Fragments of Devotion

by apathy's whore

Summary

Severus shows his son pieces of a life he is too young to remember. As he grows, he twists; spiraling down ever further into the madness of the past, determined to drag the insanity with him into the future.

Notes

A fic for a friend that got wildly out of hand.
Severus Snape (then Riddle, then Snape again) is twenty two. And his greatest shame and greatest joy have intertwined to become one. With few options left to him, he did the only thing he could stand to do and gave them a final resting place: a shallow grave beneath the stone floor of his bedroom, their coffin a worn chest. He knows the entire place has eyes. Not just those of Albus, but of the building itself. So he keeps it hidden in the earth, where the castle cannot sense its presence. He doesn't hide it with magic because magic can be sensed out, found so easily.

All the remnants of his life before are in it. He gently removes the folded robes, gauzy linen dyed black as the deepest ocean waters, black as the end of the world. In his mind it drips with the blood of every life they had so gleefully snuffed out. He takes out the mask, opal smooth and bleach bone white.

"This things were ours, Tommy," his words have no effect on his son who squirms on his lap like any two year old, fist in his mouth and black eyes wide in the dim light. He's not sure why he's showing him these things. Maybe to prove to him that his parents were either great men or a horrible men. Sometimes even Severus himself doesn't know. Tommy's tiny fist wraps around the cloth of the robe, new and fragile fingers clutching at the fabric, trying to decide what it is and if it's worth his time. He does the same with the mask and puts it in his mouth, trying to chew on the edges. Gently Severus unwraps the baby's fist and pulls the mask from him. "No Tommy." He sets his garb to the side, and pulls out the only other treasure the chest has to offer.

It's a photo album with only five pictures in it. He's not sure if Tommy should see these now when he's too young to understand, or see them when he's older and able to grasp the gravity of them. But it seems unfair somehow to never show him at all. So he settles on now, when he doesn't have to worry about Tom's influence, distant as it may be. For now he doesn't have to worry about a love of other's suffering or bitter anger at the loss of his father.

He opens the album then and takes out a photo. This first one is of their wedding, but at a glance it looks more like a funeral. He hadn't been interested in a wedding, but Tom had insisted. Tradition was important to him, and solemn and somber were the sort of things Tom liked. In the middle of the frame they stood next to each other, not kissing, not smiling, not even touching, both clad only in black. All around them in a half circle were Tom's followers, faces hidden by their masks. He didn't think a picture existed where they weren't covered head to toe, their identities carefully obscured. They were proud of their atrocities, yet too afraid to show their real faces. How silly he had been, to ever think them anything but cowards.

The next photo was of himself, heavily pregnant and stretched out in their marriage bed, clad in his dressing gown. He was reading a book with a lit cigarette dangling loosely between his fingers. He could still taste the musty smoke on his tongue sometimes, still itched to hold something to his lips. Tom had made him quit, for Tommy's sake, and Severus found he couldn't begrudge him that. He hadn't taken up the habit again after Tom was gone, though working at a boarding school probably had something to do with it as well.

In the wizarding world certain genetic combinations weren't as uncommon as they were in the muggle world, especially in families with old blood. So, when he was born with a penis that was for urinating and not much else, as well as a completely female reproductive system (the opening for which was located where the testicles would normally would be), it gave his bastard father another reason to hate him and his freak mother. People were supposed to be one or the other. Never both. He was so ashamed of what he had been told was a deformity, so terrified of someone
finding out about what he thought was a disgraceful, vulgar condition. But when he'd murmured to Tom about it, his cheeks red and fingers trembling, lips swollen from hungry kisses, Tom had said it was a blessing. He'd gently wrapped his hands around Severus' face, warm thumbs stroking the ridge of his cheeks. "You must be proud of this. It means the pure blood within you is still strong, and can be made strong again." And for the first time in his life Severus had felt special. He'd felt lucky. He felt something other than hideous, crushing shame.

He tucks the photo back into the album, gently sliding the sharp corners into place, mindful not to let it bend or wrinkle.

The third photograph if of himself holding Tommy right after he was born. It was supposed to be difficult for someone with his condition to conceive; normally requiring the aid of strong and complicated fertility potions. As such, they hadn't thought to use contraceptives. For some reason, his body seemed to take that as a call to action to go above and beyond its duties. Thankfully, it had been a normal pregnancy and a surprisingly easy labor, his Tom there the entire time. It hadn't been considered proper for fathers to watch the birth, but he had stayed with him anyway. For all of his flaws, Tom was a loving man, in his own way.

Tommy makes a fussy gurgle and squirms in his lap, growing impatient as the minutes tick by; his mother's action no longer holding his attention. Severus lets him stand and he watches, partly amused and partly irritated but mostly just tired, as he busies himself pulling books off his shelf. But magic makes it easy to clean that up; a flick of his wrist and every tome will snap back into its proper place. At the moment there are still two photos left for him to gaze at with a guilty longing.

The second to last picture is of all of them. He was holding a squirming, six month old Tommy with a smiling face. Tom had his arm around Severus' waist, and in the tiny moving picture he would lean over to have a closer look at their son. Severus had been surprised at how quickly he abandoned his own misgivings about parenthood. He had patience where it counted, and would gently guide his infant son.

If anything, he was the more stern of the two parents. Tom was much more indulgent in their son's whims. When he was a year old he would set the boy on his lap and read him grimoires and texts of dark arts. "I must teach our boy proper values, my dear," he had said with his sweetest voice. Tom knew he thought their son was much too young for some of it. Surely it was good to get a head start on education (no child of his would be a simpleton), but Tom always seemed to take things just a step too far. "This is the spell that turns someone inside out," he had said, pointing to an illustration of bones and organs flying out of a man's mouth while his skin and hair went sucking in. Tommy's graphite eyes, his mother's own, watched it with a strange intensity. Tom smiled when little Tommy grabbed for the book with his chubby baby fingers.

The last picture he had of them was one he felt he ought to burn, as the argument could be made that it was the most damning. But just couldn't bring himself to do it. He had so few mementos from their brief time together so he clung to every one. They were in the hall Tom used to gather his followers, standing unmasked before them. Severus had enjoyed watching them bow and scrape before him, thin lips turned up into a cruel smile as they tried to garner his favor. For the first time (and perhaps the last) Severus had power, he had respect, he had a true family. And he had savored it like a starving man savored his gruel. Every drop a treasure, no matter how rotten or distasteful. He'd glutted himself sick on it all until he could no longer ignore the poison that had laced it.

Oh but this picture, Tommy held so lovingly at his father's hip, just one year old. Severus ran his thumb over the image of his husband's face, a heady longing thrumming in his fragile veins. Tom had been proudly showing his son, his heir, to his apostles. Severus had been so relieved that
Tommy was a lovely baby, that his own unfortunate ugliness had not touched his son. Tommy would wear his father's handsome face someday, but with his mother's eyes.

Soon, devotion to Tom took a back seat to making sure his son lived. So, for the first time in his life, he did the right thing. Severus sold out the only person who had ever well and truly loved him in exchanged for clemency, that he may safely raise a madman’s son.
Severus hated his mother, but not enough to see her suffer. A quick spell while she slept and she never woke again. It was a mercy killing really.

Then it was time to deal with his father. He’d spent years of his life going over this in his head. What he would say, what he would do, how he would do it. Sometimes he fancied he would strangle him, pressing his thumbs into his windpipe as he watched his eyes go bloodshot and his face go blue, the entire time having to watch his own son kill him. Other times he thought stabbing would be best. How many times could he push the knife in? How many organs could he hit? How much blood could he splatter on the walls, how high would it go? Sometimes he thinks it would be appropriate if he beat him to death. His own arms weren’t nearly strong enough on their own. His father had always been so much bigger, so much stronger. He’d have to get a pipe. It was easy to find the scraps and skeletons of houses here in Spinner’s End. He’d drag it back with him and swing until his father’s skull was mush and his brains poured out his ears. Other times he imagines drowning him in the toilette. The disgusting man deserved a disgusting place to die. He’d pull his head out just before he stopped breathing for good just to listen to him beg for forgiveness, only to push him back under.

When it happens it isn’t nearly as magnificent as he thought it would be. Right after killing his mother in her bed he goes downstairs and sees his father in the kitchen, sees the knife sitting on the counter. He knew how he was going to kill him then. Stabbing it would be. While the man’s back is turned, he rams the large kitchen knife into him. It slid in easily. He must have gotten somewhere between the ribs, punctured a lung. After that he can’t stop. Once the body falls to the floor, he jumps on top of it and continues the assault. His mind is full of adrenaline and years of impotent rage as he plunges the knife in again and again. Sometimes it slides in cleanly, other times it hits solid bone and rebounds, jarring his wrist painfully. When he can finally bring himself to stop, there’s a pool of blood crawling out around them, and his father’s dead body is the life raft he’s stranded on. His everything is streaked with blood and his tears leave a sticky, semi-clean path down his face. His nose is running profusely and his arms are tired and his hand aches from holding the knife so tightly. This isn’t the glorious retribution he had dreamed of for so long. This isn’t poetic or a display of power and superiority. He was just a scared child lashing out at a long time abuser. There isn’t much to do about it now though. His parent’s are dead and he’ll never have to worry about them again. Really, his only regret is that he didn’t savor his father’s demise or draw it out. He would have liked to have watching his face when he died.

It didn’t matter though. He could heal him postmortem, put the bastard next to his mother in bed, make it look like a gas leak. And that’s exactly what he does. The muggle authorities have no inkling of magic and his mother has no relatives that would bother to check on her. He has connections now, other places he can go. Months later, he is surprised to find out that the house is left to him.
Chapter Summary

Whoever gave me the 4th kudos gets a rainbow cupcake and a handjob because you’ve earned everyone a bonus level. Not long but contains chopping up dead people so there’s that. Not sure how to tag that though... Chapter best paired with Oomph!’s Burn Your Eyes.

He remembers Tom’s words, sweet honey laced with a most deadly poison. “Deserve is a human concept, my dear. Just like mercy. We will strike with cold efficiency and take what we want because we know what’s best. They’re sheep with an incompetent shepherd, and like a sickly herd, they must be culled.”

He remembers the bodies. Sometimes they were still slightly warm but very stiff, almost impossible to move. Sometimes they were cold and pliant, waggling heads and bloated necks cracking against the frames of doors, leaving gobs of coagulated blood and sticky hair dried to the wood. Sometimes he had to ask for specific features, for their death to be on certain dates to increase the potency for his ingredient harvesting. Many a dark brew required lymph nodes, the joints from the wrist, the veins from the leg. He enjoys his work, knife sliding through flesh easily, hands pulling out organs and veins, bones and muscle. He was suited for this, it was his calling. It didn’t matter that the thing on the slab once had a life, had a name, maybe even a family and happiness. He was going to change the world. He was going to clean it so that no one would have to suffer like they had, like him and Tom.

Abused by their families, tormented in school, abandoned to an uncaring world. Tom cared, and Tom was going to cleanse this world by fire and by blood. The way it deserved. They tell him these people are unworthy, that they have committed atrocities against their cause, against their people. Who is he to question, to ask for proof? Deep down, he knows that they would have to answer should he inquire, he does out rank them. He supposes he could have asked, if he really cared. But everyone was petty, cruel, and vindictive, so they deserved it. One way or another they deserved it. Unless what Tom said about deserving something was true, in which case it didn’t really matter anyway, did it? His cigarette was burning low. He snubbed it out on the open eye of the body. He didn’t need these eyes, wrong color. He watched as it burned its way through the sclera, eating through the cold and slimy mucous of the conjunctiva, and finally burning itself out on the lens, leaving a scorch mark. Maybe Tom would let him try this on a living one at some point. Maybe it could be James.

“Sometimes, I think you’re made of spiders, my love,” Tom says. “Everything about you reminds me of them. It’s as if someone pulled the legs from a harvestman and affixed them to the lids of your eyes. They’ve taken the legs of a huntsman and sculpted them into your lovely hands. Your hair is like spiders’ webs. Does it catch the morning dew in summer? Your eyes are black like theirs. Black and waiting and hungry. Always watching.” Tom tucks his cobweb hair behind his ear and together they sleep, safe, warm, and in love. He dreams that inside his body, spiders are spinning webs in his veins, that they’re crawling behind his eyes. And they are dreams of utmost
sweetness.
Tonight's central theme is pedophilia. Brought to you by Warren Jeffs. Shout out to Silver Point Despair over at Fanfiction who's input is invaluable and helped this make as much sense as it possibly can without killing my fun. Quirrell's point of view with Voldemort's thoughts in bold.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Packed into the Great Hall for dinner, there are so many lovely children; they're all so sweet, so innocent. And the ones who have never seen magic at all are filthy mudbloods, nothing but vultures circling a swiftly dying body. Drown eviscerate burn poison. No punishment too terrible the sweetest of all. They've been told tales of magic by unbelieving adults, only to then be assured that it can only exist is as fantasy; nonsense designed to simply pass the time and titillate the mind. I can only imagine what it must be like then, for them to live here. To have the honor to reside in a place so magical it should be sacred, and yet here they are, befouling the place. Worms below the flesh, ravaging the heart.

Lately, my thoughts have quite literally not been my own. But it isn't as if I don't know why. It is, after all, by my own doing. I've let the Dark Lord into me, let him reside in my body, feed off of my life force. Obediently sheltered his now frail existence within my own. Because of it, it's a bit hard to process two sets of thoughts at the same time, to send sensory information to two different minds simultaneously. He can see through my eyes see the way you look at them, pervert, and hear through my ears lies! Lies and heresy! Take your fork, gouge out his throat! All of my senses are linked to him now. I am but a tool, a vessel for a reward you can have as many of the rats as you like they hardly count as real children in exchange for countless treasures. Such beautiful and precious things. So tempting, so many, so close look but never touch. You've been given a task pervert. His insults keep me grounded. After all, it is so hard to be around them, to have their small bodies brush against mine in the corridors and not be able to do anything about it. To see the smiles and pouts on their precious little lips and not be able to press a kiss to them has been well and truly torturous. So sweet and fragile and innocent they are, untouched by the cruelty of the adult world, having yet to know the burden of shame and the struggles of everyday life.

Tonight the food presented before us is not the only feast that I desire. I have my favorite dishes, like anyone. Little Samantha Erikson from Hufflepuff, with her bouncing brown curls and shining hazel eyes. I could stare into them for hours, trying to count and name the colors. The youngest Weasley boy is a favorite as well, with his dazzling red hair and open, inviting smile. I wonder if the sweet freckles on his face span the entire length of his body. A prolific nest of blood traitors. You may have them all. Though Percy is getting a bit old for my taste. Take him anyway. His screams would be a beauteous concert. For once my Lord's comment irritates me. I don't wish to hurt them. That's what no one understands! I love them. I want them to feel safe and happy. I want to take them by the hand and guide them. I want them to enjoy my love.

In the back of my head, a gasping laughter echos through my skull, sounding more like a dry choke
than any true expression of mirth. Oh sick abhorrent little man! No one could ever love you! But I am familiar with his cruelty, it's certainly not anything I haven't heard before. His taunts would have gone on, I am sure, if the Headmaster had not asked the Potions Master a question. I didn't hear the query, only the name Severus, and the world around me seems to stop. Inside my head it's like a dicta-quill is broken, writing the name over and over in my consciousness, incessantly scratching it into my mind until it’s all that I can hear.

**Severus Severus Severus Severus Severus Severus Severus Severus** he was my Lolita, so sinfully young it should have disgusted me. Though I could not bring myself to feel it. But it was not his youth that I desired. We share a venom, our connection based on our hurts, the experience of our fathers' blood righteously spilled. Oh, bitter child, they'd already groomed you for me. Washed you filthy in blood and distilled you with their fists, their slights. Handed you to me like a sacrifice. Shall I split you open and read the auspices from your organs? But what a waste that would be. You have talent within your bloodstained hands. Oh ugly Aphrodite, cut another slice of human flesh for me! Or shall we do it together, like a muggle wedding cake? Wipe the blood on each others lips with reverence and devotion as we did on our wedding? You'll never grow too old for me, my Severus Severus Severus.

My eyes don't see the Hall anymore, or all the pretty children. Often, he grabs hold of my mind to relive his memories quite against my will, and I suspect, at least to some extent, his as well.

My vision is filled with black eyes and greasy black hair bent over a bloated corpse, cutting off the fingers with pruning shears. With each sickening snap of bone I'm a little closer to vomiting. Thin, pale lips sip from a silver goblet of wine so thick and dark I fear it might be blood. White, spindly legs open to reveal a wonderful surprise. His face contorted in terrible ecstasy in the dim light as they make love. A newborn baby, red and squalling being placed in his arms for the first time. The flood of memories stops abruptly, fizzling out like a burning picture. **BLASPHEMER!** It's so loud I swear it makes my teeth rattle. The force of rage behind it makes me fear I may have actually screamed it aloud before the entire hall.

As carefully as I can I look around me to see if I had indeed made a scene. But no one is staring. All is normal on the outside. For now we are safe. **How dare he speak his name! Unworthy blasphemer! Punish him punish him punish him! Rip out his tongue bite it out if you must! He dare speak his name!**

It takes everything in my power to keep from attacking the Headmaster, from doing as the lord inside of me commands, my fingers clutching my cutlery almost to the point of bending it and my jaw clenched so tightly I fear my teeth may crack. I have learned by now that my master becomes rather volatile when he hears someone speak the potions master's given name, that to even think it is a grievous mistake. I learned that the hard way. He made me burn my hands over a candle, one small section at a time, the tiny flame slowly eating into my flesh until all the skin was blistered and oozing. **Respect where it is owed you loathsome thing. What is mine shares my rank as tradition with a marriage.** I haven't made such a gaffe again.

The punishment for thinking about his son, however, is slightly more severe. The two teeth I've been forced to pull from my own mouth my can attest to that. Mutilation was a constant reminder to never think about him in an… inappropriate manner. It **was** very hard at first, because he is such a lovely child. I remember the first time we saw him.

It was at the welcome feast but he was already in his second year, so dashing in his green and silver tie. **Of course he's in Slytherin my boy my Tommy. There was never any doubt about it**
with his blood so red and true inside his little veins. He looks like me at that age such a good boy so proud of him. Oh how he would laugh when they were punished! I could feel acutely his yearning to go and embrace his son, to wrap our arms around him tightly, to shower him with pride and praises. To simply hold that beautiful, charming little devil. His glossy hair like polished hematite, almost luminous in the soft flicker of the candles. I was so worried he'd turn out wrong because of the company he is forced to keep. That he would be weak of mind and spirit but my Severus would never let that happen. Look at him smile same as his mother.

There had been a sharp crack and our attention was drawn to a freshly sorted Gryffindor who had tripped, knocking his head against the sharp corner of one of the tables. We looked back at Tommy, his sweet little lips curled in what looked more like a sneer, showing just a hint of gleaming teeth. I'd yet to see the professor smile in person, but I'd seen memories of that smirk before. I had to admit, it was rather familiar on that cherubic little face. Yes his mother's smile and spider eyes and spider hands does he have his spider venom too? I should hope so. Not enough to kill no not yet. Just enough to wound and subdue. He'll have mine when he's grown though. Snake venom kills. My little snake, my little boy. I swore I'd never abandon you and here I am. Do you think he has his voice? His mother's siren voice? And yes, the professor's voice is indeed something to marvel over. It's commanding, demanding your attention with its sonorous rumble like distant thunder, a summer storm bearing swiftly down upon you.

I want to touch him feel his skin he sits so far away it's been so long since I've had hands to feel. Do you remember how I'd run mine through your hair? So fine so smooth so dirty. I didn't mind. It kept the others away. You wore your filth and pain like battle armor, daring any and all to try and lay a hand upon you, divest you of your secrets and your sorrows, and I alone am worthy. Surely if they knew they would also want to touch you. How many hands would I have to cut off? We could live in a palace made of them. You and me and Tommy. His thoughts, our thoughts, are often hard to follow. I think it's because my brain, simple meat that it is, not only has to direct information to two places, but also has to process two sets of thoughts as well as two sets of feelings and two sets of memories. It's also given me stutter for my troubles. I have to work at making sure the words that come out of my mouth are my own. But that's okay. I can manage. A stutter is common enough, and most people feel it is an unfortunate quirk rather than a symptom of something far more sinister.

Severus does not trust you. So cunning, so astute. He'd have our head if he saw you pawing at Tommy the very first day. He mustn't know, too close to the heretic. But I must speak to my son. I am, thankfully, allowed to say the name Tommy; to address the boy without the bevy of titles and honorifics that one of his station would normally require. The master insists he's going to change his son's name to something more appropriate after he has conquered his adversaries crowned himself emperor. It's a terrible name but a perfect name banal and disgusting and horribly muggle but like so many horrible things at one point it was also mine it's a connection how ever faint and faded. I must speak to my son I must know if he is intact.

Life, no matter what pressure you find yourself under, moves forward, and I found myself settling into a comfortable routine. Wake up, bathe can't wash the thoughts from your dirty mind pervert, go to breakfast the Potter boy is there can't wait to ring his neck finish the job his mudblood mother had to complicate then begin class, my master's thoughts a constant running dialog in the back of my head. Some days he would focus on his family, sometimes his plans for a new world, while others he would expound on his hatred for Harry. Shame he had to die. He was a sweet boy, if a little introverted. Ron was much more open, all free smiles and exuberant laughter staring at the filth again really you have no shame.
It was by luck alone that Tommy was in the last class of the day. He sat in the back, radiating frigid disdain for everyone around him, posture loose but eyes just slightly narrowed in distaste, baby pink lips cast into a permanent frown. From what I could tell he was a loner, scowling harshly if addressed by his peers he knows they are beneath him that is good no need to make attachments to those nearing their expiration date. His self enforced isolation made me a little sad. Children were social creatures; they should enjoy each others company in their fleeting time of beautiful innocence.

They also had a tendency to talk, so I needed a legitimate reason to have him alone. It was simple enough to charm a bookshelf to collapse just as class was about to end. Just as they were stuffing their bags back up with paper and quills, the shelves in the back of the room gave way and books tumbled over the old flagstone with a spectacular crash.

"Oh d-dear. It seems w-we have a bit of a mess. Tommy, why don't you s-stay and help me clean it up?" He made the most abysmal face I'd ever seen on a child, impassive mask cracking to reveal raw anger; his mouth twisting violently into a frown and his button nose wrinkling in distaste, placid brows scrunching down near his eyes as they sharpened in disgust. For a moment I was sure he'd hex me. But soon his expression settled back to his complacent mask once again he learned that from his mother hiding emotion at a moments notice he'll get better at it as he ages. "If you wish, Professor." His tone was calm and dispassionate, lilting soft and smooth into the air around us, every syllable said clearly and perfectly yes he'll have his voice as well. It seemed that, to Tommy, my entire existence was nothing more than a mild irritation, himself being the one with the misfortune of dealing with it. He sat stone still in his seat, black eyes following the movement of the other children like a predator carefully selecting its prey as, unaware of the danger, they chattered and laughed, young bodies a flurry of movement; small familiar touches to friends, the occasional playful shove. Their high, loud voices laughing and tittering in empty youthful joy as they fluttered in loose synchronicity out from the classroom, rather like a flock of starlings on their way to greener pastures.

Once they had all filed out and were safe distance away Tommy stood abruptly and stormed up to me with movement that so resembled Snape it rather caught me off guard; his back straight and shoulders squared, his stride long and even. "What do you really want, Professor? The other students might be taken in by cheap tricks, but I am not," he said sternly. Gone was the feigned apathy and bored acquiescence, replaced by boiling rage and sharp tongued suspicion. In my experience, children tend to be shy when alone with authority figures that they aren't familiar with. Yet here he was, calling my bluff marvelous marvelous he sees through lies he'll know the truth ask him ask him if he knows.

Struggling to find my voice, I finally managed to stammer out, "Tommy, do you k-know your f-father?" Immediately his expression darkened from severely annoyed to absolutely murderous, his eyes narrowing and his jaw clenching tightly.

"I know it's not you, if that's what you're i-i-implying," he taunted viciously. I curled in on myself and took a step backwards as I was distinctly aware that he was gripping his wand in his left hand, his already pale knuckles gone white with how tightly he was clutching it. Is he left handed must be how interesting. For a moment I was terrified of him; this boy no more than twelve looked completely ready to kill me, entirely sure that there would be no consequence to his actions. A warm pride that was not my own glowed in me and suddenly, before I could control it, the master's words were flying from my mouth. "No no, you misunderstand, Tommy. His identity, do you know his identity?" There was a desperation seeping through the sentence that I'm sure the boy picked up on, astute as he is. The master longed for his son to recognize him as his father, to let his son know that he was dearly loved. It's a beautiful thing really, the love between child and parent.
“What’s it to you?” he replied, eyeing us suspiciously. All of us knew we couldn't just come out and say it; you never knew who could be listening. The three of us stood for a moment, deciding on how best to dance around the subject while still making the point clear.

“You're n-named after him. His o-originial name. D-do you know his other name?” I managed to force out despite the intensity of the raw hate he was still directing at me.

His eyes glittered with pure rage, wand drawn and pointing right at me. "Do you know his other name? If so, what are you going to do about it? I highly doubt my mother or the Headmaster would take kindly to you harassing a student, you know. You might find yourself… t-t-t-terminated for such indecent conduct," he spat viciously.

“No! N-no, I'm a-a friend! To y-your father! You c-could say we're close." I said, doing my best to placate him. His wand lowered just a scant few inches and his defensive posture eased a bit. Show him. "I can prove it to you! I c-can! But it won't be pretty."

"Fine," he spat, "show me here, right now." I could feel his pride in Tommy’s caution good good yes he knows he knows who I am it was not hidden from him Severus.

I stood in front of the door, thinking he would perhaps bolt the second our secret was revealed. I faced the wall with my back turned to him never turn your back to someone armed he doesn't trust you he might kill you and removed my turban. I expected a scream, a gasp at least, perhaps a clatter as he dropped his wand. There was dead silence. My vision shifted to the other face as I surrendered complete control, and I could see Tommy grinning openly and honestly. For a shining moment I could see that sweet purity he seemed to lack.

"That's enough, servant," the thing puppeting me rasped, “it's easier for me to speak through your mouth.” His voice was scales on sandpaper, the last gasp of a dying torture victim. The few occasions I had had the misfortune of hearing it sent chills down my spine. Obeying his orders, I fixed my turban and turned to face the boy. He was still grinning, happiness radiating from him like sunshine in summer.

"I knew you'd be back," he said softly and reverently. "I knew you wouldn't just leave us here to rot. I could feel it in my very blood." His joy was beautiful and honest. His mouth was smiling so wide I could count his quartz glimmer teeth. Mid afternoon sunlight was pouring in through the windows and his hair shimmered and his eyes glistened and this boy is an angel you'll be losing another tooth tonight, pervert but that's okay because so few have ever seen such a thing of beauty. He was striding towards us then, confident and smooth. I fell to my knees in reverence and worship and this angel embraced me. I knew it was his father that his arms wrapped around but I reveled in his warmth, his suppleness. I buried my face in his feather soft hair and inhaled. He smelled of fresh soap and clean rain, with just the barest hint of formaldehyde spending time with his mother. Yes, this boy is worth any punishment, worth any mutilation I would be forced to perform on myself to feel him warm and alive in my arms. He pulled back slightly, so we could see his face. He trained his black eyes on mine and through his smile says, "please, Father! Please let me help you kill them! They took you from me! It is my right!" I could feel the passion in his words, the conviction. If I have a soul left, at that beautiful moment it was weeping. His lovely face contorted into rage again and I could feel my heart breaking. Such a beautiful boy should never have those thoughts. No child should. How could such perfection be tainted by thoughts of violence? And my master was laughing through my mouth, stroking our thumb over the ridge his cheek and tucking black hair behind the delicate curve of his sweet little ear. It was torture to have to touch such wonderful flesh without feeling more.
"In good time, my son, in good time. You shall have all the blood you could ever want under my reign. But patience is a virtue," he replied with a chuckle.

Tommy clutched my shoulders, pale fingers grasping desperately onto us, expression one of desperation. "I've waited ten years! Please, let me do it, please let me kill Potter!" he cried, eyes wide and voice pleading. I'd never before seen such longing and loathing mixed together in one human, and I pray I never will again.

"No!" The answer was abrupt and left no room for argument. "I must be the one to do it!"

"I can kill him right now! No one will expect it! It will be so easy! Please, you have no idea how I've dreamed of killing him!" he begged us frantically.

The master sighed through my mouth, the warm breath ghosting over Tommy's face and gently ruffling his hair, exasperated but also affectionate. He placed my hands on his warm, narrow shoulders, gripping them gently in a gesture he hoped would soothe him. "I am glad you are so devoted. I was worried that the heretic would have warped you, would weaken your mind with his endless psalms of so called righteousness and empty piety."

"His sentiment sickens me," he spat in disgust, knowing his father referred to the headmaster.

"As well it should," he said, looking the boy right in the eye. "But it isn't that simple. It must be me that kills Potter. There is a prophesy. Besides, I have a use for the boy yet. He is needed for my full resurrection."

Tommy looked absolutely defeated, deflating slightly in our gentle grip. "I hate him. I hate all of them. I hate all of them so much it's practically the only thing I can think about." It was a confession that slipped through his lips. A deep secret that he had swallowed and been forced to hide from everyone. I know how deeply such secrets can wound you, leave you bleeding and desperate for someone you could grab onto, someone to save you. He looked to his father for that outlet, for that salvation; a second vessel to hold the overflowing rage bubbling within him.

"Oh my poor little Tommy. They're not even worthy of your hate." Our fingers smoothed down his shoulders to grasped his lovely, delicate hands. "You get that from your mother you know. So much hatred wrapped up inside one body can be a powerful thing. You will learn to harness it, to use it as your greatest weapon. Hate can accomplish amazing things." I wish he wouldn't tell such things. I wish he would tell him to be sweet and pure forever, but I had my doubts that Tommy had ever possessed such traits. "You will accomplish amazing things, my son," he finished, giving the boy's hands a reassuring squeeze.

"I'm sick to death of waiting, of nodding along and pretending to agree with every stupid platitude I'm told. I want to be done mixing with the rats they allow here. I'm ready to ascend! I'm want to wrap my hands around all their useless throats and squeeze the life out of them one by one," he spat, pretty face twisting in revulsion. As I watched this angel through eyes that were once my own, it came to me that truly this was the greatest tragedy of our age. Tommy was so young, so beautiful, and yet he was so angry, so twisted. Was there anything that could be done to save this poor boy, save him from this fury that seemed to eat him so?

The master used my unworthy hands to cup his perfect face. "These things shall come to pass, my son. But you must wait."

The pair settled on the tables then, forgoing the chairs in lieu of the tables themselves. They sat side by side, father and son. Together they looked out the windows, eyes and minds trained on the distant horizon.
"How long will it be before you kill Potter?" his tone was light and conversational, almost indifferent as he inquired about the death of another boy. It was as if he was asking after the time.

"It should be by the end of the school term. Though I suppose it depends on how intelligent he is." He draped our arm around the boy's shoulders then, the gesture loving and familiar.

"If his potions work is any indication of his intelligence then you'll probably have to wait longer than that. Mother is always complaining about him." Tommy moved closer, resting his head against us.

"How is your dear mother anyway?" he cooed, voice wistful.

"He is fine, thought I suspect that he is lonely without you. When he doesn't know I'm watching he looks at the pictures."

"Yes, I believe Regulus took most of them. I should have known he'd be useless with how sentimental he was. Unfortunate really, that the Black name should have to die."

"I can't say I know much about that. Mother tells me very little. I think he worries someone would hear or that I might be too brazen with the knowledge," he said, disappointment evident in his voice.

"You must understand, Tommy. He only wishes to keep you safe. With the heretic and his weapons so close he cannot risk any leak of information about your true lineage. Your mother had an abysmal childhood because of his own bloodline. Both of us did." Our hand idly caressed Tommy’s shoulder in a comforting gesture, the tips of our fingers rubbing small circles in the soft fabric of his robe. "It's the mark of a good mother to try and keep their child safe from anything that might harm them. Though he did become squeamish about the oddest things. I believe it's because he thinks you fragile, but that's only because he loves you so. Do try not to be cross with him, and allow him to protect you as he sees fit. For my sake, if nothing more," he said, smiling softly. "He would always throw such a fit when I would bring you with me to meetings." Our lips are turned up in a smile and for a brief moment I was treated to the sight of a baby with wispy black hair and a wide, toothless grin. There were screams in the background but his vision was only focused on his laughing son. "You loved it though. You were such a happy child. It pains me to see you so miserable."

Tommy buried his face into the fabric of our robe, perfect little nose inhaling our scent. "I don't have to be miserable now though. You're here and soon we can punish them all together," he said happily. A moment passes, a perfect peace held comfortably between them, broken when Tommy asked thoughtfully, "what's it like, to kill someone?" Still nestled tenderly in the crook of my arm, he peeked up at me, dark eyes half lidded in serene contentment, framed beautifully by heavy lashes Severus’ spider eyes. "I know you and Mother both have done it before." If he had been any other child, it would have been a memory that I cherished forever. But despite his beauty, this youth is a monster. He takes no joy in simplicity like other children. There is no innocence, no wonder in him to be had. The only thing he cares about is violence, his only joy is death. Regardless of how ethereal his looks, how well spoken, how graceful he is, I can never again find this child appealing.

"It's wonderful," we breathe almost reverently, "it's like everything wrong that's happened to you doesn't matter. Like you're the only thing in existence that's important and you have all the power in the world. Everything slows down and for a shining moment everything makes sense."

"I want to feel like that." Tommy said.
"You will. Soon, I should think. That is, if everything goes according to plan."

"Perhaps you should kill someone now, help your focus." There was a sly, teasing grin on his face and in his tone. I felt my master’s pride swell up again.

He laughed, strong and honest. "I could not be more pleased with you, Tommy. You're exactly as I had hoped you would be."
Chapter End Notes

It wouldn't let me put the cat in the notes but I needed it.
The boy came highly recommended despite his rather dubious parentage. A disgraced mother and an abusive muggle father hardly make for a pedigree, but Tom knew that sometimes there was something to be had for halfbloods. As long as they had their wits about them, which this lad seemed to. When he was at initiation, he had seen his ambition, had rooted around in his head to look at his past. He had smiled indulgently when he found the memory of the boy stabbing his father to death. It seemed they had rather a lot in common.

He wasn’t much to look at, that was certainly true. With his baggy clothes, poor hygiene, and generally unpleasant visage, he could indeed turn heads, but certainly not in a good way. But for some reason, he felt drawn to the poor thing. It was probably due to the similarity of their childhoods, decades apart as they were. But regardless of any such predilection, he needed to make sure the boy was competent in his duties.

They didn’t require many potions, but the ones that they did need tended to be complicated. As such, he was rather dubious of letting one so young and inexperienced be solely responsible for their creation. That was how he found himself sitting in on Severus’ work. They’d given the boy the lab he’d needed, outfitted with tables, cupboards, cauldrons of all sizes and materials, and an array of glistening surgical instruments. “Wands and spells are all well and good, but some things are best done by hand,” the boy had said.

When Tom entered the room, Severus looked up from his work with a startled expression, eyes wide and black like the pit of a freshly dug grave. Upon seeing who it was, the boy bowed his head in respect, a quick, “my Lord,” falling from his nearly colorless lips. Tom merely gestured for him to continue and conjured a chair to observe from. Quietly he watched as the boy worked, hardly ruffled at all to have his lord watching critically.

After a good many minutes, perhaps an hour, he could admit to himself If there was an art to dissection, to the way flesh yields to the cold steel of a scalpel, then Severus was a master of the craft. Students young and old should flock to him in wonder to observe how he worked, cold and smooth but with barely hidden passion. He then knew with certainty that he mustn’t worry about the boy’s abilities. Any potion needed was in Severus’ deft hands.

Tom watched as he expertly slit open the calf of a dead man, thick and stagnant blood oozing up like eons old tar through the cracks of the Earth’s surface. He watched as the flesh was stripped away by elegant hands with spider quick fingers. When there was nothing left but bone, a quick, wordless tap of the wand at the knee and then the ankle fully separated the joints from their sockets with a sickening crack. Another wand tap and a muttered “pulverio,” had the whole thing, marrow and all, turned to a slightly blood damp dust. He watched as Severus bottled half of it, screwed the lid on the jar to seal it tight. The blank label now read tibia/fibula (human) whole, in spiky cursive, the letters drawn just a bit too tall, slanted to the right just a bit too much. The other half he added, bit by bit, to a gently boiling cauldron. It must have been the final ingredient because after he thoroughly integrated it by way of stirring, he ladled it out into another jar. The contents were a clear, pastel pink. It was a surprisingly sweet color for containing human bones. Reminiscent of valentines and bubble gum, of innocent feminine youth. Tom smiled to himself. It would not do to be taken in its innocuous color. He was sure it was far more diabolical than its appearance let on.
“Tell me, what purpose does this creation serve?” he asked conversationally. Severus gave a start and quickly turned his neck to face his master, having forgotten he was in the room. Tom found it amusing.

“Should even a few drops be ingested, the imbiber’s face will melt off,” he responded dispassionately. “Though I must admit, I did not anticipate the color,” his tone annoyed as he observed the freshly bottled concoction with critical eyes. Tom felt his lips gently curve upwards and decided he had smiled more today than he had in a very long time. He found he’d even let Severus’ impudence slide. For now.

“Surely the recipe made note of what color it should be?”

“It’s something of my own creation,” Severus said, puffing faintly with pride.

“Impressive. If it works.” There was an edge of disbelief to his voice, an unspoken dare for Severus’ to prove his claim. It would indeed be impressive, if a bit ostentatious. But that had never stopped him before. It was fun to send a clear message. To let the opposition know to watch their backs because you were always out there, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. After all, what was the point of leaving the mark above the burned houses of their opponents if not to clearly demonstrate the fate of those who stood against them?

The boy gave a knowing smile at his challenge and walked to one of the many cabinets that lined the room. From them he removed a small cage containing a single white rabbit, red eyed and lethargic, a great waddle of flesh hanging from its neck. He watched as Severus tucked the ugly creature into the crook of his arm and squeezed its mouth open as it struggled against him. A few drops of liquid and almost instantly the thing let out an ungodly, almost porcine shriek as fur and blood and flesh dripped onto his hand then to the floor. Finally, in a misplaced show of mercy, he snapped its neck. Tom watched the young man in front of him, hands dripping with carrion and still holding the carcass with a decidedly smug look on his face. He couldn’t help from smiling himself. Yes, this young man was not without his merits.

“Well done, Severus,” he said, giving him a glib round of applause.

“Thank you,” he replied, still looking as smug as can be. Tom playfully raised an eyebrow. Severus quickly added a, “my lord,” to the end of his statement. Tom had a feeling that this young halfblood would go far in his ranks.

Weeks later, he found himself dropping in on him, making requests for complicated potions he had no use for just to watch him work.

Chapter End Notes

Aww, they're so romantic! Fun personal fact: I kept getting pet rabbits as a kid and we accidentally killed all of them. My dreams are haunted by the memories of all the pets I neglected as a child. Literally. I have nightmares about it all the time.
When he comes to me, he looks very much the same as he always did. Like someone has taken a human and stretched and stretched until it's a warped and twisted caricature. Too tall, too thin, hair lank and teeth yellow. His eyes are sunken, his cheeks long and hollow. Large nose beaky and crooked. He paces back and forth, twitching, muttering, shouting. He's more nervous than I've ever seen him and Severus was always a boy to walk on pins and needles. I'd ask if this could wait until morning, but he's not alone. He's brought with him a child that he now clutches to him so tightly I fear he may break the poor thing's bones. I know that, biologically speaking, he is the child's mother. Gender was magically recorded next to a student's name in the roster. Normally it was either an M or an F. While there was an M next to his name, there was also a special annotation that briefly explained his anatomy. He was certainly not the first intersex person to be enrolled here, and he was certainly not the last. If he decided to live a man it was hardly an issue; far be it from me to dictate anyone's gender identity.

Severus' pressured speech calms down and he halts like a startled animal, looking at me with sunken eyes rimmed violet with insomnia. I doubt it's the child that keeps him up at night. I know whose side he's joined, whose mark he carries. I just don't know how much blood is on his hands. The baby fusses softly and I watch as, with more gentleness than I would have thought him capable of, he wraps the baby's hand inside his own; holds it like the fragile treasure that it is. But the hour grows late, and I know Severus isn't one to mince words.

"What brings you back here, my boy?" He has never been my boy, and he never really will be. Though I have a feeling as to why he's here.

"You need to protect him!" Severus says without a second's hesitation.

"Who?" I play the fool; as if it wasn't obvious.

"Don't feign ignorance. It doesn't suit you." Finally, there's his famous sneer. I find I'm oddly glad to see it. Then the baby makes a sharp sound, and before he can think better of it, he coos softly to him, "hush, Tommy." I knew at that moment he had never meant to tell me who had sired his child, and part of me wished I didn't know. But what's done is done. Really, Riddle should have known better, but it makes sense. Severus is a shade of Tom, and Tom always was a narcissist. To think that such fractured people managed to bring a life into this world, so untouched by their wrongs. He clutches the baby to him now, even tighter than before. He's well aware of the slip. Now he fears that I'll hurt his child, knowing who the father is. I would never harm a child, but part of me is afraid of this one. They say an apple never falls far from the tree and, in all my years of watching children grow, I've found that in most cases it's true. This child is from two remorseless killers, two brilliant men, two masters of dark arts. There is nothing more dangerous than a sharp intellect combined with the lust for power. I have to remind myself that the child is without sin. Despite his parents, none have suffered at his hands.

Severus is still looking at me with naked terror. He can see that I am reluctant to help. Perhaps it would be easier if Tom didn't know there was a child. Lord knows what sort of rituals one could perform with the blood of one's own offspring. If he knows, he might stop at nothing to have him. "Is he aware of the boy?" I ask. Severus looks relieved simply that I have spoken.

"Know?" His expression goes from relief to smug and there is that defiant edge to his voice that he
has so far been lacking. He's never had any respect for authority other than his own and I wonder if Tom likes that about him. "He married me," Severus brags. I am openly shocked. Tom had always been a solitary predator. He never showed interest in any type of romantic relationship, let alone begetting a child. "We married before he was even conceived. He loves me." The words are dripping with spite. Not towards his husband, but towards me. As if he needs to prove that he can indeed be loved. I do not tell him that madmen cannot love, that there is probably an ulterior motive behind Tom's actions. In that moment I see how unkind a place the world has been to Severus Snape. Or is it Riddle now?

"Does he know you're here?" This is a situation unlike any I've ever been in before, and for once I am unsure of the proper course of action.

"He does. But he doesn't know exactly what I'm doing. It took me months, but I've convinced him that he needs a spy here and that I am the only one who can do it. He's not happy about it though. He doesn't like the idea of Tommy and I being in such a dangerous position, of me coming back and forth here to feed you lies. But I told him if he wishes to have the world his way, we must all make sacrifices. Did not Queen Maria Theresa take her infant prince to Hungary to call for help in her war? This isn't too terribly different." He shifts the child in his arms. Slowly he is gaining some measure of confidence.

"What does he think you're doing?" I ask carefully.

"I'm to tell you that I've been raped by an unknown Death Eater and it's caused me to lose my faith. I conceived a child that I couldn't bear to abort and now I need you to help us. Help me repent and do the right thing."

It would have worked if I had not known who the boy's father was. If I hadn't known how far gone Severus must be to have married Tom Riddle. I dare not think about what he must have done to gain such favor in the ranks of the jaded, the sadistic, and depraved. Now the idea of Severus here for penance sounds ridiculous. He is not here to repent. I doubt he feels any guilt for his transgressions. But, supposedly, he's willing to throw everything he has away. I find it hard to believe. "Why should I help you?"

That had not been what he expected to hear. His expression is one of affront, but then he laughs. There are many kinds of laughter, and this is one of derision. It's a harsh, bitter cough. A parody of mirth. It is a tragedy that one so young has that much anger inside of him, that much hatred. "I should have known," he starts. "You never cared to help me before, so why should you help me now? What did you think was going to happen?" His speech is a near manic, growing in speed and volume as he spits his venom at me. "I had nowhere to go, I had no family! You'd made it abundantly clear that my life was worth fuck all to you! They were the only prospect that I had! I had no name to speak of, no money, no friends! I was worthless! But they said they could make something of me! That I could right all of the injustices done to me!" They promised him power. What do lonely, abused little boys crave more than power? His volume stabilizes into a full yell, his accusations as cutting as a knife. "You might as well have handed me over to him personally! Tommy might as well be your son for the hand you've had in his creation!" He is correct. The wide eyed child clutching at his mother might as well be my own. I've failed another student, and he's not afraid to use it against me. He might not be here to fix his mistakes, but maybe I can fix one of my own. I should know better than anyone that there is such a thing as redemption. But I have to be sure.

"Why do you need me to protect your son?"

"Because he'll ruin him!" he screams back at me. Then his volume drops, as does his mood. "I…
Some of the things he does, let's them do, I see now how senseless and cruel they are. He might have believed in a cause once, but now his only wish is power. I cannot let that happen to my son." I nod understandingly. Perhaps he does have regret; maybe there is redemption for this poor young man after all.

"A mother's love has been known to move mountains."

"I'm not trying to move mountains. I'm just trying to save my son."

"Saving someone from Tom Riddle might as well be the same thing." He gives a rueful smile. "You love him," I am not referring to the child; it is clear that he is loved. I'm referring to the child's father, the Severus' husband. To the murderer, the monster, and the false prophet Tom Riddle. He still loves the man he is fleeing from. This is not easy for him to do.

"I love Tommy more."

In response to his name, the child looks right at me, "Crusho." Despite the mispronunciation, it is obvious what he is trying to say.

"Do you see what he's teaching him!? Tom was proud!" Severus looks as if he's about to sob as he holds the child in front of him. "No Tommy! You mustn't say that! You mustn't ever say that! That is a very bad word!"

I stand from my seat behind the desk and put my hand on Severus' shoulder. "He'll forget that word. In time."

Chapter End Notes

Unreliable narrators ahoy! Love it. Albus is a good dude who had to make a lot of difficult choices to save as many people as possible, with very little at his disposal. I'd vape with him.

Also can we stop trying to make Snape pretty? It's boring. Let people be ugly in peace good god!

Finally, I no longer have any fucking clue if the Maria Theresa thing is true. I swear I've read that in multiple places before but now I can only find notes about it here.

Blood Red Flag

Chapter Notes

Heeeeey everybody! It’s me again! I’m back! Sorry for the two year silence on this but that's how I roll. I figure if Katherine Dunn can take like 10 years to write Geek Love I can take 2 to write this bullshit. I also feel like that sort of thing isn't that weird in fanfiction?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Severus knew Tommy killed every animal he could get his hands on and around, ever since he was at least seven. Thankfully he only did it when they were out of the school for the year. God knows he didn’t want him trying to strangle something that could actually hurt him.

He first stumbled upon the behavior one afternoon when he needed to go to the garden shed back at Spinner’s End. He had been drying some belladonna there because he hadn’t wanted his son to get into it. Tommy was an energetic and curious boy; as such he had a tendency to get into everything, especially if he was warned that it was dangerous. Severus always tried to write the behavior off as a child’s natural fascination with anything that wasn’t allowed. But thankfully he was young still and precautions didn’t have to be overly complicated. He only kept the shed locked with a normal padlock; he didn’t see much reason to use heavy magic to keep it shut. So naturally it came as a surprise to find five mutilated squirrels deliberately piled in the corner. At least there were five tails, which was really the only obvious thing to identify them as squirrels. There could be bits and pieces of other animals in there as well for all he knew. For all that he cared to know, really. He didn't for a second question where they could have come from. He could feel it, like a worm in the back of his mind, wriggling and gnawing at his conscience. Tommy did this. Tommy got in the shed somehow and all this stinking, rotting mess was left by him like some macabre arts and crafts project. He felt the bile rise in his throat. That strange, bitter tang resting on the back of his pallet. God damn it, god damn it why?

Furiously he stormed back into the house to confront his son. He found him in the kitchen (where I killed my own father, he thought) sitting at the table flipping through a picture book innocently enough. Sunshine poured through the window, highlighting not only Tommy but the dust particles floating through the air. In that second, even to his own eyes, his son seemed so strange, so foreign an object in his house. In so surreal a moment he just stood there, wondering. Who is this boy in my house? Is it his skin that makes up the dust therein? Maybe he was always here, this warped specter, this strange parody of a happy childhood. Etched into the liminal space of my home in stark black and white. Will this creature, this thing from my own womb, haunt me endlessly?

“Tommy!” he yelled. His son's face tilted towards him, his eyes fixed on Severus, pupils readjusting to the distance, the change of light. That strange state was broken then, reality set cruelly back in. “What the hell is that pile in the back of the shed?” He didn’t need to yell to show how angry he was, but he needed to be angry to hide how afraid he was. To his knowledge Tommy had never seen anything die, didn’t have a reason to want something dead, should have no reason to even think about killing anything. He recalled Tom saying something about an early hobby of his that consisted of catching and killing as many rats as he could in the orphanage, keeping track of how many he could get in a day and how creative he could make their deaths. At the time it made him smile, but looking at his own child unknowingly copying his father scared
him. He could practically hear Tom telling him it was all in good fun, boys will be boys, let him play as he likes. He would have been so proud that his son had the same idea as him.

“I was just doing what you do. You cut things up in the shed too, Mum.” Tommy had the gall to look innocent, completely unfazed by his outburst, staring almost blankly up at him. It was eerie to have someone look at you with your own eyes, like a part of you was had somehow slipped away and was acting of its own volition, like he couldn't control his own body and it was now roaming free and mindless, leaving destruction in its path. Tamping down the odd sensation creeping up his spine, Severus did his best to focus on the situation at hand.

“Yes, but I cut things up for a reason, Tommy!” He yelled desperately at his son. Please god say he would understand and stop, he thought. Please god say that this was just a fluke, an accidental slip of genetics, one that they could shove down. They could just pretend it never happened. “What I’m doing and what you’re doing are very different things! I’m building stores for the semester! And it’s just plants! Why did you kill the squirrels? How did you even get in there?”

“Plants aren’t challenging; they're just there. It’s harder to catch animals so it’s more fun,” he explained with a child’s simplicity. “And I only had to hold the lock and want it to open as hard as I could. And it opened.” He supposed he should be proud that his son was displaying such an aptitude for magic at such an early age, but damn it if the boy didn’t know exactly the wrong way to use it.

Severus buried his face in his hands, scrubbed at his eyes. Okay. Okay. He was just bored... They could deal with that. He could teach him something. Take him to collect supplies, teach him basic techniques in…something. Yes, he nodded his head, that was something he could deal with. Tommy was standing before him then, head coming just to his knee. He would be tall when he was grown. He crouched in front of his son, placing his hands on those tiny, fragile shoulders. His own hands, long and thin and spider legged, covered them without hindrance. Sometimes Severus felt so young, but here was youth pristine, personified, staring at him with its round, expectant face. “You can’t do anything like that ever again. I forbid it,” he gently chastised. “It was wrong and it was bad. Do you understand me?”

“I understand, Mum. I won’t do it again.” That tiny face smiled up at him, serene and happy as can be.

Severus removed his hands from his child and nodded to himself again. Yes, everything was going to be okay (for now) he decided, tucking a lock of his own hair behind his ear, feeling relief seep into the cracks of his nervousness, smoothing them over, hiding them from view. Everything was going to be okay.

In retrospect, he should have had him promise.

It was 8 A.M. and Severus woke to the sound of high, shrill animal shrieks and a steady thud, thud, thud. With his child in the house naturally his first instinct was fight. All he could think of was that his son was in danger from something. It didn’t matter what because whatever it was it was would be dead. Plain and simple. He grabbed his wand in his tightest grip and burst through his bedroom door, flying down the stairs, chasing after the source of the sound. Through the parlor and into the kitchen, heart racing, eyes wild, and wand outstretched and ready.

There wasn’t any need. His fingers lost their grip, his wand fell to the ground like a useless stick with a hollow click clack.

There was his son, the person he had been so desperate to protect, perfectly safe, perfectly content. However the same could not be said about the live rat he was nailing to the wall. Tommy had one
hand stretched out over the poor thing to hold its writhing in place, his other holding the hammer at the ready for another swing. The nail in the rat’s chest was bent and crooked, its stem bent at odd angles from his yet unskilled hands hitting it at the wrong angle. Blood ran down the wall in a great streak, pooling on the cheap tile floor.

The rat was still alive somehow. Tommy must have missed anything immediately fatal when he impaled it. Severus had to wonder if his son had done that on purpose to prolong the suffering, to wring as much twisted enjoyment out of it as possible. The idea that he was developing a taste for sadism so young made a knot form in the back of his throat, made his fingers curl into nervous fists. He had known more than his fair share of sadists in his time, understood the ruthless brutality with which they operated. Knew that they were never satisfied with the amount of suffering they caused to others. How was he supposed to stop his son from becoming that? Was there any way to stop it?

Pushing down the nausea, fear, and panic Severus strode forward and pulled his son away from his ghastly task. He forcibly turned the boy to face him, noting the flecks of dark blood speckling his otherwise clean, pale face. A sick parody of freckles. “What in the name of god do you think you’re doing!” he raved hysterically.

Tommy regarded him as calmly and innocently as he ever did, still casually holding the grisly hammer in his left hand. “I wanted to see how long it would take to die,” he said with a shrug.

God damn it, god damn it how could this be happening? Why was this happening again? “Tommy, you said you wouldn’t do anything like this again! I forbid you from ever doing this again!”

“I know. I went to get rid of all the traps because I said I’d stop! But there was the rat in one and it seemed like a waste not to. This is the last one, I swear! I absolutely swear!” he cried up at him, eyes wide and watering.

Fuck. Shit fuck. Severus pulled at his own hair, lightly pressed his thumbs into his eyes, shook his head and tried not to hyperventilate. How long had been trapping animals? How had he not noticed? God damn it, god fucking damn it! One instance could be a mistake, an outlying incident. Twice was the beginning of a pattern. If he didn’t do something now, it was going to spiral out of control. He had to show that there were consequences to behavior like this. But how in the hell was he supposed to impart the dire ramification of torture to a seven year old? He absolutely refused to use corporal punishment. He knew from experience that violence only begat violence, knew that after the blood dried and the bruises faded the resentment continued to infect, ate its way right into the bone and took hold like a cancer, burning away inside of you. Severus would give his son no further want to spill blood. He needed to do everything he could to stop the cycle of violence that had, in a way, created Tommy.

He knelt in front of Tommy and gently pried the hammer out of his hand. He could feel the warm, sticky blood half dried on the handle. “This. Cannot. Keep. Happening.” He said with as much emphasis as possible. “You are grounded. For the next two weeks you may only leave the house to accompany me. And you have to do whatever I say or chore I assign. Otherwise you’ll be stuck in here longer. Do you understand this time? Really truly understand?” He stared his son right in the eye, watching every minute twitch and flutter, hopping for some sign of that this time he really understood.

Tommy broke eye contact and nodded his head in dejection. Severus was proud of him for not arguing back, for not challenging his authority. Surely that meant he was getting through to him, that he understood what he was doing was wrong. This was just an odd phase, a passing nightmare
that had to be weathered. They would be okay.

The next two weeks past quietly. In addition to his usual lessons, Severus tried to cultivate in his son an interest in botany. Despite Tommy’s previous claim that plants were boring, he hoped that the search for specific kinds would interest him. True, you didn’t have to hunt them down or outwit them, but there was satisfaction to be had in finding the correct one at least. He would take him into the wood, point out useful but innocuous specimens and how best to harvest them, how to preserve them. He showed him the basic spells needed to process them (he avoided anything that involved any knives or cutting, no need to tempt the child). When they were home he would make him scrub floors and windows. Some days he would clean dishes and make beds. He did so without argument or complaint, merely a silent acquiescence.

After the fourteen days clicked by without incident, Severus felt that his son had once again earned his freedom. There was, however, the added stipulation that he not wander too far from home. He had also put a tracking spell on him to alert him if the boy were to wander too far from his set range. He felt a little bad for penning him in, but it was for the best.

That afternoon found Severus in the parlor, reading an academic journal on recent potions research when the pounding on the front door began. It was erratic and insistent, hammering away on the cheap wood. A cold ball of dread sunk in his stomach then spread out from there, seeping into his blood, traveling up his spine and radiating into the roots of teeth, the tips of his toes. And he knew. He had no doubt about the reason for the pounding at the door. He took a deep breath and steeled himself for whatever terrible action he was going to face.

On the other side of the door stood an old woman, the skin of her face sagging, almost melted looking, as if it was trying to escape the sinew of her weak old bones. Her iron gray hair permed into tight curls against her scalp.

“Is this boy yours?” she asked. In her left hand she held Tommy’s tiny, fragile child wrist, wrinkled fingers completely enclosing the delicate joints. Severus had to wonder what Tom would have done to someone who touched their son without express permission. He imagined the woman’s blood and organs painting the doorway, hair and intestines all slung about like crepe paper at a cheap party.

“What’s he done?” he asked in reply, leaning forward to prise away his son from her grip. Her fingers gave way easily enough and Tommy quickly slipped in behind him, peaking out around his side to watch the confrontation.

“Caught him with his hands ‘round my cat’s neck. Mrs. Davis down the street hasn’t seen her cat in days and I think I know why. You ‘ought to keep that little monster inside before he hurts someone.”

Abruptly he slammed the door in her face. Just because his son was a monster didn't mean some old muggle bitch from down the lane could manhandle him. Tommy was still his son-

Tommy was his son. Tommy was his son and he didn't have a fucking clue what to do with him. It wasn't like there was anyone he could go to for advice. And if he could what would he even say? How long is the time out for animal torture?

Severus slid to the floor, slowly deflating and crumpling in on himself, wrapped his arms around his knees and pressed his face in them, completely defeated. Fuck you, Tom, you did this to us. Our son is a psychopath and I can't fucking deal with him. Nothing I do is going to make him alright. Severus lifted his head to look at his child. Tommy had crouched in front of him and was watching intently, almost like this was an interesting story and he was excited to know the ending,
like this wasn't real. Like this whole thing was just a play for his amusement and none of it mattered.

"Tommy-"

"It's alright, Mum; she didn't hurt me. She was mostly just very loud," he said in his most reassuring voice, lips pulling into a wide smile.

“That's good,” he murmured back. He didn't know what else to say. Maybe as long as it wasn't other people it wasn't that big of an issue. Maybe whatever demons his son had could be sated with animals. He supposed he could deal with that.

Tommy pulled Severus' left arm away from his knee and nestled in its crook. Warm and soft and small. He could deal with the occasional animal carcass, he supposed.

A week from that day there was another knock on the door. This time soft and polite, a gentle if insistent query for his attention. When opened it revealed two children. Two normal, easy to raise muggle children. A girl in a jean dress, hair as fine and golden as corn silk pulled back from her oval face, skin slightly bronzed from the summer sun. With her stood a boy, obviously a few years younger. Hair a mousy brown, radiating from a center point on his skull. His face had a squashed look about it, like a bike tire had run over an over ripe pumpkin. For a moment he felt a stirring of vanity; Tommy was a much more handsome boy than this one.

"Excuse us, Sir," the little girl asked, voice small but clear. “Have you seen our puppy? He went missing three days ago from the front garden.” Her hand stretched out to produce a picture, the edges frayed from over handling and perhaps the worrying fingers of distressed children. He didn’t bother to really see much beyond that.

" Haven't seen it, sorry," he answered. Dejectedly, the pair turned away, feet shuffling over the cracked, uneven concrete of his sidewalk. Severus had a very strong feeling that they would never find it. He still might though.
You cannot stop me from undercutting this with memes and shitposts.
Hey everybody! More of this is happening! Sorry this wasn't porn! It's mostly done though I swear! I know porn brings in those sweet reviews too you fickle horny bastards (who I love very dearly). Side note: anyone wanna suggest wand materials for Tommy? The only thing I've decided is it's made from manchineel wood. You'll get credit and you'll get to help me out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He could hear it as it moved through the walls like a malignant clot through veins. But he was the only one to hear its voice. It would sing the names of its victims and soon he found himself singing along in their shared tongue. He would press his ear to the damp stone walls and listen for it. Sometimes it called for his father, hissing out Tom Tom Tom so steady and rhythmic it sounded like a heartbeat. His father’s name lived like a dark and sacred myth, dwelling on the lips of serpents, in the cracks of ancient walls, in the last breath of the dying. Through the petty obstacle that was the stone wall he told it who he was, said his name.

“You smell very much like him. Ambition flows through you as it did your sire.”

“They stifle me. My mother fears overmuch for my safety because of my lineage. But the heretic only seeks to keep my father murdered. He shall stop at nothing. He fears I shall be instrumental in his rise.” The language of snakes is languid and smooth, and he enjoys the soft hiss as it slips from his mouth like sand.

“His fears are not unfounded. What of the other boy? His voice I can sometimes understand.”

Tommy felt his anger, thick like tar, bitter as bile run through his veins. He imagines it is much the same as the basilisk’s venom; he can only hope it is as potent. “The language of the serpent is not his to use.” Parseltongue was one of the few gifts his father left him, one of the few links he had to the man. To think his killer was using it nauseated him. “He is a weapon of the heretic and not to be trusted. Kill him.” It’s like the richest of sweets pass his lips when he says the words, gives the command. “Make him suffer for his treason.” He recalled what his father had said to him in their brief time together. His hatred made anything possible, as long as he felt it deeply enough and wielded it properly.

Tommy presses his palms flat to the stones, digs his fingertips into the mortar. He listened to the agonized wail of the pipes as the basilisk glides smoothly through them. Then he hears his name, this time in human English. “Mother,” he replies. It falls from his lips as easily as the words kill and destroy do, and this word too, he finds, is sweet.

His mother's face is as drawn and gaunt as ever in the dim light of the dungeon and, even half cast in shadows, there is a crookedness to him that Tommy cannot help but admire. “Some might find it odd to be clutching at walls in a dead-end corridor. I know I do.” Even to his son there is his usual derision, the ubiquitous sarcasm. But there is the unspoken question, the hidden suspicion, the affection that only his son can see.
Tommy knows how to lie. He has learned from only the most practiced of teachers. “I thought I heard something in the wall and followed it this way.” The best way to lie is to not lie at all. You merely omit the truth you wish to keep concealed. His mother’s face is a mask, but he knows he’s being studied, knows he isn’t quite believed. But soon the mask melts to worry.

“This place isn’t safe. Stay in the dorms.” Tommy knows better than to argue, knows well enough to just lie. It wouldn’t be the first time and he knows it won’t be the last. None the less, he understands. It is a mother’s place to worry for their offspring. Poor sweet Mother, so misunderstood, so underappreciated. Beneath the iron façade, he knows how broken he is, how lonely, how anxious. Father will come, and we will be a proper family. He will love you like I know he does. But Tommy must keep such machinations quiet, because Mother is distasteful of bloodshed, because Mother dislikes the idea of him around anything vaguely dangerous. but the basilisk would never hurt him, its loyalty is hereditary, and like so many things, Tommy has inherited it from his father.

The little shit killed it, killed the basilisk.

Tommy never got on well with others his own age, even on the rare opportunities he was around them as a child. He found them irritating and loud. Growing up in such an isolated place in a small and secretive society hadn’t left him much opportunity to find someone he had much in common with. His mother tried to keep him away from the Death Eaters and their offspring, which was fine because it was bad form to fraternize with the help. Which was really all they were. Not that the Malfoy child seemed to understand, the way he was always offering favors and following him around. Lucius must have told the insufferable sycophant to try and wriggle into his good graces. Tommy had no use for schoolboys. He could understand wanting to be in Lucius’ favor (at least until everyone was in their proper place), but his son was nothing but a whining Nancy boy. Sometimes he wondered if Draco would simply scream for his father if he tried to slit his throat. All that gushing blood. Now that was a good thought. The basilisk would have liked that one. He found the humor in death. Poor thing wasn’t laughing now though. First you kill my father, then my pet. What’s next, make me watch while you rape my mother?

Tommy sighed and slumped against the wall in defeat. The basilisk was his only friend. It wasn’t like this experience had changed his attitude toward those around him. They would still be the same insufferable morons they had been before, but now he had the idea that maybe he was missing out on something. That there really were bonds to be forged not just through blood inheritance but also through shared ideals and experience, something to be gained from the company of others. And yet he could not think of one person he’d wish to share that bond with these people needed to be cleansed from the world. Their mindlessness could not be tolerated; the way they refused to try and better themselves at all was disgraceful. How willing they were to mindlessly follow orders and bow to witless leaders was disgusting. Tommy heaved himself from the floor with the thought that there was no use brooding about it. He would have an eternity and an entire planet to find someone or something that didn’t annoy him to near homicidal rages.

Regardless, he owed his dear friend one thing. They were just going to let the poor thing rot in the chamber, let it liquefy in there until it oozed into the pipes, contaminated the water. He knew the basilisk would have enjoyed poisoning people even in death. Honestly he would have left it like that if he didn’t have to drink from the same source. So much for a proper legacy, he mused.
Tommy made his way to the chamber, hissed it open. How that little bastard managed to find his way to it was beyond him, insolent little prick. God the stench was foul. It hit him in a wave after the tunnel opened. Wand alight, he ventured in. There was something to be said about the way silence can affect a human. Tommy had grown up inside a castle that housed over one hundred children for most of the year. He was used to ambient sound always on his periphery. But here, there was nothing but the sound of his own footsteps to accompany him on his journey. The darkness in front of and behind him was almost its own entity; a viscous, sentient malevolence, its hunger as great as its vastness. Inside this formless beast he began to perceive of a distant hum. As he moved further down his path, the mysterious sound grew in volume.

Deep within the human subconscious, there lies a natural revulsion to the sound of flies. When death cannot be seen or smelled, it can indeed be heard. For the random, chaotic pizzicato of their loathsome wings en mass can only mean that somewhere near by the abhorrent but inevitable enemy Death lurks very close.

Somehow, despite layers of solid rock between them and the open air, flies had managed to gather on the rotting corpse of the basilisk. As they feasted on their putrid bounty, they would mate and lay their eggs. Burrowing into the bloated, liquefying flesh the maggots supped on what was once a most glorious and magnificent beast.

He didn’t deserve this. He didn’t deserve to end up like this; a forgotten causality of a war barely started, an unloved relic of better days gone by. Tommy kept his distance, knowing that this was not how the basilisk would want to be remembered: an oozing, festering mass of flesh and bone and insects. He planted his feet firmly, wanting to be fully grounded for what was to come. Delving into his mind, concentrating on his magic, he pulled to the forefront all of his hurts.

Father’s gone struck down by a mudblood and a baby would have loved to stomp her fucking face to mush have to listen to the heretic’s ravings on goodness and purity want to slit his mouth open so I can shove my fist in it until he suffocates had Father for a brief time but he crumbled to so much dust and ash again wished he could tear those little bastards limb from limb skin that mouthy muggle born alive feel the blood slick my hands gouge out the blood traitor’s eyes with my thumbs shove them back all the way to his useless fucking brain and Harry Potter bane of my existence killer of hope god what I would do to him pull his teeth one by one sew them back up in his flesh watch the sores rot to black make him eat his friends make him eat his own friend vomit wrap my hands around his throat watch his eyes turn red watch his breath stop-

“Immolatus!” Fire shot from his drawn wand, bright and blue and fueled by his boiling rage and powerful magic, eating swiftly into the soft body and ridged bones of the basilisk. He watched, entranced, as the flames danced and flickered and writhed across his target, their movements almost erotic. A corner of his mouth quirked up as pretended he could hear all the flies screaming as they were burned alive.

Chapter End Notes

I love my garbage son. He’s a horrible person who does everything wrong.
Finally! The sex is here!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They were gathered at the Malfoy manor after a successful raid: the gleeful burning of a muggle hospital to so much stinking ash. And wasn't that funny? Wasn't it appropriate? Wasn't it well deserved? After all, hadn't they burned witches, all those years ago?

In the ensuing merriment, he'd found Severus and surreptitiously hustled him away from prying eyes into one of the many guest rooms. "If you would allow," he'd said between planting kisses down his neck, "I'd like to lay with you." Severus froze and stared up at him, his lovely spider eyes wide in shock.

Severus had told him before, when their relationship had progressed past Lord and servant but no further than stolen kisses, that he was "deformed". Not exactly a man, but not exactly a woman, trapped in between in a world that demanded he be one or the other. He'd felt his heart break then. How cruel the muggle world had been to Severus, to turn his blessing into shame, to turn the mark of good blood into something hideous.

Severus took a step back, his black eyes still wide and his thin lips trembling as, in a strained whisper he said, "I would allow it, yes."

He could feel Severus’ ragged nails digging into the naked flesh of his back but that was okay, he needed the sharp pricks to keep him grounded. Biology demanded movement, the clench and flutter of smooth, damp walls demanded his seed. The driving force behind sex was reproduction and he had never felt the need to indulge much until now. Until this twisted little halfblood wondered into his life like Little Red Riding Hood, unaware that he was lost in a wood that wanted to swallow him whole.

Severus was uncomfortably tight around him. He took it as a sign that the boy (still a boy, Severus had insisted) wasn’t enjoying himself. As much of a surprise as it might be to others, he rather disliked hurting his sexual partners. “Do you want me to stop?” Tom could feel the minutes ticking by and he hadn’t relaxed an inch. He couldn’t even get himself fully in. Long white legs wrapped around his hips, trying to reassure him that it was fine. “No! No, it’s just that I’ve never done this before. It hurts a little.”

That was a bit of an understatement actually; it hurt quite a lot. But something inside him (no pun intended) wanted it. Some basic instinct yearned for this no matter what. He needed to have Tom inside of him because his genetic code demanded copulation and now that it was happening there was no going back. He felt Tom begin to rock forward into him, and then gently pull out a bit to repeat the motion. This wasn’t anything like he’d thought it would be. He knew it would hurt but he figured it would feel different too, at least a little good. He was aware of… Tom’s presence in his body but he’d always thought his insides were more sensitive. Mostly he felt pressure and friction accompanied by a sharp pain. He didn’t have a clitoris like a women. What if he couldn’t orgasm? What if he couldn’t enjoy sex? He’d heard boys complain about girls who would just lay
there. God he was one of those girls and Tom wouldn’t want anything to do with him and since when did that even matter?

His lover’s voice broke through his panicked inner monologue, whispered right into his ear, “doing alright?” He sounded strained and breathy. That was a good sign. At least his insides must feel normal.

“Yeah,” he hissed out, squirming slightly.

“You were tensing up again. If you keep doing that I’ll probably finish sooner rather than later.” Severus couldn’t help but smile a little; Tom was eloquent even now.

“Finish when you want.” Yes, sooner rather than later would indeed be preferable, he thought to himself. It still hurt and he didn’t see any reason to prolong it on his account. He tried to cant his pelvis forward a bit for better access. Never let it be said that he wasn’t obliging. He felt Tom’s arm worm under his hips, shift them a bit, pull him down into the trust. Oh... oooohhh that was different. He felt Tom slip further in and rub against something. He felt a little silly as he realized he hadn’t been in all the way before. And now he was moving against something that rather seemed to enjoy the friction, shooting electric little jolts up his spine every time it was brushed. Gradually it was overriding the pain and giving way to pleasurable, mounting heavy and hot inside of him as the terrible friction lessened to give way to a smooth glide.

Tom decided he must have finally gotten the right angle because he felt the passage around him eased to a more comfortable pressure, watched as Severus went from distressed grunts and a pinched face to heavy breathing and a much more lax expression. If he had known that the discomfort could be relieved simply by sheathing himself fully he would have done it from the start. Unfortunately, he had the feeling that he would probably finish before his lover, but that was alright. There were other means to ensure completion. Digital manipulation was easy enough, and he had been told that he was quite talented with his hands. He wondered how talented Severus could be with his own fingers. He’d love to watch the boy spread himself open and insert those graceful white digits inside, rubbing and thrusting them until he arched in orgasm.

Instinct must finally be taking over because his partner was now rocking back against his thrusts. Now he could lose himself to this, enjoy the hedonistic pleasure of joining with someone. What once had been merely damp was finally wet, natural lubrication slicking their movements. He felt long legs wrap around his waist again, this time assured and guiding, helping to pull him in on the down stroke. Oh yes, Severus was indeed a fast learner and apparently rather intuitive. He buried his face in the hot column of his neck, tasted the other’s sweat on his lips, felt his throat expand and contract with rapid breath. He felt searching, groping hands make their way down his back, grip his buttocks. Tom couldn't help but find that amusing. His partner certainly wasn’t acting the terrified virgin anymore, thank god.

Fuck he was close. Before it had been a tentative, delicate joining but now it was swiftly becoming rutting in earnest. He wished he had the fortitude to make Severus cum like this, but he was sure he could finish him off after if he was already this wound up. Suddenly he felt a wet mouth at his neck, sharp teeth nipping at his flesh. Damn him to hell that boy was clever. Unfortunately it proved to be his undoing as he found release in that wet, clenching heat. His hips continued on for a moment as he enjoyed the raw, nerve searing pleasure of orgasm. But slowly, inevitably his thrusting came to a stop. Tom carefully eased out, his softening erection making a slick pop as he did.

He looked down at Severus, studied his face. His hollow cheeks were flushed red, his forehead beaded with sweat. His black eyes were half lidded and beautifully framed by those spider leg
lashes that Tom so loved. At that moment he felt a strange clench and flutter inside himself, an odd wriggling in his innards that he had never experienced before. This boy, strange and austere, had crept into his life like some aberrant creature, had nestled into the cracks of his existence and settled into his day to day fabric. Tom had never felt like this before. Had never before felt this need to be near someone, had never before cared about the comfort or happiness of another human. It was perhaps strange, but not necessarily in a bad way.

With new reverence he ran his hand over the curve of Severus' hip, rubbed his thumb over the swell of bone beneath sooth, white skin. Severus’ eyes flickered downward at him, his thin, pink lips slightly open, imperfect teeth catching the dim light and glinting wetly. His lank hair spread out behind his head on the pillow like spilled ink. Tom felt that odd clench in himself again, almost like a dull ache; a painful but strangely pleasant longing. These feelings were certainly worth further investigation, but there was still something he was looking forward to doing.

He stretched out on his side next to Severus and grasped his hip, gently urging him on his side as well, back to his chest. Tom’s fingers trailed through coarse, black curls, gently brushing past his permanently soft penis and slipping inside that lovely wet hole. He could feel his own fresh release inside him, slicking his fingers and trickling out onto his hand. That was itself almost enough to make him hard again, but he believed pleasure was best had in moderation. Perhaps in a few days Severus would come to him, wet and begging for another round. Oh yes, that would be worth waiting for.

Gently he crooked his fingers and began rubbing. He felt the soft muscles clench around his digits and Severus’ hips tilted forward. Tom placed kisses on his back, at his nape. “That’s it,” he cooed to him, “just like that. Let go.” Carefully he increased his speed, added more pressure, rubbing sure circles on the area that seemed to give him the most pleasure.

“Tom!” Severus cried, pushing into his fingers. He felt him contract and spasm wildly around him, felt his hips arch as far as his bones would allow, neck bent back with his scalp pushing into his nose. He kept up the same speed until Severus’ hips fell back against him and his neck relaxed. Slowly he decreased his speed and pressure until he stopped all together and eased out. Carelessly he wiped his fingers on the sheets. He could worry about that and all of these strange new emotions tomorrow.

Tom draped one arm around Severus hip, the other snaking under his neck to support his head. Something about it felt nice, felt strangely right. Like this was always how he was supposed to be sleeping, with this person pressed against him, sharing his breath and body heat.

Tom and Severus slept better that night than they ever had before.

Chapter End Notes

Tom "I'm turned on by murder and arson" Riddle

Tom "I came here to fuck" Riddle

I hate myself.
Chapter Summary

This is decidedly my favorite chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It’s strange the way they portray cemeteries in media. They're always secluded, far removed from the local population and the safety it provides; devoid of the light and warmth of civilization. They show them as places shrouded in mist and ominous miasmas, always surrounded by deep, malevolent woods. Severus has yet to encounter any such cemetery. The ones he has seen have always been in open sunlight, the detritus and undergrowth cleared away by human traffic and the occasional gardener. The birds still sing, the insects still buzz, and the sun still shines clear and bright.

It’s late afternoon in May, 1982, and the sun has taken on the magnificent golden hue of the new season; the warm rays casting a layer of gilt on everything they touch. He tilts his face to the vast blue sky, soaking in warmth and light like the fresh shoots of spring plants. The air smells of sweet blossoms and new life, fresh damp earth and second chances. He doesn’t believe it for a second.

Today is just another day in a long string of days to come, in challenges yet unmet, battles not yet fought, betrayals yet undiscovered. This tentative stretch of peace is new and fragile, but people are easily lulled into complacency. This cemetery will see more than its fair share of bodies by the end of the century.

As it stands, it’s a nice graveyard. The markers here are old, many by hundreds of years. They sit close together, packed in uneven rows stretching over the flat land. Most of them will stand for longer than it takes the bones beneath them to turn to earth. The stones are weathered and pitted, many of the designs and epitaphs have eroded away as the days have continuously passed by. Orange and green lichens grow in random patches on some, spores taking root and establishing colonies. Life marches on in one way or another, aimless and clinging. He wishes he had such luxury, to simply be, simply exist.

He is here only as a courtesy, a sense of obligation. She used to mean the world to him. The movements of all the moons and stars in the universe must have been set by her hand. At one time he thought her his salvation, the thing that would pull him from the dark and breathe life into him at last. That, somehow, she'd make him whole, would fill the aching void inside of him. But she hadn't. She had been too weak, perhaps, to bear the burden of his hurts, the horrible weight of his need. To be the salvation Severus so desperately craved. He’s fairly certain he was her doom. He’s fairly certain she was her doom. To be the salvation Severus so desperately craved. He’s fairly certain he was her doom. This first thing that had brought him any semblance of comfort is dead because of him. But he barely feels a gentle sadness for her now. Severus has more important things to be concerned with these days. Namely the child he has with him.

Tommy is two (very nearly three) now and walking with ease along the neat little path between the markers, his eyes wide and taking in every detail that he sees. He’s a quiet boy, and for that Severus is thankful. He has a keen gaze for his age and loves to examine things, loves to turn them about in his hands in that awed way that children have. Severus is quietly proud of him. When he
watches him he is aware that there is still a fresh, gaping wound in him that misses Tom, wished he was here to see their son. He thinks it’s very likely that wound will never close.

He loved him blindly, maddeningly, stupidly. There was a strange, magnetic quality to Tom that enthralled people, and even with all the beautiful, rich pure bloods groveling for his favor, he had chosen him out of everybody else. For the first time in his life, Severus had been chosen decisively over all others simply by being himself. There was a high to be had, he’d discovered, to being loved, to being truly cared for and cherished. He could feel it in the way Tom’s thumb would stroke his cheek, trace the length of his lips. He would have died for Tom if he had only asked.

There was another emotion he felt though, an odd, almost spiteful one. Despite what everyone had tried to tell him, had tried to force down his throat day in and day out, someone loved him. And not just anyone, but Tom fucking Riddle, the god damn Dark Lord, strongest wizard of their time, had pledged his love to him.

Fuck you, Lily Evans. If you were smart you would have loved me too. And now you and your hypocritical ass of a husband are six feet under.

It didn’t matter that his own husband was gone, or that he had been a murderous fiend. Severus knew it was petty and stupid, but some wounds are too severe, their infection raging deep within the psyche. They never fully heal. He would never forgive James, but he didn’t really have to now. But he did forgive Lily. He understood, too; he wouldn’t have wanted to be his friend either. Some people are like black holes, so weighed down by their pain that they suck in all the light around them. Severus knew he was one of those people. He was past his own event horizon and couldn’t pull himself from the darkness. And that was why he lost Lily. She must have felt herself being sucked down into a place so hostile that not even her light would be able to survive. She left at the first opportunity in search of what she must have thought was his opposite. Someone who was so bursting with light and joy it made him sick. In the end, he couldn’t blame her. James would be able to give her everything she wanted. Would give her a family. He himself couldn’t have done that. Not that she had known. Some secrets are meant to be kept. Kept, locked away, and thrown into the deepest of unreachable pits. But, oddly, he had found himself... glad to be physically compatible with Tom. It had made him squirm and ache in appealing places that had once seemed loathsome.

When he saw Tom he was the brightest light of all. But what he didn’t realize until later was that the light did not belong to Tom. That blinding glow was stolen by feeding off of those around him, sucking them down into his own darkness. Severus didn’t know that Tom was the biggest black hole. The super massive one that lurked in the center of his universe and was threatening to eat him alive.

Yes, there had indeed been something dark and hypnotic about Tom, but there had been something bright and enchanting about Lily. She was like a warm home in the depths of winter, beckoning to lost souls who would surely perish without her shelter. So he had clung to her desperately, like wild vines sapping nutrients from a strong and healthy tree. Perhaps he’d taken all she had, drained her dry and begged for more. The only thing he could seem to do was drag people down. Especially the people he loved. God help his son. His beautiful, perfect, innocent son. The son he’d scarified everything for.

Gently he placed his hand on the back of Tommy’s head, feeling his downy hair. He could easily fit the circumference of his skull within a single hand. How could something be so small, so fragile? How easy it would be to worry over him ever second. How did his stumbles not break his tiny bones into a million little shards? How could Severus dare touch him without fear of breaking him? How could his fingers caress his tender head without crushing it? And yet somehow, day in
and day out, he did. His son was growing, becoming stronger every day.

It was strange, in a way, seeing his son in this field of the dead. Tommy was so warm and alive it nearly hurt to look at him, brought an ache to his heart and a wan smile to his face. Severus clenched his hands into fists, nearly damaging the bunch of flowers he held. Calla lily. They stand for love and purity, but also death; they're perfect for his purpose. He felt a tug on his robe and looked down to see Tommy, his arm outstretched, pointing at the bouquet he held. Severus knelt down to hand him a lily and smiled as his son inelegantly grasped the thin stem.

“Lily,” said.

“Lee,” was the slightly slurred simplified version that Tommy managed.

“Lil. Ee,” Severus enunciated, making sure his child could see the way his tongue hit the back of his teeth to for the second L sound.

“Lil. Ee,” he parroted back to him.

“Good. That’s very good,” he said honestly with a smile. He gently pressed his forehead to Tommy’s, making him giggle. This is what was more important than Tom, more important than power, or vengeance, or redemption. Things as simple as these were the greatest reminder of what was really important, were the things that brought him hope and joy. He would do anything to protect his son.

Severus stood and took Tommy’s tiny hand in his, held it like the fragile treasure that it was, and lead him further into the cemetery. They came to a stop in front of Lily’s grave. The plot of land before her stone was grassy. The rectangle of bare soil had sprouted, taken on new life. The deep wound in the earth had healed, leaving no visible evidence of the tragedy it concealed. Truly an enviable skill, to heal so quickly and so thoroughly, to be so resilient after such upheaval. Gently he placed the bouquet before the stone, leaving tribute to the first person he had loved, maybe the first person to ever love him.

She was down there now, entombed beneath the earth like a seed cursed to never grow. He hoped it was peaceful where she was, that she was far away from all of the strife and indecision. She deserved that at least. Lost in his thoughts, Severus noticed as an odd smell began to creep on his periphery. Sweet grass and bitter smoke. Looking around to find the source, he saw his son, holding the lily he’d been given, watching intently as fire ate away at the delicate blossom.

“Fire!” Tommy exclaimed, entranced by the flames slowly working their way down the stem like a fuse, waiting to burn his hand. Panicked, Severus slapped the burning flower out of his son’s grip, quickly checking him for burns.

“Did you do that? Did you start it on fire?” he asked, uncurling tiny hands to check for damage.

“Fire!” Tommy yelled again, pointing to Lily’s grave. Turning to survey the damage, Severus saw the burning lily had fallen perfectly, and in a one in a million odds, landed in the bouquet of flowers he had just laid before the grave, igniting the entire bunch. Stunned, Severus watched the white petals curl up and turn to ash as the flames devoured them.

Chapter End Notes
Okay real talk! I have given the relationship between Lily and Sev a lot of thought. My initial take was that calling her a mudblood is not a big deal. The reason why I thought that, is because to me, that's like a white person getting pissed off that they were called a cracker. She went full Bo Bice at a Popeye's.

Lily is smart, white, conventionally attractive, beloved by her peers, has a stable and loving home life, and (I assume) is better off economically than Severus. She has almost every social advantage over Severus, who is, as she would know, also a mudblood. And here's a hot take people are not ready for. If you're raised in an abusive house, you don't really learn right from wrong or how to regulate your emotions. You have to figure that out later and it's hard. I too was raised like a feral bob cat and let me tell you, you don't learn how to be a human until you hit 20, and even then it's a fucking struggle. I'm one of the lucky ones who managed it but only because I had a decent mom (good woman, bad situation. It's a whole thing).

If he had called Lily a whore (in this house we respect sex workers anyway and we don't use it as an insult) or a slut or even a dumb bitch I would be like eehh you played yourself, Sev. But he called her a made up insult from a culture that she really isn't a part of, and really isn't effected by.

But, if you take that out of the equation and view it as a slur more on the level with like, actual irl racial slurs and saying it has the same social weight, I would get why she would be like OH HELL NO. Let's say that this is indeed the case. Then she had every right to ghost him. I don't care if it was said in a heated moment.

However, the question of the hour is does Lily face real oppression because of her blood status? I absolutely cannot say for sure. There are still some hold outs, but they're dying off. And she has pretty much every other advantage. Does that excuse Sev? Not really. I stand by her choice to ghost him.

She's not his mother. She doesn't owe him anything if their relationship becomes toxic, which is most likely was. The only thing that bothers me about Lily is she married James. Not just because he was an asshole to Severus, but because he was exactly as wrong as Sev was. Just because you don't say the slur doesn't mean you're not a racist. You can still be a bigot even if you use the politically correct language.

James comes at it less about blood status and more about class. Which, as we are seeing play out in the real world, can be almost as damaging. James is the guy who thinks Joe Biden is progressive. He thinks homeless people are just people who are bad with money and deserve to be homeless. He's too privileged and insular to actually understand the problems people face and he never once examined his power over others.

As shitty as J.K. kind of turned out to be, I do give her credit for trying to show that the people who we are told to idolize are often just as shitty as the people who we are told to hate, and that you can't really lump people simply into good or bad. This is very true.
Rereading this years later I'm impressed. I'm like damn this fucks pretty hard.

Oh god I have I peaked? Please don't let me have peaked on this.

Also to this day I have no idea how to make the annotation numbers tiny and at this point I'm too afraid to ask.

The room around them is vast and dark, giving the illusion that they float in nothingness. It is as if they are outside of existence, trapped in time in this strange pocket of reality. It is just them, the wedding party, and the altar. It is simple granite, five feet long and two feet wide. They’ve draped it with simple white linen. Timeless, respectful. In the center sits a silver chalice, gleaming dull in the low light. It’s flanked by a candle on each side. They sit on silver holders. And in front of the chalice, laid horizontal, is an athame. Its handle is obsidian, polished fine and smooth, but the blade, like the rest of the implements, is silver; elegantly etched with delicately curving filigree. He feels his eyes drawn to its wicked edge, its beauty deceptive of how deadly it could be. His gaze flicks back to Tom then, and he cannot help but find him similar.

They kneel before this simple spread to offer themselves in unity, with love and devotion on pain of death. Tom was always so sure of what he wanted. He was decisive and determined, never wavering from his perceived path. So when he had asked Severus to marry him, took Severus’ hand in his own and asked for far more than simple allegiance, he knew that it meant that Tom was fully devoted to him and would never waiver. So Severus said yes. With all of his stunted and needy heart, he said yes, so sure that there could be no greater calling, that there was nothing he wasn’t prepared to lose (which had been everything, for Tom).

He let Tom chose the ceremony. Something dramatic, yet understated. Something with gravity. Something old.

So here they knelt, the two candles flickering dimly, making the polished silver twinkle faintly in the low light. Bracketing them were other Death Eaters, but only the most loyal. For now, this must be kept secret.

Tom begins the ceremony, his stern and commanding voice filling the cavernous room. “Caríssimi: Deponéntes ígitur omnem malítiam, et omnem dolum, et simulatiónes, et invídias, et omnes detractiónes, sicut modo géniti infántes, rationábile, sine dolo lac concupíscite ut in eo crescáitis in salutе*1.”

Severus has memorized the ceremony, he knows all the words, knows all the actions and what is required of him. “Aufer a nobis, quaesumus, Dómine, iniquitátes nostras: ut ad Sancta sanctórum puris mereámur méntibus introíre,*2 ” he responds solemnly.

Tom takes the athame in one hand and holds the other above the chalice. Severus know that the dagger has a light bleeding spell on it; any wound it inflicts will bleed just a bit more than it should. Typically such a spell would be cast on a weapon to take into battle as to insure maximum
damage. But here it is used to bind the living. He watches as without hesitation, Tom slices open his palm above the chalice. “Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei, noviet aeterni testament,” he chants. “Mysterium fidei: qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum *3.” As blood runs out of the wound it clings to the edge of his hand, but finally surface tension gives way and it trickles freely into the vessel. In the dim light it appears almost black, faintly shimmering as it collects.

He hands Severus the athame next, and Severus repeats the action, draws the exquisite blade over his own flesh, feels the sharp sting as his skin parts. The cut is deep and hot and throbs in time with his racing heart as his blood mixes with Tom’s in the chalice.

“Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei, noviet aeterni testamenti: mysterium fidei: qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum,*3” he says as well.

Tom takes the vessel of their mingled blood, his strong and steady hands wrapping around it, fingers lacing together in front. With a reverence rarely shown, he holds it to Severus’ lips. He drinks deeply as Tom recites, “diffúsa est grátia in lábiis tuis: proptérea benedítix te Deus in ætérnum. Propter veritátem et mansuetúdinem et iustítiam: et dedúcet te mirabíliter déxtera tua *4.” The blood is thicker than he expected and tastes of iron and salt. It’s hot and hard to swallow, but he manages. It’s made even more awkward as he has no control over the chalice. After two good swallows he feels Tom gently start to pull it away from his lips and he cannot help but feel a tad relieved. Still though he can feel the blood coating his tongue, his teeth, his throat. The smell rises into his sinuses and it almost makes him gag. He’s dealt with plenty of the stuff before. Really it shouldn’t bother him so much. He allows himself one more thick swallow, hoping his own saliva will help wash some of it down.

Tom hands Severus the chalice then. His own spider’s leg fingers lacing around the silver that’s been warmed by fresh blood and his lover’s hands. Gently he puts it to Tom’s lips, slowly and carefully tilts it as he too says, “diffúsa est grátia in lábiis tuis: proptérea benedítix te Deus in ætérnum. Propter veritátem et mansuetúdinem et iustítiam: et dedúcet te mirabíliter déxtera tua *4.” Without hesitation Tom drinks deeply from the chalice. As Severus gently tilts it forward, a small rivulet of blood trickles from the corner of his mouth, sliding slowly down his chin then neck, finally being absorbed by the black fabric of his robes.

He removes the cup from his lips and Tom grins at him. He can see their shared blood coating his teeth. They’re chips of ruby twinkling grimly in the dim light and for a moment Severus freezes as the candles flicker and cast austere, dancing shows on Tom’s face.

Tom leans forward to kiss him, mouth open and thick with blood. There isn’t a difference in taste as his mouth is still coated too. Perhaps this is just a bit overwhelming, he thinks as he feels Tom’s hand wind in his hair. But he loves him. And right now that’s all that matters. They pull away from each other, breathless, and clutch hands.

“Mors et vita duéllo conflixére mirándo *5,” they say together. Without so much as a whisper the candles go out and they are plunged into darkness. The cut on his palm throbs hotly against the cut on Tom’s palm. Blood for blood.

Chapter End Notes

That being said, I ripped all the Latin from Catholic mass. I have an older mom who
was raised Catholic (even though we aren’t religious at all) and she never stops talking about the original Latin masses. Idk. I just clicked around until I found some stuff I thought would work well with what I was doing and I don’t really remember what the context is.

1. Dearly beloved: Wherefore laying away all malice, and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies, and all detractions, as newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation.

2. Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord; that with pure minds we may be made worthy to enter into the Holy of Holies.

3. For this is the chalice of my blood of the new and eternal testament: the mystery of faith: which shall be poured out for you and for many unto the remission of sins.

4. Grace is poured abroad in thy lips; therefore hath God blessed thee forever. Because of truth and meekness, and justice; and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully.

5. Death and life contended in that conflict stupendous.
Requiem

Chapter Summary

I guess I'm just a winter writer. Helps with the seasonal depression. I have no idea why I wrote this but it sounded cool so I went with it. We're back with Quirrell again. Hope you like it!

I wonder if he can feel the pain too. I wonder if there’s something about it that he likes if he can.

My fingers are slick with blood by now. It runs sticky and thick out of my mouth, coating my hands, clinging under my nails, dripping imperfect ellipses onto the floor. I’m trembling, choking on a mixture of blood, saliva, and mucous. The blade slips from my fingers, clinking on the hard stone, smearing the blood drops. **You’ve earned this if you want your reward PICK IT UP** finish it touched my son my perfect son with impure thought if I didn’t need your hands I’d let Tommy remove the fingers let him shove them one by one down your throat he would love that so did Severus Sever Sever Sever Severus cut them all up into bits hearts and tongues and livers all in pretty jars the way they catch the light murky cold reflected in your eyes tiny pinpricks like stars in black sky if only the world could truly understand beauty they would see they would know. Oh my love, there always was such an emptiness inside of you. The vast desolation of the universe stitched up in one young man. How do you keep it all inside of you? How do you not split open and bleed the stars upon us? I think I love your emptiness, your frigid depths so devoid of light. Do you feel as dead on the inside as you look on the outside? My poor, empty boy. I want to crawl inside your eternity and make that nothingness my home.

I collapse to my knees, my vision blurred with tears. Should I try to wipe them away I’d only smear blood in my eyes. Almost blindly I grope, seeing more of the dull glint of the blade than the actual shape. My fingers slip along the handle, struggling to manage a firm grip. I’ve earned this, though perhaps for other reasons than he says. I just need to open the gum more, to make it easier for the pliers. Cut a slit down to the soft flesh on all sides, get a strong grip on the tooth, then twist and pull. I’ve done it before, I can do it again. It’s really not that bad. If I could just-

“**It’s my only dream to be good wife to you and a good mother to our son.**” His mouth is a thin red line that looks more like a slit in his flesh than lips. A thin red line that doesn’t move when he speaks. He presses our mouth to it in a kiss, sticks his tongue inside. To my surprise there isn’t anything abnormal about how it feels. Soft and wet, I can feel the smooth, stone like texture of teeth, the jagged sharp points and grooves in the bone. It’s a familiar feeling to him, the heat of his mouth a well cherished memory. They separate.

“**That is all I have ever wanted of you,**” he says, breathless. His plain black robes fall away like smoke in the wind, revealing an expanse of sickly ashen skin, the map of his veins prominent and blue beneath, thick and full of blood. I have become familiar with it through memory alone. The grooves of his ribs are old and well plotted territory, though certainly not mine. My palms run their
length; thumbs gently caressing the soft hollows between the bones, feeling the give of flesh, the way his chest shutters when he breathes. We kiss again and I feel the slow, confident bloom of arousal pool in my groin, can feel myself hardening from the wet kisses and the stolen familiarity of dry, warm skin. The gentle rasp of fine body hair beneath my fingers.

We fall to our knees in this embrace. Severus lays back in an automatic and practiced way, his legs falling open. I take my erection in hand and push into the wet, grasping hole. It’s a now familiar dance between them, between us. A slow, slick glide into that hot, clenching meat. It feels heavenly. Like going home, like safety. Severus is oddly still beneath me. His legs bent but unmoving at our hips. It’s fine. He’s loose and open and wet, willing and wanting.

“Did you miss me?” he asks.

“Painfully.” My mouth replies for me. Oh to feel completed by this lovely heat and its wanton embrace. It’s been so long since I’ve felt this, too long. I look down at his familiar face and it stares back up at me without expression. His eyes are open, unblinking, staring blankly into space. His lashes start to twitch and wriggle; they curl and pull against his flesh. Spiders’ legs. The red slit where his mouth should be looks like it’s trying to pull up in the corner, like he’s trying to smile but he’s just not made for it. The speed of my hips increases. His lashes lengthen and continue to writhe.

“You feel so good, Tom.” His voice is tinny and distant. It lacks any meaningful inflection and instead sounds like the prerecorded message in a pull string doll. His channel clenches around us, hot and wet and perfect. The speed increases, the pressure builds. There’s a continuous wet sucking sound as our bodies meet. His legs finally begin to move. They twitch and writhe around our hips, kicking out and twisting at odd angles, the knees bending backwards almost a full ninety degrees. His upper half still lies motionless, not even his chest rises and falls with breath. “Please, Tom! Harder!” His mouth still doesn’t move, but his lashes are in a frenzy now. They grow longer, bend as if jointed, and I watch as his eyes pull themselves free from their sockets and stand on their new spider legs and crawl off into the blackness.
I’m ripped from unconsciousness by a searing pain in my mouth. My sight swims into focus and I see a child’s face take shape. Black and white blurs across my vision but refuse to coalesce. But I know who it is. There isn’t another person it could be. I try to say his name but my lips won’t form the words, too much blood and saliva rolling about inside my mouth still. Some of it trickles back and triggers my gag reflex. My chest is wracked with jerking spasms as I cough, spraying a fine mist of blood into the air. “How disgraceful!” Tommy’s still childlike voice rings out. What feels like a foot is wedged underneath me and I’m flipped onto my belly. I can feel the wet shiver wheeze in my chest as I struggle to inhale. I can feel my lungs rattle against my ribs like an animal fighting the iron bars of its cage, feel the damp air leave, feel the almost purring sensation at the end of my exhale, the soft drone petering out before I allow myself a new breath. I’m a broken wind-up toy; my gears and cogs twitching and jittering uselessly as I lay on the floor trying to catch my breath.

“Poor Father,” Tommy clucks down to me, “having to rely on such a pitiful creature. Do try not to die before you’ve served your purpose.” I’m still face down on the floor. Like a fish scooped from a lake, uselessly gasping for air that will not come.

“Come now! You're embarrassing yourself and, more importantly, you're embarrassing Father. Pull yourself together,” he chides, amusement clear in his voice. I can picture him clearly, tall frame (for his age) standing over me, back bent just the smallest bit to loom even more effectively; a trait no doubt learned from his mother. I could just picture his hair, glossy and fine, black as the back of an open throat, his side part coming loose to fall roguishly over his left eye. His petal pink lips stretched into a devious smile. His eyes narrowed just the tinniest bit. His white fingers, not quite as long or arachnid like, would be tipped with blood, drying thick and sticky on the dainty ends, caked thinly beneath his neatly trimmed nails.

“Whatever could you be waiting for? Show a little respect for your betters!” he snipped, his temper beginning to flare. Let it never be said that my lord’s son was a patient child. Why should he show patience to such a lowly worm rise you pervert and do your duty greet my son with the respect he is owed yes my son my perfect boy could hardly have imagined better shrewd and calculating and loyal burning bright with righteous hate. I manage to pull my arms under me, force myself onto my hands and knees.

I turn to face Tommy, almost slipping in the small puddle of my blood and spit. I can feel it coat my hands as it does the inside of my mouth. It’s viscous and nauseatingly warm someday you'll drown in it and on that day I know it will have been worth it for the rewards I have been promised.

One again I find myself kneeling before this corrupted princeling, this vision of perfect boyhood hiding a warped and writhing poison at its core. I keep my head bowed, my eyes only able to see the hem of his robes and trousers, the dull shine of his shoes. I dare not set eyes on his face without permission now. But to my astonishment his knees fold neatly beneath him. His cool hands, as beautiful and blood tipped as I had imagined them to be, wrap around my face like devil’s snare and tilt my head up until our eyes meet.

Instantly I am captivated by him once again. He’s smiling gently down at me, as if he’s looking fondly at a mischievous pet. His jewel black eyes are half lidded and his silken hair does indeed
fall from its part to cover one eye just as I thought it would. How could this creature born of every fantasy made flesh be bad? How could these soft hands ever wound or hurt? How could death threatens and vitriol as thick and hot as molten rock fall from so perfect a mouth? How could eyes so fathomless and beautiful be allowed to look upon a less than perfect vista? I must be blessed by gods above to be privy to such a sight; to be touched by him and not burn to ash from my unworthiness.

“Open your mouth,” he says softly, the words falling like pearls from his lips. Oh to do so would be my greatest pleasure. Your wish is my command, young prince. My jaw falls open and I feel the blood dribble past my lips, down my chin, pit pat onto the floor. Viper fast those sculpted hands snake into my mouth; red and white fingers jam something into the empty, freshly mutilated socket in my gum.

I shriek and rear back, nearly choke on what he shoved into my mouth. I spit it out, watching as my own tooth click clack skitters across the floor.

“How rude! I’m only returning what you lost,” he laughs gaily. “Father, this disgusting wretch may be the most thankless man I’ve ever met.”

**What a fine boy my Severus has raised so clever so quick so manipulative aren’t you just the luckiest pervert to be graced by his touch my perfect son my wonderful clever boy.** There’s a correctness to seeing him like this: laughing heartily among the drops of blood and the dull gleam of a lone knife. Really, it suits him more than any scene I could have imagined. Maybe I’m just not that creative, or maybe I’m too optimistic.

I kneel with my hand pressed to my cheek and my mouth open, dribbling blood as I listen to Tommy’s laughter and my master babbling, trying to convince myself it’ll all be worth it in the end. I’ll wash my face and magic away the blood on the floor and tomorrow will be easier to endure.

**Chapter End Notes**

Yeah I know that was really weird but I wanted to shove that not exactly a wet dream in where he goes unconscious because I like to mess with the reader a little? I think it sort of simulates the in over your head confusion to the madness I’m going for. Then he gets woken up from that by Tommy pulling his tooth out. This is the only linear part I guess.

Side note: How good is Bloodborne? Best game in ten years from game mechanics to art to lore to music. Tens all across the board. I have the platinum achievement trophy :)
To the Bone

Chapter Notes

Just wanted to make sure everybody knows that every perspective a character gives in this fic is inherently flawed and hypocritical. I’m not saying that’s canon but that’s what I wanted to work with. I want you to read this and go hey, what they just said/thought was utter bullshit and contradicts a previous action. Like I don’t want you to think I’m forgetting something I wrote previously or I can’t get my shit together and write non-contradictory bullshit. Nobody said anything mean to me or anything. I was just like what if I’m being too heavy handed? Then I was like what if I’m not heavy handed enough? I, much like the people I choose to write about, am full of self doubt and conflicting thoughts. So I was just like fuck it, just tell them what you want them to know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mother had warned him about this vagabond. “Stay away from Lupin,” he had hissed. “The Headmaster may trust him, but he isn’t always right.” He’d even employed the ‘you require no further explanation and my word is law’ voice that he used when he was very upset. Lupin royally pissed Mother off, it seemed. He didn’t know why that was, but he could tell bad blood when he saw it. Especially when it was this obvious.

He may not know the origins of their feud, but he felt comfortable hating Lupin on his own. The man just oozed charity case with his shabby clothes and soft speech. Like he was just begging to be gutted in a back alley somewhere. He wasn’t even a good professor (though he should hardly be surprised by that). Really, he was going to dedicate an entire lesson to boggarts?

Tommy sat at the back of the class, rolling his eyes in disgust at the squeals and giggles of his classmates. This incipient exercise could hardly even be called educational. They should be using this time to study something actually useful like stealth spells or cutting curses. And if that was too advanced, they could start with the alphabet or the proper way to tie their shoes. He wouldn’t put it past them not to know at this point. But he doubted Lupin could be depended on to teach them anything so useful.

“All right! Who’s next then? How about young mister Snape?” Quick as lightning and savage as wildfire, Tommy felt a jolt of fury run through him. Momentarily stunned he sat in his place, nearly unable to process what had just been asked of him. How dare they? How dare they so casually ask him to reveal something so private? As if they had any right to know even the barest hint of how he felt! As if they had any right to see such a weakness as his greatest fear! And most of all, how could they not see that this was all beneath him? How could he have made his unwillingness to participate any more obvious? Did he need to wear a sign perhaps? “Come now, don’t be shy!” Lupin called cheerfully to him. The bastard even had the gall to sound enthusiastic about it. How absolutely nauseating. Fine, Tommy thought viciously. I’ll play your game like a good little oaf. If Lupin wanted a show, then a show he would have.

“Very well. If we all must partake in such a crass and graceless activity, I suppose I’ll do what I must.” Hiding his rage he strode forward, haughty and frigid like an entitled king. Not a strand of hair out of place, not an unwanted crease or wrinkle to be found on his robes. It was as if nothing
would dare disobey his will.

The class watched silently in that odd, almost voyeuristic way that people have when at being granted personal information. A curiosity bordering on the perverse to see what such an odd and angry boy could fear. What unearthly monstrosity? What creature cobbled together from madmen’s nightmares could spring forth from the depths of Tommy Snape’s mind? Surely something with fangs and claws and far too many eyes, maw dripping hungrily at the prospect of their flesh.

But to their surprise it was nothing so ostentatious. Stretched out before their hungry eyes, the nude corpse of professor Snape lay before them. The boggart presented the depiction on its stomach. Its skin appearing to lose any hue or shade associated with the living. Instead it had gone a sickly gray, like the sky in the middle of a tremendous storm. Here and there patches of his flesh were rotted black and ulcerated, veins and capillaries radiating out from the spots like spiders webs in shades of red and violet. The craggy peaks of his vertebra were made more apparent by the advanced state of decay, cells breaking down and leaking fluid, causing the skin to lose elasticity and slump loosely from his sinew. The neat line of bone was like an arrow pointing to the harrow outlines of his pelvis, the cradle of curves that formed his hips giving way to the emaciated legs. One thin arm was limp along his side, long fingers curled into his upturned palm, looking like a dead spider on its back, legs curled stiffly into its belly. His other arm was extended before his body, fingertips bruise blue and purple, the skin around his nails shriveled back, making them appear like claws.

But by far the worst part was the face. His head lay facing to the right, hollow cheek flush to the floor, the flesh a blackish violet from the pooled, stagnant blood rotting and coagulating within. His jaw hung open, offering a view of yellow teeth like crooked headstones, his swollen gray tongue barely trapped behind them. The eyes, once black but lively, were completely fogged over, the pupils and irises obscured by advanced decay. His perpetually lank hair was matted to his skull in thick, inky clumps.

Seemingly unfazed, Tommy viewed the gruesome sight with nothing but a sneer. “Is this what you wished to see, Professor?” he asked sardonically. “However shall I make a mockery of him? Perhaps I should imagine some confetti? Or would you recommend a silly hat?” His voice lilted in a teasing manner, as if being presented with his own worst fear was nothing but an inconvenient, if somehow amusing, chore, his lips curled into a familiar smug sneer.

“All right. All right,” Professor Lupin said, trying to gather not only himself, “why don’t we all leave the room for a moment. Maybe we-“

“I know!” Tommy exclaimed, cutting him off mid sentence. “Riddikulus!” he spat, wand outstretched. The body before them began to twitch. The hand that lay along his side uncurled its withered fingers; the already outstretched hand dug its claw like nails into the cracks in the floor as if trying to manage a strong grip. Beneath the gray skin it was easy to see the joints move, to see what was left of the muscle surrounding them clench and flex as the corpse forced itself up on hands and knees.

A hush fell upon the crowd of children as they gazed upon such a malign sight, more than a bit unsettled by the supposed humor behind this.

The head of the Snape impersonator rose to gaze at the mass of frightened students; its empty eyes somehow seemed to focus on them. Its jaw fell open and a wet, hissing voice slopped out from behind the swollen tongue as it crawled sluggishly towards them.

“My staff has murdered giants. My bag a long knife carries. To cut mince pies from children’s
thighs for which to feed the fairies,”* it recited. The palms of its hands made a dull slapping sound as they connected with the flagstones. Its head was lowered ever so slightly to emphasize the way the muscles in the shoulders moved as it crawled, giving it a stance reminiscent of a predatory cat stalking prey. The gnarled clumps of hair on his head bobbed slightly as he moved.

Tommy stood with his back to his classmates. As such, they were unable to see his lips silently but reverently mouthed the words along with the boggart. “No gypsy, slut or doxy shall win my mad Tom from me.” As it neared him, the other children pushed themselves into the far wall as Tommy lowered himself into a crouch, hand outstretched. “I’ll weep all night, with stars I’ll fight. The fray shall well become me.” As it finished the poem it came to a halt before him and stretched out one withered hand to reach his. As the tips of their fingers brushed, the boggart fizzled away into a ball of light.

Tommy stood from his position and locked eyes with Lupin. “Was that satisfactory, Professor?”

As the day began to end, as all days must inevitably do, Tommy slipped into the halls of the dungeons. Forgoing the dormitories, he skulked into his mother’s private quarters until his temper began to cool. How dare they? How fucking dare they, he fumed silently. He could hardly believe anyone would have the gall to try to dig something so personal out of him. That loathsome, lowly Lupin should expect him to do something like that, like he was some vacuous fool who couldn’t control his own emotions. How could he make it any more obvious that he was of a better breed than the disgusting, common rabble that they let in this school? He felt that sensation of slimy disgust start to envelop him, as well as the frustration of being better than everyone around him and their refusal to acknowledge it. He hates that this is a familiar feeling.

Hates that sick, malignant rage that makes his skin crawl, makes his heart pound, makes his stomach churn. A paralyzing, all consuming feeling like he’s been flayed alive, every nerve alight with vicious rage, fed by his inability to act on it. How he is forced to acquiesce again and again. Bending but never allowed to break. Someday, he will. Someday, he’ll make sure they know their place as his fists break them, as their worthless skin blooms red with fresh, hot blood. Rip their hair out in thick clumps, smash their teeth in with his feet. Someday, no one would dare question him for fear of invoking his ire.

That was a good thought. Think of the day the when world would fall into its rightful order at last and he would never again be forced to brush shoulders with those animals. Yes, calming thoughts. He only had until curfew to try and soothe himself. He was still expected to sleep in the dorms. Imagine, the scion of a founder forced sleep with the wretches. But, as much as he hated it, he knew it was a necessary concession in order for them to keep their cover. At least after classes were over he was allowed to sulk here if he needed.

He sat quietly at a small table in the back of the little parlor, moodily thumbing through one of his mother’s old dissection books, only half paying attention to the words in front of him. He should make a list, he thought idly. A list of people who needed to be a taught a lesson when the time came. Obviously the head master first. Then probably Potter’s two closest pawns. The girl, as he understood it, was quite intelligent. A useful, if misplaced, trait. He didn’t understand the reason he kept the Weasley boy though. There didn’t seem to be any benefit from having him around. But mad men will do mad things, he supposed. He tapped his right index finger on the hard wood table and let out a sigh. Maybe Lupin next. For gross incompetence. And for making him look upon such a dreadfully shaggy and depressing sight every time he went to class. Maybe Mother could have that one though. After all, he hated Lupin first.

As he sat contemplating, he heard the door open. Speak of the devil, he thought, giving a small

Not bothering to look up from his book, Tommy replied, “I don’t know why everyone has to make such a fuss about it; I only did what I was told to do. I can hardly help what my greatest fear is.”

“But certainly you didn’t have to make such a spectacle of it?” Tommy recognized an edge to his voice that he hardly ever heard. It was hidden deep beneath a layer of bored exasperation, but it was there none the less. He knew it was the voice Mother used (or rather tried not to) when he’d stepped a bit too far out of line.

“If they can’t handle whatever manifests then they shouldn’t ask to see your fears to begin with. Besides, you can hardly begrudge me a bit of fun now and then.” Tommy finally looked up from feigning nonchalance. Though the room was dimly lit he could still easily read Severus’ face. His eyes, beetle black and sunken in, but still so very like his own (Father had liked that hadn’t he? The unusual coloring he’d inherited from Mother). Cheeks high and hollow like the ceiling of a cathedral. Skin as thin and yellowed as old vellum. Lips pursed into a thin line. Chin pointed and narrow. He stood tall and thin and stark, like a sketch gone wrong. But this was ordinary to Tommy. This is the face of the person who had cared for him, loved him, kept him safe and warm. And part of him felt relieved to simply see him alive. To see the easy rise and fall of his chest beneath the thick robes, the dart and flicker of his eyes. Not some dead, half rotten thing crawling out of the deepest jagged corners of his mind. Honestly, he hadn’t meant to upset him of all people with his antics. He thought he’d find it funny.

Severus sighed and approached him. He certainly didn’t appreciate this behavior, but it had revealed something: his son loved him. He worried, when he allowed himself such luxuries, that his son had no feelings towards him whatsoever; that Tommy was incapable of feeling anything at all.

Time seemed to speed up the older he got. It felt like just the other day Tommy only came up to his knee. Now, here he was, only a head shorter than him, and terrifying an entire class more effectively than he ever could. A sickly sort of pride bloomed in Severus’ chest. His bright and shining boy. His salvation. Gently he cupped his son’s cheek and, to his surprise, Tommy closed his eyes and leaned into the contact, going so far as to wrap his own hand around his mother’s.

Severus had never been very sure of his son’s boundaries. He’d assumed (perhaps wrongly) that if Tommy had wanted physical affection he’d seek it out. Maybe he’d been too distant a parent, maybe he hadn’t done enough to assuage his sons fears.

“You needn’t ever worry about me leaving you,” he whispered softly to him. He knew he shouldn’t lie to his son. But he loved him too much to let him worry. Besides, he had survived this long for Tommy, and he would continue to do so. As long as his son was safe, he had something to live for, had something to fight for. Sure, his son was…odd. But as far as he knew, he’d never done anything too terrible. Not anything unforgivable, anyway. So far he didn’t think he needed to worry about it too much. On the cautious lips of wizarding parents you could sometimes hear whispers about muggle children who would murder friends and family. Really it was all about keeping perspective. But-

Sometimes, he remembered his son as the seven year old flecked with rat blood in the morning light, looking up at him curiously upon reprisal. And wasn’t that just like this? Sometimes, he was afraid for his son, afraid of his son. His handsome, well kept boy who refused to make friends, who burned Portia Noel’s valentine in front of her in his first year, who slipped into his quarters at night to shower off the smell of blood. His son, who was clever enough to puppet a boggart into terrifying Lupin and his whole class. His Tommy, who looked painfully like Thomas Riddle. His
son who loved him.

Severus had long ago learned to turn off the part of his brain that recognized red flags in the people who loved him. If he hadn’t, who would he have left? At this point to acknowledge his son’s budding sadism would be admitting that he was born with something broken inside of him. Something that no amount of discipline or love could fix. And he did love him! He loved him on a painful, visceral level. Millions of years of evolution screamed at him to love and protect his son, his only son, with everything he had. So he bit his lip and turned a blind eye to his aberrant behavior long ago. It didn’t mean he wanted him to be this way, but nothing he had tried seemed to work. But he would never stop loving his son. Sometimes, in the pit of his stomach, he worried that that would someday soon become a double edged sword. He buried that fear like he had buried his chest of photos and Death Eater regalia. Something he knew would haunt him endlessly, but couldn’t bring himself to look directly at for long.

Severus removed his hand from his son’s cheek only to fully embrace him. It was still comforting to feel him in his arms, to bury his nose in his hair and breathe in his familiar scent. In turn, Tommy wrapped his own arms around him.

“You’re all I’ve ever known,” he murmured into the thick fabric of his mother’s robes.

Yes, this was the boy he’d given everything for. The lives he suspected he’d scarified were worth it, to feel the pulsing of his blood ripe heart beneath his winter peach skin. The only thing he needed to do was make sure he never crossed that line that he and Tom had so carelessly vaulted over.

“I would do anything to keep you safe,” he said.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy is fourteen and the absolute worst edgelord. In retrospect I hate this chapter. It's very cringe but I think it's very in character for my garbage son. He's the ultimate cringe.

*The poem bogart Snape says is the last few stanzas from a piece titled Mad Maudlin's Search or Mad Maudlin's Search for Her Tom of Bedlam. In order to keep the clog of notes down I’ll let you do most of the googling yourself but the gist of it is someone was so taken with an original anonymous poem called Tom o’ Bedlam they sent this one in in reply (the original fanfiction my dudes).

Tommy uses it exclusively to refer to his father and not himself (his class assumes he’s referring to himself and he’s getting off on the knowledge that he knows something they don’t because he’s an asshole like that). I figure he probably found a book of weird old poems in the library or it was something Severus had lying around and he thought it was a cute way to describe what he thinks his parents’ relationship is. He’s in his fourth year at the time. Idk if Lupin did bogart party with fourth years but for my benefit let’s say he did.
Burn the Rubicon

Chapter Summary

*sheepishly* Heeey guys. I'm back.

You may have noticed a few changes. Like I got rid of the second chapter entirely because it was stupid garbage and seemed a little TERFy. Any relevant information has been absorbed in the first chapter as well as adding just a tiny bit more to it. I've added a few paragraphs to ch9 too (the porn chapter ;) ) and just did some editing and cleaning over all. It's not perfect but it's a lot more up to code.

I honestly thought about deleting the whole fic because it's mega CRINGE but I had so much fun writing it and I love my garbage son. And I know some of you like him too. So no, I won't ever delete it. It's 20Frankenteen and I'm becoming the monster and chasing my bliss.

I can have fun playing with shitty problematic characters by problematic people. Besides, I kinda went "how about I just-" and covered everything in gasoline and struck a match anyway¯\_(ツ)_/¯ I've proven again and again in my life that I don't like nice things and I think that is very brave and sexy of me.

I don't love this chapter. I beat it into submission the best I could I swear but it just did not want to come. I don't want to look at it anymore so just have it.

Chapter Notes

Spoilers for the original Hans Christian Andersen Little Mermaid.

She dies.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There’s a trunk in a hole in the ground. He knows it’s there because he vaguely remembers seeing it as a baby. But mostly because, in the dead of night, he sees his mother pouring over its contents.

His black eyes watch from a crack in the door as his mother’s bone white fingers caress over a book. He knows how cool and gentle that touch feels. If Mother is using the very same touch on the book that he uses on him, it must be important.

The gloom in Mother's bedroom is meekly fought by a single tallow candle. Its flame hardly flickers in the still, damp air. Mother is like an ink drawing on faded paper. Kneeling before the hole in the ground, he sits deathly still, harsh black filling in where soft shadow should linger, skin mottled white and yellow in the weak light. Tommy can see his lips form a word, but cannot hear the sound. Perhaps there hadn’t been any sound after all, the word too sacred and powerful to fully give life to; a forbidden spell maybe, dark and old and terrifying.
He watches as Severus sits aside the book and lifts an opalescent mask from the trunk. It’s shaped like a skull and is one of the most wondrous items his eyes have ever seen. Surely such a thing must be of grave importance, a grand relic that must be kept safe and secret.

He hears his mother murmur, “oh, Tom,” the words falling from him in a sigh like a final breath. Had that been the word he hadn’t dared to speak moments ago? A simple name, but of obvious importance. Certainly Tommy was a child, but he wasn’t brainless. It all painted a fairly clear picture. But in order to see the full panorama he’d have to see the contents of the trunk himself.

He waits until the next night to creep into his mother’s room, his bare feet carefully rolling from heel to ball to minimize noise. Carefully he cracked open the door to Mother’s room, just enough for him to slip inside.

He groped in the darkness, trying to find the loose section of flooring. Towards the corner of the room, away from the bed was where he saw it. However, crawling on hands and knees pulling randomly at stones didn’t prove to be his best idea. He must have gotten turned around in the blackness because the next thing he knew, he crashed headfirst into the bed, causing Mother to bolt up, wand already alight.

“Tommy?” he said, groggily, voice rough with sleep.

“I had a nightmare,” he lied casually.

“You never have nightmares. What was it about?”

“Bugs. There were so many on the wall, crawling down towards me. And I was trapped in a room with them and they were going to eat me.” That seemed believable enough, didn’t it? Nothing odd about that.

Severus eyed him skeptically in the dim light for a moment, then relented. “Do you want to sleep in my bed?” That’s what you were supposed to do with scared children, right? That’s what he had heard anyway. Besides, he didn’t see any harm in it. At least for one night anyway.

“Yes please,” Tommy replied. As far as bad plans went, it really could have gone much worse, he thought as he climbed into the bed. And anyway, it was nice to curl up next to Mother under the warm blankets. He felt gentle fingers stroke his hair as he drifted to sleep, already thinking up a new plan.

He found an easy opportunity come Sunday. He was rather proud of his idea too. They were supposed to meet with the Headmaster for afternoon tea (which was already horribly boring). In preparation for his deception, that morning he’d eaten very little at breakfast and by lunch complained of a stomach ache, refusing to eat all together.

Always the skeptic, Severus felt his son’s forehead. “You don’t feel hot, but I suppose that isn’t uncommon for a stomach virus. I’ll give you something for nausea though.” Tommy wrinkled his nose but stayed quiet. He knew Mum was trying to call his bluff with the potion. Having to drink something that tasted of rotten bog water might actually be worse than feeling sick (not that he was sick but that was besides the point). But if it got him alone with that trunk it was worth it. Ruefully he drank what appeared to be an extra large dose of the foul stuff. “All right, if you’re sick you need rest. Off to bed.” He was bored already, he thought as he was bundled up in his room. “And while you’re convalescing,” Severus said, handing Tommy a workbook for basic spelling and penmanship as well as a pencil.

“But it’s Sunday!” Tommy whined, incensed.
“And you haven’t anything better to do.”

It wasn’t like he actually had to do any of it right now, Tommy decided, taking the book and pencil. He could trace a few letters maybe and sneak a book from the shelf once Mum left the room. This was an unfortunate bump in his plan, but nothing he couldn’t easily overcome.

Severus leaned down and kissed him on the forehead. “You’d better not get me sick as well,” he teased. Unlikely, Tommy thought, smiling.

Once he was alone, Tommy waited for a few moments before he crept out of bed and slipped a book from his shelf. He liked The Little Mermaid well enough. It was silly, and very muggle, but there were parts that he thought were quite good despite that.

“Every step she took was as the witch had said it would be, she felt as if treading upon the points of needles or sharp knives; but she bore it willingly, and stepped as lightly by the prince’s side as a soap-bubble, so that he and all who saw her wondered at her graceful-swaying movements. She was very soon arrayed in costly robes of silk and muslin, and was the most beautiful creature in the palace; but she was dumb, and could neither speak nor sing.”

To be so devoted, to sacrifice all of your powers and risk your life for someone, to live the rest of your life in pain seemed very foolish to him. And in the end, the prince she so loved didn’t even choose her. The poor thing dissolved to blood and foam in the sea after he married a different princess. Even after her sisters, many and kind, had come to her in her time of need, offering her a way back into the sea.

“Before the sun rises you must plunge it into the heart of the prince; when the warm blood falls upon your feet they will grow together again, and form into a fish’s tail, and you will be once more a mermaid, and return to us to live out your three hundred years before you die and change into the salt sea foam. Haste, then; he or you must die before sunrise.”

She should have done it, she should have plunged to knive into his chest and bathed in his blood. She should have gone home to her kingdom, a prodigal daughter returned from the cruel surface to live out her 300 years. Afterall, why would she wish to be a weak, magicless human, bleeding and voiceless, when she could live as a queen at the bottom of the sea, surrounded by finery and magic? Stupid thing. Perhaps she deserved to die after all.

The door suddenly opened, making Tommy jerk in surprise. “Tommy, you were supposed to be studying,” said a very disapproving Severus from the doorway.

“This is the same thing! I already know all the letters, otherwise I couldn’t read!” To be fair, a lot of the words were beyond him still, but he’d heard it read aloud enough times to get the gist of it.

“Your penmanship will remain terrible, however.” Severus said, crossing his arms.

“I’ll just use a dictaquill.”

“What if you’re somewhere you can’t speak out loud?”

“I’ll invent one that can read thoughts!” he said with a big smile on his face, smug at so easily beating the system.

Severus couldn’t help but smile. To be so self assured and confident was surely a hallmark of youth. He hoped his son retained at least some of his that childhood confidence in the years to come. “You will, will you?” he said teasingly. He uncrossed his arms and walked the short distance to Tommy’s bedside. “Maybe I should invent something to make little boys actually do
what they’re told.”

Tommy’s eyes widened and looked up at him with a mixture of awe and betrayal. “You wouldn't!”

Severus laughed softly as his son’s outcry. “Maybe I’ll look into it after tea with the headmaster.” His face fell at that thought. He really shouldn’t leave his son alone, especially if he was ill. But he hadn’t vomited. But he hadn’t eaten anything either. “I should cancel, actually.”

“No! If I have to be bored in bed, then you have to be bored with the headmaster! It’s only fair!”

“Perhaps I should ask Minerva to watch you.”

“That’s worse than being sick!”

“Tommy-”

“I took the potion! I’ll be fine by myself. I swear I’ll be good! I swear on my favorite book!”

Unconsciously Severus bit down on his thumbnail. Was it really okay to leave him alone? No, of course not. He was sick! But probably not. Though he was so small. But mature for his age. And hadn’t he himself been mostly alone at that age? And somehow he was still alive. And his private quarters were some of the safest in the whole school. Besides, how much trouble could a little boy who just wanted to read stories in bed get into?

He exhaled a nervous breath and ran his fingers through his hair, the oily strands snagging on his jagged and untrimmed nails. It was probably fine. He’d been rather well behaved lately. And it was only for an hour. And honestly, he wasn't too terribly comfortable with letting Tommy around the headmaster yet. Tommy was a good boy, and Albus was only ever kind to him, plying him with too many sweets and fantastic tales which, much to Severus' pride, his son had little interest in. But he knew Albus' eye could, in turns, be both penetrating and blind. While all seeing, he sometimes twisted things to suit his own view of the world, making Severus worried he may construct some fatal flaw in his son. Afterall, Tommy liked fire too much, contentedly staring into it for long periods of time. Severus had caught him feeding scraps of paper and bits of fabric into the candles on a few occasions. And weren’t Tommy's favorite stories the most grim and gruesome he could find? While Severus didn't think much of it, he worried that Albus might find it cause for concern. And Albus' word was worth more than its weight in gold. He'd so easily swayed the wizengamot in favor of Severus' innocence, when he could not have clearly been more guilty. What would one word of suspicion against his son do? The wizarding world was just as prone to paranoia as any other society, if not more so, ready to shred itself to bits in its own madness, to draw the blood of their own in manic fear. They would have no trouble tearing apart a child if they thought they had a reason to fear him. It most certainly wouldn't be the first time they had.

Severus took a deep breath, dank air sucking in past his thin, chapped lips. He breathed out through his nose, trying to force all of his anxiety out through respiration alone. “Fine. You may stay. But if I find out you've gotten up to no good you won't have the chance to be alone until you're an adult. And I mean it. If an emergency happens you can call for a house elf and they will fetch me.”

“I'll be very good. I promise!” Tommy proclaimed, milk tooth smile wide and sharp.

After Mother finally left Tommy waited quietly in his bed, counting down five minutes since he’d heard the soft click of their chamber doors closing. He slipped out from beneath the covers, bare feet padding softly out of his room and into the kitchenette. He grabbed an apple from the
cupboard, biting through the shiny red skin. Tommy loved apples, not because he relished the taste, but because he enjoyed the way the crisp fruit seemed to fight against him. The wet, resistant crunch of pale yellow flesh, the way his little teeth would viciously sink in to tear away a solid hunk. The visceral nature spoke to something in him, something instinctual and intrinsic to his very being. In his hunger he quickly gnawed it to the core, sticky juice dripping down his chin and fingers. He tossed the remains into bin where they automatically disappear, no muss no fuss, no need to hide the evidence. He rinsed his hands and face clean before he slipped into his mother’s room.

In the corner in the back of the room, next to a shelf full of boring potion books, Tommy found the loose stones. Frantically, his small fingers tore them away, piling them up behind him; a heavy clink echoing for every one that met the pile. With each piece moved Tommy revealed more of the worn fabric of a small chest.

This was it, this was the secret treasure his mother kept buried and hidden in the earth, like the corpse of left to rot in shameful secrecy. His hands pulled at the buckles keeping it closed and slipped the fabric straps through the metal. And finally, the treasure was his.

Inside there was a bundle of black fabric, the gauzy linen rough beneath his fingers. Careful as can be, he lifts it out of the chest, clutching it gently to his body. He can feel things swaddled inside of it, wrapped up with care before they were gently laid to rest. He lays the bundle on the floor near the foot of his mother’s bed to fully unwrap it, hands peeling away the layers hiding the prize inside. As it unfurls he sees it isn’t just cloth but a hooded robe, long and narrow, tailored to fit his mother’s willowy frame. But inside, oh, wonder of wonders, is the skull mask. It’s pearlescent, gleaming snow white and palest blue in the candle light, smooth and cool beneath his fingers.

Had his mother worn this once? Donned the flowing, hooded robe and the glorious mask? He must have looked beautiful and terrifying, black cloth fluttering around him, his strides as long and sure as they had ever been, striking fear in all who saw him. Tommy sets the mask to his own face. It’s too big by far, but he feels powerful, unstoppable as he looks through the eyes. Oh but there is no time to play, no time to wrap himself in the robe and hold the mask on as he stumbles through the rooms like a terror, commanding imaginary armies to fight his wars. He sets the it aside for now, and lays his hand on the only other object hidden in the trunk. A book. It’s small and weathered, leather bound, and without a title. Carefully, he cracks it open.

To his surprise, there are no spells, nor powerful curses, no formulas for secret and deadly poisons. What’s hidden within the pages is so much better.

Photos.

There aren’t as many pictures in the book as he would have liked, but the ones that are there are telling. There’s one of Mother and a man standing before a group of figures wearing the amazing masks. One of Mother with Tommy heavy and ripe in his tummy. Then a picture of Mother, looking more harried and haggard than ever before, his long hair damp with sweat, his face flushed from exertion, eyes half lidded with exhaustion. But he’s holding a baby. Tiny and crinkled and bright pink, almost alien in its newness. That’s me, Tommy thought as his fingers gently brushed the picture.

Oh, The man again. Mum and baby me and the man from before. A handsome, older man with dark hair slicked back from his face, just one shade lighter than his and Mother's deepest black, and odd almost red eyes stood with his arm around Severus. They were in a garden, the sky endless and blue above them, flowers of all types and colors bobbing peacefully in the breeze. He could almost
smell their sweet scent, almost feel the cool caress of wind on his cheek.

They all looked so happy. He'd never seen that look on his mother's face, never seen such easy contentment cross his normally stern features.

Tom. Mother had said that before, a whispered lamentation into the dark, grief heavy on his breath.

But Tommy wasn't Tom, had never been Tom. Tommy was the baby. Tom was the handsome man who was happy to be with them, who would turn to gaze at them lovingly, reverently.

His father. He must be. He knew, in an abstract sort of way, that he must have a father. But he never asked who or where he was.

And then, before he was allowed to memorize his face, his voice, his love, someone had taken Father away, and that made Mother very sad. But who could do such a thing? Could so callously rip a family apart like that?

Tommy felt an anger bloom in his small heart, rich like marrow and as poisonous and terrible as lead, undercut only by a heavy sorrow, a longing for something he hadn't even known he'd wanted until he knew couldn't have it.

Furiously, his small hand turned the page of the album so quickly and harshly the page almost tore. Oh. This was a good picture too; so painfully ideal it set a fire in him fueled by want.

Mother and Father Tom standing side by side again, baby Tommy balanced on Father's hip, the people in the glorious masks and black robes stood before them, seemingly in worship.

Father must have been a great man then, to stand at the head of so glorious a gathering, proud and strong with what surely must be his beloved family at his side. Tommy felt himself a prince as he gazed at the picture. But something had happened, and now he was forsaken, outcast, stripped of his kingdom and his title.

But why? Why destroy his family, his army, his lands? Why force Mother to hide these sacred artifacts like a dirty shame?

As many questions as his foray had answered, Tommy was still left with many mysteries. But he dare not ask a soul. Whatever these things where, whatever they meant, he knew they must be secret, sacred, not to be spoken of. Despite the curiosity that burned within him, he would hold his tongue, just as strong, lonely Mother did.

Suddenly, a thought came to him. What time was it? Had it been an hour? Was Mother due back any second?

Carefully, Tommy set the photo album and the mask down on the robe and bundled them up as neatly as he could. If he got caught, would he ever solve the mystery? Would something bad happen to him and Mother if he was found out? Surely it would be something terrible, something unspeakable. He had to hurry, he had to set everything back before Mother come home.

It was easy to set the bundle back in the trunk and buckle it, but the hard part was going to be arranging the irregular stones back in place.

Shoving the whole pile back on top of the trunk, Tommy frantically began trying to rearrange them properly with very little luck. How did Mother do this so easily? As his small hands scrabbled, panic started to ooze into him. He didn’t have time, how could he fit everything into place before it was too late? **Why wouldn’t these stupid stones just do what he wished?**
As soon as he had that thought, the stones abruptly started to move, rearranging themselves quickly and perfectly into place atop the chest. Startled, Tommy sat back, eyes wide. He’d done it. Inadvertently he’d used his own magic to set the stones back just as they had been before. Perfect. Everything was simply perfect.

It would over a year before he had any type of answer.

It’s the papers that finally tell him the truth, or at the very least give him a glimpse of it. Between the staff and the older students, various publications have a tendency to be left lying around for small and eager hands. It’s the illustration that catches his eye. Adorning the cover is a drawing of two people standing side by side, clad in plain, flowing black robes and skull shaped masks. Tommy feels his heart beat faster and his breath catch. Father’s army. Tommy knows these things, has the real pictures and robes and mask bundled up in a trunk in a hole in the ground, safe and secret and sacred.

Death Eaters: Still at large?

"Everyone knows on that fateful night, Oct. 31st, 1981, the dark lord, he who must not be named, was vanquished by a mere infant, the boy who lived, Harry Potter.

But after his fall, not all of his followers were accounted for. Could a small group still be out there, lying in wait to avenge their fallen lord?

Cont p4"

A lord’s son, descended from noble blood. He knew it. But to have been killed by a baby? Tommy doubted it. Lies and slander, surely. But for now, this may be the only information he had access to.

Page four it was.

Chapter End Notes

So this is my theory on human intelligence. Kids are a lot smarter than we give them credit for. You're smart until you hit 11 then you're a fucking idiot until you're 40. I'm 27 and I'm dumber now than I have ever been in my whole god damn life. Which is, again, very sexy and brave of me.

Anyway, depending on how I feel, there may just be one chapter left. Or maybe a very short one and then the finale.

edit: I got a second wind so there's probably gonna be 3 more full chapters. I get embarrassed that I'm writing this which makes me anxious so I get writers block. Then I take my anxiety meds and go oh fuck this is actually fun who gives a shit if it's gauche! Then I write 1000 words of pure dialog that's gonna need 1000 more words of scene description.
The Subtle Art of Subterfuge

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Albus does not particularly care for Mr. Crouch. Too power hungry, too single minded, too cruel. Oh, certainly Albus understands that, in times of war, some sacrifices must be made to ensure the safety of the many. But that doesn't mean one must relish the cruelties they allow.

However much he may dislike the man, Albus unfortunately finds himself in the rather delicate position of keeping Severus out of Azkaban. If one is to interpenetrate the word position literally, it means sitting across from Mr. Crouch himself in the sparsely decorated office of the Head of Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Not a picture or a painting in sight, no pretty jars of tempting candy, no bobbles to marvel at, nothing at all to enchant the eye. To have such a fine office to himself and do nothing to it. Such a waste, he thinks pityingly. Mr. Crouch is perched behind his desk, an accusatory glare fixed on his face.

“You would see them all pardoned, Headmaster,” Crouch sneers.

“Not all of them,” Albus says lightly back. He sits patiently across from him in the uncomfortable chair that's been provided, the picture of politeness and good naturedness. “I never once questioned the incarceration of the Lestrange family. Nor the validity of Sirius Black’s imprisonment, despite there being no actual trial,” he sniffs, taking a sip of the bitter, starchy tea Crouch has provided him. The man didn't even offer sugar. Perhaps what they say about the death of common decency in this day and age is true.

“I fail to see how this is much different. He's as guilty as them! He needs to pay for his crimes,” Crouch insists back.

“And yet, you've provided no evidence of any actual crimes, Mr. Crouch,” he replies, trying to find a comfortable position in the truly deplorable chair he's trapped in. Honestly, he thought perhaps age and rank would afford him more comforts than this. “The Wizengamot is more than willing to acquit, after all.”

Crouch blusters from his position at his desk and slams his hands on the hard wood. “Damn what the Wizengamot says! Is the mark he wears not enough for you lot?!”

“And I've told you, again and again, he only took the mark on my order. He was a spy for us, Mr. Crouch. And an invaluable one at that,” Albus answers, keeping his tone as even as possible. “We would have no knowledge of any Death Eater activity without Severus. Because of him, we were able to preemptively stop many attacks on the Muggle community.”

“And yet you will provide me no evidence that these supposed plans existed!”

“Mr. Crouch, with all due respect, because they were stopped there is no evidence of them having existed,” he remarks, taking another sip of the dreadful, sugarless tea. At least the warmth from the cup feels good on his old hands.

“Of course. Isn't that so convenient!” Crouch shouts, face turning red. “You have nothing to prove his innocence!”

“And you have nothing to prove his guilt,” Albus replies calmly, balancing the cup on his knee.
Crouch takes a deep breath and buries his face in his hands. “I just don't see why you're so fixated on keeping him out of Azkaban, Headmaster. He's just *one* Death Eater.”

“I could not assuage my guilt if I let you convict an innocent man. Especially if he was under my orders to begin with,” he says, expression drawing long and serious upon his wizened face.

“By all accounts, he joined when he was seventeen. I find it very much unlike you to send a teenager into that viper pit,” Crouch snaps back.

“Troublesome times call for less than honorable choices, as you yourself well know,” he says, seriousness trickling into his tone. “He was willing, and we were in desperate need of the information.” Albus wraps his hands around his cooling cup. He had not expected Crouch to be so hard to persuade. Likely still sore about the flagrant acquittal of Lucius Malfoy, he was going after someone he thought much further down on the social ladder than rich, well bred Lucius. He had probably assumed that no one would come to bat for a poor, friendless halfblood.

Crouch shakes his head, still resistant to his words. “Why would anyone be willing to do such a thing?”

“You know how teenagers are; they’re so full of youthful bravado that they think they're invincible,” he responds, removing one hand from his cup to wave it flippantly. “Don't you have a son around that age?”

Crouch scoffs, “if my son ever joined the Death Eaters, I wouldn't think twice about sending him to Azkaban, Headmaster.”

Albus frowns, “you say that, Mr. Crouch, but-”

“I say it and I mean it!” he roars, “Snape is as guilty as any other Death Eater!” Albus had, upon entering the office, been perplexed by the lack of adornments. Now he understood. Crouch was only focused on his power, his own iron clad world view, and his impossibly high standards, caring not a crumb for anything that may distract his attention, be they trinket or family. Poor Barty jr.

“Guilty of making a few pepper up potions for bad men?” Albus plied. “Are the healers at St. Mungo's not obligated to provide care even for those who are guilty?”

Crouch sets a glare on him, trying to pin the headmaster in place. “I have credible information that he did more than that. Auror Hutchins was found dead in his home the previous year. A young, healthy man like that, just dropped dead in his own kitchen for no apparent reason, according to the autopsy. That's poisoners work, Headmaster. Not only that, but sources say Snape was also greatly favored by the higher ups, even by the Dark Lord himself.” Crouch leans forward, hands crossed neatly on his Spartan desk, eyes narrowing as his gaze intensifies. “And that boy of his, he is the mother, is he not?” he whispers conspiratorially. “Then, what I would like to know, is who the father is. No one seems to have any idea who put it in him, and he's certainly not saying. I don't like it. That child could be dangerous.”

“What are you saying, Mr. Crouch?” Albus, of course, knows exactly what he's saying. And it is, unfortunately, the truth. It seems he had vastly underestimated Crouch’s intelligence.

“Dark creatures breed with other dark creatures, Headmaster, and those Death Eaters got up to all types of depravity,” he snarls, “I have half a mind to subpoena a paternity charm. I for one, would not be too surprised to find out that he who must-”

“Did I ever tell you, Mr. Crouch, that I was considering running for minister?” Albus cuts him off
abruptly, denying him the opportunity to voice such a damning suspicion.

“Excuse me?” Crouch says, clearly thrown off guard.

“Yes. For the last year or so, I was entertaining the idea that perhaps I could really make some changes for the better,” he says, airily. Albus sets his now cold cup on the desk and crosses one leg over the other, the picture of casual conversation. “However, recently I find myself encumbered by a responsibility I was heretofore unaware of. You're a family man yourself, Mr. Crouch. You know how taxing it is, having a child.” He laces his fingers together on his knee, shifting on his hip to try and ease his aching back.

Albus does not like to lie, but he knows sometimes it is indeed for the best. Crouch is a dangerous man, and such an accusation would destroy a child. He would rather make a gamble, and let the pieces fall where they may.

“Are you saying, Headmaster, that you sired that boy?” he asks, incredulous.

“I am saying no such thing, Mr. Crouch. It would be entirely inappropriate for me to have fathered a child with someone so young, especially a former student. Think of the scandal it would cause! Certainly I would be ousted as Headmaster!” he laughs easily. If Crouch takes the lies he's spinning and uses them to destroy Albus Dumbledore's sterling reputation, the backlash it would cause would likely ruin Crouch as well. And Crouch is, if nothing else, very politically minded. Meaning he’s more than aware of this likelihood. The times are rapidly changing, but there are still many people who would be willing to look past such a dalliance. “I'm just saying that, because of recent events, I am no longer able to run for minister. Leaving the position open for someone else,” he says, raising his eyebrows conspiratorially. Everyone knows Crouch wants to be minister. Wants it like a starving dog wants a rotted scrap of meat. He is, unfortunately, a shoe in. Unless, of course, Albus himself decided to run.

Crouch goes quiet for awhile, weighing the lies set before him. “I see,” he finally replies. “And you said that, on your oath as a wizard, Mr. Snape was acting on your order as a spy, and has participated in no true criminal activity?” he says, leaning back in his chair. Let the man have a piece of gossip, let him think he has some control over Albus. As long as he doesn't know who Tommy's father actually is, it's worth the risk.

“Something like that, yes,” he says with a smile.

“Well then,” Crouch starts, “normally, I wouldn’t be inclined to believe such a thing, but considering certain, ah, new information, I'm willing to release mother and child into your custody, Headmaster, to do with as you will,” he says as if it disgusts him. “Though, if anything regarding criminal activity comes to light, that shall be on your head.”

“Perfectly reasonable, Mr. Crouch.” Albus unfolds his hands and uncrosses his legs to stand. “And may I just say, I think you would make a very good Minister of Magic in my stead,” he tells him, smiling. “If anyone asks, I would be more than happy to endorse you.” Barring some catastrophe, Crouch will have the job with or without his recommendation. He might as well give him this useless token.

“That is very gracious of you, Headmaster. Your word, currently, means a lot to the community.”

The smile never wavers from his face as Albus leaves, throwing behind his shoulder, “indeed it does, Mr. Crouch.”

Severus will not like this. Not one bit.
“What. Did. You. Say?” Severus growled out between clenched teeth. Albus knew he would react like this but needs must, after all. Really, he’s just happy to be back in his own office, rosy sunshine streaming in through the windows and making all of his knickknacks shine beautifully. He’d summoned Severus immediately upon his arrival, happy to tell him the good news and the unfortunate caveat that came with it. Severus sat with his son in his lap, the dark hair adorning both their heads blue black in the setting sun.

“Severus, he was going to order a paternity charm. I had to give him a very good reason not to,” Albus says, carefully trying to crack his back.

Severus covers Tommy’s ears so his oncoming shouts won't bother him, long hands eating up the real estate of his son’s tiny face. “So bloody let him! Nobody knows who Tom Riddle is! It would have meant nothing to them.” Tommy fusses and squirms, tiny hands tugging at his mother’s spider fingers until they’re lifted away.

“Would you truly be willing to take that chance with your son's life?” Albus says, settling in behind his desk.

Severus casts his black eyes down to his son’s fragile head and his narrow shoulders sag. “I don’t see why we couldn’t have used my plan.”

“Crouch would convict Merlin himself if he thought he sneezed the wrong way. Blackmailing him about his son's Death Eater status does nothing.”

“Isn’t it bad enough people already think I’m your pet?” he bites out through his crooked teeth, “I don’t need them thinking I’m your mistress as well!”

Albus sighs deeply and looks over his charge. Severus is still young, and very much still wounded from a life that has always been a war. His dignity being the only thing he’s ever had to cling to. “I don’t think pride is the greatest sacrifice that could be made this day, my boy,” he chastises gently. “You have to realize what is ultimately at stake. You must understand that there will be even worse compromises in the future. This will be the easiest of them all, I believe.” He watches as Severus wilts a bit, seeming to fold himself protectively over Tommy. If he bristles at every slight and fights at every turn, he will wear himself to bones before any good can be had of him. He must learn to choose his battles.

It is unfortunate that Severus doesn't trust easily at this point in his life, not that Albus would expect him to or even recommend that he did. Not with what will be riding on him in the future. A heavy burden, no doubt, but it isn't as if Severus is the only one who stands to lose something in the coming conflicts. Though Albus will try to shield him from what he can. He is not ashamed to admit that he has become fond of him in the recent months. It is with a heavy heart that he admits to have misjudged him in his early years. True, he's scathing at best, quick to judge, impatient, and terribly unsuited to teaching (much to everyone's consternation). But he loves deeper than anyone the Headmaster has ever met, and his caustic sense of humor does not go unappreciated either. He's an intelligent young man and his remarkably quick thinking will serve them well. And the few times Albus has caught him off guard, the way his eyes widen and he shrinks back rather like a rabbit in a wolf's gaze is something he finds oddly endearing. He's come to think of Severus as a son. And really, it's about time someone did, he thinks sadly.

Sometimes Albus has to wonder if Riddle ever thought the age gap between the two was odd, but such a man probably wasn't capable of thinking past his own desires. He had seen something he wanted and had taken it. In his darker thoughts, Dumbledore wonders what would have happened to Severus if he had said no to Tom's advances. But he bares enough burdens, and there is no need
to add to them with what ifs. Not when the what wills are as troubling.

Riddle will rise again, and he will no doubt want his kin to join him; cruel fingers beckoning them lovingly to the darkness, mouth spouting lies as sweet as promises. And that is if he is feeling kind. There are terrible hurts he could inflict upon Severus, punishments Albus dares not think about, if Tom feels he has been betrayed. The worst part of that is a quick death would be merciful to Severus, but ultimately a terrible outcome for those depending on him. He would simply have to endure. It is most fortunate then, that the poor boy has already spent his life doing so, and will be quite experienced when the time comes.

“And do remind me to bring my own chair and tea next time I'm stuck at the Ministry for any length of time,” Albus said, trying to lighten the mood.

Severus stormed back to his dungeon, Tommy heavy in his arms. He’d be damned if he lets this go. Albus could speak of futures and consequences and sacrifices all he wants, but damn it he was pissed now.

Back in his own quarters, he sets Tommy gently down on the floor. “We are not just going to let this lie,” he tells him. Tommy babbles something incomprehensible in return, little hands reaching up to briefly tug at Severus’ hair, fascinated by the loose strands. “Go play with something for a moment, Mummy is busy,” he says, pointing to the corner filled with colorful trash that is, supposedly, very entertaining for children. Tommy, with that odd half walk half run of a toddler, goes to his corner and begins sorting through it for something interesting.

With his son momentarily distracted, Severus begins collecting the items needed to write a letter. He knew from the moment he walked out of the Headmaster’s office what he was going to do. Albus isn’t the only one who can be a manipulative ass.

He knows through Lucius that Igor Karkaroff is next on the chopping block. He also knows that Karkaroff is a coward. Luckily he hadn’t been a high enough ranking Death Eater to have any useful information. He wasn't sure if Karkaroff was even aware that Severus had a son, yet alone who the father was. Igor posed virtually no danger to anyone but himself which was ideal for what he had in mind.

Severus had just opened his inkwell when he feels a tap on his leg. Startled, he looks down to see Tommy, holding a book out to him with a determined expression on his tiny face. “Give me five minutes. After that I’ll read your book,” he says, turning back to his letter. In response, Tommy insistently taps his leg again and continues to shove the book at him. Severus sighs in fond exasperation and feels a smile slowly curl on his lips. “One minute then.”

Quickly he pens: My name won't grant you amnesty. Use Crouch Jr’s.

A date is set for Karkaroff’s trial, and Albus requests Severus’ company, most likely trying to prove a point to him. Something about responsibility and consequences, the razor edge of a warning mixed in too.

He sits in the bleachers next to the Headmaster, and can’t help but notice the way Crouch Sr’s eyes land on them briefly before he scowls and looks away. That bastard will have much more to worry about soon, Severus thinks with a self satisfied smirk.

The atmosphere here is terrible. Cold but humid, the mood tense and charged like an oncoming
storm, the disquiet in the crowd growing every minute. Finally, they bring Igor out. His hair is long and tangled, he’s half starved but fully mad, and his movements are quick and abrupt. As his gaze lingers on the pitiful man set before them, Severus realizes in a deep part of himself, that this very easily could have been him. Without Albus’ tender, sentimental mercies, he could be there right now, dressed in rags and locked in a cage, pinned down by the bloodthirsty eyes of the audience, begging for his very soul. His son lost to him, perhaps even dead.

The gravity of it all consumes him, and for a moment he feels crushed beneath a possibility that hadn’t come to pass. He clenches his fists at his sides and swallows back the lump forming in his throat, doesn’t fuss or squawk when Albus lays a hand comfortingly over his own. Severus hadn’t allowed this fate befall him. He’d been smart enough to leave, burrow into the safety of an old man’s pity, arms full of child and eyes full of fear.

When the questioning begins in earnest, Karkaroff predictably gives Severus’ name up with a manic grin. Igor’s frenzied eyes locking onto his, and Severus cannot help but smile cruelly back. Told you so, his expression says. Faltering briefly, Igor looks around the room, gaze terrible and frantic before landing on Crouch Jr. When he is declared a Death Eater, chaos erupts all around and a tainted, sickly satisfaction blooms in his chest like rotted rose.

Albus eyes Severus knowingly, a disappointed look on his face. He cannot help but offer a crooked sort of smile in return. The Crouch name is ruined, as is any bid for Minister, but most importantly any chance someone might care to hear what Crouch has to say about Tommy.

Chapter End Notes

I hope this is a decent chapter. I feel like it shows I ran out of steam at the end. But it just needed more bastard in it. Also came back and added like 500 more words of exposition. I didn't think it was coming across enough that Albus was super dad zoning Severus.

Dumbledore in the 70's: fuck this kid
Dumbledore in the 80's and 90's: actually we stan

Hold on I have more jokes! Or memes, actually.

Snape: I have never done anything wrong ever. In my life.
Dumbledore: I know this. And I love you.

Everyone: Snape is an asshole and you should fire him.
Dumbledore: But you don't have all the facts.
Everyone: Which are?
Dumbledore: I love him.

Dumbledore: I've only known Severus for 20 years, but if anything were to happen to him I would kill everyone in this school and then myself.
I also personally find it kinda funny that, in the context of my own fanfic at least, until now old guys have only ever had two modes with Severus, beat the shit out of him or fuck him, and he doesn't know how to deal with nice people.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!