be there normally.”
Draco frowned as he took stock of himself magically and mentally, wondering what that was supposed to mean… then he saw it. It almost looked like a silver rope. One end was attached to him but the other led away…

Opening his eyes in surprise, he looked in the direction it lead, still seeing it as if it were a tangible rope. He was amazed he hadn’t seen it before. “What is that?” he asked, his surprise bleeding into his voice.

“It’s your link to Adrian,” Madreca said, resting a hand on his shoulder as if to ground him. “Can you see where he is?”

Draco frowned as he followed the ‘rope’, concentrating on where it led. It felt as if he were flying through the air as he followed the link but the hand on his shoulder told him he hadn’t moved. “Looks like he’s on the edge of the forest…” he said, his frown deepening as he realized Adrian wasn’t alone. “Someone’s there.”

“Who?” Severus asked in surprise. No one should’ve been able to get into the valley with the wards in place. So who…? It took him a few seconds to realize Madreca was moving swiftly in the direction Draco had indicated, the others close behind him.

When they neared the area, he watched as Madreca came to a stop fifty feet from where Adrian lay crumpled in the grass, unconscious and twitching slightly. “Who are you?” he demanded, putting his arms up to keep the others back. When Draco went to rush by him, Severus grabbed hold of him, keeping him back, but Draco had eyes only for his boyfriend.

“Desist!” Severus hissed urgently, shaking him slightly.

He swallowed the protest as he glanced up at the figure slowly standing up. Whoever this was, they were well cloaked, even the hood was pulled up, hiding the identity of the person. The hair on the back of Draco’s neck stood up as he looked at the stranger, feeling the wrongness of him. He glared at the man standing over his boyfriend. His mate!

_Calm yourself, young Veela._ The voice seemed to echo hollowly around them… _him!_ A quick glance at the others told him the others hadn’t heard anything. Veela? What, in the name of Merlin, was this man talking about? Draco wasn’t a Veela… right?

He is singed and in shock but fine. That part seemed to be for the benefit of everyone else.

“Singed?” he growled out, shaking off Severus’ hand on his arm. “Why did you attack him?”

_I did not attack him, child. I was testing him, though I admit now that perhaps it was too soon._ The stranger’s eyes drifted over the group, coming to rest on Madreca again. _You have been teaching him?

“As best I can,” Madreca murmured with a sharp incline of his head. “It’s difficult when there haven’t been any Shadow Dragons around for centuries and no literature to fall back on beyond the one book the Veela gave Adrian on his birthday this year.”

The stranger’s head tilted to one side slightly as he turned that information over in his head before he nodded. _That is true._ His eyes drifted back to Draco in a way that was beginning to irritate him. It was the same look the Veela had given him at Adrian’s birthday party. _Out of all the children, he is the only one who has managed to find his way home._

“You brought him here that night… didn’t you?” Madreca murmured in realization.
“Who are you?” Severus asked with a frown.

“He’s Shadows,” Madreca murmured as the figure turned to face them. “Why now?”

*I have sensed more of my children being born,* Shadows explained patiently, gesturing for Draco to go to Adrian, his amusement clearly felt. *In order for them to survive as this one has, he needs to learn the ways of the Shadow World… and I sense a new danger to his life.* Draco knew he was talking about the Dark Lord. His father had brought back proof to the maniac that ‘Harry Potter’ was dead and buried with his parents… whatever that meant. *He is the only one of my children who has survived as long as he has. It is a great comfort to know that at least one will reach adulthood.*

“How are we supposed to do that when we have no way of training him in the correct manner?” Severus asked slowly as Draco pulled Adrian’s limp body onto his lap, cradling his head on his shoulder. He heard Adrian whimper softly in pain and began carding his fingers through the thick locks, hoping to help his boyfriend. It was only now that he held Adrian that he realized the smaller boy was panting shallowly, blisters beginning to form on his exposed skin.

He wrinkled his nose as the smell of charred clothing and hair wafted up to him and glared at Shadows. It didn’t make much of a difference because the stranger ignored him now. *There is a small pond mid-way along the rim of the valley which has healing properties,* Shadows told them, pointing in the direction of the pond. *It was created for the Dragons to use. He’ll need it.* The stranger looked down at him and Adrian with a thoughtful look on his shadowed face. *I will help him more now that I am sure he’ll live.*

With that, Shadows stepped into the forest and was gone, sinking into the shadows of his world soundlessly.

Severus moved closer to Draco, bending down to check on Adrian. “We need to take him to that pond. Now,” his godfather murmured worriedly.

“I’ll get a broom!” Fred said as he turned and ran for the nearest house. He was back in minutes with a broom. Severus grabbed hold of Adrian, wincing when the teenager cried out softly in pain.

“I’ll wait up for you,” his godfather murmured as he placed Adrian in front of Draco. “Be careful.”

Draco nodded, an arm wrapped behind his boyfriend before he kicked off the ground, aiming for the direction Shadows had gestured towards. From the air, he frowned when nothing was visible, leaning down to go faster. It wasn’t until he was almost at the cliff wall that he saw the light glint off water. *This was what he called a pond?* It was easily the size of a Quidditch pitch, end to end!

With a shake of his head, he aimed for the nearest shore. Once on the ground, he carried Adrian into the water, not even taking the time to undress him. Besides, taking the clothes off of him would only cause more pain.

He didn’t have to go in deep or far. The water deepened quickly. As soon as he was waist deep, he dunked down until they were both up to their necks in water. He didn’t know what Shadows goal had been, or what he’d been thinking of when he pulled his little *test,* but Draco wondered what it would do to Adrian.

All he could do was wait and hope for the best. He just wished stop everyone would stop trying to destroy his boyfriend…
Draco was worried about Adrian. The entire trip to the lake, his boyfriend didn’t wake up… at all.
He’d made sounds of distress now and again, but nothing more. He trailed the water over the too-
pale face in order to get rid of the blisters. He was very gentle doing this, making sure the water
didn’t go into his nose and mouth so Adrian wouldn’t think he was drowning and struggle
needlessly. That was when he noticed the dark circles under his boyfriend’s eyes, looking like faint
bruises. Was Adrian having nightmares and hiding it? He pushed the thought away for now. There
would be time enough to ask him about it later.

He was surprised to see Shade sitting at the edge of the lake, waiting patiently for them. He hadn’t
seen the cat all night. Wasn’t he supposed to be protecting Adrian? Then a thought occurred to him.
“Shade, are you also part of the Shadow world?”

He felt kind of foolish to be talking to the cat when the cat couldn’t answer him back, but he blinked
in surprise when Shade’s head dipped in a nod.

“Is that why you allowed this to happen to Adrian?”

Again the cat nodded and Draco was even more confused than before.

“Adrian doesn’t know, does he?”

The cat shook his head, as if he were trying to shed water from his fur.

“Are you going to tell him?” He saw the light of amusement in the depths of Shade’s eyes and rolled
his eyes. “Eventually, I’m assuming is your answer.”

The cat simply turned and padded back into the forest, melting easily into the shadows around him.

Pulling Adrian out of the lake, and grateful it was summer and not winter, he climbed back onto the
broom with Adrian before him and kicked off. It didn’t take long to get back to the house. Soon,
Adrian was lying on the bed, his face looking even more bruised than before. “What’s happening to
him, Uncle Sev?” he asked when he brought it to his godfather’s attention.

“I don’t know, Draco,” Severus sighed, eyes deeply worried. “It could be just about anything.”

“I’ll be back.” With a grim look, Draco headed outside. It was still dark and there was no one
around, having gone back to bed, but what he wanted to do didn’t require any witnesses. He needed
to speak to the man who’d done this to Adrian… unfortunately he wasn’t sure if what he was
planning on doing would work but he had to try something.

He made straight for the forest. It was the last place they’d seen Shadows so he figured it was the
best place to try this. He sat in the thickest of the shadows and closed his eyes. I need to talk to you,
Shadows, he thought loudly, hoping this worked. Why he thought this would was a mystery to him,
but he was pulling one of Adrian’s tricks and going with his gut.
He didn’t know how long he sat there, but he didn’t stop the mental chant… until he was startled out of it by fingers caressing his cheek. He was surprised to see the cloaked figure crouched before him. *What is the problem, child?* he asked curiously.

“Adrian isn’t getting better,” Draco told him, trying to see beyond the darkness of the cowl. He couldn’t see any features beyond a slight light reflecting off eyes. “In fact he’s getting worse. The lake didn’t help.”

Shadows looked off into the direction of the houses and, somehow, Draco could tell he was frowning. He stiffened slightly when the cloaked man touched his knee and they sunk into the shadows. He was actually surprised at how quickly he found himself in his room where Severus still sat with Adrian.

His godfather stood up abruptly. “He’s going to help Adrian,” Draco told him before he could demand answers.

Shadows walked over to Adrian, reaching out to touch the teen on the bed. Moving quickly, he pulled the blankets off and picked Adrian up. *Meet me at the pond,* Draco was ordered and Shadows was gone, taking the smaller teen with him.

“Tell me what goes on,” Severus ordered as Draco moved quickly for the door. He nodded as he grabbed up the broom. He launched himself into the air, heading for the lake. It didn’t take him as long to get there this time because he knew where it was now.

He touched down just as Shadows came out with Adrian cradled in his arms. His look was better than before. Gone were the bruises around the eyes and Draco was relieved. “What was wrong?” he asked as Shadows laid Adrian down on the ground.

_Someone placed a Poisoning spell on the water that was designed to last for a long time. I have taken it off so the lake will work once more._

“Thank you,” he murmured as he held Adrian close, relieved that his boyfriend was going to get better.

_It is good that you found me. If you had waited longer, I might not have known about it until it was too late._ He could tell Shadows was looking at him in curiosity again. _How did you know I would come to you?_

“I didn’t. Something told me to do that and I hoped it was right,” Draco told him with a sigh, cheek pressed against the top of Adrian’s head. “I need to help him as much as possible because if I don’t, no one else will and he’ll try to kill himself doing it alone.”

Shadows was still and silent for so long that Draco began to wonder if maybe he had offended him… _If you ever have need of me again, do the same thing and I will come to you._

Draco nodded and hesitated for a second. “Sir? About Shade, he told him he was supposed to help Adrian now. I was wondering, though, why Kanen had to die, and if it was all planned?”

He was surprised when Shadows seemed to go extremely still. _Yes, Kanen was sent to him when he needed protection the most, but he could not go where Adrian could. He would forever be left behind when Adrian had work to do. Kanen understood this. He also didn’t want to stand between Shade and Adrian, which would have happened eventually, and was willing to give his life to protect the boy he’d come to love. In return for the loss, I sent him Shade earlier than planned. There is a reason Shade always seemed to defy the odds of confinement. He is there to help Adrian now, he_
“You know he’s never going to be as close with Shade as he was with Kanen, right?” Draco asked, wondering just how closely Shadows watched Adrian. “He never got over the loss. I see him sometimes when he thinks I’m asleep, looking into the distance, like he did after Kanen died. He still grieves for him.”

Shadows looked off into the forest, seeming to sigh tiredly. *We never forget the ones we love who have passed into the realm of eternal shadows, child. Adrian will take time to be secure in the knowledge that he won’t lose Shade as he did Kanen. Shade knows and accepts this as part of his job. He loves the boy nonetheless. I must go now. Care for Adrian, it’s all any of us can do at the moment.*

Draco wasn’t really surprised when Shadows sunk into the darkness once more. When he was gone, Draco picked Adrian up, climbed onto the broom and kicked off, aiming back for village. It had been a long day…

He was getting tired by the time he reached the village again, the fear and adrenaline rushes taking their toll on him. He didn’t know how Adrian did it, honestly. Severus was waiting for him on the porch. “What happened?”

“Apparently whoever attacked the village also placed a poisoning spell in the lake. I got the feeling from Shadows that the lake we now have there is way bigger than it used to be,” Draco murmured as they walked towards the bedroom. “He took the spell off the lake so it’s safe to use again.” He laid his boyfriend onto the mattress and pulled the light blanket over his still form and sat down beside him.

“It’s good to know some things are reliable,” his godfather said with a tired sigh. “Get some sleep. I’ll make sure the others don’t wake you in the morning.”

“Thanks, Uncle Sev,” Draco said right before he yawned, unable to stop it. He didn’t even wait for Severus to leave, lying down with a tired groan before pulling the blanket up to his waist, pulling Adrian’s back against his front.

* * *

Adrian frowned at the unfamiliar warmth on his cheek. Cracking his eyes open, he glared at the slightly open curtain that had dared allow the sun into his room and realized that it was because of the slight breeze. With a huff of annoyance, he turned in Draco’s arms, determined to go back to sleep… it was way too early to get up…

“Have you decided to join the land of the living?” Draco asked mockingly, his arms tightening around his back. He buried his face between Draco’s shoulder and pillow with a groan of protest. He heard the laughter deep inside his boyfriend and smiled in response. “I’ll take that as a no, then.”

“What time is it, anyway?” he grumbled peevishly after a few minutes of enjoying Draco’s nimble fingers caressing his back, shoulders and head.

“Nearly noon,” Draco whispered in his ear, making him shiver delightfully at the puff of gentle air. However, Adrian frowned and looked up at the blonde. “What happened? Father never lets us sleep in unless something happened.”

“What do you remember of last night?” Draco asked, pushing him until he lay on his back with the blonde looking down at him, his head propped onto one hand.
“I remember... going to sit outside,” he said as he concentrated hard on what he remembered. “I think I remember seeing something in the shadows. I... think I followed it but then something rushed at me? I’m not quite sure.”

“Well, it’s not as bad as I thought it would be,” the blonde said with a slight shrug. “From what I could figure out, you probably went to sit outside after I fell asleep. You met Shadows last night. Apparently he’s going to test you every once in a while.”

Adrian rolled his eyes in exasperation. “Maybe a warning should be let out first before something like that was pulled. That would be nice.”

“No kidding,” Draco said with an irritated sigh. “It seemed whatever he was trying to do didn’t work. When we found you, you had blisters all over your exposed skin. He told Madreca he’s going to help out with your training from now on, especially when it was pointed out that the only thing we had to help you was the one book that you only just got.”

“So why am I not sore this morning, then?”

“Seems we have a healing lake in the valley,” his boyfriend said with a slight frown. “Shadows told me to take you there and it would heal your wounds. I also got the feeling that it might be only for Shadow Dragons to use. He kept calling it a pond but it seems it grew since the days of the last Shadow Dragons.”

“Alright, that’s the second time you’ve mentioned Shadows and I get the feeling this is a person. Who is this?” Adrian asked finally.

“Ah, according to Madreca,” the blonde began, a slight twinkle in his eyes. “Shadows is the name of whatever created the Shadow Dragons. He kept calling those who are like you his children. Apparently there are others who are being born.”

“I guess that means we’ll need the village sooner that we’d thought,” he murmured with a frown before he blinked in surprise as Draco shifted so he was lying on top of him. “Does this mean you’ve lost interest in the conversation?”

“Mm, yes,” the blonde whispered as he leaned down, his breath ghosting against his face. “We should take advantage of the fact that we have time to ourselves.”

“I think you should both get up,” Severus’ voice drawled in amusement from the doorway, intruding on their solitude. They both groaned at the interruption. “Your parents will be here shortly, Draco.”

“Yes, sir,” they grumbled in unison.

**

“We have a problem,” Lucius murmured as he approached the house roughly a half hour later, his face grim.

“What happened?” Severus asked, frowning at the tall blonde man, Narcissa not far behind him with Saffron in her arms. Caelum had probably taken off to join the boys where they were busy constructing a training area.

“It actually hasn’t happened yet but it would seem that the Dark Lord has decided he wants to release all the Death Eaters rotting in Azkaban. He’s hoping the Dementors had sided with him in the fight.”

Severus’ eyebrows rose in confusion. “And what’s the problem in that?”
“Where do you think Bellatrix and the Lestrange brothers are going to live, Severus? The Ministry has seized their homes and now they have nowhere else to go.”

“With this place being built, there will be no problem. Now that the main… platform, I guess we can call it since it’s not a chimney. The children can Floo here to train instead of the Manors and since no one knows about Madreca, he can simply come here with them.”

The Spaniard had, in fact, created a spot on the outskirts of the village where you could both Apparate and Floo… it reminded Severus of a round pad, actually. People could Floo out easily, coming in however was a little more complicated. A drop of blood was to be added to the green flames in order to open the passageway. Without it, you simply didn’t go anywhere. They’d tested it out and it worked. As for Apparating, you had to be added to the wards in order to not get bounced off and redirected somewhere else.

Children were different because parents had to be with them in order to do either one, so they didn’t count… unless it was an emergency.

“I didn’t think there’d be anything to this place until now,” Narcissa murmured as she shifted the little girl in her arms. “At least the summer is nearly over and in three days the boys will be heading back to school.”

“Don’t worry so, Narcissa,” Lucius murmured as he pulled her closer to him. “Caelum and Saffron are too young for her to bother with and the house-elves already have instructions not to let her near them or them near her. It’s more Draco that I worry about and hopefully we won’t have to worry about that until next summer anyway.”

“And he’ll more than likely be spending more time at Snape Manor with Adrian anyway,” Severus drawled in amusement. Hadn’t it been so since they were children? It was even more likely now that they were involved with one another.

“I’m sure you’re right,” Narcissa murmured with a small smile, though they could tell she was still worried. “When are you heading back to the Manor?”

“Tonight. The children want to spend some time with their parents before they head back to Hogwarts. Adrian will probably want to spend the night at Malfoy Manor tonight since Draco will be there.”

“You know he’s always welcomed,” Lucius murmured as they followed Severus down the road towards where the group was working on some kind of contraption. It almost looked like a muggle play set only much bigger. They heard Caelum shriek and laugh from their right and looked over to see the little boy held by Adrian, his wings keeping him perfectly balanced as he ran with him in front of him on the weird contraption they’d built.

Severus smile as he took in the happy glow around his son as he played with the soon-to-be four year old boy. He wondered now if perhaps Adrian had wanted siblings… he remembered his son asking him once if he ever felt alone with all the couples around him, but perhaps it had been him who’d been lonely, it didn’t matter now.

“Hold on!” he called out as Caelum threw his arms out as if he were flying and Adrian executed a perfect jump, twirling in the air, using his wings as balancers since his arms were full of little boy.

“Again!” they heard as Adrian landed, feet braced, on the ground, panting hard. Adrian groaned and collapsed on the ground, wings gone once more. The little boy pouted as he turned to lean on the downed boy, trying to look pleading. “Please, Adrian?”
“Need… rest…” he panted as he reached out and tickled Caelum, who laughed, trying to get away from his fingers.

“This should be interesting,” Severus murmured as he noticed Shade above them, preparing to pounce. It seemed Adrian noticed as well, because his eyes grew wide and he grabbed Caelum, cradling the surprised little boy against his chest as he rolled out of the way. Seconds later, Shade had landed exactly where they’d been.

“Are you crazy?” Adrian demanded, Caelum resting on the ground, laughing hard. They could see the look on Adrian’s face, the one that said he was listening to something no one else heard, his head cocked slightly to the right. “Not when I have Caelum,” he growled before launching himself at the big cat. Shade wasn’t a year old yet, and his immaturity showed at times like this. They watched as the two wrestled around, reminding Severus of when Adrian had done this with Kanen…

Soon, Shade had Adrian pinned down and was giving him a good face washing, ignoring the sputtering and protesting as the boy tried to shove the big head away from him, making everyone laugh. It was made even more hilarious when Caelum joined in, placing his fingers over Shade’s eyes as if that could stop the tongue darting out.

They watched as Shade shook his head, stopped, seemed to think for a second before getting up. Caelum laughed, legs tightening instinctively around the cat’s chest. He squealed as the cat began to weave slightly, as if he were drunk and then collapsed down on the ground.

It happened quickly then, first, Caelum was sitting on Shade’s side, glowing with pride that he’d bested the big mean cat, and the next minute Shade had gotten up, causing the little boy to slide off him and to the ground. Shade them pushed the little boy with his head until he was on his stomach and reached down with his mouth, being gentle, and picked up Caelum by the waistband.

“Hey!” the little boy protested between fits of laughter. “Put me down!”

“He says not yet,” Adrian said as he laughed at the two playing. “He’s having too much fun.”

Shade pranced over to Adrian and gently put the boy in his lap. “Crazy kitty,” Caelum giggled, reaching out to flick at the whiskers. Shade’s nose wrinkled before he began licking the little boy’s face. “Help!” he laughed, putting his hands up to try and block the tongue. “Adrian!”

“Alright, you two,” Draco drawled as he stood beside them, Kaida watching them with amusement in her eyes. “It’s time to get back to training.”

“But Draco,” Caelum whined, collapsing in Adrian’s lap. “We were having fun.”

“We’ll play some more later,” Adrian promised as he picked up the little boy and placed him on his feet. “Why don’t you come watch us practice?”

“Fine,” they heard Caelum grumble as he dragged his feet, following behind Adrian and Draco.

“You know,” Narcissa murmured with a slight frown on her face as she watched them move off. “I’ve noticed that the interaction between Shade and Adrian isn’t what it was between him and Kanen. I thought that when he took in the cat that everything would go back to how it was with the other one.”

“I admit, I thought it would be the same myself,” Severus murmured a little sadly. It seemed, in fact, as if Adrian held back from Shade slightly.

“Maybe it’s because he doesn’t have to rely so heavily on Shade as protector as he did with Kanen?”
Lucius asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Perhaps…” Severus murmured, a slight frown on his face. “Or perhaps it’s that he doesn’t want to be hurt again as he was when Kanen died. After all, Kanen had ties to his past. He could talk to the cat about anything and didn’t have to explain much. Shade knows nothing of the past events so he’s lost that tentative hold. I think he’s afraid of losing Shade so he doesn’t want to get too close to him just in case.”

“I wish Kanen hadn’t died,” Narcissa said with a sad sigh. “He seemed to keep Adrian on an even keel.”

“Nothing can be done about it now. We need to move on from that. Are the house-elves going to continue to build over the winter?”

“Yes, especially since Madreca said snow doesn’t come to the valley. They should have several more buildings completed by the time next summer swings around,” Lucius said, gratefully seizing onto the subject change.

“If they can build one of the buildings for a town hall and another as a library, it would be advantageous. They would have a communal place of knowledge.”

“Do they have books to put into a library yet?” Lucius asked in surprise.

“Not yet, but I know Adrian would like to get some to use here.”

“Well,” Narcissa murmured as they walked towards the center of the village, noticing that only three of the houses had been completed. In the middle, however, tables had been set up by the house-elves with food dotting it here and there. “It’s time for lunch. Minky!” she called out, waiting for the house-elf to appear. “Tell the others to come and eat.”

“Yes, Mistress,” the little creature said with a bow and was gone. She handed the baby to another house-elf and sat down to wait for the children to come…

* * *

Their new year of schooling began without a hitch, much to everyone’s relief. Even Halloween was quiet for once. It seemed that with the fake Harry Potter gone, the threat to the school had lessened.

It wasn’t until nearly Christmas that things got sticky. As Lucius had predicted, the Dark Lord managed to free the Death Eaters who were in Azkaban.

Adrian and Draco knew by now that guests were going to be at Malfoy Manor for the holidays but didn’t understand why that was such a bad thing. “Who do you think will be at your house?” Adrian asked as they made their way towards Hogsmeade to do some Christmas shopping. “Should we pick them up something?”

Draco shrugged. “I’m not quite sure, but what do you buy for someone you’ve never met? We don’t even know if their male or female yet. I suppose we could pick something that could go for either or.”

“It would only be polite.”

*From what I understand, the people who are there aren’t exactly ‘guests’,* Shade said from beside Adrian.
He frowned as he related the cat’s message to Draco. He’d been surprised when Shade had decided to go out in the snow with them, especially since the cat didn’t seem to go with him often. Even Kaida had come with them, but then she usually accompanied Draco everywhere. This would be the first Christmas without-

He ruthlessly cut that thought off, gritting his teeth against the wave of grief that tried to come over him…

Things didn’t start to go wrong until they were making their way out of Hogsmeade and back to Hogwarts. The attack came from nowhere, catching everyone by surprise. One of the blasts caught Adrian and Draco from the side, sending them flying through the air. Adrian had just enough time to gasp as he connected with the stone wall before Draco crashed into him.

He coughed, trying to breathe through the sudden fire shooting through his body, but it only made things worse… he blinked hazily at the two figures standing over him and Draco. He reached for his boyfriend but the blonde teen seemed to be out for the count. Great, he thought as his vision began to dim. Father is going to be so pissed.

*  

Adrian, he heard and blinked as he became aware that the darkness around him seemed to have a pattern to it. It’s time to wake up.

He knew that voice… didn’t he? Looking around, he felt a sharp stab in his chest as he realized who was coming towards him. Kanen!! Was he dead, then?

You need to wake up, Adrian, the white striped cat murmured again as he stopped in front of him. Adrian couldn’t help the sob that tore out of him as he wrapped his arms around the big cat.

“I don’t want you to go,” he whispered brokenly. He felt a paw come around him, holding him like he had before.

I love you, Adrian and I’m still with you, but it’s not your time yet. If you don’t wake up, it’ll be too late.

“What if I don’t care?” he asked softly, his fingers digging into the thick fur.

Don’t lie, the cat chided gently with a soft purr. Besides, Draco needs you. Adrian closed his eyes, knowing Kanen was right…

*  

He opened his eyes to confusion. His whole body hurt from head to toe. Where was he? Where was Draco?

“Ah, so you’ve decided to join the land of the living, have you?” he heard someone drawl above him. He forced his throbbing body to roll over onto his back and blinked at the man he’d seen reborn. He was dimly surprised that his head wasn’t exploding from the nearness of the maniac, but then it probably was but he was already in so much pain that it didn’t seem to register. “Sit up, Adrian Snape.”

He tried to turn himself over again, telling himself he needed to obey for Draco’s and his father’s sakes… but his body wouldn’t listen to him. His eyes drifted closed on their own… until he arched up with a choked scream, eyes wide. His whole body felt as if he’d been zapped by electricity.
“I said sit up,” Voldemort growled as he released the Cruciatius spell, leaving him panting and twitching. It took a few more seconds before he could force his body to roll over and his arms to lever him up into a half-sitting position. “Very good. Now, I’m sure you’re wondering why you’re here.”

Not really he wanted to say but wisely kept his mouth shut.

“The four of you are to be given a task in the next few weeks, a task that, should you fail, will mean retribution for your entire families.” Looking to his left, he was surprised to see two Ravenclaw students there with them. A coughing fit hit him then and he tried hard to stifle it even as his chest bloomed with fire but couldn’t quite manage it…

When he was done, he wiped his hand on his pants, not realizing he was smearing blood on them.

“You’re going to pay very close attention to your instructions and meet with whomever I assign you with at their convenience. Is that understood?”

The others answered him but Adrian simply nodded, having a hard time breathing. With eyes unfocused, he watched in fascination as the floor seemed to weave in front of him before rising to meet him. He must’ve passed out then because when he came around this time, he was in the Hogwarts’ infirmary, the weight that had been resting on his chest was gone.

He frowned, wondering if maybe it had all been a dream…

“Thank Merlin you’re awake,” Draco whispered in relief.

“What happened?” he croaked out, confused, turning to look at the blonde, hoping he could tell him something that would explain why he was in the infirmary.

“The Dark Lord… summoned us for a meeting. We’re supposed to do something for him. We just don’t know what it is yet. How do you feel?” his boyfriend asked as he moved to sit on the side of the bed.

“Tired and sore. Why?”

Draco frowned at him. “The Dark Lord sent some Death Eaters to get us. They got a little… enthusiastic. One of the blasts hit near us and sent us flying. Unfortunately, I kind of flew into you right after you hit the building. Seems you broke a few ribs on impact and when I hit into you, it pushed a piece of bone into your lung. The Dark Lord was angry when you fell over. He cast Crucio on you a few times, but when you didn’t scream in pain, he settled for whipping the skin off your back.”

“I assume Madam Pomfrey healed me, then?” he asked, beginning to feel drowsy. He must’ve been worse than he’d thought.

“And your father, too,” Draco said as he toed his shoes off and stretched out beside him. Adrian sighed and turned until he was lying against Draco’s chest. “I’m afraid I might have aggravated the damage when I carried you here from Hogsmeade but there was nothing else I could do.”

“Was Father angry?” he asked, his eyes drifting closed. He didn’t want to sleep yet but it seemed to be out of his hands as it tugged gently at him.

“He was livid,” his boyfriend said against his hair. “He doesn’t like that the Dark Lord took us without going through him and Father.”
Adrian forced his eyes to open, knowing there was something... it was tugging at the edges... then he remembered. “I saw Kanen,” Adrian whispered softly, his eyes filling with tears. He’d thought he’d gotten over the loss of the white-striped cat. Apparently he was wrong. “I miss him, Draco.”

**

Draco went still at the mention of the big cat who had died protecting them. Adrian hadn’t spoken of Kanen since the incident in the woods. Was he willing to talk about it now? “I know,” Draco murmured finally, voice gentle, pulling him closer in comfort, threading his fingers in the dark locks. “But you have Shade now. He’s there for you.” He felt compelled to defend the grey cat simply because he was trying so hard to make this easier on Adrian...

“It’s not the same thing. I can’t bring myself to be with him like I was with Kanen.”

“Why not?” Draco asked, looking towards the foot of the bed where the cat in question was resting, watching them intently. It was as if he didn’t want to bring attention to himself at the moment and stop Adrian from talking about this.

“Kanen went through everything with me. He protected me from the first time we got him and Kaida.” Draco felt there was more to it than that, could feel the inner struggle inside the teen in his arms. “I’m afraid,” he whispered finally after a few minutes of silence.

He could feel the tears wetting his shirt. This meant that Adrian had reached his limit, the stress of always being in one type of danger or another finally reaching its peak. “Afraid of what?”

“Of caring,” Adrian said, body beginning to shake. “I’m tired of being hurt, Draco. I don’t want to do it anymore. Every time I care about someone they get taken away. Up until now you, Father and your parents haven’t been in the path of danger. With Voldemort out there now, it means someone else I love is in danger of being taken away. I don’t think I could survive losing someone again. Losing Kanen nearly killed me. What if I get that close to Shade and the same thing happens? I don’t know if I can take that chance.”

Draco pulled Adrian’s head back so he could look him in the eyes. “But, Adrian, if you don’t take that chance, you’ll never really fully live your life like you should. Shade tries his best to help you but I’m sure he’s at a loss as to what to do. You don’t talk to him like you did with Kanen. Gods, you talk to Kaida more than you do him. Don’t you think that maybe he’s hurting in a way, too? I know he loves you and would do just about anything for you but you have to give him that chance.”

Adrian’s fingers were wrapped in his shirt, his grip tight, as if it was his lifeline... but then he nodded hesitantly and Draco allowed his head to come to rest on his shoulder once more. “I’ll try,” he promised, shuddering against him.

“That’s all anyone can ask.” Draco held him until he felt the smaller teen’s body relax in sleep and sighed sadly. He wished Kanen hadn’t died, that Adrian could’ve had both him and Shade to help him out. His boyfriend was right in a way. Kanen had helped him a lot more than anyone had realized. That was why his passing had been so rough on Adrian, who now felt he had no one to confide in. To him, Shade was a poor substitute for what he’d had with the other cat.

He was going to have to help Adrian learn to trust again... or it was more than likely going to take something drastic to get him to do so.

***

Four days later saw them at Malfoy Manor and Adrian now wished they’d stayed at school. In fact,
he was tempted to go to Snape Manor, except that it seemed his father was to house a guest of his own… Peter Pettigrew, the man responsible for the Potters’ deaths… and there was nothing he could do about it, not yet anyway.

He already had an intense dislike for Bellatrix Lestrange’s grating voice. She seemed to think it extremely funny to speak to them as if they were two years olds. The first time, Adrian had wondered if the woman had gone around the bend. Then he’d realized she did it on purpose.

He was still a bit sore from the attack and tried to stay out of her way as much as possible. Unfortunately she seemed to take it to mean she could do it at meal times. “You know, Mrs. Lestrange,” he finally said, eyes hard as flint after listening to her hiss her words out to him at supper. “Maybe you should take something to help clear your throat. Perhaps then we’d be able to hear you better.”

“Why you little-” she snarled at him, glaring in disbelief.

“I apologize if you find offense in my words,” he said, cutting her off before she could work herself up. “But Father always told me that if you want people to understand you and not make things up about what you’ve said, that you should speak clearly. When you hiss and do the baby talk thing, it makes me wonder if you might have a speech problem. I’m sure that’s incorrect.”

The whole room was deadly quiet.

“Adrian,” Lucius said, his tone reproachful. “I think it’s time you head up.”

“Yes, sir,” Adrian said softly, placing his napkin on his untouched plate, having no appetite with the nasty woman there. He’d get Winky to bring him something later. Pushing away from the table, he quietly made his way out of the room.

He knew he would pay for telling her off. It was in her nature, after all. Sure enough, later the next day, he was cornered by the woman, who shoved him into an unused and unlit bedroom. “You’re going to pay for being disrespectful, Snape,” she spat angrily.

“I apologized last night, Mrs. Lestrange. I meant no disrespect,” Adrian said, pushing the fear down so she wouldn’t see it. He knew she was dangerous.

“Not good enough.”

She spent the next hour and a half torturing him, a silencing spell making sure no one disturbed them. When she was done, he lay on the floor, bleeding and twitching, barely conscious of his surroundings… then he realized he was hearing something… a kind of growling from the shadows.

He heard her gasp in surprise and fear. Blinking in confusion, he forced his head to turn to look at her and watched as she backed up against the door, Shade standing between them, his hackles up and teeth bared. Adrian watched as the cat lunged at the woman, using his big paw to hit her with enough force that she flew into the closest solid object: the dresser, where she collapsed into an unconscious heap.

“Shade.” Adrian though he whispered, but he was in so much pain… and darkness was creeping around him that he wasn’t sure if the word actually came out. He moaned as he felt the cat pick him up by the back of his shirt before he was dragged down into darkness…

**

He came back to awareness in Draco’s room and frowned in confusion. His boyfriend was running a
wet cloth over him, cleaning him up. How long had he been out?

Then he remembered. Shade had come to his rescue… How had the cat come into the room in the first place? “Draco?” he whispered hoarsely, frown deepening when Draco didn’t stop. He turned his head to the side with some difficulty, wincing painfully as his muscles protested.

“Lie still,” Draco ordered softly.

“Shade?” Adrian asked, spying the big cat lying at the end of the bed, watching him. He got up and padded over to Adrian’s side, head close to his hand.

_I sensed when it got bad with the woman and went to find you_, Shade explained with a sigh.

“How?”

_I seem to be able to do what you do. I can walk in shadows. Rest. We can talk more about it when you feel better._

Adrian began shaking his head and regretted it instantly as pain shot down his whole body. “I told you to hold still,” Draco grumbled in irritation. “I don’t have access to Uncle Sev’s potions, you know.”

“Bath,” he whispered, wondering if Draco could even hear him. He was relieved when the blonde looked towards the bathroom in surprise. He was glad to see his boyfriend understood what he was trying to convey because talking was painful. “Dark.”

“Are you sure?” Draco asked hesitantly, glancing back towards the bathroom. “About taking a bath in the dark, I mean.”

Having had enough of talking, Adrian simply nodded, closing his eyes so he could concentrate enough not to whimper as the move shot pain down his neck again. With a sigh, he felt Draco get off the bed. Moments later, the water was running and Draco was back, peeling the clothes off Adrian’s battered and bruised body. His eyes flew open and he choked on a cry as the shirt seemed to tug on his skin, making him arch off the bed in pain. It would seem that Bellatrix hadn’t stopped with simply casting the Cruciatus curse on him but had cut him as well.

When he was naked, he watched as Draco also striped before picking him up. He groaned in pain but didn’t fight it, simply closing his eyes to stop the room from spinning. In the bathroom, Adrian heard the water shut off – _probably used a wand_, he thought to himself – and sighed when he was gently lowered into the really warm water, feeling his muscles relax under the heat. He didn’t protest when the blonde maneuvered him around until his head was resting against the solid muscles of Draco’s shoulder. In fact, he was grateful.

The darkness of the room, combined with the heat of the water and Draco’s nearness, helped his body relax, the pain beginning to melt away. Even where the shirt had pulled at the scabs didn’t hurt anymore. “Adrian, what happened?” Draco asked him after a few minutes of just drifting.

“Bellatrix.” Even talking didn’t hurt as much. He felt Draco press a glass to his lips and obediently opened up, feeling cool juice fill his mouth, soothing his throat. “Retaliation for last night.”

“I figured she’d try something,” Draco said with an annoyed sigh. “Are you starting to feel better?”

“A bit,” he murmured before he yawned. “It’s a good thing she’s never seen Shade before. I don’t even know if she’d recognize him even if she saw him. He looked black in the bedroom.”
“I wanted to take you to the lake in the valley but I didn’t want to chance that they were watching the Floo network.”

“This works,” Adrian mumbled tiredly, easily slipping down into slumber again now that he wasn’t in so much pain…

* * *

School couldn’t come fast enough, Draco thought darkly as he stalked down the corridor to his room a couple of hours later, glaring ahead of him. Two more days before Christmas holidays were done… Earlier, he’d left Adrian alone in his room, sleeping soundly, needing to speak to his father.

On his way back to his room, he was cornered by his Aunt Bellatrix, who was gloating at him with a look in her eyes that made his skin crawl. “So, Draco,” she breathed in that annoying way of hers, smirking knowingly. “The Dark Lord seems to have taken a very deep interest in your… education. How far along has Daddy progressed?”

“Education?” he asked, sneering in distaste as she leaned a little too close to him, her cloying perfume making his stomach turn.

“Well, I’m assuming that you and Adrian have experimented with others already but I was talking magically.” Her smile grew wider, the gleam in her eyes saying she thought he and Adrian were playing the field – so to speak – with girls. It was none of her business that he and Adrian were an item.

“Far enough along to suit my father’s need right now,” he’d told her evasively.

“I’m sure the Dark Lord will be pleased to hear that. What of Adrian?”

“You’d have to either talk to Adrian about that or Severus Snape, Bellatrix. I can’t speak for them.”

“I suppose we’ll have to see,” was all she said but the look in her eyes held something akin to anticipation. “Good night, Draco. Sleep well.”

She was up to something, he knew she was, but without proof, there was nothing he could do about it. When he got to his room, he took a deep breath to calm himself before entering. Adrian was still sleeping, thankfully. Pushing his shoes off, he climbed onto the bed, smiling as Adrian rolled into him, instinctively knowing he was there and seemed to crave the closeness.

He placed a hand on the smaller back, loving the feel of warmth radiating through the thin material of his shirt. “I knew it!” he heard from the doorway, stiffening in rage as he saw Bellatrix standing there, a gleam in her eyes. Beside him, Adrian jerked awake, frowning in confusion before he saw who else was in the room.

“Honestly, Mrs. Lestrange,” his boyfriend drawled huskily, annoyance clear in his tone. “Have you never been taught that it was impolite to enter someone’s rooms without permission?”

“We’ll see how flippant you are when the Dark Lord hears of this!” she hissed in triumph.

“You think he’ll care that two boys hooked up?” he asked in amusement, and Draco watched as an ugly colour suffused Bellatrix’s face at the taunt. “Go right ahead.”

“He will now that his plans have been disrupted,” she spat… then her eyes widened as she realized she’d said more than she’d intended. She whirled around and slammed out of their room.
“Winky,” Adrian called out quickly. He waited only long enough for Winky to bow to him before he cut her off. “Block the Floo network. Don’t let Bellatrix off the estate. Now!”

Winky nodded and was gone.

“The Dark Lord has plans for me?” Draco asked in confusion.

“It won’t matter,” Adrian said as he quickly pulled his clothes off, throwing them onto the floor, uncaring of where they landed. “She won’t be telling anyone anything.”

“What are you going to do, Adrian?” he asked, feeling a twinge of panic as he watched Adrian’s body being uncovered. “No, Adrian, you can’t!” he said as he realized what his boyfriend meant to do. “You can’t make her disappear.”

“Actually, I can,” Adrian murmured, his eyes glowing before he stepped back into the thicker shadows and was gone…

**

“I need your help,” Adrian murmured to the moving shadows that surrounded him as soon as he sunk into their embrace. “I need to teach someone a lesson in humility and respect. Are you willing to do that?”

The shadows paused, whispering amongst themselves for a few minutes. *We get to keep this one?*

“Yes. She deserves whatever you do to her,” he murmured with satisfaction.

*Good,* the shadows whispered and he could feel the anticipation in them, so he changed into his Dragon scales and pushed himself up again, knowing he would be among the trees lining the Malfoy’s drive. There was only one way off the property now… especially since there was no Apparating within the grounds.

Adrian crouched behind some bushes, ignoring the cold feel of the snow around his feet, his scales blending well with the shadows around him. He waited until Bellatrix had passed him before pouncing. She didn’t even have time to scream. He grabbed her by a wrist and shot into the air as fast as his wings would bare him. His training had prepared him for the added weight as he strained to reach a height that he knew Bellatrix would never have reached without a broom.

Anyone observing him wouldn’t know who or even what he was. He was just a blur.

By the time he reached good enough height, he stopped, listening to her scream. They went unheard by anyone but him and whatever birds that happened to be around them… and seeing as it was night, there weren’t many.

“I’m going to fuckin’ kill you!” she shrieked, glaring at him. Adrian knew he was safe, she probably wouldn’t recognize him and even if she did, there was no way she was going to survive what he had in mind for her. No one would know what really happened to her.

“You can try,” he smirked at her, watching as her eyes widened. Damn, she’d recognized his voice. He hadn’t thought of that… but that was alright. “Don’t forget how high we are.”

She sneered at him, her eyes lit by unholy glee as she pulled her wand out, trying to aim at him. “I’m going to make sure the Dark Lord kills Severus slowly for your insolence, boy,” she growled evilly before she started laughing, probably thinking of what Voldemort would do to Severus Snape…
“You think so?” he asked, angling his head slightly as if he were thinking of what would happen. “Shall we see if you can follow up on that threat then, dear Bellatrix?”

Her eyes widened in fear as they began plummeting towards the ground. In her shock, she dropped her wand… Adrian was glad it was night at the moment. The shadows were his friends. Bellatrix screamed the entire way down, trying to grab on to anything she could though they were still quite some distance from the ground yet. She clutched at him convulsively but since he wore no clothes, there was nothing to grab hold of but his hand…

Adrian laughed as he watched her, wings folded against his body, waiting for the perfect time to deploy them again. About a hundred feet from the ground, he allowed them to unfurl, slowing his decent as he opened his fingers, feeling her hand slip out of his.

She begged him not to let go but he simply smirked at her, his eyes glowing with power, as she fell into the shadows… and kept on falling, sinking into the depths of his world even as he landed on the ground, crouched on all fours, wings spread out wide by this time. He laughed as he heard her scream echo in the depths of the shadows where they were welcoming her amongst them. “Justice,” he whispered viciously, eyes glowing in satisfaction. “Just one last thing before they can have her,” he murmured as he sunk into the shadows.

He could see her writhing and screaming in the shadows’ grip. “Let me go!”

“Dear, dear, Bella,” Adrian murmured in a mocking tone as he straightened up, looking at her in contempt. “You only have one chance to tell me what I need to know.”

“I’ll never tell you anything!” she screamed at him. He smiled and gestured for the shadows to release her. That was when she realized that he was the only thing keeping the shadows at bay. He could see the calculating look come into her eyes then. “What do you want to know?”

“What does Voldemort plan to do with Draco, of course,” he mocked as if she were stupid.

She glared at him. “The Dark Lord likes pretty things and right now, Draco holds his interest. It’s just a matter of time before he gets what he wants.” She smirked at him then. “And there’s nothing you can do about it, Adrian Snape. My Lord always gets what he wants.” If Adrian had been in his human shape, he would’ve paled at her words, as it was, he simply watched her. “And as soon as he finds out what you can do, he’ll turn his attention to you.”

He smiled then, a very unpleasant smile. “But how is he going to know?” he mocked with a raised eyebrow. “Only a select few know of my ability and you won’t be leaving here to tell him of this glorious news.”

She opened her mouth to protest but the shadows swarmed her again and Adrian turned away, pushing out of the shadows and back to the real world. He crouched in the shadows, not feeling the cold around him as he glared at the surrounding area. When he saw no threat, he stood up again, his wings fading into his back, his scales melting away as if they’d never existed until he stood naked in the night air. He could feel the thrill of the hunt coursing through him and wanted…

“Did it work?” he heard behind him.

_Draco._

**

Draco watched from the tree he was leaning against as Adrian turned with a smirk, looking over at him coyly, a thick winter cloak keeping the blonde teen warm. He didn’t know how his boyfriend
didn’t feel the cold, but then it could be because of his Dragon. He’d melted the snow around him, casting a warming charm around his area and waited. He knew what would happen when Adrian was done…

With his hands clasped behind his back it completed the perfect image of innocence… which didn’t fool Draco one bit, especially when he looked into the green depths of Adrian’s eyes and saw lust burning in them.

He watched as his boyfriend walked over to him in all his naked glory. At thirteen, Draco had been obsessed with this boy but now, he couldn’t get enough of him. He got jealous whenever strangers flirted with Adrian… though his boyfriend never encouraged them, if fact, he didn’t even seem to register it.

“I’m actually surprised that it did,” Adrian murmured, bringing Draco’s attention back to the present, as he crept closer until he was pushing up against Draco’s body, igniting the passion between them instantly. Draco smirked as his boyfriend’s breath hissed out in pleasure as his arms wrapped him, hands caressing his back lovingly as his cloak wrapped around the smaller teen’s body. “Love me?” he begged as he rubbed enticingly against Draco’s body.

“Always,” Draco whispered as he claimed Adrian’s lips in a searing kiss. He never wanted this to change… never wanted Adrian to sleep with anyone else. Ever…

Draco moved so that Adrian was leaning against the tree instead of him. “You know,” Draco breathed into his ear, turning him so Adrian’s back was to his chest. “I’ve wanted to do this out here since I found out what you were really meant. Gods, Adrian,” he moaned as Adrian rubbed against him insistently.

“Too many clothes,” his boyfriend whimpered impatiently. “Hurry, Draco.”

Impatiently, Draco fumbled with his pants, pushing them down low enough to free himself. He groaned as he pushed into Adrian’s willing body, loving the feel of the warmth enveloping him.

There was no time for foreplay right now… maybe later.

Adrian gasped in pain and pleasure, clinging to the tree in front of him. He was pushing back against Draco as he began to thrust insistently into the tight channel, enjoying how it seemed to tighten around him. “Fuck, yes,” he growled out, as he caressed the body in front of him, his hands couldn’t seem to settle in one place long as the fire between them climbed higher.

“More!” Adrian gasped breathlessly, meeting Draco’s movements easily. “Faster, Draco. Please!”

His hands finally settled on Adrian’s hips, his grip almost painful but he was beyond thought at the moment. His only thought was making Adrian scream out his release for the trees to hear. The pace was too quick to last, however, and wasn’t satisfying enough but it would help until they were back in their room…

He growled as he thrust hard one last time, making sure to strike Adrian’s prostate as he erupted into the body before him, smiling when Adrian screamed his own release, head thrown back. They stood there, panting hard, propped up against the tree. Adrian groaned as he slid out of him. “Let’s go back to our room,” Draco whispered in his ear before nipping it gently. “We should be ready for another round then.”

A truer statement had never been said. Whenever Adrian’s creature came out to work, it seemed to fire up Adrian’s libido… and his. There would be very little sleep tonight. With a shaky laugh, Adrian backed up into him, wrapping the cloak around himself before they sunk into the shadows. It
“What have you done?” Severus demanded after they got back to school, glaring darkly as he leaned over his desk. They were in the Potions classroom, empty at the moment, with Draco waiting for him by the door.

Adrian blinked in surprise. “What?” he asked in confusion, shaking his head. This morning Draco had received his summons from the Dark Lord’s appointed man and Adrian had a hard time dragging his mind away from his worry about that to understand what his father was angry about.

“What is Bellatrix Lestrange?” his father demanded, clarifying what information he wanted.

“She threatened to tell the Dark Lord about us, but that wasn’t why, Father,” he said hastily when it seemed Severus would explode. “She said the Dark Lord had plans for Draco. He’s planning to take him for himself. I can’t let him do that! And if she’d told him about us, there’s no telling what he’d have done.”

“Did it ever occur to you that her disappearance will put the Malfoys in his sights?” his father snarled, eyes flashing dangerously.

He shook his head instead of answering with words. “I’m sorry,” he whispered, horror filling him. “She’s still alive. What if I got the shadows to dump her somewhere and altered her memories? Would that work?”

His father stood up straight, thinking things through. “Yes, that would work. Take her to South Barrule on the Isle of Man. Make her think she was abducted by Aurors who were trying to extract information from her about the Dark Lord’s plans and she managed to escape and make sure she thinks they took her while she was out.”

“Yes, Father.” Without another word, he moved into the closest shadows and sunk down into them. With a thought, the shadows provided him with the woman in question. He would do as his father wanted because that would protect the people he cared about most in the world: the Malfoys, but he would put the fear of the Gods into her in the process. She would leave them alone from now on…

Grabbing hold of her hair, he ignored her whimper of fear as he took her up with him, in the exact place where his father had told him to go. He was surprised when he moved out of the shadows and noticed the ruins of a wall. This was where his father wanted him to leave the woman?!

With a sigh, he pulled his wand out and proceeded to alter her memory, making sure to take away any mention of his creature, of him and Draco together, of her telling him of her knowledge of Voldemort’s plans, and added the details his father had instructed he lay in place… then he added one more touch.

“Whenever you’re in complete shadows, my dear Bellatrix,” he whispered in her ear, eyes glowing dangerously as he stood behind her. “Remember to fear them because they will eventually get you in the end.”

He smiled when she whimpered in fear and he left her there, sinking back into the shadows behind her. When he showed up in the Potions classroom again, his father was talking with Draco at the desk. Whatever they were talking about, Adrian could see, was grave enough that there was worry in Draco’s grey depths when he looked at him. “It’s done.”

“Next time you decide to take matters into your own hands, I suggest you give it more thought. As
admirable as it was, there are more lives at stake than just the two of you,” Severus murmured as he laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Yes, Father,” he whispered, moving closer to him for comfort. He wasn’t sorry for having given her to the shadows but he regretted not having thought about the consequences of the action. After a few minutes, he and Draco walked out of the classroom towards the Great Hall… he wasn’t hungry, but knew he had to go through the motions in order to keep up pretences.

He knew Draco was worried about him but he kept his gaze on his plate, pushing the little bit of food on it around.

Adrian was worried now, worried about what it was the Dark Lord would want him to do, what his plans for Draco were… The thing was, he knew Draco would do it because it protected everyone he loved, but what about Adrian? Could he deal with the fact that Draco would allow that creature to defile him like that? Just the thought of it made him ill, his stomach roiling so unpleasantly that the smell of the food around him made him want to throw up.

He choked it down… barely.

He put his fork down, done with pretending, and buried his face in his hands, if only to block everything from his sight. He didn’t know why he’d bothered to come to the Great Hall for supper…

He knew Draco was to leave in a bit to meet up with his contact from the Dark Lord and was sort of grateful that it was Friday instead of the middle of the week…

“Adrian,” Draco murmured softly in his ear. “I have to go. Are you going to be alright?”

Adrian forced himself to put his hands down and smiled mechanically at his boyfriend. “I’ll see you when you get back,” he murmured softly with a nod. Draco gave him a searching look before he nodded and left the Great Hall.

He found it funny that everyone thought he was the strong one. In fact, he wasn’t, Draco was. His boyfriend seemed to take everything in stride, even Adrian’s moods were taken as if it was normal…

He followed the rest of their group down to the dungeons and went into his dorm, just wanting to be alone until Draco came back. He pulled his curtains closed around his bed and curled up against Shade for comfort, something he hadn’t done since Kanen had died, casting a Silencing charm around his bed for good measure. Madreca had warned them that the bond between them was a strong one and what one felt, the other would feel unless they shielded it from each other… they hadn’t learned how to do that yet.

He hadn’t known what to expect, but a half hour after Draco left, Adrian clutched the pillow to him as pain came through the link between him and Draco. He wondered what shape Draco would be in when he came back…

He could feel his creature going nuts inside his head, wanting to hurt whoever was hurting its mate, but he fought it back with some effort. He didn’t realize he was shaking in reaction, didn’t even feel Shade there, as he curled into a tight ball, his eyes wide as he felt Draco use their bond to escape Voldemort’s… activities. He wanted to throw up but there was nothing in his stomach which was actually a good thing considering it was taking all his concentration to keep the creature contained…

“Adrian,” he heard whispered in his ear, startling him out of his daze as he felt his boyfriend’s body pressed against him. He blinked as he realized Draco was there with him. How long had he been lost in his mind? “It’s alright. I’m back.”
He nodded jerkily, slowly uncurling himself from his pillow. His creature was still raging against him, wanting to go hunt Voldemort down… and knew there was only one way to calm it down. He turned in Draco’s arms, his lips latching onto his. He heard Draco gasp in surprise before he pinned Adrian down onto the bed.

Neither teen noticed when Shade slid off the bed, too absorbed in what they were doing as they began tearing clothes off each other’s bodies. Adrian didn’t even register when Draco cast a new Silencing charm on the bed as he pushed Draco’s pants off his lean hips. “Draco,” he gasped urgently before he latched onto the mark he’d put on his boyfriend.

He felt Draco arch into him with a groan of pleasure. He growled as Draco managed to pull away and forcefully turned him over onto his stomach. He cried out as Draco’s teeth sank into his own mark, thrashing against the blonde. “Hold on, Adrian,” Draco gasped as he rubbed his lips against the mark, forcing a moan from him as he twitched in reaction.

He could feel his Dragon surfacing, wanting its mate. He growled again, causing Draco to pause momentarily and Adrian realized why a few seconds later when it registered that it had been a throaty growl… one from his creature. “Draco,” he begged with a whimper. “Don’t stop.” He cried out as Draco entered him slowly… but it wasn’t what he needed. “More!”

He felt Draco’s hands press into the mattress next to his head before he thrust deep, the move driving him in all the way… and pleasing the Dragon inside him. “Yes!” he hissed as a purring sounded around them. He thought he heard Draco chuckle breathlessly but he couldn’t make his mind concentrate on it for long.

The pressure built fast as Draco pounded him hard, his mouth latching onto his mark, driving Adrian wild. Then all of a sudden something snapped inside him and he was arching up off the bed with a scream of pleasure which was joined by Draco’s own groan.

“What happened, Adrian?” Draco finally asked as he rolled them onto their side after casting Cleaning charms on them and the bed.

“The creature wanted to hunt him down and make him pay. He wouldn’t stop,” Adrian panted, his eyes heavy. “Kept fighting to get out.”

“Yes,” the blonde teen murmured, his hand splayed on Adrian’s chest. “I could feel that through the bond. I was wondering what to do about it on the way down here. Is it better now?”

Adrian nodded, feeling tired now but unable to sleep. “Are you alright?” he asked finally.

“I’ll be alright, Adrian. I was more worried about you. I don’t like it when you close yourself off like that. I wasn’t even getting anything through our link,” Draco murmured, holding him tighter against him. “I think that was worse than going to the Dark Lord tonight.”

“I couldn’t help it,” he whispered, feeling his eyes fill up with tears. “I don’t like this.”

“It won’t be for long. Just until you learn more about what you can do,” his boyfriend whispered in his ear. “I can hold out until then.”

But you shouldn’t have to, he thought, keeping to himself. He didn’t want to say it out loud because he didn’t want Draco to worry about him too much.

“Try to get some sleep.” He didn’t say anything, just nodded. He didn’t think he could, actually, but at least his mind was blank now. That was good. He was right, however, he didn’t get much sleep and when he did sleep, it made no sense, the dreams disjointed and chaotic.
Chapter 15 - Retribution

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 15 – Retribution

His own task turned out to be fairly simple. Simpler than he’d thought it would be, in fact. He was to help Macnair with finding more information on Harry Potter. They went to the church where the Potters’ were buried and looked through some of the old records.

On one such night, the priest walked in on them and Adrian stopped Macnair from killing the older man on the spot, telling him he was doing research on some of the families buried in the cemetery. He’d rattled off five different names he’d spied on the tombs outside.

Once the priest realized that they were looking for information, he was happy to point them in the right direction, even helping them to look for what they needed.

“Thank you, sir,” Adrian said with a pleasant smile as he and Macnair left the church, shaking the man’s hand. “I really appreciate the help. My school report will be excellent.”

“Good luck,” the old man murmured as he closed the door behind them.

“Smooth,” Macnair sneered as he pocketed the information he’d been sent for. “It would’ve been better if we’d killed him off.”

“If we’d killed him off, we would’ve been there longer and the risk of someone else walking in would’ve been greater. With his help, he could deflect anyone else coming in. The Dark Lord wants the information more than he wants carnage.”

Macnair backhanded him suddenly, making him stumble and hit into the nearest tombstone. “Remember who’s in charge here, boy,” the Death Eater snarled at him. “I’ll be the judge of what the Dark Lord wants.” He grabbed hold of Adrian’s arm, his grip tight. He’d have bruises later, he knew.

They Disapparated back to wherever it was Voldemort was hiding. Once in front of the maniac, Macnair presented the information they’d been sent to get. Though Adrian knew it would tell him the same thing Lucius had told him in his report, he didn’t let on that he knew about that.

“Very good, young Adrian. You show great promise,” Voldemort hissed with a pleased smile. “That will be all.”

“My Lord,” he murmured as he bowed to the man in the chair, backing up as quickly as was possible without arousing suspicions. He couldn’t get out of there fast enough. He knew Draco was worried about him being in the spotlight right now but he had it easier than his boyfriend did. Macnair was easy to deal with. As long as you did as he said, he left you alone.

He wasn’t the one who had to sleep with Voldemort every Friday night… though truth be told, it wasn’t easy on Adrian either because he had to fight his Dragon every time. Shade helped him with that, but there was only so much he could do.

Each time, Draco would come back and have to calm his creature down. Quite a few times, he’d awoken to the sound of the shower going, Draco missing from his bed. The blonde never said anything but Adrian knew how he felt, could feel it through the link. He would catch the feeling of
disgust, of feeling dirty and used but no words were ever said.

When his shower was done, he would crawl back into bed with Adrian. A couple of times, he’d woken Draco up with his twitching and mumbling. Usually after those dreams, he wouldn’t sleep, letting Draco get the sleep he deserved…

But it was getting worse, not better. Some days he was so exhausted that he had to drag himself through his classes and hope he didn’t fall asleep during the lesson. Then, about three weeks after the dreams began, his father sent him a note asking him to come for a visit…

He sighed tiredly, rubbing at his dry and gritty eyes. Last night had been worse than most and he just wanted to lay down somewhere and sleep… hopefully without nightmares. “Come on,” Draco murmured after supper. “I’ll walk down with you.”

Adrian smiled tiredly and followed him down the stairs, heading for Severus’ quarters. He wasn’t really surprised when Shade showed up, padding quietly alongside him. Once inside his father’s quarters, he took his robes off, draping them over the arm of the couch, before dropping down onto it with a sigh. “What’s up?” he asked, looking up at his father, who stood in front of the fireplace.

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Severus watched as the boys entered his quarters, the dark circles under Adrian’s eyes deep and very pronounced. Just what was going on? Was his child having nightmares? Was he not sleeping because of the stress caused by Voldemort using Draco as he was? “That’s what I’d like to know. Are you not sleeping at night?”

Adrian sighed as he leaned forward, elbows on his knees as he rubbed at his eyes. “I am, actually, but… I don’t know. It’s weird. The dreams make no sense and I wake up more tired than when I went to bed.”

“He’s woken me up quite a few times with his body twitching or mumbling in his sleep,” Draco said with a shrug. “He usually wakes up quickly and sometimes he goes back to sleep.”

“Stretch out on the couch and try to sleep a little bit, Adrian. I need to talk with Draco about something,” Severus said after a few minutes of just looking at him. He was surprised when Shade climbed up onto the couch, looking at Adrian expectantly… but what surprised him the most was when Adrian simply stretched out on the couch and used the cat as a pillow, using his robes as a blanket.

Something seemed to have happened to change the dynamics between them…

He wasn’t really surprised when Adrian fell asleep quickly. “Explain what’s been happening and how long it’s been going on,” he ordered the blonde teen sitting in the chair closest to Adrian’s head.

“It started after my first visit with the Dark Lord. I came back to find him extremely tense and curled in a ball against Shade. It seems his creature isn’t happy with the new arrangements… not that I really blame it,” Draco murmured with a slight shudder. “That night, Adrian woke me up mumbling in his sleep, his body twitching like he was fighting someone. It doesn’t happen every night, but I can always tell when his dreams are bad by how tired his is the next morning.”

“So the worse the night, the more tired he is?” Severus asked with a frown.

He was distracted when Adrian began thrashing in his sleep, knocking his robes to the floor, his face twisted in anger. He moved closer, watching his child. He didn’t even realize when Draco moved to stand beside him. They both jerked back as Adrian’s wings suddenly ripped through his shirt, his
skin changing to scales. Shade moved quickly off the couch, eyes wide in surprise. They watched in fascination as Adrian’s eyes opened, glowing as he looked around him, growling and snarling at them.

His body grew in size, becoming more muscular, fingers turning to claws, which cut through the cushions with the sound of tearing material. His mouth opened on a scream of pain, but it came out more guttural, more animal than human…

As soon as he saw the creature – a Dragon – Severus realized that it wasn’t Adrian they were looking at, that his child wasn’t in control. Perhaps the dragon had had enough of the fight between itself and Adrian? It looked from him to Draco and back again, baring its teeth in a seething anger, its tail swishing from one side to the other, knocking the furniture back with its movements.

Adrian’s dragon was bigger than he’d thought it would be, a lot bigger than the boy itself…

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Draco watched as Adrian’s creature began to advance on the Potions master and knew he had to interfere. If this was because of what Voldemort was doing, the creature wasn’t going to differentiate between Adrian’s father and the man who dared come between it and its mate. Moving quickly, he stepped closer to the Dragon, knowing it wouldn’t hurt him.

Severus made a choking sound but didn’t move to stop him as he gained the creature’s attention. “It’s alright, Adrian. We’re safe here.”

He was surprised when it turned to glare at him, showing its teeth… then stopped, seeming to recognize him. He moved closer, holding his arms out towards the creature in front of him as if he was going to give it a hug… but the creature moved back, looking unsure all of a sudden. It whined softly when Draco kept advancing on it.

He couldn’t really call this creature Adrian because at the moment it was more Dragon than human. He knew it had been pushed too far… and unfortunately he would be doing it again come Friday because he had no choice. Suddenly, it lunged for him… he didn’t even have time to be afraid. It hit him, the force enough to knock him off his feet, though it didn’t hurt him. He gritted his teeth, expecting to meet hard floor… which never came.

It caught him in one paw, looking down at him in confusion. Instinctively, he reached out and caressed the head above him, watched as it closed its eyes in contentment, a purr filling the room. “It’s alright,” he whispered again. “I’m right here. Come on, Adrian. Come back to me.”

The creature went still, eyes opening to reveal its hazy green depths, as if it were waging an internal war with itself. Draco felt himself lowered to the floor, the paw sliding out from under him to be placed beside him. The Dragon shook his head, as if it were fighting off a dizzy spell or something. Every few seconds, it would stop shaking its head only to start again, backing away from him.

Draco moved to a kneeling position, watching intently as the Dragon began to melt slowly, shrinking down to the size and shape of his boyfriend until only Adrian remained, on his hands and knees, panting hard, head down.

With his upper body naked, Draco could see the evidence of the weight loss through the lightly muscled torso and knew it was partly his fault. He knew that when his boyfriend was upset or stressed, he didn’t eat and what Voldemort was doing was putting an inordinate amount of stress on the smaller boy… and there was nothing he could do to help him.
He moved over to Adrian, laying a hand on his shoulder. “What’s happening to me?” he whispered in exhaustion, turning to look at him with pain filled eyes.

“I don’t know,” Draco said, helping him to his feet and to the couch, which was now repaired. Adrian curled up against him, muscles jumping under his touch. Draco rested one hand on his upper arm while the fingers of the other hand carded through the dark locks. He sighed as he felt his boyfriend begin to relax, eyes closing slowly.

“This has to end soon,” Severus murmured softly. Draco looked up, surprised to realize how old and tired his godfather looked.

“There’s nothing we can do to help him, is there?” he asked finally, feeling Adrian twitch and jerk in his sleep.

“Short of killing the Dark Lord, no,” the Potions master said with a sigh, beginning to pace.

“So maybe we should start gearing up towards that end,” Draco said with a steely look in his silver eyes. “Because I don’t know about you, but I’m getting tired of all this crap.”

“What do you suggest?” Severus sneered in frustration. “Go all out against the Dark Lord? That should last all of ten minutes.”

“Actually, I was thinking more along the lines of teaching Adrian to fight Shadow Dragon style. I have a feeling that’s going to be the only way to win this.” He nodded when his godfather stared at him in surprise. “Madreca said that they fought with swords instead of wands. I think fighting with a wand is holding him back in a way. Sure Adrian is powerful when dueling with a wand, imagine if he were to use the correct method of his fighting style.”

“Winky!” Severus called out sharply.

“Master?” Adrian’s house-elf squeaked in surprise as she appeared beside him.

“In my office at home, bring me the two swords in the case then tell Madreca I need to speak to him.”

“Yes, Master.”

“You had swords in your office for him?” Draco asked him in surprise.

“No, they’re actually family heirlooms from a time when it was easier to have swords instead of wands.”

Draco shook his head in amusement. They didn’t have to wait long. Winky showed up with the swords, as instructed, then Madreca showed up a few minutes later. “What’s going on?”

“We’re going to start training Adrian to take out the Dark Lord,” Severus informed him after filling him in on what had happened with Adrian. “We need to end this as soon as we can before he’s driven insane.”

“Are you sure about this, Severus?” the Spaniard asked as he glanced down at Adrian. He was still twitching and jerking in his sleep but with Draco’s fingers running through his hair, it seemed to keep him centered enough that he stayed asleep and in his own form.

“What else do you suggest we do? His creature is pissed off and wants to tear the Dark Lord’s head off with its teeth,” Draco snapped angrily. “I can feel the way things are off with him and there’s
nothing I can do to help him through this. The only way I can see this ending well for Adrian is if we give him an outlet and a goal.”

Madreca sighed as he looked at him and finally nodded. “Wake him up, then.”

* * *

For the next three months, Madreca spent the evening hours training Adrian to fight with the swords, surprised at how quickly the boy picked it up. But that was a good thing because it kept him occupied when Draco had to go ‘visit’ the Dark Lord, gave him something else to focus on. By the time June rolled around, they were ready to confront the Dark Lord and the rest of the Death Eaters.

During that time, Severus and Lucius went through the people they knew, asking if they would ally themselves with them. Those who flat out refused were Obliviated and sent home, those who agreed made unbreakable vows to keep quiet until they were ready to attack.

All told, they had more supporters than they’d thought they’d get… twenty out of sixty and that didn’t include the others, just the Death Eaters. Not great odds, but it would have to do.

“Those who are with us have to be wearing something to distinguish them from the loyal Death Eaters,” Adrian told his father the night before they were to confront the Dark Lord… it would work to their advantage, anyway. The Dark Lord seemed to have called for a meeting of all his followers that same night.

“What do you suggest?” Lucius asked with a raised eyebrow. “What could they wear that wouldn’t arouse suspicion?”

“What if, instead of wearing something, they simply dropped their cloaks?” Draco asked as he sat with Adrian, a leg propped behind the smaller teen’s back, looking at the adults while Adrian leaned back against his leg, using it as a prop as he rested against Draco’s chest. He didn’t mind as he wrapped his arms around the boy sitting in front of him.

His boyfriend seemed to have gotten clingy the last few weeks, needing the contact more and more. Once their friends had found out that Adrian was training hard to kill Voldemort, they’d joined in, wanting to help. So, now, they were all sitting in the Room of Requirements discussing what was to happen the next night…

Draco was actually surprised that the Slytherins would actually willingly fight with them. It wasn’t something they usually did, but then, they knew their friend needed them and Slytherins never reneged on helping friends out.

“I think that would be a good idea. If I instruct the shadows to only take the ones wearing cloaks, that’ll be helpful. Those who are with him and aren’t wearing cloaks can be taken care of by the others,” Adrian said with a frown before looking up at his father. “Would that help?”

“Yes, I think it would.”

“Then it’s settled,” Madreca said with a twist of his lips. “I suggest we all get some sleep. It’s going to be a hectic day tomorrow.”

Draco took Adrian’s hand and led him down to their room, followed by their friends. Even Fred and George followed them into their dorm, sitting down on Draco’s bed. Shade sighed as he climbed up on Adrian’s bed, lying down beside him. He and Kaida were to be a part of the fighting tomorrow. Draco was of mixed opinions for that… he didn’t want Kaida to get hurt but he couldn’t begrudge her the chance to fight with him. She would protect him.
And he knew Adrian felt better knowing she would be doing so.

“Are we really going to do this, then?” Nott asked softly from Blaise’s bed.

“Of course we are,” George snorted with an eye roll.

“That’s what we’ve all been training for,” Fred added, leaning back on his elbows.

“You guys realize you don’t have to do this, right?” Adrian asked, one hand on Shade’s head while his other one remained in Draco’s.

“Yeah,” Pansy said, looking slightly green and Draco wondered if she’d realized that she would be fighting her father in this war… Apparently not.

“Just remember that if you don’t want to fight, stay in the common room and you won’t have to go,” Draco murmured as he rose to his feet. “But Madreca’s right. It’s going to be a rough day tomorrow. Let’s get some sleep.”

Everyone rose to their feet and those who didn’t sleep in the room left for their respective beds. Draco listened to their dorm mates get ready for bed even as he pulled his own night clothes on. He probably wouldn’t be wearing them for long but that didn’t matter.

He watched Adrian from the corner of his eye, worried about his boyfriend… he wasn’t worried about the fighting, no, Adrian was more than ready for that. He was worried about him mentally, worried that what Voldemort had been doing had caused irreparable damage between them. Adrian never said anything but that hardly mattered.

Adrian rarely said anything about what bothered him in the first place. He sighed when his boyfriend went into the bathroom to brush his teeth, sitting on the edge of the bed to wait.

An idea occurred to him then and, with a gleam of anticipation, he began closing the curtains around the bed… all but one. Then he kicked Shade over to his bed. The cat grumbled but went anyway, lying down with Kaida. When Adrian came back from the bathroom, he blinked in surprise. “What’s going on?” he asked softly when he was close enough.

Draco didn’t answer him but took him by the hand and pulled him over to the other side of the bed, the side facing the window. “Remember this?” Draco whispered as he pushed Adrian back onto the bed.

“Our first time,” Adrian murmured as he moved back on the bed, looking at him in anticipation.

When they were sitting on the bed, Draco cast a Silencing spell around Adrian’s bed. “I want to do this again, but I want you to be on top,” he whispered as he crawled closer to his boyfriend. Adrian rarely topped. It was usually Draco who did, but something told him the dark-haired teen needed this more than he did. Draco was his and only his, same as Adrian was Draco’s and only Draco’s.

Adrian hesitated slightly before he leaned forward and kissed him. It became heated very quickly but neither teen seemed to be in a rush to do much more at the moment. Draco warped his arms around his boyfriend and dragged him over him as he leaned back.

They took their time pealing the clothes of each other’s bodies. When Draco’s shirt finally fell away, Adrian proceeded to nip, lick and kiss his way down the lightly muscled chest, pausing when Draco would make a sound of pleasure, exploring the spots leisurely. Draco understood his need. He did the same thing to Adrian when he topped, after all.
By the time Adrian sheeted himself into Draco’s body some time later, they were both panting heavily but there was no urgency in their movements. It was as if they thought if they took their time, it would make time go slower.

Draco gasped as pleasure sliced through him, loving the feel of Adrian’s flesh rubbing deliciously against his own. He clutched at his lover, back arching up to get more contact. “Love you,” Adrian whispered as he rubbed his lips against Draco’s, making them tingle pleasantly.

“Love you,” he whispered back before pulling the teen above him down, lips locking together again. He never wanted this to end, he realized as they rocked together, their movements becoming frenzied as the pleasure build between them, but it was impossible to stop it and he knew it.

It wasn’t long before they cried out their orgasms to the curtains around them, secure in the knowledge that no one could hear them. Afterwards, they lay side by side, still wrapped around each other, exhausted but unable to sleep.

“I love you, Draco,” Adrian whispered finally, looking up at him. “I don’t want to lose you tomorrow.”

“You won’t,” Draco murmured softly, smiling into the green eyes of his boyfriend as he pushed him back onto the bed so he could hover over him. “I’ll still be here when everything is over and then we can go back to our normal lives. Don’t worry about me. I’ll be alright.” He leaned down and kissed him lightly, but as always when it came to kissing Adrian, he couldn’t keep it light for long. Soon, they pulled apart for some much needed air. “I love you, Adrian. Nothing will ever change that.” With a smile of joy, Adrian pulled Draco down beside him so he could lean against him. Draco pulled a blanket over them, tugging it over their naked bodies so they could sleep. “Try to sleep.”

* * *

Adrian watched from the shadows as the Death Eaters began trickling into the room, his black scales efficiently hiding him from sight. Even his clothes blended with the shadows. Draco had wanted him to wear pants that – to his way of thinking – made him look like a damn Genie!

However, he’d put his foot down and put his cargo pants on, liking the feel of the material. He had allowed himself to be talked into going without a shirt, though, and had enjoyed the look in Draco’s eyes when he’d looked at him. His boyfriend had then spent the time tying half his hair back so it wouldn’t get in his eyes during the fight. He could’ve done it by himself, but Draco seemed to need to touch him and Adrian had let him, needing it too.

He was brought back to the present by two men talking close to him. He wondered how much longer he had to wait and realized that the room was almost filled. Now all he had to do was wait for the doors to close. That would signal the beginning of the meeting. His father and godfather were already among the people filling the room so he didn’t have to worry about them just yet.

He was to wait for the signal to make his move…

He noticed that quite a few Death Eaters weren’t wearing cloaks and that worried him slightly. He knew he had supporters amongst the people in the room but he had no idea who they were and there were more than twenty without cloaks. He began to feel the panic climb inside him… then he felt Shade press up against him in the shadows and the panic lessened.

He wasn’t alone in this, he reminded himself. He and Shade had practiced together during the last few months. This morning he’d spoken to the shadows and told them their plans. They were all in agreement… they simply waited for the signal to attack.
The meeting began then and Adrian waited for the signal… It came a half-hour later when a cloak was tossed in the center of the room from the back. The Death Eaters looked at each other in confusion as the room went completely quiet.

Adrian moved, sinking into the shadows and coming up straight under the cloak. He heard the gasps around him and wondered if the effect was what he thought it was. He smirked as he came fully out, both swords drawn.

It was a few minutes before the cloak was whipped off him, as if by an unseen wind.

“Who,” Voldemort demanded angrily, “are you?”

Adrian smiled, and from the gasps he heard from the men closest to him, it wasn’t a pleasant one. “I,” he murmured softly as he brought his head up slowly, eyes pinning Voldemort on the spot, “am a Shadow Dragon and I am here to stop your tyranny, Tom Riddle.”

He watched as Voldemort stiffened in his chair and his smile widened.

“Get him,” Voldemort hissed angrily.

“Tell me,” he said before anyone could move to obey, making them hesitate as he looked at them all. “Who here isn’t afraid of the dark?” Before anyone could do more than blink in confusion, Adrian’s swords were going up as he twirled in place. “Ventus” he whispered just as his swords were just about over his head.

A wind came up suddenly, catching at the flames in the candles, gaining speed until his swords came down to the floor again. As soon as they touched it, the candles went out.

The silence was deafening… until the screams began.

He waited until there was silence again. “Flamma,” he whispered and every candle lit up again. Half the Death Eaters were gone, those remaining were the ones with cloaks off… and Voldemort. Behind the remaining Death Eaters were Adrian’s supporters and friends with Draco at the head of the group.

“You dare stand against your Lord?!” Voldemort snarled at the group standing in front of him, wands drawn.

“You’re not our Lord,” Draco sneered in contempt, his eyes flashing with hatred.

“Kill them,” Voldemort ordered of his remaining loyal followers.

“Shade,” Adrian whispered, nodding to the cat as spells began flying around the room. He twirled easily, blocking one spell that had been aimed at Draco’s back. He moved with a grace he didn’t realize he had, moving from position to position, firing spells with the swords. He didn’t miss often.

That was when it really got interesting, though. Adrian laughed as the spells from the remaining loyal Death Eaters bounced off his scales and wings, their black colour glinting in the light of the room as he approached Voldemort. He could see the fear in the dark wizard’s eyes as nothing seemed to stop his advance.

“You thought you could control us, didn’t you,” Adrian rumbled as his head lowered mockingly, eyes glued to his prey. Voldemort backed up hurriedly but because of his pride, he refused to run. Instead, he kept firing spell after spell at him. Good. It made this easier.
Adrian dropped his swords to grab hold of Voldemort, pushing him into the nearest shadow filled corner. He didn’t have to look into his soul to know this man was beyond redemption. Oh, no, he knew exactly where this one was going…

He dragged the screaming man down into the shadows, screams of rage and slight fear following them down into that other world that only Adrian seemed to be able to access. It was time to end this.

He smirked as he allowed the dark wizard to pull away from him, allowed him to feel like he was in control even as Adrian paced gracefully around him. The man was right to keep him in sight, but it wouldn’t save him. Already, he could feel the shadows pulsing in anticipation.

It took him a few seconds to realize that some of the shadows were staying still and that they seemed to be attached to the wizard before him. Tilting his head to the side in curiosity, he frowned as he mentally followed one of them.

“You’ll never kill me,” the wizard sneered, bolstered by the fact that the shadows seemed to link him to the real world. “I’ve fixed it so that no one will ever get rid of me.”

Adrian smiled maliciously as he faced the wizard again. “Are you absolutely sure of that?” he asked as he reached for one of the shadows and tugged hard. It took some effort, but soon the shadow snapped, like a rubber band pulled too tightly. “Let’s test that theory, shall we?”

Letting go of it, he watched as the shadow snapped back into the wizard with a forceful impact that rocked Voldemort with shock. So, these were parts of souls anchoring Voldemort to the real world, were they? Adrian pulled on the next one even as the wizard gasped, eyes wide with horror as he seemed to realize what was going on. As soon as he felt the second shadow snap, he released it, watching as it sprang back to the wizard.

Two more were tugged and released before the wizard recovered enough to realize his hold on the real world was being pulled out of existence. With a scream of rage, he began firing spells at Adrian, who danced and laughed, pretending to dodge the harmless spells. He liked playing with this little insect, leading him to believe he could hurt him if he struck him…

When the wizard was panting in exhaustion, Adrian tugged on the fifth shadow, releasing it to rejoin the others. “Only one left, little mortal. Once this one is gone, you’ll be left here for the shadows to have,” he said, unable to help taunting the little man. “We’ll see then just how much you enjoy being on the receiving end of the cruelty. The only difference will be that here, there won’t be anyone to stop it. It’ll go on for eternity.” The last word rumbled echoingly around them and Adrian laughed as he tugged on the last remaining hold Voldemort had to the material world.

With a shriek of pain and anger, Voldemort rushed at him. Adrian was actually surprised enough by the move that he stood still long enough for Voldemort to grab hold of his throat in a tight hold as something was pressed against the flesh of his ribs. Adrian figured it was only his wand. “Let’s see you dodge this,” he snarled angrily, spit flying from his mouth, eyes wild and insane.

Adrian smirked as he felt the last shadow snap from its hold to the real world, though he didn’t release it just yet. “It’s done,” he murmured and watched as Voldemort’s eyes flicked to the hand holding the last remnants of his soul.

When he opened his hand, it snapped home with enough force that it threw the dark wizard back. Adrian jerked in surprise as pain lanced through his ribs. He looked down in confusion, unable to make sense of the knife protruding from his side. He blinked as he touched what was trickling down his clothes, tilting his head slightly in misunderstanding as they came back sticky and red.
Absently, he heard Voldemort laugh. “Not so indestructible, are we?” the wizard mocked in amusement.

“He’s yours,” he murmured to the shadows, ignoring the little insect’s words. He was done playing with him anyway. He pushed up and out of the shadows, Voldemort’s scream of fear following him as the shadows swarmed him.

He reappeared in the same room he’d left, looking in surprise as the wizards he’d left fighting stood there in shock and he dimly realized they were his allies…

A demented female voice echoed around the room and Adrian grunted as a heavy weight landed on his back. Bellatrix! He gasped as something seemed to dig at him in several places but he used his arms to block most of the blows. It took him a few seconds to realize she was attacking him with a knife… He struggled with her, backing up without realizing where they were.

Her screams turned for rage to fear when they neared the shadows – the exact same ones he’d taken Voldemort into – and hands reached for her, grabbing hold of her. When Adrian turned around, there was one shadowed hand in her hair, another had holding of one of her hands, as they dragged her into the shadows. “I told you they weren’t done with you,” he told her as she screamed and struggled. It was too late, now.”

Her screams ended abruptly as she was dragged into the shadows and out of the room. Adrian turned to look at the people still in the room, panting slightly, the pain in his side seeming to sap his strength but he ignored it for now. “The Dark Lord is no more,” he told them, ignoring the pain in his side. “It’s over.” Just as he finished saying it, the Death Eaters around the room screamed in pain, clutching at their right arms where the tattoo linking them to Voldemort pulsed and writhed as it was forcefully pulled off their flesh, dissolving in the air.

Adrian sighed in satisfaction, weaving slightly in place, feeling suddenly weakened as relief filled him. He frowned in confusion. That couldn’t be right… “Adrian!” Draco gasped as he rushed over, catching him just as his knees gave out. He made a sound of pain as something painful was jostled in his side. “What happened?” his mate asked as he pulled the knife out of his side, making him cry out softly as pain lanced through him.

“Draco,” he whispered, the room dimming around him as the weakness increased. What was happening to him? Right, Voldemort’s knife… “Lake,” he mumbled as he collapsed against his boyfriend. He didn’t know if Draco even heard him or not…

“Don’t leave me,” he heard as if from a distance as he was cradled to Draco’s side, feeling himself being rocked. “I need you.”

He smiled, wanting to answer the blonde teen but it was simply too much effort…

* * *

When Adrian finally managed to swim back to awareness, it was to find he was still in a huge amount of pain. He forced his eyes to open only to realize he was in a strange sterile white room. He frowned in confusion. Where was he? Why hadn’t they taken him to the lake in the valley? He’d have been healed instantly.

“Mr. Snape,” a stranger said from his right and he sluggishly turned his head in the direction of the voice. “Is there any other injuries but the cuts?”

What? He blinked dazedly at the stranger, feeling so cold that his body shook from it. What was he
talking about? He blinked again, finding it funny that the stranger seemed to have a strange glow around him, as if he had too much magic inside him that it had to come out.

“Mr. Snape!” the stranger said sharply but Adrian’s eyes began to close again, unable to stay awake…

* * *

“Tell me again why we didn’t just take him to the lake?” Draco asked in confusion and frustration.

“Because we don’t know what kind of damage the blade did,” Madreca murmured from beside him as Severus paced the floor, impatiently waiting for the Healer working on Adrian to come out and tell them what was going on. “Since we’re not sure how it works, it could be that the lake would only heal the cut but nothing else. Once we’re sure that there was no damage caused inside his body we can take him to the lake and heal it.”

“What if it doesn’t work once the Healer’s done?”

“Then Adrian will have a scar to prove he survived the Dark Lord’s death,” Severus snarled in irritation. Draco knew not to take offense at the tone. His godfather was simply worried about Adrian. His father had left to get his mother ten minutes ago and would rejoin them as soon as his mother was ready.

Lucius and Narcissa walked in then and Draco had a sense of déjà vu… four years ago, when Adrian had been missing for three weeks. This time was different, though. This time he only had one really bad injury: the dagger wound.

He’d been surprised at the length of the blade: a good eight inches long…

It had to have created some internal damage.

“Draco,” his mother breathed when she saw him, coming to sit beside him. “Were you injured at all?”

“Just a few scratches, nothing major,” he told her with a tight smile. Out of everyone there, Adrian was the only one seriously injured. Others had been hit with spells, but nothing major that would’ve caused all that much damage… except for one person.

Black had joined them in the fight, a sight Draco hadn’t thought he’d see. He still didn’t know how it had happened. He’d seen the ex-convict fighting on the other side of the room at one point but then he’d jumped between a Death Eater who’d been about to fire a spell at Draco’s back. Black had died saving Draco’s life from an _Avada Kedavra_. He hadn’t expected that…

“Has there been any news?”

“Nothing yet,” he whispered as he took her hand, needing the comfort. She gently squeezed his hand, giving him an understanding smile.

It was another fifteen minutes before the Healer came to talk to Severus. “Professor Snape, I’m Healer Beckett,” the man murmured as he shook Severus’ hand. “It was a little touchy, the blade did a fair amount of internal damage, but we managed to fix it. He’s going to be weak so I want to keep him overnight for observation.”

“May we see him?” Severus asked in relief.
“Of course, if you’ll follow me.” The Healer led them down the corridor to the room where Adrian had been placed. As soon as he had the room to enter, Draco made a straight beeline for the bed, sitting on the edge so he could hold Adrian’s hand.

“Did he wake up at all?” Madreca asked curiously.

“He woke up briefly but wasn’t lucid. It looked like he was in a fair amount of pain. I asked him if he was injured anywhere else, trying to get him to stay awake. It didn’t work. Scans showed there were residual spells strikes but no damage other than the stab wound and the other superficial cuts...”

Draco lost interest in the adults then, his attention centered on his boyfriend. He didn’t even register when Severus came to stand on the other side of the bed. “Don’t worry, Draco,” his godfather murmured after a while. “It’s over now. Nothing will come after him again.”

“Do you think he’ll forgive me for allowing the Dark Lord to do what he wanted to me?” he asked softly, looking down at the long thin fingers on Adrian’s hand, the golden brown fingers twined with his own pale one.

“What the Dark Lord did was try to pervert what you two have,” Severus said with a tired sigh as he finally sat on the other side of the bed. “He enjoyed knowing he was causing pain. He might not have known about your bond, but that didn’t matter. You know as well as I do that Adrian in never going to hold that against you. You did what you needed to do to survive.”

Draco sighed softly, drawing it out as he thought about that. “It nearly drove him insane. Gods,” he murmured as he closed his eyes. “I don’t know if I’d be as forgiving as he is.”

“That’s what makes Adrian special,” his godfather murmured as he reached out to push a stray strand of hair out of the sleeping teen’s face. Adrian was still pale, that pallor making the bruises under his eyes stand out even more than usual. “At least his creature will stop fighting him. It’s gotten the revenge it wanted.”

They were silent for a long time after that, simply watching Adrian sleep. He didn’t know when his godfather had moved off the bed but he now sat in a comfortable looking chair. “Try to get some sleep, Draco,” Severus murmured after a while. “He’ll need you tomorrow.”

“What about you?” Draco asked as he took his shoes off, scooting around so he could lie against Adrian.

“I’ll watch over you, like I always do.”

Draco stretched out beside his boyfriend, grimacing slightly when Adrian frowned, trying to move so he lay against him but it seemed to be painful. He turned Adrian away from him a little so he could prop the dark-haired teen against him. It seemed to be enough. Adrian settled down, clinging to the arm Draco managed to wrap around his chest. He felt whole when he held Adrian like this, as if everything would be alright... It was enough for now.

* * *

Adrian frowned in confusion, his side throbbing painfully. Without opening his eyes, he took stock of what was going on around him. He knew he was laying on his right side, that there was a dull pain in his left side... then there was a warm body behind him, on which he seemed to be propped against. By the feel of it, he knew it was Draco.

What had happened?
Then he remembered… Voldemort, the fighting, Bellatrix, a dagger sticking out of his side…

He forced his eyes to open, and blinked at the sight of the room and the funny smell one associated with hospitals… He had to be at St. Mongo’s.

“How are you feeling?” he heard his father ask from the chair beside his bed. Adrian could see Severus hadn’t slept at all. He rarely did when he worried.

“Sore. Why didn’t you take me to the lake? I’d have been healed in seconds.” He wasn’t angry that they hadn’t, in fact he was more curious than anything else.

“We weren’t sure if it would also heal internal damage,” his father murmured with a small smile. “We can test that some other time, not when you’re life hangs in the balance. You’re lucky we got you here in time as it is.”

“I didn’t think he had a blade on him,” Adrian murmured with a tired sigh. “When he pressed it against me, I thought it was his wand.”

“Yes, he never did leave anything to chance,” Severus murmured softly. “The Healer should be here soon to check on you. When he discharges you we can go to the lake and heal whatever is left.”

“Was anyone else hurt?” he asked, realizing he probably should’ve asked that question first.

He was surprised when his father hesitated in answering him. “A few minor injuries… and one death.”

“A death?” he asked in surprise and trepidation. “Who?”

“Black.”

Adrian was shocked. He hadn’t even seen him there during the fighting… of course, at the time he’d been more intent on getting to Voldemort than to look at who else was there. “How?”

“He caught the Killing curse that was intended for Draco.”

He was at a loss, his mind blank. It would seem that Black had more than made up for his blunder. He never would’ve thought he’d willingly place himself in the path of death to save Draco… but then he knew Black hadn’t done it for Draco, he’d done it for Adrian, because Adrian loved Draco.

“He did it for me,” he whispered sadly, sorry now that he hadn’t taken the time to speak with Black.

“You were the last link to his past,” Severus murmured gently as he sat on the side of the bed. Adrian hadn’t even seen him get up. “He did it to prove he was there for you.”

“How do you know that?” he asked curiously.

“He spoke to me yesterday before the battle.” That surprised him. Black? Willingly talking to Severus Snape? “He apologized for everything he did to you, said he understood why you kept your distance from him. He didn’t blame you for it. He was proud that you went to him last summer, asking him to take care of Saffron until everything was calm again.”

“It wasn’t like I had anyone else to turn to,” Adrian said sarcastically.

“He knew that but didn’t care. It was his chance to prove to you that he could be trusted. You gave him that.” Severus smiled gently down at him, reaching out to caress his cheek. “Try to get some more sleep. I’ll wake you up when the Healer comes in.”
Adrian reached up and grabbed hold of his father’s hand, holding it in both of his. “I love you, Father,” he whispered with a tremulous smile.

“I love you, too, child,” he whispered back, and Adrian sighed in contentment, his father’s hand clasped in his while his boyfriend was wrapped around him. He was exactly where he wanted to be… with his family.

* * *

Ten Years Later

“Adrian!” Draco called from the ground. Looking down from the training frame, Adrian smiled at his husband. “Get down here! You know you’re not in any shape to be climbing the frames!”

“I’m fine!” he called back, waving his hand at the worrying man. Beside him stood a three year old blonde boy with green eyes, watching curiously as Adrian trained the newest children.

Beside Adrian stood fourteen year old Caelum, who was laughing at them, his hair blowing in the gentle breeze. “You guys haven’t been married for more than four years and you’re already sounding like an old married couple,” the teen teased. “Of course he could be worried that you’ll hurt your latest baby.”

Adrian smiled as he ran a hand over his distended belly where their newest child slept. This one would be a girl, he figured. She was already getting restless to get out, moving around constantly. “He worries too much,” he murmured with a shrug.

“You can’t really blame him, Adrian,” ten year old Saffron drawled from behind them. “Besides, if he didn’t worry about you, who else would? And you have to admit that you do take unnecessary risks.”

“It’s not unnecessary if the younger generation learns to fight, now is it?” he asked with an arched eyebrow. No one had been more surprised than he and Draco when it had turned out that both Saffron and Caelum were Shadow Dragons. It seemed Shadows was determined to bring them back with a vengeance.

They had a total of fifteen new Shadow Dragons training in the valley and six more were born in the last three years. The village was thriving wonderfully. They had wizards and witches in the village as well. One was running a bakery on the outskirts. Another – a goblin, no less – was in charge of the blacksmithing. The library was fully stocked with every kind of books they would ever need, even some on Shadow Dragons, thanks to Shadows.

Adrian didn’t know where they’d come from but he wasn’t complaining…

Severus Snape and Lucius Malfoy were regular visitors, enough so that Adrian had conned them into being part of the council with him. Madreca was another one. There were two more adults on the council, but Adrian didn’t really know them well yet.

“I think big brother is about to have a fit,” Caelum murmured, pulling him back to the present. “I think you’d better get down there. I’ll make sure the kids don’t get hurt.”

“I suppose,” Adrian said with a sigh, opening his wings and floating down to the ground below. “You’re such a worry wart,” he grumbled as Draco moved to meet him, kissing the blonde man. He smiled when Draco obliged, wrapping an arm around his waist.

“You know the Healer said not to exert yourself,” Draco said with a scowl as he picked up their son.
“I wasn’t exerting myself,” he protested with a laugh. “Come here, Scorpius,” he murmured as the little boy fussed, willingly going to him. “Why aren’t you with the other children in daycare, hm?” he asked gently.

“It seems he’s gotten good at pulling the disappearing act,” Draco murmured as he ran his fingers through their son’s fine hair. “He came to find me in the library.” On his days off from the Ministry, the library was usually where Draco could be found when Adrian was working with the children. Working alongside his father hadn’t been as bad as Draco had feared at first.

They’d made some great progress with the Ministry laws where Shadow Dragons were concerned. They now had the same status as the Veela, where any child born with the ability was theirs. The parents were welcome to enter the village but they couldn’t stay and as long as the child was sent to them for proper training, Adrian saw no reason to have the child taken from them. There was the rare occasion where interference had to be employed – hence the daycare center which doubled as an orphanage.

In the case of abuse, the child was automatically taken from the parents and placed in the village’s care. They were thriving here again…

Of course, it helped that Adrian had threatened to get rid of the corruption inside the Ministry if they ever dared interfere with them. It had only taken one example to get his point across. Fudge had resigned because of his blindness to Voldemort’s return.

Black had been exonerated after the battle with Voldemort. It was a bittersweet victory for the man who had died protecting Adrian’s husband. Adrian sighed as he kissed the top of Scorpius’ head, looking around him. Nothing had turned out like he’d thought it would… but he was happy none-the-less. “What’s wrong?” Draco asked softly, eyes watching him carefully.

“Nothing,” Adrian murmured with a smile. “Let’s take Scorpius back to the daycare. I want to spend time with just you.”

Draco smiled at him and took the little boy from him. “I’ll take him back, why don’t you have Winky pack us a picnic?”


“I know you do, Scorpius, but this is Daddy time. Remember what that means?” The little boy wasn’t happy but he nodded anyway. “We’ll go for a picnic tomorrow, I promise.”

“Okay,” the little boy mumbled.

“Besides, I think Victoria is up from her nap. Maybe she’ll play blocks with you again.” Scorpius brightened at the mention of his favourite playmate and stopped fussing as Draco walked away from Adrian.

Yes, Adrian was definitely happy.

He was still smiling when Winky held out a basket to him… and he froze as pain lanced through his body. He couldn’t be going into labour yet. He still had seven weeks to go. He frowned as he placed a hand on his belly, wondering at the wetness he felt against his side and realized it was blood he was looking at. “Winky, get Draco,” he gasped as another painful spasm went through him.

The House-elf’s eyes were huge as she dropped the basket and vanished.

By the time Draco came pelting into the house, Adrian was trying to breathe through the pain, sitting
on the floor, resting against the wall. “What happened?” Draco asked as he picked him up as gently as possible. Adrian simply shook his head as Draco carried him out of the house and towards the large building they’d put up for an infirmary.

“Healer Beckett!” he called out urgently.

“Bring him here, Draco,” the healer called out as a Mediwitch came running over from the opposite side of the building, helping him to lay Adrian down on the table. “What happened, Adrian.”

“Nothing,” Adrian gasped, trying to curl up but the Healer wouldn’t let him. “It just started bleeding.”

“What’s happening?” Draco asked and Adrian could hear the concern in his voice but just then another painful spasm hit him and he grit his teeth to keep from screaming.

“Adrian, I’m going to give you something to make you drowsy. It’ll help you relax, alright?”

He didn’t bother to answer as he panted through the pain. It was taking too much out of him as it was and he couldn’t concentrate enough to give a verbal answer. When the phial was pressed against his lips, he simply opened them, swallowing whatever they gave him. It didn’t take long for the potion to take effect, which he was grateful for…

**

“Draco,” Healer Beckett said urgently, gesturing for him to join him on the other side of the bed. “Hold his hand while we work.”

Draco was grateful that he wasn’t simply kicked out of the room… but then the healer had already seen how effective soul bonds were when it came to healing their patients, especially Adrian. “I’m here,” he whispered in Adrian’s ear when his husband whimpered in pain.

“Let’s turn him onto his side,” the Healer instructed the Mediwitch. Even Draco helped turn Adrian onto his right side so they could see where the bleeding was coming from. He frowned when he realized it was the old scar that had torn open, the one Adrian had received during the final battle.

“I thought that wouldn’t reopen,” he told the Healer with a scowl.

“I also remember telling you that it could tear if he put too much strain on it while pregnant. He was supposed to rest during the last two months of his pregnancy. No climbing or flying around with the children but grounded at home.”

“Well, obviously he hasn’t been listening because I found him in the exercise yard.”

The Healer’s mouth tightened in disapproval but he didn’t say anything more as he set to work trying to stop the bleeding and close the wound again.

**

Adrian slowly woke up in the same room he’d been in earlier; the potion the Healer had given him finally wearing off. He frowned as he realized he was on his side, which was a position he’d never liked sleeping in. With an effort, he managed to open his eyes to find Draco sitting there, waiting for him to wake up. “How are you feeling?” his husband asked softly as he leaned forward, brushing his hair back.

“Tired,” he mumbled before he cleared his throat. “What happened?”
“Good,” he heard Healer Beckett said from the doorway but he didn’t move from his position to look at the man, knowing he would be coming around the bed anyway. “Now, Adrian. How many times do I have to tell you to not overdo things?”

“I wasn’t,” he protested tiredly, frowning at the Healer.

“I told you when you were pregnant with Scorpius that you were to stop strenuous work during your last two months of pregnancy. Do you remember why?”

Adrian’s frown deepened as he thought about why he was to limit himself and came up blank. “Not really.”

If he hadn’t been so tired from blood loss, he would’ve laughed as the man scowled at him. “The scar tissue where that dagger went into your side is very thin and is liable to tear open when you reach your seventh month of pregnancy. We managed to stop the bleeding and heal the damage done but you have to take it easy. Climbing on the frames is not taking it easy. It puts too much strain on it.”

“I forgot about that,” he murmured with a sigh, closing his eyes. “What do I do now?”

“I’m going to have to keep you under observation for the duration of your pregnancy just to make sure nothing goes wrong again.” The Healer smiled when his eyes popped open. “No, it doesn’t mean you have to stay here. I’ll put a spell in place that’ll alert me as soon as something goes wrong. But,” the man said sternly. “You have to take it easy from now on.”

“Alright.”

“Draco, you can take him home. Make sure he rests for the rest of the day.”

“But we were going to go on a picnic,” Adrian protested as Draco helped him to sit up, trying to hide the wince as it pulled at the scar. He didn’t quite manage it.

“Rest!” Healer Beckett stressed with a stern look.

“Don’t worry,” Draco murmured as he helped Adrian down the steps of the infirmary. “We can have a picnic behind the house. That way it won’t be a stressful walk and we can still have our picnic.”

“But I was looking forward to going somewhere private,” Adrian sulked, knowing he was being unreasonable but couldn’t help it. He enjoyed his alone time with Draco…

Draco smiled lovingly at him as he helped him up the stairs to their house. “Winky, is everything ready?”

“Yes, Master Draco,” the house-elf answered promptly.

“Good.”

Adrian looked suspiciously from the little creature to Draco and back again. “What’s going on?”

“You’ll see,” Draco murmured as he led Adrian through the house to the back door and outside to the back yard. Adrian stopped in astonishment as he took in the beautiful sight of the yard. Draco seemed to have turned their back yard into an oasis. There was a small pond with a fountain splashing gently in the center. Around it was a beautiful array of flowers, their colours divers and multiple. It almost looked like his favourite spot at Snape Manor. There was even a tall hedge around their yard that muffled the sounds of village life.
“How?” he breathed in shock.

“I remember you telling me how much you liked Uncle Sev’s garden with the maze and decided to ask Winky to recreate it here for you. I was going to wait until your birthday to show it to you. It’s three days early but that’s alright. Happy birthday, Love,” Draco said as he draped an arm around Adrian, pulling him back to lean against him so he cradled him in his arms.

“It’s beautiful,” he whispered softly, eyes misting happily. With a smile, Draco led him down the path to where a blanket had been spread on the ground. He grit his teeth as he sat down on the ground but the pain didn’t last long and he was soon reclining against Draco’s chest, munching hungrily on a piece of chicken.

As they ate, Draco’s hand would creep down to rub at his belly, watching as it rippled to kick at it. Adrian laughed as it did it for the third time. “I think she’s going to be jealous of the attention you give me,” he told Draco, who chuckled softly. He looked up at his husband, eyes shining. Draco leaned down and kissed him gently.

“She’ll learn to share,” was all he said as he popped a grape into Adrian’s mouth.

* * *

On September twenty first, at exactly eight o’clock in the night, Adrian went into labour. It didn’t take more than a half hour for Healer Beckett to deliver the seven pounds eight ounce little girl. In fact, the whole village knew the instant she was born, her screams easily heard from one end to the other.

The baker told a customer jokingly that they finally had a screamer in the village.

She calmed down quickly, however, once Adrian had her, her silver eyes glaring up at him accusingly. “I didn’t abandon you, sweetheart,” he told her gently as he ran a tender finger down her cheek, resting against Draco instead of the pillows. “They just had to clean you up first.”

Draco chuckled at him. “Welcome to the family, Emily Sarah Malfoy,” he said as he looked at her over Adrian’s shoulder, with their friends and family gathered around them to greet their newest addition, even Scorpius looked at the little girl in curiosity.

Yes, things had turned out for the better…

~Finite~
Ten Years Later

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“What’s happening?” Draco asked and Adrian could hear the concern in his voice but just then another painful spasm hit him and he grit his teeth to keep from screaming.

“Adrian, I’m going to give you something to make you drowsy. It’ll help you relax, alright?”

He didn’t bother to answer as he panted through the pain. It was taking too much out of him as it was and he couldn’t concentrate enough to give a verbal answer. When the phial was pressed against his lips, he simply opened them, swallowing whatever they gave him. It didn’t take long for the potion to take effect, which he was grateful for…

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“Draco,” Healer Beckett said, gesturing for him to join him on the other side of the bed. “Hold his hand while we work.”

Draco was grateful that he wasn’t simply kicked out of the room… but then the healer had already seen how effective soul bonds were when it came to healing their patients, especially Adrian. “I’m here,” he whispered in Adrian’s ear when his husband whimpered in pain.

“Let’s turn him onto his side,” the Healer instructed the Mediwitch. Even Draco helped turn Adrian onto his right side so they could see where the bleeding was coming from. He frowned when he realized it was the old scar that had torn open, the one Adrian had received during the final battle.

“I thought that wouldn’t reopen,” he told the Healer with a scowl.

“I also remember telling you that it could tear if he put too much strain on it while pregnant. He was supposed to rest during the last two months of his pregnancy. No climbing or flying around with the children but grounded at home.”

“Well, obviously he hasn’t been listening because I found him in the exercise yard.”

The Healer’s mouth tightened in disapproval but he didn’t say anything more as he set to work trying to stop the bleeding. Once that was under control, they would transfer Adrian to the new pool they had linked to the healing lake.

Draco knew that once they took Adrian out – once the healing was done – the Mediwitch would cast a drying spell so Adrian wouldn’t catch a cold in his current condition. All this was still experimental. They weren’t even sure if the pool would work yet. Adrian would be the first one to test this out, but if it worked, then it would mean quicker responses for dire situations…

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Adrian slowly woke up in the same room he’d been in earlier; the potion the Healer had given him finally wearing off. He frowned as he realized he was on his side, which was a position he’d never liked sleeping in unless Draco was there. With an effort, he managed to open his eyes to find Draco sitting there, waiting for him to wake up. “How are you feeling?” his husband asked softly as he leaned forward, brushing his hair back.

“How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” he mumbled before he cleared his throat. “What happened?”

“Good,” he heard Healer Beckett say from the doorway but he didn’t move from his position to look at the man, knowing he would be coming around the bed anyway. “Now, Adrian. How many times do I have to tell you to not overdo things?”

“I wasn’t,” he protested tiredly, frowning at the Healer.

“I told you when you were pregnant with Scorpius that you were to stop strenuous work during your last two months of pregnancy. Do you remember why?”

Adrian’s frown deepened as he thought about why he was to limit himself and came up blank. “Not really.”

If he hadn’t been so tired from blood loss, he would’ve laughed as the man scowled at him. “The scar tissue where that dagger went into your side is very thin and is liable to tear open when you reach your seventh month of pregnancy. We managed to stop the bleeding and heal the damage done but you have to take it easy. Climbing on the frames is not taking it easy. It puts too much strain on it.

“I forgot about that,” he murmured with a sigh, closing his eyes. “What do I do now?”

“I’m going to have to keep you under observation for the remainder of your pregnancy just to make sure nothing goes wrong again.” The Healer smiled when his eyes popped open in slight panic. “No, it doesn’t mean you have to stay here. I’ve put a spell in place that’ll alert me as soon as something goes wrong. But,” the man said sternly. “You have to take it easy from now on.”

“Alright.”

“Draco, you can take him home. Make sure he rests for the rest of the day.”

“But we were going to go on a picnic,” Adrian protested as Draco helped him to sit up, trying to hide the wince as it pulled at the scar. He didn’t quite manage it.

“Rest!” Healer Beckett stressed with a stern look.

“Don’t worry,” Draco murmured as he helped Adrian down the steps of the infirmary. “We can have a picnic behind the house. That way it won’t be a stressful walk and we can still have our picnic.”

“But I was looking forward to going somewhere private,” Adrian sulked, knowing he was being unreasonable but couldn’t help it. He enjoyed his alone time with Draco…

Draco smiled lovingly at him as he helped him up the stairs to their house. “Winky, is everything ready?”

“Yes, Master Draco,” the house-elf answered promptly.

“Good.”
Adrian looked suspiciously from the little creature to Draco and back again. “What’s going on?”

“You’ll see,” Draco murmured as he led Adrian through the house to the back door and outside to the back yard. Adrian stopped in astonishment as he took in the beautiful sight of the yard. Draco seemed to have turned their back yard into an oasis. There was a small pond with a fountain splashing gently in the center. Around it was a beautiful array of flowers, their colours divers and multiple. It almost looked like his favourite spot at Snape Manor. There was even a tall hedge around their yard that muffled the sounds of village life.

“How?” he breathed in shock.

“I remember you telling me how much you liked Uncle Sev’s garden with the maze and decided to ask Winky to recreate it here for you. I was going to wait until your birthday to show it to you. It’s three days early but that’s alright. Happy birthday, Love,” Draco said as he draped an arm around Adrian, pulling him back to lean against him so he cradled him in his arms.

“It’s beautiful,” he whispered softly, eyes misting happily. With a smile, Draco led him down the path to where a blanket had been spread on the ground. He grit his teeth as he sat down on the ground but the pain didn’t last long and he was soon reclining against Draco’s chest, munching hungrily on a piece of chicken.

As they ate, Draco’s hand would creep down to rub at his belly, watching as it rippled to kick at it. Adrian laughed as it did it for the third time. “I think she’s going to be jealous of the attention you give me,” he told Draco, who chuckled softly. He looked up at his husband, eyes shining. Draco leaned down and kissed him gently.

“She’ll learn to share,” was all he said as he popped a grape into Adrian’s mouth.

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On September twenty first, at exactly eight o’clock in the morning, Adrian went into labour. It didn’t take more than a half hour for Healer Beckett to deliver the seven pounds eight ounce little girl. In fact, the whole village knew the instant she was born, her screams easily heard from one end to the other.

The baker told a customer jokingly that they finally had a screamer in the village.

She calmed down quickly, however, once Adrian had her, her silver eyes glaring up at him accusingly. “I didn’t abandon you, sweetheart,” he told her gently as he ran a tender finger down her cheek, resting against Draco instead of the pillows. “They just had to clean you up first.”

Draco chuckled at him. “Welcome to the family, Emily Sarah Malfoy,” he said as he looked at her over Adrian’s shoulder, with their friends and family gathered around them to greet their newest addition, even Scorpius looked at the little girl in curiosity.

Yes, things had turned out for the better…

~Finite~

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