That which we make for ourselves

by Magentasouth

Summary

Harry accepts his fate and follows Voldemort into the Forbidden Forest to be killed.
He blinked. “what?”, trying to convince himself that he’d misheard.

He was having a moment of madness. He could not really have heard the headmaster say he was going to have to allow Voldemort to kill him or the wizarding world would be lost.

“Oh Harry...I am so very sorry, my boy, truly – if there were any other way...” Dumbledore’s portrait said with a sorrowful expression. Seated at the headmaster’s desk beneath the portrait, Headmistress McGonagall pursed her lips with a dark expression but said nothing.

Harry gaped.
He wanted to leap up and rant.
He wanted to leap up and run out of the room, run far away from the man he’d trusted to get them all through the war.
He wanted to leap up and do anything at all, smash things, stamp his feet, scream – but he found he just didn’t have the strength to do it right now.

Instead he sat numbly, slack jawed, his eyes slightly unfocused, unable to comprehend that after he’d done everything asked of him, after all the deaths..Sirius..Remus.. Fuck after Hermione.. goddamn it. After all he’d given – they wanted his life too.
And they had from the start.
It had always been the plan to use him like this – never telling him what was coming next, never telling him why he had to do anything..never telling him what he was.
He’d spent the last six years of his life fighting against a monster that gave him almost nightly nightmares and nobody would ever tell him why. They made up rubbish over and over again to feed to him about why the snakefaced bastard had an open line into his head, they told him he would find out whatever he wished to know when he was ready – he shouldn’t question, -

and he had swallowed it. He’d been so desperate to save the few good things in his world that he’d have done anything.

And so he’d gone off on the run to find Voldemort’s horcruxes without question.

He’d left without even saying goodbye to his friends because he knew that Ron would make a fuss and Hermione would never let him go without her...and he didn’t want her with him in case he failed – in case they were captured and something happened to her.

He didn’t want her(.or Ron, he supposed.. but mostly her) – in danger. It had taken a long time for him to realise exactly how he felt about her – she was his best friend, even if the world might think him closer to Ron..even if the world might think her closer to Ron – Hermione understood him.
She was never petty or spiteful; always believed him, no matter how strange what he said might have sounded..she was always worried for him.
And.. and she was beautiful..and clever and brave and ...it was impossible to work out just when he’d gone from laughing and tickling and drinking cocoa in front of the fire with her and Ron to imagining how it might be to kiss her and run his fingers through her hair..trail them over her slender neck.. how it might be if she looked up at him with heat in her wide amber eyes.

He’d never told her how he felt and she’d never seemed to notice the way he looked at her.
He had decided that if he survived the horcrux hunt he’d come back and apologise for leaving her behind..beg her for her forgiveness (since he’d known she would be furious) and tell her how much he loved her.

But instead he had come back a month ago to discover that the order had apparently failed to prevent a death eater raid upon her parents house while she was visiting them and she was dead.

He hadn’t known. According to McGonagall, the headmaster had instructed that the news of Hermione’s death be kept quiet. He’d prevented it even being reported in the papers – because he didn’t want Harry to somehow, by chance, hear of it and abandon his mission purely in order to mourn his best friend.

In recollection, Harry had felt a rush of joy and triumph from voldemort a few months back and had known something horrible had happened to something he was fighting to protect – His friends, the order, the ministry, the wizarding world – Voldemort had clearly done something that Harry would hate when he learned of it.

The last month between that meeting with McGonagall and the current one, he’d spent mostly staring at walls and trying to understand that she wasn’t going to walk into his room and scold him like she always did with that doting little smile because he hadn’t been training or hadn’t eaten much at dinner or had been short with someone.

She wasn’t going to laugh or hug him or tell him with great big animated eyes about the newest theory or spell she’d just gleaned from some doubtlessly dusty old tome that he had no intention of ever reading.

She wasn’t going to do anything. Ever again.

There wasn’t even a body – they’d torched the house.

He’d been hopeful when he heard that until professor McGonagall had produced a pensieve memory provided by professor Snape.

The fucking bastard had been there.

He’d been in the bloody ROOM when Hermione was killed and he’d done NOTHING.

If Harry had wanted to kill the vicious old - there wasn’t a word bad enough – then that desire was increased a thousand-fold now. One day he would end him!

The memory, when he’d watched it had showed Voldemort himself casting the Avada Kedavra upon Hermione’s parents and then the girl herself.

She didn’t even cry at their deaths – just stood there beautiful and strong and perfect, waiting for it and told him “you will be defeated.”

When the green flash struck her she slumped bonelessly to the floor like a puppet with the strings cut.

Harry had watched it over and over for the first few days, trying to find anything about it that might suggest it was a fake.. he knew it wasn’t but he had to hope.

Was there anything.. any little thing that was off about it? He couldn’t find anything.

In the pensieve Hermione had lay, half on her side, her soft amber eyes wide and empty and voldemort had stepped forward and inspected her as if she were some kind of hunting trophy.

“Such a pity about her blood status..” he’d said thoughtfully. “You say she was quite a capable witch?”
The potions master had walked closer and looked down with his head slightly tilted. “Incredibly annoying, My Lord, but yes.. an exceedingly bright girl. Her marks were the highest Hogwarts has seen since your own... she was..an acceptable potions student too. Had she not been attached at the hip to the boy wonder and his moronic sidekick she might have achieved far more.”

“Truly?!” the memory Voldemort raised hairless eyebrows “That is somewhat more than ‘bright’ – as she was described to me by Malfoy’s son. Perhaps I was hasty in my decision to eliminate her - Do you think she might have been turned?”

The response was immediate and decisive. “I very much doubt it my Lord. Not for any ideological reason particularly – the girl broke more rules than most students and was never caught doing so, I suspect she’d have taken to dark magic well – but she was undyingly loyal to Potter. She trailed after him and applied her abilities to any goal he desired. She would never have been anything other than hostile and resistant as long as one of your objectives remained the death of the wizarding world’s saviour.”

Harry was always left with an incongruously warm ache inside his chest when the memory ended there. The way they had described her. He loved her more than ever and she was gone. He wanted to kill voldemort. Letting the prick kill him was like the final injustice in his life.

“You are his last Horcrux, Harry” Dumbledore’s portrait reminded him sadly. “While you live, he cannot be killed”

Harry bristled. “I know. You’ve already told me. I’m not stupid, headmaster” he flinched and coloured slightly, looking sheepishly at headmistress McGonagall who had raised a thin eyebrow at him. “Sorry, headmistress.” He muttered. He got to his feet.

“Fine. I’ll do it. Whenever it happens – you don’t need to worry. I’ll throw whatever’s left of myself away so that you can kill him. You just better not fail.”

It took less time than he could possibly have imagined. He had thought he might have another few months at least.

He’d tried to spend as much time as he could resigning himself to his fate, saying goodbye to the place that had held his happiest memories, trying to find the ghosts of Hermione in the halls.

Ron and he didn’t talk anymore. There just didn’t seem to be anything else to say. Mrs Weasley had forbidden her children from fighting in the final battle, whenever it might come and the two had not protested overly much.

Ginny still tried, half-heartedly, to lure him into sleeping with her even after he’d made it absolutely clear to her that he wasn’t interested– he presumed she actually intended to get herself pregnant if she could possibly manage it. Securing Harry potters heir would keep her family in galleons for the rest of their lives.

He was...almost... tempted to give her what she wanted. It wasn’t as if he could take the money with him.. but he just couldn’t bring himself to do it.
He’d been left with a bitter taste when it came to Ron and Ginny and the thought of his son never knowing him and growing up in the burrow, exploited by its mother and uncle for fame and money.. no.
He’d left the family a sizeable sum in his will and that would do. Ginny would not be carrying his child, no matter how persistent she was.
He had found love potions in his food on three separate occasions. He hadn’t bothered to have an argument about it, he’d simply vanished the plate and taken another.

Perhaps she might have gotten cleverer about it in time but she never had the time since after only three weeks events had quite suddenly come to a head.

And now he was standing at the edge of the forbidden forest while battle raged behind him.
He had seen Voldemort turn and walk into the forest only a couple of minutes earlier and made his way down here.
Nobody had even tried to curse him. It was surreal.
He’d walked through the flashing lights and yells, flicking off hexes here and there where he could as he hurried toward the last place he’d seen his nemesis.

Beyond the treeline it was dark and still. No voldemort in sight.

Hesitantly he walked into the darkness within, following the vague path before him and trying not to think about Aragog’s children. They would be far far deeper into the forest. He winced at the loud cracking and rustling of his own movements within the dark forest.
The battle noise seemed to fade away quickly leaving an ominous silence. Something snapped over to his left and he spun, his wand out, peering through the dimness.
He couldn’t see any source of the sound. Large dark trees and scrub.. not a bird tweeted in these forests.. roots grew knarled and monstrous over the forest floor.

::Harry::
the faint hiss was carried on the slight wind. It was clammy and cold, foetid like the last breath of a corpse. He shuddered, feeling his scar begin to throb achingly and forced himself to move toward the sound, into the breeze.

::I’m waiting for you, Harry:: Voldemort’s voice carried from closer now..
Harry suppressed the urge to clamp his hand over his forehead, knowing the pressure wouldn’t alleviate the pain, and tried to move faster without making more noise, failing abysmally. Each step was a crunch and a crack announcing his approach.

Then he was there.
He moved past two trees and almost fell into the clearing.

The area was perfectly round and lower than the surface of the rest of the forest. Where the ground before had been covered in black musty leaf mold and packed earth, here it was inexplicably covered in snow. Moonlight bathed the open space, making it shine.
He could just feel that this was the place voldemort wanted him to be. This was where it would happen. The last place he’d ever see.

Harry walked forward tentatively, his shoes crunching the ice and becoming immediately wet and
He hissed in pain at the sharp pickaxe in the brain pain from his scar. He was here somewhere. But looking about for Voldemort’s black robed skeletal form, he couldn’t see him anywhere and felt off kilter – like stepping forward from a staircase in the darkness believing himself at the ground and finding one more stair.

Gritting his teeth, he scuffed through the snow into the centre of the clearing, looking about himself quickly.

“VOLDEMORT! COME OUT AND FACE ME!!” he yelled.

“ARE YOU AFRAID TO FIGHT ME?!?”

There was a faint amused hissing laugh that echoed around the clearing.

“SHOW YOURSELF!!” Harry screamed into the moonlit darkness. Then a sudden streak of pale yellow shot out of the darkness between two trees. Harry didn’t even bother to try to dodge. Hopefully whatever it was would kill him quickly.

It struck him in the chest and he screamed, dropping to his knees in sudden agony. It felt like he was being flayed alive. He put his hands up to his face and felt his skin crawling. It was in that position that a boot caught him on the shoulder and propelled him backward, landing him with an oof on his back in the snow.

He blinked through suddenly blurry vision up at the black robed figure with pale white blob of a face standing over him. He couldn’t see the expression it wore. He saw only the hand raise and tip something over him – it felt like itching powder. Then the blur raised his pale wand again and a pure white flash of light enveloped Harry.

He felt like he was falling backward through the ground, turning over and over..becoming heavier until his entire body jerked in landing. It was a peculiar sensation. He hadn’t left the ground.. it was much like the strange falling dreams he had at the edge of waking sometimes.

He opened his eyes gingerly as the dizziness receded from his mind again. The blurry vision was still there and for a second he confused the pale white blob of the moon in the sky above him for voldemort.

He removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

“Go on then” he muttered. “finish it.”

There was no answering curse, not even a snide silibant hiss. He blinked and then blinked again noting the crystal clear world. His eyes! His eyes were fixed somehow! Why in hell would voldemort fix his vision? Maybe he didn’t intend to? But that was stupid. The man lived and breathed curses – there was no way he’d accidentally repair Harry’s vision when he actually intended to burn his eyeballs out.

Against another sudden wave of dizzy nausea, Harry sat up and looked around the clearing. It was empty. Voldemort had just left him.

Did he think he was dead? What time was it? He cast tempus – no.. it had to be only minutes after the creep had cursed him. He must be around here somewhere.
“HIDING NOW?! SHOW YOUR UGLY FACE YOU BASTARD!”

The forest around him was silent. Nothing stirred.

He got carefully to his feet, swaying slightly and turned in a slow circle, looking around the dim clearing. Nothing.. nothing..

“DAMN YOU..” he cried desperately. “Damn you.. come back..” he almost sobbed.

He stood, shivering, wet and freezing, waiting around for what must have been a quarter of an hour but voldemort didn’t return. Reluctantly he trudged toward the trees he thought he’d come into the clearing by and stepped into the denser forest. He was surprised to note small patches of snow here too now. Had it started to snow when he had gone into the forest? Was that why only the clearing had been covered?

Miserable and cold; thinking only of how he had failed in his last and most important mission and needed to get back and try to help the others, he stumbled through the darkness, his wand barely illuminating the area around him. The forest suddenly seemed alive with little cracks and rustles. He tried to hurry on.

The forbidden forest was a bad place to be alone in the middle of the night. There were redcaps, acromantulas, bowtruckles, fairies, demiguises, gnomes, horklumps, jobberknolls, ghouls and much more that would be only too happy to trick or take a bite out of a solitary wanderer.

And indeed, ahead he saw the telltale wavering white stalks poking out of the ground. He stopped dead. There were five or six of them. The erlking used these plants to trap wayfarers so that they could subdue and abduct them. Harry looked about frantically. At least one of the vile creatures would be hidden quite close by if there were khenlute fronds there.

He spun and backtracked, realising suddenly that he had no idea where he was going and that the ‘path’ he had thought he was following was no path at all, looking behind it was little more than a slightly wider area between the trees. It looked untrodden, apart from his own footprints.

He started to panic slightly, running on till he at last found his way back to the snowy clearing. Fuck. FuckfuckFuck! Which way was Hogwarts?! He couldn’t see past the trees to find where the spine of the hill lay. There were no landmarks.

He placed his wand on his palm finally and murmured “point me” The direction it showed was at least a quarter turn around the circle from the trees he’d set off through. He didn’t recognise the trees that way at all, but he did trust his magic. He set off down the new path.

It was harder going since he could either have a compass OR a light. He decided a compass was more important and simply ran as fast as he could while taking care not to trip.
Inevitably, after a minute or two, despite his care, he failed to see a particularly large root winding across the way, half covered by light snow. Toppling onto his knees his wand flew out of his hand and skittered off into the dark.

“No!!!!” he hissed and scrambled on his hands and knees toward where it had landed, sifting through the dark frozen snow and leaves to find it, despair growing in him.

“Accio wand” a quiet voice said from behind him and a movement through the air past his head informed him that his wand was now in this unknown stranger’s possession. He spun to his knees facing a darker shadow in the dark.

This was bad; - almost certainly a death eater – the figure wasn’t nearly as tall and slender as voldemort himself and the voice had been wrong.. but it was familiar somehow. Maybe one of the death eaters from the ministry of magic?! He didn’t even expend the energy to demand his wand back – it would do no good. Whoever this was, was going to kill him now. This death probably wouldn’t help matters either. If it was irrelevant who killed him, Harry was sure Dumbledore would have probably had him avada’d long before the battle. So his death now would constitute the final failure. And it would be his own stupid fault for losing his wand in the dark when he should have had more sense than to run through the forbidden forest with it balanced on his palm.

Unwilling to die on his knees before a death eater; he rose to his feet. His knees were freezing cold and soaked through like his entire back half now.

The figure was not as tall as it had seemed from his prostrate position and it tilted its head almost speculatively. He could see the shadow move.

“Who are you and what are you doing in the forbidden forest alone? How did you get here?” The voice was soft and cultured and again.. somehow familiar. Harry was confused. What it had asked made no sense. Whether death eater or order member it was blatantly obvious what anyone would be doing in the forest tonight. And even without his glasses.. was it truly dark enough that the other had no idea he was Harry Potter?

Something wasn’t right here

“What are you talking about?!” he asked incredulously. “What do you mean what am I doing here?! What do you bloody think I’m doing here?!”

There was a pause and then the figure lit its wand to get a look at Harry. The side effect of this was that Harry could see it better and what he saw caused him to jerk backward violently, backing away quickly. ‘fuck!!!’ his mind repeated over and over, his thoughts turning in blind desperation. ‘he’s managed to regenerate himself or something. Oh god oh god oh god.’

The harshly lit oh-so-familiar-boy approached him slowly and carefully as if he were a timid rabbit that might bolt at the smallest noise. He was wearing a black over-robe with a hood. “Calm down” he said reasonably.

“Now tell me how you came to be wandering around alone in the forest. You clearly don’t do this often, to judge by the way you tossed your wand away.”

Harry blinked. “What?!”

This wasn’t going right. The regenerated voldemort wasn’t acting right. He should be making
snide smug comments about how he’d won and how weak and pathetic Harry was. He didn’t seem to even know Harry and he was acting almost politely.

Harry licked his lips. “I don’t understand what’s happening right now. Why are you.. have you lost your memory?!”

The boy raised surprised eyebrows. “Have I lost my memory?! Why would you think that? I am perfectly aware of who and where I am – You on the other hand don’t seem in possession of either fact right now.” The boy hesitated
“Do you remember what you were last doing?” he asked.

Harry was beginning to get a very bad feeling about this. This boy was behaving very much like the memory in the diary he’d met in second year; not like the current Voldemort at all. He hadn’t tried to attack him yet, apart from taking his wand and seemed more curious than anything at the moment.

He answered slowly, unsure what to really say.
“I...I don’t know. Something about a battle.. I think I was hit with something.. I don’t remember.”

The Tom Riddle lookalike was gradually inching closer. Harry shifted uneasily from foot to foot but didn’t retreat further even as the taller boy came into close proximity, illuminating Harry’s face once again.
He blinked and narrowed his eyes in the harsh light.
The boy seemed to look at him appraisingly.
Harry raised a hand to his head and rubbed at his forehead where his scar tingled very faintly.

“Who are you?” he asked quietly.

The other boy pursed his lips for a moment indecisively, looking away and it was a long minute of conflicted expression before his eyes returned to Harry’s and he responded decisively.
“Come with me.”
He paced off through the dark and Harry stood dumbly for a while unsure whether to follow or to turn on his tail and run. He still didn’t know what the hell was going on here. Was this Voldemort? Was it somehow another restored diary ghost? Was it..was it..the actual Tom Riddle?
That was the worst thought of all.
He should run away. But the boy had his wand.. He’d almost fallen into erlking traps earlier with his wand.
Without it he’d be redcap fodder.

The darkness parted again for the moving light of the other boy’s wand and Tom Riddle looked into his eyes angrily.
“Are you slow? You may have some form of memory damage at present but I did not believe you incapable of comprehending basic commands. I told you to follow me.
I will not come back for you again and I assure you there are a large number of rather violent ways to die in this forest.
So come along now.”

Harry bristled at the tone but stumbled after the retreating point of light.
When he tripped over the third root, the older boy stopped and walked back to him, taking him by the elbow.
There was something in his posture that screamed anger in the darkness, even if the hand on his elbow was not harsh, guiding him over and around the impediments in their way.

After ten minutes or so, Harry spotted the edge of the treeline, and beyond it, the vast empty snowy
rise up to the castle.
He gaped in shock. Where was the battle?! It wasn’t even that there was nobody there the snow was pristine! Undisturbed. The movement of dozens of feet and curses should have torn it up visibly.
This was..wrong.. again.
He stopped and tried to prevent the internal panic from bubbling up within him. Something was very, very, wrong here. What had Voldemort done?! The explanations for this were becoming fewer and fewer and the most likely one was beginning to weigh on his mind. Somehow.. this boy next to him was the actual Tom Riddle.
He was in the past.
Whatever Voldemort had done had sent him into the past.
Why in hell would the man do that?! If this was his younger version then all Harry had to do was kill him and none of the horror would ever happen. His parents wouldn’t die, Hermione wouldn’t die. The headmaster wouldn’t die either.
The only person dead would be the one that deserved it.
Harry glanced at the taller boy next to him, his hand still lightly gripping his elbow.
He needed to kill him. Could he perhaps get the jump on him and take his wand?
He was quite certain that it would work for him.
He was considering it when the boy turned to him and looked into his face again, bringing the wand up beside his cheek.
His expression was unreadable and then he murmured “You have very unusual eyes..”
Harry blinked up at him, confused.
When the boy raised his wandless hand up and cupped his face his confusion turned to panic.
Tom must have seen his eyes widen in fear because he made shhh shhh noises of comfort and the warm hand on Harry’s cheek stroked it gently.
“Stop that!” Harry hissed, jerking his face away from the hand and stepping back out of reach.
The boy followed him slowly until Harry accidentally backed himself against a tree. Then Tom’s hand reached out and gripped Harry’s jaw, holding it in place.
“Don’t be difficult” the older boy instructed quietly.
His thumb brushed over Harry’s bottom lip, making him shiver in dismay.
“Don’t touch me!..” he warned, pushing at the boy.
Moments later he found himself bound to the tree behind him.
He whined in the back of his throat helplessly as the very tangible form of Tom Riddle stepped closer still, his chest against Harry’s own.
“I think you are being rather ungrateful. I’ve saved you from what would probably have been a violent death.
The least you could offer me is one ..kiss...”
Harry’s eyes widened to show the whites all around as he felt the hand trailing up his body. He shook his head frantically.
“No! Don’t touch me!! I.. I don’t like boys.. and even if I did I wouldn’t want you. Get your fucking hands off me!”
The boy sneered at him in the half light of the lumos. “You might think you don’t.. but you will..” His hand slid up Harry’s face again and into his hair, gripping and holding him in place as his warm mouth suddenly descended, kissing lightly, teasingly at Harry’s tightly clamped lips. “mm... relax..” he murmured between soft gentle kisses. Harry managed to shake his head. Instead of pressing the point the boy kissed a feather light trail along his jaw to his neck where he trailed the hot point of his tongue up and down the pale column of Harry’s throat. Harry could feel his smile against his skin at the shiver this produced.

He teased at his neck until he found a particularly sensitive spot and Harry was unable to suppress another shiver. Then he sucked on it, flickering his tongue over it. It felt amazing. Entirely against his will Harry found his breath speeding; couldn’t quite prevent himself arching his neck to the mouth. When Tom found another sensitive place and nipped at it, Harry barely suppressed a small moan of pleasure. His eyes were closed and he could feel himself hardening slightly in his pants. The shame of it washed over him like a scorching wave. He wasn’t turned on. He liked girls.. and he’d never..ever.. want voldemort. That was just sick! Murderer.. monster.. “Stop..” he mumbled weakly. “please stop!”

The mouth at his throat seemed only to redouble its efforts and then it withdrew suddenly and he felt lips against his own again, kissing. The length of Tom’s body that was pressed against his own shifted slightly, brushing against his hardening cock and it suddenly felt so very good that he couldn’t help but respond to the lips, kissing back. “Mmmm” the boy hummed pleased against his mouth and a tongue flicked at the seam of his lips, asking for entrance. He ignored it.

Suddenly a hand running over his cock through his pants made him gasp and then tom’s tongue penetrated his mouth, kissing him deeply. He whimpered and tried to move away, but the other boy was having none of that and held him in place by his hair even as his other hand rubbed his cock unceasingly. Harry’s nerves were on fire. Nobody had ever touched him like this and his body seemed to have taken complete control of his will.

He was moving against the hand on his groin and he gave up fighting the tongue in his mouth, giving himself over to the kiss. The movement of the hand vanished abruptly and Harry couldn’t help the urgent disappointed noise he made into the other boy’s mouth. But then panic returned as he felt his trousers being unfastened, the fly pulled down and that teasing hand actually slid down into his boxer shorts, gripping him, skin to skin.

He managed to tear his mouth away and cry out “STOP!!” He wound his hips, trying to pull away and unable to do so and then the warm hand started to stroke him gently up and down. It felt like nothing he’d ever experienced. It wasn’t at all like when he did it to himself in bed at night and he threw his head back, cursing and biting his lip. “oh fuck.. oh.. that feels... oh.. stop... no.. don’t stop.. oh fuck.. please.. please!..” He heard a soft dark chuckle from the boy whose face was bare inches from his own.

He opened his eyes and saw delicate features lit only by moonlight. He’d thought it in a vague objective manner in the chamber of secrets but he was abruptly and wretchedly aware of how attractive Tom Riddle was. He bucked his hips mindlessly at the skilful hand fisting him.
“You beg so prettily” Tom’s voice said low and slightly husky. “I believe you were asking me to stop?”
The hand at Harry’s groin stopped and loosened, making as if to withdraw. “No!” Harry cried urgently.
“please... please! ..I need..I..Oh merlin.. please dont stop.. I..please..finish it”
The dark smirk on the beautiful face was terrible.
“Kiss me again” he demanded. Harry leaned forward, trying to comply.

Tom’ hand in his hair released and moved, stroking over his cheek and jaw as he kissed him again, slower, languidly, their tongues slipping over one another wet and rough. “mmmm” he groaned into Harry’s mouth at the kiss.
His hand tightened once more around Harry’s cock and he fist ed it hard and slow.

Harry made soft needy little whimpers as he climbed closer to his peak. It wouldn’t take long. Just a few more strokes.

Abruptly the mouth kissing him broke away and the hand at his groin withdrew. He opened his eyes, disorientated, not seeing Tom anywhere and then his pants were roughly tugged down to mid thigh and he looked down in shock, finding Tom on his knees before him.

“What..what are you doing?!?” he stuttered, shocked. The other boy didn’t bother to respond, just reached up for Harry’s cock and guided it into his mouth.

Harry cried out in sudden intolerable pleasure. It felt better than anything had ever felt before. He shook and came almost immediately, wailing his bliss, jerking as the waves of sensation washed over him and Tom continued to suck right through his climax, swallowing his emission and cleaning him off.

Harry let his head fall forward and his body sag against the binding spell in exhaustion.

He felt suddenly so tired and confused. This wasn’t supposed to happen. Voldemort in some form just gave him a blow job. The first blow job he’d ever had. He’d wanted that particular first to go to Hermione. He’d..he’d dreamed about it.

He barely noticed the other boy putting his cock back in his pants for him and fastening him up.

When his head was picked up by a hand fist ed in his hair he blinked blearily at the attractive face looking down into his eyes. “Was that your first time?” Tom asked curiously.
He managed to nod wearily, blushing to his roots. The dark eyes glittered and the boy seemed pleased. He stepped close to Harry again.
“It’s a pity then that I’ll have to obliviate you back to before we met. But at least you aren’t a meal for redcaps or erlkings right now.”

Harry frowned, worried and unsure what to think. On the one hand, he wouldn’t have to know what he had done with Voldemort - but on the other hand he would be obliviated. It was dangerous. It damaged the mind. And Voldemort..or Tom..or whoever would still know about what happened.

“Please don’t obliviate me...” he whispered.

The boy came close, pressing his cheek against his and stroking his hair. “Shhhh.. there there. I have to. You see... I’m not supposed to be outside the castle at night and you’ve seen me.”

Harry realised once and for all that it truly was the actual Tom Riddle he was dealing with.
“I won’t tell” he whispered. “please... don’t make me forget”
The hand stroking his hair moved down and cupped the back of his neck as Tom moved back and pressed a soft kiss to his cheekbone. Harry didn’t bother to flinch. “You are a dear one, aren’t you?! No.. I’m afraid I must obliviate you because one of the teachers who will no doubt speak with you is a legilimens and he’ll have the memory of me...helping you... out of your mind and into the Wizengamot in no time at all. So you’ll just have to do without it.”

Harry felt a sinking feeling. Dumbledore. It was true. If Dumbledore saw that Tom Riddle had..well.. practically raped him...he’d be delighted. But that would be good.. then. There wouldn’t be any Lord Voldemort if Tom Riddle spent a short stint in Azkaban.

It didn’t matter. He wouldn’t remember it soon. He lowered his eyes unhappily.

The boy pressed against him sighed and stroked his cheek. “Don’t worry pretty, I’m sure Dippet will decide to keep you here. We’ll make a new memory for you.”

Harry looked up, shocked. He hadn’t considered that, in the wake of his recent..experience.. If he was really in the past, what was he supposed to do? The only person likely to be able to help him get back was Dumbledore. He’d have to stay here. What if they didn’t let him?! He had no money. He couldn’t remember much about the forties. World War II was happening and Grindelwald was waging a war in the magical world too. What was he supposed to do if he couldn’t stay in Hogwarts?! He looked up, worried, into Tom’s eyes, who only smiled. “Time to go..”

Harry shook his head faintly “please...please don’t obliviate me”

The other boy sighed and stroked his cheek, leaning in and pressing a gentle kiss to the corner of Harry’s mouth and then stepping back. He raised his wand and his face took on a much harder expression, the shadow of what would become Lord Voldemort peeking through the beautiful facade. “Obliviate”.. was the last thing Harry heard.
Chapter 2

He crashed to his knees, disorientated and dizzy. What just happened? Where was he?

Harry raised his head and jerked back, startled at the sight of the castle up a snowy rise ahead of him.
What? How? How had he gotten here? What the hell just happened?! Did Voldemort put him under imperius or something?
He had been in a clearing somewhere in the forest.
He had been there.. and now he was almost back at the castle and everyone was gone. What happened to the battle?!

What the hell?! The snow was thin and soft. It didn’t cover bodies or raked up earth. This couldn’t be.

“what the hell is going on?!” he screamed internally, climbing shakily to his feet and setting off at a run up the hill to the castle where one way or another his questions would be answered.

Tom stood in the shadow of a tree watching the strange boy run pell mell up the hill to the castle as if the furies were after him.
He was bemused at his reaction to the boy.
Admittedly he was a very pretty creature with those haunted, pale, emerald eyes, but it was not like him to be generous. He should have left the unfortunate fool in the forest for the grimleys to finish off.

And to..force himself on the boy..
that kind of lust-driven behavior really was beneath him.
He had students throwing themselves at his feet to touch him.

He was disconcerted that it had happened. But there was nothing more arousing to him than curiosity and it was rather peculiar how the boy had arrived.
Tom had been in the clearing checking on conditions for a meeting of his knights the following evening, when the boy had materialised in the snow, seemingly unconscious.

He’d started toward him but thought better of it when the shadowy form had started to stir, and had retreated to the cover of the shadows to watch what the figure did instead.

Following him he began to realise that this was not some elite scout of Grindelwald’s or, in fact any kind of threat at all.
It seemed to be a youngish boy.
The way the fellow bumbled around in the forest he was likely to get himself killed.

He’d followed, curious which of the forest’s wonders would take the boy’s life.
When he’d recognised and retreated from the erling’s traps Tom had been mildly surprised and then the boy had doubled back from where he’d been heading deeper into the forest and had used a point me.
He’d obviously been looking for the castle since that was the direction indicated.

Tom had generously raised his estimation of him a few notches.
That had been lost however when the fool started off into the darkness without a lumos or any kind of spell to aid vision and had had lost his wand.
IDIOT.
It was that that had provoked Tom to want to see exactly what he was dealing with here. How old was the boy?! Was his stupid error forgiveable due to youth?
He’d been shocked at the face exposed in the wandlight. Perhaps sixteen.. it was hard to tell; A dirty blonde mop; -angular, determined jaw and those pale pale green eyes.
No...the boy was certainly old enough to know better.

But on questioning him and finding his disorientation and confusion Tom felt able to concede some benefit of the doubt back to the panicked fellow.
If he had come from a battle of some kind, as he indicated, it was possible he was suffering from lingering spell damage. It didn’t explain how he had come to be here but then.. the boy himself seemed to have no idea where he was or how he’d arrived. There was little point in pushing the question.

And then when he’d realised he was going to have to obliviate him anyway, the temptation to taste him..just a little.. was irresistible.
His innocent responses...the way he tried and failed to resist the sensations and the shame he so obviously felt at his own helpless lust... Tom would have to have him again.
Even if the boy was not useful.. he was appealing.

Of course, he’d have to be careful in his pursuit. No one could know. It wasn’t the done-thing to dally openly with one’s own sex – despite the fact that some of the most powerful wizards had been so inclined – Salazar Slytherin for one!
He suppressed the inner irritation at the constrictive and hypocritical morals of the age he had the misfortune to be born into.
He would have the boy even if he had to keep him a dirty little secret in the dark.

But first things first, he’d have to ensure that the boy remained within his domain. He’d have to make sure that Dippet, that imbecile, made the morally sound choice regarding the poor lost boy. He set off in the boy’s wake, disillusioned, following in his footprints swiftly.

When he got to the castle the foyer was empty. He swore under his breath. Where had the disorientated little fool gone?!!

He remained very still until he could hear faintly footfalls echoing from upstairs, then he set off at speed.
The boy was moving fast through the corridors. He sounded like he was a floor above him.

Tom hurried to the alcove behind the golden suit of armour and took the passage up to the next floor.

The running was louder. He followed it swiftly.
The boy was heading toward the moving stairs. He caught a glimpse of the tail of his plain black robes heading around a corner at the end of the next corridor and ran as fast as he could.

He was halfway up the moving stair toward the next platform when Tom reached the corner, throwing out his wand and sending a silent stupefy, before the figure could get to the next floor.
and out of range.
The boy collapsed into a messy pile on the stairs and started to slide down the slope.

Tom levitated him over to the floor near him and then summoned a house elf.
“Go and wake the headmaster and tell him I’ve found an intruder in the school” he informed the cowed little creature.
It nodded and disappeared quickly.

Nudging the body at his feet over onto its back with his boot he admired the boy’s face again by lumos.
Even with those startling eyes closed, he was a dishy little package. He looked so innocent and forlorn. His eyebrows turned up imploringly even in unconsciousness.
Oh yes... Dippet would let this little one stay.

He levitated him again and set off in the dark for the headmaster’s office. He knew the school like the back of his hand.

“What’s this about an intruder, Thomas?” Dippet yawned sleepily from behind his desk as he walked in, levitating the boy behind him.

The headmaster was wearing a blue and white stripey nightshirt and bedcap. All that was missing was a candlestick and he’d resemble wee willie winkie, Tom thought.

He straightened somewhat at the sight of the unconscious form being levitated into the room, removing and polishing his glasses as he stood and walked gingerly over to inspect the bundle on the floor.
He was wearing old ratty slippers on his skinny white legs that the nightshirt flapped around.

“Well.. What in the world?! The wards have not shifted, however did this young chap get into the castle?! Did you speak with him? Why is he stupefied?”

Tom bristled internally but remained outwardly calm.
“No headmaster, I’m afraid not. He was running and I could not keep up. Rather than lose him, I thought it best to stupefy him and bring him to you. At first I thought him a student but he is not wearing a uniform and when I saw his face...well.. I know all of the students and I don’t know him.”

“yes.. yes.. Indeed. Not a Hogwarts student and somehow inside the castle. Mm. Well lets wake him up and ask him.”

Tom nodded and moved back. “Enervate” he intoned softly.

The boy’s eyes flickered and then he sat bolt upright.

Dippet flinched back as if he were a cobra.
“Now! Then! Boy! Calm down there! Who are you and what are you doing at Hogwarts!”

The boy gasped and looked up at him, blinking as if he was seeing a ghost. “You.. y-you’re headmaster Dippet!” he sputtered, shocked.

Dippet, the fop, straightened his nightshirt and cap and seemed to throw out his chest.
“I am indeed, boy. There is...ah.. the small matter of your name and how you managed to enter Hogwarts through the wards.. if you could explain..”

But the boy wasn’t paying attention, he was looking around the room in horror and then he turned and his eyes met Tom’s..

Tom actually took a half step back in surprise at the shock of recognition, fear and then raging hate that burned in those pale green orbs at him. He looked back questioningly.
The boy couldn’t possibly remember their little tryst and even if he did – this was an unreasonable measure of hate for such a little thing.. the boy was looking at him like he wanted to kill him.

He reached for his wand and Tom thought for a moment that the boy actually was going to try to curse him and flicked his wrist to summon his wand from its hidden sheath, but Dippet, bless his foolish old soul, plucked the wand out of the boy’s fingers.

“But the boy wasn’t paying attention, he was looking around the room in horror and then he turned and his eyes met Tom’s.”

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“Now! You! I won’t have you raising your wand in here. Thomas may have stupefied you but you are quite unharmed, there’s no call for that kind of reaction. Tell me your Name, boy!”

The boy blanched and ducked his shoulders. “Sorry, sir” he mumbled. “I.. force of habit..”

He chewed on his lip. “Can I please talk to professor Dumbledore, sir?”

Tom almost fell over in surprise.

If he’d known that the little wretch was somehow connected to Dumbledore, he’d have left him to the redcaps, pretty eyes and all.

It certainly explained that look of hate the boy flung at him though.

Dippet was scratching his head. “You know professor Dumbledore then?” The blonde mop nodded.

“He’s.. a friend of the family”

Dippet seemed content with this and called upon a house elf to summon Dumbledore to his office. He nodded to Tom “I shall return shortly. Watch this young fellow please Thomas”

“Certainly Sir” he responded amicably as Dippet shuffled off to his room, presumably to change into more appropriate attire.

The boy on the ground turned and watched him suspiciously.

“I don’t know what you seem to have against me..” he offered placidly. “I’m sorry for stupefying you. You have quite a turn of speed on you when you’re running..”

The boy bared his teeth angrily and hissed “don’t talk to me.”

Tom blinked, trying to tell himself that he didn’t feel some small measure of disappointment that the boy suddenly hated him so. Had he hated him before? It was hard to tell. He’d seemed more confused than anything.

He’d definitely been frightened of him when he’d seen him in the wandlight.

What might Dumbledore have said about him to evoke that measure of fear and hate. He could imagine..

No matter though. It would be more of a challenge to reacquire the boy when he felt so strongly.

The whoomp of the floo caught both their attention and then Dumbledore stepped into the room. He looked rather surprised but his expression quickly became flat and unreadable.

“Professor Dumbledore, Sir.” Tom acknowledged.

Dumbledore nodded “Tom.”
The boy on the floor then rocketed to his feet and raced to Dumbledore. “Sir! I’m sorry I came unexpectedly. I couldn’t help it. I was in danger and the portkey you gave me activated. I’m so sorry to be a burden sir!”

Dumbledore blinked and seemed to stare at the boy for a few seconds before embracing him briefly and responding “Quite all right, my boy. That was after all what I gave it to you for. How are your parents then? What has happened?”

The boy looked into his eyes and then looked down and Dumbledore’s face fell. “Ah. oh dear. I am sorry Caed” he opened his arms to the boy again who clung to him and buried his face in his robes in an overly familiar manner.

Tom schooled his expression not to display the irritation he was feeling.

At that moment Dippet returned to the room wearing his typical brown robes and laced boots. His face still bore pillow creases but otherwise he looked as if he had been up for hours. “Albus. You do know our intruder then.” He noted, relieved.

Tom’s gaze didn’t waver from Dumbledore who seemed to spend a lot of his time staring into the young boy’s eyes.

It was possible that he was simply concerned for him after the implication that something terrible had happened to his parents..but tom hadn’t noted any glint of recognition in the man’s face when he had first flooed in.

It wasn’t until the boy had run to him and started to speak that Dumbledore had suddenly become close to the whelp.

This all felt very suspicious.

“Yes Armando.” Dumbledore answered “Caedmon is the son of a couple I have been acquainted with for some twenty years now. I have just learned that they have unfortunately been killed. It seems that Caed was caught in an attack in France and the portkey that I had given his parents as a birth gift activated and brought him here. I am afraid he has nowhere else to go now.”

Dippet looked alarmed.

“Oh! Indeed?! Oh.. very sorry to hear.. mm. Well. I should think the boy could stay in Hogwarts..possibly.. er... he is capable of magic, isn’t he? Oh.. mm. Yes. Silly me. I have his wand here somewhere.”

he looked around his unorderly desk finding the object he sought after a few seconds.

“yes. Here. Well. Test him. If he is capable of sitting at least one subject he may remain.”

Dippet walked to Dumbledore and handed off the wand, which Tom noted Dumbledore did not give the boy, but instead put in his own pocket.

Dippet seemed to think of something else

“I am of course very sympathetic to his plight Albus but I won’t have him holding back the other students. If he does not meet the requirements for a subject for his year, he will not be allowed to take it. No exceptions!”

Tom saw the opportunity and stepped forward, clearing his throat politely to attract Dippet’s attention.

The old man’s face slackened when he turned toward him and he offered a smile, knowing he’d had Dippet in his pocket almost from day one.

“Sir... If i might be so bold. Caedmon’s situation is rather unfortunate but not at all his fault. I know very well how it can be to lack the advantages other students have been born with.” Dippet gave him a shit-eating smile.
“If... you would allow, Sir... I would be willing to tutor him, to ensure he is able to take any subject he may be weak in. He will, after all, need his NEWTs if he is to survive on his own after school.”

Dumbledore looked at him with blatant suspicion and the boy..Caedmon if that was truly his name.. glared at him.

Dippet on the other hand clapped his hands together in gratitude.

“Thomas. Selfless as always. I am certain that...er...what was your name again? Right.. right... i’m certain that Caedmon will appreciate your assistance. Just don’t overstretch yourself, my boy. Merlin knows you do take on so many responsibilities.”

Tom nodded and stepped back, reassuming his ‘invisible’ pose that tended to encourage people to carry on conversations as if he were not even in the room.

Caedmon seemed to be struggling to control his fury. It was poorly hidden and Dippet frowned at him.

As far as Tom was concerned, “Caedmon” or whoever he was had just shot himself in the foot. Dippet was a massive stickler for politeness and good form – and his opinion, once lost, was almost never regained.

“Yes.. thank you Tom” Dumbledore offered without looking at him. “If you dont mind Armando, I’ll just take Caed and set him up for the night in one of the guest rooms. Tomorrow morning I’ll test him and he can be sorted.”

The headmaster waved them both off and soon thereafter dismissed Tom also. He walked slowly back to the head boy’s room lost in thought. He was not sure whether he had made the right choice. Perhaps it would have been better if he had left the strange boy to his own devices.. or even assisted him into an early grave in the forest.

He didn’t know exactly what Dumbledore was to him but he could not allow any damage to his reputation this year. Despite his lack of means or title, he was being courted by the ministry of magic for a position, contingent on perfect newt scores.. and he planned the imminent cementing of his little coterie of ‘knights’ into a more permanent alignment. He had found a very old bonding charm and fashioned something more advanced out of it. It would allow him to be aware of their movements, to call them to him or to apparate to their side at will.

As ..attractive..as the strange boy might be, he could not allow himself to become distracted. If the twerp couldn’t be acquired he would be managed.. and if he couldn’t be managed he would be removed. Simple.

He very softly whispered the password for the door into the head boy’s room, letting himself in and wandered straight into the bathroom divestoing his clothing to a hanger as he went.

He would shower and sleep. He needed to be up early in order to follow the boy... Caedmon.. Caed.. in order to follow Caed’s movements.

Harry followed Dumbledore silently, trying to ignore the ominous feeling and the way that his professor had pocketed his wand rather than return it to him.

They walked sombrely and he recognised that they were heading toward professor McGonagall’s office.

Indeed Dumbledore stopped in front of the familiar pale wooden door and began a lengthy series of ward lowering incantations and pass-spells.
His security arrangement was beyond paranoid, Harry thought, but then with Lord Voldemort currently studying in the school Dumbledore was probably being justifiably cautious.

“There. Inside now” Dumbledore said softly, opening the door.

Harry gasped and smiled in pleasure. The room that was exposed was so familiar – different but so very familiar. Funny little objects and whirring turning contraptions littered every flat surface and some of the walls. It looked like someone had taken Dumbledore’s headmasters-office arrangement and squeezed it into a space half the size.

The bang of the door behind him startled Harry and he spun to see that professor Dumbledore – a very young professor Dumbledore at that – was not twinkling at him.

“Sit.” He said curtly, gesturing to a chair in front of his desk. Harry swallowed and obeyed quickly.

He examined Dumbledore. The man looked younger than professor Snape had in his own time. He had shoulder length mahogany curls and pale blue eyes and he wore quite a respectable burgundy edged charcoal grey robe with understated embroidered trim at the sleeves.

The power that radiated off him felt different than Harry remembered. Almost as if his ‘flavor’ had changed over the years.

He did not look amused at present and his younger face lacked the laugh lines that his older self wore even in sternness.

“Now – I’d like to know exactly what is going on here. Who are you and how do profess to know me? – I have never set eyes on you before. I took it on trust upstairs and did as you asked since you seemed in urgent need of assistance, but you had better have a good explanation for requesting me to lie to one of my oldest friends.”

Harry gnawed on his lip uneasily. “I.. do.. but I.. I shouldn’t tell you too much about it, hea..sir.”

Dumbledore’s eyes widened, catching his slip. He gestured for him to go on.

Harry shifted on the chair uneasily.

“I.. i’m from a different time. I don’t know what happened. I think someone cast a spell on me or something.. there was.. there might have been something like sand and then a spell. I woke up at the edge of the forbidden forest. I.. I didn’t realise I was in the wrong time till I saw headmaster Dippet.”

Dumbledore sat back heavily in his chair, his expression wandering between shocked and dubious. After a few moments he asked hesitantly “What time did this incident occur in?” Harry swallowed and dithered.

He didn’t know whether he should say. Hermione had gone on and on about the dangers of time travel after they’d used the time turner to save Sirius.

Harry had wanted to go back and save his parents and she’d spent pretty much an entire week in constant lecture mode about the dangers of even allowing someone from the past to find out details about the future, letalone blatantly altering events yourself.

“um.. the future, sir.” Harry said quietly. “about fifty years.”

Dumbledore’s expression wavered slightly and now a new emotion entered the mix between shock and suspicion.. it looked a bit like greed. The ice blue eyes glinted at him.

“Can you prove any of this..mr..what is your name?”

Harry shook his head slowly. “I.. how could I prove it?!.. what do you want me to do?! I could tell you who wins the muggle world war but I shouldn’t.
I don’t know ..what kind of proof do you want?!”

The expressions on professor Dumbledore’s face warred and finally, reluctant acceptance won out. “No. you are right. I should not ask it of you. Forgive me. For a moment I was tempted.. I have come to my senses. It is best that I do not know anything further about you if I am to meet you in the future.. including your name. I can infer that you are a future Hogwarts student and that is sufficient for the moment.

You shall be Caedmon Piper. The Pipers, as you may know, are one of the older wizarding families that have become scattered widely about the world. It is entirely possible that you could be from some uncharted branch.

As to your blood status – whatever it may in fact be – it would be advisable for you to be a pureblood in this time. Those with lesser blood status are treated with strong prejudice.. although it is worse in some houses than others.”

Harry frowned.. lesser status? His Professor Dumbledore would never have referred to halfbloods and muggleborns as lesser.

“ok” he said simply.

Dumbledore smiled. “What subjects were you taking in your time?” he asked neutrally.

Harry opened his mouth to answer and closed it again. After a moment he asked hesitantly “What subjects do you offer now? Can’t I just pick the ones I’d like to take?”

He bit his lip thinking how Hermione would be pleased with him.

Dumbledore snorted “If I do not know what you have studied, how am I to assign you to the appropriate classes?”

“test me?” Harry suggested. “Headmaster Dippet did think that was what you were going to do..”

Dumbledore sighed and leaned back in his chair. “Currently Hogwarts offers: Transfiguration, charms, potions, ancient runes, arithmancy, divination, elemental magic or alternately animagus studies, magical creatures, defense and duelling, History of magic, herbology, astronomy, classical studies, art and music and languages.”

Harry blanched. He hadn’t even recognised all of those subjects. “um.. I’d like to take transfiguration.” he offered a small smile. It was not returned. he continued uneasily. “Defense and duelling...uh... magical creatures...”

He hesitated. Snape hadn’t even been born yet. He’d be studying with Slughorn again – slughorn had been ok in sixth year.. but then Harry had been famous then and he’d had the half blood prince’s text book. But without potions (and arithmancy) he couldn’t become an auror..

Although - he’d find a way to go back and what he studied here would hardly matter then.

Reality rushed back in – he wasn’t ever going to be an auror.

If he went back; he’d still have to die. His own side insisted upon it. He was sure they’d somehow find a way to do it and get the effect they needed, since the bloody snake - against all expectation-apparently wasn’t willing to comply, even after spending years threatening to kill him.

It... might actually be better for him if he stayed here.

Surely he was harmless here in the past – they’d be able to kill moldypants in the future without him there. .. But if he went back..

“Potions and arithmancy” he said decisively. He’d just plan for the event that he didn’t go back and if he did then he wouldn’t be losing anything.

He’d dropped charms in sixth year in his time but it might be good to have it and..surely he’d be
ahead of everyone here – he’d learned things that hadn’t even been invented yet. “um.. charms.”
Dumbledore nodded.
“Herbology” he added reluctantly. He thought it might have been on the required subjects for auror training list but he wasn’t sure.

Dumbledore shot him an appraising look. “Do you think you will manage seven subjects, Mr Piper?”
Harry looked down. He wasn’t actually sure. Vold..Tom riddle’s offer of tuition occurred to him briefly.
F**k no. He wouldn’t take that snake faced (well.. ok.. perhaps not quite snake faced here. he..looked alright.) bastard’s help if it was the last thing he did – and it probably would be if he did.

“I think so” he said with more confidence than he felt.

Dumbledore nodded slowly, looking dubious. “very well then. I’ll bring you to a guest room for the night and tomorrow morning we will test you in those subjects.”
He stood and after another minor trek through dark silent corridors Harry found himself left in a plain single room without furniture.
It was practically a cell, he thought. Dumbledore had even locked him in. He did however return his wand to him before he left. “At least that” Harry mused as he undressed himself immediately and slipped between the freezing sheets.
He didn’t have the opportunity to obsess over his situation as sleep overtook him almost as soon as his head hit the pillow.

“What the hell!!” he whispered bemused.

The echoes of his alarmed cry had faded. Harry stepped closer to the floor length mirror, examining himself.

In passing toward the bathroom early in the morning to relieve himself he’d startled and doubled back frantically for his wand, thinking someone else was in the room. Now he stood dumbfounded in front of the mirror peering at his face.
He looked almost completely different. His hair was blonde!..a kind of sandy blonde in fact. Nothing like malfoy but shocking all the same. And his eyes!! They were really light green.. it looked like all the colour had washed out of them. His skin was a deeper golden colour than he was used to. He wasn’t certain whether his nose was the same.. it looked slightly different..
he prodded at his face, tugging on his hair and peering at his eyes closely. When had this happened?! Had he looked like this the entire time yesterday? It wasn’t as if Dumbledore would notice the difference.

A vague memory returned to him of a yellow spell streaking out of the darkness and then pain all over his face and skin.. his skin had been crawling beneath his fingers. Voldemort had not only sent him back into the past but had ensured that he would not be recognised by anyone in his own time. Well that explained a lot.
He let his gaze trace down the length of his naked body in the mirror. Nothing else appeared to have been altered. His muscle tone and shape were as he remembered them, just the colour had changed.

“Caedmon” he said softly to himself, watching this new face form the words.

“I’m Caedmon” he tried. It was a mouthful.

“I’m Caed” he said and smiled.

The new look wasn’t that bad, he conceded to himself. He looked happier or something; definitely less gaunt and hollow than he’d been looking for the last few months.

Perhaps this was a good thing.

He showered and dressed in his scourged clothes from the previous day, returning to lie on his bed and wait for Dumbledore to pick him up.

Walking back to Dumbledore’s office with him he wondered why it felt so odd between himself and his former mentor.

Professor Dumbledore had been almost like a grandfather to him— he’d always been there.

Ok, admittedly he’d left him with the Dursleys... and when Harry had begged him not to send him back he’d been quite short with him... and... perhaps he could have done more for Sirius... and Remus... and obviously he could have done much more for Hermione... and Harry’s parents too...

but he was there when nobody else was. And he...

— it was no good. Harry could feel it all fraying in his mind; the image of professor Dumbledore as the benefactor and protector in his world.

He didn’t want it to. He wanted to keep seeing the headmaster as the lovely old wizard sucking on lemon drops and twinkling and saving everyone from the darkness — but he just couldn’t ignore the glaring holes in that image anymore.

He wondered why it had been so easy to ignore them in his own time.

Even after Hermione had been killed— he’d still tried to believe the best.

He’d offered his life up on a silver platter to Voldemort and instead the bastard had sent him here. Here he had no one.

Not even Dumbledore it seemed. It felt like the man was suspicious, reluctant to help him, almost angry with him for some reason.

He had no idea what he’d done to upset him in so short a time.

They walked in silence. When they arrived, he was shown in wordlessly and seated at a small desk that had obviously been set up for him to take his tests upon.

“Professor?” Professor Dumbledore raised his eyebrows in question. “Have I done something wrong?” he asked softly.

The older man’s gaze became shuttered. “No Caedmon. I was merely lost in thought. What subject would you like to begin with?”

The next six hours went past in a horrible blur. They didn’t break for breakfast or for lunch and by the time ‘Caed’ was struggling with the arithmancy-standards test his stomach was growling and he
felt terribly thirsty.

“I can’t do the next equation” he said unhappily.
Professor Dumbledore craned his neck to see where he was up to and pulled a discontented face.

“It seems you do not meet the requirements for seventh year arithmancy either then Caedmon.” He responded sadly.

Harry tugged on his hair, burying his head in his hands.
“So.. the only subjects I can take are transfiguration, defensive arts and magical creatures?!”

Professor Dumbledore looked over his notes. “You were just below the borderline of charms and potions. I will allow you to take those provided you prove to me in the first few weeks that you are working to catch up.”

Harry felt like he’d been kicked in the stomach.
“but.. I need to take arithmancy and herbology if I want to become an auror” he whispered.

Professor Dumbledore looked away. “Mr Piper.. You will be returning to your own time, where you will probably reenrol in your seventh year and some other wizard will make the decision as to what subjects you may take.
I have no idea whether standards have slipped over the intervening years. Perhaps you may take arithmancy and herbology there.
However, even if you were to remain here – which you shall not - In all likelihood you could not become an auror, or indeed serve in any capacity within the ministry of magic. You lack any background history in this time and one of the requirements of a ministry position is a ten year background check. Therefore it is of little consequence whether you take arithmancy and herbology now, surely?!”

If he’d felt kicked before, now he felt ten times worse. “What am i supposed to do in this time then?!” he asked plaintively. Professor Dumbledore blinked at him
“Why.. search for a means of returning to your own time, of course, Mr Piper – something I will also be working on – although Merlin knows I have other problems at present.
The sooner you are returned to your correct time, the better off we shall all be.”

Harry shrank into himself somewhat and nodded blankly. “ok” he managed to respond.

Professor Dumbledore looked at him thoughtfully. “You could make my life marginally easier and tell me what you remember about the dark wizard Grindelwald.”

Harry looked back uncertainly. “I don’t remember that much about it” he said hesitantly, seeking to evade the question. “Bins has an obsession with the goblin wars and that’s all i remember covering in history of magic.”

Professor Dumbledore looked at him sceptically but did not call him on his evasion. Instead he got to his feet and motioned to Harry to rise.
“In that case let us go and see to your sorting and you can run along and purchase your robes and books. You will begin classes tomorrow I think..
And Caedmon...I would...prefer.. you did not accept tuition from Mr Riddle if you could possibly avoid it. The young man has a lot of commitments and it would be better for you to come to terms with the workload without a crutch.”

Harry bristled and looked down, blushing. Not that he had been intending to take up the generous offer of the bloody dark Lord Voldemort.. but professor Dumbledore made it sound like he was wasting everyone’s time and energy.
“I’ll see what I can do, Sir” he managed.

At that Dumbledore frowned at him and led him curtly out of his office, marching him up to the headmaster’s stairway in stony silence. Harry actually glared at his back, shocked that professor Dumbledore could be such a truly massive prig.

“Ah Albus and.. erm... Mr..” Headmaster Dippet struggled, smiling faintly.

“Piper” professor Dumbledore supplied shortly. The headmaster nodded agreeably. “mm yes. Mr Piper. Come to be sorted, I take it?” Albus nodded. “He is qualified to take five subjects, Armando. Transfiguration, Defense, creatures, charms and potions”

Dippet did not seem to find this overly brief but smiled encouragingly at Harry. “Well that will be sufficient for a basic Wizarding education, I believe” he observed.

Harry flinched as the familiar voice spoke up behind him. He noted that Dumbledore had flinched even more.

“Sir... I don’t mean to interrupt... but surely Piper would be assisted by a NEWT in arithmancy.. After all most positions require it and it would be terrible for him to be disadvantaged for the rest of his life due to his present unfortunate circumstances.”

Harry felt reluctant thankfulness mingled with vague numb horror. Arithmancy was an important subject in his own time too. It was almost impossible to find work without it. At present he was facing a choice between Voldemort’s kind assistance or a prospective bleak future in a past he did not understand.

“He did not meet the minimum standard for the course” Professor Dumbledore said simply. “You insisted, Armando, that Caedmon not hold up the other students.”

Dippet looked indecisive and the overly polite..caramel smooth.. voice behind Harry offered. “Please Sir - I would be more than willing to tutor Piper. He could be meeting the grade within a couple of weeks at most.. if you would allow it.

If you would place him in arithmancy on a probationary basis, I promise I will see to it that he does not hold up any of the other students.”

Harry swallowed, feeling like a cow at market about to be sold to a meatworks.

Headmaster dippet however interpreted his expression as hopeful pleading apparently, his gaze vacillating between Harry’s face and a spot above and to the right of him. “I..will allow it..then. Tom – you may arrange with Mr Piper appropriate times for you both to work on his..deficiencies.”

Harry blushed and dropped his head, embarrassed at having his inadequacy showcased in front of his mortal enemy. He flinched at the sudden presence of a hand on his shoulder, looking up in fright. Tom Riddle stood at his shoulder. He darted a glance up at him, looking away quickly. The intense sapphire gaze was not directed at
him but at the headmaster and Harry was glad of it. He wanted to shake the hand on his shoulder off but was only too aware of how this would look.

As if Tom sensed his discomfort the hand squeezed once, not unkindly and removed itself.

“Yes. Mm. Admirable of you, Tom. Hogwarts is...ah.. lucky to have such a dedicated head boy.”

The watery blue eyes drifted back down to Harry and cooled marginally.

“Well then.. we shall sort you Mr. Piper..and then you may.. perhaps.. go with Professor Dumbledore and see about your books and robes?”

Dumbledore’s face was blank as a sheet and he nodded curtly.

Harry looked down again, painfully aware that without Dumbledore, as manipulative as the man might be, he was entirely alone in this place.

In the next moment he was temporarily blinded as the sorting hat was dropped upon his head. He felt the disconcerting rummaging around in his mind feeling that he now recognised as legilimency.

~hmmm.. what have we here?!.. a strange mind!.. You have travelled far, Mr Potter... or is it Piper...
- no.. definitely potter.
I can see that you have met me before.. however I do not recall you at all..
It seems that last time we spoke you refused the house of your ancestor.. ~

‘its not my ancestor’ Harry thought in response. The hat didn’t seem to pay attention to him.

~I see you were in Gryffindor.. but no... that house would not do at all.. Your feelings toward it are quite clear.. as are your feelings toward it’s head of house. No.. I think you would do best after all in~

“SLYTHERIN” the hat called out and was swiftly removed from Harry’s head, offering him a view of Dumbledore looking at him with tight lipped disapproval and Dippet smiling encouragingly.

Dippet had been a Slytherin, he remembered suddenly.

“Well..” the headmaster remarked. “That will make it much easier for Tom to assist you to catch up. I am certain you will find a suitable place in the noble house, Piper. Perhaps, Tom, you might take him down and find him a bed in the dormitory, later? Mm? Show him around a little?”

It seemed to Harry that he had won dozens of plus points with Dippet simply by being sorted into the right house.

“Certainly, Sir. I’d be glad to.” The smooth voice behind him said.

Harry swallowed uncomfortably but Tom went on.

“In fact Sir, perhaps it might be convenient for Professor Dumbledore to leave me to assist Piper to purchase robes and books also? I’m sure that the professor is incredibly busy and I have already been excused from my classes... it would give us a chance to speak about house practices and the expectations placed upon all Slytherins.”

Dippet looked pleased as punch. “A wonderful idea, Tom. I’m sure Albus would appreciate the assistance.”

Professor Dumbledore shrugged neutrally but Harry could almost feel the irritation and hostility pouring off him in waves. “That would suit me, Armando. I have a number of other things to work on at the moment”

“Then its agreed.” Dippet stated and rummaged through his desk distractedly. Eventually he pulled out a small purse and held it out over the desk. Harry watched as Tom Riddle stepped out from
behind him and moved to take the purse. He tried not to inspect him but couldn’t really help it. The boy who would grow up and slaughter hundreds was painfully well formed – he looked like he should be a quidditch chaser – broad shouldered and slender tapering build, but from what headmaster Dumbledore had told him, he had never played. Tom turned and Harry knew he’d seen him looking. He lowered his eyes again but caught a small smirk in his peripheral vision that faded into a helpful smile as the boy moved toward him and was probably completely transformed by the time he’d turned back to Dippet.

“The purse is directly connected to the Hogwarts scholarship fund – so ensure that you take good care of it, Tom. I’m certain that the vault could stretch to provide you both a meal while you are away, should you miss dinner.” Dippet smiled at Harry even more broadly than before. He wondered at it, and the rather calculating way the milky blue gaze flicked between the junior Dark Lord and himself. The hand returning to his shoulder made him flinch again and he saw Dippet’s smile falter at his flinch and take on an almost pitying tint. He frowned and stiffened, lowering his head further.

“Come on, Piper..” Tom said quietly “we’d best be off quickly. We have only three hours until the shops close.”

Harry nodded, infuriated with the inevitable flow of events that had apparently placed him in bloody Voldemort’s care and frustrated because he couldn’t think of a realistic alternative to going along with it.

Keeping his eyes fixed firmly on the flagstones, he stood, following after the head boy to the door and down the staircase.
Chapter 3

Walking behind Riddle he felt safe enough to examine him further.

He was so very much like the figure he remembered from the chamber of secrets.. only.. less tall and imposing.
But then he himself had grown in leaps and bounds since second year. Riddle was a little taller but in no way the looming figure he’d been.
The black hair of the other boy fell in artfully styled perfect waves. He thought discontentedly on his own mop of uncontrollable mess. It didn’t seem to matter what he did to his hair, it just looked like he’d rolled out of bed and not bothered to run a brush through it. He had permanent bed-hair.
Admittedly it didn’t look quite as bad in blonde, he conceded. It was ridiculous that Voldemort had actually made him look better than he normally did.
He could have made him look like anything.. anyone.. yet he looked essentially the same.. better than usual in fact. So bizarre.
“Ooof!” he bounced off Riddle’s back.
The other boy had stopped dead at the foot of the stairs. He didn’t move as Harry rebounded off him, but turned and glanced over his shoulder at Harry now sprawled on the lowest steps

“Sorry Piper.. force of habit. As a Slytherin, it is always better to be aware of the state of the corridors here before you step into them. I did not intend to knock you over. Were you not paying attention?”

Harry scowled and didn’t answer, climbing to his feet and following silently as Riddle stepped out into the (empty, as it turned out) corridor.
The head boy walked slowly, turning every now and then to glance at Harry. It unsettled him.
And then unexpectedly, as they were walking down an empty first floor corridor, Riddle said quietly “I’m sorry about your parents..”

The incongruity of the statement stopped Harry in place and he fought to suppress the violent rage welling up inside him. He wanted to yell “No you’re not! You fucking bastard! You killed them!” but of course, he couldn’t do that. Instead he fist his hands and struggled against the angry magic that swirled around him, wanting to lash out.
Riddle looked surprised at his reaction and took a half step toward him.
He jumped back as if stung. “Don’t come near me.” he growled and started walking again, keeping his face turned resolutely ahead.
He heard Riddle start after him and catch up quickly.
Uncomfortably he suddenly realised he could also feel his presence beside him in some indefinable way. His scar didn’t hurt.. it barely even tingled but there was a faint tickle of awareness there. Like a ghost pain in comparison with his reaction to Voldemort in his own time.

They walked in silence until they reached the main gates of Hogwarts and then Riddle stopped him with a hand so that he could open the gates and let them both out.
On the other side they walked on down the road in silence for a while. The pale winter sun had melted most of the snow and was making a valiant attempt at evoking impressions of spring. It felt cool but not cold.
Harry, scuffing along on autopilot was berating himself internally for his inability to conceal his
hate even the tiniest amount. He knew he should talk to the bastard, pretend that everything was fine..
Whether he wanted to kill him or try to make a life in this time, making the proto-Voldemort suspicious of him wouldn’t help him much either way.

He was just about to ask something neutral and give the creep the chance to be all head-boy-ish at him when a sudden hand on the back of his neck yanked him off the path and into the dense bushes at the side of the road.
He yelped as he was spun and propelled forcefully into a tree, half knocking the wind out of him.
Tom was in his face before he could even orient himself properly and he found his wand missing when he reached for it.
He reacted automatically, pushing at the boy and trying to get away.
This had no effect. First of all, pushing at the head boy was about as effective as pushing on the tree behind him, and secondly, tom’s arms boxed him in on both sides, forcing him to look into the face that was uncomfortably near.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” he demanded with more bravado than he currently felt. “Get off! And give me my wand back!”

Tom’s expression hardened. “Listen ..Piper.. if that is your name. We need to have a little conversation before this goes any further.”

Harry blanched.
Tom already suspected him of lying. Fuck. What would he do now?! He’d made it obvious that he hated him. God.. stupid stupid stupid. What was he thinking?! He hadn’t been able to stand for more than a minute or two against Voldemort in a duel in his own time – Dumbledore had had to do it for him.. and he didn’t think that he’d even manage the younger version.
What was stopping him?!
Harry swallowed as the pale yew wand he knew so well was suddenly pressed to his cheek lightly, almost tenderly.
“It appears...that you have something against me..” Tom said deceptively softly. His expression was hard.
“I am certain that I have never met you before and I have gone out of my way to assist you.. so I am wondering just what reason you have for your rather extreme reaction. Care to explain?”

Harry, wide eyed, shook his head emphatically.
Tom, if anything, moved even closer.
The midnight blue eyes were examining him, flicking between his eyes and his mouth.

“Perhaps then.. you will explain why it is that Dumbledore lied for you when the man doesn’t even know you?”
Harry couldn’t prevent his eyes from widening further but he didn’t respond. He felt the wand on his cheek stroke down and along his jaw, onto his neck, the tiny sharp point travelling slowly down toward his collar.

“You are in my house, ..Caedmon.. You should confide in me. Perhaps I can help you. ..you really should not start out here making enemies..”.
Harry struggled to focus on the reasons not to take that advice. They were few and far between.
The reasons to give up the fight seemed much more persuasive. He was alone in an unfamiliar reality. Dumbledore was not going to help him; didn’t even like him..
Everyone else in this place, according to what Dumbledore had told him about Tom while he was learning about the horcruxes, thought the sun shone out of Riddle. He’d already offered to help him
with his courses.
The head boy would be able to get into his room at any time while he slept. 
He probably couldn’t beat him in a duel and he almost certainly had a group of little junior death eaters somewhere too.

He was alone. It always came back to that.
He was alone here. In slytherin!

Riddle had offered to help him, for whatever reason. Obviously he was doing it for his own reasons – Voldemort was many things but altruistic and sympathetic were not among them.
Maybe he was only curious.. maybe he’d end up attacking him anyway.. how was that any different to now, though?!
He couldn’t survive being Riddle’s enemy in this place. What if he couldn’t go back?

Making his decision suddenly, he swallowed against the dryness in his throat.
“Dumbledore lied because I asked him to. I..needed a believable story. Caedmon Piper isn’t my name.”

Riddle’s eyes glittered in pleasure. “I’m glad you’re being reasonable...What is your name? Who are you really? Obviously not a poor unfortunate orphan” he snorted softly. There was something almost disappointed to the sound however.

Harry bit his lip uneasily. “I..can’t tell you.. I couldn’t tell Dumbledore either. I am an orphan though.”

Tom’s expression darkened.
“I’m not fond of the word ‘can’t’ – I have found it is frequently used in place of ‘won’t’ - Why exactly do you feel you cannot tell me who you are?”

Harry shifted uneasily against the rough bark of the tree behind him. To tell or not to tell.. he wasn’t sure.
If he told Tom, the most likely result would be that the other boy would then spend the rest of Harry’s short life torturing facts about the future out of him.. if he didn’t tell him, he’d probably end up doing the same thing eventually just to find out what he was keeping secret.
He realised with a slight jolt that there was in fact a third option.
He could give up. He could just tell him everything.

The midnight blue eyes were calm in their patient appraisal. He felt as if Tom could actually see the cogs turning in his mind and was waiting for them to finish processing. Reaching that point, he hushed out in a breath
“I.. can’t tell you that either..-that is – I can’t tell you yet. but I -..”
he gritted his teeth and forced himself to continue with what he needed to say. “..- appreciate.. your help. I didn’t expect it.” He darted a glance to Tom’s eyes, not really daring to hope that this would be enough.
He found a calculating expression there in the deep blue depths. Tom was very close to him. It made him feel uncomfortable. He could actually feel the warmth radiating off the other boy in the chilly shade of the trees.
He swallowed and looked away again.

The hand that brushed down his cheek was so fleeting he might almost have imagined it and then tom was moving back, stepping away from him. “Fine. For the moment I will accept that answer.. But Caed-“ Tom’s expression hardened and Harry was reminded of the cruel sneer of the boy in the chamber of secrets “-Do not delay too long or I will have to assume that you have decided to refuse my generous gesture toward you. You may not yet know me.. but you will find that my
opinion carries considerable weight within Hogwarts - particularly within Slytherin. Your time here could be uncomfortable and brief if you choose to make me your enemy.”

Harry had been thinking exactly the same thing but what option did he have? Come out with – ‘oh ok then. You want to know? Actually I’m from the future. I’ve spent the last six years killing you in various ways and I’ve just finished killing off six eighths of your soul. Want to be friends?’ That would not go over well.

He’d have to find some truth he could tell to assuage Riddle’s suspicions.

Apparently seeing that his threat would not evoke a sudden change in behaviour, Riddle informed him briskly that he was going to apparate them both to the entrance to Diagon Alley as they were ‘clearly wasting time here’.

He didn’t have time to respond before the other boy had taken two quick steps forward, gripped him by the elbow and disapparated.

The next two hours went past in a wash of uncomfortable silences and curt commands. Riddle had been glued to him the entire time.
For a moment he had thought that the other boy wouldn’t let him go alone into the changing room at Habb and Dasher’s. As it was, Riddle had stood at the other side of the curtain and waited, as if on guard.

Harry wasn’t sure whether he was guarding him from escape or from attack – probably the former, but it was very strange all the same.

In flourishes books he had experimentally distanced himself while Riddle had been flicking through a book on Morgan Le Fay and immediately the boy had replaced the book and moved to his side, hovering like a personal stormcloud.

“Stay close, Piper” he’d instructed quietly.

Harry had shrugged it off.

After they’d purchased the books and reduced them, Riddle had insisted upon eating before they returned to Hogwarts. Harry had been reluctant. He didn’t want to sit down to dinner with the creep. It was worse than the idea of sitting down for a nice bite to eat with Malfoy. Going to dinner with bloody Voldemort.

Even so, he’d found himself soon enough seated in a corner booth with Tom at a seedy looking little eatery. It certainly wasn’t a restaurant. It reminded Harry a bit of the hogs head. Tom however, seemed relaxed, even pleased.

When Harry shrugged uncaring at the question of what he wanted, he ordered for both of them, actually selecting what Harry realised he would have probably picked if he had had the will to bother.

Picking at his lamb shank and fried potatoes and drinking his butterbeer, he couldn’t help but register the gaze of the other boy flicking frequently back to him in between monitoring the room and consuming his own pepper steak and chips.

He felt uncomfortable with the way Tom kept looking at him. There was something weird about it. It wasn’t exactly curiosity.. it was something else.

He couldn’t put his finger on it but it was far too familiar.

Seeking to make Tom equally uncomfortable he asked rudely “so.. what kind of name is ‘Riddle’ anyway? I don’t recognise it…”

He was pleased at the way the other boy froze, his fork halfway to his mouth. He returned it to the
plate and looked up, a darker glint in the midnight blue of his eyes. Harry took it all in and went on, pushing his luck,

“Since I can’t see a mudblood becoming head boy, you must be a halfblood.
And in light of your little comment earlier about knowing disadvantage and about my not even being an orphan – I take it that your parents are dead.”

Unmistakeably a flash of crimson flickered through the other boy’s eyes. Tom was apparently more than just a little uncomfortable.
Harry decided it would be best to backpedal slightly. He only wanted to upset him a little to get him to stop staring at him, he hadn’t actually been angling to be cursed – which was what those eyes were promising silently right now.

He went for his wand in his pocket, not missing the way Tom’s hand also slipped quickly below the level of the table.
“Calm down. Just wanted to cast a muffling charm. Is that ok?”
The cold dangerous look on Tom’s face didn’t diminish but he nodded after a moment. Harry gingerly put his hand back down and cast the charm silently, not removing his wand from his pocket. When he felt it go up he put his hands back on the table where tom could see them.

Reluctantly, he mumbled what he told himself was not an apology. “Um...I shouldn’t have said that I guess.
I...didn’t..mean.. that is.. I..well..obviously I’m not a piper”
There was no discernable reaction on the other boy’s face, this was not new information for him.
Harry took a breath and continued. “My father was a pureblood and my mother was a muggleborn.
They were both killed.
Dumbledore gave me this name and told me I’d be a pureblood because it was “easier” than being someone of..lesser status – as he put it. He is a complete wanker, isn’t he?!”

The cold blank expression of the other boy twisted into a small amused smile. Harry was relieved to see Tom’s midnight blue eyes no longer as threatening and cold.
“Yes. He is.” The other boy agreed. “How exactly do you know him? He certainly didn’t know you last night – of that I’m certain - and you two didn’t seem particularly chummy this morning either.”

Harry hesitated and bit his lip slightly before looking down. “I...”

“-can’t say” the other boy finished for him. “You are altogether too mysterious Caed. You do realise you’re tempting me to pry the answers out of you?!”
Harry darted a look up, taking in Riddle’s smirk and looking down again. “I.I know..” he said softly. “that’s what I’m afraid of.” He murmured to himself, but the other boy caught it.

“You are afraid of me?” he asked curiously, looking as if it pleased him.
Harry scowled and bit back automatically “No!”
The other boy smirked and slid gracefully out of the booth, taking out the purse and tossing a few galleons on the table. “Come.. We should return and get you settled.
I have other responsibilities, Caed. I probably should not have offered to sacrifice my time and energy to help you.” He turned and began to walk toward the door.
Harry gaped feeling unaccountably bothered by his some-day-enemy’s comment. After tailing him for the last three hours he wasn’t even looking around to see if Harry was following now.

He felt like he’d done something wrong and it grated against him to realise that there was a tiny part of him that didn’t like this feeling and wanted to fix whatever he’d done that apparently made
Tom Riddle walk off uninterested. Was he still upset about the half blood comment? Was it that he didn’t tell him anything again? Probably.

He slid out of the booth and followed perhaps a shade quicker than he might have otherwise.

Outside, it was already dark. The street lanterns were lit, throwing bright circles of light on the cobbles below them.

Tom didn’t bother looking at him as they walked to the apparition point. Harry looked over several times and the other boy was looking off at the window of some closed shop or gazing over the remaining pedestrians in Diagon Alley with vague interest.

They reached the apparition point and Tom made no move to take his hand. Harry frowned, unsettled and offered his hand. It was taken and he was tugged slightly closer before the squeezing sensation pulled them away.

They reappeared where they had left, in the bushes on the road to Hogsmeade. Tom walked off toward the road immediately, again leaving Harry to wander after him.

“Did I..do something wrong?” he found himself asking, wondering why he even cared. “Is this about what I said about you being a halfblood? Cause..I’m not going to apologise to you. I already said I shouldn’t have said it.”

Tom didn’t reply. He simply walked quietly beside him, his shoes not even scuffing on the road as Harry’s did.

His expression was indecipherable in the darkness.

“Tom?” Harry asked uncertainly.

The boy stopped silently and turned to him, a silhouette.

“Caed – or whoever you are –I admit I was curious when I found you – I thought there may be more to you than meets the eye. However after only three hours I’ve come to the conclusion that you are exactly what you appeared to be. Far below average academically – possibly in need of remedial level tutelage in most of your classes.

Magically weak and unused to any form of sparring – hence why you lost your wand to me without even noticing.

Your behaviour over dinner only leads me to conclude that you are not even intelligent enough to curry favour with those who can assist you, which suggests you will be eaten alive in Slytherin house - particularly since I sincerely doubt you will be able to adequately emulate the pure blood manner and etiquette required of the alias Dumbledore has given you.

You would have been better sorted into Hufflepuff or Gryffindor.

You are almost certainly not worth the stand I made for you.”

“I am realising that I have committed myself – I have given my assurance to Dippet to see to it that you are capable of holding your own in classes and I am regretting my hasty actions. I expect you will take up a great deal of my time over the next weeks – time I could be dedicating to infinitely more worthy pursuits, and, it appears to me that in light of your dramatic secretive posturing, your social ineptitude and your general ignorance of recent developments in any area I might consider of interest, it will be very difficult to spend so long in your company.”

“That is what is wrong. Your opinion of my blood status would only bother me if I considered your thoughts of any worth whatsoever. Could we cease wasting time and return to Hogwarts now, in order that I might deposit you in a dorm room, explain the basics of your new environment and get on with my evening?!”

Harry felt his jaw hanging. It had been so almost from the beginning of Tom’s civilised if utterly
venomous rant.
The feeling he’d gotten in the restaurant when the other boy had simply walked away was back and a hundred times stronger.
He was nothing. Not even worth anyone’s time – especially not tom’s apparently.
He was stuck in the past and he was now completely alone.
He had had Dumbledore helping him but he’d somehow made the man into an enemy.
Tom – who would eventually be his enemy had for whatever reason started to try to help him and now after only a few hours he thought..all that.

And the worst thing was – everything he had said was true. He was nothing. He’d failed in every possible way.

His entire time at school he’d suspected that his professors might be letting him slide through with good grades because he was the boy who lived.

And then later he’d known that they were letting him skate because they needed him to do something – defeat Voldemort.

And then in the end he’d understood that they gave him good grades when he didn’t deserve it because it didn’t matter.. he wasn’t ever going to work. He was just going to die...
What point even bothering to take the trouble to make sure he understood how to brew a calming draught, transfigure a raven into a silver spoon, calculate a geodesic vector or recognise asphodel from asmortem shoots.
He’d always had Neville for herbology and Hermione for pretty much everything else.

The only reason he’d really been taught defense against the dark arts was because he needed to stay alive in order to destroy all the horcruxes.
His entire life.. practically from birth.. had been a lie perpetrated in order to manipulate him into doing what Dumbledore needed done and then being noble or broken enough to sacrifice himself.

He blinked. Tom was some distance up ahead, walking silently. He could see the blacker form moving, the edges undefined in the very dark darkness that you only got in the countryside. No stars tonight.
He was walking back toward Hogwarts.. a place that held so many good memories.. but most of them cloaked in lies.
He had no real purpose there anymore. But he couldn’t just turn around and walk away either. He had no money. He didn’t know anyone in this time.
Well.. except Tom.. and Dumbledore.

He didn’t know whether he could even work at seventeen without any papers or qualifications. If he could it wouldn’t be something he’d want to be doing. It would be something even worse than being in Hogwarts with hundreds of complete strangers and classmates thinking he was more stupid than Crabbe and Goyle.

He wrapped his arms around himself in mild panic. He had nowhere to go.
For a moment he had thought to himself ‘I want to go home’ but then he had had to realise that there was no home anymore. There was only death back there.
There was no Hermione. Ron didn’t even really want to know him.
He’d thought he had friends but after he came back from the horcrux hunt he’d realised he just had people who said hello to him and asked him about quidditch from time to time. None of them really cared a jot what happened to him.
They didn’t even see him as a person – just as Harry potter.
Someday after the war was over they’d be able to say they knew Harry potter – went to school with
him. He was a nice enough bloke. It was a real shame what happened to him. Hero to the end.

Harry felt sick. He let himself drop down to his knees in the cold dust of the road his arms wrapped around himself tightly, rocking forward in abject misery.
It hurt.
It hurt so much.
He had nothing. There was nothing left for him and nothing left inside him.
Perhaps he should just take out his wand and end himself right now. It would save everyone the trouble of bothering with him.

Tom looked around. Where was the bloody little twit? He was late. His knights would be looking for him soon and the blasted boy was wasting his time.
He couldn’t see him anywhere. Perhaps he’d run off?

Several different emotions flickered simultaneously. Relief that he wouldn’t have to deal with the boy over the coming weeks; anger that his night would probably be ruined when Dippet demanded answers; and disappointment.
The last was the only one he didn’t understand.

Admittedly he might have been slightly harsh toward the other boy but he’d noticed that giving him the silent treatment in Diagon Alley had seemed to make him perk up and pay a bit more attention and by the time they got back to the road and started toward the castle he’d realised the time and felt anxious to be back and rid of the boy so that he could prepare for the ceremony tonight.
Then when the boy had gone and brought up blood impurity again – in the open air near Hogwarts..he’d simply lost patience with the idiot.

Growling inwardly he started off back down the road, casting a spell silently to improve his eyesight.
There. He could see him now. Some way away. A small huddled figure on the ground.
Had something happened to him? Was he ill? What was he doing?!!

He hurried toward him, dropping to his knees and pushing the boy back slightly till he could see his face. Wet. The fool was crying.
He’d dressed him down a little and the sot was so weak that he’d literally broken down and cried.
Tom felt a wave of disgust well up. The other boy was turning his face back downward, his eyes were closed.
He hadn’t even looked to see who had appeared next to him. Idiot.

And then very softly he heard him whisper “I’m sorry.”

Tom lifted the other boy’s face with a finger under his chin, undecided how to deal with this.
He wanted to curse the wretch but that would only waste further time. He could imperio him back to the castle and into his room and then obliviate the memory..

“This isn’t my time.”

He almost missed the words, they were barely breathed and the slight wind took them immediately.
Gripping the boy’s jaw hard, he demanded “explain.”
The pale throat swallowed visibly and he saw another couple of tears slide down the shiny tracks on the slender face.

“Someone cast a spell on me. I don’t know what they cast. This isn’t my time. I..i’m stuck here. But there’s nothing to go back to anyway. I don’t belong anywhere anymore. I..don’t want to be here. I’m sorry.. for..wasting your time.. You-you’re right.. i’m worthless. My only purpose is to die and I do-don’t want to..I wish I did but I.. I’m sorry.”
The blonde seemed to shatter into actual sobs then.

Tom blinked, stunned. The boy was the victim of a temporal spell of some kind? That would explain how he materialised in the clearing and why he was so secretive, he thought to himself. Absently he pulled the snivelling creature forward into his arms and held him, rocking gently as he had seen others do in the past.

For some reason it didn’t feel as strange and wrong as he might have expected.. This boy..there was something about him. Tom generally avoided unnecessary physical contact with others, although he did partake in their bodies when it suited him.. But this boy he found he enjoyed touching even without the pursuit of his own release. He had fellated him without any expectation of reciprocation and now, even as the strange little idiot cried a wet patch into the shoulder of his robes, he found himself stroking his thin frame in a manner he hoped was comforting.

He leaned his cheek against the boy’s and said softly “I snapped at you because I was late for a prior engagement..and because it irritated me not to know anything about you..and yes..because of your comment and your mentioning it again. I dislike remarks about my blood status. Avoid making any reference to it in future.” He felt a nod against him. The boy’s cheek was hot and slick, tom felt another chilly little tear slide down against his skin. The boy was taking the deep gaspy breaths of one who was trying to pull themselves back together and stop crying. He held him slightly tighter, observing again that it did feel pleasant to do so. It would feel better, he thought, if the boy would put his arms around him too. The slender form stiffened against him and then he could feel it pulling away.

Reluctantly he released him and sat back on his heels, watching the confused, troubled and guilty expressions twisting the damp face in the dark. Caed managed to get out in a husky voice that wavered slightly “I’m sorry. You said you were late. I.. we should go.” Tom nodded and then realised the boy probably could barely see him. He cast the vision improving spell on him and smirked when the boy gasped and then blushed darkly.

“Thank you” he mumbled, embarrassed. Tom nodded again, gliding gracefully to his feet and extending a hand to help the other boy up, who hesitated, looking at tom’s hand and then took it gingerly and allowed himself to be drawn up to his feet. Tom held his hand just a second or two longer than absolutely necessary before letting it fall, turning back toward Hogwarts.

He walked slower. Meeting or no meeting, now was the opportune time to find out more about what could prove to be a very advantageous acquisition. His knights would not dare to question his lateness anyway - and if they should ask why he was late for a meeting that he had ordered, they would feel the lick of his wand for their imprudence.

He flicked up a muffling spell he’d recently created. Obviously the boy had one too – he’d felt it in the crone’s cup earlier.
“Are you from the past then?” he enquired neutrally. It would explain why the boy had not performed well in the tests Dumbledore had given him.

There was a silence and then the boy responded nervously. “no. About fifty years in the future.”

Tom looked over at him surprised and delighted. He bit off the dozens of questions that flooded his mind at the thought of having access to a window into the future.

Coming from the future explained perfectly why the boy was so nervous about telling him anything about himself.

He was worried about the timeline.

Tom had read a number of books on temporal theory and most seemed to present the theory that a wizard or witch travelling any distance into the past might accidentally destroy space and time by creating a paradox – killing their own grandfather as it were.

Tom did not subscribe to this theory. He held it to be illogical and unfalsifiable. The only way it could be proven was to create a paradox and end the universe.

Personally – he believed that if a person went back in time then whatever they did would create the future they had previously existed in. An oruboros loop.

This was a paradox but it didn’t involve the destruction of the universe – it merely suggested that free will might be an illusion.

However if the boy thought that the entire universe was at stake, he’d have to be very careful in his questioning if he wanted to get anything out of him.

And..he realised.. it didn’t explain why the boy was so abysmal in his academic tests. Surely- he should be ahead of the curve if anything.

Perhaps the boy was simply a very poor student.. or had had limited access to magical study? Had the magical world become more stupid in the future?! Was that even possible?!

“Were you home schooled?” he asked curiously. Caed looked surprised, as if he had expected an entirely different question.

The blonde thought for a moment, probably considering whether answering the question could be dangerous and then replied uneasily. “No. actually I went to Hogwarts. But..um.. I just found out that my professors hadn’t really been teaching me over the years. They’d just been giving me E’s and A’s and not really caring whether I could do the work or not.

Don’t ask me why. I..really can’t tell you that part. I thought I was pretty good – not the best or anything – but an ok student. Now it turns out I’m not even good enough to get into the classes I was taking.”

Tom blinked, shocked. Why would Hogwarts professors do something so awful to a student?! Had his parents bought his way through? Tom remembered that Caed had said he was an orphan.

Did his professors simply not care enough to even bother trying to teach him? Was this general practice in the future?! What would he do when he graduated and could barely manage in the real world?

“What would have happened at your NEWT’s?” he questioned, morbid fascination propelling him. “I assume they are still ministry tested at least.”

Caed swallowed and looked away. He didn’t answer for a while and tom wondered what was wrong with the questions. Had there been some colossal change in the wizarding world such that the ministry no longer existed and the boy didn’t want to mention it?

The answer when it came was offered in a strangely flat voice that troubled Tom for some reason. “I don’t think I would have ever had the chance to sit my NEWT’s so it wouldn’t have mattered I guess.”
The gates loomed up ahead and Tom went automatically through the process of letting them both in, his mind still on the answer Caed had offered. ‘He wouldn’t have had the chance to sit his NEWTs so it wouldn’t have mattered.’ Tom inferred, although he recognised that the inference was not solidly based, that the professors had recognised that Caed would never be sitting his NEWTs and had not bothered to teach him for that reason. Why was it expected that he would not be able to sit his NEWTs?!

“Did they start simply passing you in first year? Fourth year with your OWLs? Later?”

“I don’t know”

“How did you do on your OWLs then? They’re ministry tested.” Caed hesitated again for a long time. He scuffed when he walked. Tom made a mental note to add it to the long list of things that he needed to fix about the boy. “I did about as good as I did in my grades before and after. I guess they probably started in first year. My grades were about the same all the way through.”

Tom frowned, detecting a problem in the theory. If his OWL scores were fine and the same as his other scores then he was probably adequate the rest of the time too. The ministry wouldn’t fake a student’s exam results even for money.

“How do you know that your professors gave you marks you didn’t deserve?! You said you achieved the same level on the OWLs. Are you suggesting that the ministry results were somehow tampered with? You do realise how it sounds, don’t you?!”

The other boy stopped and Tom saw him fist his hands for a moment and then force himself to calm down. He didn’t look at him but his voice was tight when he responded. “Yes. I know how it sounds. You don’t have all the information, ok. I wasn’t supposed to live to take my NEWTs – and the ministry is more corrupt than... look - It doesn’t even matter, alright. Forget I mentioned it. I’m just basically a shit student and retarded to boot. This is all just an excuse, alright!”

Tom was disturbed. What the hell happened in Caed’s time?! He wasn’t expected to survive to 17?? No.. Worse.. He had said supposed.. he wasn’t supposed to survive to 17. And his professors and, according to him, the ministry knew about this and condoned it – facilitated it in fact, simply passing him for convenience?! That was beyond belief!! He must be delusional in some way. But the way he reacted didn’t give that impression at all. The way he’d cried.. He seemed, generally speaking, reasonably rational if a little emotional. Not that Tom had a lot to base his assessment upon but the boy had reacted rationally in the forbidden forest until he’d decided to run with a pointme in the dark and lost his wand.

“Allright. For argument’s sake – i’ll believe you.” He offered quietly, noting the way the boy’s shoulders relaxed almost imperceptibly. They continued walking, each apparently preoccupied with their thoughts, till they reached the main entrance.

Tom noted that Caed turned toward the staircase instead of down the corridor toward the dungeons.

“Caed” he called. The other boy seemed to shake himself and look around. His eye flicked..somewhat wistfully Tom thought.. up the stairs and then he turned away and came back to where tom waited.

“You weren’t a Slytherin in your time, were you?..” he asked slowly, realising that Caed had been absentely wandering back to whichever of the other houses he belonged to.
He doubted it was ravenclaw.
So he truly was a Hufflepuff or a Gryffindor. How unfortunate..

Caed looked at him sheepishly and shook his head. “No.. in my time the hat wanted to put me in
Slytherin but I asked it not to. I was a Gryffindor. This time round it didn’t really listen to me – just
said I didn’t like Dumbledore and belonged in Slytherin.”

“Perhaps you belong in Slytherin.. but I’m not convinced you’re going to fit in there very well.
It makes sense in light of the fact that you were.. essentially are.. a Gryffindor. You don’t behave in
the manner all Slytherins tend to behave.” Tom sighed. “Perhaps..something can be done about it.
Time will tell.”

He gestured for Caed to precede him, curious whether the boy would know the way to the
Slytherin common room. Apparently he did. He walked down without any trouble whatsoever,
stopping in front of the correct shield and waiting.

Tom smirked. “The current password is ‘Ophiuchus’. I change it weekly, or more often if there are
concerns about security. The new password is posted inside the dorm rooms on the morning it is
changed.

Harry leaned close, whispering the strange word and the shield popped away from the wall
slightly, opening the way for them both.
There were a few students sitting around the common room inside, almost all younger years, and
they all looked up with varying degrees of interest.
Harry tried not to blanch in reaction, thinking that Slytherins would probably see that as a sign of
weakness.
He tried instead to fit a blank look on his face and waited for Tom to lead him.

The common room itself looked pretty much how he expected it would – and quite similar to how
it would look in fifty years when he’d sneak in as Gregory Goyle.
The furniture was different but it was all black and there was a lot of old and expensive looking
wooden tables and sideboards with various silvery trinkets and objects about the massive stone
pillared room.
The large fireplace and massive oval window opening under the lake dominated the view.

“Come, Caed. We shall find you a room.” Tom spoke behind him, gesturing toward an arch at the
back of the large room, which seemed to lead downstairs.
Harry walked toward it immediately and started down, stopping on the first level and waiting for
further instruction.
Tom looked at him approvingly.

This was so surreal somehow. He was actually trying to make friends with Voldemort. Voldemort
was probably the only person prepared to help him here.
He might even be..dependant.. upon him.
If he couldn’t go back.. (and he really couldn’t go back)..then he had to somehow make a life here.
He had to learn everything he hadn’t learned before and find some kind of work. Tom might help
him do that.
The tall and undeniably graceful, boy led him down the corridor, stopping outside a room and
seeming to hesitate. He turned around quickly, fixing Harry with a speculative look, his head slightly tilted, and spoke quietly, a strange little smile playing at the corner of his lips faintly.

“There is a bed free in this dorm room. It is in fact the only bed free among the seventh years. ..however..”

he took a half step closer
“In the dormroom shared by my...friends – there is one individual who might be moved here instead of you. You could take his place in that room.”

Harry noticed the slight pause before tom had said friends. In his mind Harry was substituting ‘death eaters in training’ and the hair stood up on his arms in gooseflesh as his eyes widened. Tom was going to put him in a room with death eaters. He swallowed. Tom took another half step closer.

“To translate for your Gryffindor mind” he said, an indecipherable expression on his face “I am generously offering you an introduction and a possible affiliation with my associates. You would be safe within Slytherin if you had such a connection. The most important thing that every first year learns in Slytherin is that, while one is always at core alone, it is dangerous to be without association.”

Tom moved another few inches closer and Harry stepped back uneasily feeling once again off balance. He didn’t understand what Tom was about. Maybe he realised that Harry was uncomfortable with him invading his space and did it just to intimidate him. It bloody worked. Harry took another step back and his heel hit the wall. He slid along it quickly and put the open corridor at his back, glancing behind him briefly to make sure no one else was there.

He was gifted, incongruously, with another approving look from Tom.

“Caed - This is the kind of offer that many in Slytherin would give their wand arm for. ..well.. someone’s wand arm, at least.” He added, smirking again.

“My circle is composed of the brightest, strongest and most well-connected of the Slytherins in seventh year. In case you did not realise - I am offering you my protection, Caed. But it is your choice. I can put you in this room. You need only say the word.”

Harry’s eyes flicked to the door and then back to Tom. He’d only just finished telling himself how he needed to make friends with Tom and try to get his help if he wanted to survive. If he didn’t take Tom’s offer, he had a feeling it would be interpreted as an insult or something. He really didn’t want to put himself in a room with death eaters while he was sleeping and vulnerable.. but maybe.. maybe Tom really would protect him. Maybe the safest place for him to be would be in the middle of them.

“I’d ..like.. to stay in your friend’s dorm then.” He said. Remembering as an afterthought. “Thank you..again..Tom.”

The dark blue eyes glinted slightly and the other boy nodded, smiling faintly and gestured for him to follow. At the door at the very end of the corridor he motioned stop.

“Wait here Caed.” He instructed and, knocking twice, entered the room after a couple of seconds.

Harry didn’t hear anything and after a few minutes he started to think that maybe he wouldn’t have to stay there after all if whoever was in there refused to move, but then the door opened and a short boy with messy brown hair and pajamas came out looking more than a little ticked off.
Harry stepped out of his way quickly as he stomped past and down the corridor into the room that Harry had just declined. Tom appeared at the door and smiled at him with bright amused eyes. “Seems that Willowbank was a little reluctant to give up his prime position. I managed to persuade him in the end though. Come in and meet your new dorm mates, Caed.”

Harry blinked, wondering just how Tom had persuaded the pissed off looking boy who’d stomped past. He stepped forward gingerly and then stopped again and forcibly pulled himself up by his bootstraps. No weakness. Slytherins are like sharks or something. And... and death eaters way more so.
I’m fine. Tom’s practically vouching for me. Probably. I need to just stay cool.

He walked forward with confidence he didn’t feel and was surprised to find that every other boy in the room was dressed. He’d thought they’d all be in bed, like uh.. Willowstead seemed to have been.

The room held eight beds with four on each side and a door at the end that was closed. He supposed it might be a bathroom. The bed closest to the door was conspicuously without belongings or trunk around it and Tom nodded at his speculative look at it. “Yes. That will be yours – but I’d like to introduce you first.”

He looked up and mustered the other boys. They all looked somehow older than the seventh years he’d known back...back in the future. Perhaps people got softer over the decades or something.

Three boys sat on one of the beds at the back and two on another bed. The remaining two were on their own beds and one had been reading while the other was writing something, it seemed. They sat up and paid attention.

“This is Caedmon Piper” Tom informed the room. “He has entered Hogwarts only this evening and will begin classes tomorrow. I would appreciate it if you might watch over him a little. He has been home-schooled and might have some difficulty adapting to the workload. I think.. given time.. he will fit in here very well however... Caed.. come here.” Tom walked over to the first boy who was lying on his stomach working on something. Harry recognised it as ancient runes.

“This is Roan Mulciber”

The boy in question was slender with brown hair and light grey blue eyes. He had an alert watchful look about him but his smile was friendly enough as he extended his hand for Harry to shake. His grip was firm and his hand warm. Harry thought he didn’t seem much like his impression of death eaters.

“Nice to meet you” the boy said.

Tom told him “Roan’s family are predominantly involved in academic research, Caed. He is strongest in runes and languages – neither of which you are taking, however he is also quite good in transfiguration, charms, arithmancy and of course Defense and Duelling – but then everyone here is good in that.”

There was a quiet snigger from some of the other boys. Harry got the joke but nevertheless tried to pretend that he didn’t.

Tom moved on to the next bed where an athletic black haired boy with black eyes sat. He had a sharp hard look about his features and reminded Harry a tiny bit of Victor Krum.

The boy looked up at him with a calculating expression, as if sizing him up. He had been reading a book. Harry blinked at the strange writing.

“Antonin Dolohov, Caed. Antonin’s family are mainly centred in Eastern Europe, particularly in
Russia. They are ...quite well connected there.” He gave him a meaningful glance which Harry didn’t know what to do with.

“Ok?” he said uncertainly.

Antonin laughed softly and glanced up at Tom, the two sharing some form of quick communication before Antonin told Harry with a faint accent “He means we are involved in the Russian wizarding mafia. He was perhaps being a bit too..delicate. You might as well understand now.”

Harry fought to suppress the blush that lit his cheeks, feeling stupid. “oh.. ok.. thanks” he said and offered his hand.

The boy took it with a slap and pumped it once, glancing at Tom again and smirking in faint bemusement.

Tom smirked back and informed Harry that Antonin’s strengths were in arithmancy and runes, he spoke several languages but did not study the subject and he was absolutely brutal in a duel, to which the Russian thanked him, laughing but added “compared to most other students – perhaps.. compared to you – not so much.”

Tom smiled thinly and moved on, leading Harry by the elbow to the bed on which three boys sat.

“Caed – this is Gyphus Lestrange, Palmer Avery and Darius Nott.” He gestured to each boy and Harry shook each hand quickly in turn.

Gyphus had a more muscular form, a bit more heavysset than the others, Harry noted, with dark brown hair and light brown eyes. A thin white scar ran along the cheekbone under his left eye horizontally. Harry wondered what it was from.

Palmer Avery next to him had dark sandy blond hair and pale blue eyes. He looked a bit.. well.. it seemed wrong to say psycho when he didn’t even know the guy but this boy kind of gave him the creeps a bit from the getgo. His eyes were just ..dead.. somehow. He smiled but there was just nothing behind it. His handshake had been limp and Harry had been pleased to release the hand. His build was somewhere between slim and athletic.

Harry had shifted his gaze away from him quickly, unaccountably discomforted by him.

Darius Nott was a smaller boy with light brown hair and quite pretty large blue eyes. He had a dreamy kind of smile and Harry was reminded a wee bit of Luna.

Not quite as spaced out as Luna maybe but something of that otherworldlyness. That was the end of the similarity however. Darius wasn’t at all waiflike, in fact he was pretty strong looking – a bit like seamus the last time Harry had seen him.

Harry was starting to feel like he was at one of Slughorns awful parties with the way Tom introduced his friends.

Apparently Gyphus’s family was in trade and finance while Palmer and Darius had parents high up in the ministry.

While Gyphus was best in charms and defense and good in magical creatures and herbology – tom told Harry not to ask him for help in arithmancy because he was balls in it.

This earned a growled “hey! I am not! I got an A on the last test! The others laughed.

Tom snorted. “As I said. Balls. A is short for Abysmal, Gyphus.”

Harry smiled. He was feeling surprisingly good. Tom was...different.. than he’d thought he would be, knowing who he was and all. He was actually enjoying meeting these guys and the faint glimmer of hope was dawning faintly that maybe.. possibly.. it might be alright somehow to be stuck here.
If..he could make friends.. and somehow catch up on a million miles of work and pass his NEWTs...

Tom was going on about Palmer’s strengths but he was only half listening. He had a feeling that he would not go to Palmer for help anyway. Darius was apparently best in potions and arithmancy and tom advised him to go to him for assistance in those subjects if he couldn’t find tom himself. The stocky boy smiled up at him and winked, grinning. “Don’t worry. You’ll be alright. Sluggy likes Slytherins and if you’re set with Tom, you’ve pretty much got it made with him.”

“Sluggy is professor Slughorn, Caed” Tom explained unnecessarily. “he teaches potions. He is somewhat... overwhelming.. at times. You’ll see.” Harry nodded agreeably. He knew Slughorn was overwhelming. The man was a huge annoying pompous lard arse who’d just wanted to show Harry around like some kind of trophy to a bunch of other boring people he had no interest in knowing. He was still better than Snape of course..

Tom turned around to the bed behind them and Harry followed his cue. The boys on this bed were incredibly familiar looking. It was some relative of his godfather Sirius and probably the father of Lucius Malfoy. They looked like blacks and malfoys

“This is Alphard Black and Abraxas Malfoy, Caed.” Harry shook the hands, somewhat hypnotised by the familiarity of the boys. Was he staring? He looked back at tom uncertainly. Tom raised an eyebrow a microfraction of a millimetre. Yes. Apparently he’d been staring. Damn.

He turned back to the two boys and swallowed, managing. “It’s an honour to meet you.” Abraxas smirked but relaxed somehow as if he received faintly awed reactions from time to time and was used to it. Alphard looked to Tom with a faint questioning look in his eye. Tom shook his head almost imperceptibly.

“As you would know, Caed – both the Malfoy’s and Blacks are mainly involved with finance, investment and international trade and, correspondingly – Alphard and Abraxas are strongest in arithmancy and defense. Alphard is also very good in transfiguration and Abraxas in charms. Neither are even taking magical creatures and they’re both mediocre in potions so don’t bother going to them for those subjects.”

Harry nodded and wondered whether he should have been making notes of all this. “You do know i’m probably not going to remember what everyone is best in, don’t you?” he asked uncertainly.

Tom snorted. “I know no such thing. Tell me – who would you go to for arithmancy if I were not available?”

Harry looked around and said after some thought.. Darius and then Antonin and if they weren’t available.. maybe Alphard and then Abraxas.”

Tom shot him that approving look again, however it was much stronger. “See,. you did remember.. Who might you ask about charms?”

Harry informed him that he’d probably go to Gyphus and then Abraxas and then maybe Palmer. Over the next few questions Harry determined that he also knew who to see about transfiguration and potions too.

“What about defense?” Tom asked softly.

He hadn’t told Harry much about the relative abilities of the boys in that area, with the exception of Antonin.
Harry swallowed and looked around and then back at Tom. “Um... You first. Then...Gyphus, Antonin, Abraxas, Alphard, Palmer, Darius and Roan.”

Tom looked surprised and pleased. “Why Gyphus first?” he asked curiously.

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know. If I had to fight someone in the room – other than you, he’d probably be my last choice.” Tom considered this.

“Gyphus does indeed have a broader knowledge of defense than the others. You seem to have judged everyone quite well in fact. That is...useful to know.
How are you in defense, Caed? Where would you place yourself among the others?”

Harry stiffened, his eyes widening in unease. “I...I don’t know.” He mumbled.

Tom looked thoughtful for a moment. “Nevermind. We have defense tomorrow afternoon – I’m sure we’ll soon see.”

Harry swallowed and flicked his eyes away and back at Tom uncomfortably.

Great. Tomorrow he would be having DADA as critiqued by Lord Voldemort. That was going to be fun. Harry had sometimes had dreams in which he’d been in DADA and Voldemort had stood by watching and ridiculing him for every move. It was unpleasant. He’d had a lot of sympathy for Neville in potions because of it.

Tom looked at Caed speculatively. He’d been quite impressed when the boy had, off the cuff, estimated the abilities of his knights exactly as Tom himself privately rated them. He wondered now whether the boy might actually be more use than previously assumed. He would observe him carefully in defense. Perhaps he might be skilled in that area. or at least possess some natural talent that might be developed.

On that thought, casting tempus he noted that it was already after midnight. He could still carry out the ceremony with his knights, however it would be cutting it thin on time and he would not be as alert as he now desired to be for tomorrow’s defense class.

As if reading his mind, Abraxas questioned obliquely. “Another day?”

He nodded to him and thereby to all of them. Suddeny remembering he rummaged around in his pockets and pulled out Caed’s bags and books, taking them over to his bed and enlarging them again before turning back to the peculiarly endearing blonde boy hovering indecisively between Gyphus and Abraxas beds.

“I shall leave you to get settled now, Caed. I will see you at breakfast.” He shot a last meaningful look around the others and turned and left, making his way out of Slytherin house and up to the head boy’s room. The painting – an irritating mermaid – tried to tell him off for coming in so late. He smiled a charming smile and explained how he was helping a new student, telling the wretched daub that she was lovelier each day. When the portrait closed after him he rolled his eyes. He needed to find some way around that blasted scribble.

Divestoing his clothing, he didn’t even bother with his nightshirt but simply crawled into the wide double bed that was one of the main perks of being head boy, rolling over and relaxing.

In his mind’s eye pale emerald eyes floated and he ran his fingers through messy blonde hair. He
sighed and turned over, falling asleep almost immediately.
Chapter 4

Harry walked into the grand hall and felt immediately uncomfortable. Quite a few people turned and looked at him curiously. He could feel himself being sized up and although he couldn’t hear any specific comments he recognised all too well the feeling that many of them were now talking about him.

“This way Caed” Roan said, moving past him as he’d frozen. Harry nodded and offered a smile back.

After Tom had left last night he’d felt suddenly nervous at being with the others. Then Antonin had said they were all really glad that he’d moved into their dorm – Willowbank was a tosser and Roan and Darius had come over to his bed and asked him about what subjects he was taking and how he met Tom.

Harry had answered them, noticing how all the others were paying attention too, if somewhat more subtly as they all got ready for bed.

If it had been Gryffindor they’d all have been crowded around him asking questions at once.

It was...ok...he found.

He’d explained very vaguely what had happened with his nonexistent parents and how he’d gotten to Hogwarts.

Darius asked was he was well acquainted with Dumbledore then and he could almost feel the others pricking their ears up. There was some strange sense of relief palpable in the air when he said he wasn’t; that he actually didn’t get along with him well at all and thought he was an arse. Roan grinned at him and said he would find many in Slytherin who shared that view.

Harry got the feeling that they were all wondering about him but surprisingly, nobody was at all pushy about questioning him beyond what he had ventured in response to Darius and Roan’s tentative questions.

Then Gyphus had come over in black pajama bottoms with blue constellations and asked him whether he followed quidditch.

The other boy had sat down as Roan and Darius wandered off to get ready for bed, and launched into an explanation of the sport and the confederation, describing some of the teams he thought were best. Harry listened rapt, absorbing as much as he could about the teams of the time.

It was so...friendly and normal – it was surreal in its normality. Sitting and chatting about...or at least listening about quidditch with future death eaters in Slytherin house..

He didn’t know anything about gobstones which seemed to put Alphard Black off a bit when the boy wandered over to join Gyphus and Harry, wearing a dark green flannel nightshirt, but when he said he’d like to learn – the painfully familiar looking face brightened and promised to bring him to one of the Slytherin matches.

Feeling somewhat reassured and...hopeful again.. Harry had pulled out and slipped on the pale green pajamas that he’d bought earlier with Tom and had gotten into bed.

He’d considered putting up wards but in the end he hadn’t. He’d just rolled over in the bed both familiar and unfamiliar and had gone to sleep.

Harry followed Roan past the place where he used to sit at the Gryffindor table down to the
Slytherin table; all the way down to the head of the table where Tom sat, immaculate and alert, seemingly not watching them approaching at all as he pored over a newspaper and ate fruit salad. Harry had a feeling though, that Tom was always perfectly aware of everything going on around him and true enough, when they got close, the head boy glanced up, meeting his eyes for a second before gesturing for him to sit at his left.

Gyphus and Alphard obligingly moved down a short way for him. Roan, Harry noted, walked all the way around the table to sit on the other side next to Palmer, a few places down. Opposite Harry, Abraxas was eating half a ruby grapefruit with a spoon segment by segment. He glanced up and raised a pale slender brow.

“I trust you slept well, Caed?” he enquired politely. Harry nodded and smiled. “and you?” the other boy nodded back and turned, glancing at the newspaper Tom was reading.

“Caed” Tom said, still reading and absentely skewering a cube of honeymelon with his fork. Harry turned to him.

“Professor Dumbledore already gave me your timetable. Unfortunately you do not have many classes with me. You will have charms with Gyphus and Alphard first period and then magical creatures. None of us are in your class for that. After lunch we will all have defense together and then the rest of the day you have free periods. I did ask professor Dumbledore whether you might attend parallel classes in your subjects in order to catch up, however the professor did not think that it would be ‘suitable’.” Tom glanced up and Harry found he could actually feel the other boy’s irritation at Dumbledore even though outwardly he looked quite placid.

“You will therefore go directly to the library after third period and study until I join you. I’ll look over what you’ve been working on and we can decide how to proceed.” He raised his eyebrows questioningly and Harry nodded agreement.

“ok. What sh-“ he was interrupted by a quieting of the soft hum of conversations and turned around to look behind him, finding that everyone had stilled and was looking up at the head table. Following the eyes he saw that Dumbledore had stood up to make an announcement and groaned – seeing what was coming.

“Good morning students. I have a small announcement. A new student has joined us today – Caedmon Piper please stand up!”

Harry fought against the blush that rose up as he turned, feeling his cheeks heat. A spell hit him from behind then and he felt suddenly cool relief slide down over him. Either tom or one of his group had cast something. He was grateful. The entire school, including all of Slytherin was looking at him with interest.

“Caedmon comes to us a war orphan. Grindelwald killed his family and I do hope that you will make him feel welcome now that he is dependent upon us all.”

This time Harry couldn’t keep the disgust off his face. He was appalled at Dumbledore. The man was making him a social pariah on his first day. He’d told everyone he was impoverished, orphaned and of low blood status, usurping the school funds and implied that he was also ignorant and slow.
Harry looked back at the students to see sneers of disapproval and snide amused expressions, here and there a look of pity.

He Hated Dumbledore at that moment. Almost as much as when he’d learned that the man had kept Hermione’s death quiet.

“Thank you Caedmon, you may sit.” Dumbledore gestured to him absently and Harry turned quickly and sat, fury on his face. He looked back at Abraxas and Tom whose faces were blank and polite, listening to Dumbledore offer some quidditch related announcements. Harry couldn’t even listen to it, all he could hear was his blood rushing. How was he supposed to get by here now?! Half the school hated him already. He glared at the toast and folded his arms.

Tom’s hand on his arm made him jump and he looked at him with narrowed eyes. “Don’t do that. Calm down. Show them you are not affected.” The other boy murmured almost inaudibly, still looking up at the head table.

He blinked. What?

The hand withdrew and Harry furrowed his brow, confused. He knew what Tom meant and tried to calm down. It was hard. Unfolding his arms he took a deep breath and rolled his shoulders slightly, shaking it off.

It didn’t matter. Bloody..Voldemort.. would make sure he was ok ..probably.. and he’d said yesterday that his opinion carried a lot of weight in the school. The hum of returning conversation was louder than it had been. Tom returned to eating his breakfast and reading the paper and said quietly “We will speak about this later Caed. You must learn to control your reactions. This sort of thing is only as damaging as you allow it to be. Eat something.” Abraxas nodded subtly also, although he glanced at Tom with a veiled expression.

At Harry’s side Alphard leaned in close and said wryly “Seems like you’ve already made him your enemy then.”

Harry nodded and reached for a slice of buttered toast.

Charms was awful. The miserable professor Phipps had obviously talked to Dumbledore because when Harry came in he made him sit at a desk at the side of the classroom by himself and gave him a charms textbook to ‘review’ while he taught the rest of the class. Gyphus and Alphard shot surprised glances at one another at this before they became absorbed in the lesson. Gyphus had made a joke about it on the way to taking him to magical creatures and Harry had smiled but he didn’t feel very much like laughing.

Professor Kettleburn was slightly better, if only because he treated every student like an idiot.

They were shaling Wirrowskeins – a scaley larger cousin to the puffskeins that had become popular as pets in Harry’s time. Wirrowskeins weren’t the friendliest of animals and bit and scratched with claws that had some kind of mild poison, however their scales were valuable potions ingredients.

The wounds burned slightly. Harry managed to shale his a bit before the lesson had finished and felt satisfied enough with that. Most of the class hadn’t done as well.
He walked alone up to the main building, feeling a bit better. Then a group of students pushed roughly past him from behind, half knocking him over and laughing nastily as they walked on. He looked after them automatically thinking of Malfoy and his goons, only to see that they were Gryffindors. The rest of the way to defense he felt crap again.

He walked into the large gymnasium like room with a dark expression which he guiltily tried to blank as Tom turned a friendly smile toward him. “Sorry..” he mumbled. “some Gryffindors... doesn’t matter.”

Tom nodded approvingly. “Thats better. I don’t want to see you walking around with a face like thunder again Caed. Appearances are extremely important.”

He shifted uncomfortably, looking around the room in order to have a reason to look away from Tom. His perfect hair, sapphire eyes and immaculately groomed appearance – Harry knew he himself looked like he’d been pulled through a hedge backwards most of the time. Glancing about though, he noticed with a groan that the class was a Slythindor mix. The other half of the room was full of red and black uniformed students – most of which were talking in groups and then looking over at him standing next to Tom.

“Don’t ever ignore them ...but don’t allow them to bother you either” Tom instructed him very softly. “Dumbledore put you in a rather nasty position this morning and now we must show that you have good breeding, that you are a worthy individual and that you are not defenceless. Do you understand, Caed?”
Harry nodded unhappily. “I will teach you how to comport yourself. We will begin this evening after I am finished with my classes and before my patrol.

Caed looked shaken, Tom noticed. Was the boy truly that fragile? He had hoped the little breakdown yesterday would not be symptomatic of the boy’s temperament. Alphard had informed him what had occurred in Charms. It appeared Dumbledore had done more than simply ruin Caed in the eyes of most of the school. This might be more difficult than he had anticipated. He wasn’t certain it was worth the effort of working to redeem the boy publicly.

Perhaps it might even be better if he didn’t. Caed would be more dependent upon him if the rest of the school were threatening or dismissive. He would think on the problem.

Public opinion aside however - if Dumbledore was going to deliberately sabotage Caed’s performance in his classes it would demoralise him. From the way the boy had broken down yesterday – he might not withstand an ongoing isolation and degradation.

Tom sighed inwardly. This was all an unnecessary complication in his plans for the year.

He glanced over at Caed who had moved to stand next to Antonin and was smiling at Alphard and Gyphus’ horsing around with Abraxas. The aristocratic blonde was not finding their little spells messing up his long silky hair and tying his shoelaces together funny at all and was gearing up to
Caed looked almost painfully innocent. His eyes were sparkling with mirth. He looked even more appealing when he was happy, Tom decided.

Unfortunately the boy, absent the memory he had taken from him, was very skittish at his proximity.
He’d noticed it while they were shopping... when he’d held him after he’d found him crying... and especially in the dorm corridor last night.
He should not have tried to approach him like that.
He’d been tempted in that moment. Caed had displayed... obedience... and Tom liked that in a partner.
He’d stopped, however, when he’d seen the fear in the other boy’s eyes and his position ready to bolt.

As much as he disliked the thought, when he already wanted to drag the blonde naive aside and thoroughly sate himself.. it might be necessary to move slowly and attempt to bring Caed to a mindset where he would be tolerant of advances from a male.
Although... he recalled the hazy lust in those beautiful eyes when he’d stroked him..the desperation in his voice when he’d begged him not to stop. Perhaps he might be better served by forcing the other boy.. just a little.. and allowing his own body to persuade him to change his views.
That was a risk however. Caed could panic and try to report what had happened..
Tom was certain Dumbledore would be only too pleased to take his accusation seriously. Even if nothing came of it, such allegations would ruin his prospects with the ministry after his NEWTs.

He could obliviate him if he panicked but that would not improve his current position much. He wanted to be able to enjoy the boy’s body more than once.
But even more - he wanted Caed to want him in return..to beg him for more. If he raped him, he would weep and carry on annoyingly and in light of the possible information in the boy’s head, obliterating him again was ill advised.

He was jolted out of his thoughts by the familiar no nonsense voice of professor Merrythought.

“Good morning students. Don’t stand around like pillocks. Get into pairs and warm up. We’ll be beginning work on the Surinaste series of spells today so I want your shielding and reflexes ready.
Four metre duels. Level one and two hexes only. Get cracking.”
Professor Merrythought bustled through the room to the door which led to her office, taking for granted that seventh years would be able to organise themselves sufficiently to warm up unsupervised.

Tom indicated to Roan to pair with Caed.
Clemens wilkes had been looking with interest toward the new boy and had just taken a step toward him when Roan snapped Caed up and led him off to the side.

Tom smiled at the look of irritation on the boy’s face. Wilkes was the Slytherin quidditch keeper and captain of the team. He had family in the ministry.
Tom had considered him a prospective knight for a while but Wilkes was difficult to control. He saw himself as a leader rather than a follower. If Tom brought him into the group he’d always have to watch his back. The boy would try to drag Darius and Palmer to him first, and then would have worked on Alphard.. or possibly even Abraxas, Tom expected.
Antonin was too clever for intrigue games and Gyphus and Roan too unquestioningly loyal.

Wilkes was therefore dismissed and it was this dismissal after Tom had been showing what probably amounted to a flattering level of interest in him that had likely contributed to the boy’s
enmity toward him now. Whatever Tom had, Wilkes coveted.

Tom had showed the school that he welcomed this new boy this morning. Irrespective what the rest of the school might or might not think, for Slytherins, allowing Caed to sit at his left hand this morning was an unmistakeable signal.

As a result Wilkes probably wanted to get Caed alone and find out exactly what tom wanted from him. Tom sincerely doubted that the innocent little Gryffindor would have any idea what was going on if Wilkes got him alone for a chat. Wilkes would have him wrapped around his finger in short order. Then Caed would have an alternative if he wanted to back away from tom. Well.. in actual fact he probably wouldn’t – Wilkes would drop him as soon as he was no longer of value – but he would likely convince Caed sufficiently to trust him.

Wilkes associated with three other Slytherins – Bellico Yaxley, Benjamin Travers and Callista Kent. Together they could present a very plausible alternative from Caed’s perspective. That could not be allowed to occur.

He moved, lost in thought, to stand opposite Gyphus. There was no question as to who he would spar with to warm up. He did spar with the others sometimes for their benefit. But Gyphus was quick and had a decent range of knowledge. It was less dull for Tom to warm up with him than the others.

He absently defended himself from the minor hexes thrown at him, returning them here and there, while watching Roan and Caed spar. Caed had decent shielding and very good reflexes, Tom noticed, but he seemed to use the same few spells over and over. He wondered whether the boy was lazy, unwilling to reveal his true capability or simply had a very small range of knowledge. From his quickness and the strength of what he cast, he could have potential. Tom hoped he was being coy.

“All right! That’s enough. Come back now” professor Merrythought called from the oversized blackboard upon which the spells they were working on were usually noted just in case the slower members of the class forgot what they were doing from one second to the next.

This wasn’t unheard of. Guner Crabbe in Gryffindor was completely dense. It took him the entire lesson to master one spell most of the time and sometimes he failed to learn anything at all. Lysander Blithe in Slytherin was a vapid little thing too and her aim was atrocious. He had instructed her in impossible to misunderstand terms years ago that when she was in this class she would position herself far from him and face the other direction.

If anyone was to receive accidental pot shots he wished it to be the Gryffindors.

He broke off sparring and moved toward the centre of the room with the others, drifting to stand next to Caed. The blonde glanced at him and then turned back to professor Merrythought.

“Right! We will be working on Surinaste hexes today. Can anyone tell me about any of them?”

Tom glanced around. Several hands were in the air. Caed looked blank so he edged forward and murmured, his lips against the boy’s ear, “Do you know the Surinaste series?” Caed shied away and glanced back at him perturbed then shook his head slightly. Tom turned his
eyes back to the front.

Adnael Surinaste was one of the most well known of the modern wizards specializing in martial hexes. He was significant.
He wondered at Caed’s blank look. Probably the hexes were superceded in the next fifty years. Almost certainly.

Professor Merrythought was listening with a discontented expression to Billius Weasley give a rather underwhelming explanation that the hexes were dark martial spells by some Arab.
The boy had obviously heard of them but Tom doubted he’d even seen one used or even knew what any of the curses did.

“Thank you mr Weasley” the teacher offered when he was finished. “One point to Gryffindor for that rather abstract definition. Could anyone else tell us more?” He casually looked to his knights who all knew the answer. Gyphus and Alphard had their hands raised.
Caed seemed rather distracted by Weasley, he noted.
The boy looked like he had seen a ghost. There was...something... in the blonde’s expression that just got Tom’s hackles up. He nudged him. “Pay attention” he snapped curtly.

Professor Merrythought selected a Slytherin to further answer the question. “Yes – miss Crouch.”

Tom listened to the second redhead merrythought had picked give a far more substantial answer. Charis was quite capable magically. She was simply a warthog.
Tom could not credit any witch or wizard that did not have the good sense to ensure they appeared at least moderately attractive. There was no excuse for the ratty red hair and the poor skin and the girl was fat for Merlin’s sake!...
She was a witch!! There were spells for that!
He tended to ignore Charis.

“The Surinaste hexes are a group of thirty five fairly dangerous curses created by Adnael Surinaste in 1882 through 1901. They are usually divided into three groups – cutting, heating and transfiguration curses. An example of a surinaste cutting curse would be the 'Lf at-Tkhfyджāt or thousand cut curse. One of the heating series would be Ḥār al-'Snān or tooth heating curse and one of the transfiguration hexes is al-'Qrb Fy al-Bţn which transfigures whatever is in the victim’s stomach into scorpions. Surinaste did invent some curses in German and French but his Arabic hexes are the most vicious and thus the most popular.”

Professor merrythought nodded, pleased. “Yes – very good Miss Crouch. Ten points to slytherin.
Now – We’re going to learn a few of Surinaste's curses and their counters. These are hexes you could be faced with, should you ever duel a skilled wizard in battle.
We’ll work on cutting curses today and move on to the other two sets after the weekend. You will be giving me three feet on the cutting curses – all the cutting curses, not only those we cover today - on Monday morning.
Right now.. These are the five most popular of Surinaste’s cutting curses.”
Professor Merrythought flicked her wand at the large board causing the curses to appear there.

Tom glanced at Caed again. The boy looked wide eyed and somewhat scandalised. He edged closer and whispered by his ear “What is it?”
The blond turned, distracted and returned eye contact. He hissed almost inaudibly “this is dark magic!!”
Tom quirked his brow and nodded. “Yes?” Caed looked stricken.

“I’m not going to use dark magic!! Why is she teaching this?! Does the headmaster know?”
Tom raised amused eyebrows. “I take it that it’s not taught..where you’re from.” Caed shook his head forcefully.

“MR PIPER!” professor Merrythought scolded. “PAY ATTENTION!.. I don’t want to interrupt the lesson taking you or others to the infirmary.” Caed looked back at her like a frightened rabbit in a spotlight. Tom kicked him lightly. “Calm down.” he murmured, barely moving his lips.

Caed’s face hardened and he seemed to pay very close attention to professor Merrythought demonstrating the wandwork and intonation of the first curse.

“Circle, slash, twist, flick, flick. The incantation begins at the middle of the slash.. like so. an-Nzyf ’Lá al-’Bd”

She cast the curse at her own finger and a slash immediately began to drip blood. “The forever bleeding cut” she stated. “Traditional healing spells will not have any effect upon it. You must cast the countercharm Hw ’zm Adnael..which means..anybody?” The class looked around with blank faces. Even his knights looked unsure.

Tom snorted amused. – didn’t they ever wonder what they were saying? He raised his hand.

Merrythought smiled at him, her look saying she knew he would be right.

“The countercurse means ‘Adnael is the greatest.’ Most of surinaste’s countercurses refer to his greatness, glory, prowess and brilliance. Several others refer to the incompetence or sexual inadequacy of his enemies – who he names explicitly.”

Collecting another ten points, Tom smirked inwardly. Adnael Surinaste was a conceited man with a twisted sense of humor, he had concluded years ago when he had first learned the curses. It was unfortunate for his enemies – particularly Jostiel Le’Mane – a minor landowner in the 18th century who would probably be most remembered through history for having, according to Surinaste – a penis smaller than a child’s thumb.

Professor Merrythought was already explaining the third curse ‘Skyn ‘Br al-’Ywn’ the blinding curse.

It placed, irrespective where it struck the victim, a horizontal cut across the centre of both eyeballs, popping them if applied with force. It was a terrible thing to heal. Merrythought was teaching them a shield against it, a countercurse for it and a healing spell that would repair damage that sometimes remained after the countercurse when the curse was thrown hard.

Tom looked to Caed, who appeared both fascinated and disgusted but was certainly paying extremely focused attention. The beautiful pale green eyes were bright and shining.

Tom glanced back up at the board at the blinding curse. It ...had been known to occasionally scar. In all likelihood Caed would not experience it. His reactions were quick when he’d been sparring with Roan.

All the same though – it would be a waste if the boy’s eyes were ruined before Tom had the chance to see them looking up at him again in the throes of lust. It had been dark last time.

He leaned forward and murmured next to Caed’s ear “You will practice the curses with me.” The boy paled.

A few short minutes later professor Merrythought dismissed them all to pair up and practice the curses, shields and countercurses.

Caed turned to him looking deeply worried.
Tom led him off to the very end of the room, placing his knights between them and the rest of the
class. This seemed to only worry Caed more. He saw the boy gulp, drawing his wand and looking up
unsteadily.

“Relax Caed.” He said softly. “I paired with you to protect you from harm. You may cast first.” He
cast the appropriate shields silently and waited. Caed seemed unwilling to begin, raising his wand and then hesitating and lowering it slightly.

“Very well then. I will begin” Tom informed him shortly. “Prepare yourself.”

This, the boy responded to immediately, throwing up the correct shield without looking up at the
board.

Tom smiled thinly, pleased at how quickly he’d absorbed the information. He alternated between
the five curses they had learned. Caed’s shield held. He wore a strange determined look on his face
as if he were in a battle and not a D.A.D class.

Tom smiled faintly, amused. “Alright. Now.. will you cast or shall I practice the counter-curses on you first?”

Caed shook his head slightly. “I.. won’t use them.”

This wasn’t amusing anymore. What was wrong with the idiot?! He could see that the whole class
was using the curses! “Why not?” Tom demanded.

The other boy swallowed and stuck his chin out. “I’m not a dark wizard. I don’t use dark magic.
I’ve learned about how.. how seductive it can be.” Tom thought he might laugh out loud and
coughed slightly to prevent it.

Walking closer he smirked at the idiotic little blonde “How will you fight dark wizards if you are
unfamiliar with dark curses?” The other boy shrugged noncommittally.

“Fine. I’ll practice my counter-curses. Drop your shields.”

The other boy looked at him warily. “No.”

Tom raised an eyebrow, his smile twisting slightly. “Suit yourself.” Tom cast one of his own
inventions quickly and the level three shield Caed was using melted away. The other boy jumped
and backed away quickly, trying to cast another shield but Tom had already flicked off the first
cutting curse. It slashed across Caed’s jaw redly.. blood seeped out and dripped down.
The boy put a hand to his face, shocked. Tom stalked after him and cast the counter, healing the cuts to his heart and
following it with the recommended healing charm.

Pale green eyes looked at him angrily. “Stop it” Caed growled. Tom snorted and melted the next
shield the boy had put up, casting the third curse. The boy dropped to his knees clutching his chest.
He looked up, his eyes wide with pain and Tom cast the counter, healing the cuts to his heart and
following it with the recommended healing charm.

“Stop!” Caed said more plaintively this time.

“Are you going to stop being ridiculous about practicing class material?!” Tom asked him in return
and the boy looked away.

“I..” he trailed off.
Tom dispelled the shield a bare moment after Caed erected it. It was a level four. The boy apparently did know some defense but he was slow in silent casting at this level.

“Don’t!!” Caed said urgently, feeling his defences disappear again. Tom sneered back

“If you refuse to participate then I might as well get in some practice. Incidentally – if this were a battle you would already be dead.” The boy looked up at him hatefully and in the next moment he’d raised his wand and cast the first curse.

Tom blinked, feeling icy coldness at his neck and then warmth flow down his chest. Caed had slit his throat from ear to ear with the forever bleeding curse.

Little bastard! Tom cast the countercurse, vanished the blood and scourged his clothing.

The pale green eyes were liquid and apparently stunned by his own actions.

“Better.” Tom told him. “Now stand up and stop making such a fuss.” He wanted to punish him for the insolence but the boy looked quite distraught. He thought it better to encourage him.

It was unacceptable to cast in such a manner upon him.. upon Tom.. but if Caed had used the curse on another in that rather bloodthirsty manner, Tom would have been delighted. As such.. it was a good sign.

Caed got shakily to his feet and whispered something. Frowning, tom stalked over to him. “What?” he said as gently as he could manage.

“I..shouldn’t have..”

Tom considered. “Perhaps not upon me..but it was a good effort. You are quite capable of doing very well in this subject. Show me the others.”

Horrible. It was just horrible. Somewhere between the end of fifth year and the start of seventh, charms had gone from quite fun and manageable to ridiculously complicated and dry. Harry leaned back in the wooden chair and stared at his book as if it had personally offended him.

He..didn’t want to be doing this. He wanted to go grab his broom and fly for a bit. He wanted to go hang out in the common room with Ron and Dean and Seamus and faff about like they all had in the first part of sixth year.

He didn’t want to concentrate on fifty two different kinds of binding, attraction and repulsion charms for objects smaller than a standard housecat which was chapters one and two of the horrible charms textbook he was reading.

When would he need to magnetise beans?!

He stared listlessly out the window at the view down toward the forbidden forest. After a pretty bright morning it was clouding over and it would probably rain later.

If Hermione was here she’d be rapt. She always said she liked it best in the library when it was raining.

It was confusing to be here. He almost felt like at any minute she’d come bustling up to him with a stack of thick books and sit in the chair opposite. She always sat there. He didn’t always sit here.

But when she was making him work on some essay or something this was where he usually sat. Originally it was because there was more space if he sat opposite her – she tended to take up two spaces with her books –
but later he also liked sitting opposite her because he could quietly watch her while she read.

She hated when he did it – it put her off to think someone was watching her - so he had to be cautious about it and not make it obvious. He could almost see her sitting there now with the curls cascading around her face and pooling on the book below her.

He almost jumped out of his skin when a hand suddenly landed on his shoulder.

He looked around half expecting to see Hermione there and felt a jarring disconnect with reality when Tom Riddle’s face looked down at him.

“. . . didn’t mean to surprise you, Caed. I was on my way from languages and thought you might not have left for lunch yet. What are you . . .”

Tom leaned over his shoulder slightly, his hand still on Harry’s shoulder and peered at the charms book.

“Oh . . . Von Wernicke and Gusswright. Yes . . . I heard about this morning. How are you finding the material? Actually . . . don’t answer that. Are you particularly hungry?”

Harry, who had opened his mouth to mumble ‘fine’. Closed it again and considered the question. Are you particularly hungry. It seemed to suggest that if he wasn’t then something else would happen now.

Maybe Tom would sit down and work on charms with him.

He really didn’t want that. He could figure this out by himself. It wasn’t that hard – it was just boring.

Really . . . really boring.

“I wouldn’t mind having lunch . . .” he said slowly. “I was about to go down to the great hall.”

Tom frowned for a moment and then sighed. “Ok. We’ll have lunch then. Come along.”

A few minutes later they were walking down the second floor corridor toward the stairs when Tom touched him on the elbow to let him know they were going down a side corridor.

This wasn’t the way to the great hall. Harry was immediately alert.

“Where are we going?!” he asked suspiciously.

“Good grief you are an innately nervous type, aren’t you!” Tom responded dryly. “I wasn’t planning on dragging you into an alcove and murdering you, Caed. This way.”

He turned into an alcove and Harry stopped hesitantly.

Tom turned and rolled his eyes impatiently then took two steps out, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him bodily in.

Harry didn’t see what he pressed but the back wall suddenly clicked and folded back and Tom walked through.

It seemed like they were only in the dark narrow passage for a few metres and then Tom opened the next wall and they were in a corridor that Harry recognised was on the first floor.

He didn’t know that passage, he noted. Whether it hadn’t been on the marauders map or whether he’d just never had need of it . . . he couldn’t say.

Directly across from them was a large painting of a mermaid, sunning herself on a black rock. In the background a stormy ocean tossed a ship that seemed perpetually on the verge of capsizing.
Tom led Harry over, leaned close and whispered to the mermaid, who winked at Harry saucily and opened, letting them both in.

Inside was a large room – perhaps half the size of the common room. A white marble fireplace was lit and the fire crackled merrily, with a leather wingback chair, a large leather sofa and a chunky wooden table before it.

The flagstones were strewn with oriental rugs and on the walls hung tapestries of medieval scenes and blue and green interlocking/interwoven patterns.

At the side of the room a massive polished mahogany desk stood against a large arched window looking out over the lake. The upper part of the arch was laid in stained glass depicting a flying dragon. Two large bookshelves flanked it, full of neatly rowed tomes and there was a cushioned wooden chair that resembled a throne.

On the opposite side of the room to the desk a double bed with beams and dark green velvet curtains stood. The bedside tables bore lamps in the shape of vertically stacked spheres of coloured glass in various green and blue hues, which glowed in a pleasant manner, while on the far side of the bed an arched door could be half seen next to a large mahogany wardrobe.

It was, Harry decided, a really nice room that he wished he wasn’t in.

“What are we doing here?!” he demanded. “We’re missing lunch. We should go down to the great hall.”

The black haired boy who had strolled into the room and walked over to the desk turned around, his hands full of parchments and rolled his eyes. “I didn’t realise you were on the brink of starvation. Merlin! I had every intention of feeding you, Caed. Gopper!”

Harry nearly groaned as a small greyish house elf in a blue bathtowel fashioned as a tunic appeared suddenly.

“What do you want for lunch, then?” Tom asked impatiently.

Harry blanked. He wanted whatever they were having in the grand hall that couldn’t be brought here.

“um.. grilled cheese sandwich?” he said desperately – the first thing that came to mind.

Tom raised a perfect eyebrow contemptuously. “That’s all?!! I thought you were faint with hunger! Gopper bring his sandwich and a tray of something to snack upon. Oh.. and orange juice with ice.”

“Orange juice?” Harry asked curiously after the elf had gone. “what’s wrong with pumpkin juice?!”

“I’ve never really understood the fascination with pumpkin juice. It tastes sickly. It’s not any more healthy than orange juice. I can call Gopper back if you’d rather pumpkin juice.”

“No.. I like orange juice better too. But..everyone kind of..looked at me strangely whenever i didn’t have pumpkin juice. There was always kind of peer pressure to drink it. And... it’s ok. It doesn’t taste bad or anything.” He trailed off feeling that he was kind of getting off track from the point “What are we doing here? We could have eaten in the great hall. Won’t your friends wonder where you are?”

Harry suspected that Tom’s death eaters wouldn’t dare to question where he was ..ever.. but that wasn’t the point. He didn’t know that as Caed.
“No. They’ll be fine. We are in here and not down there because I have three classes after lunch and I have decided I don’t want to leave you studying in the library by yourself all day. There are students who might take the opportunity to outnumber and threaten you. Or worse. More importantly – anyone who happens to pass there can see what you are working on and thus, exactly how far behind them you might be at present. It is better not to encourage others to think of you as academically and magically inferior.”

“You will work in here while I am gone. Anything I do not wish you to touch is warded against any hand but my own. I am certain that you will find it more than adequate to your purposes.”

Harry was surprised. It actually sounded like Voldemort..well.. ok.. he might not be Voldemort yet. It sounded like Tom was trying to help him again. He just kept doing that somehow. And he hadn’t asked anything much since he’d found out where Harry was from. He probably would later, Harry thought. When he left, Harry would probably find he couldn’t get out of here and later the painful interrogation would begin.

“Um.. I could just as easily study in my dormroom, couldn’t I?” he said uneasily.

Tom sighed impatiently. “yes but-“ the elf popped back into the room, floating a large tray with a jug of freshly squeezed orange juice, two large glasses full of ice, a large platter of fresh fruit and nuts and a small plate with two grilled cheese sandwiches.”

Tom indicated the coffee table wordlessly and the elf floated the tray down, disappearing immediately.

“You could have said thank you” Harry muttered in a low voice, walking over to the sofa and sitting down at one end, taking the first grilled cheese sandwich.

Tom shook his head as he followed, seating himself at the other end of the sofa. “It makes him uncomfortable. ...As I was saying – you could study in your dorm but it is not secure and all of Slytherin is not your friend – particularly at the moment while they believe you might be of impure blood. Moreover – you have no desk to work on and no fireplace – it can be quite chilly down in the dungeons – trust me.”

“You could work up in the common room but there you would be under constant scrutiny and surrounded by the lower years lazing untidily on every flat surface. Here you have access to a house elf, a desk. It is comfortable, secure and most importantly - it is convenient for me to work with you when I am finished with classes before I have to make my rounds.”

“I don’t quite understand why you are so unhappy with the idea of studying here. You should consider yourself honoured. I do not invite others into my room often.” Tom reached for a slice of fresh pineapple, dropping it into his mouth and chewing with visible enjoyment.

Harry thought about what he’d said. It was all very reasonable and sensible and all but it was not the point!.. If he were talking about studying in Hermione’s head girl room – not that she’d ever have one now but she would have had one – then it would make sense. It was the idea of being alone with Voldemort in his private room, possibly warded in, when nobody even knew where he was, that bothered him. But what could he say. The reasoning had been persuasive. He’d look like he just didn’t want to be around Tom if he refused now. He couldn’t do that – he needed him.

Reluctantly he nodded.

“Yeah ok.” he growled, not looking at Tom. He heard the other boy snort. “Your gratitude is
overwhelming, Caed. What have you learned today?"

Harry snarled inwardly ‘I’ve learned that I need to find somewhere in the school to hide myself away from everyone where even you can’t find me. I’ve learned that I need to get better at making up excuses when I don’t want to do something.’

He struggled to think of charms that morning. “um..I read through chapter one of the sixth year charms textbook.”

Tom raised an eyebrow and waved a hand over his shoulder wordlessly summoning a book from the bottom shelf of the bookcase behind him. It looked drearily familiar to Harry. Tom opened it and flipped through for a while, glancing at each page briefly then closed it and laid it aside.

“Yes. What did you learn in chapter one?’ he asked neutrally.

Slouching down in irritation Harry let his head fall back against the sofa.
“I have no idea. I don’t remember. It’s really...dry.” He heard a sniff from the side. “You did not seem to have any problem learning spells in defense today, once you got over your moral quibbles. This is no different. You should excel in this subject considering how quickly you grasped what was shown you in class.”

Harry swallowed and mumbled “I guess..”

The other boy sat up and sighed long sufferingly.
“What was the last book you read for pleasure, Caed”

Harry looked across at Tom suspiciously. “I shouldn’t really tell you.. it’s not even written yet.”

Tom raised an eyebrow. “Alright then. How long ago did you read it?

Harry struggled to remember. Months. Quite a few months. “I don’t remember. A long time”

“How long is a long time. A few weeks? A few years?” Tom asked neutrally.

Harry frowned and told him “sometime last year maybe. It was a muggle paperback. I bought it at a bookstore to distract me. I..I was by myself for a while. For a few months.. I didn’t have access to magical books really. And..when I got back I didn’t feel like reading anymore.”

A look of curiosity flickered over the future Dark Lord’s face but he didn’t ask any further about why Harry might have been by himself for months.

“Was it a thick book? Was it fiction? Non-fiction? Did you enjoy it?”

Harry shrugged and held his fingers about two inches apart. “It..was a book of short stories by a horror writer. I guess I enjoyed it well enough – I...maybe enjoy is the wrong word. Some of the stories were a bit disturbing. But sure.. I guess I enjoyed reading it.”

Tom asked how long he’d taken to read it and seemed scandalised when he told him that he’d stretched it out over a month.

Harry didn’t want to tell him that it had taken so long because he’d only read the Stephen king book in the daytime and had put it down whenever it scared him. It was creepy enough being alone in the middle of the forest with people hunting him, he didn’t need to worry about the horrible things that the American writer had dreamed up as well.

He’d privately wondered about what kind of person had that kind of stuff in their head and whether Stephen king ever had nightmares.
He turned to Tom. “what?!!”

The sculpted face frowned slightly. “Say excuse me or pardon me, Caed. Not ‘what’ – it sounds coarse.”

“.It seems to me that you perhaps learn best by listening and watching rather than reading. That is...less convenient for you at present and over the long term puts you at a disadvantage to other students in some ways.. however..it might be more advantageous to you in the world outside Hogwarts..depending upon what you go on to do after your NEWTs. Either way, it will not prevent you from catching up to the class and even superceding their capabilities.
I will go through the material with you and you will absorb what I show you.”

“If this method proves effective, when you move onto seventh year material perhaps I will have some of the others work with you in the same manner.
Now. Pay attention. We will start with chapter one. Binding charms...”

“This is the coalexia plane surface binding charm for objects of similar size and material....”
Tom walked out of ancient history with a spring in his step, looking forward to seeing how Caed had progressed. He had left him with instructions to look through the textbooks for sixth and seventh year transfiguration, potions, D.A.D and arithmancy and mark where his current knowledge ended.

But more than that, he was... ridiculously enough, he realised... looking forward to returning to his room and finding Caed there.

He slipped through two passageways to reach the first floor faster and let himself into his room.

Caed was gone!

A stab of disappointment irritated him. It was good that he was foolish enough to leave. Tom wouldn’t have to bother with him for the rest of the evening.

Perhaps he would check on him at some point on the weekend but if the little cretin wasn’t interested in helping himself, what use would tracking him down and forcing him to study be?!

He walked... perhaps a bit more slowly than he had two minutes earlier... to his desk and deposited his books on the side then took up a book on spell construction he’d been reading over the last couple of days and went to his wingback to read till it was time to patrol.

His heart clenched slightly when he walked around the sofa and saw Caed sprawled there, his arm thrown over the side and the arithmancy book splayed open on its spine on the floor beneath the hand. The blonde head was thrown back and toward the fire and the one knee was bent, his foot curled under the other leg. His uniform was crinkled and disordered and the tug Tom experienced toward him was powerful and irrational.

He walked silently closer and seated himself on the coffee table looking down at the boy who for some reason affected him viscerally every time he saw him. Licking his lips slightly, he struggled against the desire to run his fingertips down the pale column of the sleeping boy’s neck. It was hard to think of reasons why he shouldn’t do it.

He could just cast a somnis hex and explore to his heart’s content.

Letting his head slip forward he berated himself internally. Self control. What had happened to it?!
He was acting like a dog after a bitch in heat. To distract himself he picked up the arithmancy book on the floor and flicked through it.

There were no pages marked. He couldn’t tell how far Caed had gotten before falling asleep. Looking up at the peaceful innocent face again he had to fight against the need to just touch his cheek.

He wanted to get down on his knees and gently kiss him awake but he knew that the reaction would not be the one he most wanted and so he forced himself to stand up and walk away. He’d take a shower instead. Perhaps when he came out, Caed would be awake. Hopefully he would still be here.

He closed himself into the bathroom and ran the shower. Stepping in he sighed as the spray soothed the tension in his neck he had barely been aware had settled there. Slowly and languidly he stroked his cock, thinking about the things he really wished he could be
doing with the scruffy little beauty asleep on his sofa, and after a bare minute came with a hissed expletive of pleasure.
Relieved and much calmer than before he washed his hair and body and got out, wrapping a towel around his waist and walking back into his room to grab some clothes from the wardrobe.

The gasp made him look over at Caed, who was sitting up stiffly aghast at the sight of Tom half naked.

He’d obviously only just woken cause he was still blinking sleep from his eyes.

“Oh. Sorry. I thought you were still sleeping. Excuse me while I dress, Caed.”
Tom walked into the bathroom and closed the door, leaning against it for a moment feeling an ache inside.
The boy had looked appalled.
On some level he’d actually imagined Caed waking up and seeing him in a towel and showing some sign that he found him attractive. He’d ..hoped..
- he hadn’t really thought the boy would even wake up ...but the way he’d looked at him, as if he were something horrifying..as if he wanted to wash his eyes.. It was discouraging.

He dressed slowly, fully expecting that Caed would have vanished when he returned, but instead he found him ostensibly reading with an expression of utmost focus, as if there couldn’t possibly be anything more fascinating in the world than the book on arithmancy that he was currently staring at without moving his eyes.

Tom walked over nonchalantly and sat on the very end of the sofa again. “Where did you get up to then?” he asked, deciding to ignore the little incident that had just occurred.

“huh?” Caed said and looked up distractedly.
He seemed troubled.

“The book.. arithmancy. Where are you up to in the sixth year text?”

Caed held out the book wordlessly for him to take. He had it open at a page about one quarter of the way through.
Inwardly tom groaned. He would have to teach him what amounted to a whole year’s work in charms, arithmancy and, he thought pessimistically – probably also his other subjects too, and he would have to do it in a space of a few weeks.
What was more.. arithmancy operated quite differently to charms and defense. Differently even to potions. It would be difficult for him to teach Caed this subject by demonstration.

“Oh..” he said slowly, thinking about how to go about the task.

The other boy hung his head. “I’m sorry.” He mumbled. Tom glanced up, frowning. “You don’t need to apologise Caed. We will manage this. I will help you. If you are prepared to listen and pay attention, then you will be up to the others in a few weeks.” Caed ducked his shoulders even more.
Tom couldn’t prevent himself from leaning forward and putting his hand on the other boy’s shoulder, ignoring the flinch and rubbing slightly. “Hey.. its ok.” he said softly, aware only of the warm muscle beneath his hand. Did the boy play some kind of sport in his time? He reluctantly withdrew his hand.

“Don’t worry, Caed. You’ll be fine. By the time I’m finished with you, you’ll be calculating rings around the others.
Now come a bit closer so you can see the book too. We’ll work through the next problem together.”
He placed the textbook on the coffee table and summoned parchment and writing set from the desk.
Caed moved very gingerly closer.

Sighing, Tom examined the problem, seeing the answer straight away. “Ok.. the next three questions are in principle the same problem. I’ll show you the first, we’ll work on the second together and for the third I’ll take away the examples to see if you’ve comprehended the idea. Pay attention!
The lunar value comes first because the arrangement – see the format? Three columns and four sections.. its Mace Locaster rules. Do you know the term?” he was relieved that Caed said he did remember the name.

“Ok..so in Mace problems – the lunar value is converted to a vector first. It leads the astronomical section. The key to remembering the order of calculations in mace problems is Lusty Sons Just May Sate Naughty Urges Very Many Places – in other words – Lunar, Solar, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, Venus, Mercury, Pluto.”

He listened to Caed repeat the mnemonic to himself, half smiling.

“In the second section – you have position variables. These are ordered according to..”

Harry sat back against the sofa and stared into the fire. He’d just finished the last problem that Tom had left for him to do. He thought he might have actually got it right!

It was...shocking...disturbing even, how good Tom Riddle was at teaching. He was patient and he knew how to explain things a different way if the first explanation wasn’t understood. He was easy to listen to too. He had a very pleasant voice – completely unlike Lord Voldemort’s high reedy hiss.

And after he worked through a problem with Harry, asking him what next and why all the time, Harry felt like he knew what he was doing. That horrible panicked feeling when he looked at an arithmancy problem was gone – at least for these problems. The next page was still terrifying –but he had a feeling that it wouldn’t be, after Tom explained it.

Grudgingly he admitted to himself, yawning, that Tom really was helping him – whatever he might want from him later, here and now he was working hard to help him.
He yawned again a minute later, taking a cherry from the mostly empty platter of fresh fruit.

Tom had put that there for him too. It was really nice to study and pick at small bite sized fruits in between sections.

He let himself slip down to lie on the couch again. He knew he shouldn’t. Tom would be back some time and then he would walk him back down to the dorm to make sure he didn’t get a detention for being out after curfew.

Apparently, in the past even Fridays had curfew. By his time they’d made Friday curfew free like Saturday, at least for the higher years.

But.. he could maybe rest his eyes for a little bit. Tom would wake him when he got back. He’d hear the door probably even.
He yawned once more widely and curled up warm and comfortable and not feeling quite as worried as he had been a few hours ago.
Tom walked in and didn’t see the blond head over the edge of the couch. Quickly creeping forward he was relieved to find Caed asleep again on his sofa.

On the coffee table the parchment showed the last problem he’d set him completed somewhat untidily.
He summoned it wordlessly and looked it over. It was correct. He’d grasped the principles and used them. Excellent.
At least the boy was capable of learning when the right method was applied.
He just couldn’t sit down and work from a book apparently.

Maybe it was the Gryffindor influence – that he needed some kind of social stimulus to process information. Who knew?!

He returned the parchment to the table and leaned on the sofa, looking down at the lovely creature.
He should wake him and take him back to his room.
But then..nobody in Caed’s dorm would report him missing. He’d told Roan in ancient history that Caed was with him and that he’d bring him back personally later in the evening. When he didn’t do so, they’d probably just assume he was fucking him.
What a pity he wasn’t, really.
Still.. to wake him or to leave him here?.. Difficult choice.

Sighing he realised what he had to do if he didn’t want to have a huge melodrama in the morning.

He moved around the sofa and knelt beside Caed, shaking him gently. “Caed...” he said softly.

“mmm? Sleeping, Ron. G’way.”

He shook him again. “Caed.. Do you want to sleep on my sofa tonight and continue working in the morning?”

The boy nodded and then seemed to surface slightly. “what’s happening? What are you asking?”
He blinked muzzily, trying to focus. Tom smiled.
“I asked if you want to sleep on the sofa tonight and we can work all day tomorrow since its Saturday.”

The blinking boy seemed to deliberate for a long minute. Tom got up and walked away.

“Make up your mind. If you want me to take you downstairs we need to go now. Otherwise I’ll give you a pillow and blanket and then go to bed myself and in the morning we’ll have breakfast and get back to work on charms and arithmancy and see how you are in potions.”

The thought of getting up immediately seemed to persuade the messy haired blonde more than the other arguments and he mumbled “Yeah.. ok. I’ll crash here then” while toeing his shoes off and curling up into a semi foetal position.

Tom sent one of the pillows from his bed floating over to him and then transfigured a duvet from a handkerchief from his drawer.
Finally, undecided about whether it might scare Caed off, he pulled out a pair of black pajamas from his wardrobe and tossed them at the boy.
“In case you don’t want to get wrapped in your uniform. I’ll use the bathroom while you decide whether you can be bothered moving.” He slipped into the bathroom and changed into dark blue pajama bottoms, divestosing his casual clothing to a folded pile.
After he’d brushed his teeth he walked back out and, carefully not looking at the boy on his sofa, climbed into bed. He registered in his peripheral vision as Caed crossed the room to the bathroom and, with much internal debate, forced himself to lie down and not look in the direction of the bathroom door full of eager anticipation.

When Caed came out he lay with his face turned in the other direction. He heard the boy cross back to the sofa and the leather creaked slightly as he lay down and shifted around. Thinking himself a sot, he sat up reluctantly, reached for his wand and pointed at the sofa from his bed, transfiguring it into a wider, soft flannel surface and lying down again. He heard a soft muffled sound that might have been thank you and smiled, extinguishing the lamp, unaccountably pleased.

As an afterthought, he cast a silent proximity ward around the boy on the sofa. If he moved more than a metre in any direction during the night, the ward would yowl in his head, waking him. Just because he wanted the boy here, didn’t mean that he would ever sleep around anyone without the barest modicum of protection. He lay awake for a long time listening to the soft sounds of Caed breathing.

He woke in the dark. The fire had gone out and only the pale moonlight spilling over the desk lit the room.

What was that?! Remaining perfectly still he strained to listen for anything that might suggest a threat. There. The sound that had woke him.

“No!” the whimper was so desperate and plaintive. “No! Don’t!”

Tom lifted his head slowly, casting the vision enhancing spell he favoured. Caed had kicked his blanket off and was curled up defensively, he seemed to be struggling fitfully.

Tom frowned at the whimpering figure. Was he remembering the memory that Tom had obliviated? It had been known to happen occasionally. Cautiously he slipped out of bed and padded over to the boy, kneeling beside him and weighing up whether to wake him or not.

“NO!!!” Caed said louder now. “RUN!”

Run didn’t really seem right, Tom mused. Was the boy dreaming he was watching himself from outside?

“NO! My knee..”

Tom’s eye darted automatically to the boy’s knee.

Caed started to cry, wrapping his arms around himself and curling up tight. “my knee..” he sobbed softly sounding heartbroken.

Deciding that whatever the boy was dreaming about, it probably had nothing to do with the
memory of their kiss, Tom stood carefully and returned to bed. What was wrong with Caed’s knee then?! He didn’t seem to have any problems walking. He hadn’t seen the boy’s knee – perhaps there was spell damage.. perhaps it was healed. Perhaps it was nothing though. A strange meaningless dream and nothing more. He wanted to shake him awake and ask him. He wanted Caed lying here beside him telling him about his dream. Scowling in the dark he punched his pillow and turned over angrily trying to get back to sleep.

Harry stood under the shower feeling weird.

He’d been around the boy who would grow up and ruin his life for the entire day.

The Whole Day!

Now it was seven in the evening and he was finally having the shower he’d been meaning to have all day, then they were going to have dinner and work on potions theory.

This was just wrong, he thought as he turned around under the water. Tom was wrong. Everything was wrong. He’d fallen asleep last night and Tom had given him a pillow and blanket and let him crash here and nothing had happened to him all night. Then this morning he’d woken up and Tom was already up and dressed and ordered pancakes with honey and cream for breakfast and had immediately – while eating breakfast - gotten back to showing him charms. Harry had found himself casting charms with one hand while eating pancakes with the other.

The entire day, Tom hadn’t stopped. There’d been some kind of tiny bite sized pastry things for lunch and while he picked, he had been going through Cutter Glee long range calculations in arithmancy with Tom. The bloody arse was so..patient...and nice..all the time. It was just WRONG. And yeah.. ok.. he was really painfully clever. More so even than Mione had been.

He loved..he had loved..Mione but she wasn’t really that good at explaining to others the leaps her mind made. She’d look at a problem and be at the end while everyone else was reasoning through step by step and when asked how she got there she sometimes seemed on the brink of saying ‘well... its just obvious..’

Tom wasn’t like that at all.

Harry didn’t have the feeling when he was explaining the problems to him, that Tom thought he was dim witted. Tom didn’t even use large words when small ones would do. He was just..really easy to listen to.

Perhaps that was why he’d attracted all those blind followers willing to do horrible things for him, Harry grumbled.

He reached for the shampoo and had just lathered himself up, his eyes squeezed shut when he heard a faint bell from somewhere. Tom was maybe doing something out there.

He washed his hair off and got out, drying and dressing in the jeans and forest green polo shirt that
Tom had offered to lend him.
That was annoying too, he scowled, slipping the jeans on. He had been wearing Voldemort’s bloody pajamas.
Fuck!.. He didn’t even want to know Voldemort had pajamas. It was just all so strange and wrong.
He didn’t know what to think about anything.
They were supposedly going to work on potions now and then Tom would take him down to his dorm.

He rubbed at the mirror, clearing a circle from the steam and peered at himself. His hair was damp and stuck out in every direction. Pulling and tweaking at it didn’t really fix much so he gave up, preparing himself mentally to find out exactly how much he’d forgotten (or never learned) in potions.
What he wasn’t prepared for was the sight of Tom with a slender blonde girl on his lap kissing him passionately.

The girl was straddling him, pressed so close that the best credit card wouldn’t have passed between them. Tom had his hands on her ass and seemed to be quite preoccupied with exploring her throat with his tongue.

Hesitating, Harry considered going back into the bathroom or letting himself out of the room quietly. The second option seemed better and he crept surreptitiously toward the door.
He was halfway there when Tom stopped him.

“Caed! Where are you going. We have more work to do!”

Harry turned uneasily to find Tom leaning away from the..he could see now – stunningly beautiful blonde girl, who looked a bit ticked off.
Tom beckoned him back and gently ejected the girl from his lap, placing her back on her feet.

“Elana Galloway, please meet Caed Piper, I’m certain you recall he joined Hogwarts yesterday after that lovely introduction from professor Dumbledore. Caed – Elana is my girlfriend.”
There was a slightly uncomfortable silence, Harry thought. The pretty blonde was looking at him meaningfully and it was clear that she wanted to be alone with Tom.

“Well.. I.. should get back downstairs..I..was going to learn gobstones from Alphard” he said hesitantly.
Tom frowned at him.

“You’re not getting away that easily, Caed. We have to finish that project for potions.” He turned to Elana apologetically. “I’m sorry doll, we’ll do something another time, ok? I’ve been so busy with school duties and now this project too. I really can’t let Caed run off without doing it or we’ll both be in trouble next week. I’m sure you understand.”

Harry struggled to blank his face.
The blonde pouted prettily. She had enormous sky blue eyes and full pink lips. Harry thought she looked a bit like a doll.
A perfect porcelain doll.. a Barbie doll... She had a really nice figure. Her legs seemed to go on forever.
He tried not to look at her too much.

“You haven’t had any time all week” the girl was sighing in a musical voice. “I know” Tom said mournfully. “I’ve missed you though. I think about you constantly. But you know I can’t ignore my responsibilities. I was under the impression that you liked that about me..” he pulled her close
and kissed her gently, teasingly.

Harry felt appalled watching them together. What the hell had happened between this Tom and the one who killed his parents?! The answer was like a growl in a dark room. ‘nothing – he’s lying to her. He’s already killed. This is all an act. He’s being nice to you just like he’s being nice to her. You haven’t seen the real Tom Riddle show his face yet.’

He was still thinking on this pensively when Elana with a slightly jealous expression, said goodnight and that she was pleased to have met him. Tom walked her to the door and kissed her long and lingeringly again.

Harry turned away and pulled out his potions text book, leaning back on the sofa and thinking about how unbelievably convincing a liar tom Riddle was. Tom wanted something from him. But then, he needed something from tom too, he supposed grudgingly. Maybe this was how Slytherin friendships all went; some kind of mutual usefulness and suspicion about each other’s real motives.

Tom sat down next to him and smiled a quick false smile, looking away again and rubbing the bridge of his nose in apparent embarrassment.

“Sorry about that. I didn’t know she was coming over. I hope you weren’t uncomfortable.”

Harry shook his head vaguely and mumbled. “no.. she seemed nice.”

Tom looked at him searchingly and answered. “She is. Very nice. She’s a Gryffindor.”

Harry frowned slightly at the thought of how the entire school was completely sucked in by Riddle and looked back at his book. A moment later it was taken out of his hands gently and he looked up questioningly at Tom, who seemed ..maybe.. a little nearer?

“Is something wrong, Caed?” the head boy asked softly. He shook his head firmly.

“No.. nothing. I think i last worked on the draught of living death.”

Tom closed the book and put it on the table.

“Are you sure?” he prompted and Harry nodded tensely, reaching for the potions book again. He flinched back when Tom caught his hand and held it lightly for a moment. Tom’s hands were very warm and smooth and larger than his own.

“No.. Dinner first. We’ll work on potions afterward.” the future Dark Lord said decidedly, releasing him as if he hadn’t just been holding his hand for five seconds.

Harry withdrew his hand feeling weird and off centre again. Tom was really good at making him feel like that. Like when he’d been staring at him in that tavern.. or ..or when he’d been up in his face after they just left Hogwarts.

He didn’t know what to do about it.

He sat uncomfortably while Tom, not even bothering to ask him what he’d like (he’d only have shrugged and mumbled he didn’t know anyway) summoned Gopper and ordered roast lamb with all the trimmings.

It was a good choice. Harry couldn’t think of anything he’d have rather ordered if he’d been asked.

When it came, he tucked in with relish, one eye always on the innately elegant boy dining next to him.
At some point Tom informed him quietly “We will have to work on your etiquette and carriage too, Caed..and at least discuss the pureblood traditions.”

Harry didn’t respond immediately. Yeah.. he knew he had to think about all that stuff too probably – but it just seemed like Tom was too willing to help him all the time. It made him suspicious. He hadn’t asked him about any of the things he was probably burning to know more about. Harry was sure he would sooner or later and now it was just hanging over him ominously, waiting to happen. But..maybe it would be better to get that over with.. at least to find out what Tom wanted to know. He thought about the question carefully and then placed his knife and fork down on his plate.

“Tom... Slytherins aren’t really known for being altruistic, right?” he asked cautiously.

He heard a slightly amused sniff beside him and the sapphire eyed future monster responded with a smirk “You’re wondering what I want from you, Caed.” It wasn’t a question, he’d leapt two steps ahead to the point.

Harry hesitated and then nodded. Tom put down his own knife and fork and leaned back slightly. “..I should be pleased that you are thinking more like a Slytherin. It is a reasonable question.. however I don’t have an exact answer for you, at present. I am interested in you..for a variety of reasons.”

“...I am wondering whether you might possibly fit in well among my friends. We are a kind of circle.. we ..study together, I suppose.”

Harry privately considered the ramifications of ‘fitting in well’ among the future death eaters. It was an uncomfortable thought on many levels.

“I am.. of course.. interested in your background and whatever you might feel able to tell me about that time, however it was not, as you must have realised, my main reason for choosing to help you. That was..something else. I cannot name it exactly. It was perhaps a feeling of connection. Something in you spoke to me.”

Something in him! Harry suppressed the snort of black amusement. Yes.. that would explain it maybe – Self interest was probably instinctive in someone like Voldemort..like Tom Riddle. Maybe the head boy truly didn’t understand himself why he felt the impulse to help him...

“Perhaps at some later point you might decide to repay my assistance, if I am ever in a difficult situation and you are in a position to help.”

It was said lightly but Harry swallowed. He’d helped Voldemort.. sure.. he’d helped him into his grave. Over and over again. He’d stabbed Tom Riddle’s memory with a basilisk fang. He realised suddenly that that diary must already exist. It would be around here somewhere probably. Glancing up at the bookshelves he couldn’t see a thin black diary among the host of other black books.

“Caed?” he looked at Tom again, feeling slightly guilty against his own will.

“Yeah?”

Tom looked at him strangely, his eye seemed to wander over him. “Nothing..” the boy so like the diary ghost said softly. “Finish your dinner and we will get to work
on potions.”

Harry nodded uncertainly and picked up his knife and fork. The rest of the meal they spent in silence. He wasn’t sure whether it was a good silence. It felt like something hung unsaid in the air. Tom, however, seemed not to notice or care when he banished the plates and turned to the potions textbook. Sighing inwardly, Harry gave him all his attention again. It really wasn’t that hard to listen to Tom Riddle. Not hard at all. Even...maybe a bit enjoyable. Like.. like a documentary on tv only interactive. He would probably have made a good teacher if Dumbledore hadn’t stopped him.

He felt himself waver on distraction at that thought and forced it away, focussing on what tom was saying about the use of gums and resins in potions.
Chapter 6

The evening had dripped away relatively satisfyingly, Tom thought.

Caed had a very good memory. He could tell him something and if the boy understood the principle or thought the information was important, he could usually remember it, if only in gist. It wasn’t as tedious to teach him as he had supposed it might be. It actually felt quite good to see the effect his effort had. Caed looked brighter and less despairing.

He was in the bathroom right now changing into his pajamas.

They had had a debate over whether he would stay and in the end the boy had conceded that they had gotten through a lot of work today by starting almost from the moment he woke. He had argued that he could just come up after he woke in the morning and Tom had countered that he would oversleep or would be grumpy and that breakfast in the great hall would waste time. After some back and forth Caed had relented and agreed to sleep on his sofa again.

He didn’t know why the thought of keeping him here, when he knew he wouldn’t be able to physically enjoy the boy, pleased him so greatly. He’d had Elana here earlier panting after him and he’d dismissed her in order to spend more time with the awkward blonde boy who wouldn’t touch him with a bargepole. Ridiculous. Now he would likely sacrifice another night of restless sleep knowing Caed was here and he couldn’t have him.

He didn’t like not being able to have the things he wanted.

Over the last four or five years he’d come to find he could have any student he desired. They all sighed and lusted after him. Even the males were amenable to flattery and fell to his will when he chose one.

Among his own knights he knew that all, with the possible exception of Alphard...and perhaps Palmer...would welcome him eagerly into their beds if he were so inclined of a night. He would not do that with them obviously – It would be counter-productive in his plans for his knights to do that.

He looked over as the bathroom door opened.

The black pajamas the boy had donned once again shone in the liquid manner peculiar to silk as he padded back over to the couch.

“Bathroom’s yours” he said nervously.

It was an obvious statement of his desire for Tom to leave him and go and change into his own nightwear. He nodded thoughtfully.

“If you can remain awake for just a few minutes longer, Caed – I will speak to you about some of the pureblood traditions applicable to school life. Not all of them obviously – that would take a very long time.”

The blonde nodded at him weakly, not meeting his eyes. Tom could see the nervousness written all over his posture and features. The boy was so transparent. He would have to fix that if he wanted to convince the school. He couldn’t be bowing and simpering as a pureblood in Slytherin.

“You must have more...” He said seriously. Pale emeralds lifted to meet his own gaze.
confidence. Purebloods are, more than anything else, supremely confident and self-entitled.”

The boy’s forehead furrowed and then he, slowly, changed his posture until he was slouching in a way that somehow radiated arrogance. His face took on a faint sneer. It...reminded tom very faintly of Abraxas actually.

Was the boy that good at learning from demonstration?! That was a useful skill if so.

“Thats very good, Caed!! Just like that!” he praised, getting to his feet and standing. The pale glittering eyes followed him. They weren’t perfect. Didn’t quite manage the closed indifferent superiority of the rest of his visage but it was an enormous start, even so.

“Are you imitating Abraxas?” he enquired curiously.
Caed shook his head once in a way that tom could see the white-blond aristocrat doing. “No. His grandson” came the reply. “He was a massive dick-wad while I was at Hogwarts. We didn’t get along.” Tom smirked.

“Can you imitate others like that?” he asked curiously.

The boy frowned slightly and bit his lip then slowly his posture changed again and he looked like he might wet himself with excitement at any moment. The eyes that were quite innocent to begin with fairly glowed with naivete and goodwill and he seemed to become small and energetic without even moving.

“Who is that?”

Caed answered in a breathless overjoyed voice “a boy who worked as a photographer for the school newspaper. He.. he kind of had an obsession with me.”

Tom blinked and startled inwardly. A boy had been obsessed with him? A photographer? He could see why – Caed was lovely to look at. But still.. was this boy interested in him sexually? What was the story behind it?

His thoughts were diverted at the change again in the boy’s posture. He looked like he was concentrating for a moment and then his posture became withdrawn. Subdued and odd. Almost faintly threatening, without doing anything in particular to justify it. It was difficult to pinpoint where the impression came from. It was immediately recognisable to Tom however.

“Avery! You’ve got his blank face and..that way he has of not quite fading into the background! That is quite impressive, Caed!”

His compliment was understated. In actual fact he was delighted. The boy was very good at changing his appearance.. changing the impression he created. He would have no problem dealing with the student body if he could do this, Tom was sure. But more importantly.. he might be useful to Tom personally.

“I would advise you to stick with imitating the Malfoy descendent you know while you are within Slytherin. You might also try for Gyphus a little if you are threatened..”

That thought pulled another thought on its heels automatically and he started slightly at it. Almost nervously he voiced it to the boy. “Can you imitate me?”

Caed’s eyes widened slightly and he swallowed. “...maybe” he murmured.

Tom looked at him expectantly and after biting his lip for a moment, the boy seemed to turn his
attention inwardly and then he stood up, straightening his back and shifting his shoulders. The angle of his head changed and his facial expression became alert, friendly but slightly reserved. He adjusted his pajamas slightly, his movements smooth and fluid. He looked...graceful.

“Walk.” Tom instructed, bemused.

Caed’s eyebrows furrowed only momentarily as if he were focusing on a memory and then he stepped a few steps forward, confidently and gracefully. Tom tilted his head, fascinated. Did he walk like that? He wasn’t sure. It wasn’t something he paid conscious attention to. Whether he did or not – the boy should move in that manner in the future. It was very flattering on him and he looked...strong.

“Can you imitate my speech too?” he wondered aloud, fascinated. This made the boy frown for a longer while.

Tom stepped a little closer, looking the confident, well grounded, boy up and down. After a few seconds Caed responded in a quiet enunciated voice “I believe so. What would you like me to say?”

His jaw dropped slightly.

It was as if he were meeting an entirely different person! Dumbledore would be furious if he met this boy.

On that note he responded, distractedly “Tell me your opinion of Dumbledore then.”

The pale pink lips curved very slightly in an amused smirk he recognised from the mirror, making him blink and widen his eyes. “Dumbledore is a fool” Caed informed him dismissively. “He is a manipulative old goat who plays with lives like chess pieces on a board. I would delight in watching the light fade out of his repulsive twinkling eyes.”

Tom froze. Caed knew he wanted Dumbledore dead?! That was something more than simply hating the man. That was a lot more.

“Are those your thoughts or mine, Caed?” he asked softly.

The boy smirked wider and said decisively “Both. We are of one mind on the matter, Tom.”

Snorting slightly he stepped even closer to the blonde whose very magical-aura seemed changed, crackling around him pleasantly like static. Could he even affect that?!

“Dumbledore is a meddling fool.. but whatever makes you think I would wish him dead?”

The boy’s smirk faded and became secretive and superior. “I do not believe I am inclined to tell you that.” He said, seemingly entertained.

Tom took the two final steps bringing him close to the boy, a quick finger under his chin tilting his face up and looking scrutinizingly into his eyes. “You are... almost perfect..” he murmured.

Caed snorted softly. “You have a high opinion of yourself, Tom” he muttered back. Tom smirked, tickled. He might have said the same thing, he realised. He wet his lips in anticipation of the thought that was rising in his mind.

“Have you ever heard of...polyjuice..Caed?” he asked softly.

It was on the seventh year curriculum. If the boy was this good at imitation – with polyjuice he could be... anyone... convincingly. It would be amazingly useful to have a body double in the school whenever he desired.
The boy’s mask faded for a second as he nodded and frowned slightly, his face taking on a nervous expression that would never be at home upon Tom’s own face.
“Yes.” He offered shortly without explanation. The way he said it though, Tom thought he might have used it before.

“Good.” he said softly, leaving the topic alone. “You are full of surprises. Caed. I think it would be best if you imitated Gyphus or your familiar Malfoy descendant in the school as much of the time as possible. Gyphus is more approachable and would be of more use in... for example defense... charms and magical creatures.
The Malfoy superiority would be of greater benefit to you within Slytherin house, in potions where you will find Slughorn to be dismissive of non purebloods – and in transfiguration where it will irritate the dickens out of Dumbledore.”

He took in the attentive nod of the blonde and continued seriously. “I do not want you imitating me before any student or teacher, Caed. There may come a time when I will ask you to do so... and in order to be successful – no one must suspect that you can do it. Do you understand?”

Caed sniffed. His expression fading to cynicism. “I understand.” he said in a low somewhat snide voice.

Tom’s eyes sharpened on him. Was he insinuating that he would not do it? He considered pressing the point, perhaps with more than a polite suggestion. but thought that it might be best to leave it at that, for the present.
He would win the boy’s full trust and try to erode that strange moral imperative he’d displayed in Defense yesterday.
Caed cast well – but he would be of no use if he refused to use dark magic.
He imitated well but what good would that be if he refused to be an instrument at Tom’s disposal.

“Very well...” he said lightly. “You can drop your masks now. When you are alone with me you will never need to be anything other than yourself.”
He moved away, stepping around the boy and approaching his bed, taking up his pajama bottoms and going to the bathroom to change.

He returned in his dark blue pajama bottoms, shirtless, moving slowly and cautiously to join a wide eyed and nervous Caed on the couch again.
“I do not like sleeping in the tops” he offered softly. “I find them restrictive.”
The boy swallowed and averted his eyes from where Tom had seen they were hovering around his chest, moving down toward his abdomen.
He was well trained, he knew. He expended enough time each night exercising the various muscle groups in turn precisely in order to appear aesthetically pleasing to others.

The slight blush he had seen high on the blonde’s cheeks was encouraging. It suggested he had perhaps found the sight appealing and was confused by his own reaction.

Tom smiled faintly and half turned toward his desk, extending a hand over the back of the sofa and wandlessly opening the hidden cupboard disguised as three drawers.

Caed gasped in a gratifying manner.
It had been a lot of work to develop his wandless magic to this level, and extremely frustrating. Only Gyphus and Abraxas knew he could do it, but they were not aware of how good he had become.

He probably should not be showing Caed. He didn’t know whether he could trust him... yet on some level he found he automatically wanted to trust the boy. It felt right to do so. He simply knew that the boy would not tell anyone.

He summoned a glass and metal device full of clear liquid and perpetual ice cubes, followed by simultaneously, a tall thin ornate green bottle, two glasses and a black and gold metallic tin.

When he looked back at Caed the boy’s eyes were wide and a bit fearful. He raised an eyebrow and the blonde shook his head slightly. After a second or two he mumbled “You’re even stronger than I thought you were.”

Smiling and allowing his eyes to glitter in the firelight he responded “You haven’t seen anything yet, Caed. But... show me you are worthy of my trust and perhaps in time...”

He paused thoughtfully as he set up the absinthe fountain with two glasses, drawing from the metal box two silver absinthe spoons with serpent cut outs and sugar cubes. He poured the absinthe into the bottom of the thick carved crystal classes, placing the spoons and sugar and setting the absinthe fountain to drip its endless ice water through the sugar into the two glasses.

“Perhaps... in time.. I’ll teach you.. some of the more exotic things of which I am capable” he murmured thoughtfully, glancing up at the blonde and finding him transfixed in a mixture of fascination and fear, watching the absinthe fountain drip.

“What is it?” he asked anxiously.

Tom smiled. “It belonged to one of my ancestors.. It is an absinthe fountain, Caed. I take it that you have never tried Absinthe?”

The boy frowned. “Its.. illegal.. I think. Wasn’t there something about it making a bunch of French poets go mad or something?” Tom smirked.

“It will not drive you mad, Caed” he reassured him. “I have researched the liquor extensively.. as did my ancestor I might add.. and concluded that the reasoning behind its ban in the muggle world was political and commercial rather than based in a legitimate health concern. It was arranged by Vodka traders who sought to dominate the market. France took up the boycott due to their close relations with Russia, the primary source of vodka at the time. There is no substance to your concern. Wizards have enjoyed absinthe for at least one thousand years.”

He watched as the boy relaxed marginally, still looking unsettled and avoiding looking at him directly.

“Does it bother you to see my body?” he asked softly. “I can go and put on a shirt if you find it terribly unpleasant to look upon”

Caed jumped slightly and the pale green eyes.. so much like the pale green drink filling the glasses drip by drip, he realised.. turned and looked at him nervously.

“No.. it’s..fine” he said uneasily.

Tom relaxed back into the corner of the sofa, looking back at the endearingly shy blonde perched on the edge of the couch as if he might take flight at any second.

“I’m not going to bite you, you know..” he offered. “Relax. Now.. pureblood practices.” He watched amused as the green eyes flickered down his body for a second before flashing back
Tom considered explicitly giving the boy permission to look at his body but decided against it, glancing to the glasses which were almost ready. He shut off the ice water fountain wandlessly and levitated the absinthe spoons to stir the icy pastel green liquid, reaching forward to take both glasses and passing one to Caed, who seemed not to know what to do with it.

Smirking, Tom leaned back into the corner of the couch, tilting and examining the hue and comparing it to the wide emerald eyes flicking back and forth nervously. “Pureblood practices” he restated, taking a sip of the delicious icy drink. “We will start with your behaviour independent of others, I believe.” He watched Caed start to chew his lip nervously. “For example-” he stated “-Do not do that in public.”

“You will not chew your lip, roll your eyes, pull faces, pick at any part of your body whatsoever with your nails, adjust your clothing or express any sound other than speech. Such conduct is basic societal etiquette and should be followed regardless of one’s blood status. If you must cough, sneeze, belch or pass wind you will leave the room and seek out a bathroom in which to relieve yourself. You will do this if you need to adjust clothing or scratch anything also.”

He received a silent nod, Caed’s eyes fixed determinedly upon his own. Suppressing a smirk he continued. “Your attire will be clean, tidy and appropriate to your surroundings at all times, Caed – in other words, if you dirty a shirt and are unable to scourgify it perfectly, you return to your dorm and change before returning to wherever you were destined. If it is raining, you will wear clothing that covers your body to your wrists and ankles and will employ an impervious spell upon your entire person, including your hair. In summer, briefer clothing is sometimes optional. However, generally – it is unwise to wear anything other than full length trousers. Children wear short trousers. You are no longer a child. Adult males may do so only if the majority of others at the location are expected to be wearing them. For example – at the beach you might wear short trousers but at the park you would not.”

Caed frowned. “But if it’s hot then why should I care whether everyone else is wearing shorts. I like shorts!”

Tom raised an eyebrow. “Use a cooling charm.” “Appropriateness is often a function of popular opinion – i.e. what the majority are doing. It is almost always unwise to try to change a practice unless you are of such high status that the majority follow you.”

“For example Abraxas might choose to wear waistcoats in velvet combined with silk – he would not, the two are never combined, but that is beside the point – because he did so, many other purebloods would assume that it was perhaps a fashion in some continental nation he had visited and rush to imitate it. The same would not occur if you were to wear the garment. You would merely be ridiculed for your lack of fashion sense.”

“The Malfoy name carries a lot of weight. There are things that he might do which I would not hazard due to my own name – which you have already rudely pointed out, is not among the known
pureblood families.”

Caed looked at his drink speculatively and Tom paused while he gingerly took a miniscule sip, pulling a face immediately.

“This is really strong!”

Tom tilted his head. “Do you like the taste?” he enquired softly.
Caed looked back at him thoughtfully and took a slightly larger sip, holding it in his mouth and considering.

After he swallowed he said slowly “It tastes a bit like licorice. It’s..not bad..”

Tom nodded, raising his glass slightly. “It is a preference of the oldest pureblood families. You may differentiate between the older and more traditional families by such little things. More modern families will preference infused cognac or even firewhisky, of all things. Traditional families enjoy absinthe or one of three extremely rare and expensive liqueurs – Winnowthrop, Gelfthornberry or Bruello.”

“The first two are almost impossible to come by, sourced from plants that are almost extinct and are therefore unobtainable to all but the uppermost elites. Being able to discuss the effects and taste of them can be of significant assistance in gaining acceptance within those circles, since little is published on the matter.”

“Bruello is a dangerous acquired taste. If one is not introduced to it in early childhood, even small amounts of it can be fatal – this is part of its attraction. It is also prohibitively expensive for most of the wizarding world and a child must be given it in small doses weekly for months in order to acquire the resistance to the cobra venom which is a component of the liqueur. This means that it can function as a rather extreme test of one’s heritage in some circles. Those who were raised in the correct social niveau will partake and will immediately be accepted as superior. Those who refuse are of questionable heritage.”

“You must understand, Caed... there is an entire world of gradation and ranking within the pureblood culture. It is not simply – mudblood, halfblood and pureblood for them. Mudbloods and halfbloods are entirely outside the spectrum of ‘real’ wizards and witches, as they view it. Within that spectrum one fights for place and strives to elevate oneself as far as possible, or at least to give the flawless appearance of elevation.” He stopped as Caed pulled a face and looked away. “What is it?” he asked.

The blonde bit his lip again. “I don’t want to be a pureblood. Its..different in my time.. or .. maybe its not but I never had to deal with any of that kind of thing and I never wanted to. Its..ridiculous.. People are all equal.”

Tom restrained the flare of anger that cracked like a whip at the idea that everyone was equal. They were not. Perhaps some of the pureblood customs were slightly tedious but there needed to be order. Hierarchy brought order. He was descended from one of the highest families and it was his destiny to be at the top of the hierarchy.

Obviously Caed was from a very low level if he thought that everyone should be equal. It was the cry of the ignorant masses..bleating for everyone to lower themselves to their revolting
level.

He forced himself not to snap back and said quietly “Be that as it may.. you are playing a pureblood here. That cannot be changed and you must play the part convincingly.”

The boy took a larger drink of his absinthe and Tom watched his adams apple move under the silken skin as he swallowed it unhappily.

“Moving on, Caed.. When travelling through your surroundings, while looking around you, you will not stare others in the face for longer than half a second unless you wish to address or challenge them. Purebloods are.. in a sense.. somewhat like canines. A lot is communicated in a look. With your expression.. you may unwittingly insult or challenge. Challenge consciously if you will, but do not do so accidentally – it proves you a fool.”

When entering a room, if you see any wizards you know to be of a higher social level than yourself, it is good form to make eye contact and offer a polite nod, like so” He demonstrated the understated faint dip of the head.

“You do not need to do this for witches, irrespective their social status. Hats are presently not in mode, however if you were to wear one, you would remove it if you were entering the company of witches and desired to speak with them.”

Caed frowned at him attentively and he saw the expression that the boy wore when he was remembering charms and spells. Good. He was learning this.

“You do not..ever.. walk up to unknown witches and wizards and introduce yourself. This is the height of bad manners.
You require an introduction from a mutual acquaintance. Just as I introduced you to my circle in the dormroom two nights ago, someone must bring you to the person you desire to meet and facilitate your introduction, generally expressing some minor information about you to them and vice versa. If you are pursuing a closer friendly acquaintance with the wizard you, or they, will offer a hand – the hand of friendship, as it were. They may offer a hand first or they may nod. The meaning of this varies according to your relative status.”

“If they are of lower status you may either return their hand or you may ignore it and nod at them. This is not insulting, particularly if there is a considerable status difference between you. If they are of higher status and offer their hand you will accept it or risk insulting them. If they do not offer their hand and instead nod, simply nod back - they are indicating that they are amenable to meeting you but do not at present desire a closer association.” He paused thoughtfully, his eye on the soft bottom lip of the naive blonde, which was wet with the aniseed flavoured liquid. He wanted to lean forward and lick it and shifted his gaze in time to see Caed blink and look up from where his own eyes had been resting, which was, apparently, again some distance below his chin.

He smiled inwardly. Whatever the boy thought his sexual orientation might be, he was attracted to him. It was visible in his shy looks, the way he held his absinthe in front of him as if hiding behind it.

Caed had half finished the glass already, Tom noticed. He considered absently whether or not to make him a second one. His eyes still looked quite bright but he didn’t wish to knock the boy out with hard liquor.
He drew a breath and continued.

“Most first meetings will involve a nod. Your meeting with my associates proceeded differently purely on the strength of my bond with them. In other situations, however, a pureblood may wait to see what your intentions are in seeking them out.

If you offer them your hand and it is ignored, you will offer a nod – if this is ignored, you will make a polite excuse and withdraw. To remain after that point is terribly rude.

If a handshake is exchanged, generally the introducing party will politely remove themselves after the conversation begins. In this case – you can from this point on approach the wizard in question independently to initiate conversation and you will not need to offer a hand unless you have been out of contact for a longer period – for example if you met them in Diagon Alley, but not if you met them in the corridors.”

He paused again, noting the faint nod of the other boy for him to continue.

“If you do not seek a closer acquaintance with, or are not on friendly terms, for whatever reason, with the wizard you are introduced to, generally neither will offer a hand, but the lower ranking individual as established by the order of introductions, will give a brief nod.

If this is returned by the higher party, the exchange may continue. There is no assumption that either party will be able to approach the other on subsequent occasions.

A facilitator will be required thereafter, however introductions will be curtailed. For example – I might say – “Levithea Kant, I believe you are acquainted with Caedmon Piper. Caedmon and I were just discussing the quidditch game of the past Saturday and Caedmon observed that your treatment of Randal Prenker following his foul was quite admirable.”

He smiled briefly at the other boy’s slightly bemused expression.

“And every person I talk to outside of your friends and you – I have to go through this with?! How the hell would I have made friends if I didn’t know you?” Caed looked horrified.

Tom sniffed, amused

“Well.. without me you would likely have put yourself into a bind by trying to approach Slytherin purebloods and, after being rebuffed, would have tried to find friends in other houses among the more ignorant or opportunistic of impure blood. This would have put you at odds with Slytherin and with the purebloods generally – who are the majority in Hogwarts.

The introduction by Professor Dumbledore already set you up for this.

Phrasing it in such a way that it was implied that Grindelwald had virtually personally executed your parents implied that your blood status was questionable, whatever your name.”

Caed frowned and stared into the remains of his absinthe. “Yeah.. I.. I kind of got that impression from the way everyone was looking at me. I...didn’t think he’d do that.” The boy took a large gulp of the icy drink, looking up to Tom resolutely. “Doesn’t matter though. Fuck him.

So who’s Leviwhatsit and why am I not going to be friends with him or her then?”

Tom found the vulgarity and..hate.. that the boy had momentarily displayed very interesting.

He’d said before that he wanted to kill Dumbledore too.. He wondered why. Caed seemed quite irate for the minor nasty things that Dumbledore had done so far.

He entertained a small suspicion in the back of his mind. Caedmon knew Dumbledore. That was why he had asked for him.

Still.. there was a small possibility that the boy was lying about everything and was here as Dumbledore’s plant.
He didn’t really think it to be the case, although the boy had demonstrated extremely good acting abilities.. and his story was quite far-fetched..
All the same.. he had the most peculiar feeling that he could trust Caed. It was not a natural feeling for him. In fact.. he could not remember ever having felt this way before. That alone disturbed and put him on guard.
He felt..comfortable.. around him. As if he remembered the boy...as if he were familiar in some way.
It was a most singularly unusual feeling.
Caedmon wouldn’t betray him to Dumbledore.

“Tom??” the slightly husky voice queried at his extended silence.
He blinked and shook his head as if to say nevermind and continued with the explanation the boy sought:

“Levithea is a Gryffindor sixth year witch from a fairly elevated family and it is therefore not to be automatically expected that either of you would initiate a close acquaintance.
I would, were it not for my head boy status, possibly not be in a position to introduce you in fact.”

Caed nodded, seeing the point. He looked down and then finished the last of his drink, continuing to hold the empty glass before him, fiddling with the stem distractedly. “can..can I ask a question that might be impolite?” he asked finally.
Tom raised an eyebrow and nodded for him to go on.

“Um.. I know... your name.. um.. must come from a muggle.. “
The green eyes darted up nervously as if expecting him to curse him at any second.
“Sorry. I.. I know you said you don’t want me to mention it. I..was just wondering about your ..your mother’s family. I..you..you don’t have to answer. I was just curious.”

Tom balanced on conflicting emotions of anger, uncertainty and temptation. He could not tell Caedmon.. who he had known for all of two days.. who he in fact did not know at all.. anything about his true heritage.
He was not even really content to inform him of his mother’s maiden name.
He did not wish to discuss his birth or background in any way whatsoever in fact!

Delaying, he swirled his absinthe in his glass and watched it pensively.

“Nevermind. I’m sorry I asked.” Caedmon hushed out.

He looked up at him sharply, noting the slight flinch. “I’m afraid I haven’t had enough to drink to discuss those matters yet Caed. Perhaps you would care for another..” he gestured to the absinthe.

Caed tilted his head and licked his lips slightly, as if considering. “I..shouldn’t.. I don’t really drink much and.. it’s a bit strong.”

Tom shrugged. “If you would like one, you may demonstrate how well you observed and make us both another. He brought his glass to his lips and tipped it back, enjoying the sugary dregs and offering Caed his goblet.

The blond blinked and smiled slightly, taking the glass off him. “um..ok then” he said softly and did just that.

Tom slouched down deeper on the couch slightly, making himself comfortable and watched him, wishing that he would take his pajama shirt off.
On impulse he wandlessly cast a very gentle warming charm on him.
“In pureblood society there are very different rules for interacting with wizards and witches. Most of these rules are softened while in school and some are ignored altogether. For example – you would never remain in a room alone with several young witches outside of Hogwarts. Here however you might find yourself in a study room with only younger witches and this would be acceptable.”

He observed the faint rosiness on Caed’s cheeks indicating that the alcohol and warming charm were doing their work.

“Some rules that do remain in Hogwarts however are that you will never enter an official duel with a witch, irrespective of her blood status. Although – you will never enter into an official duel with anyone of lower blood status either. Duels are in that case without recourse to the traditional dueling laws and rulings established in 1436 and updated in 1822. In other words – in duels with half and mudbloods you may use any spell or tactic to prevail and there will be no further ramifications if you kill your opponent – however the same is not the case if a mud or half blood were to kill you in such a duel. You are – in that sense – protected in some ways from the possible attacks of the impure. Although.. as Dumbledore has positioned you with such individuals anyway – this protection is not really relevant to you.”

He accepted the absinthe that Caed offered him. He had followed the steps he observed exactly. Tom sipped and watched a small bead of sweat build at the edge of Caed’s forehead. The boy saw him looking and wiped it away hastily, looking embarrassed.

“The fire is quite warm” Tom observed neutrally. “and the alcohol is widening your capillaries, increasing the blood flow to your skin – heating you. You could cast a cooling charm..” He hesitated and rested his head back on the couch, examining the firelight reflected through the pale green milky liquid in his glass.
“personally I prefer the warmth of the fire on my skin to the chilly grip of a cooling charm – but to each their own.”

Taking another sip he thought back to what he had been discussing.

“Now.. there are many ways to issue a challenge to others and it is not only foolish to accidentally issue one but also to fail to recognise when one is made to you. The most important-”

he heard a soft fabric sound and glanced over to see that Caed had unbuttoned his pajama shirt and opened it slightly, exposing a slender but leanly muscled torso and abdomen. He had quite nice abdominal muscles and Tom wondered whether he might play quidditch. He could be a swimmer, he considered also.

Seeing Caed watching his perusal with a flirty embarrassed expression he continued, keeping his gaze above the neck for the moment.

“-thing to watch for are gestures. They are the concrete indicators of a challenge. You might anticipate one is coming by facial expression and duration of staring. In the right circumstances – where a specific gesture would be inappropriate, such as in a polite social gathering which one does not wish to disrupt – a facial expression and stare can be sufficient as a challenge. The parties will then remove themselves and exchange a verbal challenge. Most of the time, however, physical gestures are used.”

He silently sent another extremely weak warming charm at Caed as he spoke, turning away to look into the fire and noting in his peripheral vision with delight how the boy spread his shirt wider.

“The most common gesture, universally recognised, is to draw ones wand and bring it to the right
shoulder, flicking it then diagonally downward as if casting something off. Like so:”
he brought a fist to his heart as if holding a wand and then flung his hand downward and across his
body as if tossing something down.
“This challenge cannot be refused. It is made publically and will be contested publically. It is an
immediate challenge – no deferral is possible. The wizard who has issued it is going to attack you-imminently.
You will have recourse to the rules and regulations if you accept the challenge by reflecting the
gesture back. If you do not accept the challenge, the wizard may withdraw, however in practice –
generally will not. He will simply attack you as if you were a half or mudblood. It is therefore in
your interests to recognise and respond to this kind of challenge.”

Tom forced himself to remain looking at the fire and talking while he registered Caed taking off
his pajama shirt completely. He hid his anticipation by sipping at his own glass thoughtfully.

“The second most common challenge is a deferred public challenge. In this – the wizard places his
wand as in the first challenge but sweeps it across vertically before his face and then straight down.
Like this;”
he demonstrated, allowing himself finally..finally.. to glance over at Caed, not reacting at all to his
exposed state.
His shoulders were stronger than he had noticed. In totality he was a delightful package.
Strong and yet slender, like a sapling not yet broken by the first harsh storms.

“If you are issued with this challenge you reflect it and then the wizard issuing it will state a time
and place to carry out the duel. You can reject this and suggest another. If you bicker back and
forth too much however the other wizard may escalate to an immediate challenge.
The next two challenges you must recognise are the immediate and delayed private challenges.
They are exactly as the first two but are made without a drawn wand. Because of this they are
sometimes abbreviated to small hand gestures in polite company.”

He demonstrated a small diagonal slash with a straight hand held low and then a horizontal and
vertical slash in the same way.
They were things one might send someone across a room or during class – particularly the delayed
private challenge. He had seen them made below desk level in classes often.

“It is imperative that you recognise these in class and around the corridors. You may even receive
one in the great hall.”

Caed looked at him with extreme focus and nodded.

“Do you play quidditch?” he asked tangentially, his mind on the boy’s body more than challenge
etiquette among purebloods.
Caed smiled and nodded. “I’m... I was a seeker.”

Tom raised his eyebrows. “The coveted position no less! Do you think you will try out for the
Slytherin team?”
He hoped Caed would say no but it seemed he had not considered the prospect and now looked
thoughtful.

“I..don’t know.. why?. Should I?!”

An approving look was gifted for the boy’s questioning what Tom might prefer him to do. After
consideration he responded. “It would depend upon how good you were. Our current seeker is
quite passable. Freya Edgecomb. She caught the snitch three times last season.
Caed smirked and Tom narrowed his eyes at him. “Why?.. do you believe you are better?”
The boy gave a curt nod. “Or at least.. I was when I last played.. which was almost a year ago, so I guess I might not be anymore. In fifth year I caught the snitch in seven of sixteen games and missed two games cause I was in the infirmary. In sixth year I only played five games and caught the snitch three times.”

Tom looked at him, slightly startled. That was better than the best seeker of the four houses, Greta Klett of Ravenclaw – who had caught six snitches last season and had played in every game. Gyphus had wanted to date the fifth year girl for a while when he was in sixth year and had waxed lyrical on her skill and beauty.

“Perhaps.. you might like to try for the team then..” he said thoughtfully.. “I...hesitate because the Slytherin keeper and captain is a boy I would prefer you had little contact with.”

A suspicious expression appeared on the blonde’s boy’s face. He looked slightly flushed and this Tom was certain was because he had already almost finished his second absinthe. It seemed he did like them.

“Why should I keep away from him?” he asked dubiously.

Tom let his head slip back and thought about how to phrase it without mentioning any of the things he had not yet told Caed about his knights and his role in the school.

“He...has an issue with me. We had a misunderstanding at the beginning of the year and I am certain he will try to befriend you and seed conflict. He is..intelligent and very persuasive. I am sure that he will convince you with his manner and compliments that there is no reason for concern.. and in short order you will be questioning everything I have told you.. you will be challenging and arguing and in no time we will fall out, as you decide you would rather circulate with his little group.”

“Of course.. at the point that I cease to have any interest in you, his group will abandon you like a canker. Then you will be alone again. Not only alone.. you will be alone in Slytherin, distrusting myself, my group and our intentions toward you and shunned by all others.

I..do not want that to happen. I have the impression you tend to think the best of everyone and Wilkes is extremely convincing. So..yes.. I am concerned. At the same time – if you can help Slytherin to win the quidditch cup back from Ravenclaw.. I feel I should advise you to try out.”

He sipped his absinthe and looked back at Caed, who seemed slightly less suspicious perhaps.

“Who are they then? Why did you have a.. misunderstanding?”

Tom licked his lips pensively, sizing him up. He..could..tell him a little perhaps. If he was cautious. He allowed his eyes to drift over the body glowing with health in the firelight and sighed slightly.

“The boy I am speaking of is Clemens Wilkes – you did not see him but he already tried to seek you out as a partner in defense before Roan took you aside.”

Caed narrowed his eyes obviously looking inwardly. “Blonde guy, tall?” he asked slowly. Tom nodded, impressed he’d even noticed. He’d looked quite oblivious at the time. “That’s him. He circulates with Bellico Yaxley, Benjamin Travers and Callista Kent. Yaxley – you have in magical creatures - I will try to remember to point him out in potions on Monday. He’s from a upper middle range pureblood family; slightly below the Pipers perhaps. Travers is of a similar level. You might have him in arithmancy perhaps. His family are academics
like Roan’s. They share most of their classes.
Callista is a very pretty blonde girl who is utterly poisonous. I’ve no doubt, with the way that you
looked at Elana earlier, that Callista would have you eating out of her hand in no time.
She’s very clever.. stunning green eyes.. Admittedly not as lovely as yours, but quite striking all
the same.”

Caed blushed, seeming a bit flustered and looked at his empty glass to calm himself.

“She studies elemental magic – which suggests she might have some fae in her lineage somewhere.
That is a class which can only be taken by those with a gift for it. I, for example, did not pass the
entrance test. I am not an elemental wizard.”

He glanced down at his glass which was still half full and, against his better judgement, drank it
quickly, offering the empty to Caed and gesturing at the absinthe so that he might make them both
another.
He had considered offering the boy his. Generally he did not indulge in more than two, however it
seemed to make the blonde relax and Caed wasn’t visibly hazy or slurring his words.

He was surprised at the comment that came while Caed was turned away preparing the classes
under the ice water fountain.
““You have nice eyes too.. Like sapphires. I.. I knew a wizard who had red eyes once. Yours are
better.”

He thought on the peculiar compliment. “Thank you” he offered softly. “What do you mean by red
eyes? Bloodshot? Or was there perhaps some kind of spell damage or cosmetic change to render
the wizard’s irises red?”

There was no response for a few seconds and then Caed seemed to sigh. “No.. the entire eye was
red. Red red. Blood coloured. And he had vertical pupils. It was creepy.”

Tom tried to imagine this. “But how-“ he started. Caed interrupted. “yeah.. spell damage I guess
you could call it. I don’t know whether it was intentional. I never asked.”

Tom lay back and thought about the image the blonde had painted. Reaching out a hand he
summoned a sugar cube and transfigured it into a hand mirror, noting peripherally the impressed
expression on Caed’s face.
Looking at his own face he applied a glamour to his eyes experimentally. It was quite hard to
 glamour eyes. Generally they were the only part of a glamour that didn’t take – but he’d worked on
that as a personal project a couple of years ago.

After some fiddling he had red eyeballs and black slits. He thought it looked quite interesting.. a bit
like a snake.
Creepy, as Caed had said, but definitely an interesting effect. It was possible that whoever it was
had done it on purpose.

He turned and looked at Caed for a second opinion to find that he’d scooted all the way back to the
end of the couch and was pressed into the tall armrest looking terrified.

Tom furrowed his brow, slightly confused. “Caed? What’s wrong?” He asked, concerned.
Realising himself he flicked his hand dispelling the glamour, observing the way it took more than a
few seconds for the hyperventilating boy to calm his breathing down even a little.

Swallowing, he got up and moved closer tentatively, sitting down in front of him. “I’m sorry. I
didn’t realise that it would upset you.. You mentioned it and I wondered what it would look like. I
would not have done it if I had known you would react this way.’’

He could almost hear the boy’s heartbeat going at ten to the dozen and wanted to calm him. Caed shook his head faintly in distraught response to the reassurance.

Hesitantly, unsure what he was doing he reached forward and pulled the panicky blond to him, hugging him and rocking slightly as he had when he had been crying on the road to Hogsmeade. The difference was though that now he could feel the hot smooth skin pressed against his own. He tried to ignore the excitement of his body in response to this, pushing the faint stirring feeling down.

“Shh.. I’m sorry.” he said softly. “I won’t ever do it again”

After a while he felt shaky, arms, flinching back uncertainly, wrap themselves around him gingerly in return.

He savoured the feeling, wishing he could turn his head and kiss the boy. Instead he pulled back slowly, before Caed got to the point where he did so himself, and looked into the beautiful, intensely conflicted face, only ten inches away. “Are you ok, Caed?”

A response was not immediately forthcoming and he thought Caed might be thinking about it seriously, unsure whether he was. He could still feel the warm silk of his skin in his mind, as it had pressed against his chest. The pain of desire was almost unbearable. He barely had the presence of mind to toss a glamour over his pajama pants where his interest could be plainly seen if the boy looked down right now.

“.I..think so..” Caed offered with a slightly husky voice.

Tom had to move away. If he stayed this close to him he was going to end up throwing caution to the wind and having him. As encouraging as the boy’s reaction was, he didn’t think he’d respond favourably to kisses and intimate touches at present.. which would mean he’d end up forcing him again.

No. He wanted more this time. He wanted a memory that Caed would keep..

Reluctantly he forced himself to get up and move back to the other corner of the couch, lying back as he had been before. Hissing in displeasure he noticed the absinthe glasses standing in wide puddles on the table as they had overflowed slowly.

“Oh.. fuck.. “ Caed said, sounding afraid. “will it damage the table? I didn’t mean to waste any. I’m sorry!!”

He looked at him thoughtfully. It was the response of someone who had been punished harshly for spilling things in the past. He had seen it before in the orphanage. He himself didn’t have that problem much. Spills cleaned themselves up mysteriously when he was a young child and by the time he was older, he had become very careful and precise in order to avoid punishments.

He answered Caed gently. “It is nothing. I could create a new table from a quill if I required but there will be no damage. The waste is unfortunate but I have enough absinthe to spare. It is only a pity to have to remake and wait for two more drinks. These ones will taste weak and unpalatable now.”

He waved a hand, banishing the liquid on the table and in the glasses. Another spell repaired the
slight white shadow left by the absinthe puddles on the table and further concentration set the sugar up over each glass.

“I will show you another way of preparing it then..” he said, smiling.

Turning he levitated the bottle and poured the absinthe into the glass through the sugar cube. When both were prepared in this manner he flicked a finger at them one by one, igniting the alcohol soaked sugar. It burned with purple flames, sizzling and dripping liquid sugar down into the green liquid below.
Caed, he saw, was transfixed.
When the fire had died down and the sugar had ceased to melt, he turned on the ice water fountain, melting the rests and filling the glasses quickly, stirring them and passing the other boy one.

“It is a quicker method and the fire is quite attractive, don’t you think?”

Caed half smiled at him and nodded, sipping his absinthe and then pulling a face. “it tastes different.”

Tom nodded. “yes. It’s stronger this way and slightly smokier.”

Caed took a slower sip, letting the liquid slosh around in his mouth a little contemplatively.

“You prefer it the other way.” He informed him, seeing it on the boy’s face. Caed nodded. “I do too.” He said. “but its passable like this also.”

He watched the other boy nod and then yawn, putting his hand over his mouth and seeming surprised. Ah. The effects of alcohol. Perhaps he shouldn’t have made him another. He was almost certain Caed would be on the floor by the time he’d finished this one.

“What was it like in your time?” he asked him idly, wondering whether the boy was tipsy enough to speak freely. “Was it very different to Hogwarts now? Diagon Alley now?”
Caed scowled at him sharply at the first question but the second seemed to soften him a little and he shook his head.

“no. pretty much the same. Some different shops. People wear different clothes. There’s some stuff you don’t have yet I spose but it’s not much. I guess the wizarding world doesn’t change very fast. Hogwarts is identical far as I can tell. Cept none of my friends are here. Course.. none of my enemies..” he jolted and trailed off, looking away guiltily and swallowing.

Tom puzzled at the strange response. What did it mean? Was he irritated at revealing that none of the current students here would be his enemies in the future or was he reacting at the memory that some people he’d already seen over the last two days would be his enemies.
He’d said he wasn’t supposed to survive. Tom struggled to put all the little things together. It didn’t produce a coherent whole yet.

The way Caed had reacted earlier to the glamour.. one of his enemies might have eyes like that, Tom mused.
The way the boy had looked.. Something clicked slightly.. The hate the boy had flashed at him in Dippets office.. the fear he’d shown in the forbidden forest.
He was Caed’s enemy in the future somehow. He knew him.. He’d recognised him from the beginning.

“Caed?...” he said softly and the boy turned to him with a confused and so very young expression.
He had been about to ask but, seeing the look on the boy’s face he changed his mind. No.. it would
ruin everything.
Later.. another time.. when the boy trusted him more, he’d explore that dark little avenue and see where it led.
In the meantime he’d just have to be careful.
If Caed hated him as much as he’d shown in Dippet’s office, perhaps the fact that he needed help to survive here wouldn’t matter to him.
He was a Gryffindor after all – well known for rushing in where angels feared to tread.

“Nothing. It doesn’t matter.” He said, shaking his head faintly.

“What time is it?!?” the boy asked suddenly. He patted his leg and seemed to remember he was wearing pajama bottoms, looking about panicked for his wand.
Tom cast tempus. the glowing dial showing two thirty.

“Your wand is right over there. Look. You can see it from here. I promise you don’t need it right now. Calm down.” He said soothingly.
His mind was still playing over the fact that Caed probably knew him in the future.. or.. perhaps..perhaps he only knew of him.

Had he perhaps followed through with his back up plans in the case that he could not work in the ministry?
Had he..was it possible that he had attained the darkest of his secret fantasies for the future? Had he become something like Grindelwald? A dark wizard who would go down in the annals of history?

If he had, how much did Caed know about him?

If he had..was it even worth pursuing the place in the ministry? The future was already written..

He was jolted from his thoughts by the soft raw voice he had already decided he found inexplicably soothing.
“hmm?” he said, looking up and being taken once again by the loveliness of the boy.
“I said.. i’m getting tired.”

He glanced at the glass the boy was holding. It was empty. Smirking, Tom shook his head slightly and held out his own half full glass.
“It appears you are quite enthused about absinthe, Caed. Finish mine and we’ll go to bed.”

Caed looked at him quite shocked but leaned forward and accepted the glass that he had been drinking from.
He glanced between it and Tom’s face several times before lifting it to his lips and draining it, closing his eyes and savouring the thicker syrupy dregs.
When he opened them he looked faintly happy. “The last mouthful is the best” he mumbled in explanation.

Tom smiled back. “yes.”
He yawned, stretching himself over the end of the sofa, his arms bent above his head and hearing his neck click faintly.

When he looked back at the boy Caed was slack jawed, staring at him with a somewhat mesmerised expression.
“you look really good” he mumbled dazedly. “do you work out?”

Tom furrowed his brow. Did he work out? Work out what? He tilted his head, smiling as enticingly
as he could.
“Thank you, Caed.. I don’t know the term – but I assume you’re asking if I exercise. Yes.. I exercise a lot...Perhaps in the morning you can join me in my daily callisthenics. I omitted them this morning... that is.. yesterday morning.”

The blonde nodded with the familiar confused fearful expression on his face again.
Tom could see the responses tick over in his brain. Caed found him attractive and then, when he realised it each time, he reacted with horror and denial.
But that was fine. The most important point was that he did find tom attractive.

Standing he returned the absinthe apparatus to the desk by hand, purely in order to have the other boy watch him as he moved and bent.
When it was all put away he turned to find Caed had stretched himself out on the sofa ready for bed. He strolled over and leaned on the back of the sofa, tilting his head and looking down at him speculatively.

“You may share the bed, if you wish” he offered softly. “It is certainly more comfortable. It’s a lot warmer than the sofa and quite big enough for three.”

Caed looked frightened. “No.. no i’m fine here.” he managed.

Shrugging, Tom moved away, disappointed. “Suit yourself” he said lightly, sending over a pillow and blanket and climbing into bed.

“Thanks. Um. goodnight.”

He offered a quiet goodnight in return and pulled the covers up to his shoulders, extinguishing the lamp and staring up at the stone segments of the roof far above irritatedly.

Thinking of how effective the warming charms had been in removing Caed’s outer layer he smirked.
Surreptitiously he vanished the pajama top from where it lay on the floor and cast a very gentle cooling charm on the blanket Caed was using and the couch he lay upon.

He placed his arms behind his head and waited for a few minutes and then cast another pair of very gentle charms.

After ten minutes he heard the sound of Caed moving and peered at him subtly. He was looking for the pajama top.
Tom smirked nastily. Any minute now.
He didn’t dare risk another cooling charm. It would become obvious to the boy that his covers were getting colder when they should be getting warmer.
He remembered the boy’s wand and hoped like hell the tipsy little fool wouldn’t remember it and cast a warming charm. Then he heard a soft stage whisper.

“Tom?..Are you awake?”

Triumph flooded him.. Or.. more properly, he thought, ::triumph:: flooded him. The parseltongue word didn’t quite have the same meaning – it meant ‘the taste of prey caught with much skill and cleverness’.

“mmm?” he responded as if half asleep.

“I’m.. ...nevermind” Caed lost his nerve and stilled again.
Tom frowned with his eyes closed and then offered in a sleepy voice. “If you’re cold you can sleep here. I’m not getting up to transfigure any more blankets right now.”

There was a long pause and then he heard, delight of delights, slow (probably quite frightened, he supposed), padding steps cross the room to the other side of the bed. He kept his eyes closed, feeling the covers drawn down tentatively and then the mattress shift slightly as the other boy got in.

“Um.. sorry!!” Caed said in a voice that sounded terrified.

Tom shook his head slightly and mumbled as if half asleep “It’s fine. Night Caed.”

He lay still, letting his breath come slow and regular and simulating sleep while listening intently and focussing on the movement of the other boy. He was very still and Tom could actually feel him staring at him. It was as if the gaze had a physical presence upon his skin, crawling over his bicep, his jaw, his mouth.

It took a very long time for Caed to settle and lie down and when he did, he did so facing Tom. Only when he was certain that Caed was truly sleeping and not simulating as he had been did he move, as if rolling in sleep, his eyes still closed, till he could face him and peek through his lashes at the lovely face, relaxed in repose, one arm under the pillow and the other curled against his body.

He put a hand out of the covers on the edge of the bed and summoned his wand silently, casting a protego horribilis shield upon himself. Although he could cast a number of shields wandlessly now, the horribilis shield was tricky and he did not wish to err when sleeping in a bed with a boy who might consider him some form of enemy. The shield was sufficient though, he decided. It would prevent magical or physical contact with the intent to harm.

Unless the boy could cast the killing curse...

He probably could not, to judge by his attitude in defense and duelling, however as a paranoid afterthought he summoned the boy’s wand carefully and placed both wands on the bedside table, casting a wandless glamour over them to appear as a book.

Only then did he allow himself to cautiously slip into true sleep.
Harry inched closer to the warmth next to him, his mind gradually floating up from the depths toward wakefulness.

He felt very comfortable and...somehow safe. Contented. Rested.

He didn’t usually feel this way and it was why he woke so slowly. Normally he jolted awake unpleasantly in shock, feeling tired and crabby with eyes seemingly full of sand. But at present he lingered at the twilight edge of sleep.

He nuzzled closer to the warm smooth surface his cheek was pressed to. It moved slightly and he rose sharply closer to full wakefulness. Something tensed around his lower back.

A hand, his mind supplied dimly. Held. Someone’s hugging me.

s’nice.

Who could be hugging him, he wondered, his mind not quite rational.

Too big to be a girl. S’a guy.. his senses offered vaguely.

Ron?.. Ron was hugging him? Why was he in bed with Ron? Doesn’t smell like Ron.. smells like.. licorice and no.. absinthe and- His eyes flicked open in shock and he took in his current position in mounting horror. He was facing Tom Riddle. He was in bed with tom Riddle and facing him. His face was pressed against Tom Riddle’s warm hard chest and his arms..well.. both of their arms really.. were wrapped around one another.

He could feel the chest against his face moving slowly and swallowed in shock. How did he get into this bloody position?! Had the prick somehow imperiused him into bed? Why?

God.. had they.. had he...

He moved his leg slightly and felt that he was wearing pajama bottoms, breathing a massive sigh of relief inwardly.

Still... how did he get here-??..he remembered then: vaguely feeling cold and a bit sloshed and accepting the offer to share the bed. He’d been perched on the very edge of the other side and he’d watched Tom for ages before he went to sleep. Proto-Voldemort hadn’t moved an inch. He’d been asleep.. Fuck.. what happened?

Had Tom.. somehow pulled him over and grabbed him in sleep, thinking he was that blond girl Elana? What would he do when he realised he wasn’t?

Or ..or..worse – had Harry himself somehow curled up to him for warmth while he slept?

He’d be livid when he realised.
Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck. How to get away..

The question resolved itself when the body next to him stirred slightly, the arms around him tightening slightly and then performing a cursory exploration, the arm that was curled around and under him slid over his back slightly, the one at his side, slid up to his ribs.

“Caed?” Tom’s voice was soft with sleep and confusion.

“Uh.. yeah. I just woke up here. Um.. sorry. I.. don’t know.. sorry.” He unwrapped his arms and tried to move away.

Tom hadn’t released him. He groaned slightly and muttered. “..comfortable..”

Harry felt panic rise up inside. He wasn’t going to let him go. Fuck. What should he do?!

But then with a heavy sigh the strong arms around him released him and Tom turned onto his back. He felt him stretching all over languidly and told himself that he was relieved that he’d let him go.

Now, however, he could see Tom again.

He looked like some kind of perfectly proportioned animal. A panther or a jaguar. Something slinky and graceful and velvety.

Harry berated himself internally, forcing himself to move back, noticing in the process that he was all the way over on Tom’s side of the bed.

Shit. He had probably been the one to seek him out in sleep. What the hell was wrong with him. He kept bloody noticing things about the future snake-faced bastard that he had no business noticing. It just wasn’t right.

He.. he couldn’t help looking at his body last night.

Well.. It had been hard not to, what with it glowing softly in the firelight, all smooth and muscular and bloody aesthetically perfect.

Aaaaugh. Alright. so.. he could see exactly why every idiot in the past believed the best of the young Lord Voldemort.

He was ridiculously intelligent, really nice and considerate.. friendly.. helpful.. and he looked like bloody sex on a stick. What was not to like?!

It’s a mask! Just a mask. His mind informed him again.

And.. and.. what does it matter if he’s maybe.. well proportioned or.. fit.. or anything.. he’s a guy for fucks sake!

Harry had never even looked twice at guys. He knew he liked girls. Tom’s girlfriend Elana had been gorgeous.. Harry had fancied Hermione.. he’d even fancied ginny for a while.. and Cho chang. And Melissa Cuthbert too and he’d even found Luna a bit fanciable for a few strange weeks at one point.

Just because he’d never done more than kiss any of them didn’t mean he didn’t want to do more. He’d wanted to do a lot more than just kiss Hermione.

He fancied girls. He didn’t fancy guys at all.

At no point had he looked at Dean or Seamus or Ron and thought.. hmm.. I wouldn’t mind kissing him.

Draco was practically the school cassanova and Harry’s stomach turned thinking about touching him.

Ok.. he’d maybe noticed that Cedric had been quite a good looking bloke.. before.. before.. he’d well.. before.. Pettigrew had..

He shifted his mind away from the image of Cedric’s empty eyes staring up at him from the grass
in the Little Hangleton graveyard.

“Do you feel like breakfast first or shall we exercise and then eat?” Tom’s soft measured voice asked idly, still slightly rough from sleep.

Harry struggled to process coherent thoughts. Tom didn’t even seem bothered that he’d woken up cuddling him.
What the hell was going on?!
He tried to imagine Voldemort cuddling anything. He tried to imagine Voldemort willingly cuddling him.
It Did Not Compute!

“I..I don’t know” he managed vacantly, his mind still whirling.

Tom turned his perfect face toward him, raising an eyebrow. “You don’t know whether you’d rather have a crumpet with melted butter or do thirty push ups?”

Harry blinked at him. No. He didn’t. Neither of those ideas made any sense to him right now. He just couldn’t seem to stop his brain from going round in panicked circles chasing its tail.
It jumped between various related ideas like a ball bouncing off bumpers in a pinball machine.
Liking girls and not liking guys. Cuddling tom Riddle. Cuddling Voldemort. Being currently in bed with tom Riddle. Still!!! The bizarre lack of reaction of said future dark Lord to all of this. Feeling safe and warm before he realised where he was. Liking girls and not liking guys..
He swallowed and looked back helplessly, not even sure what the question was that he’d just been asked.

Tom frowned slightly, the corners of his lips showing that he was amused and not annoyed, and turned onto his side toward him.
“Are you quite alright, Caed? You seem a bit..off.”

He shook his head blankly and offered a weak smile. “I..” he trailed off, not sure what he’d been going to say.
Something along the lines of ‘I want to go back to my dorm room now please’ he supposed.

Tom closed his eyes and sighed.
“Look.. It was nothing to worry about, Caed. It was cold last night. We both sought warmth. I don’t know about you, but I didn’t find it unpleasant when I woke and it’s hardly as if anything happened.
You are clearly overthinking things and panicking unnecessarily.
I believe I feel like breakfast first and exercise after. Gopper!”

Harry barely suppressed the gape his jaw wanted to produce at that.

He watched in mortified fascination as the future Lord thingy, leaning on his elbows and looking down at the tiny elf (which seemed entirely unconcerned at them both lying in bed together), actually ordered butter crumpets with fresh strawberries on the side and guava juice for them both.
He dropped back down and turned toward Harry with a languid smile.

“If you do not wish to exercise with me, you might shower and then I will set you some arithmancy problems or some review tasks in Charms while I work through my routine.”

Harry blinked, bemused at how insanely normal this all felt. Almost.. familiar. Easy. Entirely wrong and weird and unnatural and yet.. simple and easy and comfortable and familiar.
He..Merlin help him.. against his will he liked being around Tom Riddle.
This was sick.
He looked down and swallowed, flinching and jerking away when Tom’s fingers touched his chin, seeking to tilt Harry’s face back up to meet his eyes.

“You have too much guilt, Caed” the dark wretchedly beautiful evil monster informed him.
“I see you smile – you have a breathtaking smile, you know.. and then immediately your face is clouded with guilt and recriminations.
You should let such things go. If you are happy – be happy.. if you are enjoying something – enjoy it...
if you feel good.. allow yourself to feel that..
at the very least in private you should allow yourself to entertain your own true desires and feelings.”

Harry furrowed his brow. Lord Voldemort wasn’t someone to be taking advice from, he decided. Especially advice that was basically – if it feels good, do it! That was a terrible motto. If everyone lived like that – it would be anarchy.

The crack of the house elf returning cut the thought off and he turned and sat up as two trays were floated onto the bed and Gopper cracked away again.

It smelled amazing.

He leaned forward eagerly, taking in the lovely spread and the pillow behind him suddenly expanded rapidly, becoming huge and firm for him to lean against.
He turned and smiled thanks at Tom (who was enlarging his own pillow), and then picked up a buttery crumpet in his fingers with anticipation.

This was not where he expected to be at all but.. on the other hand.. he wasn’t dead in a messy pile of tortured flesh in the forbidden forest either.
He wasn’t in the infirmary.. he wasn’t at the Dursleys.. he wasn’t walking around aimlessly in a Hogwarts suddenly full of familiar faces who didn’t give a crap about him.
Well.. ok.. he was kind of in a Hogwarts full of unfamiliar faces that didn’t give a crap about him.

But on the other hand.. the person he least expected to, did seem to give a bit of a crap about him.. and maybe..he might make friends with Tom’s death eaters – they all seemed pretty nice guys so far.
They probably weren’t but so far they seemed friendly – they’d watched out for him.

And.. last night had been kind of nice.. except maybe for the bit where Tom changed his eyes but that was sort of not really Tom’s fault, he reasoned since he had brought it up.
And Tom had stopped it as soon as he’d realised how much Harry hated it. He’d..hugged him again.. like he had when he’d cried.
That was so messed up.
And maybe a large part of why it was messed up was that Harry had found he sort of liked it.
Like this morning when he’d woken up. He felt..kind of good.. till he realised where he was.

Maybe tom wasn’t entirely wrong about just enjoying things in the moment and not letting all the negative little fears and guilts get in the way.
Well.. maybe a little bit at least.

He ate a strawberry thoughtfully and glanced at the boy sitting next to him who was sipping his guava juice and looking equally thoughtful.
The day flew by somehow. He wasn’t sure where it went, to be completely honest.

They’d both worked out. Harry had been bothered when Tom had transfigured his pajama bottoms into a pair of black boxer shorts to train in, suddenly confronting him with even more of his perfectly defined body to try to avoid staring at.

After they started though, Harry understood why. Tom’s ‘exercise routine’ was hardcore!

Harry had struggled and he didn’t consider himself unfit at all
And it was really hard to do the squats and the stretches with pajama pants on. He refused to transfigure (or ask Tom to transfigure) his own pajama bottoms though.

After that he’d showered and Tom had set up Two arithmancy problems that he’d answered while he was showering.

The rest of the day had whizzed by on charms and potions work, with a thick Tuscan tomato soup and crusty bread for dinner and then it had been time to go back to his dorm.

He could feel the last hours of the weekend dripping away as they both walked slowly down the stairs toward the dungeons.
It didn’t seem like Tom was particularly anxious to get rid of him. He’d put off walking him back till almost nine thirty. Curfew was in half an hour!

Harry hadn’t exactly pressed the point on going back either. He felt..kind of..comfortable.. around Tom now.
Going back down to the guys in the dorm...they were all nice guys and everything.. but he didn’t know them at all yet and it was, strangely enough, easier to be with Tom than face seven unknown quantities.
Seven unknown quantities who could probably each kick his ass in fact. And who were all purebloods.

The stuff Tom had started to say about pureblood traditions had unnerved him a bit. He’d suggested there was a whole LOT more that was important but they’d gotten distracted somehow and now Harry was worried something would happen and he wouldn’t understand and would accidentally do something massively stupid.

He hesitated in front of the shield.
Tom looked at him expectantly and he struggled to remember what the weird sounding name had been. He looked back helplessly and the other boy snorted in amusement.

“You’ve forgotten it, haven’t you?” he grinned. “What would you have done if I hadn’t come with you?”

Harry half smiled sheepishly. “Um.. hidden and waited for someone to go in or out I guess..”

Tom shook his head.
“It was..Ophiuchus – it’s a constellation. The snake handler, in fact. But.. since its Sunday anyway.. I might as well change it.”

He looked down at him with a faint smirk and stepped close to the shield. Harry couldn’t hear what he said but he moved away and then, unexpectedly stepped close.
He felt Tom’s lips brush against his ear as he whispered “the new password is absinthe.”
It tickled slightly and he shivered at the sensation, feeling unnerved at having his future enemy so close to him again, and even more unsettled by the way his stomach had fluttered for a moment.

Tom moved away and looked at him with a small knowing smile that widened slightly when Harry blanched in embarrassment.
Harry knew that he’d reacted and that Tom found it amusing.

Mortified, he turned away and whispered the password to the shield, avoiding the dratted perfect face.

Abraxas offered him a sly smirk when he walked in after Caed.

He frowned back reprovingly and the look was wiped off as if it had never been there – it wouldn’t do for the skittish blonde to see that kind of suggestive response. He was already nervous enough and nothing had even happened yet.
Oh.. but it would..he was certain. The way the boy had responded, it was only a matter of time.
It was extremely encouraging.

He stood back slightly as Caed was welcomed back and asked about his studies politely. Not a shred of insinuation was offered and Tom relaxed, relieved.

When Alphard started to berate Caed on the gobstones match he’d missed yesterday, Tom nodded to Abraxas to follow him and waved a silent adieu to Caed who, gratifyingly enough, looked perturbed that he was leaving and seemed on the brink of breaking away from Alphard to follow him.

Gyphus and Antonin joined the conversation and asked him questions, pulling his attention back toward them and Tom nodded at the quick pair, smiling as he turned and departed the dorm room.

“So... Absinthe hm?” Abraxas enquired, the tiny smirk back on his lips.

The password, he knew, appeared, pinned to the dormroom walls the moment it was changed.

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Indeed” he responded neutrally, leading the sleek aristocrat one floor down to where the passage he was seeking was located.
After they were safely within the dim, dusty corridor, he turned back to Abraxas, dropping all pretence.

“We are keeping him. He has ..skills.. that I am confident will be useful.” The snort in response was decidedly lewd, he noted, irritated.

“Skills... is that so? Do tell? Will we all benefit from his skills?”

He had his wand in his hand in the blink of an eye and Abraxas crashed to his knees crying out in sudden blinding pain.

“I will have none of that insolence Abraxas!...just so that you know - I have not ..had.. Caedmon yet – The weekend actually was spent tutoring him.
Mainly in Charms and Arithmancy, if it interests you particularly.
I therefore cannot venture to guess whether he is skilled in those areas.”
“He is mine however. Irrespective his eventual level of sexual skill, I will not tolerate any other pursuing his favours.”

“The particular skill he possesses, to which I refer, does not concern you at present. Perhaps you will work it out yourself.. or I shall inform you when the time comes and I wish to utilize it”

Abraxas, recovering, looked up from his knees and nodded agreement.
“Sorry Tom.. I ..forgot myself. It was not my place to question. The boy is yours. I will see that he is protected.”

Tom nodded, gesturing for Abraxas to rise. “I do not want any suggestion made to him of my desire for him. He is..almost painfully naive and flighty. It is quite endearing and potentially problematic. I would prefer to avoid panicking him. See to it that nobody makes any ill conceived comments. I will be.. vexed.. if I am forced to deal with something of that nature.”

Abraxas, who had climbed shakily to his feet again, looked pale and tense. “Of course.” He responded solemnly.
“When will we be moving forward with the next meeting?”

Tom considered carefully.
“The new moon will be this week. It will be particularly dark. Perhaps a good time for so many of us to be about on the grounds at once. Darkness hides a multitude of sins.”

Abraxas, who had looked disappointed at the long delay, brightened slightly.
“Am I to understand that we shall have.. entertainment.. then?” he questioned with thinly veiled eagerness.

Tom nodded once, curtly.
“I will procure it myself. It will make up for the disappointment of cancelling, last week. There must be.. no leftovers.. however. These things have a way of finding their way into the wrong hands.” he said darkly.

Abraxas swallowed and nodded. “I think we will all be able to.. deal with that. I will speak with Roan. He is the weakest link regarding.. these matters.”

Tom nodded. “I would like to think I could bring Caed in to the circle at that time.. However I am certain this kind of play will be far beyond him at present. Perhaps later at some point. He has a vast amount of potential.. but some idiotic Gryffindor guardians have nearly ruined him with moral restrictions, guilt and foolishness. It will take me a while to untangle him.” He paused for a moment and then added as an afterthought. “He may be trying out for the quidditch team.”

Abraxas looked dubious. “He practically heard of the sport for the first time on Friday. If he tries out, he’ll probably only embarrass himself.. and in so doing, all who associate with him.”

Tom smirked. “I wouldn’t be too sure. I believe Caedmon will turn out to be quite gifted, surprising all. I want him watched around Wilkes. The cur is already sniffing after him.”

Abraxas frowned but nodded.
“Why do I get the impression that there is more going on here than I’m being told?! Is he what Dumbledore said he is?”

Tom’s smirk widened.
“His parents certainly were not killed by Grindelwald for their blood impurity” he responded shortly, allowing the nth generation pureblood to leap to his own conclusions on the matter. From Abraxas visible relief, he saw that he’d leapt to the conclusion tom desired at present.

“Do you have any other matters of concern?” he asked, already closing here.

“Only one. Willowstead – He was very put out at being forced to move and is making a bit of a stink, badmouthing you in the presence of younger years. Several students have expressed their thoughts on the matter to me and most were supportive of his complaints. It’s undermining you and it casts Caedmon in the role of usurper”

Tom nodded pensively. “I’ll deal with it...”

He turned on his heel and after casting a detection spell to determine the position and proximity of other lifeforms, he opened the passage and led the blonde, who was walking much more stiffly now, back to the dorm.

Entering he found Caed laughing and joking with the others. He showed a mix of expressions when he turned and caught Tom walking back in with Abraxas. There was relief then suspicion and finally concern. Interested by this little display, Tom walked close to where the blonde sat on Antonin’s bed with Alphard and Roan (while Gyphus and Darius walzed around in circles as a couple with their noses in the air, to the amusement of all.) and put his hand on Caed’s shoulder lightly, causing the latter to look up at him in conflicted confusion again.

As he watched though, the boy’s expression shifted slightly and he offered a sheepish somewhat relieved smile as if to confirm he was ok. “I’ll see you all tomorrow at breakfast then” he said quietly. A chorus of responses came back.

Caed asked, looking a bit disappointed “You’re leaving already?”

He caught the amused looks on several of the other’s faces and tilted his head at the blonde. “You’d rather I stayed?”

Caed opened his mouth to respond and the strange conflicted look flickered across his face again. He nodded slightly, looking embarrassed.

Tom smiled down at him and brushed aside the lick of hair that had fallen into his eye. “Then I’ll stay” he offered softly.

He only needed to glance at Alphard and Roan for Roan to get up and move to his own bed and Alphard to shift to the side, leaving space next to Caed. He sat down close to him, almost but not quite touching and leaned back on his hands, surveying the reactions of the others.

He did spend time with his knights.. however..since the beginning of the year he had not been in the dorm with them most of the time and they tended to know him from a different side than he was projecting to Caed, so the slight tension he read in a few faces was quite understandable. He had not been one of them for a while now. He was their leader.. disrespect was punished immediately and harshly.

Palmer looked amused but he detected that Abraxas and Gyphus were on edge and Roan and Darius seemed a bit strained too.

Glancing at Caed he saw him quietly reading the faces around him which were continuing to chat and joke cautiously, if somewhat more subdued than before.
They knew how to joke and relax around Tom.. and they knew how to behave around Caed.. it was the dissonance between the two models that was the problem.

Caed turned to him suddenly, his expression searching and he arched an eyebrow in response, enjoying the way Caed seemed to only see him, whenever he was present in the room.

“What’s going to happen tomorrow?” the boy asked suddenly. “with..with tutoring I mean.. Should I go to the library? What classes do I have?”

Tom yawned and closed his eyes thinking.
“hm.. Potions first period.. then nothing for two periods and then charms and defense. I have second period free. I would suggest that we spend the time writing Merrythought’s assignment and return to the other subjects after defense tomorrow evening”

He watched the boy jump in sudden horror. Apparently he’d forgotten the Surinaste cutting curses essay.

Tom smirked at him.

“Don’t fret.. All the information you will need I have in my bookshelves.”

The relief on the boy’s face was painful to look at.

Tom snorted slightly and let himself down to lie on his back across Antonin’s bed. Peripherally he was aware of the acute, if surreptitious attention of all of his knights even as they chatted and engaged around him.

“What time is it, Alphard?” he said after a while, tiredly. “half past ten” the response came. “I have to patrol” he sighed grudgingly, pushing himself up and glancing around the faces, pausing meaningfully on Abraxas, who nodded.

Last of all he turned to Caed apologetically. “I regret.. I cannot stay any longer. I’ll see you tomorrow. Have a good night.”

He stood and laid a hand on the blonde’s shoulder only briefly, squeezing lightly and then releasing.

“Goodnight, all.” He tossed back, stalking out of the room and making a mental note to deal to Willowstead tomorrow.
“you will work with me” Tom informed him, leaving no room for debate.

Not that Harry would have debated working with the best student in the school in a subject where team projects accounted for more than half the final grade. He nodded and smiled slightly.

He was, he realised, a little nervous for no rational reason, at the thought of seeing Slughorn again. It was stupid. He was the one who had gone into the past. Slughorn wouldn’t know him from Adam.

Still.. there was a low burning tension as he stood against the stone wall outside the potions classroom with Tom and most of the knights. Not present were Roan, Palmer and Antonin, none of whom took potions.

Tom seemed to examine him thoughtfully. “You will have no problem in this class” he said softly. Harry doubted that anyone else heard it.

A whooping gaggle of rowdy students approached from far down the corridor and Harry saw Tom frown slightly, his lips tightening. “The Gryffindor apes approach” he announced under his breath. Harry looked at him reproachfully and, astoundingly, the sapphire eyes wavered almost regretfully.

The noise did seem to get a lot louder the closer they came though and, in comparison to the quiet calm Slytherins – who were probably so at Tom’s command, Harry thought uncharitably – the Gryffindors did sound a bit like animals in a zoo.

An elbow nudged him in the ribs and he looked sideways at Gyphus who grinned and leaned in to whisper.

“Tom’s little bit of fluff is in this class. Wait till you get a load of her..”

Harry looked at Tom quickly. “Elana is in this class??” he asked, not sure why the thought set him on edge.

Tom gave him an unreadable look and nodded slightly, confirming it.

“You’ve met her already?” Gyphus smirked, his eyebrows raised.

“Er.. sort of.. yeah” Harry offered back, looking away from Tom uneasily.

Gyphus snickered softly. “Hot piece of tail but not too bright, is she?! Watch how she sinks her painted claws into him the moment she gets here.”

Harry felt a strange inner agitation and frowned slightly.

Seconds later a glossy haired blonde flew past them both at speed and tossed herself at Tom, wrapping her arms around his neck and planting a completely inappropriate kiss on his lips in the middle of the corridor.

Tom swept her up and kissed her back.

They were..utterly breathtaking together.. Harry thought with a sick little stabbing feeling inside. Two perfect creatures.

A wonder to behold.

He could hear a couple of people sigh somewhere around and glanced at Gyphus who was watching him with interest.

“What?” he said grumpily.
The brown eyes laughed silently as the boy shook his head slightly, his deep brown shoulder length wavy hair shivering in the movement. “Nothing.. nothing..” he replied.

Harry folded his arms and wondered what the time was. Bloody slughorn.. could at least come on time. Could be writing that stupid paper for merrythought right now. Bet we’re making something stupid anyway. Good god.. are they still kissing? Holy fuck. Get a room already. That thought somehow made the little clenching feeling inside grow a little. He imagined what they would look like.. together.. naked..and it was just horribly painfully perfect. And he just knew that they did sleep together. It had been obvious that that was what Elana had been gagging to do when she’d turned up on Saturday. Maybe Tom would blow off helping him today to do that instead.

And..he couldn’t honestly blame him really – look at her.. she was fucking beautiful. All that angelic shiny blonde silky-straight hair.. and she had huge blue eyes and..big breasts..tiny waist and her ass was kind of the perfect little shape to cup. Of course he’d rather go fuck her than talk about bloody arithmancy and charms that he probably understood years ago.

God.. Harry found he felt like such a disgusting little retard. Nobody could be blamed for not wanting to be around him. Unlike Tom.. Probably no one would ever want to touch him unless it was to use him somehow...like Ginny. Only he wasn’t famous here. Nobody would ever even want to use him anymore. He was nothing. And they were STILL kissing. Fuck! He wanted to hex them apart and turned his head away, suddenly relieved to hear the low rather jolly greetings and comments from Slughorn as he approached.

“Yes. Right here. My apologies. Got a bit caught up on the way. Still.. at least some of you seem to be putting the time to good use” the fat prat smirked, glancing at Tom and Elana who were no longer kissing but were still embracing.

Harry looked away again scowling and narrowed his eyes at Gyphus who seemed amused beyond all reason.

Slughorn bumbled the door open and exclaimed “Well then.. come along. Lets see what we’re up to today.” He paused then though and gave Harry a sidelong look. “Mr..Piper, wasn’t it? Yes.. yes.. well.. we’ll see about you. Come along.”

They all filed in under-enthused and Harry wandered off to the side somewhat, unsure where he was even supposed to go.

“Caed. Over here” Tom called, walking over to the last desk on the far right. Harry scowled slightly. The expression deepened when he got to the potions bench and Tom said in a low voice “what have I told you about that face in public?” He narrowed his eyes at him at the comment and then looked away, not responding, turning away from the broad smirk of Gyphus too, who was standing at the next bench along with a distracted Abraxas busy flipping through a book in some other language – Arabic he thought. Hard to tell from the distance.

Elana and some wavy haired brunette Gryffindor girl were in the far right front row – two benches ahead of he and Tom. The blonde kept glancing back and smiling at tom flirtingly.
Harry thought he might be sick from the darling perfection of it all. He wanted to stomp up to her and say ‘hey!... your boyfriend has killed at least four people that I know about already –probably quite a few more, I expect. He’s going to be the blackest wizard of the age! You don’t know the first thing about him and you’re not bright enough to even notice anything off. Hell you probably wouldn’t notice anything off about him even if he summoned the basilisk right in front of you. You’re a stupid ridiculous piece of jewellery for his mask of the perfect student, the perfect young wizard, the perfect head boy. So stop bloody fluttering your eyelashes and face the front you daft tart!"

Instead he sniffed and folded his arms snippily, focusing on Slughorn who was bobbing back and forth around his desk like a small tethered balloon in a gale, pulling out various books and bits of parchment.

“Ah.. here we go” Harry saw him mumble. “Ok now. Settle down” he said distractedly as the Gryfffindors started to socialise at top volume again, since nothing was immediately happening.

“Just what is wrong with you” Tom’s voice hissed by his ear, sharper than he had heard it since the head boy had utterly destroyed him after they’d been to Diagon Alley.

“Nothing” he responded shortly.

“Then tell me why it is you’re wearing a face like a smacked bum, right now” Tom hissed, his breath ghosting over Harry’s ear. He couldn’t help it. The image was too funny.. he cracked a grin and scowled twice as hard resentfully, trying to bring his traitorous mouth back under control.

He jolted slightly at the hand that slid around him and landed on his left shoulder and folded his arms tighter determined to ignore it.

A small part of him inside was confused and wondering why he had even been upset. The rest of him was already fully committed to the snit and wasn’t feeling like questioning why he hated Tom’s fucking guts again.

“Don’t touch me” he growled low.

He heard a soft sigh and then a half second later hands on his shoulders turned him firmly to face the future Dark Lord.

His expression was not pissed off, as Harry had fully expected it to be (and hadn’t fucking cared either way, of course!)

Tom actually looked faintly pleased and infinitely patient.

He moved his head, catching Harry’s eyes and holding them. “Caed. It’s nothing.” He said softly.

“Nothing. Don’t let it bother you.”

Harry frowned and looked away.

The hands on his shoulders released him lightly and he turned back to face the front.

Bloody nothing. Whatever. He struggled to pinpoint what he was actually angry about right now and failed.

It left him with a mildly irritated and confused feeling. He only had the vague conviction that it was somehow all Tom’s fault. But Slughorn had obviously found whatever he was looking for and was ready to get started so Harry’s attention was drawn away at that point

“Alright Class. Yes.. ok.. Settle down now. Good. now then – I’m certain that this potion isn’t entirely unknown to any of you, and some of you may have even brewed it before. Nevertheless – it’s on the required curriculum and therefore, irrespective how undemanding some of us may find it-“,
the walrus faced man glanced in the direction of tom and him, “we’re going to be brewing Amortentia.”

Harry blinked, surprised even as half the class, mostly girls, gave little happy sighs and a number of students groaned in irritation.

He’d already brewed that in sixth year. The curriculum must have changed over the years. Slughorn had said that some of them would find it unchallenging – maybe it had become a sixth year potion in time because of that.

He glanced at Tom who wore a neutral polite expression. The git turned to Harry then and murmured low.. “It’s just as well I suppose. You will brew this Caed and I will supervise. I will intervene only if I feel you are in danger of making an error.”

Harry sneered in a malfoyesque manner but managed to bite off the snide little remark he’d been thinking. Tom’s head inclined just slightly warningly even so.

“Fine.” He ground out, stomping away from the table to join the others who were heading toward the ingredient stores.

He only had to check one ingredient; the rest he remembered. Tom stood back watching him with an unreadable expression. When he started on the base, only checking the directions once very briefly, Tom muttered “I take it you’ve made this before.”

Harry didn’t reply but cut the flobberworms he was gutting a bit more forcefully than he absolutely had to. Tom was at his side in a second murmuring “check the directions” when he started cutting their heads off and tossing them. Harry ignored him.

Tom said, a bit more insistently “You have too many flobberworms and the heads are not to be severed. Start over.”

Harry half turned and glared at him. “I know exactly what I’m doing. You’re right – I have made this before. It’s been improved since your time now raff off”

Tom’s eyes widened in shock and then narrowed. Harry swallowed but ignored the venomous look his ear was receiving from the other boy.

“If you ruin this potion and cause me to receive anything less than an...E.. you will see another side of me, Caed.” he threatened in a low voice, standing very close to him.

Harry shook his head slightly and jerked his shoulder to get Tom to back off. “yeah. Fine. Whatever” he growled, placing the prepared flobberworms to the side. He pulled out the two peacock feathers and carefully severed the filliments from the needle again ignoring the faint bluster of disgust from beside him.

At the point where he pulled out a mortar and pestle and started grinding the ashwinder eggshell Tom was nearly apoplectic “Are you just making this up as you go along?! Do you even know what you’re doing?! Stop! You won’t have enough time to finish unless you don’t start over now!”

Harry turned to him thin lipped, confident in the half blood prince’s skill. “Why don’t you make the standard Amortentia then” he hissed, incensed. “That way, Slughorn will be happy whatever the result.”
Tom fumed visibly but hurried off to do just that. With him gone, Harry found he felt somehow relaxed with events now.

Screw him! He knew what he was doing. The potion was practically the same – the half blood prince didn’t often change the potions completely.. just offered different preparation directions. When he thought about some of them they made a kind of sense sometimes..they usually got more out of an ingredient by using only the important part or using more or less in some cases.

While Tom set up next to him quickly and efficiently, preparing the ingredients with a speed and precision he was forced to concede was impressive, Harry set about carefully peeling the billywig stingers, using only half the usual amount.

After that he macerated the passion flower with the point of his (cleaned) knife and removed the petals, discarding the rest. The budding rose petals he did the same thing to. His base needed to simmer twice as long and so it happened that Tom was slightly ahead of him by the time he was ready to add his reactive ingredients.

Tom was avoiding looking at him as he scattered his freshly plucked rose petals over the brownish mixture in his cauldron, causing it to abruptly shift to lemon yellow as they sank, dissolving away. Harry gingerly added his macerated petals one by one, waiting for each to dissolve before adding the next and the potion shifted in steps until it was almost a mandarin orange colour. He ignored a further huff from the side.

Tom was ready to add his final ingredient Harry saw. Billywig stings were the most sharply reactive ingredient of all.

Glancing around the classroom he saw that most other students had already reached this point. Some cauldrons were lidded, the samples already collected.

Harry kept one eye on his potion, waiting for it to turn and shift to purplish so that he could add the powdered ashwinder eggshell.

In the meantime, Slughorn was at Abraxas and Gyphus table, peering into their shared cauldron with a slightly dubious expression.

"Weak. You were inexact when adding the ingredients.. and the colour is slightly off. Did you remember to scourgify your flobberworms?"

Gyphus looked guilty and the moment Slughorn had turned away from them both, stating “A” dismissively, Abraxas glared at Gyphus furiously.

They were silent but somehow the silence was very loud.

Was this how purebloods raged at one another, Harry wondered.

Slughorn was looking into his cauldron with a confused expression. “this...doesnt look right at all, I’m afraid..” he said distractedly.

Harry gestured to Tom. “I’m making an improved version Professor. We thought you might not like that so Tom’s made the original version for you to mark if you are unsatisfied with the final result.”

And in that second Tom’s potion shifted into a pale sky blue and he dropped the five billywig stings in, causing a sudden hiss and rapid shift of the potion into a pale pink hue. Opalescent steam spiralled upward and Professor Slughorn nodded, smiling appreciatively.

“Perfect as always Tom. Not that I expected any less from you. Now.. what was this about an improved version? Improved in what way? Tom? Can you shed some light on this?”
Harry interrupted, for some reason he couldn’t explain- not wanting to let Tom admit to not knowing something.

“It was a project we worked on together over the weekend, Sir” he interjected quickly. “to see.. if we changed some of the preparation and brewing times, whether we could make the.. the..potion..” Harry snatched up his mortar of eggshell, tossing pinch after pinch in, just in the moment the potion shifted to a deep aubergine. The result was immediate. The surface bubbled as the powder was broken down almost immediately and the potion continued shifting on smoothly until it was a bright azure blue, at which point Harry hurriedly picked up his billywig stings and dropped them very carefully from just above the surface of the turbulent liquid.

They didn’t sink as tom’s full stings had but were slowly, very slowly dissolved from below, the potion gradually altering in hue until it reached pale pink, releasing soft twirling spirals of opalescent steam, but the potion continued turning until it was a fuschia and the steam was thick and opaque and glossy.

The half blood prince’s amortentia was like a concentrated hardcore version. The steam alone flooded the classroom, making everyone sniff slightly, appreciatively.

Slughorn stepped toward the gushing cauldron in delighted surprise. The shocked, impressed look on Tom’s face was even more satisfying, before he fixed it to the neutral, pleased expression of one who supposedly knew about the workings of the potion and fully expected this effect.

All this, Harry barely took in though, because he was backing away from the cauldron in horror he could barely hide behind a rictus smile.

The potion used to smell like dusty books, hot cocoa and hermione’s shampoo. He’d sniffed deeply in bittersweet anticipation of that.. and it did smell like dusty books at first.. but then.. it..didn’t smell of cocoa or chocolate or anything of the sort.. it smelled of licorice..aniseed.. it smelled of absinthe..and where he’d smelled the soft appley scent of Hermione’s natural essences shampoo, now there was a darker..muskier smell.. He couldn’t place it but he had the most horrible suspicion what it was and the potion was wrong.. he didn’t... he wasn’t at all ...attracted...like that... to... to him... That was just bloody ridiculous.

He glanced up at the despicably good looking Dark Lord in question who was looking thoughtfully at the cauldron just as Slughorn himself fished out a sample of the fuschia potion and lidded the cauldron, shutting off the dizzying maddening steam and putting the cauldron in stasis.

“Well I never.. one of the oldest potions and you’ve gone and ..perhaps quadrupled its strength. You’ll have to tell me just how you did that.” He looked expectantly at Tom who moved away to stand next to Harry.

“It truly was a combined effort sir. I cannot even take the larger share of the credit. Caed is quite gifted in the art of Potions.” He stood very close. Harry could feel their arms brushing and furrowed his brow in confusion at the absence of the desire to shy away.

He looked at professor Slughorn with what was almost certainly wide dazed eyes. “Please sir.. could I go to the bathroom.. I..I feel a bit dizzy.”

Slughorn’s eyes sharpened in concern. “Perhaps you had better go to the infirmary.
Experimentation in potions can be extremely risky.. You are both very adventurous to have taken it upon yourself to do so. And.. perhaps lucky also that you were not harmed.”

Harry shook his head faintly, desperately stringing together what he needed to say to be allowed to leave and not go to the infirmary
“No.. just dizzy sir.. We’ve made the potion before.. Its.. I just didn’t have breakfast and the steam was so strong. I’ll be fine if I get some air and splash a bit of water in my face.”

Slughorn brightened as if the sun were coming out from a cloud. “Oh.. excellent then. Very well. ..As a matter of fact – for your efforts you may both leave early, if you wish. I would like you to write up a report on your experimentation if you please. “

Harry nodded vaguely, fumbling to pick up his things. He needed to pack up his equipment.. he.. Tom’s hand around the top of his arm pulled his overloaded mind back together momentarily enough for him to look up helplessly into the sapphire eyes that were far too near. “Are you alright?” he asked softly, sounding concerned.

Harry opened his mouth to respond but couldn’t. He just shook his head pitifully. “I need... I need to leave..” he managed.

The sculpted face glanced up and over his shoulder. “Gyphus. Pack up our things and take them down to your dormroom before you go to your next class.” And then Tom was nudging him in the direction of the door.

Somehow he arrived upstairs and then he was in Tom’s room, standing, blinking blindly and seeing nothing.

He heard Tom putting the large pile of books belonging to both of them on the desk but the meaning of it was lost on Harry. He just stood numbly, his mind whirling in uncomprehending horror, now that he didn’t have to hold himself together in front of the class.

‘It’s not true! I don’t! I don’t fancy Tom Riddle.. I don’t! I’d never. Never never never. I don’t even like guys. I..he’s Voldemort. He wants to kill me. I’d never think of him like that. It’s sick. It’s wrong – it must be a mistake.
Snape must have ruined it somehow. Or.. or I made it wrong. I don’t. I don’t!!..’

And then his mind actually stopped thinking at all in blind panic as Tom was suddenly in front of him and he felt himself pulled into a careful hug.

He whined in the back of his throat helplessly, unable to even find the strength to push away from the warm strong arms holding him.
Tom was stroking his back comfortingly again and swaying slowly and It was as if something snapped in him. He put his arms around the taller boy’s waist and clung desperately, whimpering in a low miserable voice “It isn’t true.”

He felt Tom lower his face and then the smooth cool cheek was pressed against his own burning one and it felt good. Merlin help him – he liked it!
A gentle hand brushed down the back of his neck and he buried his face shamefully in Tom’s neck and clung to him as if the ground could drop away beneath him at any second.
He didn’t even notice himself crying or the way he inhaled deeply against Tom’s skin.

“It’s alright, Caed” the caramel voice murmured next to his ear. He shook his head numbly.

He.. he.. fancied.. Tom Riddle.

The sudden image of Tom and Elana kissing in the corridor seared his mind.

Irrespective of ..of EVERYTHING in the future...Of all the bloody blokes in the known universe he could possibly develop an insane attraction against his own will to – He had to fancy the very heterosexual.. very taken Tom Riddle.

The boy who was more controlled and disciplined than anyone Harry had ever met. And he cared so deeply about his image..even if he was even the slightest bit gay – which he clearly.. demonstrably.. wasn’t – he’d never ever in a million years allow himself to risk doing anything that might tarnish his image as the perfect bloody school star.

And..and even if he did.. he’d pick someone like Abraxas or Alphard or something.. or the Gryffindor or Ravenclaw or ..hell.. even Hufflepuff equivalent to them. Someone beautiful and powerful and well seen; someone with connections; someone that would compliment his own perfection.

The clenching ache inside offered him the strength he needed to push away from the Tom’s warm embrace, turning and stumbling away a few steps. “Don’t.. don’t touch me..” he pleaded.

When Tom followed him and tried to hug him again, obviously seeing he was still upset and probably not knowing what else to do about it, he dodged away, avoiding his eyes and hurried to the bathroom, shutting himself in and sliding down the door to wrap his arms around his knees.

This was terrible. What was he supposed to do? Tom Riddle was the most intelligent person he’d ever met. He’d figure it out if he kept staring at him with big moon calf eyes. ‘if he hasn’t already’ he thought to himself dismally.

Tom moved away from the door again nervously. Damn it. He’d been in his arms.. He’d been right there..He’d felt the way Caed held onto him..pressed himself into him. Tom had been a half second away from turning his face and kissing him and then Caed had ripped himself away and told him not to touch him.

He’d seemed appalled..and now he was in the bathroom and it was all Tom could do to stop himself from forcing his way in and shaking the frustrating little wretch and then dragging him to bed and shagging the hell out of him until he screamed in pleasure.

He’d..thought he had him..

It had seemed for a moment as if he’d... he had thought Caed ..might perhaps have recognised something in the amortentia .. Something that reminded him of Tom.

After the way the boy had carried on about Elana kissing him, it had seemed possible.

Merlin knew that for him the entire room had been overpowering with the smell of snow and pine and fresh strawberries and the musk of Caed’s skin.. the sweet sharpness of his natural scent. He’d sweated as they trained yesterday morning and it had been perhaps the most alluring thing that Tom had ever smelled.. afterward he’d sat, his cock an iron bar, and listened to the soft sounds of Caed in the shower.
He’d managed to scratch out some arithmancy problems and apply a glamour to his trousers before the blonde stepped back out, pink and fresh and damp with steam. Tom had barely touched himself under the shower and he’d come, gasping.

Smelling Caed in the potion hadn’t surprised him at all. He was already well aware that he was blind with lust for the naïve, oblivious, idiotic, beautiful, entirely intoxicating little twit.

He needed to know what was going on. What was he doing in there?

Had he..perhaps..not scented anything related to Tom? Was it something else? Had he just ruined everything in his need to hold him?

At that moment the door cracked and opened slowly and a different boy walked out. He looked calm and serious and blank. Tom felt whatever passed for a heart in his chest sink.

“Caed?” he asked softly.

The pale eyes met his emotionlessly and shifted away again. “I’m.. sorry.. for my reaction” the boy said softly.

“I...there was a girl...I cared about very much... and she was...she died. A few months ago. It was difficult to smell the amortentia. I didn’t mean to ...lose it...like that.”

Tom felt the stone..the cannonball.. in his chest grow heavier and he responded stupidly “oh. I’m..sorry for your loss.”

Caed’s eyes narrowed slightly, just for a second. Tom bit the inside of his cheek. He’d said the wrong thing again somehow.

Caed had reacted badly when he’d offered sympathy for his parent’s deaths too. Perhaps he just shouldn’t do it anymore if the boy ever mentioned death again.

“Are you..ok?” he asked emptily, feeling far from ok himself as the blond nodded decisively, turning and going to the desk for his books and parchment. ‘So that was all it was then.’ he picked at the wound morbidly.

Caed hadn’t felt anything for him at all.. seeing Elana with him must have reminded him of this dead girl.. and then he’d smelled her in the potion vapour.

For a wretched moment he considered whether he might slip down to the potions lab and take the sample of the amortentia that Caed had brewed. He could..give it to him.. It was far stronger than regular amortentia, Slughorn had said. Perhaps ..perhaps it might last longer.. perhaps it might be permanent and..

The idea died in his mind in horror. He felt sick. Was he truly as weak as his pathetic insipid mother?! – drugging the object of his desires because he couldn’t win him by other means.

He would never..ever use that potion in any way, shape or form.

Positively ill, he dragged himself to his bookcase, pulling out the text Caed would need for the defense essay.

“Here..” he said, hating how weak his voice sounded. “Chapter three contains everything you will need on Surinaste’s cutting curses....I’ll..go through it with you..if you like..”

The blonde shook his head, not looking at him. He’d ruined everything. Caed must have realised his pathetic desire for him and it revolted him.
He wasn’t persuaded. Maybe he wouldn’t have been in the forest either. Maybe he was simply trying to protect his own skin.

Tom turned away and ran his hand through his hair desperately. He could obliterate him again. He let his hand fall away in defeat. No, he wouldn’t obliterate him again. What good would it do? He couldn’t keep obliterating him every time he failed. He’d put him in St Mungo’s within weeks. That wasn’t what he wanted.

He turned back to the blonde who was already bent, poring over the text with the appearance of utmost concentration. Knowing how little the boy derived from reading texts, he surmised Caed just wanted to appear busy so that he would leave.

“Well...if you don’t want my help...is there anything else you’d like? A drink? Something to eat?” ‘my pathetic foolish heart on a plate?’

“No...thanks. I’m good” Caed said distractedly.

Tom nodded, ignoring the painful stab in his chest again. “...very well then. I’ll..leave you to work.” He managed and practically flew out of the room.

Outside he had no destination. He’d simply needed to be away. He should be in ancient runes after lunch, he realised dimly. He’d left all his books in his room.

He didn’t want to go to class anyway though, he realised. His feet carried him outside of their own accord and after wandering aimlessly along the edge of the lake he found himself following the line of the forbidden forest.

He knew where he was subconsciously headed; found himself in the place minutes later and it had obviously been his destination since he no longer felt drawn to walk.

The tree he’d restrained Caed against looked different in the pale sunlight. He ran his fingers over the rough bark and turned inward, deeper into the forest. He liked the forbidden forest. Few others came in here. It was dark and quiet and secret. He’d seen amazing things while walking alone in here.

After a few minutes he came, without effort, to the circular clearing where the boy had first appeared. The snow was gone and soft wild grasses and flowers were everywhere.

‘Right...there..’ he thought to himself.. going to where he thought the boy had appeared.

He’d been lying on his back.. there..

After a moment, he lowered himself to lie in the place. It felt strange to do so. As if he were lying in someone’s shadow. It was a silly sentimental idea to do it at all.

Overhead a cold blue cloudless winter sky stretched between the tall points of the trees. After a time he turned on his side and curled up.

The ground, though no longer covered with snow, was freezing. It didn’t, however prevent him from closing his eyes and somehow dosing off after a time.
He dreamed.

He stood over Caed. but it wasn’t him.

Another boy... at first he thought it was himself... He looked a little like himself when he was younger..

black hair.
The boy wore glasses over his tightly clenched eyes but he knew it was Caed, however he looked.

He was so small.. frail.. and writhing.. screaming uncontrollably under the hex..

Snarling, Tom took it off and then cast it once again “CRUCIO!!” and the high unnatural screams rang out again as Caed twisted and cramped frenetically.

He was going to kill him.

He was going to hold him under the incandescent agony of the cruciatus until his mind snapped and he breathed his last.

The loathing and disgust he felt was overwhelming. He couldn’t see anything but the weak..insipid..pathetic little creature at his feet.

It needed to die.

“Where is he?!” Abraxas demanded the moment the muffling charm sizzled into place. “You were with him last! What the fuck happened?! He hasn’t been in any of his classes. Nobody’s seen him.”

The sleek blonde, so much more like Lucius than Draco Malfoy glared at him.

Harry shook his head helplessly.

“I don’t know. He left me working on my essay before second period! I haven’t seen him! He’s not in my charms class – I expected he’d be in defense”

Abraxas looked at him suspiciously. They were in a side corridor down from defense – which Tom had not turned up for.

In charms Gyphus and Alphard had looked over at him a bit strangely and seemed to be trying to catch his eye, but sat separately over at the side there wasn’t really any way to ask what was wrong and after potions.. he hadn’t wanted to talk to either of them.

He hadn’t really noticed where Alphard was but he’d been waiting outside with them all before potions so it was a sure bet he’d seen everything... how he’d freaked out and left with Tom. Gyphus was going to make some kind of crappy remark, he just knew it. So after class he’d darted out and rushed to defense and had waited a couple of corridors down till class had just started and then come in, apologising for getting lost on the way.

Tom’s death eaters had looked at him suspiciously and he looked back defensively wondering what their fucking problem was all of a sudden.

It was one thing to poke fun at him for making a fool of himself this morning but they were looking at him as if he’d done something to them personally.

It wasn’t until Professor Merrythought started the lesson on Surinaste burning hexes and Tom still wasn’t there that he suddenly understood why they were all looking at him like that and panicked.
Obviously Tom hadn’t turned up to another class as well or something – they were all acting weird before class even started.
Where was Tom? What had happened?! Had someone attacked him?

Had ..Dumbledore done something maybe?

Maybe there were other students who had something against him...had it in for him. He could be somewhere bleeding. He could...
The thought slunk into his mind like a dark shadow. ‘he’s probably just avoiding you because of what happened; skipped class to think about what to do. Or maybe he’s with his girlfriend..’

Class had been tense. Roan had sparred with him and he’d asked, sounding really worried “do you know where Tom is? The others said something happened this morning. I didn’t really understand what. Something about a potion you made together? He never misses a class.”

Harry had said he didn’t know – he’d told him the same thing he’d just told Abraxas and Roan had only nodded and looked worried.

“...I...has anyone checked whether he’s with Elana?” Harry asked Abraxas, reluctantly. “--maybe he went there after he left.”
He avoided looking at the wretchedly familiar aristocratic face.

“He isn’t with Elana, Caed – she takes Ancient runes with us both and she takes herbology with Roan – she was in class today all day.
Did something happen? What have you done?!!.. Did you do something over that confounded kiss this morning – I saw you fuming over it.
Tom said you had some kind of...valuable skill.. Have you-..”

“NO!!” he yelled, furious. “I haven’t bloody killed Tom Riddle and vanished the body or anything. I haven’t done ANYTHING!! I just sat on his couch and wrote my stupid defense paper – I didn’t even know he wasn’t in classes. And why the fuck should I think anything about him kissing his girlfriend??”

Abraxas snarled at him “Little liar!!.. You were boiling mad. Anyone could see that. What happened after you left class??”
He advanced on him quickly and without thinking Harry backed up hurriedly till he was against the wall and Abraxas’ black and silver wand was stabbing into his neck
“‘You have no idea who you’re dealing with, Piper.. Tell me what I want to know now before I decide to loosen your tongue!’

Harry had a sickening case of déjà vu. This man could be Lucius Malfoy. Nice and polite one minute and a venomous snake the next. He’d..forgotten..that these guys were death eaters.

“I don’t know.. nothing.. nothing happened. I didn’t do anything, Abraxas.”
He looked into the hard silvery eyes like mirror glass.

“Caed.. I don’t wish to tell you again..” The cultured voice said softly and dangerously.

Harry flared in anger. “Fuck you! I didn’t do anything!”

The blond tsked “Language, Caed. You haven’t covered Surinaste transfiguration hexes yet, unfortunately.. so I doubt you’ll know the counter if I fill your bones with molten lead or as that..troglodyte Crouch quoted – your belly with scorpions. And of course I can always tell the nurse that I was assisting you to practice for Friday’s class. Answer the question. What. Happened.
Swallowing Harry looked down.
“I... he... hugged me.. because I was... upset... and...I.. um...”

Abraxas leaned in closer, his lip turning up in a slight malfoy-esque sneer and eyes narrowing “yes? You-?”

Harry gulped. “Nothing!..”

Abraxas sneer morphed into a snarl.
“Molten Lead, Caed. Have you the faintest idea how painful that is? It has been compared to the Cruciatus!”

Harry shook his head slightly. “No.. I just.. nothing happened. I.. um..” He closed his eyes “I liked it.. as...as... more than he meant by it.. I.. I “
He whimpered miserably. “I...smelled Tom in the amortentia... I... Abraxas.. you can’t tell!... I..I didn’t mean to... I’d never... I don’t even like guys like that... and... Tom is...is Tom... and”

Abraxas looked faintly amused. “yes.. I see Caed. What happened then?! He...hugged you.. What did you do?”

Harry looked up helplessly. “I...hugged him back..and...t-then I pushed him away and went to the bathroom and pulled myself together and came out and apologised. And then he gave me the book I needed for the essay and then he left. That’s all. I don’t know where he is. I left just before charms. That’s all. I swear!”

Abraxas looked incredulous. “You pushed him away? Why? And he allowed that?!”

Harry frowned. “because...it wasn’t right. He was just calming me down. He... he did it before when I was upset. He... has a girlfriend..a really hot girlfriend. Yeah... ok... maybe it bothered me a little to see them kissing. They’re both so..bloody perfect. But...you know that if he thought I... fancied him or something... he’d... he’d... fuck... they’d never even find my body. So... I got the hell away and then I came back and explained everything away and it was fine. He gave me the book and then he left. Look.. I didn’t do anything – we need to look for him or something. He... something could have happened.”

Abraxas groaned. “He’s right – you really are completely naive. How are you even in Slytherin?! Tom can’t stand Elana. He fucks her because its expected. I don’t imagine it is that great a sacrifice. She is fairly pleasing physically.”

“Didn’t you listen to Gyphus this morning. He told you that she was a lame duck. Did you miss that?! She clamps herself around him in public places whenever she can. They..benefit from one another’s association. He is among the most desirable Wizards at Hogwarts and she, one of the most attractive of the seventh year girls – a Gryffindor no less. You said yourself – they look..perfect..together. Tom wishes to look..perfect. For that, he tolerates her.”

“You, on the other hand – You he wants!.. Are you blind?!”

“The way he treats you..the way he looks at you makes it abundantly clear. He has staked a claim
on you – you are his.
You are also a complete imbecile if you imagine he has been seeking purely to comfort you...
Tom is not the comforting type, Caed.
He has sought not to frighten you off. But his embraces are most certainly not innocent.”

“He is..you might say...Omnisexual..He has taken other male partners in the past – but his
behaviour toward you is ..unprecedented.
If you say you now...fancy him..as you put it.. There is no longer any need for this fussing.”
The Malfoy ancestor withdrew his wand, sheathing it in his sleeve and stepped back.

“This presents us with a problem however.. if you are not responsible for his absence.. where then
is he?!”

Harry shook his head faintly. “Where does he go to be alone?” The other boy shrugged.

“It is not my habit to follow him around Caed. He would not take kindly to that. Perhaps he is back
in his room.”

Harry frowned. Tom wasn’t in his room. He didn’t know where he was.. but it wasn’t there.
The feeling was ephemerally faint. Just a vague feeling that he wasn’t anywhere nearby.
Like the suddenly noticed absence of an almost inaudible constant noise.

“He’s not there” he said. “Check the room of requirement. Or..” he stilled.
Abraxas was glaring at him.

“For one who has been in this school for mere days.. you certainly seem to know a few rather
guarded secrets about it, Caed. Why do you think he isn’t in his room?! Why should he be in the
room of requirement?! Do you know where it is?!”

Harry kicked off the wall.
“um.. the fifth floor. Shh. He’s not there though either I think. He’s not here..”

He suddenly had an idea. Snow.. Voldemort kicking him onto his back.. Waking up at the edge of
the forest and feeling confused.
He turned and ran toward the stairs hearing Abraxas curse and pursue him.
Passing the statue of Agus Agusfrey he skidded to a halt and darted behind it, taking the passage down to the first floor then running pell mell down the stairs to the foyer and out the door.

He reached the edge of the forest in ten minutes, out of breath and now nervous.

He didn’t know where to go from here. But the faint hum in his mind was louder, he thought. It was...so very faint.

Still panting with exertion he set off into the forest at a jog, keeping his wand in his hand and trying to look around him as he ran. Several times he changed directions because it felt like he was going the wrong way. Just a vague sense of wrongness.

He realised he was completely lost after a while and it was getting darker. He lit his wand and moved more slowly, trying to pay attention to that faint almost itch.. in his head.

After a minute or so he stumbled out into the clearing and saw the body immediately, lying in dewy wildgrass.

He was on his knees beside Tom in half a second and turning him over, inexplicably terrified that he was dead or injured. The wand was at his throat before he’d even blinked and then Tom said, confused “Caed? What are you doing here?”

He felt the thin point withdraw from his skin as the wretchedly good looking arse stretched and yawned. “You were sleeping?! Fucking MERLIN, you Prat! Abraxas wanted to fill my bones with molten lead because of you! All your little servants thought I fucking offed you or something! And you’re just having a nap in the middle of the bloody forbidden forest – are you mad?!”

Tom blinked up at him, shocked and, from the twist of his lips, highly amused. “My little what?!?” His smirk faltered then and he sat up quickly. “How exactly did you find me?” the question came low and suspicious.

Harry glared. He was not going to tell him that. “I lied, alright. It was you. The stupid amortentia. It used to be my...friend... She did die.. I don’t want to talk about it and don’t tell me you’re fucking sorry for my loss – I hate that from you. I thought.. I didn’t know that you..” he trailed off, unable to say what he wanted to get across and was unprepared for the speed and strength with which Tom suddenly seized him and tossed him down on his back in the grass, flowing gracefully up to straddle him.

He had barely had the time to blink in surprise before lips had descended upon his and he found himself being kissed...ardently.

Tom’s arm had found its way beneath his neck, lifting him slightly toward him even as his other hand stroked down Harry’s cheek.

It was all so rapid and forceful that his mind reeled. Was this what he wanted? No.. he didn’t know... no... it felt bloody weird. He wasn’t sure what to do...literally. He’d never kissed a guy.. he’d only kissed girls a few times..

He felt the boy above him sigh slightly and then pull back. In the near dark he still made out the
disappointment and longing on the gorgeous face.

Tom seemed to stare down at him transfixed and then he said, his voice husky and tight. “You..do not want this.”

Harry frowned confused. “I don’t know.. its..look.. you don’t understand..”

The boy above him closed his eyes and his face looked pained for a moment. “No.. I don’t.. You haven’t told me.”

he leaned down again and placed a small gentle kiss at the corner of Harry’s mouth.

“I want to..please you..Caed” he murmured, pressing the next light butterfly kiss to Harry’s jaw.

Swallowing, Harry considered the various meanings of Tom’s declaration.

Conflicted still, he allowed his jaw to be nuzzled upward to expose his neck as Tom applied himself to the side of his throat.

“Ohhhhh” he sighed faintly at the fluttery feeling in his stomach as the boy who he told himself was probably not yet Voldemort nibbled his way from sensitive spot to sensitive spot, sucking and licking.

The breath across his ear made him shudder involuntarily and when Tom sucked his earlobe into his hot wet mouth, his tongue flicking at it, Harry’s hands, quiescent till now, came up of their own accord and wrapped themselves around the hard firm body above him.

“Feels good?” soft lips murmured against the shell of his ear and he whimpered, nodding slightly and turned his head, barin more of his throat.

Tom applied himself with even more art and Harry could not quite stop himself from emitting tiny mewls of pleasure, his breath growing ragged.

He didn’t even become aware that Tom had undone his robes until he felt, faintly a sensation graze over his chest and then slight coolness. His buttons were undoing themselves. Wandless magic again he realised even as he shivered at the feeling of his shirt being parted by Tom’s warm smooth hands.

He wasn’t really in a state of mind to do much about it. Tom had kissed his way around and was teasing the other side of his neck with the same slow seductive skill.

He didn’t know when he had started to pant slightly but when lips grazed his own again gently, experimentally, he tried, inexpertly, to kiss Tom back.

A warm hand was sliding tantalisingly down his ribs, featherlight, and he broke away from the kiss and gasped, shivery at the unfamiliar sensation.

He’d been touched before without his shirt on. Ginny had practically tried to jump him..but no one had ever touched him like this. She had been all grabby hands and overenthusiastic force and he’d pushed her away after a second or two.

He’d never have thought that this person of all things would be gentle and ..and ok – exciting.

It..was exciting to lie in the grass in the dark with Tom Riddle bloody kissing and groping him like this.

So that probably said it all really, didn’t it? He must really be gay cause he...he liked this a lot more than he’d liked kissing Cho or Ginny.

He felt a hot wet flicker tickle his top lip. Tom’s..tongue..he realised.

A weird clench of horror and insecurity warred in his gut and he babbled “I.. don’t.. I haven’t..done this..much.”

He sensed more than saw the small smile on the gorgeous face now a mere shadow in the dark.
Then it dipped down and he felt Tom nuzzle the side of his face again. “So...innocent.”
The small kisses trailed along his jaw again and then he felt Tom’s lips move a millimetre above
his own. It tickled.

“I want you. Caed...whoever you really are. I’ve wanted you since I first saw you. Do you really
think I would wish for a more experienced partner? Your innocence tells me that you will be mine
alone.”

Harry swallowed again in the dark. Saying it like that made it very real.

As much as he might..like it..when Tom held him..he didn’t even feel comfortable kissing him.
What was Tom going to want him to do?.. He had only vague ideas of how guys..um..got together.. but he knew it involved oral sex which he
felt weird at the thought of receiving and really wasn’t eager to perform and anal sex which he
absolutely would not do. So how was this possibly going to end in anything other than Tom Riddle getting angry with him?!

As if sensing his reticence, the face centimetres above his pressed a chaste, lingering kiss to
Harry’s lips again and then sat up, straddling him. He looked up to see Tom silhouetted against the deepening blue of the evening sky. A few stars
were becoming visible.

“I am tempted to convince you right now.. but we should return. My.. “servants”.. as you say – will
be even more concerned by now. It is perhaps faintly possible that they could report me missing.”

Harry breathed out in relief (and a tiny incongruent flash of disappointment?) and nodded.
“Yeah..ok” He waited for Tom to rise but the other boy tilted his head, gazing down at him. His chest felt cold
and he wanted to pull his shirt closed but somehow didn’t quite dare to just now.

Tom’s hand in the near dark stroked down the middle of his chest and, irritatingly, he couldn’t
prevent himself from shivering again. “Beautiful..” he thought he heard the other boy whisper. Then the hand withdrew and his shirt slid
closed of its own accord, buttoning itself.

Tom seemed to glide to his feet effortlessly and held a hand to pull him up, in the process, pulling
him up, very close to him. For a moment Harry held his breath as it seemed that Tom would kiss him again, then the second
passed and the shadow in the dark turned away. “Come..” he muttered. “this way”

Harry lit his wand and followed quickly.

“No.” the measured voice stopped him. “No lit wands. They attract too much attention.”
A silent spell tingled over him and the night suddenly became much lighter and clearer. The spell
Tom had used when they were walking back on the hogsmeade road.

“Thanks..” he said softly. “Will you teach me that sometime?” He saw Tom nod pensively and
glance back at him.

Harry simply followed him. It seemed like only minutes later that they walked out of the trees onto
the grass. He’d wandered around for ages before he’d found his way to the clearing where Tom was.

“Disillusion yourself” Tom commanded absently and Harry wrestled down the niggly oppositional
defiant urge to argue about his tone and say he wasn’t one of his servants. He disillusioned himself instead and bit his lip in surprise when a warm hand found its way into his own.

Tom was... He didn’t take him for the hand holding type. Safe in the security of the spell he allowed himself to grin.

Until Tom’s voice said dryly - “We’re taking a different way into the castle and I don’t want you to get lost if we move silently.”

His grin faded slightly and Tom informed him “We’re going to run now.”

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Tom grinned broadly as he led the silenced figure through the passage opening into the dungeon corridor.

Caed was obviously not in the practice of running quickly and silently.. and probably wasn’t even used to running for that long –he’d been panting and struggling at the top of the hill and he’d had had to silence him before they got closer.

The boy didn’t seem upset at this, if anything, his faint shimmery posture had been one of embarrassment.
That was good.
Tom was sure he would have no trouble persuading Caed to accept a training regimen to rectify the fault.

He led Caed cautiously through the dim corridor and up the stone stairs to the first sublevel. They had reached the shield and dispelled their disillusionment charms in no time.

“You will not tell them anything, Caed. You will defer to me. Is that understood?”
The boy half frowned at him as if wanting to argue.
He shot him a warning look.
Caed nodded, somewhat sulkily he thought.

Letting them both into the common room he ignored the many faces that looked up questioningly.
Obviously his knights had been asking around after him.
Smiling pleasantly he strolled through the room and down to the dorms, knocking once and entering the last room.

The overwhelming relief on the three faces was unmistakeable. Palmer, Alphard and Darius.
He made a mental note of that. These three had not insisted upon searching for him.

“Where are the others? Go and retrieve them.” He instructed dismissing them all.
They dashed off, leaving him alone with Caed in the dormitory.

He could see the moment that this information penetrated the blonde boy’s mind. Caed looked back at him timidly as if expecting to be set upon at any second.

He stalked closer to him slowly, observing with enjoyment the way his green eyes widened and face paled, even as he held his ground.
“I need to know how much you know about me, Caed..” he said quietly.

The way the green eyes instantly became shuttered and cloudy confirmed the suspicion he’d already held. The boy did know him.
Or of him he corrected again.
Nodding slowly he approached once again.. his voice soft.. as if trying not to frighten a skittish animal.
"I am not seeking to learn of the future.. I merely wish to avoid wasting time by obscuring things you are already quite aware of."

The emerald eyes hardened again and then softened indecisively. He stopped in front of the blonde and brushed his hair aside slightly with a finger. “Caed?” he asked softly.

It was troubling how angry the boy looked now. He seemed in serious internal conflict. Finally the expression resolved itself into an irritated resignation.

"Fine. You want to know what I know about you? I know you grew up in a horrible orphanage and they thought you were mad. You used to steal from the other kids and sometimes things happened.. people got hurt – and the lady who worked there thought it was you. She wanted to have you looked at."

Tom took an involuntary step back. Rage welled up. How the hell...the answer was immediately obvious to him. “Dumbledore. That fucking bastard. I’ll kill him.. I swear it.”

The boy’s eyes took on a dark bitterness for a moment, but it was wiped away almost immediately and he looked up at him again seriously. “You killed your father and your grandparents and framed your uncle. That ring you wear was his.”

Tom hovered again on the point of stepping away from the strangely hard face or attacking the boy. How did he know that?! Nobody knew that. If Dumbledore knew it, Tom certainly wouldn’t be in Hogwarts. But.. But perhaps he would know it in the future. He would have to work on finding out how exactly it all came out and what the effects on him had been.

In sudden suspicion, he narrowed his eyes at the hesitation on the other boy’s face.. he was staring at the onyx ring on Tom’s finger and seemed to want to say more. Chilly terror that had been budding in him blossomed fully. He couldn’t know about that... There was no way.. He didn’t.. But if he did?.. Nobody could know about his horcruxes. If they were known, then they were vulnerable.

He raised his hand, displaying the ring to Caed. “Yes? Say what you are thinking”

The boy shook his head faintly and looked away. “You’re Slytherin’s heir” he said low. “You opened the chamber of secrets. You killed Myrtle – not Hagrid.”

At that Tom did fly at him, grabbing and throwing him roughly at the wall, following and crushing him there, his wand out and sparking furiously. He snarled at the pretty face of the boy who knew enough to ruin him. He knew more than any of his knights.

And then Caed said in a low reluctant voice. “The others aren’t your friends.. they’re your death eaters.”

Then the green eyes shut in horror and shame and Caed whispered, as if unable to lend any more strength to his voice than that “You’re.. you’re Lord Voldemort.”

Tom blinked, He didn’t know what the term death eater was supposed to mean. He must change the name for his knights at some point obviously.. But the last part.. He’d never told anyone the name he’d created for himself.
He had fantasised about disappearing for a while and returning... reinventing himself as a Dark Lord, but he’d never heard the name spoken by any other but himself.

The...aversion.. with which Caed said the name was heady. It sounded like fearful blasphemy; the way a muggle religious zealot might whisper a curse as if their God might hear them if they said it any louder.

He felt himself actually harden slightly at the sheer intoxicating power that Caed gave the name.

“Yes-” he said, quietly abandoning his ministry plans without regret and embracing this new path. “I am.”

The boy seemed to tremble and he turned the blonde head toward him with a finger at Caed’s chin and kissed him gently. When the soft lips didn’t part for him automatically he flicked a light wandless stinging hex at the boy’s side and took advantage of his pained gasp to surge forward, thrusting his tongue into Caed’s mouth and exploring.

He heard the whimper this evoked and, still clutching his wand, wrapped his arms around Caed, pulling him tight against him.

After flinching back and resisting this kiss at first he felt the boy seem to ..melt. The tongue which had been still and unresponsive, moved to touch his own tentatively.

He withdrew slightly, teasing and then allowing the boy to follow until Caed was breathing fast through his nose and tangling and twirling his tongue as their mouths worked against each other. The smaller body shifted against him slightly as if uncomfortable and Tom pushed harder against him, smiling through the kiss when he felt the hard raised line of the blonde’s arousal against his own.

He had been fidgeting in order to try to hide it.

“Mmm” the boy moaned plaintively, his arms coming up around tom’s shoulders as if afraid that Tom might break the kiss.

He had no intention of that as he kept Caed busy while his hand carefully delved into his robes and started to unbutton his trousers.

“Mmmph!!” the urgent whimper came when Caed realised what he was doing and tried to pull away. He nipped at the boy’s tongue in warning, his hand already slipping down into the Caed’s underwear and stroking over his hot silky shaft.

“Mmmmmph!!” Caed struggled in excited panic. Ignoring it Tom gripped him and started to slowly and gently stroke up and down. When he felt Caed’s hips start to follow him helplessly, jerky in the first instance, he did break the kiss, wanting to see the other boy’s expression.

It was delicious. Caed looked so painfully torn between horror and reluctance and overwhelmed bliss.

He adjusted his grip slightly and silently applied a spell to lubricate his hand. The sudden tight slick pressure wrung a low groan from Caed; he bit his lip, closing his lovely eyes and letting his head fall back against the wall; panting and moving his hips against the hand driving his pleasure.

Tom smirked at him. “Do you want me to stop” he asked, teasingly. Caed’s eyes opened wide and fearful, “n-no..ohh.. fuck.. feels so good.. don’t stop!”

Tom leaned in and kissed him lightly, noting the way Caed eagerly parted his lips and seemed disappointed when he drew back again.
He manipulated him expertly to an ecstatic climax, Caed's arms clenching around him as he keened and spasmed.

Afterward, the boy was weak and fairly hung on him as he scourgedified the emission and refastened his trousers.

“I know, Caed-” he said quietly as he cleaned him up “that in your time.. you considered me an enemy.”

He felt the boy stiffen slightly against him and nuzzled gently at the head that had earlier fallen against his shoulder as the boy regained his breath in the afterglow.

“That is no longer the case.. You are no longer my enemy.”

He slid his hands out from inside Caed's robes and embraced him gently.

“You are here now. There is nothing else in this time for you, but me.. and I won’t allow you to leave me now anyway. Do you understand?”

He played at the soft locks of sandy blonde hair at the back of the boy’s neck, waiting.

Eventually he felt Caed nod against him, turning his blonde head slightly to rest on Tom's shoulder and look at him.

His expression was unhappy but resigned.

Tom wasn’t sure he liked that look on his face and frowned slightly.

“Oh don’t look like that.. You like it when I touch you, don’t you? When I show attention to you? You certainly disliked it when I showed attention to Elana.

...Have I not helped you? I will teach you so much more than remedial arithmancy, Caed. And these little kisses and touches are nothing in comparison to the heights of pleasure to which I will bring you. Have you any idea how many would crawl across coals to be in your position?”

He saw a flicker of something like guilty relief pass through Caed’s emerald gaze and then the boy looked away.

Tom sighed and drew back, leaving Caed to support his own weight.

“Come.. They certainly are taking their sweet time. Come and lie down and rest. I can remember what was covered in the next chapter of year six charms. I’ll show you.”

The boy let himself be led docilely to his bed and pulled down to curl against Tom’s side.

He was pleased with how quickly the flighty creature was now taking to his newly revealed role. He suspected he was still in some kind of extended shock. Something in his eyes reminded him of one who accepts everything that is happening because they don’t really believe they’re awake. It didn’t stop him from making the most of his soft accepting pet.

He stroked Caed’s back gently as he demonstrated charm after charm for him, summoning objects as targets when he needed them.

Caed watched everything with avid, tense mien and answered correctly when he questioned him from time to time about what he had been shown.

By the time Abraxas returned with Antonin, Alphard and darius, Caed was demonstrating for the second time the ten charms he had learned.

The boy immediately pulled away from him, embarrassed; inching away as if they were simply both lying on the bed side by side.

Without looking Tom dragged him back with the arm that had been wrapped around him, glancing at his new toy sternly in reproof.
Caed swallowed, meeting his eyes only once before looking down – but he didn’t try to move away again. Satisfied with this, Tom looked up, frowning slightly in question at Alphard, who responded without needing direct instruction.

“Palmer went for Roan. Gyphus is upstairs in the common room and –“

at that moment Gyphus walked in irritated and, seeing Tom, visibly geared up to say something unwise.

Tom was amused as Abraxas, displaying excellent reflexes, silenced him and, grimacing apologetically, dragged him off to the side to remind the most hot-headed of his knights exactly who he was about to gripe at and how sympathetic Tom was likely to be to his irritation.

Antonin cautiously approached his own bed, sitting down on it cross legged facing Tom and waiting; to which Tom smiled approvingly.

Antonin almost never had to be corrected. He surmised that the boy, in light of his family’s ties, was used to being around powerful dark wizards who hexed quickly and demanded constant respect.

Roan and Palmer sidled through the door a couple of silent minutes later. Roan, Tom noticed, looked intensely relieved to see him. Now that they were all there together, it seemed that the atmosphere changed.

There was a certain angry expectant feeling emanating from his knights and this just could not be tolerated.

“Where I have been today is none of your concern.” He said simply, ignoring the infuriated reaction on the faces (except Antonin, who nodded slightly)

“But Tom!” Abraxas started frustratedly “anything could have happened to-“

Tom cut him off “If I had encountered problems with professors or the ministry – there is nothing you could have done for me. And I am certain you do not wish to suggest that I could be easily bested magically by any wizard who happened to be passing and thus might lay robbed and bleeding in a ditch somewhere.

As I said – where I was today was not your concern. Had I wished you to know – I would have notified you.

However!.. that being said – I recognise and value your concern and loyalty. This confusion could have been easily avoided had we met as I had planned last week.”

He absently stroked Caed’s back, turning slightly and gifting the boy with a thin smile.

“It..could not be helped” he muttered.

“We will meet this week. This Wednesday is the new moon.”

He looked around at the nodding, relieved faces.

“After that.. we shall have no further problem locating one another..” he added cryptically, observing peripherally that Caed stiffened in his embrace at the words.

Did Caed perhaps know what he intended to do to them? His knights certainly had no idea what spell he intended to carry out with them..upon them. They took it on faith that whatever it might be, it would be useful.

He assumed that they were also somewhat motivated by the thought of having another opportunity to exercise their uninhibited desires on muggle victims again, knowing that he would pick up the pieces and protect them from any repercussions.

He did not much mind this. Muggles were filthy barbarous animals and deserved everything these
wizards might do to them and more. It was their place in the order of things to serve wizards by any means desired.

He looked down at the green eyed innocent quietly avoiding his eyes and said thoughtfully. “Caed will be joining us.”
He ignored the gasps and suppressed exclamations, paying attention to the blonde at his side who had looked up in horror, his eyes clearly pleading with him.

“Are you sure that is…wise..” Abraxas – apparently the officially designated whipping boy for all at present - questioned quietly.

He turned and sent him a filthy look. “Would I have said it, if I did not?! He will join us. Never question me again, Abraxas”
The Malfoy heir jumped, yelping and clutched at his cheek where a wandless whipping curse had marked a thin red line.

“The next one will be permanently scarring” he warned him softly, looking pointedly at Gyphus.


Tom looked away dismissively and turned to look again at Caed. “What time is it?” he asked the room.

Antonin was the first to respond “ten minutes after seven.” He nodded, his eyes still roving over the lovely form curled against him nervously. He brushed Caed’s hair aside slightly and placed a kiss above his eyebrow, feeling the boy stiffen once more.

“Shh.” He murmured. “They were all aware of your role long before you realised it yourself.”

The green eyes didn’t meet his own. He sighed slightly.
He still had to make his excuses to the professors of the classes he’d missed. It would not do to appear bright and chipper at the Slytherin table if he was going to say that he did not attend because he felt unwell and accidentally slept through them.

“I will not join you for dinner. ...take care of Caed.”
He sat up, aware that Caed’s emeralds shot to him, unsettled and questioning. It was gratifying that even if he was afraid and conflicted about the whole situation, the thought of his new master leaving bothered him nevertheless.

Of course Caed probably did not think of it in those terms, he mused. He perhaps saw Tom as a beau or perhaps a potential lover.
He stroked the blonde’s head again absently and stood.

“Bring Caed to my room after dinner, Abraxas” he tossed, glancing over them all and then stalking out of the room.

He had been tempted to take the little waif with him now- but it would not do for him to be absent at lunch and dinner on a weekday.
No doubt a few of the more perspicacious had entertained questions when the boy missed all his meals on the weekend.

As he slipped into the passage on the third sublevel that would take him to the first floor down the way from his room, he wondered again about the things Caed might know about him. What he had revealed was disturbing.

As soon as he marked the boy he would work to find out everything he knew.
Harry sat up hesitantly, looking around the room at the death eaters.. or apparently not yet death eaters. Abraxas was looking at him with tight lips. The expression on Gyphus face was sympathetic.

Alphard looked openly hostile. “Where was he?!” he demanded.

Harry shook his head faintly. “I.. he said..”

“Leave him alone!”

Harry turned surprised to see Antonin standing close by the bed, placing himself between Alphard and him.

“You know what will happen if you make him tell you anything Tom told him not to say. Just drop it Alph. It does not matter!”

Harry looked up at the Russian gratefully.

“Fuck the well being of Tom’s new toy, Toni – He was missing! For the whole day! Don’t you want to know where he was? You know if he goes down, we’re going with him!” Alphard snarled.

Abraxas wasn’t saying anything but looked like he agreed.

Antonin glanced over his shoulder tensely at Harry and turned back. “Alphard – you need to control your mouth” he growled quietly.

“Yeah.. leave it out Alph” Gyphus spoke up, looking irritated. “He’s got enough worries right now. Obviously Tom wasn’t at the ministry.”

He looked pointedly at Harry who swallowed and started to shake his head before catching himself.

“See. There you go. Your privileged arse is safe. Now shut your hole.”

Harry looked around at the boy’s faces. Was that what he was now?! Tom Riddle’s..toy?!.. The uncomfortable, sick, guilty feeling he’d been feeling since potions.. no – since Sunday morning really – and which had gotten way worse when Tom started kissing him suddenly flared out and bore fruit.

He leapt off the bed and ran to the bathroom, slamming the door and barely making it to the toilet bowl before he emptied the contents of his stomach.

It was just acid. He hadn’t eaten all day.

He knelt and swayed slightly before retching again.

He was Voldemort’s fucking toy.. it was worse than everything that had already happened. What a life.. dead in the present or.. or.. this. He didn’t know which was worse.

God.. the look on Hermione’s face if she knew about this. It was almost a mercy she was dead. If she had lived he would have tried to get back and then eventually he would have had to tell her.

He heard the door open and close again quietly and then a second later Antonin squatted down at his side looking troubled.

“Hey. You ok? Alphard’s an idiot. You can’t take it to heart.”
Harry grabbed a handful of toilet paper and wiped his lip of the sickly sour acid that coated it. He shook his head absently wishing that the other boy would leave.

“look.. if you were that...Tom would not be insisting you come on Wednesday.”

Harry sneered at the tiles in the corner of the room. “No.. he still would. I know what he’s doing. I know what he’s going to do at the meeting.”
He turned and looked at the black eyed boy next to him warningly. “It’s bad stuff. He’s going to mark you all. You’ll be tied to him forever.”

To his surprise the look on Antonin’s face didn’t change much. His eyebrows raised slightly and he nodded slowly, thoughtfully.
“Ah. That is what it is? I was worried for a minute. You look so upset. Marking is not bad. My family carries a mark already. I don’t think it will be a problem for them if I wear two”
The boy flicked open the top two buttons of his shirt and pulled the neck open, dragging it down to expose the top part of a black sigil tattoo over his heart.

“It is the Vadinesh clan” he informed lightly.

Harry, frustrated, shook his head. “No! You don’t understand! This is different. With this mark he can find you and you can find him all the time. And it won’t ever come off! He’ll be able to call you with it. Its dark magic”

Antonin looked thoughtful again for a moment and then looked up and tilted his head
“It sounds useful. It would have been good to be able to find him today.”

Harry groaned “NO!! You don’t fucking get it – He’ll be in control of it. He’ll be the one calling you and finding you – you’ll only be able to find him when he wants you to. Listen to what I’m saying. You’re not listening!”

Antonin gave him a strange look. “He is already in control Caed. I thought you understood that.”
The boy stood smoothly and tilted his head, looking down at him. “Clean yourself up. We go to dinner now.”

Harry watched as he walked out, looking calm as anything. He slid onto his buttocks and leaned up against the wall, with his knees bent against his chest.
This was all wrong. He shouldn’t be here. These boys obviously thought he was naive but they were naive – they would all end up tom’s slaves for the rest of their lives!!
He should tell them everything he knew – but then, if he did that it would get to the ministry. Some of their parents were in the ministry and they were Slytherins. It would come out somehow and then he’d be in Azkaban.

Hermione had said that the ministry had a really strict policy with time travellers – anyone who had the power to fuck up the entire universe, in their eyes needed to be locked away for society’s protection.

Even if it didn’t get back to the ministry – if he told them everything and even one of them took it in and tried to get away from Tom..God.. he didn’t even want to think about what the young Dark Lord would do to him.
Killing Harry here wouldn’t change the time line at all.

He needed to think of something. Maybe he should run away.
He couldn’t stay here and take the bloody dark mark. That wasn’t fucking happening.
His thoughts were punctuated by the bathroom door flying open and Gyphus stomping in. He found himself dragged bodily to his feet and thrown over the much larger boy’s shoulder.

“You’ve had enough self pity now. You’re keeping everyone from dinner. Pull yourself together” he was told as Gyphus carried him out into the dormroom. He saw Palmer and Darius smirking at the side. He was dumped on his feet by his bed and Gyphus pinched his cheek, grinning. “I will carry you all the way up to the great hall if you don’t snap out of it now. Alph didn’t mean it – he’s a colossal tosspot and we’ve all told him where to go so you can cheer the fuck up now, alright?.”

Harry saw Abraxas roll his eyes over Gyphus shoulder. “Really..must you be so vulgar, guy?” Gyphus half turned and smirked at the blonde. “Yes. I really must. Now.. can we go already?”

They went.

Abraxas took Tom’s place and Caed found himself steered subtly to sit on his left side, with Antonin next to him and Gyphus opposite. Alphard, he noted, was all the way at the end on his side after Antonin and Palmer. They would have to lean all the way out to see one another. On the other side in his view, Roan and Darius sat, and behind them, the rest of the school.

Because they were so close to the front of the hall, he couldn’t see up to the teachers, but he’d seen Dumbledore and Slughorn both looking at him when he’d walked in with the others.

Slughorn had looked pleased and greedy – not entirely unlike how he’d used to look at him in the future. Dumbledore had narrowed his eyes disapprovingly again. Clearly he didn’t like that Harry had been so immediately and completely adopted by Tom’s friends.

He ate his roast beef and Yorkshire pudding while the boys around him chatted and laughed. A few times one of them managed to pull him into a conversation. It was strange. It wasn’t the same as the loud, rowdy rambunctiousness of Gryffindor – in fact it was maybe even a little better. He’d often felt overwhelmed by the Gryffindors when he was feeling a bit tired or worried. By the end of the meal he felt a lot better. Not looking at Alphard might have helped. It was funny how he could want to avoid someone who looked so like Sirius.

He stirred his custard aimlessly, staring at nothing.

“Caed. Stop staring at Goyle. You’re provoking him” Abraxas informed him from the side.

Harry blinked and turned slightly, confused. “huh?” He saw Gyphus snort in front of him, amused and then turn around and crane his neck at the other side of the room curiously. Harry looked too.

He saw all the way over the opposite side in hufflepuff a big thickset bloke with no neck was glaring angrily.

“I..wasn’t.. I didn’t even see him.” He said bemused.

Gyphus sniggered. “Well.. you sure picked the right person to not see. Goyle’s the resident bastard of the huffies. Don’t look at him again and maybe he won’t challenge you.”

Harry averted his eyes onto his bowl immediately thinking fuck fuck fuck – what were the gestures
tom told me about?! He said there was a lot more as well and if I didn’t notice them then it would be bad.
Crap.. did he make one already? I wasn’t watching. How is anyone supposed to be completely aware of everyone at all times. I was just daydreaming. God purebloods suck.

The rest of dinner he spent controlling his eyes very closely and making sure not to even glance in the direction of hufflepuff.
Tomorrow, he decided, he’d switch sides.
He didn’t like having his back to the room but it was worse to risk starting some fight accidentally.

He didn’t even bother trying to persuade Abraxas not to take him up to Tom’s room. The look on the aristocratic face told him that it would be ignored or treated with disdain.

On the way up though, he encountered another difficulty.

“I did not tell the others, however I am still curious, Caed – how it was that you knew Tom was not in his room.. that he was not in the school.” Abraxas asked him quietly as they walked through the corridor.
He’d felt a spell go up and realised what was coming but he had no idea what to tell him.

“A lucky guess.” He offered hopefully. The blonde shook his head lightly.

“No...you were quite certain as you spoke. You knew.. you didn’t even bother to check his room. Where did you disappear to? Did Tom show you that passageway?”

Harry bit his lip. “look.. I just had a feeling.. you know? The feelings you get sometimes about stuff? Just like a gut instinct. It doesn’t matter.”

Abraxas stopped dead in the corridor and looked at him wide eyed. “That’s the skill he was talking about. You’re a seer.
It explains why he didn’t want to talk about it.”

Harry’s eyebrows made a break for his hairline. “What?! No. I’m not a seer – I don’t even like divination.
I don’t think he-”

Abraxas smiled, delightedly. “You don’t have to have anything to do with divination to be a seer, Caed. It’s a gift. You can have it without realising it.”
He seemed to think of something and looked troubled suddenly. “You were very upset before dinner. What were you thinking about?”

Harry looked away, suddenly remembering what he’d been thinking about. “oh..yeah.. I ..I forgot...” he looked up ahead to where the mermaid painting was already visible down the corridor.
“Nothing.. I.. it was nothing.”

Abraxas drew his attention back with a hand on his shoulder. “Antonin told everyone what you said about the meeting.
He said you were quite..distressed about it. Is something going to go awry on Wednesday?”

Harry rolled his eyes at the other boy. “How should I know?? I..I just don’t want to do it.. and..
and what Alphard said – it’s true, isn’t it!!.. That’s what I am. You’re bringing me to him right now and if I wanted to go back down to the dorm you wouldn’t let me, would you?! I...
...this is all messed up.. I don’t want to be here. I don’t know where I want to be but I don’t want this.”

He stumbled as Abraxas pushed him suddenly, dragging him into an alcove.
“Look.. Caed..” the other boy said, almost compassionately. “This might be difficult for you to accept. It is painfully obvious that you are somewhat..inexperienced.. however you must find a way to adapt!
After today – after what I can only assume occurred when you found him, in light of the way he was holding you – this is the way things are now. They cannot go back to how they were before. You are perhaps not his...toy.. that was crude of Alphard. But you are His.
I am not certain how much you understand about Tom yet – but understand this. He is powerful; He is more intelligent than all of us put together and he is not particularly tolerant of faults in others.”

Abraxas hand lifted to his own cheek absently where, beneath a glamour, the mark from tom’s hex lay.

“You would do better pursuing his favour than seeking to provoke his wrath, Caed. He is a gifted lover, or so I am given to know by others – It is surely better to be writhing in lust beneath him than writhing in pain at the end of his wand!”

“And do not imagine that you might go to a professor for protection. Tom is...untouchable.. in Hogwarts, whereas your own reputation...suffice to say you do not yet have much credit here and all the credit you have is given to you through your association with Tom. If you try to report anything you will only appear a deluded ungrateful little blaggard and then you will still have to face his anger.”

Harry felt his stomach contracting as the blonde spoke. His dinner was threatening to make another appearance.

“Ok! stop!” he hissed. “I know all that. You don’t need to tell me. I know what he’s capable of.” Probably a lot better than you, he thought
“Just.. just don’t, ok?!” He put a hand on his stomach as it shifted horribly.

The aquiline featured face offered a tiny cold smile. “yes.. You would, I imagine. I suppose that is part of the reason this is so difficult for you. As I recall, last week you wouldn’t even perform dark magic in defense.”

Harry glared. “I’m not going to use dark magic. And I’m not a bloody seer. Stop acting like I am.” He forced himself to ignore the queasy feeling and stepped out of the alcove, marching down the corridor to the mermaid.

“Don’t wink at me. Just open the bloody door” he growled at her. She looked affronted. He could hear Abraxas catch up behind him just before the portrait swung open, displaying Tom smiling devastatingly.

Harry frowned, struggling to compose himself as the deep blue eyes, taking in his state slid questioningly to Abraxas.

Whatever passed between them he didn’t see because at that point he’d had enough of it and pushed past Tom rudely, stomping to the sofa and tossing himself down.
When nothing happened for over a minute of silence he sat up to see the door closed and Tom
nowhere in sight.

Great. Probably outside having Abraxas rat everything out to him’, he thought uncharitably lying down and swinging his boots up onto the armrest.

He was absolutely certain that Tom would not like this and was pleased that it would tick him off.

The door closed quietly a couple of minutes later and he didn’t move, just stared at the cracks on the ceiling with his arms folded. He heard Tom walk around the sofa behind his head and sit down next to him.

“I am painfully aware that you are highly strung, Caed and understand that Alphard upset you earlier – but if you do not remove your boots from my furniture, I am going to demonstrate a particular Surinaste hex you did not learn in class today on them.”

Harry rolled his eyes, still glaring at the ceiling and toed his boots off, letting them drop one after the other onto the floor. He flinched away at the hand that stroked through his hair. It did not stop even so.

“How did you find me? Abraxas seems convinced you are a seer.. that this is the skill I intimated you possessed.
Are you a seer? There was no reason at all for you to think I might be in that clearing.”

Harry growled, brushing at the hand to get it to stop touching him..even if it didn’t exactly feel unpleasant...

“You’re the smart one. I’m sure you can figure it out.”

The hand in his hair tightened and his head was wrenched backward painfully till he was looking at Tom upside down.

“There are limits to the sark I will tolerate from you, Caed.” He was informed coldly.

Harry narrowed his eyes and looked away. “I don’t care”

He was released a second later as Tom sniffed disgustedly.

“I am told that you spoke with Antonin regarding the plans for Wednesday. You ...warned..him. Abraxas said that Antonin did not inform the others what exactly concerned you, only that – in his opinion you were needlessly worried. What exactly did you tell him?! What do you believe I am going to do on Wednesday?!”

Harry pursed his lips and folded his arms tighter. “I’m not your toy” he gritted out. “I’m not..yours.. I’m bloody mine.
It was a mistake. I don’t want this. I don’t want you.”

Tom hissed softly in annoyance. “Alphard is going to pay for that remark. You can be assured of that, Caed. However that is beside the point right now- If you continue to refuse to answer my perfectly legitimate question, I will go and ask Antonin and then I will return and demonstrate my displeasure with you most creatively.”

Harry felt a sinking feeling inside. He would do that too, he was sure of it. And now Tom knew that he knew some of the things he’d done – he thought that the young Voldemort probably wouldn’t hold back on cursing him.

Although... he was holding back now.. His older self would have cruciated him as soon as look at him.

Maybe this Voldemort wasn’t that bad.
Pissing him off just because he was feeling pissed off himself wasn’t the smartest idea anyway.
“Fine!! I told Antonin that you were going to give them all the dark mark. That’s what you’re going to do, isn’t it?!
I’m not taking it! You have to accept it, don’t you?! I’m not accepting it. You’re not marking me!
I’m not a death eater!!”

He shied away from the hand that returned to his head and played distractedly in his hair again.
“and stop petting me. I’m not a cat either – I’m not your pet.”

In the next moment he found himself dragged bodily up till his head and shoulders were laying in Tom’s lap.
He looked up at the stern (albeit still painfully perfect) face and blanched slightly.

“I believe I told you that I would not tolerate any more of this attitude, Caed.” Tom’s voice was icy.

Harry swallowed, thinking ‘right. I’ve done it. I’m definitely in for it now.’ But astoundingly the harsh expression softened and Tom’s hand brushed his cheek gently – soothingly. He looked back at the gorgeous blue eyes warily.
Tom’s voice was reasonable.. measured..caramel when he spoke next.

“Yes.. I am going to use a spell on them that I have only recently created. It will mark them. I wish you to take it also.”

A finger settled on his lips lightly when he moved to respond
“Hush. It will not harm you. If you refuse to take it, I will simply apply a different curse to bind you to me. – one that does not require your consent.”
Tom looked thoughtful, his expression softened to a dark pleasure. “But perhaps you would prefer that.. I can think of one binding spell right now that would cause the desired result. It is rather dark.. black in fact..from a much earlier, and in many ways simpler, time.”

Harry felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up in horror. Whatever that spell was, he really really didn’t want it.
If it provoked this sinister little smile – it was nothing he ever wanted applied to him. Tom looked like he was seriously considering it.

“All right” he offered quickly. Anything. He didn’t care. Just not whatever was going through Tom’s twisted little mind now.
He didn’t want the dark mark but he wanted some kind of bloody medieval binding even less.

Tom summoned three books wandlessly from the bookshelf, not even looking. Harry read that one of them was the seventh year textbook for transfiguration while the other two were advanced texts
in the subject.

Tom sighed slightly and then turned his attention back to him. Harry was relieved that the disturbing smile was gone. Tom’s smile was the regular confident magnetically appealing one as he asserted. “You are going to become very proficient in transfiguration, Caed.”

Later that night, lying in his bed back in the dorm room he was going over everything they’d worked on in his mind.

He could hear the soft breathing of the others (of the death eaters – his mind corrected nastily) and the light snoring of Darius.

Tom was an amazing teacher. If he were teaching all the subjects, Harry was certain he’d have had much better marks all throughout school and they’d have been real. It didn’t seem to bother him if Harry didn’t get something the first time. He just changed the way he was explaining it till the understanding dawned. And...it was different now too. The way he taught him. He had given Harry little kisses when he was pleased with him.. he’d held him while he explained things.

At first Harry had resisted that but in light of the threat of a dark binding curse of some kind and maybe also just a wee bit due to the fact that it felt kind of..nice..he’d just stopped trying to stiffen away from the other boy.

It seemed like Tom Riddle, was – weirdly enough – really affectionate. He liked to be constantly touching him, stroking him, kissing him, holding him. He constantly sought out his gaze. The sheer weight of the future Dark Lord’s attention was heady.

Harry had been adored by thousands of people he didn’t know from adam and he’d had friends who were almost constantly with him.. and Ron and Hermione hugged him too from time to time – but he’d never experienced anything like Tom. It was really difficult to not want him back.

Maybe the way he acted affected him even more than it otherwise would just from knowing who Tom was.

In any case when Tom had said that he had to bring him downstairs now, Harry had actually felt a little disappointed. Tom had known immediately and had tightened his arms around him as he sat leaned up against his chest, gently kissing and nipping his neck in a way that made Harry shiver.

Apparently he wasn’t allowed to stay there except on the weekends – it was better that no one suspect their trysts.

He should have been happy to hear it. But he found he wasn’t really.

He should have been pleased that he could evade Tom’s advances for an entire week.. but he just felt kind of dejected..

It hurt to be something shameful that the bloody Dark Lord would want to hide – even if he really didn’t want anyone knowing about what he and Tom might do either.

And he felt..maybe a little lonely.
But that was obviously just because of.. well.. everything. He’d always had Ron and Hermione ..and Ginny too..and the other Gryffindors.. and now he didn’t have that security, that belonging anymore. That was all it was.

It was nothing new.
Chapter 10

“Mr Piper! Perhaps you could demonstrate for us”

Tom looked at Caed calmly. He knew how to do this. They had worked on the transfiguration of parchment into variably refracting mirror glass last night. Tom was confident that he would manage it again now.

“Stand, if you please” Dumbledore commanded in that ‘such a nice teacher’ voice while his eyes glinted at Caed like shot steel.

The blonde stood, visibly uncomfortable and raised his wand, pointing it at the parchment and whispering “spiegelum varifis.”
Tom held his breath and released it calmly when the parchment obediently shivered and morphed into a curvy silvery surface.

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows slightly and shot a sidelong glance at Tom himself.

“Very good, Mr Piper, you may sit.”

From two seats along he could feel the relief streaming off Caed. He observed in his peripheral vision how Gyphus congratulated him with a look and a nudge.
Dumbledore at the front of the class was rattling on about the spell. For the next hour he worked through the next four charms in the text book – this was unheard of. The man had only ever introduced three charms at the most during a single lesson and then only if they were related and fairly simple. Today he wanted five? – four of which he had not even told them to learn.

He asked Caed for demonstrations of two of the remaining four, which caused even some of the Gryffindors to frown slightly.
Caed however, had worked on those two the previous evening.

Tom had been slightly perturbed when Dumbledore asked for one that he hadn’t thought to work on with the boy but he maintained the polite confident smile and Dumbledore, frowning slightly at him, asked Augusta Longbottom instead.

Astoundingly the snidey little baggage managed it and there was thankfully no call to ask another student.

By the end of the class Tom was feeling quite smug at the irritation at the edges of Dumbledore’s kind smile.
That was.. until the incorrigible bastard asked, as if in passing “Mr Piper.. could you remain please. I would like to speak with you.”
Most of the rest of the class probably missed it as they were packing up their parchments and ink but he saw Caed freeze as if petrified.
He tried “professor.. I have another class.” And tom cursed inwardly. Idiot.

The smile spread on Dumbledore’s face and he answered a fraction of a second too quickly. “Oh.. so you do. I quite forgot. Ah well then, perhaps you will return afterward. I believe that Magical Creatures is your last class today, isn’t it?”

At that, Tom could see the realisation dawn on Caed’s face too. He wasn’t getting out of it. He would have been better to just agree now. This way, Dumbledore would have him later for an indeterminate period of time.
“Yes sir.” He replied dully.

“Then you will come to my office afterward.” Dumbledore informed him in a friendly tone. “Good day Mr Piper, Mr Riddle”

Tom smiled back his best shit eating smile “Good day Sir” as he herded Caed out the door subtly.

In the corridor, while the second years poured into the transfiguration classroom behind them Caed turned to him with a pale worried expression.

“What do I do?!?” he hissed.

Tom shook his head faintly. “There’s nothing that can be done. He wants to speak with you. I can’t get you out of it. What are you most worried will happen?”

The blonde opened his mouth and then shook his head, thinking better of it. “not here” he mumbled.

Intrigued, although he had charms now and Caed magical creatures, he pulled the boy down a corridor to the closest hidden passage, opening it and shoving Caed through.

He cast a couple of witch lights up into the blackness, throwing a fahl light down on them both.

“There. Now.. what in particular are you concerned about – other than the obvious?!”

The blonde seemed to waver in the half light as if thinking better of saying anything. After a moment, Tom stepped forward carefully until he could take him by the shoulders and pull him close, embracing him gently despite the initial resistance of the boy. He sighed and pressed his cheek lightly against Caeds, leaning into him and inhaling his strangely enticing scent.

After they stood like that for a minute or two and he felt Caed’s arms wrap around him, his body melting into the embrace, the boy mumbled “Dumbledore really hates you.”

He nodded slowly, not wanting to disturb the state of mind that made Caed want to speak.

“He.. he spends his entire life trying to destroy you.. or.. or he’s going to at least.”

That information was both intensely exciting – since it was clearly something about his future, which the boy had said he wasn’t going to tell him anything about – and violently infuriating. He swore inwardly again that he would destroy Dumbledore even as his mind made the connection it had missed before.

If Caed knew Dumbledore – he was somehow inexplicably going to fail to kill the bastard for at least fifty years!

Assuming the information Caed had offered about his time of origin was correct.

He shut the emotions raging inside him down as the boy who was nestled against him cuddled closer and started to speak once again.

“He.. asked me to tell him about Grindelwald last time I talked to him – I didn’t though.. and he said I shouldn’t accept your help – he was pissed that I did, obviously.

..i’m.. i’m shit at occlumency. .. if he looks for you in my mind.. There’s things there.. he-he just can’t see any of that. It’ll change everything. He’ll.. find out about you.. i’ve.. got a lot of memories that are about you.

Not just the things I told you.. much more.. if he knows then he might.. he might try to-”

Tom felt the body against his suddenly judder slightly in shock and pull away sharply and then Caed sounded hard and disgusted.. at himself apparently.

“Fuck.. this is wrong..what am I.. what am I doing?! You’re a fucking manipulative snake. Why am I ..FUCK..
I should go to him and tell him everything. Dumbledore’s a bastard but at least he’s not a mass murderer.
I should be helping him.
Tom.. you’re going to.. the things you’re going to do.. I should be trying to stop you.”

Tom struggled to suppress his shock at the revelation that on this new path he was giving up the ministry for, he was going to be a mass murderer apparently - and the automatic urge to lash out at the boy for his traitorous threats.
Instead he pulled him closer again and turned his face, pressing soft kisses to Caed’s cheekbone and then down to his lips.

The boy was stiff and resistant but he patiently kissed and nibbled at him until finally he got the response he was seeking and Caed melted once again against him.
The soft whimper the boy emitted as tom gently teased and suckled at his tongue went a long way toward calming his urge to curse him.
He kept kissing him till Caed was soft and pliable, clinging to him weakly.

When he slowly moved away, returning over and over with chaste little butterfly kisses, Caed was looking back at him almost punchdrunk.

He offered him a smile that he knew soaked witches lingerie at fifty paces. Caed smiled back dreamily.

“You have two options..” he said seriously. “If you cannot occlude.. you can either place every memory you are concerned about in my pensieve and I will obliviate you..or you can offer him something else he wants and distract him from thinking about anything you wish to obscure.”

Caed’s eyes swum back into focus and he furrowed his brow angrily. “I’m not going to tell you everything just so I don’t tell Dumbledore anything! you’re a psychopath! and.. I don’t have enough to distract him. I don’t think i do at least.
I don’t really remember that much about grindelwald.
Dumbledore beat him..he..locked him in Nurmengard. I never read about how it happened.
I..Mione said that Dumbledore and Grindelwald might have been..involved.. when they were younger. She said professor McGonagall said something at..”

Tom could see the moment that Caeds mind caught up with his mouth and he flushed red.

“Damn it. You!”

Tom looked at him in innocent query. “I? I haven’t done anything! I offered you advice. That’s all.”

Caed fumed “You melted my bloody brain is all. Don’t touch me! You..you did that on purpose”

Tom smirked at him and leaned in quickly, capturing his mouth and kissing him hard, pushing him up against the wall even as he held him in place.

“MMMmmmph” Caed managed. He struggled to push tom away even as he responded helplessly. This time when tom pulled back from the kiss, Caed let his head fall back against the wall, breathing hard.

“Stop that..” he muttered weakly. Tom smirked.

“No. and I don’t believe you truly want me to. Are you talking about Minnie McGonagall? Gryffindor fourth year?”

He leaned in, smirking slightly as he felt the hard line of Caeds erection against his thigh.
“I don’t know.. I guess. Yeah.” Caed muttered, surreptitiously moving every so slightly against him. In response he leaned in harder and ground himself against Caed, who groaned and closed his eyes, breathing faster.

“What did she say then? About Dumbledore and Grindelwald.” He prompted lightly.

Caed bit his lip and shook his head slightly. “uhh.. I...don’ remember.. doesn’t matter... could you.. with your hand?..”

Tom moved back slightly, taking the pressure away, smirking as Caed’s hips tried to follow him at first. The boy growled, frustrated “I don’t know. Something!.. he never got over him or something like that. I wasn’t there. Hermione thought he might have loved him. It was just gossip. Professor McGonagall was drunk or something.. upset.. Tom!!..please!!.”

Tom smiled, pleased and rubbed his hand over the hard raised bar in the boy’s pants. “Oh? Where did this happen?”

Caed bucked against his hand. “Ohh god.. more.. harder.. your..your hand.. please....” he whispered.

Flashing a devilish grin, Tom moved close and slid slowly down the panting blonde’s frame, wringing an excited moan from him. “Oh god.. are you going to.. oh fuck..”

The way he looked at him, so excited and overawed, was most satisfying, Tom thought as he unfastened Caed’s robes, parting them as he eased lightly to his knees. Caed whined excitedly when Tom leaned forward and rubbed his face against his cock through the material of his trousers, looking up at him provocatively. “You must remember where... why was McGonagall drunk?” he murmured. “Focus.. this is you we’re trying to help..”

He traced a pointed tongue lightly up the solid raised bar straining at the fabric.

“Oh Merlin..” the boy whispered, shuddering and bucking helplessly. “Please... please Tom.. I.. I need.. Please.. you.. you want me don’t you? Please..touch me.”

Tom tilted his head and looked at him expectantly as his hand trailed up Caed’s thigh feather light. Caed broke again “It was his funeral. McGonagall was in her cups cause she fancied him or something.. Hermione said.. I wasn’t there.. I was.. I was.. Oh please!!! Please!!”

Tom undid Caed’s trousers quickly, delighted at the idea that Dumbledore had bitten the dust, even if so far in the future. He slid his fingers into Caed’s trousers, easing them down slightly so that he could expose the cock he had not yet seen in close detail in the light. It was every bit as lovely as the boy it belonged to, he found. Long and straight and slender..Circumcised and a deepening pink at the head as Caed became more desperate and needy. It wept a pearly tear as he watched.

“How did he die?” he asked distractedly, his eyes fixed on the beautiful organ before him.

“Tom!!” Caed whimpered.
He looked up to him in warning. “How did he die?”

Caed hissed an impatient response. “It was a death eater. Stop teasing me now! Please tom!!”

He grinned widely. He would kill Dumbledore in the end after all, even if by proxy. He trailed his fingertips up the length of the pale shaft, which twitched in response as Caed gasped. Scooping up the tiny bead of precum he brought his finger to his mouth and sucked, looking up at Caed and letting his eyes close. “delicious..” he informed him softly.

He gripped Caed at the very base and leaned in, parting his lips as if to suck, hearing the caught breath above and feeling the cock in his fingers become even harder in response, and then hesitated.. breathing hotly over the head of Caed’s cock and looking up. “Am I alive when all this is going on?” he asked as if an afterthought.

Caed looked about ready to scream or hit something. “Yes. Yes fuck yes alright! You’re alive! You ordered it! He’s dead. He’s headmaster so he’s a fucking portrait forever – goddamn it if you don’t-”

When he ran his tongue up the underside of Caed’s dick, the boy stopped mid threat, jolting as if stung and hissed in shock.

“oh fuck.. thats so.. so..” he heard the knock of Caed’s head against the wall behind him, smirked and sucked up the side of the rather nice cock in his hand, hearing Caed gasp and feeling the boy buck again slightly, his hands gravitating helplessly to tom’s head and hovering hesitant inches away.

When he pulled the cock down and suckled on it lightly, Caed did grab his head, yelping in pleasure and alternately trying to push him away and pull him deeper, indecisively. A flippant wave had the boy’s arms pinned to the wall beside him as he sucked harder, slowly swallowing the length of his cock.

“FUCK!!! Fuck.. Tom.. oh..stop.. its .. i’m going to.. STOP!!” Caed begged desperately, panicked. The boy was so sensitive. Inexperienced. He didn’t want him to spill just yet, he decided and pulled back, returning to licking the long smooth shaft. He lowered his head and nuzzled at Caeds small hairless balls, enjoying the groan of delight that the boy gave when he licked them. The skin over them contracted into tight little wrinkles at the passage of his mouth and he sucked one then the other into his mouth gently.

Above him Caed’s head had fallen to the side slightly in bliss. “so good.. your tongue is so.. so hot..” he mumbled faintly.

Thinking him calm enough Tom returned to his cock, circling his tongue around the head and then up through the slit. Caeds whole body trembled. “Tom..” he whispered and bit his lip.

When he started to suck him again, Caed responded eagerly, pushing his hips forward in counterpoint. It took very little time until the boy was thrusting forward at him roughly, entirely lost in the sensations of his body, groaning and murmuring little curses and endearments.

He felt him tighten in preparation for his climax, and leaned in burying Caed’s cock in his throat, feeling gratified at the loud ecstatic yell of pleasure that the boy made as his entire body tightened and spasmed with the pumping of his cock.
Tom drank him down quickly, sucking him clean and smacking his lips thoughtfully. Sweet. The boy tasted quite sweet, comparatively speaking. He admired once again the wilting member before him. It was a nice size – it didn’t tax his throat overly but neither was it by any means small. Leaning forward he kissed the soft head lightly and put Caed’s cock back into his trousers, standing and fastening him up once again.

The boy leaned on the wall looking blissful, his eyes closed and a faint smile on his lips.

Tom nuzzled at his cheek gently. “Better than my hand?” he asked softly.

“Yes.. “ the reply sounded sleepy. “Amazing..better than anything I’ve ever felt.”

Tom kissed him and sighed. “We had better go. We’ve probably missed the first quarter of class.

Caed wriggled against the wall where his wrists were still bound. “Don’t want to.. want to go to bed.. Isn’t there some way to get around Dumbledore and go to bed instead?!”

Tom kissed his cheekbone thinking to himself. Yes.. there might be.

“No.. I’m afraid not” he said sadly.

His mind drifted from the idea onto Dumbledore again. The man was Grindelwald’s lover, at least possibly.. That was sure to be a sore point for him.. and almost certainly something he wouldn’t wish revealed.

If there were proof..then his problems with Dumbledore might possibly be at an end.

“Come on.. we have to go” he said reluctantly to Caed, dispelling the bindings.

The boy slouched forward, pulling a face. “Can you...will you do that again..later?” he asked softly, hopefully.

Tom smirked. “We’ll see” he offered. “If you perform adequately in your lessons perhaps.”

Caed’s forehead furrowed anxiously. “But..you want me.. right?” he asked worriedly. “Not.. not just because of what i know? You want me too?”

Tom felt a peculiar pang for the boy. So..weak. So desperate. Normally he despised such neediness “I want you, yes. I would still yearn to have you, even without your strange background - now come.”

He leaned disillusioned in the shadow of the pillar watching the students come and go.

Any minute now Caed was going to come up the stairs on his way to Dumbledore’s office. He paid extremely close attention. This would need to be precisely controlled or the result could be worse than he intended. It was more complex because he had to obscure the origin of the hexes which necessitated a hidden position, an acute angle and hexes that did not flare.

He smiled as the beautiful blonde came through the doors unhappily, trudging to the stairs and climbing as if to his death.

Caed had almost reached the top when tom cast the tripping hex and a lesser known weak variant of the stupefy that knocked him out even as it threw him backward slightly.
The result was that he fell - backward, down toward the long expanse of stair.

As he fell limply down through the air toward the unforgiving stone of the stairs, Tom carefully sent the curse that broke his arm and ribs and, no sooner than he’d sent those, cast a gentle levitation charm to control the boy’s movement and prevent him from doing any genuine damage to himself in the fall.

He caught him only bare inches from the stairs, cushioning his fall as he rolled and tumbled down to lie crumpled at the foot of the stairs. Caed would be somewhat bruised, but he would not have suffered a broken neck.

Only after the broken puppet landed, his arm at an unpleasant angle, did he send a temporary blinding hex, unfortunately necessarily producing a black flare of energy as the spell arced through the air.

As the cries of shock from the surrounding students and calls for a teacher rang out, he had already melted away down the corridor, making a large circuit and doubling back to get to his languages classroom. Caed would be fine. He would visit him in the infirmary later. Dumbledore however would be furious. Caed might feasibly be knocked out overnight with so many broken bones and, even if not, the blinding hex would mean that Dumbledore could not use legilimency to access his mind. He had every confidence that Madam Ricktor would prevent any untoward meddling with her patient.

As he slid into his seat and opened his Arabic textbook he caught Abraxas eye, who frowned at him curiously.
“you look pleased. what’s happened?” he whispered.

Tom allowed himself a small secretive smile and turned back to his book.

Awareness burst around him in a flare of pain. “Uuurgh.. wha?” he groaned. He was in a dark room. He was.. he was lying down on a bed. When he opened his eyes, he couldn’t make out a thing, it was so dark.

Was he in the dorm? He could hear..something..

“Mr Piper” Dumbledores voice made him squeak in shock and try to crawl backward, crying out in the sudden agony that shot through his ribs and arm. “It hurts!! Stop!!” he yelped out plaintively.

“I am not doing anything, Mr Piper. You are in the infirmary. You have had a nasty fall it seems.”

Harry tried to stay still but it hurt even so.

“Oh look what you’ve done, Albus! He’s popped the seal on his ribs already. If you’re going to excite him like this you’ll have to leave.”

Harry swallowed. “turn on the light please.” he said, in sudden suspicion that it might already be on.
He was told as much by the matron a second later.

Oh god.. what had happened?! He’d been on his way to Dumbledore, he’d walked up the stairs and then... he’d tripped?.. But that wasn’t right.. he couldn’t remember landing.. he couldn’t even remember falling. He swallowed and investigated the parts of his body that were currently sending frantic bursts of pain signal to his brain.

His eyes felt fine. He couldn’t see anything at all but it didn’t hurt. Gingerly he felt his eyelids.

“Someone has cast a blinding hex on you, Caedmon” Dumbledore informed him, making him shy away again painfully. The voice had come from his right now and far too close.

He pressed his uninjured arm around his ribs blinking away the tears that had sprung to his eyes in pain. “Is it.. am I..”

“No. It is temporary. If it is not reversed, it will wear off eventually.” Dumbledore said sounding relieved.

Harry blinked in the darkness. Dumbledore was probably only relieved because if he regained his sight, he’d be vulnerable to legilimency again... at that thought, the pieces slotted into place in his mind. Tom. Tom had probably done this somehow. It was exactly the kind of thing he’d do. He could see the twisted logic of it clearly.

“When will it wear off?” he asked softly.

Dumbledore sniffed. “Difficult to say. If it doesn’t wear off in a reasonable amount of time, we may be in a spot of bother with your admittance as a student. If you cannot participate in classes, you cannot catch up with the work – and if you cannot do that you will not pass NEWTs – and naturally, if you cannot attain any of your NEWTs, there is no further reason to remain at Hogwarts. I would have to see about finding you other more suitable accommodation for your convalescence. So let us hope that whatever spell was applied, it dissipates fairly quickly. You don’t recall who hexed you, do you?”

Harry shook his head.

Dumbledore asked again, a low prompting tone “and you cannot think of anyone who may have done this?”

Harry rolled his blind eyes. “Well.. lets see – half the school probably. They don’t seem to like me much after your introduction. Thanks for that, professor.”

Dumbledore huffed disdainfully. “You may not believe it – but I sought to help you, Caedmon. The boys you appear to have fallen in with are a bad lot. You would have been better served by finding friends among the halfbloods and mu-ggleborns of the other houses.”

Harry gaped at him disgusted. He admitted baldly that he’d done it to set the purebloods against
him and what the hell was that hesitation on the word muggleborn.
As much as he currently disliked Dumbledore he couldn’t imagine that he would use that..other.. word. “Well.. thanks for your help professor Dumbledore. I’m sorry I didn’t make our meeting. What did you want to talk to me about?”

There was a long pause and then Dumbledore said irritably. “It will wait until you are well again. I’ll let you rest now.”

Harry set his jaw. “No.. it’s fine. No time like the present. I can hear you fine and my mind is clear enough right now. What did you want to meet me about earlier?”

He heard Dumbledore shift slightly and the man was suddenly next to him once again. A spell ripples across his senses. Muffling charm? Probably, he decided.
“How are you finding your classes, Caedmon? Have you been working on charms and potions? You have arithmancy tomorrow.. although I don’t know how you hope to manage in that class if you cannot see. .”

Harry smirked inwardly.
“I’ve been working on charms, Sir. I’m almost halfway through the sixth year textbook already. I think Professor Slughorn was happy with my potions submission and I’m also working very hard on arithmancy. I think I’ll be able to catch up with the class in a few weeks.”

Dumbledore shot back disapprovingly. “Yes.. I heard about your performance in Potions. A project with Tom Riddle, I believe. Professor Slughorn was very excited about your revolutionary improvements to the Amortentia potion. I must caution you against trying anything of that nature again Caedmon. I will not tolerate you utilising knowledge you should not have and putting us all at risk.”

Harry grit his teeth and said tightly – “yes sir.” Dumbledore continued – “And I advised you not to go to Tom for assistance. Caedmon.. I had hoped you would choose to be selfless and not bother a student I informed you was overloaded with work – but since you do not appear to have decided to do the right thing, I will tell you - Tom Riddle is a very troubled boy, despite appearances. I would like you to break your contact with him. What you know is too dangerous to risk around him. Tom can be very persuasive.. he may seem to be helping you but that boy serves only himself. He will convince you to trust him and then he will coax the information he desires out of you. You must stay away from him.”

Harry knew everything he said to be true but it still grated against him. It was so Dumbledore. Why couldn’t he just have said that in the beginning?! Harry had already known it but that wasn’t the point. It was so typical for Dumbledore to dismiss other’s ability to handle relevant information and lie and manipulate instead. He wasn’t as good at it right now as he would be in the future.

Dumbledore’s person aside, the core of what he said was true though. Tom was dangerous.. Dumbledore had no idea how dangerous. He was persuasive and he was trying to get information out of him already – his mind flicked back to what Tom had done in the passage. He swallowed, trying to think of something else because the thought of how Tom had looked with his ..with his lips around .. he was so achingly good looking and.. and his tongue... the thought of it made him harden.
He shifted his thoughts to the safer memory of lying on his bed while Tom taught him charms, sitting at Tom’s couch working on arithmancy problems. He was a good teacher. He was going to do all the terrible things in the future anyway, with or without Harry’s input, so why shouldn’t he let Tom teach him things?! 

Dumbledore had the right idea about how bad Tom was but he didn’t take it far enough. He didn’t realise just how dangerous Tom was already. Tom had already said he wouldn’t let him go now, Dumbledore telling him to break off contact was too little too late.

If Dumbledore himself weren’t such a colossal dick, maybe Harry might have been sorted into Gryffindor again. As it was, he suddenly realised he had no intention of staying away from Tom just because Dumbledore said so.

“Thank you for your concern, Sir. I’ll think about what you’ve said.” There. That was polite enough, he thought.

Dumbledore obviously wasn’t buying it though. “It is not sufficient to think about it Caedmon. I want you to give me your word you will cease associating with Tom Riddle!”

“No!” Harry blurted too quickly. “I won’t give you it. You can’t decide who I will talk to or who I will be friends with, Professor. I said I’d think about it – I’ve thought about it. I’m not walking away from everyone here who has been nice to me just because you say so.”

“That is most unfortunate Caedmon.. You continue to make bad decisions. Why can you not simply see sense?!

Either you will walk away from Riddle and his circle or I will go to the ministry about your presence here and have you removed from this school – and in fact from society as a whole.”

Harry flushed in anger, biting his cheek so hard that his mouth tasted of blood in the effort to keep silent.

“I am not playing in this matter. You will cease consorting with him or you will be moved to Azkaban. Do you understand me Caedmon?”

Harry ground out “I understand..sir” he blinked away the panicked tears that sprang to his eyes, forcing them away; forcing himself to display a blank face. He refused to show Dumbledore his internal disorder.

“And furthermore, Caedmon – I will have all information you possess on Gellert Grindelwald! I have had enough of reasoning with you. Tell me what you know now or tell me from your future residence. It makes little difference.”

Harry turned his head away, ‘looking’ in the direction he assumed Dumbledore not to be in. “I can’t do that sir. You would be ‘using knowledge you should not have and putting us all at risk’ – as you said yourself. I’m pretty sure that Grindelwald is more important to the timeline than minor improvements to the amortentia potion, don’t you think?”

He could feel Dumbledore lean close down to him; He could actually feel the magic whipping around him angrily.
“You are trying my patience, boy. I can have you removed from this school tomorrow. I will have that information!”

Harry turned back, narrowing blind eyes at the man he felt next to him.
“I don’t remember much about it. I told you already. He was defeated. Sometime around the end of the second world war. I don’t know where or how. It wasn’t really covered in school.”
Dumbledore huffed. “You know more than that. Tell me!”

Harry bared his teeth in a snarl back. “Fine. You want to know? It was you that did it. Whatever it was that happened. You defeated him. And then you spent the rest of your life alone and miserable!”

He felt the air around him clear as Dumbledore leapt backward in dismay. “What.. what do you mean?” the older wizard demanded.

Harry glared at the location the voice had come from. “Someone who knew you well said you never got over him. You were alone and miserable from the day of your victory till you died. Happy?! Aren’t you glad you forced me to tell you? That’s all I bloody know about it, I did have other things in my life besides your history, you know – now piss off and let me go to sleep! My arm hurts.”

Dumbledore was nearly upon him a second later. “Curb your repugnant little tongue, boy! You will show respect when you address me.”
Harry cried out in pain as his broken arm was suddenly knocked, breaking the bone crust that was forming.

“You will not speak of this matter with anyone. Anyone, Caedmon. And you will report to me as soon as your eyes have healed. If I see you with Tom Riddle again, I will ensure you are removed from Hogwarts.”

There was a movement near him and then he heard swift steps cross the room and the door opened and closed.

He swiped angrily at his wet eyes, gasping and trying to think. Despair was settling onto him like a cold damp blanket.

The matron returned a minute or two later, finding him there, damp cheeks, clutching at his arm.

“Oh, goodness gracious! What has happened here, Mr Piper?! You must remain calm and still in order to allow the bones to knit back together! If you continue to move about to this extent, I will have to petrify you!”
He apologised numbly and allowed himself to be helped down into bed.

“Try to get some sleep now. When you wake, your bones should be fine..and..I’m sure your eyes will right themselves soon enough. Don’t fret!”
Harry nodded and thanked her, listening to the woman he’d never even seen bustle away again.

He lay in the blackness wondering just what he was supposed to do now. Dumbledore was worse than .well.. no.. he was kind of par for the course really – he corrected himself. But he was way more obvious than he would be in the future and bloody nasty to boot.

His arm ached now.
This was horrible. It seemed like whenever things couldn’t get worse here, they just did anyway.

He wondered whether he would have to do everything that Dumbledore said now. Would he really have him put in Azkaban or kicked out of Hogwarts? Could he?
The feeling of a spell around him made him instantly alert. “Hello?” he tried, nervously. It was the scent he recognised before the sensation. Lips pressed against his and he could smell Tom’s hair. His skin.

He kissed him back needily, raising his good arm to try to pull him close. The arm was captured and pressed down to the bed quickly as Tom broke the kiss.

“I heard everything. When you told him to piss off, I could have kissed you. I’m disillusioned so cover your face a little with the sheets when you speak.”

Harry complied immediately and was shocked at the desperation in his own voice when he asked urgently “What are we going to do?!!”

A soft hand stroked his hair and he sighed.

“Well are not going to do anything, Caed. I will handle it.”

Harry nodded, suddenly confident that he would. Tom was like some force of nature. If he said he could do something it meant he already had a plan for how to do it.

“You pushed me down the stairs” he muttered resentfully. He received a kiss on the forehead for it.

“You expressed the wish to avoid Dumbledore and go to bed, did you not? Well.. you’re in bed and Dumbledore did not view your memories. Look at how dedicated I am to fulfilling your desires.”
Walking down the stairs toward the Dungeons an hour later, Tom’s mind was turning over rapidly. He had an idea how to handle the problem but the details were problematic. He needed information immediately and he was not certain that the information he required was attainable.

Grindelwald had been an interest of his for a while now. He’d had his knights seeking information on the topic for the last couple of years. The approximate whereabouts of Gellert Grindelwald’s castle ‘Nurmengard’ was known to him. For a long time he’d imagined how it might be to meet the great wizard. he’d actually fantasized about joining him. about gaining his recognition. but due to the pathetic weakness of his mother in seducing a muggle – he suspected that Grindelwald would probably not be inclined to accept him, even in light of his founder heritage.

But this was different. He had information which the wizard might want.. it might be possible to persuade him to trade and escape with his skin intact.

He needed to contact him.. more than that.. he needed to meet with him.

In doing so, he had no intention of using a school owl, quite apart from the fact that the poor creatures would be hard pressed to fly to Russia to deliver the message. Antonin would have contacts in Russia who could help him.

How though, was he to leave Hogwarts in the middle of the week?! Damn Dumbledore for forcing his hand in this way. He couldn’t allow him to fabricate a reason to remove Caed from School.. and he knew that the bastard would definitely follow through, provided he felt assured he could still access him in Azkaban. or wherever else Caed might end up if Tom lost sight of him here. The information in Caed’s head was too valuable.

And.. he conceded reluctantly.. the rest of the boy was quite tolerable also.

He passed through the shield into the common room, his eyes falling upon a familiar if not particularly well-liked face. Willowstead was scowling at him from across the room.

Another loose end, he mused. Snipping his fingers and gesturing for the surly little twat to come over to him he continued en route to the dormroom. Willowstead, he noted looked a bit brighter now. Obviously he imagined that Tom was going to put him back into the most prestigious dorm group once more. Silly tosser, Tom sneered inwardly. He had resided in the room the entire year and had not once been invited to join the others at breakfast or in other social gatherings. Did he not realise that he would never be part of them?

He let himself into the dorm without knocking, holding the door open for Willowstead and closing it after him. The others were looking at him with various blank expressions. Abraxas, as he looked at him, raised a perfectly shaped brow a barely perceptible millimetre.

Tom answered it by stunning Willowstead in the back. The black haired boy crumpled heavily to the floor.
“Antonin.. I require your assistance. I would speak with Grindelwald in person by the end of the night. Can this be achieved?”
Antonin’s jaw dropped – A reaction that Tom had never seen from the generally unflappable boy.

“What? I.. why? are you certain? I..don’t know..By the end of the night?! I..I can ask my father. Perhaps?”

Tom frowned slightly “How long will that take?!”

The other boy shook his head slightly. “I have an emergency portkey but ..”

“Very well. We will both go. You will be returning. I shall make you a portkey back myself.”
Antonin nodded, still looking slightly shellshocked.

“Tom... what is going on?!?” Abraxas asked quietly, with real concern in his voice.

“I will tell you later perhaps, when I am successful” he offered back. “How much polyjuice do we have left?”

Darius responded to this – he was generally the one responsible for potions they kept in reserve. “um.. a lot. I just finished a batch last week. There’s enough for.. maybe.. sixty doses?”

Tom nodded thoughtfully, looking from face to face. In the end he looked speculatively between Roan and Abraxas. Roan was unshakeably loyal.. however Abraxas was more ruthless. No.. Whoever he chose would need to be frequently absent from class. He looked to Roan. “You are going to be in charge of ensuring that our Mr Willowstead here is dosed once hourly with polyjuice. He will be taking Caed’s place in the infirmary.

“Caed’s in the infirmary??!” Gyphus started up. “What happened?!”

Tom glanced at him irritably. “I broke his arm and ribs. He’s fine.”

Gyphus frowned angrily, clearly about to launch into a rant. He cut him off. “You’ll see him shortly when Abraxas brings him down from the infirmary. He will play me until I return or the polyjuice runs out, whichever occurs first. I do not know how this little meeting is going to play out so I’d like you to see about purchasing further supplies of polyjuice in case I am detained longer than two days.”

Alphard reached his tolerance. “TOM!! Stop! What is going ON?! Caed is supposed to pretend to be you? How is he supposed to do that for Nimue’s sake?! He doesn’t take any of your subjects. He is an utter mouse.. There is no way anyone would believe it.”

Tom allowed a small smirk. “We shall see. You are right however – he will fail miserably in most of my classes so he must not be forced to demonstrate proficiency in them. Abraxas, Alphard – one of you will remain by his side at all times. You will go with him to the bathroom and you will accompany him on my patrols. You will not leave any opportunity for a student or professor to be alone with him. There are many things to which he will not know the answer in class and in his dealings with other students - you will provide him with those answers. All of you will, in fact – with the exception of Roan. Roan I wish you to focus only on Willowstead. If he returns to his own form then all other efforts will be for nought. Your task is crucial.”

The faces of his knights were, to a man, extremely unsettled about this sudden array of demands. Abraxas stepped forward, his expression silently begging him to see reason “Tom.. Why are you
going to find Grindelwald – this is insanity! Please.. tell us what has happened! Alphard is right –
you can’t expect this little urchin who has known you for all of five minutes to convince anyone..
they’ll catch us using polyjuice! We’ll be expelled Tom! My father –“

“I believe I spoke to you already regarding questioning my plans, Abraxas. If I require it of you – it
is what you will do. If I tell you that Caed will adequately play the part – I will not tolerate your
doubt!!”
He punctuated his statement by severing a large hank of hair from the back of his neck, using a
charm to regrow it.
“Take this now. Prepare polyjuice for Caed. Go, Abraxas! You are wasting my time.”

Walking over to Willowstead he cut a hank of the crumpled boy’s hair also.
“Willowstead cannot be reported missing. Take turns with the polyjuice. You do not have to be
consistent. Simply ensure that he is seen walking through the corridors a few times a day.. I’ll have
the house elves move his things back into this room for the moment. His dorm mates will assume
he has returned.”

Ten tense minutes later found him walking up the stairs once more with Antonin, Roan, Abraxas
and an imperiused Willowstead.
They reached the infirmary without incident and Madam Ricktor did not appear to be around. It
was a small matter to enervate Caed, repair his eyes and instruct him to take the polyjuice to appear
as Willowstead.
He seemed about to argue or question but a harsh look silenced him and he swallowed the foul
greenish liquid with a mild grimace even as Willowstead knocked his own phial back absent
expression.
He had transfigured the two boys clothing and made Willowstead get into bed and then as the three
watched he had blinded him – while the physical damage of the broken bones would be carried
over by polyjuice, certain hexes – like the suppression spell, were not.
The transfer of the imperio from Tom to Roan passed without a hitch and Abraxas, Antonin, Caed
and himself left the pensive boy with the silent quiescent Willowstead.

What are you doing?!! Caed hissed at him as they walked back downstairs.
He looked back, narrowing his eyes and said nothing.
Caed glared but after a long, tense second looked away, cowed.

“One moment” he told the others, pulling the boy into an alcove.
It was horridly distracting that Caed was in Willowstead’s body. Lane Willowstead had nothing
even remotely attractive about him, in Tom’s opinion.
Nevertheless – he needed Caed to behave himself in his absence.

“I am saving you..” he murmured softly into the unfamiliar ear.
Caed-willowstead looked up at him bewildered..
“How?! Why did you put that..this.. boy in my place. Dumbledore will know it’s not me!”
Tom shook his head slightly. “No. He won’t. Roan will take care of it. You will listen to Abraxas and Gyphus in my absence.”

Caed hissed, alarmed “Your Absence?! Where are you going?!!”

He hesitated for a moment about telling him.

“I am going to find information to use against the wizard who is currently blackmailing you.”

The wretched incorrect face blanched, understanding.

“But.. you didn’t.. I don’t know.. nobody ever recorded that you went to meet with him. Someone would have noted that, surely!! What if you’re changing the timeline? Tom.. I.. I don’t want..please don’t go.”

He offered Caed a small smile back. “Don’t worry. I’ve wanted to meet him for a while. This is just a little sooner than I planned. I am confident that it will be fine. If you wish to help me – play your role here well. Let no one suspect.”

Caed-willowstead shook his head hurriedly and whispered, turning his face away from the other’s eyes
“What about Grindelwald’s views on blood?!.. he’ll..he’ll kill you.. and..” The boy trailed off.

Tom had the impression that he was conflicted.

Glancing quickly at the others, who were positioned facing away, monitoring the corridor to either side, he steeled himself and leaned in, catching Caed’s lips.

The kiss was altogether unsatisfactory for him.. Willowstead felt and tasted wrong.. he wished for a moment that he had kissed Caed before he changed –just in case he didn’t have another opportunity.. but that was foolish thinking and, after all, the boy reacted exactly as he would have in his own body. Tom felt him melt slightly.

After he released his lips, Caed-willowstead clung to him needily. He whimpered “Please..don’t go..He’ll.. I ..”

Tom let him go slightly as the boy pulled away angrily. “Fuck.. this is wrong! I’m completely fucking sick for feeling this way ..but I don’t want you to die..”

Tom smiled thinly.
“Trust me, Caed. Do as I ask of you. I will return in a few days at most. Listen. Go with Abraxas. The password to my room is emerald” He kissed him again lightly and turned away, leaving the other boy looking forlorn and confused.

“Abraxas. Take him back downstairs. Antonin!”

He considered the rigidly controlled expression on the sharp lines of the aristocratic blonde’s face and the way he avoided meeting his eye. Abraxas was furious and frustrated. He hoped Caed would rise to the task. If he failed.. there was much on the line for all of them.

Somehow he suspected that if Abraxas had known the purpose of his journey, he might have been less inclined to follow orders. Protecting the foolish little time traveller went against the most severe of ministry regulations. It could ruin them all if this plan failed. He was certain that Abraxas would have counselled him to get rid of Caed if he wasn’t willing to turn him in to the ministry. An accident or perhaps he might run away and never be heard from again.

He met Antonin’s black eyes when the boy sidled past Caed as they exchanged places in the
alcove. The Russian pulled out a necklace with a silver ring strung onto it. “Please hold on” he said reluctantly. “We will port to my family home. We can summon my father there.” Tom nodded and hooked his finger into the ring, opposite Antonin’s.

He did not turn his head again to see the fright in Willowstead-Caed’s eyes or the disapproval hidden behind Abraxas silvery orbs. Antonin spoke a word in Russian – a language he did not master – and the portkey ripped them both away.

“Come on then!” Harry was roughly shoved from the side and turned in shock.

“What?!”

The familiar Malfoy face offered an even more familiar sneer and hissed, apparently to himself “This is ridiculous. What in Merlin’s name is he thinking. Come on Caed. Let’s go.” Caed followed along hurriedly as Abraxas marched them back down to the dormroom silently, looking pissy.

When they arrived, he found Gyphus, Alphard, Darius and Palmer talking low among themselves. They shut up as he came in and Gyphus looked at him slightly guilty.

“He’s gone with Antonin. Willowstead and Roan are in the infirmary.” Abraxas stated, swanning over to his bed and sitting down in a manner that exuded frustrated irritation. “He will be back. Take care with your words Alphard.”

Black rolled his eyes. “He’s gone to fucking Grindelwald. He probably won’t be back.. and we’re supposed to have ..this.. take his place? Think Brax!” Alphard gestured disgustedly.

“What?!” Harry gasped? “I.. thought I was supposed to take Willowstead’s place. I’m.. I can’t take Tom’s place. Maybe for a few hours if he just had to be seen but not.. I can’t..I don’t know enough!!”

Abraxas pursed his lips and Alphard looked at the others as if to say ‘see! I’m right. Even he sees it’.

After a long pensive minute Abraxas said coldly - “Nevertheless. You Will do it, Caed. He has ordered it. For whatever reason, in his ineffable wisdom, he has decided that it is to be you. Someone give him some polyjuice! We had best see exactly how exposed we all are”

Harry stumbled forward and sat down on the bed. “He said he’d be away for a few days. I ..I don’t even know what classes he has. How am I supposed to.. Damn it.. he said.. when he said he might want me to do this I thought it would be something short.. just sit and study as him in the library or something.. just something for an hour sometime maybe and not right away.”

Gyphus sat down next to him. “He already talked about you taking his place sometime? Why?!!”

Harry looked up uncertainly.

“Here. Swallow it.” Abraxas shoved a glass of silvery fluid under his nose. It glittered strangely like metal filings.
He accepted the glass and held it as Abraxas leaned over him slightly with folded arms looking irate.

“Now, Caed! We have far too little time to turn you into the barest imitation of Tom.”

Harry felt a bit insulted at the derisive tone.. and the way it was reflected on Alphards and, to a much more subdued extent even on Darius face.
“Don’t worry. You’ll be fine” Gyphus offered sympathetically beside him, Harry felt a strong arm settle around his shoulders.

He forced himself to sit up and blank his face. It was harder than it had been when he was facing Tom. The irritation on Abraxas face didn’t shift an inch.

Tilting the glass to his mouth he started to drink. It tasted like honeyed pear..but as he swallowed the taste turned sour.. bitter..he forced the rest down.
It was quite a strange uncomfortable incongruence of the sweet on his tongue and the bitter in his throat.

He felt sharp painful bubbling beginning and curled down over his knees into a tight ball, straining to remain quiet in the face of the stabbing pulling grinding sensation as his bones, muscles and skin rearranged themselves.

When he looked up, he noticed that his vision was very slightly clearer.
He realised at the critical looks on the other’s faces (except Gyphus who looked pensive) that he must be wearing an expression that Tom wouldn’t have. He focused himself internally, thinking about Tom Riddle.. thinking about the boy he’d seen in the chamber of secrets.. in the memory fragment.. thinking about everything he’d seen of Tom over the last few days. He wouldn’t sit like this..

Pulling his shoulders back, he straightened his spine, throwing off the softness and emulating that silky catlike grace and composed untouchable poise that Tom exuded.
He adjusted his face carefully, simulating that distant utterly confident expression, curling his lips up slightly into a tiny smirk at the startled looks the others gave him.

“What did I tell you about questioning me, Abraxas?!” he said quietly..threateningly, hiding the glee that surged through him at the momentary panic in Draco’s grandfathers eyes.

“Merlin’s saggy balls!..” Gyphus jumped up and looked at him in disbelief. “Fuck.. that sounded just like him..”

Harry turned his steely amused gaze upon him and rose gracefully.

“I am pleased to hear you think so. ..Alphard?”
Harry raised his brow questioningly.

Alphard looked torn between shock and anger.
“You still won’t be able to pass in his classes. You’ll only need to open your mouth in runes and this daft little game will be through.. and I don’t know what you’re going to do in languages. Do you know any Arabic? Did he teach you anything? This is never going to work!”

Harry narrowed his eyes and reached for his wand, laughing inside at the way Alphard’s eyes widened.
“I will not be answering questions in languages. I have a..cold. When I must answer in other classes – you will give me the correct answer! Find a way, Alphard!”
“I think he can do it” Darius piped up suddenly. Palmer hesitated and then nodded, a strange twisted smile growing on his face. “His voice even sounds the same. Merlin, If he came to breakfast in Tom’s place and read the newspaper, I don’t know whether I’d be able to tell it’s not him.”

Abraxas frowned and stepped closer. “And just how do you propose to deal with Elana?” he asked dubiously.

Harry paused for a moment in surprise, ensuring he kept a mild thoughtful expression on his face. He’d never slept with a girl before. Tom on the other hand seemed to be quite experienced. Elana would know something was wrong. She was beautiful though.. nothing like Hermione but then.. no one ever would be. His stomach clenched. He hadn’t just been thinking about tricking someone into fucking him using polyjuice. It was a horrible thing to do.. like date rape in the muggle world. He wouldn’t do that, obviously. He wasn’t thinking about it or anything.

He responded slowly “I think I may avoid her. I do not want to pass on my cold, after all.”

Abraxas nodded curtly. “that is the only rational course of action. The girl is certainly not mindless enough not to notice that there is something wrong with you when you do not kiss the same way.. when you hold her differently and so forth. I doubt that Tom would wish you to ruin his situation with her.”

Gyphus was suddenly at Harry’s side again, his arm around his shoulders. “Yeah..but she is pretty tasty, don’t you think? You could have a ride or two and confund her a little. I’m sure you know that charm, right? Fuck.. if you don’t, I’ll teach it to you!”

Frowning, Harry shook his head. “no. I won’t be bedding and confunding Elana, Gyphus. The matter is settled”

Gyphus snickered at his side. “God..they’re like fucking twins. He’s the nice harmless twin. Caed.. If you knew the things Tom has done.. the things he enjoys..” he laughed. “But I’ll leave it for a surprise I think. I’m sure you’ll see tomor. Oh bloody Hecate’s frozen tit. We’re not going to miss out again tomorrow are we?”

All the boys except Abraxas groaned in renewed irritation.

It was a tiring two hours before Abraxas took him to walk Tom’s rounds and dropped him off at the mermaid portrait – however it was a very quick two minutes between entering the door and sliding into Tom’s bed. He didn’t bother with pajamas. He didn’t feel like digging through Tom’s wardrobe for some and it didn’t seem like Tom would be coming back tonight. Instead he slipped into bed naked.. slipped in still wearing Tom’s skin.. turned over and buried his face in the pillow which smelled like Tom’s hair. His scent was everywhere. Lying here he remembered how it felt to wake in his arms. Before he’d realised where he was, he’d felt safer and happier than...
it was so hard to make a comparison. That moment of ignorance.. perhaps he had never felt that warm and content.

This situation was crazy. Impossible. How could he enjoy Voldemort’s touch?! Tom was Voldemort – would be Voldemort.. NO.. he was him already. How he’d reacted when Harry had called him by that name. He was already the monster.

It was impossible that Harry should worry about him... or..miss him at all.

He burrowed down in the bed. Ten minutes later the polyjuice wearing off woke him again and he became aware anew of Tom’s scent around him.

A tiny pang of loneliness pricked him as he drifted back to sleep again.
Chapter 12

It was 4.31am.

Tom reinforced his shields yet again and held his position by the bank of the river in the shade of the bridge.

Grindelwald was late – if indeed such a term could ever be applied to the man – Wizards such as Grindelwald did not arrive at appointments late. They were the focus of time – it oriented itself around them and their convenience.

On the other hand, it was possible he was here already and Tom had not detected him. He suppressed a shiver and cast another radial detection spell, a more precise one. It picked up a lot of animal and bacterial life, unsurprisingly.

Perhaps the dark wizard had changed his mind.

Perhaps he had been held up.

Antonin’s father had grilled him for an hour on why he sought a meeting with Grindelwald. When he said he required information and had information that Grindelwald would want in return - Evgene Petrovich Dolohov had tried to persuade him to change his mind and he had offered intermediaries or owl contact. Tom had refused and insisted he arrange a meeting.

“He won’t want anyone else to hear this.”

It had taken a further three hours to contact and negotiate back and forth with the Great Wizard who had at first dismissed Tom entirely and then ordered Antonin’s father (through the two intermediary connections by means of which he’d contacted the dark wizard) to extract the information and provide it.

This Tom had repelled and again insisted that Grindelwald would not want anyone else to possess this information.

And so he was offered a time and place and that was where he found himself now. In the shadows of Belgium in the icy morning light. The stars were still out but the sky was ever so slightly lighter than it had been a half hour ago.

Abruptly he became aware that he could not move.

Panic flared and he waited for whatever Grindelwald – who it seemed was indeed already here and had possibly been observing him for a while if the spells did not pick him up – would do next.

“How dare you demand my personal attention – filthy halfblood” the deep voice spoke softly from behind him with a thick german accent.

“What could you possibly know that I can not learn from any of a hundred other sources? Or do you simply wish the honor of dying by my hand. You will have that for your impudence either way.”

Tom felt sweat prickle on his brow. This wasn’t good. He wondered briefly whether this plan was really a good idea. Yes. He thought through it again. It was the only way.
Dumbledore needed to be muzzled or he would become an imminent existential threat. If he learned what Tom could only imagine upset Caed so greatly about Tom’s own future – Dumbledore would potentially forget his duties, forget the laws, forget even common sense in temporal dealings and try to kill him by any means necessary. That could not be allowed to occur. The only way to prevent it was to get him to stop before he found that information and the only way to do that was to blackmail him with something he considered too dangerous to risk the wizarding world finding out.

That would be his former(?) intimate connection with the dark wizard Grindelwald. His reputation would be tarnished and he would be excluded from all ministry dealings – probably interrogated and possibly imprisoned if he still had any contact at all with the great wizard.

Grindelwald walked silently around to stand before him. He could not move his eyes but he could see the wizard clearly. A tall, broad-shouldered, well dressed man in the prime of life. He had curly blond hair that fell to his shoulders, a strong chin and startling blue eyes. He looked to be only in his late thirties. There was an air of power about him that was visible. Tom felt his skin gooseflesh in response to the raw magic the man exuded.

“Well.. at least you are quite fair for a schlammblut” Grindelwald sneered, looking him over speculatively. He reached a leather gloved hand out and stroked a finger down Tom’s cheek down to his chin where he tilted his face up slightly to catch the light better. It seemed whatever spell he was using only prevented Tom from initiating movement independently. How clever. He wished he knew it even as he shivered internally. He had fully grasped the idea of Grindelwald being in a homosexual relationship with Albus Dumbledore whenever this may have occurred – but the notion that the man could find him attractive had been somewhat far from probable to him, in light of his blood status.

“Speak then. Convince me to spare your worthless little life” Grindelwald growled low. The spell released him and he said quickly, hoping it would be enough. “I have certain information about your upcoming defeat and wish to exchange it for evidence I know you have the power to provide”

Grindelwald’s gloved hand which had been lowered, returned and gripped him around the throat tightly, lifting him slightly. He looked furious. Tom did not move to pull at the hand. He didn’t fight at all. Nor did he avert his gaze for a moment from the sparking blue orbs threatening to kill him where he stood. After a moment the fury was diluted by curiosity. “Explain” the great wizard ground out, lowering him just enough that he could get words out around the clamped pressure.

Tom thought quickly. He didn’t have the detail he needed. But he thought he might have enough to stave off death. He could get more information from the boy...there were other, more effective, methods. He was sure he could find out more.

“I have.. information..about the future. Want.. to.. help..you!” he managed.

Grindelwald dropped him and folded his arms pensively. Tom found he could not move again. He waited anxiously, hoping it would be enough. The blue eyes narrowed. It seemed that a decision had been reached. This was then made obvious
when the great wizard gripped him around the upper arm and disapparated them both.

They reappeared in a dingy torchlit stone room. A dungeon, quite apparently.

Tom felt a knot of fear form in his stomach. This wasn’t the best outcome.

Grindelwald flung him toward the closest wall andgestured. Manacles rose like snakes and snapped around his wrists, tightening and pulling him back.

“Very well. I am..intrigued. What is this madness. Are you a seer? Why do you say I will be defeated?! I hear it often, you know, from those I kill.. They tell me with their last breath that I will be defeated. It grows tiresome very quickly.”

Tom shook his head slightly. “I’m not a seer. I’m not sure I place much faith in divination. My source is more reliable than a drugged witch’s rambling.”

Grindelwald gestured upward, brightening the torches and stepped closer. “Perhaps then, you know of a plan to attack me?”

Tom hesitated and then shook his head. “No.. not a specific one. I’m not connected with the ministry of any country or with any resistance group. I don’t have all the information about the attack right now. I...can get more information soon.. if you give me what I ask.” He grit his teeth as his chains tightened, pulling him off the ground and straining his shoulders painfully. It was obvious that the merest desire of the dark wizard would have his shoulders dislocated.

“Not.. a demand..Sir...” he tried. Breathing was hard in this position. Grindelwald lowered him slightly. He started again.

“It’s not a demand!” he panted “I need what I’ve come....to ask... you for... if I want to...get more information”

Grindelwald stepped closer. “What is the source of this information and what are you wanting from me?”

Tom hesitated and licked his lips nervously. This part could be a bit dangerous, he felt. He watched Grindelwald watch him lick his lips and thought, surprised again, that it was possible that Grindelwald did find him attractive.

“A temporal spell of some kind brought a boy back from the future recently... He has memories of what has already happened in his time...and some of those memories revolve around your defeat.”

This information seemed to throw Grindelwald somewhat. He flicked a finger and the chains loosened enough that Tom could lower his arms. He massaged some life back into his own shoulders, the chains clinking.

“What I need is information and physical evidence to use as blackmail against a wizard you have had dealings with in the past. He wants to take this boy and use him in order to defeat you.”

Grindelwald pursed his thin lips and drew his wand. It was smooth, matt and black. Tom forced himself to remain still. The urge to use his wandless magic and try to free himself was
great – but he doubted that he would be able to apparate from this place even if he could escape this room – which he probably could not. His last chance to flee had probably been on the riverbank. Now he had to ride out whatever might happen.

He reminded himself that this was what he wanted. Grindelwald was dedicating time and attention to him and he hadn’t yet cursed him. He was listening to him...admittedly the wand now levelled at him did not bode well for the continuation of that situation.

“Legilimens!” The dark wizard growled.

Tom didn’t need to slam down his defences – they were perpetually in that state. He had been constantly occluding, even in sleep, for the last few years. It had left him exhausted for weeks after he had started, before he had adapted to the constant strain on his magical energies, but he had little choice. The feeling of Albus Dumbledore poking around in his head was distasteful in the extreme. The older wizard had been irritated when he couldn’t do it any longer by Tom’s second year.

His head pounded as Grindelwald tried to force his way through his occlumentic shields. “Open your mind to me” the man demanded after a minute, never wavering for a moment in his gaze.

Tom grit his teeth and hissed “No.”

At that the dark wizard broke off the attack, as if shocked that Tom would even dare to refuse.

The pain that lanced through him then was terrible; as if a large spike had been rammed through his body between his ribs and was extending burning tendrils upward and downward in his chest cavity. He swayed and leaned back against the wall.

He would not fall to his knees!

The pain increased as if the volume were being turned up and he pushed it away, quieting his mind. For a minute he slipped out of events because the next thing he was aware of was Grindelwald directly in front of him, inches away, looking down at his agony pinched face with mild interest. “You are stubborn” he pronounced. “But you will not resist forever. It was generosity that I would look in your mind rather than drag answers out of you with pain.”

Tom managed, with difficulty, to shake his head. “If you torture me..you will fail. I will not break and you will never know the information I am offering you.” He took a risk and demanded. “Release me!”

The sudden increase in pain actually did bring him to his knees, despite his best efforts. He crashed down, his arms hanging above him in the manacles.

“You are in no position to issue orders, mudblood!” Grindelwald snarled at him.

Tom remained silent, hanging his head, exhausted by the mere effort of drawing breath. He felt, rather than saw, Grindelwald squat next to him and then a hand in his hair wrenched his head back. Cruel fascination was visible on the great wizard’s face.

“Why would you come here? I do not believe a halfblood wretch would seek to aid me if there weren’t something in it for himself.”
Tom blinked hazily as the pain retreated enough for him to speak again. “I want..” he broke off. What did he want? He wanted to learn from Grindelwald. That was clearly not likely. “I want to stop the wizard who wants to defeat you” he managed.

Grindelwald sneered but then paused, faint suspicion on his face. “Who is this wizard?”

Tom shook his head. “Release me..I will tell you what I know. Please..release me..Sir”

After a few seconds in which Grindelwald examined him like a bug under a microscope, his hands were freed from the manacles and he barely managed to stop himself from falling down onto his face. He wavered on his knees. The agony that spread throughout his entire torso now began to ebb slowly, leaving an ache. He rubbed his wrists absently, looking back at the great wizard.

“Allbus Dumbledore” he said softly. “He is the one who defeated you, according to history. He is the one who is seeking to acquire the memories of the boy I mentioned.”

Grindelwald stood in one fluid movement looking disturbed. “That is a lie” he hissed. “Albus swore he would always remain neutral.”

Tom shook his head. “If you have a pensieve.. I will share some memories with you.”

Grindelwald looked down at him and then nodded curtly. “Acceptable. Get up, boy.”

Tom managed to climb to his feet, to his credit, with only the smallest stumble. The imposing man gripped him by the arm again and apparated once more.

The effect of apparating so soon after whatever curse had been inflicted on him previously left him swaying and nearly toppling again. It was only the hand on his arm which did not let go that kept him upright.

“Verzeihung” he breathed, blinking to clear his swimming eyes and take in as much detail as he could of the dark elegant study into which they had just apparated. Grindelwald looked at him in surprise.

“Du sprichst deutsch. Gut so. Ich werde mich also mit der englischen sprache nicht weiter bemuehen.”

Tom shook his head. “Lieber nicht. Mein deutsch ist nicht sehr gut... Ich...ich hoffe ueber die zeit mein deutsch zu verbessern.” He swallowed. “Ich hoffe die zeit zu haben mein deutsch zu verbessern.”

Grindelwald smirked. “If what you say is true.. you shall perhaps have the time”

Tom eye had caught on the long wall of bookshelves. He yearned to go and investigate the titles. He physically ached to know what Grindelwald thought worthy of retaining in his personal library.

“You are a Hogwarts student?” the great wizard asked him, looking at him thoughtfully. “Albus is your professor? You suggested he was no friend of yours. What has he done to send you off to find a wizard who would see your kind all dead?”

Tom turned to him with suppressed anger. “They are not my kind. I do not believe in the mixing of wizarding and muggle blood. My mother was a weak whore who desired a muggle nobleman. She sullied our lineage. I am the last heir of Salazar Slytherin.”
The blonde wizard’s eyebrows rose slightly. “Is that so? Slytherin was a great wizard. Truly great. I expect he would kill you himself if he met you. Can you prove this?”

Tom hesitated and said softly “I am a parselmouth.”
He raised his hand and hissed a soft parsel spell. The chair over by the fireplace began to burn silently with blue flames that did not scorch its leather surface.
Grindelwald had his wand on him in half the blink of an eye and he found he could not move once again.

“What wandless magic in one so young is unheard of!”

Tom stared helplessly at the burning chair, unable to turn his eyes or lower his hand. Grindelwald walked around him, examining him once again. The tall regal wizard passed through his line of vision briefly and was on the other side then.

He sounded speculative when he spoke again. “I have perhaps underestimated you.. If your blood is as you say – and it appears to be so – then you are worthier than a normal schlammblut.
You have had the ability to try to fight me and have not done so – however it is better not to take unnecessary risks.”

Tom heard the man step away and move toward the bookshelves. He was cursing himself internally for displaying his wandless magic. He had thought it might gain him a little respect from the dark wizard.. and indeed it seemed to have done that.. but it had sacrificed a valuable hidden weapon.
Grindelwald was suddenly behind him. He felt the warm proximity of the wizard. Something thin and silvery passed down through his line of vision quickly. A necklace. It was fastened around his neck and then the immobilizing spell dropped once again.

He didn’t even bother to try. The dullness around him and the diffuse cottony feeling in his mind already informed him what had been done. His magic was bound. He was essentially a squib for the time being.
It was futile to even try to remove the necklace. Slytherin had written about this type of binding object at length.
The victim could not affect it. It would be removed by Grindelwald or not at all.

The knot in his stomach that had made itself known earlier returned and grew tenfold. He lowered his eyes frustratedly.

“That was unnecessary.” He said softly. “I would not attack you, Sir. Were I not afflicted with this blood impurity, I would already have sought you out independently. And at present – I am both in a position to be useful to you and in dire need of your assistance. Attacking you would not be in my interests.”

Grindelwald walked around him once again to look down into his face with mild amusement.

“it matters not. I do not like to have wizards point their wands at me and your magic is a continually pointed wand. This is better.”

Tom swallowed as grindelwald reached forward and brushed his hair to the side in an overly familiar manner. He felt the leather brush his forehead lightly.

“Yes, sir.” He said quietly. The man stepped away again.

“The pensieve is over here. I will extract the memories for you.”

He was led over to a recess between two bookcases that held a bust of a wizards head. He thought it might be Godelot but he wasn’t certain. With a wave from Grindelwald the bust shimmered out
of view and became a tall white marble pensieve, looking like an overly ornately carved birdbath inlaid with mother of pearl.

Tom debated how small he should keep the fragments he was willing to show Grindelwald. The first memory of Caed telling him of Dumbledore’s death was rather personal so he went straight for the second memory of observing Dumbledore with Caed. It was somewhat complex as memories went since he’d had to use a lip reading charm to decipher what Dumbledore was saying and he had been positioned across the infirmary half hidden behind a curtain. Nevertheless he focussed upon it as Grindelwald’s wand touched his temple lightly, drawing out the silvery filament and flicking it into the pensieve.

The wizard barely glanced at him to immobilise him again before immersing himself in the memory.

Tom knew what he was seeing. Dumbledore told Caed to stay away from him and Caed refused, then Dumbledore threatened him with Azkaban and he finally agreed. At that point he questioned him on Grindelwald in an overly aggressive threatening manner. Caed hedged and delayed but when pressed with the threat of being interred somewhere at Dumbledore’s will, told him that Grindelwald would be defeated around the end of the second muggle world war and upon being threatened further admitted that Dumbledore had been the one to do it and that he would be alone and miserable afterward.

Tom wasn’t sure about that part, truth be told. He thought Caed might have said it simply to be nasty.

He had let the memory run until Dumbledore had rebroken Caed’s arm in a moment of vindictiveness, demanded Caed visit him as soon as his eyes healed and threatened to remove him from Hogwarts if he was even seen with Tom again. This was not relevant for Grindelwald’s defeat but he thought that it might be useful to demonstrate his own ulterior motive in the matter as well as Dumbledore’s possible imminent possession of the useful boy.

When Grindelwald returned, his white clouded eyes clearing and focussing upon him, he looked somewhat troubled. Dropping the spell he demanded “What else do you know?”

Tom hesitated. “The boy appeared only last Thursday. He is very skittish and determined not to reveal anything about the events to come. I can persuade him to do so.. and I can use..other methods to extract information from him.. but I have been trying to win his trust first. If he is frightened of me, it will be that much more difficult to get him alone and have the chance to find out what he knows. I am tutoring him in several subjects..and..” he paused, wondering whether it was wise to reveal the rest. Grindelwald’s narrowing cobalt blue eyes convinced him.

“..and he is mine. He will be my lover when I return. The boy is very innocent and upset by the thought of possible homosexual tendencies, nevertheless – he is succumbing quickly. He confessed already that he smelled me in the amortentia our potions class brewed. I will make him love me.. he will tell me all his secrets. I require only time... and a means of encouraging Dumbledore to leave us alone...”

Grindelwald’s expression which had become pensive darkened further. “No. you will bring him to me. That solves both problems”

Tom shook his head. “He knows very little about your life. Most of his memories – most of what he is protecting revolves around my future.”
Grindelwald’s eyes flared in anger. “That interests me not at all. You expect me to trust you with such a valuable commodity as this boy? You will stay here and I will order another to retrieve him. I have followers in that—”

Tom interrupted, gambling
“You won’t find him. I hid him before I came to you. If anything – Dumbledore will find him sooner than you will – and neither of us want that.”

“I will force you to reveal his hiding place” the dark wizard snarled furiously “—and then I will have him brought here.”

Tom smiled thinly. “Go ahead and try. I will never break. Not even under veritaserum.. and you will fail to find him before Dumbledore.”
Grindelwald growled in frustration. “What is it you want, boy?! How do you plan on ‘controlling’ Albus. He is very wilful.”

Tom smiled a more generous smile. “He has cultivated a pristine reputation, both in Hogwarts and the British Ministry of Magic. I intend to blackmail him with evidence of your collaboration and former relationship.”

Grindelwald laughed lightly. “Where did you learn of that? I doubt that Albus would have informed you. Do not tell me it becomes a matter of public knowledge in the future. I cannot see either of us ever admitting it publically.

Tom swallowed and conceded that the information had indeed come from Caed. “Show me!” Grindelwald demanded. “I want to know what else he told you!”

“I’d rather not share that memory”, he answered uncomfortably.

Grindelwald’s eyes darkened again and he pressed his wand hard against tom’s temple, leaning over him imposingly.
“I’m sure you would rather I did not break your bones one by one also. Think of the memory!”

Tom sighed and nodded slightly, watching as Grindelwald drew away the slick greyish filament. This time he was not immobilised when the man slipped into the memory. He wondered whether it was intention or whether Grindelwald had simply been so perturbed at the thought of the world finding about Dumbledore and himself that he’d not thought about Tom again after he had the memory. It didn’t really matter which was the case, he reasoned and paced away quickly to the bookshelves, walking along at a clip, taking in as many titles as he could and trying to remember those he did not know.
His mind was irritatingly distracted with the thought of what the great wizard was seeing now: Caed, soft and pliable as he worked him over, seducing the answers out of him.. kissing him..

“Dumbledore really hates you – he spends his entire life trying to destroy you” the boy panting needily, grinding at his thigh..
“he asked me to tell him about Grindelwald – I didn’t though. I’m shit at occlumency.. if he looks for you in my mind – theres things there...you’re a fucking manipulative snake – Dumbledore may be a bastard but at least he’s not a mass murderer...should be trying to stop you...you’re a psychopath”
Rubbing him, kissing him, bringing him back to the point of lust induced daze
“Dumbledore beat him..locked him in Nurmengard... Mione said Dumbledore and Grindelwald might have been involved when they were younger ...he never got over him, Hermione thought he might have loved him.”
Tom dropping to his knees, teasing Caed’s cock..
“It was his funeral. McGonagall was in her cups because she fancied him or something...it was a
death eater...you ordered it”
and finally the bittersweet taste of the innocent pretty wizard’s semen sliding down his throat..

He was thrown backward suddenly and slammed against the bookcase, the leather gloved hand at
his throat once again. Grindelwald had his wand an inch from Tom’s eye and it spat furiously,
giving off black sparks.
“You will kill Albus?” he said in a low dangerous voice.

Well that certainly answered the question of whether they were involved.
Tom forced himself to remain calm and collected, choosing his words carefully.

“It seems that in fifty years or so I give some kind of order to my forces and Albus Dumbledore is
killed.
I would point out however that at this point you are either dead or have been interred in solitary
confinement for more than fifty years and that, as I understand, Dumbledore has been dedicating
his life to destroying me for this entire period. It’s hardly an unprovoked attack upon an innocent
man.”

He held his breath while various emotions flashed through the cobalt eyes of the greatest living
wizard culminating in grim acceptance.
“So he will betray me.” the wizard ground out finally. Tom breathed out as the wand close to his
eye was withdrawn and the hand at his throat loosened.
Grindelwald stared hatefully at the bookshelf beside his head. “He...that boy claimed he loved me.
And still he will do this... Render me powerless and imprison me. I need to know more. I must
have this boy.”
The eyes slid back to Tom’s own, still poisonously narrowed.

Tom thought quickly – he could possibly take Caed and run with him, but to forfeit his NEWTs
was a dangerous risk. He’d be dependent upon Grindelwald. Unable to work anywhere in the
magical world.

“And what of me?” he asked quietly.

Grindelwald seemed surprised. “What of you? You cannot serve in my army with your blood. For
your assistance in delivering the boy I will allow you to live. You may return to Hogwarts.”

Tom felt coldness spread through him as he finally abandoned his dreams regarding joining
Grindelwald.
The wizard would never accept him. It was as Abraxas had counselled him.
He responded icily “No. You cannot have him. He is mine.”
“I will return to Hogwarts and I will extract the information you require and pass it on to you.
If you kill me – the boy will either go to Dumbledore, who will use him to destroy you – or he will
be killed by my servants when I do not return.
He will, however, never fall into your hands.
Give me what I need to destroy Albus Dumbledore in the eyes of the wizarding world and I will
sully this place no longer with my tainted heritage.”

Grindelwald blinked, looking at him more carefully.

“You wished something of me personally?” he asked in a low voice

“What did you think. You show me some small tricks and I forget what you represent?
You are the ruin of one of the great wizarding bloodlines. You are an error that should have been
corrected before birth! Your blood is too defiled to make you a soldier in my army... is that what you want? – You are too despoiled for that.
And yet even after that intriguing display of seduction with the other boy, your lineage is too high, your magical ability too considerable for me with a clear conscience to render you permanently a squib whore.
What shall we do? What do you want in exchange for this boy?"

Tom offered a blank face, compressing and subliming the pain at the cruel dismissal of the man he had idolised for the last three years.
“There is nothing. You cannot have him. He is mine.
I offer you an exchange of information. What he knows about you for what you know about Dumbledore.
Other outcomes are no longer negotiable”

Grindelwald tilted his head thoughtfully. “Do you not fear what I might do to you for speaking to me in this tone? Have you any idea of what I do to officers who look at me in a manner I do not appreciate?”

Tom found he didn’t fear that actually. He didn’t feel much of anything right now. He was certain he would get what he wanted in the end and beyond that he no longer cared.

Grindelwald seemed to half sigh when he didn’t respond at all.
“The boy’s words.. he seemed to suggest that you would be dangerous.. perhaps become a powerful dark wizard after my ..fall.”
Tom allowed himself a very thin smirk and responded quietly after a few seconds “He was terrified of me when he saw me. I’ve never seen so much hate and fear. He thought I would kill him at any moment.”

The older wizard’s gloved hand released his throat finally and slid lightly down his chest before dropping.
“I have been hasty in my judgement.” He offered in a somewhat conciliatory tone.
“Our interests are aligned in this matter. You are clearly magically capable. If you cannot be persuaded to bring the boy here, I would ask how you plan to retrieve the information from him”

Tom narrowed his eyes. “The same method you sought information from me – legilimency. There are also certain potions I might employ to put him in a state in which he might access information he does not know he remembers. Tiny things heard and seen in passing. Do not concern yourself. I will drain the boy of every last pertinent detail.”

“I will require tangible evidence and detailed information in order to bind Dumbledore from disturbing me in this endeavour. It must be damning.”

Grindelwald smirked and shook his head slowly. “It will only make him seek the boy more. Albus reacts perversely to threats. Trust me.. You will need another method. This will not work.”
Tom frowned slightly. Part of the appeal of this plan was that he would have the chance to go to Dumbledore and threaten him clearly. He was looking forward to the look on the man’s face when he told him everything he knew and assured him that this information would go to the correct parties if anything at all were to happen to himself or Caed, or if Tom felt that he was intruding unwelcomely on their relations.

“What do you suggest?” he asked tightly, still not giving up on his plan entirely.

Grindelwald snorted and was silent for a minute, appearing to think. He spoke slowly then, as if musing aloud
“Albus is very difficult. Very paranoid. He will have pensieve memories of everything relevant. If you wish to obliviate him you will have to find copies and probably secondary copies. with something so important he will be thorough. Nor can you kill him...not that I would allow this... as he is alive at some point in fifty years.”

Grindelwald turned and paced off toward the fire. The chair still burned with blue flames before the hearth.

As the wizard neared it Tom said shortly. “Do not touch it.. It is unquenchable by all but the caster and you will not have sufficient time to free me before it engulfs you.”

Grindelwald nodded distractedly and turned away, pacing toward the large polished wood desk at the end of the room. “Perhaps we might merely buy time with Albus until you have the information I require”

Tom glided smoothly over to the man. “Explain?”

A dark smirk was turned upon him. “You could bind the boy to you. There are spells that would connect you both. enable you to find him at all times..to restrict his distance from you when you choose. spells that are cancelled by death – you could rid yourself of him when you have what we need”

Tom nodded thoughtfully. “I have already considered using some form of binding on him, so that i might sense his location. there is a spell I have been developing. but it could be applied in addition to whatever binding spell you’re thinking of. However neither would prevent Dumbledore from legilimising him at Hogwarts or removing us both to Azkaban or elsewhere. what good would that be?”

Grindelwald rolled his eyes.

“I would not have suggested if I had not already considered those possibilities. What if I could give you a charm for the boy to wear which only you could remove. much like that which you are currently wearing. and which protected against legilimency? There is such a thing though few know about it. I do not know if Albus might know. And I might provide you with something that will enable you to contact me. something you cannot remove. Should you be taken with the boy to a hidden place.. I could find and retrieve you.”

The man frowned then in frustration “This is however all very elaborate and unnecessary. If you would only bring the boy to me.”

Tom turned away. “No.”

Grindelwald gripped him by the shoulder and turned him roughly, his expression dark, examining. His gaze slid over Tom’s face, slowly transforming into something like physical appreciation.

“Very well. It is what we will do then. Do not move.” The matt black wand appeared in the large wizard’s hand again and in a silent spell Tom’s robe and shirt dissolved into vapour, dissipating. Alarmed, he nevertheless sought to obey even as his instinct told him to protest.

“What are you doing?” he asked quickly.

Grindelwald’s attention was focused on his body, looking him over with visible interest. “Be silent” he was told absently.

The point of the dark wizard’s wand was moving over him now. Tracing down his neck, over his shoulder, down over his pectoral muscles. He found himself excited despite the concern, nipples hardening even as the most dangerous
Wizard in the world trailed a wand over his skin – a wand which had certainly killed hundreds.. thousands perhaps. The sharpening of his small flat nipples to tight little nubs caused the other man to glance up at him with a faintly amused expression.

“You like that it seems. That is good.. After this you will serve me..even if no one may ever know of it. And in return.. I will protect you against vanishing into Albus’ pocket. Do you accept?”

The wand which had been glancing over his upper abdomen slid to the side, over his ribs

“How will I serve you?” Tom pressed cautiously. It was never wise to accept anything verbally when someone holding a wand asked you. It was better never to verbally accept anything at all unless you had examined it thoroughly.

Grindelwald sneered slightly. “In any way I wish” he offered.

“No.” tom responded immediately. “You will simply wish me to bring Caed here. I will not accept those terms.”

The dark wizard raised a blonde brow. “You are altogether too old for your years boy. Very well. You will serve me..by providing the information I desire”

Tom protested again - “I will provide only information pertaining to Caed’s memories of your possible defeat”

Grindelwald snarled and the wand that was slipping over tom’s low abdomen left a thin white trail of burnt skin, making him hiss in shock. “As you say. You will provide me all available information pertaining to the boy’s-“

“Caed’s” Tom interjected again

“You will provide me all available information pertaining to Caed’s memories of myself, Albus Dumbledore, and anything related to my possible defeat.”

Tom remained silent.

Grindelwald continued “And.. you will serve me..physically.”

“Physically?” Tom enquired with a raised sceptical eyebrow.

“Sexually.” Grindelwald smirked back.

“...And my blood?”

“Is of no relevance” the answer came. “I do not intend to reproduce with you after all.”

Tom thought about it for a moment. “What will you want me to do?” he asked hesitantly.

The older wizard scoffed slightly. “You do not seem a sexual innocent. What do you think I will want?”

This wasn’t sufficient. Tom was of all things, not a naiveling and knew the many deviancies located within the spectrum of sexual activity.

“What will sexual service entail?” he asked clearly, determinedly. The other wizard smirked again.

“As i said earlier.. Stubborn. Sexual service will include penetration, touching, kissing and the kinds of physical intimacies expressed by most lovers.
I will hurt you when I wish, I may use objects and instruments for this purpose.. but there will be no lasting harm. You will not be required to engage in any act with another person, animal or magical entity."

Tom frowned slightly and shook his head. “When will this take place?! How long is this arrangement? Does it end when you have all the information from Caed?”

Grindelwald tilted his head slightly. “You will come to me when I summon you, unless prevented by circumstances beyond your control. You will serve me until I release you.. even after no more information remains to find. In return.. I will protect you from Albus and any force or body he commands to the best of my abilities.
I will not protect you from anything or anyone else. I am not your minder.
If you are arrested by an auror for stealing sugarquills – you may rot, for all I care.”

Tom thought about this proposal carefully. He could still say no. It was..more than he had intended to bargain with.
Could he..fuck..Grindelwald?
Tom was a top..always.. he was dominant. Always. He doubted sincerely that anyone ever topped Grindelwald.
The man had as much as declared that he was going to brutalise and torture him as he saw fit.
There would be nothing he could say or do against it if he accepted this.

He did not flinch as a warm leather gloved finger traced the thin line of his collarbone. “You will accept..” the great wizard said quietly and Tom wasn’t sure whether it was an order or a prediction.

“I want to know everything about Dumbledore and yourself.. and I want evidence – evidence that would be enough to ruin him” Tom demanded. “Your plan is adequate for buying time but I might need leverage with him later.”

Grindelwald frowned and pursed his lips slightly. “You do not need that.” Tom responded immediately “I want it.”

The great wizard narrowed cobalt eyes and grit his teeth. “Fine.. I will tell you whatever you wish to know about my dealings with Albus Dumbledore and I will provide evidence enough to destroy him... Agree now, boy. You are trying my patience!”

Tom smirked inwardly. He had gained what he wanted and far more besides.. and all for something he was already offering and something he might have done anyway if the wizard had flattered him instead of insulting him.
“I want one other thing..” he said softly, steeling himself for possible punishment.
He stepped forward till his body was touching the expensive embroidered silk of the dark wizard’s frock coat, looking down demurely.

“What else do you want, spoiled child? You demand too much. I will enjoy teaching you appropriate manners”

The comment was harsh but Tom noted the way the man’s hands stroked lightly down the outside of his arms.
Yes.. it seemed the most powerful wizard in the world was interested in him, tainted and filthy as he was.
Interested enough to offer a lot..
But this deal had no end date. He still needed more to sign himself away as a sexual slave to a sadistic dark wizard.
“Good. Because I want you to teach me. Allow me to read from your library. Share your knowledge with me.”

“No.” Grindelwald responded instantly. “Take the deal as it stands.. agree.”

Tom raised his eyes in as innocent a manner as he could manage. Submission was not his forte. He thought of how Caed looked at him and tried to imitate it as best he could.

“Teach me.. give me access to your library and I, in turn, will offer you more. I will offer to do whatever I may to prevent you from being killed or interred for the next fifty years. If I cannot prevent it, I will seek to free you. If you share some of your private knowledge and discoveries with me.. I will share some of mine with you. We will both benefit.”

Grindelwald seemed to consider this seriously. Tom held his breath. After a while the man asked sceptically “What knowledge could you possibly offer me that I cannot attain for myself?!?”

Tom allowed himself a slow smirk. He had him. He would get everything he wanted from Grindelwald.

“I am the only person in the world who can access Slytherin’s personal library, his perfectly preserved library, I might add. I am also the only person who can read his texts - which are written in parsel. I could share some of my findings with you.. Perhaps even provide you with translations of his experimental journals, his created spells...” he trailed off and wet his lips intentionally with the tip of his tongue. The other wizard’s gaze, an avarice filled gaze now, followed the movement with interest.

“That is.. tempting” he said in a low voice and Tom was not sure whether he referred to his suggestive lick or the offer of one of his greatest assets. “Isn’t it just” he agreed.

“So.. to sum up.. you will tell me everything pertaining to your interactions with Albus Dumbledore, you will provide me with enough evidence to ruin him in the eyes of the British wizarding world and you will protect myself and Caed from Albus and any force or body he commands. In addition you will teach me as you would an apprentice, you will allow me access to your personal library and you will share with me some of your private magical knowledge and findings. In return - I will provide you with all information retrievable from Caed’s memory pertaining to you, Albus Dumbledore and your possible defeat.. I will work to prevent said defeat.. and should you be defeated and imprisoned – I will do everything in my power to free you..I will share some of my private magical knowledge and findings with you, including parts of the contents of Slytherin’s library and.. I will serve you sexually in the manner agreed upon by us both, until you free me from this part of the agreement.”

Grindelwald nodded slowly, seeming to examine the proposition from all angles. “I..believe.. that may be acceptable.” He said finally.

Tom, relieved, stated quickly – “then I accept too.” A small smile flashed across the other man’s face. “Good. This is where you remain still. I will ..seal.. the deal”

Tom stiffened in surprise as Grindelwald stepped back slightly and then pressed the tip of his black wand to his right breast, above where his heart would be, if it were on the right side of his body.
“Servitum perpetuo” He intoned low.

Tom had the impression that something further was cast silently because it took a few seconds before a searing acidic pain burned into his chest around the point of the wand. Gritting his teeth and hissing in discomfort he looked down to see a seven pointed star branding itself in black ink into his flesh. Unreadably tiny runes glowed around its inner circumference momentarily in orange before fading to leave what looked like a rather ornate star tattoo.

Grindelwald removed his wand and inspected it carefully. All at once Tom felt his heart flutter wildly. He gasped.

The other wizard scrutinised him, smiling darkly. “Just a test. When I summon you, you will feel something like that.. When I demand your presence..”

Tom hissed again in sudden pain – it felt like the mark burned into him anew. He closed his eyes discontentedly realising suddenly that he had made a great mistake. No matter what had been offered – he had allowed himself to be marked, much as he was going to do to his knights. He had learned a great deal about marks while he was modifying existing spells to his purpose. What Grindelwald had placed upon him was almost certainly worse than what he was going to apply to his own servants and it was possible... it was probable in fact, that he’d never get rid of it.

He regretted his agreement already.

As if reading his inner turmoil on his face Grindelwald brushed the back of his knuckle down his flesh over the mark and whispered something that Tom didn’t catch. The mark faded away from view.

“No one will know of your service.” He muttered.

Tom felt the heart flutter again, even though the mark seemed to be gone.

“How do i contact you with it?” he asked, forcibly pushing his internal turmoil aside.

Grindelwald reached down and caught his left hand gently, lifting it, seeming to examine it for a moment and then placed his palm over the place where the tattoo had been.

“Say my name..” he said quietly.

Tom frowned slightly and said “Grindelwald” The other man shook his head.

“Do you know my first name?”
Tom nodded slowly, “...Gellert..” he managed in a much softer voice..

Calling this man by his first name was inappropriately familiar. His mind reminded him sharply that there would soon be very little that was improperly familiar with him. Grindelwald had contractually obliged him to be his damn sex slave.

The great wizard breathed in sharply. “It is operational”
Tom removed his hand from his chest hesitantly.

He stood still as the blond wizard reached up, putting his arms around his neck in an intimate embrace.

This felt..strange. He was no stranger to embraces but he had never imagined Grindelwald would be a shirt lifter before Caed had mentioned it and it had certainly never entered his head that he’d be... there was a tiny click and the man withdrew his arms again pulling the necklace away.

“There. You will find you can not harm me any longer. There is no need to bind you.”
Tom jolted slightly, once again reminded of how like his own mark this one was. His servants would also never be capable of attacking him.

“What time is it?” he asked uneasily. The older man gestured at the wall where a clock showed that it was almost eleven am. “I must return by tonight” he said quickly. “I had planned to mark my servants.”

The dark wizard, putting the necklace away in a hidden drawer in the bookcase turned and frowned slightly.

“Mark them? You? What with?! A rubber stamp?! You need a more convincing excuse to run away, pretty child. It is too late. You have made the deal now. You belong to me.”

Tom struggled not to lose his temper at another disparaging remark. “My body is yours perhaps.. in some ways..
Don’t be patronising. I have developed a magical brand, not unlike the one you just gave me. Protection, loyalty – I will know where they are at all times.. We will be able to contact and apparate to one another’s side. I was going to mark them this evening – the new moon.. I had also promised them some muggles to play with.
They were most looking forward to it.
I was already forced to cancel once because Caed appeared in the clearing I had planned to use.
I would like to return by this evening, if I may. I will return when you summon me.
I have a replacement in my classes as we speak. A convincing double.”

Grindelwald narrowed his eyes and strode over to him. “You are speaking the truth. You have already servants. Perhaps you will later become a dark wizard after all. You give them muggles for what purpose – to play how?”

Tom shrugged. “They like to frighten them.. fuck them.. torture them.. kill them.
I take them from across the country. So many children in orphanages during this muggle war..
They are never found – half of them have never even been reported missing. I assume their minders presume they have run off. So many people.. so many women alone with their husbands and father’s at war.”

Grindelwald tilted his head and looked at him thoughtfully. “If you kill them when you are finished – always-, then I approve. There must never be any accidents.. no more halfbloods, Tom”

Tom started. “I.. you do know my name.”

Grindelwald sniffed “Yes..Tom Marvolo Riddle. I know who you are. Do you think I would meet with some unknown wizard alone in an isolated spot?! You did not deserve a name before. But now you are my property.. I must call you by something.
You have a muggle name, boy. Perhaps I shall call you Marvolo...”

Tom looked away, ashamed. “I loathe my name” he said quietly. “Soon enough no one shall ever call me by it again. They will forget about Tom Riddle entirely and know me only by the name I have chosen for myself.”

Grindelwald snorted, disbelieving. “It is not so easy to escape such taint, boy. Will you kill every wizard you ever met?
That too would lead others to realise who is responsible and the name will follow.”

Tom turned back and glared sharply. “Caed spoke my name... my true name.. The one I have chosen for myself. He said it with such horror and aversion. I had not yet told any other of that name. Now I know that it is the name by which the wizarding world will know me. And they will fear me!”
Grindelwald looked interested, despite himself. “Is that so. What is this name?”

Tom hesitated.. nervous.

To tell this wizard.. of all wizards.. His opinion meant a lot. On the other hand.. to tell Grindelwald first – before any other- was somehow fitting. Deserving.

“Lord Voldemort” he said quietly.

The man frowned slightly..as if puzzled. “Flight of death.. A strange name. Why have you selected it? You fashion yourself a Lord?”

Tom smirked “It is an anagram. But that is irrelevant – it is a name that evokes shadows. It is something that will lend itself well to whispers and rumors. It sounds impressive and dark. They will not know me.. will not see me at first.. they will see only my actions. I will cleanse the wizarding world of mud and filth. I will purge the ministry of muggle sympathizers.”

Grindelwald moved closer and, to Tom’s surprise, ruffled a hand through his hair, smiling faintly. “I think it is good that we met, Marvolo.. Our goals are very similar. It is a shame about your blood but..as you say – soon enough, no one will ever know.”

The hand in his hair tightened then and pulled his head back, forcing him to look up into the much larger wizard’s face uncomfortably. “But.. you will never reproduce. Your disease.. which will soon never again be spoken of..ends with you.”

Tom swallowed and bit his lip. “And... Slytherin’s bloodline?”

Grindelwald’s face darkened. “Will end. Most unfortunate. But you will not contaminate other great wizarding lines with your dirty muggle blood.. neither will you corrode Slytherin’s heritage any further by taking a halfblood or mudblood. It ends with you, boy. Do you understand?”

Tom lowered his eyes. It felt wrong to allow the great founder’s line to end but he understood all too well. He wasn’t entirely sure that Slytherin wouldn’t say the same thing. He had felt a faint sense of disapproval radiating from the library when he first entered it.

If his mother had not died giving birth to him he would have sought her out and sliced her into wriggling little strips for the crime against wizarding kind that she had perpetrated.

“Yes. You are right. I will never allow my seed to take root in a woman’s body.”

Grindelwald smirked. “We can do better than that, Marvolo..” He drew his wand and for the first time Tom felt real blinding terror arc through his body when Grindelwald lowered his wand and pressed the tip of it to Tom’s groin.

“Stop! What are you doing?! Stop!!” he struggled and wrenched at the hand gripping him. “Don’t!! I’ll never.. I’ll make an oath.. don’t do this!”

The older man hesitated. Tom froze, his eyes pleading. “Don’t geld me.. I’ll swear the unbreakable oath. I’ll never allow it to happen. Please!. Please...Master!!.” he tried.

The word sat uncomfortably on his lips but that vicious wand was milimeters from rendering him a eunuch and he couldn’t seem to manage wandless magic to escape the hand that held him like steel. The word Master seemed to please Grindelwald however. His eyes narrowed. “..Very well. the Unbreakable oath. Should you slip, you will die.”
Tom tried to nod but couldn’t move his head. “Yes. Yes!! Thank you!” He babbled gratefully, holding out his hand in eagerness for the dark wizard to take.
The oath was completed in short order, Tom felt it sink into him to the bone like threads of ice.

In the aftermath, still numb with shock at realising how completely vulnerable he was to the man, now that he bore this mark, he let himself be led by the elbow gently to the door and from the room, out into a wide lavish corridor.
Chapter 13

This place reminded him very much of Malfoy Manor... if anything it was less ostentatiously decorated but there was still that luxurious opulence. He felt somehow smaller... more tawdry in the face of it.

It irritated him to feel that way.

He usually ended up cursing Abraxas soon after he had been to the manor – it was a kind of itch he needed to scratch... needed to bring the blond aristocrat down a notch to remind himself that he was superior to his servant in every way.

Grindelwald led them both down a long hall to another great oak door. The handle flashed dimly when he touched it.

A massive oaken bed came into view as the door opened and Tom felt his innards grow cold again as the reality of what he had done returned once more. Slave. That was what he was... he had sold himself to Grindelwald.

“Come...” he was instructed.

He obeyed, stepping further into the room and stopping.

“Calm yourself, Marvolo... I will not hurt you today, I think.” The great wizard offered absently, removing his thick cape and sending it to the wardrobe. His words had the opposite effect on Tom. His concern increased severalfold.

He was not a virgin... the muggle caretaker at the orphanage – Mr Phipps - had seen to that by the time he was five. The man’s attentions had continued until last year, when he had in his anger accidentally tripped him wandlessly and sent him hurtling down the stairs – much as he had Caed...except that by the time the revolting old pederast had landed, his head had been facing the wrong direction.

It had not been satisfying.

The man had escaped too lightly. He should have been tortured for years for the things he had done. Seeing that he had escaped into death had infuriated Tom. He had since worked concentratedly on his wandless magic to bring it under control.

The ministry arrived shortly after the caretaker’s death, alerted by the use of magic, but had found no wand and in the face of Tom’s distraught act concluded that the use was accidental. They then called Dumbledore and Tom had had to explain again to the bastard what had happened.

Dumbledore had looked at him disapprovingly.

“I understand that you were ..upset, Tom and had no control over your magic – So I think that this can be overlooked this once. If it ever happens again – you will be bound against using magic and banished from the wizarding world.”

He had nodded and thanked him; the words burning like acid in his throat.

Dumbledore had known for years what he was sending tom back to – Tom had told him in second
year – asked him..begged him..not to send him back to the orphanage. The files in the infirmary clearly showed the evidence of beatings, rape and starvation over a long period. It was undeniably clear. But Dumbledore had only insisted that he could do nothing and that such trials built character.

Tom heard in his mind the disgusting groans of the muggle as he held him down and split him open.. he remembered the man’s hot sweat dripping down onto his back.

Character.

Dumbledore disapproved of his character now.
He had no right!!

He jumped half a foot into the air when Grindelwald’s hand came down on his bare shoulder unexpectedly, turning his face away and trying to plaster a blank expression back over the horror and aversion he was feeling.
His face was turned back, not unkindly and he took in the fact that the older wizard had, while he was going down the haunted back alleys of memory lane, undressed.
He blinked, disorientated at the naked.. and visibly aroused.. wizard before him.

Grindelwald was large and muscular. It appeared he was as particular about training his physical strength as Tom himself. He had a light dusting of blonde hair on his chest that trailed away down his abdomen down to darker blond pubic hair.
He looked like a man.
Tom had only ever seen one man naked.. his voluntary partners were all still boy’s like himself.

“..sorry.” he managed in a croak, apologising for flinching away at the wizard’s touch.
He sucked in an alarmed breath when Grindelwald stroked his collarbone again lightly

“Be still..” the man instructed him softly.
He felt fingertips feathering down his chest. There was an intelligent calculating expression in the cobalt blue eyes of the older man.
“You have been hurt in the past, It seems.”

Tom hesitated and then nodded once. The man nodded back slowly and then seemed to start. His eyes widened.
“It was not Albus?!” he demanded alarmed.

Tom shook his head. “No. ..he never touched me...
He ...refused when I asked for his help - sent me back to the one who did over and over again”

The corner of the blonde wizard’s mouth twitched downward in disgust. “What has become of him?! He would never have done such a thing when..”
the deep voice trailed off into a sigh as his warm hand stroked over Tom’s neck and down to his chest lightly.

“I will be careful with you today, Marvolo. You will learn I am not the man that you fear in your mind”

Tom couldn’t prevent himself from snarling back “I don’t fear him!!”

The older man nodded, seemingly understanding. His voice was light when he next spoke, stepping nearer.
“Then come.. let me enjoy you.. let yourself enjoy this.”
His arms wound around Tom’s waist and pulled him against his body.

As Grindelwald bent his head down to kiss along his neck and shoulder, Tom tried to relax. It felt good.
It felt very much like what he had felt with Zander, Calyx, Adorno..what he would soon enjoy with Caed.

Grindelwald...Gellert.. sucked gently on a spot below his ear and Tom felt his breath catch unevenly.
“yes..” he whispered.
As if he had offered permission, the man’s hands explored him, tracing the muscles of his back and sides.
He took the opportunity that seemed to be on offer to do the same and could feel large hard muscles bunch on the man’s smooth back. The blond hairs on his chest tickled against tom’s own hairless one.

He didn’t even realise his trousers and underwear had been vanished till he felt skin against his own stiffening member.

Gellert’s hand stroked down his spine and over one cheek of his arse, lingering and cupping him for a moment before moving on.
Tom shifted on his feet slightly, feeling his erection pressing against the thick shaft of the older wizard.

“Come” the low accented voice growled against his ear and he was pulled gently as the man stepped back toward the bed.

“Come..” Gellert instructed him again, a faint smile on his lips. Tom followed hesitantly, realising that he did feel calmer.

At the side of the bed Gellert turned and placed a hand on his shoulder pressing him downward slightly. “On your knees, boy.” he urged quietly.
Understanding, and not particularly bothered by this, Tom let himself drop down lightly, turning his face up to the dark wizard.
It did not escape his notice that Gellert Grindelwald’s cock was thick and quite long. Much more of a mouthful than Caed’s had been..
Calyx had been longer – the boy was practically deformed, his cock was so long – rumours about it had been the reason Tom had sought him out and seduced him. Curiosity.
But Calyx cock was strangely slender where Grindelwald’s was thick and veined. He tried not to think about how it would probably tear him up when the man penetrated him.

“You know what to do..” the german accent reminded him. “Or are you waiting for specific instruction? Take me in your mouth, Marvolo.”

Tom brought his eyes down the older wizard’s body to the cock pointing him in the face. He leaned in and started to bathe it with his tongue slowly to get it nice and wet first.
He could hear Grindelwald breathing deeply above and tilted his face lower, rubbing his nose at the slick shaft as he caught a large heavy ball on his tongue. He felt a hand stroke his hair appreciatively.

“Gut..sehr gut. Lutsch es” The man’s voice was different in his own tongue, tom noticed again.
Deeper still. Smoother.

He obliged and sucked the fat ball into his mouth gently, rolling it on his tongue. There was a soft
groan from above.
He repeated the process with the other ball and returned to licking the large cock slowly, here and there kissing and flickering his tongue over it rapidly.

When Grindelwald urged him impatiently. “Suck, boy!..” Tom obeyed, although he would have preferred to tease a lot longer. He traced the head of the thick cock with the tip of his tongue, flicking at the slit gently and then inserting his tongue.
The hand stroking his head tightened and Grindelwald took his own cock in hand forcing it deep into Tom’s mouth.

“I do not require.. persuading.” The deep voice above growled. “I am not one of your schoolboys. But you do not know. I will teach you what I want from you in time”

Tom raised his eyes up to the man, forcing his throat to relax as Grindelwald pushed deeper still, the hand fisted in his hair relaxing again and stroking him.
He swallowed against the massive organ and started to suck, moving when he felt the hand would allow it and gasping breath through his nose when he could.
It felt a little strange.. off balance. He enjoyed doing this but he was always in control when he sucked another boy’s cock.
it was an act of power – he could make them weak with little effort and they could do nothing.
He never tolerated anyone grabbing at his head or setting the pace themselves, binding them or moving away when they tried.
This was very different.
He could not use magic against the man whose thick cock was burying itself repeatedly, and forcefully, in his throat and he could not move away – he had no doubt that something painful would happen if he tried.
His jaw and throat ached already.

Was this what his partners felt like, he wondered absently. He hated the feeling. Helplessness.
It reminded him of being a child.. being forced..

Grindelwald’s hand stroked gently through his hair again and he heard the man’s breathing speeding.
He cast a wandless slicking spell on his fingers and juggled Grindelwald’s heavy balls in his fingers gently.

Exploratively he traced a finger of his other hand back past the man’s perenium to circle his anus.
The hand in his hair tightened again warningly but it seemed the small touch had pushed him over the edge. Tom felt the rushing feeling in the base of the thick cock against his lips. Half a second later, with a deep groan of release, the man was spilling down his throat and he was forced to swallow frantically over and over in order not to choke.
Grindelwald held him tightly in place and Tom sucked as hard as he was able.
He heard the man panting above him and the hand in his hair loosened again, patting him absently.

He needed to breathe but made himself remain where he was. It was a blessed relief when Grindelwald straightened slightly and pulled his softening shaft from between Tom’s lips.

“Very good..” the voice was rough and sated; He had pleased him it seemed. “Get on the bed..

Tom rose to his feet silently, his eyes lowered. Surely the wizard couldn’t go again so soon. He was..older.. men lost their sexual stamina somewhat as they aged, didn’t they?
He complied with the order, climbing onto the bed and kneeling, resting back on his heels.

He didn’t flinch at the hands that gripped his shoulders gently, urging him down to lie on his back.
but neither did he look at the face of the powerful wizard in whose hands he had irrevocably placed himself.

“Your body is well trained” the compliment was tossed at him lightly. “that is good.. you will be able to endure more than weaker boys.. we will explore the limits of your capabilities together another time.”

Tom shivered and closed his eyes briefly. Why had he come here?! He should have killed Caed in the forbidden forest. All of this was the boy’s fault. This... disgusting.. helplessness he felt now. He’d enslaved himself for the little emerald eyed idiot. Why?!
What difference did it make to him if Dumbledore took the brat and used him against his former lover. The sensation of lips on his thigh forced his eyes open once again. He glanced down at the man whose bright cobalt eyes were trained on him even as he kissed and licked his way up his body. Tom’s wilted cock twitched slightly in response. Grindelwald avoided it and moved up his body. For a moment Tom experienced a surreal sense of unreality as the german genocidal dictator tongued his nipple. His mind was informing him in horror that this was the most powerful dark wizard in the world. That yes.. in fact it appeared he was going to be fucked by Gellert Grindelwald. Furthermore that this was not going to be a one off incident.
Cautiously he raised a hand toward the man’s head, slowly, as the wizard was watching it like a hawk. He touched the silky blonde curls gingerly, running his fingers through them. Grindelwald allowed it, patiently letting him familiarise himself with his new..what.. lover? Master? Owner was more like it.
He realised suddenly that the great wizard probably thought of him as he thought of Caed.
That was unacceptable. He would not be meek. He would not be owned.
Leaning up suddenly and thereby forcing the man kneeling over him up also, he kissed him hard. Half expecting to be punished for it he was only surprised when the older wizard returned his rough affection with an even harder kiss, their tongues battling. Tom learned that his partner was much stronger when he was pushed effortlessly back onto the bed and pinned there as Gellert won control of the kiss too, devouring him in his fervour. He felt a hard cock rub against his own again and moved his hips in counterpoint. The mouth against his was snatched away and buried against his throat, biting and sucking hard, moving down to his chest. He shifted and bucked in response to the painful yet strangely exciting bites that were moving down his body closer and closer to a place he really did not want to be bitten. To that end he stilled, looking uneasily down at the man whose face hovered above his cock.
The cobalt eyes were alive with lust and dark temptation as Gellert leaned low and trailed a burning tongue up the length of his cock, making his breath speed. It felt good. Irrespective his concern that the sharp white teeth that had left purpling crescents down his body might bite down on his length, he found he was quite interested in seeing what it looked like to have the most dangerous Wizard in the world sucking his dick. He met his eyes steadily; an urgent throbbing in his cock in time with his speeding heartbeat.
“Beg.” The German demanded softly.

Disgusted, he turned his head away in anger and mild frustration. Damn him. He wouldn’t. He could take or leave physical pleasure. He did not require it and he certainly was not going to beg for it. He wasn’t one of the needy little boys he himself seduced.

A low laugh irritated him further.
“Stubborn.. Stubborn ..boy.. Marvolo.”

Tom rolled his eyes venomously, ignoring the jibe. “kannst mich am arch lecken” he muttered. The chuckle grew to a rich belly laugh. He felt the man crawl up his body and then his own glowering face was wrenched toward Grindelwald’s smiling one.
“You will learn respect in time, boy. You are lucky – I am enjoying your arrogance at present. It is a refreshing change. So few dare to refuse me anything now. Only Albus.. and now you..”

Tom responded in a low voice “I’m not going to beg.”

The other wizard looked down at him thoughtfully. “I think you will.. in time..But not today, perhaps. That is to be expected. I told you I would not hurt you today. Very well.” He leaned down and teased at Tom’s lips with his own.
Tom responded half heartedly. His lip was bitten sharply, drawing blood.
“You will not pout..” he was informed.

Irritated he gripped the arm bracing over his shoulder and hooked his leg around the larger man’s body, flipping him onto his back with difficulty and straddling him, kissing him forcefully. He felt the man smirk against his mouth and growled in the back of his throat in infuriation. The large strong hands were stroking down his sides as if he were a cat. He had been allowed to take this position. Had the much stronger wizard wished to prevent it, he would have done so.

He pushed himself away furiously sitting straddled on the warm hard body and glaring down at the amused man.
“ I Hate this!” he hissed.

Grindelwald chuckled darkly. “I see that. You hate to be weak. I perhaps more than any other.. understand..that”
The humour faded out of the face and Tom realised that this hard cruel visage was what most of his victims probably saw. “But you see – you are weaker than I” The German accent stated coldly. “And you always will be. See my generosity for what it is and know your place, Boy. Now come here.” The large hands smoothed up tom’s thighs suggestively.

He swallowed the rage that had welled up in him at the words “you are weaker and you always will be” and after a few seconds leaned down again over the.. objectively seen.. very attractive blonde wizard, to press a light, conciliatory kiss to his warm smooth lips. The skin around his jaw was faintly prickling with the beginnings of a pale blonde six o clock shadow.
Kissing him again, more deeply, he felt the strong arms wrap around him and hold him in place.

Giving up on resisting he slid his own arms around the wizard beneath him, alternating deep
sucking kisses with licking and nipping at his neck
He thought he felt the man below him express a sigh of pleasure.
One of his arms moved to hold him, the fingers gripping and massaging the back of his neck lightly while the other hand wandered slowly down toward his ass. Tom stiffened only slightly as he felt fingertips probe at the delicate skin around his anus.
This was nothing like what the muggle had done to him.
The mere fact that he was kissing Grindelwald changed the nature of the sensation.

The fingers retreated for a moment and when they returned they were slick and hot with some kind of oil.
Obviously a wandless spell.

He tensed against the man’s neck as a finger rubbed in circles around his tight little ring.
“Calm.. No pain..” Grindelwald whispered against his ear, trailing his tongue up the outer shell of it.
He shivered.
The circling finger felt strange now.. fainter.. was there something in the oil that was being applied to him? The finger teased just inside the edge of his rosette and there it felt much stronger and intrusive.
The hand was removed entirely and he leaned up looking down at the wizard’s face curiously.

“Some kind of numbing potion??!” he asked, bemused.
He received no answer.. the hand at his neck merely pulled him back down for another long languid kiss.
He was slowly losing himself against the skilled tongue probing his mouth when a strange fizzing sensation in his bowels startled him.
The kiss was broken and he was pulled up higher and further forward to hover on hands and knees.

He could very well imagine what it had been – although he had only used the charm on others thus far. The basic scourgifying colonic.

He felt through the numbness when Grindelwalds fingers returned to his ass. A small nip on his bottom lip again told him that he was too focused on events happening around his lower body and he applied himself to the man he was kissing with more energy, barely flinching when a finger coated in some kind of thick warm jelly penetrated him and moved gently in and out.
The kiss was broken and he was pulled up higher and further forward to hover on hands and knees.

“Stay.” He was told, not unkindly.
The finger in his ass was joined by another which felt uncomfortable.
He felt the scissoring movement stretching him.
“You look like a wild creature in a cage” the handsome wizard below him said suddenly, incongruently, his eyes locked with Tom’s.
“I am pleased it is my cage. Be calm and I will take care not to rip you”

Tom nodded shortly, wincing slightly as a third finger was added.
In response, Grindelwald slowed his movements, twisting his hand slightly and flaring his fingers.

“Shall I stretch you completely? It will feel better for me if I do not..” he trailed off suggestively.
Tom looked away angrily. “It’s fine.” He said tightly, receiving an approving smile.
Damn him. He knew that thrice blasted expression. He used it on Caed. Damn him to Hades for
turning him into the naive boy.

The fingers slipped out of him and the man’s other hand urged him downward. “Down. Lower yourself onto me” was the instruction. He had never done this before. He only topped the boys he chose and the muggle who had raped him had always been above him, behind him, pressing him down, crushing him. This was without comparison.

He reached behind him, finding the extremely slippery shaft of the cock that Grindelwald was holding up for him. It was a small matter to position it.

When he sank down a little it hurt as he was stretched far wider than Grindelwald’s fingers had prepared – but then again it did not hurt as much as he had feared.. or as much as he had remembered.

He dropped down slowly, in little movements until his cheeks rested against skin. It felt very...full.

He looked down at the man who was currently balls deep in his body and found him watching with an excited unreadable expression.

“How does it feel?” he asked thickly.

Tom thought about it for a moment. “..strange.. unfamiliar and familiar..warm. hard. Aching.”

The smile widened and the blonde man looked delighted for a moment. Tom wondered what he had been thinking.

The accented voice drew his attention back as it urged him “Move, Marvolo! Your tight grip is maddening. Move or I will turn you over and take my pleasure!”

Tom didn’t want that. Not at all. He rose up quickly, the slick sliding feeling not unpleasant and then dropped back down slowly and smoothly.

It hurt again but once again it was tolerable. The effect on the wizard beneath him was more dramatic, however.

Grindelwald tipped his head back, closing his eyes, and groaned low.

Tom repeated the movement. It didn’t hurt that much but it didn’t feel good either. He moved up and down a little faster. Perhaps he could bring the man off quickly.

He had never derived pleasure from this act when it had been forced upon him. Perhaps something in him was broken.

He had certainly brought other boys to screaming climax with his cock alone. Grindelwald was well endowed. He thought he should be feeling more than this somehow..<br>
More than a mild ache and a feeling of fullness.

Hopefully the wizard would not want this all the time. He would apply himself to learning how he preferred his cock sucked and perhaps he would want that instead.

“Stop.” The order came thickly.

He hovered, the fat cock halfway in his body.

“I had thought you experienced.. I see on your face that you are not. You do not know how to move.. how to take your pleasure. Get up..”

Tom raised himself hesitantly, feeling the cock slip out of him.
In a second, with a practiced movement of the man, he found himself back on his back.

This too wasn’t..as bad as it might be. The muggle – Phipps – had only fucked him like this once or twice.. he preferred him from behind.
He tried to remain calm as the large wizard knelt between his legs, lifting his knees and hooking them over his arms, raising him up slightly, effortlessly.
He positioned himself without needing hands and drove in, in one smooth movement.

Tom cried out and arched off the bed in shock. It.. it felt good.. he melted back down and looked up in astonishment at the now smirking wizard who tossed his legs upright against his shoulders and reached down to grip him around the hips.

“That.. is how it should feel.” He informed him softly.

He began to move, repeating the same motion and slamming across that place that felt good. Tom could do nothing. Literally, he had tossed his head back and to the side involuntarily and gasped in time with the hard punishing thrusts, his hands fisted in the bedsheet.
He was losing control.. He never lost control.. But he was.
He couldn’t prevent himself from writhing and pushing back against the cock hammering into him.. hammering into..that place..

He heard himself moaning and just couldn’t help it.
When the forceful movements halted for a second and he felt a large hot slick hand grip his cock and stroke him even as the hard muscle in his ass returned to its punishing rhythm, he cried out. Swearing and whining as he moved mindlessly into the hand and back against the cock.
It felt better than anything he had thus far experienced with a male or female partner. His climax was approaching rapidly and he tensed, arching his back.. but then the sensation changed. A sharp tightness around the base of his cock seemed to shift all sensation to that place in his ass and he came hard, screaming and flexing his entire body helplessly.
He hadn’t ejaculated.

He faintly registered the soft laugh of the older wizard who continued to fuck him.

He was barely coming down from the high when the hand on his cock moved again, stroking him quickly and it felt as if he was rocketed back up past his previous climax, about to tip over the edge again..

He whimpered, cursing and moving automatically as his body chased a high his mind wasn’t sure it could handle.

Just as he was about to come again the same thing happened.. a pinching sensation at the base of his cock shifted the pleasure and he came, screaming again, struggling this time blindly in the effort to get away from the cock that continued reaming him brutally and the hand that was again moving teasingly, preventing him from coming down completely from the orgasm.

“No..” he whined. “No more..”

It seemed that Grindelwald did not care a jot for whether he wished to be forced to experience intolerable pleasure again.. He wailed desperately, unable to free himself, even as he felt the wave approaching.

“Beg.” The husky voice commanded low.

He bit his tongue that wanted to pour forth pleas and exhortations, shaking his head firmly.
When he crashed over the edge into ecstatic screaming pleasure this time he felt tears stream from his clenched eyes.
At that, the punishing pace stilled and he felt his limp legs lowered from Grindelwald’s shoulders and tossed around a hot slick waist as the man leaned down over him to hold him close, cock still buried deep in his arse. His skin was scorching and slightly damp with sweat. Tom shivered at the sensation against his own cold sweating skin.

“You are so very stubborn, Marvolo” Grindelwald told him, sounding somehow fond. He responded blindly as hot lips pressed against his mouth and wrapped his arms around the wizard’s neck, damp curls stringing at his nape. As they kissed he felt him start to move again, slowly, lingeringly. Grindelwald’s hard muscular abdomen rubbed tantalisingly against his cock in the process. He mewled helplessly into his mouth, kissing him hungrily.

The other wizard pulled back. He opened his eyes to see him looking at him intensely.

“How does it feel now?” he was asked huskily.

Tom leaned up trying to kiss him again but he pulled back further. Rocking his hips against the movement of the cock inside him, he answered, panting “Good.. it feels like.. like..” he trailed off at the man’s hand delving gently into his hair, teasing and scratching lightly at his scalp. “Ohh..” he whispered, arching his head into the sensation helplessly like a cat.

“Beautiful..” the dark wizard pronounced softly. The kiss that came was tender. Their tongues no longer battling but slipping and winding over each other languidly.

Tom felt his legs unwrapped from around Grindelwald’s waist and lifted, bent against him till he was folded in half, his legs once again against the great wizard’s shoulders and held in that position. He was embraced.. clamped down, even as they continued to kiss.

Like this he couldn’t rock his hips and his cock was hardly touched by the wizard’s movements. He fell to gasping when the man drew back and returned to pounding into his arse roughly. He could hear the damp slapping of their skin. Every third thrust or so hit that sweet spot inside him. It was amazing. He tossed his head from side to side in pleasure. The cock inside him felt even bigger like this.. but somehow that was a good thing.. A very good thing..

“harder..” he moaned and the wizard obliged, pounding into him so hard that it verged on bruising pain.

“yesss..” he hissed. ::So fucking good!::

The movement ceased abruptly and he cracked his eyes looking up to find the point of a wand.

“What did you cast?” the wizard on the end of it demanded aggressively?

“What?” he responded muzzily?

“You spoke in parseltongue. What did you say?

Tom shook his head slightly, trying to clear it. “did I? I ..didn’t realise.. I.. I said.. that feels so fucking good..”

Grindelwald looked at him strangely. “You do not notice you are speaking another language?”

Tom looked up at the white ceiling above, impatiently. “Not always.. if there is a snake present it often happens automatically.. I..don’t usually lose myself
in things. It hasn’t occurred during sex before.”

He couldn’t see it but he somehow felt the man relax again. After a moment he felt him start moving again slowly and moaned low in relief.

Grindelwald spoke again softly. “Say my given name in parseltongue”

Tom opened his hazy eyes, surprised. The raised eyebrow suggested questioning was not desired at this point. He half shrugged. ::Gellert:: he offered.

The man smiled at him, pleased. “You may say that whenever you wish. Speak the word for ‘master’” He demanded.

Tom let his eyes close again, enjoying the slow slick movements within him rubbing at that sensitive place, a tiny smirk creeping onto his face.

“There is no such word in parsel. Serpents do not serve as slaves. The closest equivalent is ‘Lord’ They recognise hierarchy. A serpent ‘Lord’ is the highest among equals. To use the word is a sign of respect which does not diminish the speaker, as the word master does.”

He looked back at the cobalt eyes in which understanding was dawning. ::my Lord:: he hissed.

Grindelwald leaned down over him again. “I see...” he murmured

“Well.. you may use either of those names.. If I hear you say anything else.. I will punish you.”

Tom nodded vaguely, tossing his head when the large wizard above him and inside him raised himself and began to pound his ass hard again. He was manipulated expertly to another two painfully intense anal climaxes before the man allowed him to spill his seed ecstatically all over his own belly, nearly passing out in pleasure.

He wasn’t even aware that Grindelwald had come inside him until he came back to himself somewhat and felt him pulling out slowly.

The mattress rocked as the man threw himself down by Tom’s limp drained body. Turning his head slightly he saw him yawn.

“I suppose you will want to conclude the rest of our business immediately instead of letting me sleep”

Tom turned away again slightly. “I don’t have much time. You said you would allow me to return tonight” He yawned himself, feeling the urge to just roll over and sleep for a while. He was exhausted. He didn’t think he’d been this tired since he’d first started constantly occluding.

A warm hand stroked down his body slowly and, finding the rests of his semen, scourged him silently and continued its progress. He forced his eyes open. They had slipped shut and stayed that way as he had yawned again.

“You are tired... sleep Marvolo. It will wait.”

Tom yawned again and shook his head. “No...”

It took him several seconds to persuade himself that he needed to sit up. Tempus informed him that it was already almost four pm. If the events of tonight were to take place at all he still needed to
acquire the muggles for his debauched little servants.

“A shower?” he asked wearily, looking about the room and finding the door at the other end. The man next to him rolled over like a large powerful animal at rest, his eyes closed, and gestured absently at the door he was looking at.

“Go ahead. I’ll join you in a moment.”

Tom looked down at him and experienced the temptation to just lie down against him for warmth and forget his promise to the others. He looked back at the door.

“Damn it..” he muttered.

After a few reluctant seconds he pushed himself to the edge of the bed and trudged over to the bathroom. He’d been awake for two days, the first of which was psychologically draining and the second physically exhausting what with the torture and the incredible sex. He felt dead on his feet and leaned against the wall as he turned the taps for the shower, setting it at a cool lukewarm. A hot shower now would only put him to sleep, he knew.

When he came back from the bathroom, slightly more awake, a towel slung around his waist, he heard soft snores coming from the naked wizard on the bed.

Hesitating, because it was a risky thing to wake an irritated man against whom he could not defend himself, he climbed onto the bed and knelt next to him. Brushing the blonde curls aside caused him to frown and turn away more. He leaned down slowly and pressed a kiss to the wizard’s cheekbone.

This had the result that the man turned quickly and grabbed him, pulling him down and holding him restrained. “Sleep Marvolo” he muttered.

Tom growled, frustrated because he really...really wanted to do that right now.

“I cannot. Tonight is the new moon. It is the best time to mark them. And if I do not then I will have failed in my word. It must be tonight! I still need to ward and protect the site...I would have done it last night if not for Dumbledore’s drama. I have yet to go muggle hunting and they will need to be caught and brought to the clearing.

I have to bind Caed at some point tonight else, when Dumbledore figures out that he cannot access his mind he will take him. There is too much to do.. I must go.”

The great wizard cracked an eye at him. “Ah the endless energy of youth” he grumbled irritatedly. “verdammt..wenns sein muss... We will conclude our business here quickly and I will bring you to a point you can apparate from. How will you be returning? Must you return to Dolohov’s estate?”

Tom shook his head vaguely. “I’ll make a portkey. It doesn’t matter where you take me.”

Grindelwald glanced at him thoughtfully and then shook his head slightly and swung his legs out of bed, sitting and stretching for a moment and then standing up. “It is a shame about your blood” he muttered, summoning a silk robe. “were it not for that..”

He didn’t finish expressing what might be if not for Tom’s blood, merely shook his head and,
fastening his robe, strode to the door, leaving Tom to follow after.

Back in the study he moved first to the bookcase, pulling out a book and reaching behind, where, apparently another drawer was hidden. Tom watched fascinated. It seemed the drawer was keyed to Grindelwald in some way, to judge by the muted flash it emitted when he touched it. Removing whatever was inside he replaced the book and strode to his desk, transfiguring a quill into a phial and then tossing himself down into the large desk chair.

He looked at Tom pensively, leaning back and narrowing his eyes. “You will not reveal the information that I share with you of Albus. It is to be used solely as a threat.. and then only if the situation worsens to require it.”

Tom raised a sceptical eyebrow. “In my experience – one should never make a threat if not prepared to carry it out.”

Grindelwald grimaced, visibly confirming that he thought the same way, and averted his eyes to the bookshelf. He seemed to debate internally. Tom worried that he might not get the information he wanted after all. The man did seem overly protective of the colossal bastard that was Albus Dumbledore.

“I will not use the information unless he pushes me to do so. If I were to use it, I would lose my leverage against him.”

This did not seem to persuade the wizard to give him what he could only assume was to be a memory, in light of the phial the man had sitting before him. “I will inform you of the situation and seek your advice before revealing the information you give me publically..” he offered, hoping it would be enough.

“..yes.” the man said finally with a leaden voice. “I am being...sentimental. If Albus wishes to betray me, why should I concern myself.. But...I will require further proof of his intent, Marvolo.”

Tom’s lips quirked slightly. No one else had ever called him by that name and it seemed Grindelwald had firmly decided that that was how he was to be referred to. He found it didn’t dislike it on the powerful wizard’s lips.

“I shall provide it” he assured him softly.

“But I will need more than memories. I will need something that cannot be ignored or explained away.”

Grindelwald let his head fall back against the chair and looked up. “You have not given me any of the boy’s memories yet.. why should I give you this?”

Tom snorted. “I have given you enough.. I have signed my own body over to you. I have given you my word..Damn it – you MARKED me!! You are being unreasonable!”

He fell back two steps as a vicious whipping hex sliced across his bare abdomen above the towel. Grindelwald glared at him furiously. He glared right back at him, standing up straight again and wandlessly healing the thin raised mark.

“You will watch your tone with me, boy.” He was warned darkly.

Tom folded his arms and looked off to the side, smirking faintly at the leather armchair still
burning with blue flames. “You are being unreasonable.” He responded quietly. “I came to you voluntarily with information that might prevent your death or imprisonment. You have in return hexed, insulted and enslaved me.”

He heard the creak as the dark wizard rose from his chair and padded over to him and then the larger man embraced him.

Grindelwald conceded in a softer tone than he had last used “You are right perhaps. But I am in the habit of getting what I want with absolute respect at all times. You will not yell and carry on melodramatically.”

A finger on his chin turned him back to face the man, who seemed again to be looking him over like some kind of valuable artifact.

He felt the side of Grindelwald’s thumb brush over his jaw as the wizard sighed softly, his cobalt eyes glinting in the firelight.

“It would be better if you stayed here. I am not finished with you. We could sleep, bathe, eat and then explore one another further. Perhaps I might even allow you to read a book from my library later..”

Tom felt a clench of want tighten inside him. All of those things were very appealing.

He took a deep frustrated breath and released it slowly.

“...I cannot. I have given my word.. I will not break it. ..And it is important that I bind Caedmon as soon as possible.”

The thumb at his jaw stroked him again and the other wizard nodded finally, turning away.

“It is important to keep one’s word. A wizard is known by his actions.”

Tom wasn’t sure but he thought he saw a faint shimmer of avarice in the man’s eyes.

“I will give you what you require. But...You will not allow Albus to know you possess it until after you have provided me with certain proof that he is seeking my downfall. And you will not reveal anything to the wizarding world without my permission.”

Tom nodded, relieved.

Grindelwald turned away, pacing back to his desk, he gestured as he walked and a book levitated itself out of the bookcase and floated over to Tom. He took it as it hovered in mid air and tilted it to read it in the firelight.

‘Disease in the Vine: On the preservation of the noble blood, Gellert Grindelwald and Albus Dumbledore, 1924’

Tom looked up in shock. “This is- “

he broke off and flipped the book open to a random page near the front. His jaw dropped.

‘-that feel desire for muggles are suffering from a form of mental imbalance, likened to that which draws otherwise reasonable witches and wizards to attempt to mate with animals or children. Muggle-lovers are to be pitied in the first order and feared in the second. They are as rabid dogs which gnaw their own paws to the bone; for unlike those who would take animals or children to their beds, muggle lovers internal corruption threatens the well being of all who value their lives in the wizarding world – and indeed the future of our world itself.. They must be segregated from the wizarding world and undergo treatment to cure their malady and, if treatment can reasonably be expected to be unsuccessful – it would be best to euthanize the poor creatures rather than allow them to succumb to their weakness and potentially bring a depraved union to fruition. The products of such would be inevitably unredeemably flawed at birth.-’
Tom snapped the book shut softly, staring down at it with his mind in turmoil.

“Here. That book and this memory is all you will need to destroy Albus. And Marvolo-...If I learn that you have not heeded my wishes.. there will be no words to describe the suffering I will visit upon you”

Tom looked up, disorientated, his mind still on the book sitting heavy in his hands. ‘the products of such would be inevitably unredeemably flawed at birth’. .. was he unredeemably flawed?
Was that why Dumbledore had despised him from the first moment they met? Why he had allowed the muggle to abuse and beat him? Was it why he ignored him wherever possible in class, disregarding his abilities and meeting him with that constant disapproving stare?!

He watched his hand reach out independently to take the phial and was dimly aware of Grindelwald appraising him calculatingly.

“You should read the book. It may help you to understand your place in the wizarding world..”

That snapped him out of it.
“I know my place.” He snarled. “It is at the top, with everyone else serving me.”

The other wizard smirked faintly. “More and more I find your case tragic, Marvolo” he offered heavily.
“Beautiful.. gifted..ambitious.. and yet at core rotten. You were ruined before you even took your first breath.
Even when you take this new name and convince the world of your nobility – you will always be corrupt.
You will always be contaminated with the stink of muggles.”

Tom clutched the book to his chest to disguise the shaking of his hands. He wanted to kill him. He wanted to tear out his heart and feed it to him. He wanted to drown him in the blood of a hundred syphilitic muggles.

“How can I go now, please.” He managed in a polite restrained voice.

Grindelwald got to his feet, a stern expression on his face. “No. You may not.”
He walked around the desk again and approached him. Tom stiffened, expecting to be pulled into the man’s arms again but he walked close by and pulled his shoulder turning him and pointing.
“Fix that first.”

Tom’s will to destroy the man increased a hundredfold. He wanted to practice the foulest curses he could find on him...

::finite:: he hissed at the chair snappily. The blue flames died away.
He did not even have time to blink before the clench of apparition dragged him away.

A moment after that he stood alone, by the bank of a Belgian river in the shade of a bridge, while the sun set in the distance over the snow.
He was wearing a bloody towel.

“Bastard” he cursed in a low voice, wandlessly transfiguring the towel into a pair of trousers. It would do.
He shrunk the phial and book and pocketed them.
He would retrieve his wand from the well in the small town ten miles from this bridge and then he would portkey to London to hunt the blasted muggles.

Sleep? Who needed sleep?!

His stomach growled in complaint. It didn’t matter. None of it mattered very much.

The words of some muggle poet played themselves in his mind incongruously. ‘These woods are lovely, dark and deep; but i have promises to keep; and miles to go before I sleep.’

Was he corrupt at core, he wondered. He remembered muggle poetry.

Was he the ruin of the wizarding world?

The things in Grindelwald’s book were true.. he knew them to be true. Why then did it anger him so unbearably to hear them?

He was not corrupt. He was Lord Voldemort. He would be the greatest wizard in the world.

Grindelwald would kiss the hem of his robes. He would beg.

He disapparated, anger and purpose fuelling his sleep deprived body.
“No.” he said dismissively. Elana pouted prettily.

“But you promised you’d spend more time with me. You said you’d visit me this week. It’s Wednesday already.
Are you avoiding me?
I can make you feel good and I know you can make me feel good – you always make me feel so... good...
Please tommy! We could go to your room and-”

Harry looked at Abraxas in frustration. The blonde was standing against the opposite wall of the corridor ostensibly minding his own business.
His hair was unnaturally glossy and straight today and he was running his fingers through the ends of it over his shoulder absently while he appeared to be extremely interested in the absolutely nothing that was happening at the end of the completely empty corridor.

“I have other plans tonight Elana. Plans I can not cancel.”

The blonde stamped her foot in temper.

“Tom Riddle! I’m tired of chasing after you all the time.
Either find time for me or its off between us. I am not some wallflower – I refuse to spend my evenings in my dormroom pining after a boy.
You know that Clemens asked me to the Yule ball-..”

Harry bristled. Clemens.. the name rang a bell. He was sure that Tom disliked him.
How the fuck would Tom respond to this kind of threat?!
He couldn’t give her what she wanted...
well.. for a host of reasons he couldn’t do that.. but he couldn’t just let her dictate to Tom was one more reason.
He was certain Tom would never tolerate that. This was annoying.


Abraxas snapped to unwilling attention despite himself and was at his side immediately, a questioning eyebrow raised at him.
Harry drew his wand and silently stupefied Elana, catching her in his arms before she could fall to the ground and holding her against him as if in an embrace.
He cast a muffliato around them all.

“You will obliviate her. She did not find me this evening. She was speaking to you and asking after me when she suffered a fainting spell.
You will tell her that I have been called away to assist a professor and will be busy until very late.
You do not recall which professor.
Reassure her of my..Tom’s.. continued affection. I will be in m-his room should you require anything further of me this evening. I’ll take dinner there. Gopper will bring it, I’m sure.”

“I have enough potion to last until bed. ..Good night Abraxas.”
He turned and pushed the limp Elana into the Malfoy ancestor’s (who looked unexpectedly impressed) arms and spun, stalking away quickly.
A few seconds later he heard a dull meaty slap and half turned.

 Abraxas had dumped Elana unceremoniously on the floor.
 The blond was looking down the corridor at Harry with a small nasty smirk on his face even as he squatted down and drew his wand.
 Harry heard him cast enervate after he had turned the corner into the next corridor.

 He fixed his face to obscure the momentary guilt and concern he felt at the way he’d treated the girl.
 He had conflicted feelings about her.

 She was very pretty.. but he’d found himself feeling annoyed and jealous when she was trying to climb all over him.. just because on some level he knew she wasn’t doing it to him – she was doing it to Tom and.. if only in the back of his mind.. he could admit that he hated that.
 It wasn’t that she was a relatively harmless girl (even if she was a complete slut and annoying to boot!) who was in danger if she was near Tom.
 It probably should have been that.. but it wasn’t.

 It was that he just didn’t like it when she touched the snakey git.
 Tom had kissed him.. he’d.. he’d more than kissed him.

 If he was going to do things like that with Tom Riddle – which was obviously evil and wrong in and of itself – then at the very least he wanted the manipulative bastard to be faithful.
 Or.. or.. if he couldn’t be faithful.. then.. at least he shouldn’t parade some blonde slag around and shove Harry’s face into the fact of his unfaithfulness.

 He could have told Elana to push off and never come back.. he’d considered it for a moment.
 But Tom probably wouldn’t like that.
 In his current patently insane state of mind he found he wanted to please Tom..
 He wanted to succeed in this so that when he came back he’d look at him in that approving impressed way...

 and he would come back of course.

 History didn’t show him dying at Grindelwald’s wand – history probably just never knew he went there in the first place.

 Unless history had changed..
 Was that possible? Had he fucked everything up and now the future he’d come from didn’t exist anymore?

 He stopped at the mermaid and whispered the password. She blew him a kiss and winked. He ignored it.
 Bloody portraits even flirting with the arse. No wonder he was always so full of himself!

 “Gopper!” he called irritably.

 It was nice to have a house elf. Hermione wouldn’t like it, he knew, but it had been convenient to have dobby sometimes.. even Kreacher had had his moments and Gopper was really nice to have around too.
 It wasn’t like he was Malfoy or anything – he’d never hurt a house elf..
 But if they wanted to bring him dinner and he wanted dinner brought then surely there was no problem there!
The little elf flicked into the room and smiled timidly. “Yes Master Riddle?” it said hopefully.

“You are a good house elf Gopper. Thank you for all your assistance.” Harry told it.

The little grey green creature turned orange-cheeked and gaped. A blush? It hugged itself, shaking. “don’ts need to be thanking me Master Riddle. Gopper wants just to serve you.”

Harry smiled slightly. “That may be true.. but you are not appreciated often enough. Would you have any ice cream in the kitchens, perhaps?” The elf nodded vigorously and popped away.

Harry had barely taken two steps before the elf was back with the most obscenely elaborate sundae he’d ever seen. It had at least a dozen tiny balls of different flavoured ice cream with shaved chocolate, nuts and tiny candy runes.

He accepted the floating Sundae with a wide smile of delight. “Thank you gopper!!” he gushed, forgetting for a moment that gushing was not among the Tom Riddle five most probable expressions.

The little beaming elf yelped at being thanked anew and popped away again, still blushing.

Harry spooned his icecream – the first ball was something caramelly – and wandered around the room aimlessly. It was his first chance to poke about the place. He’d fallen asleep so quickly last night and he’d had classes all day today – long endless boring terrifying classes in which Alphard and Abraxas shadowed him like a hawk. On one horrible occasion he’d been called upon to answer in ancient history and hadn’t had a clue what to say, but looking down at his parchment he watched the answer appearing in shimmering letters and saw Palmer of all people writing frantically on the other side of the room. The answer had been right and he’d managed to carry it off – but it had been hairy for a second.

He stopped in front of the bookshelf and tilted his head to read the titles. There wasn’t a single thing in there with dark, black or most evile anywhere in the title. Maybe Tom kept his favourite books somewhere else.

He reached aimlessly and ran his fingers along the spines. Frowning, he went back and did it again. Leather... leather leather..leather.. cloth.. that felt wrong. The book he was looking at was leatherbound. He rubbed his finger over it again. Yes.. something wasn’t right there.

Reaching up to the top of the tome he dug a finger in and hooked it out. As it passed through the plane of the bookcase its appearance changed. What had been ‘herbology of the east Siberian plains’ became Gilfried Worts: Venoms and Stings for the Advanced Potioneer. Harry stared at it fascinated and looked back at the bookcase smirking. Brilliant. He’d hidden everything in plain sight!! That was convenient.

He shoved the potions text back and started at the top shelf, pulling the books out one by one and reading the titles.
Dark this.. dark that.. most evile yada yada.. He smirked.

And then on the second highest shelf, in between “lethal protection: traps and wards for the paranoid wizard” and “Senatus; OnTriumph and Sacrifice” he found it. It felt strangely light and innocuous in his hand as he held it. No sign of the danger within. He turned it over.

The embossed writing was bright and clear. The diary was new in this time.

Curiously he opened it, flicking through the pages..blank. He wasn’t really surprised. It tingled in his hand.. it was already a horcrux.

So strange... one day he would kill the soul fragment that resided inside this.

He hefted it, imagining a tiny Tom Riddle in a box inside being thrown from side to side and cursing in a squeaky little mouse voice. Stupid. He smiled, walking over to the desk slowly. It wouldn’t hurt to say hello.. poor thing was going to be completely alone for fifty years.

He wondered if Tom talked to it sometimes. It seemed cruel somehow. Like locking your twin brother in the cellar for decades while you travelled the world.

Sitting, he flipped the book open and reached for the quill.. inking it and poising his hand over the paper, hesitating. What should he write? Oh yes.

“Hello.” He wrote.

There was a long moment and then the book responded in beautiful calligraphy “Hello.”

The word cleared and then the same lovely handwriting posed the question

With whom am I speaking, if I may ask?”

He thought about it and then answered.

“a friend”

The book didn’t seem to know what to do with that. Harry wondered whether Tom Riddle had anyone he would truly consider a friend at the time he’d made this diary.

“Perhaps you might tell me your name?” it tried.

“Rumplestiltskin” he wrote back and smirked.

“...What would you like to talk about.. Rumplestiltskin?” the book flashed at him after a while, no sign of the irritation that Harry assumed the real Tom would be showing right about now.

He chewed on the quill thoughtfully and answered

“I want to know you better.”

The pause here was decidedly longer. He thought perhaps the diary had decided not to respond again when the words appeared
“What is the date today, if you please?”

Grinning madly Harry wrote down with relish

“14 March 3102.”

The response made him laugh.

“...You are not as amusing as you obviously believe yourself to be”

He found himself feeling peculiarly fond feelings toward the horrible homicidal monster.

“I can just see you saying that too. What is it like in there?”

The diary responded after a long minute. Harry imagined that it might be confused that he seemed to know who and what it was.

“Answer my questions truthfully and I might tell you.”

Harry hesitated for mere seconds and then, shrugging, wrote back.

“I’m Caedmon. I really do just want to know you better. Its December of 1943. You’re head boy now by the way.”

The pause dragged on and then the diary wrote back.

“I see... How did you learn about this diary?”

Harry shook his head, smirking as he wrote.

“You said you would tell me what it was like in there.. I’m sure you remember.. you only said it a minute ago, Tom.”

The book responded and the supercilious tone fairly dripped off the pages. “I said I might. Why do you want to know?”

Harry dropped the quill on the parchment in irritation. A second later he picked it up and wrote in scratchy writing

“I was curious. Forget I asked. I’ll put you back on the bookshelf.”

The response was immediate

“NO!! Wait..”

The writing remained for a long time. He smirked at it and then wrote. “A question for a question until it’s time for bed?”

“Yes!” the writing blinked briefly.. then was replaced by new words.

“In answer to your question - it is Hogwarts in here...without the students.”

Harry imagined Tom wandering through the school by himself like a ghost. It was not pleasant. He felt sorry for the soul fragment in the diary. He was about to say something to that effect when new words blinked.

“Where is the Tom Riddle out there right now?”
Harry wondered the same thing vaguely.

“I don’t know” he wrote.
“Maybe with Grindelwald. Thats where he was going when he left yesterday.”

The writing was rougher “Why did he go to Grindelwald?!”

Harry wrote back.
“Not your turn. What do you do all the time in there?”

Tom responded hurriedly. “I read mainly.”

“He went to Grindelwald to get dirt on Dumbledore I think. Grindelwald and Dumbledore were lovers when they were younger. Right now Dumbledore is being a pain in the arse and Tom wanted to blackmail him.
... aren’t you lonely with no one else in there?”

If writing could look irritated, Tom’s did right now.

“What are you talking about?! Grindelwald and Dumbledore – that’s preposterous!
You are obviously fabricating again. I would not be foolish enough to -

Why did I particularly want to blackmail Dumbledore? What exactly is he doing now?!”

Harry stared patiently at the paper until it came finally.

“No. I am not lonely. I always found the other students tedious. Answer my questions!!”

Harry wondered if it was true. It was possible.. maybe Tom would be happier without the rest of the world around.

“Dumbledore threatened me. He told me he’d remove me from Hogwarts if I talked to you..that is..if I talked to Tom again. So Tom went to Grindelwald last night – I tried to convince him not to. But you know you!... You don’t much care for other people telling you what to do or not do”

Tom wrote after a second, while Harry was trying to think of a question

“What are you to me?”

Harry rolled his eyes. The whole concept of taking turns seemed to be foreign to tom.

“I don’t know.” He wrote back “what was the first thing you can remember really wanting badly??”

“You don’t know?! How can you not know?!
Do you have something I require? Am I in debt to you somehow?

Why would I risk my life for you?”

“Isn’t it my turn? That was five questions there.”

“A red yoyo.
Merlin – Why are you asking me inane frivolities when my life may hang in the balance?!”

Harry remembered the first memory of Tom that Dumbledore had shown him. In the boy’s sad little box of stolen toys there had been a faded red yoyo. He took pity on him
“I’m fairly sure you’ll be fine. Confident you will at least. You said I was yours. Or.. He said I was his. Maybe that has something to do with it.”

“You’re mine?! Why?! Who are you again? I don’t know any Caedmons. Are you a Hogwarts student? Where are you right now?”

Harry could hear the frustration and impatience. He felt sorry for the boy in the diary. He was going to be alone for fifty years and then he would be killed in the moment he thought he might be freed. It was tragic in a way.

“Do you want to leave the diary?” he wrote idly.

“Do you know how I can leave?” it responded immediately

“Well.. yes...but there must be another way..” he wrote, thinking aloud.

The Tom Riddle in the diary obviously realised that he did know the designed method of departure from the diary. The words appeared slowly.

“It would be only fitting.. if Grindelwald has killed me.. for you to give your life for me in return. If we..care for one another as you seem to suggest.”

Harry rolled his eyes

“No thanks. And Grindelwald hasn’t killed you. You’d have felt it if he had.”

He wondered what would happen if the diary fragment fed on him like it had Ginny. It couldn’t surely - clearly it hadn’t or it wouldn’t have been around to end up in Ginny Weasley’s cauldron – but if it did?.. what would happen if it tried to feed on another horcrux? Was he immune? Was it doing something to him now, just from writing in it?

“What is your family name?” Tom wrote.

Harry looked at it and shrugged. He’d already lied. It didn’t matter.

“Piper. Who was the first person you ever kissed?”

“I don’t know any Pipers. Where are you right now? I’m not answering that question. Can’t you think of something sensible to ask me?”

“Oh come on.. you know that you will never tell me that out here. What does it matter? Was it embarrassing? Was it a girl or a boy?”

“Merlin. Fine. It was a girl obviously. Her name was Martha. Are you happy now?”

“What a stingy answer. Paint me the picture!

I’m in your room at Hogwarts. The head boy quarters. It’s pretty nice. Would be nicer if you were here..”

Harry blushed at the last thing he’d written and moved to erase it but it disappeared into the paper.
“I am here..”

“Yes.. but not really.” He wrote uncertainly “I can’t see you.. I can’t touch you.”

“Describe yourself.”

Harry blushed harder in shock. What was he doing?! Flirting with Tom’s bloody horcrux.. This wasn’t what he wanted to talk to it for!

“Caedmon?”

His quill dripped onto the page and he wiped it and wrote quickly, his mind protesting the impulsive movement of his hand

“Sorry... I’m about half a hand shorter than you..my body isn’t as good as yours.. I’m a quidditch seeker – its more important to be light and fast in that position.

My hair is kind of a dark blonde colour and maybe three or four inches long now. Its always messy. I can’t help it.
I have light green eyes. What else do you want to know?”

There was a long pause and then the words appeared on the page:

“Are you in your uniform?..”

Harry bit his lip, hovering on the precipice between making an excuse and going to bed and continuing this really bad idea. His ice cream, he realised, was completely melted. What a waste.

“Are you in your uniform?” the diary still asked him. He put the quill down and stared at it blankly. Now was the time to make the excuse! It would be easy.

He picked up the quill and wrote instead “No. I’m in your uniform. I’m polyjuiced as you right now.”

“...Then you already have me there to see..and touch.. undress!”

Harry felt his heart speed up in shock. Last night he hadn’t had the energy to even think before he’d crawled into bed.
This morning he’d dressed and then taken the polyjuice.
He hadn’t really taken a close look at the body he was wearing. He’d seen tom in nothing but boxer shorts on Sunday morning.. but at the time he hadn’t really had the luxury to look at him too much – he’d limited himself to short glances, and even then he’d been terrified he was going to blush

“I can’t do that!!” he wrote back. “You.. he.. wouldn’t like it”

“I am him... I’m telling you to undress. Now! I want you to see me..”

Harry’s hand moved of its own volition to his tie, loosening it and pulling it over his head. He toyed at the top button of his shirt, tempted.

“I hope this silence means that you are obeying”

Harry flicked the button open idly and moved down to the next.
What did it matter if he undressed?! He’d have to undress to go to bed. It wasn’t as if he could be criticised for looking at a body that he’d been ordered to wear.
He’d had to go to the bathroom earlier in the day and had gotten a completely unwelcome hard on just from the idea that he was holding Tom’s cock. It was embarrassing. Gyphus had been standing at the side of the room and had seen his helpless response and sniggered.
He’d gone into a stall and tried not to look.. tried to think of something other than Tom Riddle’s body until it finally went away.
When he’d come out Gyphus had smirked at him and asked if he’d enjoyed his time in the stall alone with Tom.

He unbuttoned another button.

“Caedmon? Have you run off? Or are you..preoccupied?”

Harry picked up the quill and wrote “I’m still here.”

“Are you undressed?”

He undid the rest of the buttons quickly and pulled the shirt off, dropping it on top of the tie on the floor.

“um.. partly?”

“Only partly? You were gone for a long time..“

“Thinking.. and I was ..kind of nervous I guess”

“Why would you be nervous?. You said I told you that you were mine. We must be very close”

Harry didn’t want to admit that he had no idea why Tom had said that and that he hadn’t gotten close enough to know Tom’s body yet. He wrote back, trying to disguise that fact

“This feels weird. Like betraying someone with their twin”

“I assure you.. If I had polyjuice of your body, I would certainly explore it.
And.. He is not my twin. We are the same person. You cannot betray me with myself.”

“Why do I have the feeling that he wouldn’t agree?!”

“He is not sealed in a silent empty world.
And he is not here.
Touch yourself..”

Harry read the line again. The diary fragment wasn’t as content as it professed to be with reading all day every day, it seemed. He felt that pang of sympathy for it again.
One day he would kill it. One day in the future, in his past.. when he was dying himself.

He looked down at the chest he had bared.. at the arms that were clearly Tom’s arms.

“I think you’re beautiful” he wrote to the diary.

“Use the Spiegelum charm” Tom commanded.

Harry remembered. He’d seen Tom use it right before he’d transfigured his eyes to look like Voldemort.
He tried not to think of that.
He remembered the charm though. It was on the sixth year syllabus somewhere, he was sure. He
reproduced what he’d seen Tom do and created a hand mirror, then enlarged it and leaned it against the wall.

Tom’s face looked back at him, wearing a feverish, excited expression he didn’t think he’d ever see on him under other circumstances.

“Now I can see you’re beautiful” he wrote shyly.

“I am lying naked on a sofa in the Slytherin common room right now” The diary wrote back.

Harry shivered, imagining Tom there right now. He rubbed gingerly at the bulge in his pants. It was bigger than he was used to from his own trouser tightening experiences. It felt very, very, good to run his fingers up the fabric.

“I’m sitting in your chair at your desk under the dragon window. The sun’s going down outside. Thinking of you lying there is making me hard”

“Mmm.. Good. Take my cock out..”

Harry hesitated and then unbuttoned his trousers, sliding them down a little way. He looked in fascination at the large cock that sprang free. It was much larger than his.

He looked in the mirror and shuddered.

Experimentally trailing his fingertips up the length of it. He gasped at how good it felt and pulled his hand back reluctantly, picking up the quill again.

“Feels so good... But..I can’t kiss you like this. Your kisses drive me crazy.. your mouth..”

“I would kiss you if I were able..”

Harry felt his heart pang sharply again. His eyes misted suddenly. Stupid. He was being stupid. He was going to kill this boy someday.

“I’m going to save you” he wrote suddenly, unable to stop himself “I’ll find a way to get you out.”

“Don’t think about it right now. “ Tom wrote back.

“I know a charm... That is - I created it. The incantation is dictatia kompleasis. Tap the quill and then make a small circle clockwise, swish up right flick back left horizontally three quarter length. The incantation begins on the halfway point of the circle and ends at the apex of the swish.”

“Cast it.”

Harry reread the instructions a few times and on the third try felt the magic catch. The quill stood up and hovered over the page. “You’re kidding..” he said, watching the quill write his words down.

“Tom Riddle invented the dictaquill??”

“You’ve seen this spell before?! I only invented it at the beginning of sixth year. Did I patent it then??”

Harry frowned and the frowned again when the quill wrote
“Something like that I guess.” He said out loud.

“There is something odd about you” Tom wrote.

He seemed to dismiss it again just as quickly though because his next question was “How long do you have before the polyjuice wears off?”

“Not long I guess.. But I have more If you like”

“It would be better if you were in here with me..” the diary wrote. Harry could almost hear the thought percolating in the boy’s head.

“What the fuck are you DOING?!”

The shout from behind startled Harry and he jumped a foot in his seat. Tom, behind him, pushed him aside and slammed the diary shut, turning and raging at him

“WHY?!! How did you even get it out of the bookcase?!!”

Tom looked angrier than he’d ever seen him in the past, Harry thought, shrinking back. He looked almost as angry as when he had killed his basilisk.

“I just pulled it out.” he said defensively. “It wasn’t warded or anything. Jeez”

The boy spun away and darted to the bookcase, casting some kind of diagnostic spells or something. He turned back

“It is still warded.”

Fury mingled with deep set suspicion.

He marched back and loomed over Harry who was still more than half naked in his polyjuiced form.

“I’m not going to ask what the fuck you’re doing with your shirt off, pants open and an enormous hand mirror – do you even know what that book is? Don’t touch it again. It’s...cursed. Its dangerous.”

Harry noticed for the first time the deep black rings under tom’s eyes. He looked exhausted.

“What do you remember about your conversation with the book?”

Harry shook his head dismissively. “I remember everything! Tom - he seems lonely. Don’t you ever talk to him?

He didn’t even know that he was head boy now. He didn’t know what year it is.

He said he’s in Hogwarts but there’s no one else there. He spends all day reading.”

The frazzled looking head boy took a step backward. “You..did it tell you it was me? Its not! It’s just a tricky little cursed book. It will suck your life out if you talk to it too much”

Harry got to his feet angrily, looking down surprised and doing up his pants as he looked back up
at the other boy.
“Fine.”
As an afterthought he added “..I’m glad you’re back. ...I was worried...”

A guilty look flashed through the sapphire eyes for a millisecond before Tom turned away.
“How long do you have before the polyjuice wears off?” he asked as if the topic of the diary and his recent absence were both inconsequential.

Experiencing mild déjà vu Harry shrugged back. “I don’t know.. a few minutes.. why?” Tom looked at him.
“I’m sure you recall what I have promised the others was to happen tonight...”

Harry felt his own eyes widen involuntarily. “No! I don’t want to. I won’t take it!
You found what you needed right? That’s why you’re back. So you don’t need to do this to me now.”

Tom smiled a wan smile. “I have had an exceedingly trying day, Caed.. Don’t be difficult please.
We have already discussed this.”

Harry glared.

“No we haven’t. We didn’t discuss it. You ordered me to take it and then you threatened to do
something even worse if I didn’t. I don’t want the dark mark!”

Tom stalked across the room in a sudden rage and backhanded him. Hard. He stumbled, falling
down onto his ass in surprise.
Tom was leaning over him with narrowed eyes.
“You will take it! You have no idea what I have endured.. what I have sacrificed for you today!
I don’t want to hear any more about it. You will take it.”

Harry looked away angrily, glaring at the floor. He felt a strange fragile pain inside, like a broken
eggshell or something made of pointy splinters. Tom had hit him.

The horrible bubbling of the polyjuice wearing off gave him an excuse to pull his legs tight against
his chest and cover his face.

He wasn’t upset over the slap. That wasn’t it. It wasn’t anything... Probably wouldn’t have even
bruised if he hadn’t polyjuiced back anyway.
He took a deep breath and raised his head, looking up at the familiar too perfect face that was
looking down at him with something approaching disgust.

“Get up. Stop being so weak.”

In his mind Harry heard Voldemort calling him weak over and over again.. in his mind.. in his
dreams.. in the graveyard.. in the ministry of magic.. weak weak weak.
Somehow it had never really touched him like it did when Tom said it.

He climbed dully to his feet and avoided meeting the other boy’s eyes.
This was harder when Tom stepped close to him abruptly and nuzzled at his face gently with his
nose, kissing his cheek and sighing.
“Calm down. I didn’t mean it. I am..very tired.” He sighed wearily.
“And I have no appetite for the events to come this evening. And I will have to act otherwise.”

Harry pressed into the soft kiss on his cheekbone unwillingly.
Tom spoke again softly “-and so will you…”
“but perhaps we might be able to withdraw together somewhere and leave them to their fun when
the main event is over”

Trembling slightly, Harry turned his face and caught Tom’s lips, kissing them gently.
The gesture was returned, but the other boy did not seek to deepen the kiss and soon enough broke
away when the bell sounded through the room, releasing him and moving to the door.

Harry was unsurprised to see Abraxas on the other side.

“Caed has been officially discharged from the infirmary. Roan took him down to the dorm and
restrained Willowstead in our dormroom. Here is the polyjuice. The others have left already.
They’ll be waiting by the first marker in the forest.”

Tom nodded, taking the phial.

Harry’s eyes were still on Abraxas who was looking him over appraisingly.
He folded his arms, uncomfortably aware that he was only wearing trousers.

“Don’t flatter yourself” Draco’s grandfather told him. “I’d rather have Elana..”

Tom looked at him curiously, pressing the polyjuice phial into Caed’s hand and moving to the
wardrobe to pull out a black shirt.

Harry rolled his eyes at Abraxas. “Great. Do everyone a favour and take her then” he gestured with
the phial at Tom

“Did you know she threatened to go to the Yule ball with Clemens today if i didn’t shag her!”

Tom frowned and shook his head.

“Daft chit. Did you shag her?
...Or did you refuse, hoping that I’d take you instead?”

Harry looked away, embarrassed and threw back the polyjuice in lieu of an answer.

Abraxas answered for him.

“Really?!!” Tom sounded intrigued. “There may be hope for you yet, Caed.

“Pick your feet up” he hissed softly as they ran disillusioned down the hill toward the forbidden
forest.
He heard the scuffing still completely and knew the boy had only used a silencing charm. He’d
have to work on that.

His mind was a bit hazy at the moment. It had been a lot of work to get all the muggles ready.
He just wanted to sleep now.

Something was nagging at him.. he felt he’d missed something.. or wasn’t thinking of something. It
was just a vague irritating feeling.
He replayed in his mind the elaborate warding and shielding of the clearing.

No.. that was all correct..
His feet moved under him fluidly, the regular pat on the grass as he ran was soothing.

The second girl he’d grabbed had dodged the stupefy and run like the clappers and he’d had to chase her through some alleys.
He could have let her go and looked for another but she had looked quite fetching. Exactly the type that Alphard liked. Long red hair..blue eyes. Busty.
When he finally caught her and brought her down he’d apparated her back to the clearing and sat down in the grass.. so desperately tempted to lie down and have a rest.

No.. whatever it was.. it wasn’t the muggles.. that had gone fine apart from the redhead.

Something..with Caed.

When he’d seen the diary open on the desk his heart had stopped for a moment. He’d seen himself sitting in the chair and had thought..for a moment...
When he realised it was Caed he wanted to crucio him for making him think that his horcrux had killed him.

How the hell did he get it?! Was it because he was polyjuiced? He’d have to experiment later. His wards were no good if any polyjuiced wizard could get through them.

But the diary hadn’t seemed to do anything to him either. It was strange..

The image flashed again of himself sitting shirtless at the desk, pants open.. He snorted internally. Trust him to try to seduce Caed away from himself.

He saw the scene in his mind again. It was something about that. He picked at it..
He had looked over Caed’s shoulder before he’d yelled at him. The diary had said something. ‘better if you were in here too or better if you were in here with me.. or something like that.

What else had they been talking about?

How did Caed end up writing in a blank book from his bookshelf in the first place?
He’d seemed very certain that the person he was corresponding with was Tom.. had the horcrux told him that?
Why?

“He seems lonely” Caed said sadly in his memory.
“ He’s in Hogwarts but there’s no one else there. He spends all day reading”.. “don’t you ever talk to him?”

He banished the thoughts from his mind. Ridiculous. Why would he talk to a horcrux?! It was a fragment of his soul. Not a person.
To talk to it would be like talking to his ear or his toe. It’s state of happiness was irrelevant.

Up ahead he saw his knights standing, a larger patch of distorted air.

“Follow me” he instructed them without stopping. They fell in behind effortlessly.

He wondered how Caed was doing. He hadn’t been good at running over long distances. Silenced like this he had no idea whether the boy was nearing collapse.
Reaching the black marker on the root he left he stopped them. The clearing was hidden here somewhere.

He set about taking down the segmented area of the wards he’d created for that express purpose – to let them in.
It was a ward he was quite proud of. He’d based it on the fidelius charm – it hid places and objects in the same way but it didn’t operate in the same way – it could be cast like any ward and only the caster could open or close it.

A space shimmered into view between two trees on their right and displayed a large grassed expanse lit by torches.
It was the circular clearing. He’d hidden the entire thing. Setting up the ward markers to exact geometric segments had been wearying. And then he’d still had to prepare the environment itself...

He’d spent quite a lot of energy transfiguring various props for his servants to use on the Muggles.

In the centre of the clearing, there were low, organic-looking, black chairs arrayed in a circle around a low table on which he’d collected – for their pleasure – various bottles of alcohol, potions.. some of the easier to come by and less dangerous drugs.
He knew that that would please Alphard, Palmer and Darius.

Tonight it didn’t matter if he disapproved of it. He wished them to feel reassured that when he said he would do something – he would do it and it would be better than their best imagining.
Leading them in and waiting by the passage point he watched them drop their disillusionment spells, wide greedy eyes looking around. Alphard spotted the muggles first, their tied bodies arrayed at the far end of the clearing in a row.

Around the periphery he’d transfigured various props and instruments. It looked like a bordello-cum-torture-chamber had had a rather lurid affair with mother-nature.

He turned away from Alphard in time to see Caed drop his disillusionment spell, reading the look of horror on the boy’s face clearly.

“Wait there.” He told him quietly as he closed the wards. Caed obeyed.

‘that at least!’ Tom thought wearily.

Turning he absently sent a small stinging hex at Palmer who had moved to open the sugarbowl of white powder.

“Ow!” the boy protested, pulling his hand back.

“You will not indulge in any of this until after. Do I make myself clear?”

There were nods and the boys abandoned looking around for finding themselves a chair.

He noted, as he stepped close to Caed who he felt immediately was shaking, that his servants at least had the good sense to order themselves into a rough hierarchy. Abraxas and Gyphus were standing-off over the chair to the right of the largest one. He let them work it out. He would be content with either of them there tonight.

“Caed..” he said softly, slipping his arms around the boy. “Look at me..” Willowstead’s priggy little eyes looked up at him reluctantly. It was distracting.

“I take it you understand that I am not only going to mark you all. They will.. enjoy themselves. “

The boy looked back unhappily. “I don’t want to be here” he whispered. “Can’t you ..mark me.. and take me back? I don’t want to see it. I.. why do they.. why do you have to do this?! It’s wrong. Its evil, Tom. Make them stop!”

Frustrated anger rose in him. He hadn’t traipsed all around the country and expended considerable energy bringing muggles, wine and song here – he hadn’t sacrificed the offer to read from grindelwalds personal library.. only to throw everything away because a silly little boy was unhappy.

“No. I won’t. “ he told him sharply.

“I wish you to wipe that look off your face. Tonight I require you to show the others that you are one of us; that you are no threat.”

“This is important, Caed. Make me proud of you and I will take you away after only a short while. ...They will be dangerous tonight, Caed.. if you present this..this..attitude.. I am not certain what might happen when they are intoxicated.

Do not force me to protect you against them!

If you cause disunity among us I will punish you myself.. in front of everyone.”

“You need only show willing.. I will not require you to participate much.. and then we will be
alone.” He offered a small smile.
“you do..desire..to be alone with me, don’t you?” He wound his fingers gently into the hair at the back of Caed’s head.

The boy nodded but didn’t look particularly happy at the thought. Tom pursed his lips trying to think of something that might motivate the weak little sot.

“If you make a very good showing.. I will take you and not Elana to the Yule ball. Would you like that?”

The boy’s eyes widened and his face looked pained. After a moment he looked down embarrassed and then nodded.
Tom snorted inwardly. Typical.

“-If you please me tonight..” he whispered into the boy’s ear, feeling him shiver.

Caed looked up through incorrect eyes and pleaded “but.. I ..I can’t hurt muggles. Please Tom..”

He smiled thinly.. he almost had him. Caed was considering the prospect seriously.

“I’ll stop dating Elana if you do.. She will not touch me again..”

Desire, shame and aversion warred in the dark eyes.
“What exactly do I have to do?” he mumbled.

Tom smiled wider. There. He had him.
“Merely what I order you to do Caed. Without hesitation and pleading. Trust me to know your limits..”

The boy leaned closer suddenly as if seeking shelter. “Please don’t make me sleep with any of them.. I don’t want to do that!”

Tilting his head he brushed his cheek against the polyjuiced boy’s hair. So Caed was a complete innocent. Well.. that would never do.
But perhaps he did not want to change it tonight..
after all.. they were muggles...
His Caed should give his last sweetness to a deserving witch of the correct disposition.

He held him more tightly. “I will not ask that of you.” He assured him softly.

“Come.. The others are impatiently waiting, spoiled children that they are.”
He felt the nod against his shoulder.

With satisfaction he observed that Abraxas had apparently won the tussle over his right hand place.
Gyphus sat next to the empty left hand chair.
Very good. They recognised Caed’s position implicitly then.

He moved to his own seat, leaving the boy to follow.

After a minute of silence in which he examined the faces looking back at him, he spoke, allowing his voice to ring clear and pure in the torchlit darkness

“Tonight.. my loyal knights...will be the final test of your faith.. in me and in one another.
It will be a test of your commitment – to our circle and the noble goals we pursue – the defense of the wizarding world, the preservation of the power and glory of the ancient bloodlines from the muggle infection.”

There were sounds of agreement from his knights. He sensed Caed stiffen slightly beside him and turned, fixing him with an indulgent expression and stroked his hand lightly, leaving his hand upon it.

“Tonight” he said quietly, turning back to his knights “you will accept a gift – a symbol of honour which will bind us..all of us..as brothers – I shall give you a mark which will not bow to the will of insipid teachers, corrupt ministry officials or posturing family members.”

“Tonight is the dawning of a new era. From this night you will no longer emulate the tragic, ruined, Knights of Walpurgis.. who were hunted and scattered by the ministry even as they sought to save us all – tonight you become something new.. something greater! You will eat death and it shall make you strong.. powerful..triumphant! It will cleanse you of the stain of weakness running through our world. Tonight I initiate you as death eaters! Taste the words.. they will be feared as no army or force has been feared before. I promise this!”

He looked from face to face slowly. He could see them running the name over their lips and trying it on for size. The expressions indicated that this new darker sounding term was approved.

Drawing silent breath he continued. “From this night forth I will no longer be Tom Marvolo Riddle, though the fools will still use this name. You alone, my faithful, will know my true name. In time it will become more feared than even that of the great wizard I last night visited and who offered me his support today!”

He saw the dismayed impressed look pass from face to face as they assumed that they were now in an alliance with Grindelwald himself. Tom allowed himself a dark victorious smile. Grindelwald couldn’t have cared less about any of them – but when they were marked he would be able to extend his protection to them if he chose. The great wizard should have considered that.

He spoke quietly, his voice nonetheless ringing out pure in the still night. “From this night – I am ::Lord Voldemort:: I am Lord Voldemort!”

He watched the eyes of his servants widen in delight. They had only once before heard him speak parseltongue when he informed them of his noble lineage. Caed’s hand inched away from beneath his own at the words and he held it in place, gripping it tightly.

“They will speak of me as the Dark Lord..”

He caught slight disapproval edge in on Abraxas expression. No Malfoy would ever call another wizard master. Alphard looked slightly sceptical too. He decided a soft explanation was better. They would adapt if he framed it in terms they could accept.

“Do not imagine that this name diminishes you, my brothers – A serpent Lord is a leader but never a master – you shall call no man master while I live.”

The concern in their eyes diminished slightly
“No.. The name Lord in the serpent tongue is a sign of respect given to the first among equals.. it denotes that I consider you to be my equal..and that we stand alone above the rest of the wizarding world – for only the worthy may receive my mark.”

“...Tonight you will offer me your loyalty, your protection and service – and I will offer you my guidance. I will take you all to the future dreamed of.”

“Do you accept this gift?”

He looked to Gyphus first, knowing Abraxas would require a moment more to digest developments. Gyphus looked at him for a long moment and he felt as if all the world balanced on a pivot. As if the very forest held its breath. Why had he picked Gyphus?!.. he could have been assured of Antonin.. Roan..

He had thought Gyphus – the strongest among them.. equal almost with Abraxas in his favour.. and generally unflinchingly loyal.. would be his best bet.

He watched as Caed looked at Gyphus and frowned questioningly, seeing the dark eyed boy also take this in. Then the brown eyes turned back to him and Gyphus said clearly “Yes, my Lord.”

The relief inside him was like a living creature fluttering and scrambling. He showed none of it but turned briefly to Caed and stroked his hand again with a finger to show his approval. It was troubling that the boy’s influence had seemingly tipped the balance for his strongest knight.. He would have to look into that.

Gyphus had been quite interested in Caed since he arrived.. protective even. He recalled the furious expression on his strongest knight’s face when he had informed them all that he had put Caed into the infirmary.

Turning then he fixed Abraxas with a cool even stare. If Abraxas also accepted, Alphard would fall in line. The others would be no problem.. but he had to secure these three first or they would be insulted and Alphard would probably refuse on principle.

Abraxas scrutinised him and he allowed his mouth to twist into a tiny cruel smirk. As if this persuaded him, Abraxas responded quietly “Yes, my Lord.”

Alphard fell into line as he expected, offering his acceptance almost immediately, Antonin, Palmer, Darius and Roan all consented with no hesitation at all.

He looked then, the flutter of fear beating wildly in him once more to Caed. Willowstead’s dim face looked back at him.

It was unacceptable.

“Not yet.” He told him shortly. “This promise you will make in full possession of your mind, body and magic. Be still.. Think on what I have offered you.”

He knew that this, to the others would seem to be referring to the guidance he had placed in his end of the agreement they were making.. but Caed would think about Elana and the Yule ball.

“You will take the mark in silence, my death eaters!” he told the others quietly.

“Come to me Abraxas. Kneel before me and offer me your left arm”

The flicker of infuriation flared through the silvery eyes again. Kneeling was not a habit for
Malfoys and it brought matters back to the idea of masters and slaves. Nevertheless, the boy got up from his chair and lowered himself to kneel close to tom’s feet, flicking his wide sleeve up and extending a milky unblemished forearm.
The muscles shifted under it as he tightened his fist.
Tom took his wrist and looked down appraisingly into the determined aristocratic face, his hair yellow and gold in the firelight. He drew his wand and traced it lightly up the sensitive skin of the boy’s forearm, amused as the hard, almost angry expression on Abraxas face faltered uncertainly.

He had always wondered whether Abraxas might have the tiniest attraction to him. The boy only dallied with girls but occasionally there was something behind his eyes faintly that made him wonder.
If that was so.. then he would likely be quite affected by this.
Tom pressed his wand hard into the flesh below Abraxas elbow and cast the incantation silently.

With a great gasp, Abraxas threw his head back, his eyes slipping involuntarily closed as his back arched. Had Tom not been holding his wrist he had no doubt that the boy would have fallen.
He had visible trouble remaining silent and bit down on his lips in the effort to keep control.

Tom smirked darkly. The others would imagine he was in great pain, he was certain. It looked very much like he was tossed in the throes of agony.
His mark didn’t work like that, however.
He glanced down at the arm through which black threads were winding, sketching out the image he had chosen. It had been a sword before he had spoken with Caed and learned of the name of his future servants.. He wasn’t sure where the idea for this new image had come from exactly – it had simply occurred to him.
A snake issued forth from the mouth of a skull near the boy’s elbow and wound itself into a figure eight.. the symbol of immortality..
He.. the serpent Lord.. immortal..and connected to the deaths head.. to his death eaters. It was ..right.. somehow.

The mark was almost finished. He glanced down the front of the blonde writhing silently on his knees to note the large bulge in his robe. Just as the tattooed snake made the final turn, knotting the figure eight, Abraxas gasped again twice, his entire body stiffening, the fist of the wrist Tom held loosened suddenly and splayed fingers stretched as the boy’s body spasmed in ecstatic release and then fell limp.

Glancing around the others he saw concern and disquiet on Gyphus and Alphards faces, resigned determination on Antonin’s and outright terror on Palmer, Darius and Roan’s faces.

It had possibly looked quite painful from the back, he mused.

He glanced at Caed who seemed surprised and met his eyes in silent question. He offered him a secretive smile, turning away again to the limp boy at his feet.

Abraxas opened soft, hazy eyes and looked up at him in bewildered satiation and then looked down at his arm, blinking and examining the gently moving mark, stroking it with an inquisitive finger.
Tom released him and indicated that he should return to his seat.
He nodded and, to his credit, managed to affix a blank stare onto his flushed face when Tom wandlessly scourgified his robe.

“Gyphus?” he gestured expectantly.

Gyphus licked his lip nervously and got up, kneeling in front of him with a tense defensive expression.
“Silently..” He murmured at him with a steely eyed stare.  
The boy nodded pensively and offered his arm, shoving his robes up carelessly.

The shock and dismay on his face when Tom initiated the mark was almost amusing as the boy struggled and failed to remain unmoved. He saw the lust darkened brown eyes flick to Caed and realised that the polyjuice was wearing off.

Gyphus shuddered in waves of pleasure as the mark drew itself.  
He didn’t need to glance to his left to recognise the moment that Caed had returned to his true appearance. He could see it in the expression on Gyphus face.. The boy’s lips parted and his head tipped slightly, eyes slipping closed in bliss for only a second before he forced them open again to continue looking at the boy who belonged to TOM!  
He would have to deal with this, he realised.  
He looked to Caed.. concerned that he might see that lust reflected there but the boy looked only puzzled. Trust Caed.. supreme naiveling.. to be baffled by the most overt of lustful gestures.

Caed looked away from Gyphus and met Tom’s eye, raising his eyebrows .  
Tom smiled reassuringly.  
His Caed was not to blame for Gyphus affection, clearly. The boy had not even been aware of it and possibly was not even aware of it now.  
Good.  
He looked back at Gyphus, relieved.  
The boy swaying in overwhelming sensation on his knees panted now and closed his eyes , an expression of near agony on his face as the incomparable climax tore through his body.  
Unlike Abraxas, his face when he looked up at Tom again did not show confusion but rather understanding and a faint guilty sheepishness as he glanced a last time at Caed. He did not look at his arm until he sat down again and then he stared at it in pleased wonder, tracing it with his fingertip as Abraxas had also done.  

Alphard looked like he was going to be sick when he knelt before him. He was pale as a sheet and offered his arm as if he really wanted to take it back and leave.  
Seeing Abraxas and Gyphus – both stronger than he – seemingly almost undone by the agony of the mark obviously made him more than uneasy about taking it.  

Tom had no illusions about Alphard.  
He was at heart a coward and could never be fully trusted – but he was strong and clever.. and the black family was among the ancient bloodlines.  

When it was over Alphard leaned in, grinning dazedly and whispered “Can I have another one?”  
Tom smirked back briefly and then fixed his face, sending him off with a stern expression.  

Antonin took the mark with almost perfect control and thanked him for the honour afterward, with shining eyes. The Russian had obviously been expecting to suffer and had accepted the pain as a sign of commitment. To be offered pleasure instead seemed to affect him deeply – he looked awed and grateful.  

Palmer and Darius were much alike in their frozen fear beforehand and relieved punchdrunk amazement afterward but Roan, he thought, must have comprehended what the trick was at some point because he approached and knelt with restrained excitement.  
The greyblue eyes fixed him with something approaching wistful eagerness.  
Roan offered his arm reverently, never breaking eye contact and Tom suppressed a small smile, recognising the core of Roan’s devotion now too. He had been curious about Caed from the start.. but from the tiny, veiled, resentful look in the academic boy’s glance toward Caed now, Tom wondered if he didn’t want to be him..
He allowed himself to caress Roan’s arm with his wand as he had Abraxas’ and saw the boy’s expression shift in wonder and perhaps a faint tinge of yearning. Roan was going to enjoy this even more than Abraxas had, he predicted.

The weakest among his knights... no... now they were death eaters... – Roan was nevertheless perhaps the most unquestioningly loyal... he would do whatever was asked of him. Tom realised he would have to ensure that this devotion did not twist into spite if he lavished too much affection upon Caed in front of the boy.

He began the incantation and the boy shuddered and gasped as the first strands of black delved into his pristine skin. Roan looked at him with adoring eyes as he struggled to keep silent. In a sudden impulse, Tom stroked his thumb over the wrist that he held and Roan tensed, arching in delight.

Very faintly Tom detected the tiniest whine of bliss... barely a ghost of a sound. Roan’s head snapped up and his eyes met Tom’s in horror, tears suddenly filling them. He obviously knew even through the haze of his lust that he had failed.

Tom considered breaking off the mark where it was... It was almost complete... it would still function – and Roan would always wear a pale mark as a sign of his weakness.

The pleading eyes of the boy certainly warranted it... ... weakness!...

But the boy’s hand abruptly gripped his own wrist, holding him even as he was held. He managed to choke out... “punish me... but... finish it... please... my Lord!”

Tom narrowed his eyes and nodded curtly.

Yes. It was better that his servant bore no visible sign of his weakness. Roan would bear punishment for enjoying Tom’s touch too much.

No sooner had the mark completed, even as Roan was tossed in the throes of climax, he released him roughly, kicking him down to sprawl before him and raised his wand.

“Crucio!!” he spat.

In his tender oversensitive state the curse was even worse. Roan shrieked in unbearable agony, twisting and struggling.

He was peripherally aware of Caed sitting rigidly next to him, his every muscle tense but he held the curse on Roan for another ten seconds of unnatural screaming and writhing. When he released it, Roan lay panting and sobbing on the grass.

There was silence and then slowly, in visible pain he crawled around with difficulty and pressed his face to Tom’s shoe, reaching for the hem of his robe and bringing it to his lips, his eyes closed. His voice was hoarse and thick with tears when he whimpered. “Thank you, my Lord. I’m... I’m sorry for my failure. Thank you for giving me your mark”

Tom smiled approvingly and leaned down, generously stroking Roan’s disarrayed brown hair. The boy gasped and turned his face against Tom’s hand like a cat.

Tragic little Roan had it bad. How had he missed that?!.. “It is done. We shall speak of your weakness no more. Get up. Go back to your place.”

Roan nodded against his shoe and Tom had the impression that he wanted nothing more than to remain where he was.

As Roan limped off, Tom turned his attention, inevitably, to Caed. The blond sat straight and stiff by his side, his face rigid in a mask of blankness.
Tom lifted his hand and brought the fingertips to his lips, kissing them gently. “Will you accept what I have offered?” he asked him softly. Caed’s eyes widened fearfully. Tom could see that he wanted to say no but didn’t quite dare.

He trailed the point of his tongue over the pad of the boy’s index finger. He could see him waver in a temptation that reminded him a little of Roan’s expression.

Caed whispered uncertainly “What does loyalty, protection and service mean?”

Fury warred with approval in Tom. He didn’t want the boy questioning him like this.. nevertheless he was the only one among them all sensible enough to ask. He would not have allowed Grindelwald to bind him to loyalty, protection and service! It was a general oath of complete obedience.. it rendered the taker powerless.

He glanced at the others and then tugged on Caed’s fingers, urging him up out of the chair and then closer.. pulling him down onto his lap. Leaning back, he dragged Caed against him. After a tense moment, looking around at the others, the boy softened and then leaned in, melting down against his chest and laying his head on tom’s shoulder.

“It means..” he said slowly, turning his face toward the captivating green eyed waif, and stroking the back of his hand with a thumb. “That you will not seek to destroy me–...”

Tom waited and after a long..too long moment he felt Caed nod against him. “ok.” he whispered.

“You will stand with me against all enemies”

Caed’s hand tightened convulsively and Tom pressed a gentle kiss to his eyebrow. Wherever he had come from.. the boy had been decidedly in the thick of his enemies, clearly. He drew back and met the conflicted emerald eyes with his own, patiently. When the boy still looked fearful and reluctant he leaned down and caught his lips, kissing him slowly and deeply, enfolding him in his arms.

He ended it with a sigh and told Caed “Your past does not matter.”

The boy shivered suddenly and then whispered “Ok.. I’ll do it..I’ll stand with you.” He tried to kiss Tom again but Tom pulled away slightly. This would be the hardest part he sensed.

“And.. you will obey my orders, Caed – as a soldier would a general.”

The green eyes narrowed in discomfort and anger. “No! I won’t! I can think for myself!”

Tom stroked his hair back reassuringly, glancing briefly at the various expressions of fascination and anger on his new death eaters faces. “I know you can. Nevertheless.. I must know that if I have instructed you to do something – it will be done.”

Caed looked at him stubbornly. “If you ask me to do something and I think it’s a good idea I’ll do it.”

Tom smirked and sniffed back a laugh. “No.. that’s not enough. There may be times when I cannot reveal all relevant information to you and it might seem to you that another course of action would be better. I need to be assured that what I have asked of you will be carried out even against your better judgement – I require your trust, Caed – Trust me that I will know best.
“I will protect you.. Have I not proven this already?”
He felt Caed cling to him more tightly.

“Maybe..but sometimes you might not have all the important information and I might know something you don’t.”
Subtly the boy’s fingers dug into his side. The message was not lost on him. Caed was trying to imply that he would not follow orders that contravened his memories.

Tom sighed deeply. This put him in a difficult situation with the others. He stroked Caed and thought about it.

“Very well. You will follow my orders unless you know absolutely and incontrovertably of a reason why it would be dangerous to me or my goals to do so – in which case you will inform me if you are able, of your reasons for refusing, and if not you will act as you truly believe I would have you act, were I in possession of the facts at that moment.”

Caed examined the statement silently and then whispered “ok..”

Tom kissed his forehead approvingly. “And I in turn.. will guide you..”
He circumvented the question he felt Caed already opening his mouth to issue.
“In other words I will instruct you.. I will teach you, Caed. I will encourage you to develop yourself to your fullest potential.”
He hesitated and then whispered “I will continue to try to protect you..” kissing the boy again lightly.

Caed sighed in a way that sounded almost pleased. “and.. Elana?”

“No...” tom informed him. That is contingent upon other things...”
The boy huffed but after a few seconds murmured “ok” and turned his face in against Tom’s neck, sniffing and nuzzling him.

Tom smiled and drew Caed’s left arm from around him, gently sliding his robe sleeve back and raised the entire appendage, trailing his tongue from elbow to wrist and delighting in the great shudder of arousal from the boy.
He could see from the slight bump in his robe that Caed was hard already and admonished him.
“You must endure it silently!..I will punish you more harshly than Roan if you disappoint me, Caed.”
The nod against his neck was slow and he felt the boy kiss him.

He looked around the others. Roan looked envious.. Gyphus also, he noted.. Alphard was irritated and glanced down at the table impatiently.
The others.. particularly Abraxas, wore expressions mostly coloured by curiosity and fascination.

He pressed his wand to Caed’s tanned forearm and cast the spell.
The boy gasped against his neck and squirmed on his lap deliciously. He bucked his hips helplessly and Tom feared for a moment Caed was going to moan, hissing sharply when the blonde instead bit down on his neck, his right hand clenching around tom’s robes.
Caed had found a particularly sensitive spot and the hot panting breath, the pain, the rocking against him.. it was intoxicating.
::My beautiful.. ..sweet.. my precious:: he hissed, letting his own head fall back in pleasure as the writhing boy’s ass rubbed over his own cock and the teeth bit down harder on his throat.

This seemed to set Caed off even more and the teeth were replaced with kissing and sucking. Tom hissed again ::my own::
Caed was going to bring him off with him if he didn’t stop... and it seemed that that was exactly the boy’s aim as he moved with greater intent, rubbing himself over Tom rhythmically.

Turning his head and shifting slightly he captured Caed’s lips and fell into the kiss, letting himself drown in it.
He felt it when Caed came and swallowed the rapturous gasp, tipping over into his own climax in response.

When he let the boy’s lips slip away, he heard him panting in release and struggled to catch his own breath, his eyes still closed. He felt in his mind for the faint awareness of the boy’s mark and activated it, dimly aware of Caed’s thrilled arching as the faint echo of that pleasure flooded him again.

Gathering himself together he opened his eyes and shared a dark sated smile with the others as Caed shuddered still in the faint throes of pleasure in his arms.

“Go. Take your pleasures. Enjoy what I have brought you” he instructed them softly.
He waved a limp hand vaguely behind him and the strains of music rose up in the forest.

The amplified wizarding wireless had been among the harder objects to obtain, curiously enough. The drugs were easy in comparison.

Alphard had leapt up as soon as he had finished talking, closely followed by Gyphus and Abraxas. They raced to get a look at the selection of muggles and pick their choice first.
While they would in all likelihood share them around a bit... the first ride was always more exciting somehow. The girl (or usually it was a girl) did not know exactly what was coming... was tighter physically and still panicked with terror. Horrified acceptance usually set in with time.

Palmer and Darius moved immediately to the table, Palmer setting upon the sugarbowl of powder and casting cage wards over the table to prevent wind. Darius seized the nearby bag of green bunched plant matter and both became instantly absorbed in preparing their respective preferential poisons.
Palmer would probably be an utter git for the rest of the night, Tom sighed inwardly, but he would be cruel and inventive – and that usually amused the others.
Darius possibly wouldn’t participate quite as much as he otherwise might, but he himself would get a lot more out of watching the others.

He watched Antonin rise and prepare himself a drink. He had almost forgotten to get the vodka that he knew the boy preferred.
Antonin raised a glass of the oily gasoline to him in tribute and strolled off to peruse.

Tom glanced down at Caed who had stopped spasming and now simply curled around him in a pose of apparent contentment.
Roan had remained sitting, looking at them both sadly. Tom raised his eyebrow and the boy flinched and shook his head faintly, looking away.
He prepared himself a large firewhisky soon thereafter and moved off slowly to the others, to walk around and see what was on offer. His movements betrayed the aching of his body in the aftermath of the cruciatus.

Stroking Caed’s hair gently Tom watched them all while the bright music drifted surreally.

Alphard had found the redhead that Tom had known he would favour and was arguing with Abraxas over her stupefied bound form. Abraxas, tom was sure, was only being a difficult asshole.
He would in all likelihood much prefer the slender..far too young blond girl he’d taken from the front of a large apartment block.

She was skinny and sparrow boned, her long hair silvery in the light. Her age was indeterminate – he had thought her perhaps fourteen or fifteen when he had first seen her but she was so tiny on the grass.. she looked far younger.

Tom sighed slightly, watching Gyphus looking down speculatively at one of the two boys he had brought. This one was a tall skinny blonde with short hair.

Yes.. he would pick that one, wouldn’t he?!

The boy had reminded him of Caed when Tom had first seen him. He did not look like him.. well apart from the general colour of his hair – but he had had a sense of awkward-fawn about him. A curve of his eyebrows perhaps.. that marked him as innocent and shy.

Gyphus picked him up with little effort by the ropes and hefted him over his shoulder, looking around speculatively at the various props and toys around the clearing.

He seemed to decide and headed off toward a wooden horse, suitable to bend the boy over.

Tom turned his eye back to the others. Alphard had obviously won the debate over the redhead since Abraxas had wandered on. He was looking thoughtfully over a tall leggy brunette now.

Or perhaps he was looking over the dark haired boy next to her. It was hard to tell from behind.

Antonin had found one he liked it seemed. He liked older women, for some reason. Tom had picked this one older than he usually took, unsure whether Antonin might like her.

She looked to be in her early thirties. He’d thought she might be a little too old, even for the strange Russian. She was a brunette with shoulder length brown hair and warm brown eyes.

He’d asked her for directions to get a better look at her and she’d smiled at him, actually blushing slightly. So he’d taken her.

Antonin squatted down next to the bound body and drew his wand, preparing to wake her.

As he looked on, Caed emitted a soft snore at his neck and he smirked, tempted to leave him where he was.

But it wouldn’t do. The poor little wretch would wake up into Sodom’s garden and panic. Better he witness it begin and adapt accordingly.

He turned his face and kissed the closed eyes. “Wake up” he whispered.

Caed’s face wrinkled in discontent and he mumbled something unintelligible.

“Wake up Caed.” He said more sternly and the pale green eyes cracked slightly.

“Oh god.. are we still here? I hoped it’d be over..”

Tom snorted and kissed him lightly.

“It’s just beginning. Wake up and prove to me you deserve to be the sole recipient of my affections or I will pacify Elana tomorrow in the manner she demanded of you today.”

Caed opened his eyes wider and scowled. “No!”

Tilting his head provocatively Tom waited.

“What do I have to do?” Caed asked finally, unhappily.

Glancing up, Tom looked at Darius who was leaning back in one of the chairs with a wide lazy smile and a fat joint in his hand.

“Darius – I’ll take that” he commanded. The dreamy eyed boy took a moment to look around and then smiled.
“Yeah.. ok.. here.” he slurred slowly, climbing up, knocking Palmer in the process who was down on his knees near the surface of the table with his face. The kneeling boy looked up furiously and blared “Darius you fucking zombie.. you made me spill it! Fucker!”

“Oh.. shit.. Palmer – didn’t see you there!” Darius giggled and backed off slowly, with obvious concentration. He came around and handed off the joint and then seemed to suddenly notice what everyone else was up to and jumped slightly “Oh!!! There’s girls.. I forgot! Hey.. Brax!!.. “ he hurried off at a quick stumble toward the remaining six muggles. Alphard had taken his redhead to a mattress and she was already stripped and spread-eagled. Tom watched for a moment as she woke and looked around confused and then the screaming began.

The sound was strangely pleasing with the swing music.

Caed flinched and whimpered on his lap. He turned his attention back to him. “Shhh. It’s alright. She won’t scream for long. Here. Take this..”

Caed looked at him wide eyed and hissed frightened. “I...I’m really here.. you’re.. really.. oh god... this is.. no.. I don’t want that. I can’t-..”

Frowning disapprovingly Tom shrugged one shoulder and leaned back, putting the joint to his own lips and dragging on it slowly.

Palmer sprang up suddenly and yelled “FUCK YEAH!!”, making Caed jump again and look around in horror but the boy was already halfway to Darius and Roan now. Abraxas had apparently taken the brunette boy off to a hassock. It became suddenly much louder as the screaming panic of the redhead was joined by the yells of several others.

“What the fuck are you doing?! What is this?! Where am I?!” And other similar questions split the air. The exponentially louder chaos set Caed on edge visibly. Tom turned his head back to look at him and smoked the joint in a leisurely manner.

He heard the redhead squeal in shock and Alphard’s voice low and soothing. “Yeah.. calm down.. just like that.. nice and easy. See? No one’s hurting you.. enjoy it.. just relax and enjoy it. You know.. you’ve got fucking lovely tits.”

Caed’s wide eyes darted around the clearing. The nature of the screams was changing slowly as a new slower song started. There were more sobs of pain and resignation combined with slapping sounds than screams of horror and shock. It had been seemingly unconsciously accepted by all that no one would torture immediately- just because in the past it had upset other muggles who were around and ruined the submission and acceptance that some of them liked to enjoy at first.

Darius was crouching over the tiny blonde girl looking thoughtful while Roan was levitating a black haired girl with dark red painted lips over to the other side of the clearing (where he might also have a good view of Caed and himself, Tom observed)

Palmer, was marching up and down looking at the remaining three muggles - a slender leggy brunette in her late teens with tiny breasts, an ash blonde straight haired girl in her mid twenties who looked like she’d been around the block a bit and an overweight curly haired brunette in her mid teens. The latter tom had selected purely for Caed. He thought it might be easier for him to curse an
unattractive specimen.
Palmer pulled a snotty face and set off around the clearing to investigate what he’d missed.

Tom turned his eyes - somewhat sleepy eyes now, back to the beautiful boy in his lap. “I want you to curse one of them” he tried to say but somehow he ended up just saying “I want you.”

The sparkling green eyes looked him over indecisively and Tom railed at the tiny inner uncertainty that he might not measure up.. that Caed might not want him in return.

“Only me?” the boy asked softly.

Tom let his head fall back and smiled. “Can’t get you out of my mind.. so lovely.. I want to kiss you.. I want to push you down and bury myself in you.. I want to make you come..over and over again.”

Soft lips brushed over his own and he grabbed the boy and pulled him tighter against him.
“Gyphus wants you too.. but you’re mine.. You won’t have him, will you Caed?”

The blonde shook his head slowly and licked his top lip. “C-can we go to bed now?” he asked nervously.

Tom smirked back, reading the underlying hope in the question.
“We are not returning for a long while yet Caed.. There are things I still must take care of before I go back.” His smile widened and became feral “But..we can go to bed.. yes..”

The boy swallowed and wavered indecisively before nodding.
“Ok” he managed, looking pale and frightened.

Tom smiled meltingly and caught him up in a deep kiss again, exploring and working at him until Caed was breathing fast and heavy. Tom’s stroking hand found the hard line of Caed’s cock through the robes and he smiled against the whimpering boy’s mouth, pulling away and smirking darkly.

“...Always so hard for me..
...I want to see all of you, Caed.. I want to taste you again.”

He pushed the malleable creature up off him, collaring his robe to stop him from stumbling over and landing on the table and told him lightly “Come.. I have a place for us..”
- dragging him over to the large four post bed he’d transfigured – which had been wisely ignored by his servants. It even bore sheets and curtains. He had thought Caed might require some small measure of privacy.

The boy in question allowed himself to be pushed down onto his back on the bed, looking up at Tom in overawed excitement.

Around them the sounds had morphed into the sounds of fucking under variously diminishing degrees of unwillingness and some woman was crooning a slow song on the radio.

Tom leaned down, opening Caed’s robe and spreading it, baring the tight black shirt below. A wandless charm had that too open and spread.
The slender muscular chest was flattered by the torchlight. He peeled the clothes off the boy and tossed them to the side, stepping back and stripping off his own outer garb, his eyes fixed on the emerald ones watching his every movement avidly.

For Caeds (and, he was sure, probably also Roan and Abraxas’) benefit, he stripped his shirt manually, flexing his muscles as he slid it off and continuing the slow, self assured display as he
removed his trousers and then his boxers. The way Caed’s gaze roamed all over him hungrily felt like bathing in warm sunlight. He turned and allowed the boy to see all of him, turning back and tilting his head.

“Do you like what you see?” he purred suggestively. Caed swallowed and nodded emphatically.

The blushing desire emanating from the little naive was heady. He stalked slowly closer and leaned down, brushing his fingertips over the rock hard erection tightening the boy’s trousers, causing him to drop his head back and groan helplessly. He had the pants undone and dragged them off along with the boy’s underwear in seconds, pouncing on him, straddling and kissing him deeply. Crawling up the boy’s body on his knees he dragged him further onto the bed by his arms with marginal effort and flicked a hand to release and close the green curtains. The torchlight now filtered down only from above.

“There.. no one will see what I am going to do to you” he said with a half threatening smirk. A flicker of fear showed on the boy’s face and Tom leaned down over him again, kissing him and forcing his arms under his back to embrace him. “calm down.. it was a silly joke” he assured Caed, peppering his jaw with tender kisses. “Mmmm.. your skin..” he whispered.

Relaxing again, cautiously, Caed put his arms around him in turn. They kissed and slid against one another for a while, rolling as their hands each explored the other. Tom looked up in amazement at Caed, lying on top of him and licking his breastbone with apparent enjoyment. It felt so good, Tom marvelled somewhere in the rational back corner of his mind. Touching Caed felt so right.. it felt like the boy was meant for him.. it almost tingled to feel him pressed so hot and smooth from head to foot against him.

Different than all the others..Grindelwald had been good in bed. Really very good in fact..and powerful.. but he hadn’t wanted him like he desperately wanted Caed.

When the boy started to kiss his way downward, Tom caught his breath and held him in place a moment.

“Please.. I-I want to..” Caed said huskily.

Tom looked down at the greenish glimmers in the dimness thrown down from overhead and nodded, transfixed. How could he possibly refuse that..<br>He balanced himself on his elbows to watch the breathtaking sight.

Caed was shy and a little unsure what to do. The look on his face though..it made clear how much he wanted to please Tom. Everything he did..when he kissed his way up the top of his thigh, when he scratched his fingernails lightly over Tom’s tensed abdominal muscles.. it all felt wonderful. And then when he licked up his shaft like an ice cream.. his tongue so hot.. Tom knew that even after the events of this morning he was not going to last long. There was something about Caed touching him. But the boy wanted to suck him.. he had shown initiative.. that had to be rewarded. He could not refuse him just because he was worried he might pass out and not bind them both. He shouldn’t have had the joint. He had hoped it might calm Caed down. When the boy refused it he should have vanished the thing. He was too tired for its effects at present.

And then all thought cut out abruptly because Caed tentatively sucked the head of his cock into his hot little mouth.
Tom fell back onto the bed and moaned in pleasure. This only encouraged Caed that he was doing something right and he tried to suck harder and go deeper. Tom’s hips moved entirely without his permission, trying to delve deeper into the place that sent shocks of excitement through his veins. He heard Caed choke slightly and struggled to reign his desire in.

Focus.. he needed to bind him..

It felt...so ..damn.. good.. but he didn’t know how much energy he had. He might not manage to stay awake to clean up this little party later if he had to come twice and use the unforgiveables - they were rather costly in terms of energy...

and he needed to be awake to persuade Caed of what he wanted the boy to do.

With the utmost reluctance he forced himself to sit up and grab Caed, pulling him back up his body and holding him, kissing him.

The expression on the blonde’s face was surprised and disappointed..perhaps even embarrassed.

“No. “ he assured him “You were pleasing me greatly. You were pleasing me too much.. That is not where I wish to spill right now..”

The green eyes widened in apprehension. “Do we have to do that..here..” Caed whispered.

Tom nuzzled him. “Mmm.. we are here.. it is now... I want you.. Do you not want me also?”

The blonde looked away.

After a minute, Tom followed his gaze – he was looking up at the stars visible faintly in the sky over the clearing. “I shouldn't want you.” Caed said unhappily. He lifted his arm and looked in disgust at the black wavering mark on his forearm.

Tom realised that he hadn’t seen Caed look at it once since he’d received it. “This is..wrong. sick.” He heard him whisper.

With energy he wasn’t aware of having he was over the boy in a second, pinning him and glowering down at him. “Sick?” he hissed angrily.

The blonde looked up at him unhappily, his arms splayed and held down.

“Yes.. you don’t know ..you can’t possibly understand... me being with you is fucking sick. I’m... You killed everyone I ever loved, Tom.. or just about everyone..

...There’s no one else left for me to even want to go back to...and... and... you didn’t just order someone to kill most of them.. YOU did it... You personally..

I’m an orphan because of you..”

“There...was a girl I loved...a friend.. my best friend..
I was going to tell her I loved her before you killed her and.. and now I’m a ..what.. a death eater?! This is FUCKING WRONG!!”

Tom released his wrists and sat up on his knees. That put a slightly different complexion on things perhaps.

He understood suddenly the fear and hate when Caed had first seen him. Some things made more sense. He wasn’t certain how to respond to the information.

“I.. haven’t done it yet.” He offered quietly.

“Tell me who you are.. Tell me who they are and perhaps I won’t... I’ll change it..”

The boy shook his head “You can’t.. I wouldn’t even be here if it hadn’t happened. You’ll break reality or something. You’re going to do it because you did it.. it already happened for
me. And now i’m..this.. “he looked down at his arm again in revulsion.
“I..I asked you not to do it.. can’t you take it off? Take it off Tom – please!! I can’t stand it...It’s like I did that to them.. its like I’m responsible for-..” He turned his face away.

Tom mused.. he had been somewhat responsible perhaps. He would have initiated seven knights of Walpurgis with a sword shaped mark but instead he had initiated eight death eaters with a skull and snake. He had intended to pursue a ministry career and now he was enslaved to Grindelwald and determined to become the Dark Lord Voldemort.
In a certain sense perhaps Caed carried the seed of his own destruction.

Tentatively he leaned down and curled his body around that of the blonde boy, still straddling him and resting his head on the tanned chest.

“I..could take it off. But I won’t. I’m sorry Caed. You are in danger. With it we can find one another. It is useful.”

He thought on what he needed to make Caed do tonight and bit his lip. It would be very difficult if the boy was in this kind of state.
He considered obliterating him but he really didn’t want to risk damaging any memories the boy had.
If he had known how important Caed was – he probably wouldn’t have obliterating him in the forbidden forest the first time.

They lay together, each lost in worried thoughts for minutes on end.
Outside the bed the sounds of screams started up again..sizzles of spells and cracks of whips. He felt Caed shiver beneath him.

Hesitantly he raised his head and crawled up the boy’s body to lie beside him and pull him near. He stroked him slowly while Caed flinched at each of the slaps and meaty sounds.
Tom struggled to think of what he could say to bring the boy to the right way of thinking and complete the binding.
He could still bind him against his will.. there were spells for that... but he had wished to use a different spell.. and for that he required mutual desire.

His mind turned it over as his fingers played at the boys ribs.. his skin was like silk.

“I shouldn’t want you” Caed whispered again unhappily.

Tom’s mind clicked onto the phrasing this time. “But you do” he responded softly. Caed whimpered.

“I can’t help it.. I don’t want to be attracted to you. You’re just so bloody.. good at everything.. and confident and clever and so ridiculously good looking..
How can anything so evil look like you look.. it hurts to look at you, you’re so beautiful..
-that is..handsome or whatever.”

Tom smirked and nuzzled at the boy’s cheek affectionately. He was about to return the compliment but Caed continued “-And..apart from today ..and maybe pushing me down the stairs..you’ve been really nice to me..you offered to help me before you knew anything about me. I know who you’re going to be and I hate it..I hate you.. I don’t want to want you.. I wish I didn’t..”.

Tom suppressed the grin that wanted to spread over his face. He would have him after all.
“Will you give yourself to me?” he whispered next to his ear.

Caed covered his face with his hands and mumbled something. Looking down, Tom saw that the boy’s erection that had flagged and vanished had twitched back into life.
He could persuade him. He was certain of that now.

“Tell me you want to be mine..” He urged Caed, who was on his knees with his arse in the air squirming and moaning as Tom tongued it.

“God...Don’t stop.. please.. “ Caed whimpered.

Tom watched the tiny pucker make little kissing motions, he kissed it back, tracing the tip of his tongue around the sensitive ring of flesh and then pushing inside and fucking the boy with it some more. “ohhhhhhh... fuck..” Caed groaned, stretching like a cat and pressing back against his mouth. He nibbled at the tender flesh gently, making the boy twitch.

He wasn’t sure whether or not to stretch him. When the boy gave his permission and he could fuck him – there needed to be blood. The spell was designed for use with heterosexual couples. It relied upon there being a maidenhead to break in order to base the blood binding upon. Tom was certain that it could work just as well for a submissive male like Caed.
There was nothing specifically feminine in its parameters.

He drew back and licked up Caeds crack with a wide flat tongue. “My cock will feel so much better than this..” he tempted softly. “You only need to say you’ll be mine. Give yourself to me. Say yes.. say you want to be mine!” He flickered the tip of his tongue down the perineum already slick with saliva.

“FINE! YES, YES – I WANT TO BE YOURS!” Caed yelled desperately. “DO IT!!... PLEASE.. FUCK, TOM.. PLEASE”

Grinning broadly, Tom raised himself up on his knees.
Well that little outburst almost certainly alerted someone as to what exactly he was doing with Caed. The screaming of the girl that their attention had obviously been focused upon right now had died down to sobs and Tom was quite sure that those of his servants who realised the probable implications were probably explaining it to the others and listening avidly.

He licked his palm and rubbed it over his unslicked cock. His servants would know for certain shortly.

Placing himself at the unreasonably tiny tight little rosette he hesitated again. It was so small.
Perhaps he should have stretched him a little.
He glanced up the perfect tan expanse of back down to where the boy’s face was buried in his arms.
“It will hurt.” he told him, cursing himself for being a weak sot.
“It will hurt a lot at first Caed... But then..it will feel better than anything you can imagine.”

He heard a muffled fearful “ok” from the boys arms.

Gripping himself and holding Caed’s waist tightly he worked the head of his cock at the saliva slicked hole, pushing hard.
“Ow.ow ow! Damnit! Stop!” Caed started already. With a sharp thrust of his hips the head slipped inside. The boy yelped loudly and tried to move forward and get away. Tom was not having that. He grabbed him by both hips and forced himself inside roughly. Caed screamed in pain and he could feel his arse fluttering and panicking around him.

“Shhhhhhhh shhhhhhh” he soothed absently, pulling back carefully. The boy subsided into sobbing, obviously thinking he was pulling out. When he slammed back in Caed shrieked in pain again and started yelling for him to stop, begging for him to stop. The third thrust was much smoother and he knew it was blood lubricating it. He sighed in relief and this time when he had sunk himself balls deep he stayed there, leaned down over the hysterically sobbing boy’s back, holding him and enfolding him in his arms. “It’s over.. the painful part is over Caed. Shhh.. “ Caed didn’t respond and with effort he pulled them both down, still connected, to lie spooned on their sides. Now he could hold Caed and kiss the back of his neck.

He applied himself to stroking and kissing the boy until he calmed slightly and scrubbed at his eyes with the back of his hand.

He sounded miserable when he asked “Did you have to hurt me.. or did you just want to?” Tom sighed. “I had to..” he offered back. The boy didn’t respond. Tom moved his hips experimentally and halted when Caed hissed in pain. “When is the feeling good part supposed to start?” Caed whimpered at him.

Tom let his head fall foward till his forehead rested against the boy’s neck, which was damp with cold sweat. Fuck.. how was he supposed to bring him off like this. They had to come together for the spell to work correctly. It was a marriage binding spell –not an enslavement spell. Merlin! Why hadn’t he found out what the numbing oil spell was that Grindelwald had used. That would have made everything here much easier.

He lifted his head cursing himself. Perhaps the prick could still help him.

“I can make it feel good..” he whispered at Caed’s neck and slowly.. slowly pulled out.

Caed heaved a sigh of relief when Tom’s cock popped free of his arse. However he protested when he was roughly turned and struggled fiercely when Tom picked up his legs. “No.. don’t! Please! I don’t want to. Please don’t! Stop Tom!!”

Tom snarled and strained to immobilise him, bending him in half to stop the flailing legs from kicking him. “Calm down!” he demanded.

Caed was not listening. Tom gave up on trying to persuade him and instead concentrated on getting his cock back into the boy, ignoring the scream and renewed sobbing this produced. When he was sunk back in he leaned down and tried to kiss him, receiving a bitten lip for his trouble. “Spiteful little creature” he hissed, licking at the blood.

“Get the fuck off me” Caed demanded. “I don’t want to do this anymore.”

Tom snarled at him. “Fine.. Enslavement spell it is.”,
He summoned his wand from his robe outside the bed.

The frantic movement stilled immediately. “What?” Caed said, frightened. “No! Please don’t! Please don’t, Tom!! You said if I took the mark you wouldn’t..”

Tom parted the legs he was holding down and lowered himself to lay down on the boy, absently noticing the way Caed’s legs automatically wrapped around him. Brushing the blonde hair out of his beautiful eyes he told him quietly “I never said I wouldn’t use both, Caed.
I have to bind you to me to prevent Dumbledore from taking you somewhere that I cannot reach, even if I might be able to feel you are there.
And..I want to.
I want you to be mine.. Do you understand?
I’ve never even faintly considered doing this with any other...”

“..I wasn’t going to use an enslavement charm. I...wanted..” he trailed off, feeling strangely inept.

Caed, seeming to understand that something warranted a careful touch, tentatively leaned up and kissed him gently. “What did you want?” he asked quietly.

Tom looked up hopefully, meeting the emerald eyes.
“It’s...a marriage bonding charm. It will enable me to selectively limit...or not...the distance you may be from me.
It...will allow us to..sense one another’s emotions better...it will enhance our future unions..
It won’t force you to obey me unquestioningly. I can’t use it to punish you physically – other perhaps than by restricting you to remain in my presence.”

“...but..it requires blood..and mutual desire..you have to want to be mine, Caed.”

The boy in his arms was blinking in shock.
“...you wanted to..marry..me?!!” he said as if examining some fascinating, horrible new prospect.

Tom looked away, embarrassed and angry. “It was a foolish idea. Forget it. I shouldn’t have even told you.” He raised his wand to cast the servire coercenda.

Caed gripped his wand and pushed it aside and then pulled him down and kissed him hard. He kept kissing him hungrily and then Tom moaned softly into his mouth as he felt the boy move his hips against him. Clearly he had decided to participate willingly.

Tom carefully moved in gentle counterpoint.
He knew the moment he found the right angle because Caed’s entire body shivered and he pulled away, looking up with an extremely startled expression.

“That felt..”

Tom did it again and Caed gasped and closed his eyes in pleasure.
“Better?” he whispered against the boy’s neck, licking him. He received only an eager whimper and a nod. The legs around him tightened however as if to prevent him from departing.

Tom smiled and started to fuck him there a bit harder, landing the right angle once every few strokes and making Caed yelp and groan in pleasure.

The boy clung with his arms around his neck and panted and bucked. “Ohhh.. I’m gonna..” he mumbled urgently.

Tom broke out of his embrace as if burned and leapt back. wrapping tight fingers around the base of
Caed’s cock.
“Not quite yet” he panted back, continuing to fuck him. Caed arched suddenly, crying out, and Tom felt his legs shake against him.
He felt himself close to losing his own nut at the delicious fluttering around him and struggled to pull back from the edge, thrusting more gently.

By the time Caed’s spine softened, he felt he had himself in grip again. He put his hand around the boy’s cock and started to stroke him.
The lust and panic in the green eyes when Caed looked at him was delicious.

He made a note to himself to remember to thank the German for this little trick.

Caed tipped over the edge again, screaming louder this time. The excited palpitating of the boy’s arse was marvelous..even stronger than before.
Tom smirked. This really was very satisfying.. He kept it up, here and there having difficulty keeping control, till Caed was begging exhaustedly with manic eyes.

“Tom.. it’s too much.. I can’t again.. not so soon. Can’t breathe.”

Smiling he lowered himself to lie against the now hot and sweat dampened body. “mmmm.. you feel wonderful” he murmured at the dazed boy’s lips.

Caed kissed him wearily and wrapped slick arms around him. He sighed, feeling content with the world. This was perfect.
Even the screams of agony and terror from outside, which had at some point started up again, pleased him. He rubbed himself against the sweaty boy in delight, grinding his cock inside him, and bent his head to lick up the slippery chest. “You smell like amortentia.” He whispered.

Caed groped at him and kissed him, suddenly frantic and needy again.

Responding willingly, Tom fucked him harder and slid a hand down between their slick skins to grip Caeds cock, swallowing the thrilled groans of the boy into his mouth.
He felt his own release hovering on the very brink and held it barely at bay.

When he felt Caed tense he let himself fall with him.
It was somehow so different than anything he’d ever felt before, slick wet skin clenching and clutching at one another, the hot panting mouth on his own.. it was as if they melted into one writhing, burning creature.

He barely had the sense in his mind to pull away and grip his wand, murmuring the charm before falling back upon Caé’s throat to bite and suck at him mindlessly, lost in his own pleasure and the thrum of the heartbeat against his mouth.
Chapter 16

Caed’s voice woke him and he started up in panic. How long had he been asleep?! Damn.

No.. it was fine.. someone would have come to check on them if it was getting late..early..

“Mmmm?” he hummed questioningly. He had no idea what the boy had said next to his ear.

“I said.. you were right.. That felt better than anything” Caed mumbled and kissed the shell of his ear. Tom allowed himself a wide smug grin against his neck. He was lying half on top of the boy, his face still buried in Caed’s neck and one knee raised and curled against him in a straddle.

“How long was I sleeping?” he asked, cracking his eyes open and raising his head. Oh.. his head felt so heavy.. he would kill to be able to just turn over and go back to sleep now. Although.. that wasn’t saying much. He would pay Dumbledore an earnest-sounding compliment to be able to turn over and go back to sleep.

“I don’t know” Caed said thoughtfully. “I dropped off for a bit. The screams are different now. I think it’s someone else.”

Tom sighed and forced himself up off the warm body he was almost certainly crushing. Caed tried to tighten his arms around him and keep him in place.

“No.. don’t go..” he whispered forlorn.

Tom smiled. A genuine smile. Caed had enjoyed being crushed beneath him.. He turned it into a smirk for the boy. “Don’t worry...wife...I’m not going far.”

The indignant look made him chuckle. “Oi! I’m not your wife. If anything we’re both the husband.”

Caed snorted and grinned suddenly and threw an arm over his eyes.

“What?” tom demanded. The boy shook his head slightly.

“I just can’t get my head around it.. I..married..Vol-.. You know.. only bloody you would try to marry someone without even telling them”

Tom debated whether to be irritated about the remark but he found he felt unaccountably mellow at present.. He yawned tiredly and stretched, becoming aware as he looked back at Caed of the appreciative look he was receiving. He twitched an eyebrow at him.

“You are...so..painfully..gorgeous” Caed said quietly, still managing to blush slightly at his words. Lovely!! He was glad he would keep the innocence a while longer.

Tom leaned down over him and kissed him lightly. “and I am also your husband..Say it!”

Caed shivered and whispered. “you’re...my husband..” Tom saw him swallow hard. Then Caed laughed suddenly. It sounded a little hysterical.

“I..became a death eater and married.. Voldemort. Oh my fucking God...”

Tom shook his head. “Yes yes. Life is strange and unpredictable. Get up. It’s time to show the
others that you are more than my toy.”

Caed sat up quickly. “What do you mean?” Tom didn’t respond – the boy knew what he meant.
Softening slightly he crawled toward Caed and manipulated him till the boy sat between his legs,
his back against Tom’s chest, curled in a protective embrace.
Leaning down, he whispered in the blonde’s ear.
“I want you to play a role for me... It is not Abraxas.. or Gyphus or Palmer.. it’s certainly not me..
I want you to play the role of Caedmon..
Not the boy you are when we are alone together.. not Caed..
Caedmon is strong.. ruthless..a pureblood who loathes muggles. He is above my other death
eaters.. and today he must earn their respect.”

Tom half turned Caed gently by his shoulders and looked into his eyes seriously. “Do you
understand?” he asked him softly.
Caed’s green eyes narrowed and he seemed indecisive.
Tom felt a frisson of fear go through him. “It is too late to go back now” he whispered urgently.
Something in his tone or his eyes must have caught Caed because the boy nodded slowly.
“This will destroy me..” he murmured faintly, his eyes haunted.
Tom embraced him quickly.
“No.. You are strong. You will change. But you will not be broken.” Caed shook his head.

“I couldn’t do it.. I couldn’t cast the cruciatus. Not even on someone who’d just killed someone I
loved.”

Tom bit his tongue wondering if Caed was talking about casting a cruciatus on his older self.
“The unforgiveables are somewhat taxing..” he said softly. “you have to mean them.”

Caed snorted, laughing.
“Yeah well.. if I didn’t mean to hurt someone I fucking hated.. I don’t know how I’m going to
mean to hurt some poor muggle i feel sorry for.”

Sighing, tom wrapped his arms tighter around Caed.

“It’s not that difficult. You don’t need to desire to harm the person.. you can merely desire to cast
the curse successfully.
Or.. you can desire to please me.
It is not the direction of the desire that matters so much as the concentration. If your emotions are
scattered and fluctuating wildly... you cast the curse and then the effect is dampened by shock and
guilt or some other diffusing emotion – and thus you fail.
With all the unforgiveables – you must summon intention before you cast. It must be done with a
collected mind. And never use them when your own magical reserves are low.
While most magic is converted out of ambient flows – the unforgiveables and a few other curses
sap your magical core directly. Their strength depends upon your strength.
If you are weakened, they will be ineffectual. They may not work at all if you are nearing critical
levels of depletion.” He kissed the side of the boy’s head.

“I don’t want to use them” Caed said softly. “ever!”

Tom huffed impatiently.
A woman’s voice was begging softly outside and there was laughter.

“Caed.. You must. You do not wish to change the timeline, do you?
If you refuse to do as I ask then eventually I will have to protect you against my knights..that is..death eaters.. and its possible I will lose – there are seven of them and they have duelled me for years now.

Gyphus occasionally gets the drop on me.
Similarly – I cannot simply avoid the issue and refuse to order you to participate.. the same thing would happen.”

“You must be one of them. You must show them your strength..
Show them that you are as involved in this night as they are, or else they will fear you might betray us all.”

He stroked Caed’s chest slowly. The boy took a long time to respond and when he did his voice was colourless.

“I don’t know how to be Caedmon. There is no Caedmon.”

Tom sighed. “Be someone else then. Do you know any other death eaters from your time. Be someone they don’t know. Someone vicious.”

Caed swallowed.
“Bellatrix” he breathed, sounding sickened.
Tom frowned and half turned “A woman? I have female death eaters?! Whatever for?! How would that work in light of the kind of amusements the others enjoy?!
Surely a woman would be appalled and uppity in the face of it – even if she considered the muggles lower life forms.”

Harry snorted. “Tom, I’m appalled at it. Anyone who isn’t a bloody psychopath would be!
I don’t know how many female death eaters you have. I only know about Bellatrix. She’s fucking evil. And crazy. She’s absolutely stark raving mad in fact..
I think you like her that way.”

Tom smirked. Caed seemed to be finding it easier to tell him more about his own future. He didn’t want to make the boy aware of it.

“She sounds relatively acceptable then.. Be her.. perhaps be her with slightly less..madness..as you put it.”

Caed shivered.

Tom summoned their boxer shorts wandlessly and passed Caed his. “we must go now” he informed him quietly and climbed out from behind him, slipping between the curtains naked into the firelit clearing.

He glanced at the knot of half dressed wizards who had all turned to look at him with interest.
The older blonde woman was hanging naked from invisible restraints in the air and was criss crossed with minor cutting hexes all over her body. One eye was swollen closed.

Tom slipped his boxer shorts on and parted the curtain, looking in at Caed with a ‘come on now’ expression. The boy was shaking and all wide eyed desperation.
But then, as tom watched, his expression changed. It became manic and excited. The effect was a little unnerving in fact. It looked like Caed was unravelling before his eyes.

Caed turned over and crawled to the edge of the bed, climbing out and throwing himself at him, kissing him rabidly.
Tom received the affection, worried at what this new persona might do. The boy had imitated others perfectly. Was it wise to have him play a mad witch? He felt hands slither down his chest and around him, down onto his arse, pulling them both together as Caed ground against him.

“Mmmmm..” the boy purred through the vicious biting kiss, suddenly releasing him and spinning off to retrieve his wand from his robes on the ground.

Tom blinked and watched him bounce off toward the others, apparently unaffected by the rather thorough reaming he had just received.

Caed looked like a child at a birthday party and grinned as he pointed his wand up at the snivelling woman.

“Engorgio” he cried joyfully, pointing at the somewhat saggy breasts.

Tom walked slowly after him, ignoring Abraxas and Gyphus questioning expressions that seemed to cry “what exactly did you do to him?!”

The woman’s breasts were enlarging dramatically. However, as her skin was covered in cuts, the overall effect of this was to split her skin further, tearing wide rifts as her breasts became first pleasantly, then unnaturally and then obscenely large, huge bloody balloons on the front of her body. She cried out hoarsely, unable to even scream at the pain.

“Holy fuck” Palmer said, delighted. “that’s brilliant!!”

Tom studied Harry who was similarly crowing.

“az-Zyt al-Mghly!” he cried out suddenly.

The woman somehow found voice enough to emit frantic shrieks and shake and struggle against the invisible bonds.

Tom suspected what she was shrieking about and cast a deeper cutting hex in the bottom of one of the massive balloons.

Boiling black tar drizzled out onto the grass below.

Caed turned and looked at him with wide adoring eyes. “Last defense class we covered Surinaste burning hexes.” He said excitedly.

Tom nodded, offering a small smile of approval.

“Continue. What else did you learn in the class?”

Caed turned back and cast three more hexes in quick succession. The blonde was bald, blackened and barely struggling when he had finished.

Tom could see that her body would give out under the stress soon enough.

He stepped up to Caed and placed an approving hand on his shoulder. “You paid attention despite my absence. Good. Finish her.”

The flinch was almost completely sublimated. He only noticed it because he was touching the boy and through a strange..tingle..- a disembodied moan of horror in his mind..

Caed smiled over his shoulder at him in that manic way and then raised his wand.

“Sectumsempra!” he cried jubilantly.

That was an unfamiliar curse! His little innocent knew a nasty curse that Tom himself had not learned. Delightful!

Tom watched with great interest as bone deep cuts ripped through the obscenely distended burnt body and gore and oil poured out onto the grass in rivers.
The woman didn’t even whimper.. a faint choked rattle was the only sound as the life that she had left evaporated into the night air.

Caed was laughing and jumping up and down in excitement and turned to him for a kiss.

He wasn’t sure he liked this particular role the boy was playing but he kissed him and stroked his hair dotingly, enfolding him in his arms.
He held the kiss until Caed pulled away and then simply looked into his eyes, wide with unnatural manic happiness. Behind them the body was being levitated away to lie with five others.
Had they been gone that long?!

Abraxas and Gyphus were abruptly at his side and Caed looked to the side in surprise, his eye then wandering down in further surprise.
Apparently he had not noticed the other wizard’s state of undress before.
Abraxas frowned at him, looking back to Tom while Gyphus flexed subtly. Irritatingly, Caed blushed and Tom pinched him to get his attention back from the body that was more heavily muscled than his own.

Caed grinned and turned, planting a heady kiss on him before struggling free and bouncing off to join Antonin and Palmer, where he received slaps on the back and grins.

Tom’s attention shifted unwillingly back to Abraxas who was patiently waiting with a controlled inquisitive expression.

“Are congratulations perhaps in order.. or did we mishear?” the cultured voice demanded in soft distaste.

Tom narrowed his eyes, glancing between the two. “I will explain the situation to you later.” He informed him. “You did not mishear. we are bound.”
This last comment he addressed pointedly to Gyphus who averted his narrowing eyes.

He was about to push past them when Gyphus growled angrily. “What’s going to happen to him when you get tired of him after five minutes like all the others? Will you just kill him??”

Tom had him on his knees curled in pain in seconds.
His voice was icy when he informed him “I fail to see what concern it is of yours Gyphus, but Caed is not like any other.”

 Abraxas fixed him with polite inquiry again, perhaps seeking to defuse the situation. “And Elana?”
Tom looked away.
“-will no longer be seen on my arm or in my bed” he answered quietly. “Take her if you desire her, Abraxas.”

At that he stalked off to join the others. The tiny blonde girl was sucking Alphard’s cock while the others stood around watching. Caed looked completely absorbed by events.
He moved to stand next to him and a surreptitious hand searched out and clung to his. He pulled Caed close and held him again, enjoying the warmth of the boy’s chest against his own in the cool air.

Caed leaned in and whispered in his ear. “That’s a child, tom! A little kid!”

Tom looked over Caeds shoulder at the small girl. She seemed entirely unharmed. Whoever had been with her hadn’t started in on her yet apparently, although her eyes were red and swollen from crying.
Alphard reached his end and pulled out, spilling himself on her face and making her cry anew while everyone else laughed.

Tom sighed internally and whispered in Caed’s ear. “I didn’t realise she was so young. Abraxas likes them very young.. very blonde.. I was tired and she was there. It is too late now.”

Caed pulled back and looked at him with determination. He spoke loud enough for the others to hear -
“I want her. Isn’t it common to give gifts when you bond? Give her to me.”

His own eyes widened in surprise. Caed wanted her?!! The steely glint in the boy’s eye didn’t betray his thoughts.. he could feel only resolute desire from the boy.

“...Fine..” he said softly.
“Palmer. Let the girl go. I am giving her to Caed. As a gift...”

There was a frustrated growl from the boy who had been about to shove his cock down the tiny thing’s throat. “Can’t he wait till I’m done?!?” Tom flicked off a stinging hex without bothering to look at him and imperioed the girl, walking her over to Caed.
“There. She’s yours. Go and enjoy her.”

He watched with a strange cold feeling inside as the blonde took the girl by the hand and led her back to the bed, helping her to climb in and closing the curtains behind him.

Seeing the discontented expression on his face, the recovered Gyphus who had joined them all commented “Trouble in paradise already?!?”
Tom sent a tongue lengthening curse at him and turned away in irritation.

There were only two muggles left. One of them was the blonde boy Gyphus had first taken. He levitated the terrified wretch over and stood him up in the centre of them all, examining him thoughtfully.
He was nowhere near as attractive as Caed.
His eyes were a rather watery blue and his body was a bit too gangly.
Walking around him he could see the rests of dried blood on the back of his thighs.

He stopped in front of him again and tilted his head up slightly with the tip of his wand. The boy was shaking like a leaf.

“Please..please don’t kill me” he whimpered. “I..don’t want to die.”

Tom tilted his head. “What would you do to live?” he asked curiously. The boy’s eyes widened.

“Anything!! Anything! Please!! Let me go!! I won’t tell! Please”

Tom backhanded him absently. “None of that please. We are having a conversation. Try to keep your responses on topic. Now.. would you get down on your knees and fuck every boy here?”

The boy dropped to his knees at once. “I want to live.” He said again.

Tom shook his head. “It was a question, not a directive. Would you kill her?” he gestured at the terrified black haired girl whose red lipstick was smeared over her face.

The boy hesitated, looking fearfully at the naked bruised girl.
Tom wondered vaguely whether Roan had taken out his frustration upon her or whether it had been one of the others.
“Yes.” The boy said miserably. “I’d kill her to live. I don’t want to be like..like that blond girl.. please don’t.” Tom flicked a stinging hex at him

“Remaining on topic, muggle! I won’t tell you again”

He wondered what Caed was doing now. Was he fucking the little blonde? He’d thought the boy was upset when he’d whispered.. but he was playing some mad role. Perhaps this Bellatrix woman liked to toy with children. Would Caed do that if he was pretending to be her? He wanted to go and check but it would look bad if he did so.

He examined the boy who was in no way as desirable as Caed.. - as his husband, he reminded himself -, slightly disturbed by the notion that he was bound..married.. Turning, with an evil smirk he severed and summoned a chunk of flesh from the almost cooked blonde corpse and levitated it before the boy

“Eat.”

The boy looked around at all the faces in horror. He seemed to want to say something.. to protest.. to rail against this.. but the survival instinct won over and he gripped the meat quickly and tore a bite out of it. Most of his death eaters cheered in delight. Gyphus tongue still hung obscenely halfway down his chest but he slurred a cheer of amusement even so.

“Good.” Tom commended the boy. “How does it taste?”

The kneeling figure retched slightly and looked up at him with teary eyes. “It’s fine” he managed, green about the gills.

“No.. What does it taste like?” Tom asked. “You see.. we are wizards, not cannibals. We don’t eat human flesh – that would be barbaric. Only Muggle animals do such things. Therefore in the spirit of academic inquiry – I would like to know what that tastes like.” He gestured with his wand.

The boy swallowed and struggled with his words. “-it tastes like..” His face twisted in a grimace straight out of a frieze of tortured souls.

“Yes?” tom prompted.

The boy started sobbing suddenly. “it tastes like me mam’s Sunday roast before the war. It tastes like roast pork. I’m sorry.. i’m so sorry! I don’t want to go to hell!!”

Tom took all this in with interest. “If it tastes so good.. you should really finish it. After all – it is a crime to waste good food during wartime.”

The boy sobbed louder and looked around the circle as if hoping to receive help from someone else. The others were watching avidly.

He knew that they tended to prefer the more obvious physical torture.. but it always interested him more to see exactly what people were capable of in dire peril.

The boy raised the hunk of charred flesh to his lips again unwillingly, disgust and aversion painting
his features.

“There you go.. come along. Quickly.. and I might decide you deserve to go free. I can bring you back to the exact place I took you. Wouldn’t you like that? To go back to the nice muggle slum?”

The blonde’s eyes got large and wild and he took a huge bite out of the meat, chewing it frantically and swallowing, then taking another and another. He really wanted to live, apparently.

“Leave him to finish his meal” Tom instructed them all and levitated the last muggle over. She didn’t scream.

He wasn’t sure whether it was a bizarre sense of self preservation or pure shock – but she goggled at him as he drew her over and lowered her down to the ground a few metres from the blonde boy on his knees tearing at the hunk of meat.

She looked up at him silently, her arms wrapped around herself covering at least her breasts from sight while a neat black triangle of pubic hair was exposed. She was quite attractive and he looked at her speculatively.

“And just what might you do to live?” he asked softly.

She swallowed.

“Nothing. You’ll kill me anyway. Just like you’ll kill him too.” She said in a bare whisper.

“So get on with it. I’ve made my peace. I’m going to my final judgement.. you can destroy my body but you won’t get my soul!”

Tom’s eyes widened in pleased surprise.

“Intelligent enough to comprehend your circumstances. That is truly rare in livestock like yourself! Very well I accept your challenge. Let us see whether we cannot tarnish that shiny little soul of yours. I would hate for you to miss out on damnation.”

Tom looked around at the others where, with the exception of Antonin, everyone wore expressions of confusion.

He explained. “Muggles believe that if they are good, nice, sweet little boys and girls, - when they die, a God will send them to a wonderful place full of bread and honey and milk and biscuits and all of the people they like..forever. It’s called heaven.

If on the other hand they are naughty – they go to Hell - a dark place of fire and sulphur and red hot pokers up the backside and are tortured without respite forever.

As far as I can determine – some muggles think that hell is full of all the evil blaggarts that ever existed and divided by area according to the various wrongdoings they have committed.. while others believe that hell is empty and one suffers alone forever..”

He frowned slightly as the incongruent idea of his horcrux diary wandered through his mind in an unwelcome fashion.

“He seems lonely..”

He had only made it last year. It wouldn’t be so terrible to spend a year without other people, would it?

“So.. who decides what ‘wrongdoing’ sends you to the Hell place then?” Darius asked, sounding enthralled.

Tom shrugged

“God I suppose. I remember some of the unforgiveable sins.. The first is fornication. I don’t see a
ring upon your finger so you’ve already committed that one, little muggle.”

The girl protested. “I never did! I was raped..I was chaste before tonight. God will forgive me.”

Tom stalked closer. There was a faint red mark around her neck.
“was she wearing a necklace” he asked the others, not turning. There was some shuffling.

He fixed Roan with a long even stare. “You have it. Give it to me. You may have it back after.”

The boy summoned a silvery chain and passed it over, looking down. “I only wanted-..”

“I don’t care” Tom informed him and turned back to the girl. “A crucifix I believe, is the term” he smiled down at her.
She nodded cautiously.
Tom’s smile widened. “Ah yes. I believe it represents Christ – who is in some way also God. I never understood how that worked. But it is so, isn’t it?”

The girl looked uneasy and nodded again. “Can I have it back?”

Tom snorted, amused. “Thou shalt not make idols” - your god has instructed that no physical representations – such as this crucifix – are to be made or worshipped. Thats one strike there.
Have you ever washed your hair or tidied your room on a Sunday?
Have you ever disobeyed your parents knowingly?”

“Have you ever lied?”

The girl looked up at him wide eyed. “Those little things don’t matter. God will see my soul is pure. I’ve tried to be a good person”

Tom nodded as if agreeing. “Perhaps you are right.”

“One questions why your God would go so far as to make those things commandments if they are not important.. But let us move on.”

He glanced over his shoulder at the bed, where the curtains were still closed and suppressed the scowl that wanted to twist his features.. He stepped even closer to the girl, who was standing defensively, until her folded arms brushed his chest. She took a half step back, her eyes widening in fear and then becoming hard once more.

“Do you find me attractive?” he purred softly, stepping forward again.

She shook her head frantically. “You’re evil. I saw what you did..”

Tom laughed gently in the way he knew all the girls liked. “Do you think.. objectively seen.. That I am quite a good-looking boy?
Do you think others might find me attractive.. If they didn’t know what I made that boy do, you understand?”

The girl didn’t answer but looked more nervous.

“Please answer the question.. “ he entreated, stepping against her again and brushing a hand down her cheek.

“No!” she said quickly. “You’re not. Don’t touch me.” she moved away.

Tom put a finger to his chin and gave the appearance of deep thought. “I wonder.. whether you
might not be knowingly lying right now” he mused aloud. 
Looking up he tilted his head “Then again.. perhaps you are homosexual – another damning sin, I am informed”

The girl shook her head “No.. I’m not.. either. I just don’t think you’re good looking.”

Tom heard sniggers around the ring of boys surrounding them and put on a hurt expression. “I am wounded.. but then – I’m certain you’ll know yourself whether you are currently damning yourself in an intentional lie, purely to try to insult me. After all.. You would never put your soul in jeopardy for something so frivolous.”

The girl started to shake. “I...”

Tom looked up with an innocent expression he generally saved just for Dumbledore. “Yes?” he prompted.

“Other people might find you attractive” the girl whispered. “if they didn’t know how evil you are”

Tom smiled, nodding. “ah.. truth at last. You concede that I am good looking in your estimation. Are you also capable of admitting that you find me attractive?”

He ignored Alphard’s impatient huff in the background. The boy was obviously tiring of this little game and wanted to get back to hexing the muggles. Well.. he would have to wait. Tom was having fun now.

It took a long time before the girl nodded once, much averse to doing do.

He smiled, pleased and stepped closer again. “Well done.. I see it was very difficult for you to be truthful.”

As the girl had been moving back, Antonin behind her had not been moving correspondingly and so there was only a step to go before she would be pressed up against him. The Russian exchanged a long understanding look with Tom. He and Abraxas were the two who tended to like this kind of game and Tom had the feeling that the boy took in a lot more of what went on around him than he ever showed. The black eyes flicked only for a fraction of a second toward the curtained bed and Tom averted his gaze. He did not wish to think about that right now.

As he moved forward the girl glanced behind and realised that another boy stood behind her. She wrapped her arms around herself more tightly and closed her eyes. “Our father who art in heaven” she whispered. Tom took the opportunity to move in and embrace her gently, rocking her slowly.

“There.. calm down now. You’re ok.”

He looked at Antonin pointedly, lowering his brows and the boy stepped back and disillusioned himself.. the others following suit, Alphard last of all, looking irritable. In his peripheral vision the kneeling blonde boy disappeared. He wondered whether it was Antonin.

“You can open your eyes now.. I’ve sent them all away. You’re safe.” He said softly.

The girl continued to whisper her prayer.
Tom stroked her hair back from her face and waited patiently.

After a minute the girl opened her eyes timidly. “Will you kill me quickly?” she whispered. “I’d rather not die like that other girl.”

Tom inclined his head.
“You are so certain that you will die. You are more intelligent than the others.. I like intelligence. Perhaps I might allow you to go.”

The girl’s eyes did not even flare in hope. “No. you won’t.” She said dully. “You just like to torture people with their minds instead of their bodies like those other boys.”
Tom smiled in pleased surprise again.
“You would like a quick and painless death then..” he murmured low.

The girl swallowed, looking up at him.

He tilted his head and offered her his finest panty-soaking smile “I would like to kiss you. Will you allow it?”

She stared and then blushed, looking around confused.
“Where did the others go? They wouldn’t just leave like that”

Tom was pleased again.

“We are wizards.. we can come.. and go..at will. It is magic.”

Biting her lip, the girl seemed to accept that. Her blue eyes flicked back to him uncertainly.

“Alright then. You’ll kiss me and then.. it will be quick and painless?” her voice wavered.

Tom didn’t respond but leaned down slowly until he could brush his lips across hers feather light.

As he kissed her tenderly, her arms unwound themselves from her body and gingerly wound themselves about his. It was too easy.

He broke away from her mouth and kissed her again as the hand on her breast moved down slowly, fingertips grazing down her body and delved gently between her legs.

She gave way sooner than he expected. His tongue met her own tentative one and he delved smoothly, satisfied as he heard her faint surprised moan.

As he kissed her tenderly, her hips rocked against his hand and she gripped him more tightly, balancing on unsteady legs.

She gasped and mewed as he teased her with practiced ease, playing her like a familiar instrument.

She didn’t resist when his hand moved to cup and stroke her firm little breast. Her nipples were already standing up sharply.

“ohhhh.. stop..” she whispered and moaned again as he sucked on a particularly sensitive spot.

He moved back and kissed her again as the hand on her breast moved down slowly, fingertips grazing down her body and delved gently between her legs.

She made a muffled protest through the kiss but it gave way to a gasp of surprise as he manipulated her clit skilfully. Her hips rocked against his hand and she gripped him more tightly, balancing on unsteady legs.

At his urging they both lowered themselves to the grass and he lay over her, still kissing her while his hand strummed her to a frenzy.

She even parted her legs for him.

He resisted the urge to smirk. It would be a most inopportune time.
Instead he broke the kiss and moved to suck on the nipple of the breast he had been gently massaging and stroking. She moaned again surprised and arched, pressing it against his mouth.

When he delved two fingers down and penetrated her, his thumb still circling her tiny button, she clutched at him and seemed to whimper.

Were she a witch, he knew he would probably soothe her with his tongue, but he was not going to put his mouth there on a muggle. It was bad enough kissing them. Instead he simply gentled his movements further until she relaxed and started to rock her hips against his hand again.

Looking up with his best uncertain expression he whispered. “Do you want me to-..” trailing off meaningfully.

The girl whimpered and bucked on his fingers. The aversion and need warred on her face.

Tom lowered his head and tongued her other breast, suckling at it gently and flicking her clit with his thumb.

“Yes..” she whimpered.

He moved up her, never stopping the movement of his fingers and thumb and kissed her again. “Are you sure? If you don’t want to I won’t.”

The girl clutched at him, fucking his fingers desperately. “I..yes...” She whispered.

He vanished his boxers wandlessly and shifted till he was poised between her legs. Only in the last moment did he remove his fingers and guide his cock into her. After Caeds tight burning-hot velvety channel she felt cool and wide and far too wet. He slid in too easily. She made a surprised face and arced again.

He leaned down and started to move in her, fucking her in long smooth strokes.

“Ohhhhh.. its... so different.. to the other boy.” She whimpered and tried to kiss him again.

Tom allowed it and slapped into her a little harder, rotating his hips slightly on the upstroke, while he worked her mouth over.

It would feel different, he mused. He was at least two inches longer than Roan and a decent sight thicker. In addition he had had a lot of experience discovering just what females liked and how to bring them to earth-shaking climax. The girl currently moaning into his mouth now was receiving the benefit of his diligent study and experimentation.

He broke the kiss.

“I.. I have to confess.” He said uncomfortably.

Her lust blunted features sharpened, but only slightly. She was too focused on moving against him and running her fingers through the back of his hair. Her other hand on the middle of his back was pressing down as if to pull him deeper. “Mmmm?” she moaned.

“I..I’m married. I.. it only happened recently.. I’m ..it..slipped my mind..earlier..It’s all so new.. and I’m not sure we should be-..”
The girl froze only for a second but his harder thrusts melted her. “Doesn’t matter.. Ohhhh.. don’t stop that.. please.. feels so good.”

Tom pulled out swiftly and got to his feet, wiping his mouth and scourgifying himself wandlessly.

The girl took a moment to realise what was happening and then whimpered at his cruel dark expression, sitting up and curling into a tight defensive ball.
“You... you.. it was all..” she yelped near tears.

Tom glanced up at the faint shimmers in the air pointedly and they cancelled their disillusionment one by one, leering in amusement. Even Alphard looked pleased, Tom noted.

“No no. You’re a bright little thing. We’ve all realised. Where were we? Ah yes. Fornication. You discounted your earlier fuck with my colleague”
At palmer’s raised eyebrows and smirk Tom amended “Oh pardon me – colleagues. I believe you cited that rape.. didn’t count. ...Or something to that effect.
I am sure though that you must count your little.. experience.. with me.
After all.. I did ask you quite clearly whether I could kiss you.. you agreed. I asked you twice whether you wished to be fucked and you – as everyone witnessed – apparently did. And unfortunately I fear we must also add adultery to your list of sins since I confessed to you of my recent marriage and you stated – I quote ‘doesn’t matter.. don’t stop’
We might add coveting your neighbours husband to your list of sins also in all probability.”

“If indeed your god was prepared to ignore your idolatry, disrespect toward your parents and no doubt innumerable lies – I wonder whether fornication and adultery are equally trifling?!
What do we have left?
Oh yes.. The most important sin of all, isn’t that right?
Muggles tend to believe they will be quite safe provided they don’t commit this one.”

Tom summoned his wand and pointed it at the girl, casting the imperius. Her eyes became dazed and she smiled faintly. He accioed a leaf and transfigured it into a knife, walking forward and handing it to the girl.
Smirking then, he looked up at the blonde boy who was still on his knees and trying to look as unobtrusive as possible.
There was no sign of any meat.

“Boy.. I believe you said you would kill to survive.
I hope for your sake you were telling the truth because she is shortly going to try to kill you.
Prepare yourself. Prove you deserve to live.”

Tom stepped back, curious how the little fight would play out.
He realised he didn’t really care who won. His kn-death eaters looked, to a man, thoroughly entertained.

The black haired girl got to her feet purposefully, hefting the knife and walking toward the boy, who gaped and scrambled to his own feet, backing away.

When the girl ran at him he turned and raced full pelt toward the treeline, where he met with an invisible barrier and bounced off, landing on his back.
The girl was on him in a second, knife raised and they struggled as the boy punched at her and tried to wrest the blade from her.

In the end though, his hand slipped and the blade dropped, plunging into his shoulder. He screamed and struggled but from the moment he’d lost grip on her arm it was essentially over. The girl stabbed down over and over in a frenzy. The boy was dead in under a minute.
Snirking, Tom dropped the imperius just as her hand was dropping to stab into the mutilated chest and watched the blood soaked naked girl complete the movement in pure momentum, her face contorted in sudden horror.

That was the beauty of the imperius. The victim remembered everything.. and they remembered that they had wanted to do whatever they did.

It was a wonderful curse.

The girl shattered, dropping the knife and scratching at herself, trying in a panic to get the blood off. She jumped up and fell away from the boy, scrambling backward on hands and knees to get as far as she could from the red, nearly eviscerated form.

“I didn’t!... I wouldn’t! It was you!!..”

Tom gifted her with a sad smile. “I have been standing here the entire time. I’m afraid that you are responsible for his death, my dear. You held the knife. He was running from you – not I.”

Tom walked a few steps closer and tsked the girl

“And now you are damned.. if indeed you were not already so. Does it feel any different?” He looked at her curiously.

“I want a go with her before you kill her” Alphard said petulantly. “You already took the blonde. I thought we’d have a bit more time with the ones that were left or I wouldn’t have finished off the others so quickly.”

Tom glanced back over his shoulder in irritation.

“Alphard you must have spilled your seed at least a half dozen times already. Have some perspective. The muggle is coming to terms with an eternity of torture and suffering. An ETERNITY.

Can you even begin to imagine that?!..

Pain, rape and abuse – a horror that continues without pause not for days or weeks or years.. but forever..despised by her god and surrounded by the most evil beings imaginable. Naked and without redemption!”

Tom watched as the girl shrank in on herself with each word, shaking and near raving.

“Well.. if she’s going to be tortured forever anyway – can’t we start now and avoid the rush?” Palmer quipped and Tom couldn’t quite suppress a smirk.

The girl spoke then. “Not without-redemption!! I can be redeemed. All I need to do is be truly sorry.. and I am truly sorry.”

“I am sorry for everything I’ve ever done wrong.. I’m sorry i wasn’t always respectful to my parents. I love them and I wish I’d listened to my mum and not gone out tonight. I’m sorry i’ve lied and made excuses about doing it. I was usually afraid of something.

i’m sorry that I.. that I fornicated.. and I’m sorry that I did it with you..and I’m sorry – really sorry – that I helped you betray someone who is probably suffering enough at being married to you..

and most of all I’m sorry for that boy.

I’d never have..done that.. if you hadn’t done something. I know it.

I am sorry I hurt him.. I’m sorry I killed him. I’m sorry for everything and God is going to forgive me!”

Tom looked at her in disgust.

“Fine. Avoid the rush. Have at it” he gestured to the others and spun on his heel, marching off
toward the bed.

He heard Palme’s low satisfied laugh. “Girl.. You talk too much..” he tossed at her. “I don’t want to hear any more about stupid muggle superstitions or I’m gonna cut your tongue out and you’ll see what it’s like to French kiss your own arse. Now.. get over here and play nice or it’ll be worse than that blonde bitch you were so bothered by.”

Tom rolled his eyes, losing interest in the proceedings.

He parted the curtain and found Caed lying on his back, looking up at the stars. The naked blond girl lay on her back beside him, seemingly asleep.

Caed had been right. She did look very young. A mere child.

Tom raised a suspicious eyebrow and pressed his hand over her mouth and nose. She wasn’t breathing.

“You killed her?” he asked almost incredulously. Caed didn’t look at him but glared at the stars.

The girl was in his way. Impatiently he transfigured her into a triangular stone and tossed her to the pile of robes behind him. He would have to keep track of that. Dead muggle children in the forbidden forest could be problematic and biological transfigurations tended to revert as the original form decayed.

Climbing onto the bed he closed the curtains and cast a muffling charm. “What happened?” he asked finally.

Caed folded his arms over his chest. “You already said it. I killed her.”

Inching closer he probed “And how did this happen? You said earlier you were never ever going to use the unforgiveables. Did you perhaps suffocate her with your bare hands?”

Caed turned his face away. Tom moved just a fraction closer again. His new..husband.. looked very upset. It seemed he had misinterpreted the boy’s intent earlier.

“I heard you, you know.” Caed said darkly. “Everything you..did..to them..”

“Oh?” Tom offered, unsure how much damage there was to repair.

“You.. she was right.. you are evil.”

Tom resisted the temptation to try to touch the boy. He had the feeling that they were hovering on the edge of a knife at present and the wrong word or act could make Caed panic and either try to run or try to attack – neither of which was currently possible due to the wards and his mark.

“Why did you do it?” the blonde demanded. “You didn’t have to. I can’t believe I’m saying this but you could have just let them rape and torture her and be done with it.. Why did you..have to-..”

Tom sighed inwardly, relieved that the sorest point of contention was apparently not the acts themselves but the perceived betrayal.
He could deal with that.
He rolled onto his back and looked up at the stars. The sky was more blue than black now, he noted absently as he flicked up a muffling spell around them.

His voice was rough when he spoke
“How did you imagine I would react when you demanded the blond girl as a gift and took her off to bed, not to return for a considerable time?
In light of your previous behaviour?!
How did you think I might interpret that?”

Caed half sat up and hissed. “I had to save her! They were going to-.. I didn’t want her to die like that other girl. She’s ten Tom. TEN!!”

Tom closed his eyes, his face tight.
“That wasn’t what it looked like when you left.. and I couldn’t exactly come and check on you.
I was..thinking..of you..and feeling perhaps a little angry.. and it seemed justified to make the point with the muggle. I’m sure you noted that Istopped as soon as my point was made.
It’s hardly as if I desired the girl.”

Caed covered his face with his arms and muttered something unintelligible.

“Pardon?” Tom prompted and Caed removed them and repeated, exasperated “I said, I don’t even know if that makes it better or worse. I thought.. I told myself that you weren’t Voldemort yet. You weren’t ..quite.. evil.. or something. I don’t know how i convinced myself that Tom Riddle and Voldemort were different.
I mean.. I even knew better.. I know what you’ve-“

he corrected “some of what you’ve done already – you tortured two kids in a cave way before you ever came to Hogwarts.
It’s hardly like there’s any point where there’s this nice caring Tom Riddle and then something happens and leaves a burnt out shell of evil.
It’s like you’ve always been this way.. and I’m fucking stupid or something.. Because I keep trying to pretend to myself that you’re not bad at all.”

“...When you said you were going to bind me.. when you said you hurt me like that because you had wanted to m-.. because you wanted to..m-marry me and not enslave me.. do you know I actually felt happy?! It would have been better if you’d used the enslaving charm – at least then I’d know I had no choice.
Now I have to live with the fact that I knew you were an evil bastard and I wanted you anyway. Just like that girl.”

Caed sat up and seemed about to leap out of the bed when a sharp urgent scream of pain broke the relative stillness outside..
He pulled his feet in instead and tucked his knees against his chest, shuddering.

Tom sighed, looking up at the stars and feeling strange.
He wasn’t certain what the feeling was exactly.. he wasn’t even sure whether it was his feeling or that of the boy lying next to him.

“...I was happy too..” he said softly. “and then you left with the muggle girl and... I wasn’t happy anymore.”

They lay in silence for a while until Caed abruptly turned and wriggled over to curl against him.
Tom wrapped his arm around him and held him carefully, not wanting to disturb anything with an incorrect act.
After a while he risked stroking the boy’s side slowly and to his relief Caed wrapped his arm around him in return.
Harry lay in bed in the dorm with the curtains closed.

He could hear the others moving about and was considering getting up and going up for breakfast but he didn’t have any classes till after lunch. Potions and arithmancy. Possibly he should work on arithmancy... he hadn’t had the class yet and he was sure it was all going to be gobbldigook today anyway.

Don’t think about it

Maybe he should go up to breakfast and see Tom. Maybe Tom would be upset if he didn’t come...

Don’t think about it

He rubbed his palms into his eyes cursing himself again. Stupid. Why did every bloody thing revolve around him now.

..husband..

the word ghosted through his head irritantly.

But he wasn’t. That was just stupid. Voldemort didn’t marry people – it wasn’t a marriage.

At best it was a binding to protect him from Dumbledore. It wasn’t like there was any emotion behind it. Fuck.. he’d only been here a week!

Just because he’d spent the last years researching and fighting and generally knowing Tom Riddle existed – the opposite was obviously not true.

Just because he was a weak insane sap.. didn’t mean that this wasn’t a glorified enslavement to Lord Voldemort.

Against his best will, he thought about what had happened last night... and then tried again not to think about it anymore.

Lifting his arm he could see in the near dark of the closed bed the black shadows on his forearm.

Sectumsempra...

No. he wasn’t going up. He’d only had a few hours sleep. He’d get a few more before he had to face potions and work with tom again.

He rolled over and curled up again.

“Caed. Get up.” Abraxas called irritably.

“I don’t have class till after lunch” he called back.

The curtains were pushed briskly open a moment later.

“I couldn’t care less when you have class. Tom told me to make sure you attended breakfast and you are attending breakfast. Now get your arse up.”

Harry sat up.

“Speaking of arses – what the hell crawled up yours and died this morning!”

Abraxas stalked over and ripped him out of bed by the collar of his pajama pants, tipping him onto the floor. “Some of us have a full day of classes today and don’t have the time to babysit you. Now
move!"

Harry glared and climbed to his feet, padding into the bathroom and showering quickly. When he returned the room was empty apart from Abraxas sitting on his bed impatiently with his legs crossed, doing an amazing impression of Lucius Malfoy in a snit.

“You do realise that because of you he will never be able to work in the ministry!” he hissed as Harry walked past.

Harry turned and looked at him uncomprehendingly. “So? It’s not as if he was ever going to work in the ministry. What the hell does that have to do with me?!”

Abraxas had him pressed up against the bedpost opposite in half a second with his wand at Harry’s throat.

“What would you know, you mentally challenged little waste of space?! You haven’t even troubled yourself to find out how Hogwarts and the British wizarding world operate before insinuating yourself into his affections and ruining everything.
The ministry approached him at the beginning of the year – they were that interested. All he had to do was maintain his grades and date some halfway acceptable witch and he’d have been drafting ministry policy within years...
With his charisma who knows how far he might have gone.”

“No...you’ve burdened us all with your...person... and he is...after one week - bonded to you – which means he is no longer eligible for ministry entry due to the restrictions regarding promotion of fertile marriage and, what’s more - he is suddenly talking about becoming some kind of revolutionary.
The most brilliant mind to have passed through Hogwarts in two hundred years and you have reduced him to a terrorist!
IN A WEEK!!
What will you have done by this time next week?! He’ll be expelled before the year is out, no doubt! And us along with him!
We would have all been better off if you had been killed with your muggle loving parents!”

Abraxas stepped back with a filthy sneer and stalked off toward the door, leaving him there.

Harry sat down heavily on the nearest bed. It wasn’t true! It couldn’t be! Tom hadn’t mentioned it and nothing in the history books had ever even hinted that he could have worked in the ministry..but then they hadn’t mentioned that he was bonded to someone either.
What if it was true?! What if all he would have had to do to save everyone was apparate away as soon as Tom Riddle walked off and left him on the road.

What if everything..everything.. was his fault?!

He’d told Tom about things.. Tom hadn’t known that his servants were death eaters – they were something else before. Last night everyone had looked pretty shocked at what Tom had informed them.

He pulled his legs up against his chest and held them, worried.
What if he was to blame?! Really to blame. What would he do? Kill himself now?
Would that even help anything? – he’d already told Tom enough to get him determined to do exactly what he ended up doing. What good would leaving do?! Maybe it wasn’t too late to..

He shook himself. It didn’t matter. None of it mattered. It didn’t even matter if he was the one to blame. That was what had happened and he couldn’t fix it now by trying to convince Tom to do
something else. It was part of his reality – Tom would become Lord Voldemort.. that was all. And
it was hardly like he was going to be this wonderful caring ministry worker – he enjoyed torturing
and killing muggles for fun with his followers, for goodness sake! – if he’d become minister of
magic legitimately some day – how much worse off would the world have been?

He thought suddenly about his own time. What if Tom ...what if Voldemort had won by now?! What if he was minister of magic now and there was no opposition left.

He frowned at how little that thought affected him in comparison with how he knew he should feel
about it. Other things were more troubling to his mind than Voldemort running the ministry in the
future.

He wasn’t even sure how to think of himself or the world anymore... He’d...cursed that woman.
Horribly. He’d used dark magic on her!! He’d bloody KILLED her. And LAUGHED!! In his mind
he’d heard that crazed high pitched laughter as Bellatrix taunted him. He’d been Bellatrix. No.
Worse. What he’d done to that woman was sick. And as much as he might tell himself that he’d
done it in order to prevent the others from seeing him as a threat and attacking him.. as much as he
might like to believe he’d done it because he had few options in this place without Tom and his
little minions..the truth was – he’d done it for Tom. He’d... it had.. He’d tried to act..he’d tried to
think like Bellatrix..and he’d gotten...a bit carried away. A lot carried away. He’d felt like he was
swimming in shark infested water and paddling to stay afloat.. he’d.. he’d become a shark..so that
the other sharks wouldn’t tear him apart..
He’d become a death eater..
And at least part of the reason for it had been that Tom had wanted it of him..had required it..

The little muggle girl last night had been so scared. She’d told him that ‘the first man’ had played
hide and go seek with her and there were all these people screaming and nowhere to hide.
He’d listened to her for a while and then he’d told her to lie down and go to sleep.
She didn’t want to, so he’d stupefied her.. and then he’d sat and listened to Tom playing with the
religious muggle girl like a cat with a mouse and tried to work up his courage to use the killing
curse on a child.
It had taken a lot of tries till he’d succeeded..
When Tom ended up giving the Christian girl to the others anyway to be tortured, he’d been so
glad that the little girl wouldn’t have to go through that.
The sight of Alphard..forcing her to suck his cock..
He didn’t know whether any of them had raped her. He didn’t want to know. There wasn’t any
blood he could see.. not that he’d looked much.
It was just better that she go to sleep rather than be there for anything else. They were like wolves
that just wouldn’t stop until they’d torn the quarry apart. ...Sharks..scenting blood..

He stumbled over to his bed and got dressed trying not to think anymore.

Walking up to the great hall the corridors were empty and breakfast was almost over when he
finally sat down next to Tom. The head boy was reading his paper and looked breathtakingly
perfect as usual.
As Harry watched, he seemed to blink and struggle to focus.

“Are you ok?” Harry whispered , trying to ignore the disapproving glare Abraxas was giving him.
Tom glanced across sharply and Abraxas pretended to be thoroughly absorbed in his cereal.
“I am fine” Tom said with a voice that sounded somewhat harrowed. 
“...Oh.. I almost forgot yesterday, Caed.. I have something for you. It ..may be better though if I do not give it to you right here and now..
Come. You can study in my room until potions. I’m not really very hungry in any case. We’ll go now.”

Harry nodded, curious and mildly apprehensive. “I don’t have my books..”

“You can use mine. Come along.”

Harry got up and left with him, glancing over his shoulder to see Dumbledore looking angrily at them both. He turned away and ignored it.

When they had reached Tom’s room and passed the portrait hole the head boy growled and rubbed his eyes in irritation.
“..I will never again order my affairs around lunar cycles. Last night should have occurred on a Friday or Saturday. I would kiss Charis Crouch right now for an hour’s sleep.

He flicked his hand and his appearance shimmered. A glamour!? As Tom stumbled over toward the couch, he was horrified at how utterly exhausted the boy looked. Worse than yesterday.

“Did you sleep?!” he demanded in a whisper. Tom gave a faint shake. The shadows under his eyes were black and his hair was lank. Tom Riddle’s hair was never anything other than perfect! Harry followed him with genuine worry and tenderness flooding his chest, concerned as Tom flopped down onto the couch and groaned. He walked around it and knelt down next to him.

“Tom..” he whispered and the almost translucent purplish lids flickered open and offered a bleary sapphire glance.
“Caed..” Tom whispered back. “Come here.. I want to hold you for a few minutes before we have to go to class..”

Harry leaned in and kissed him gently.
“Look.. I’ve got some polyjuice left. It..went fine yesterday. I’ll just play you again.. you can sleep until potions. Alright??!” he kissed him again and stroked his cheek, worried.

Tom smiled a lopsided reluctant smile. “it’s too dangerous..” he mumbled, his eyes slipping closed again. Harry snorted and countered, – “It wasn’t too dangerous yesterday. It’ll be fine! Sleep.. I’ll come back and wake you up before potions.”

At that Tom reached out and wrapped his arms around Harry, pulling him close. “Oh thank Merlin!! I thought you weren’t going to argue there for a second.”

Harry smirked.

“Was that the gift you wanted to give me then? The nudge to take your place all day in a bunch of boring classes?”

He felt the head shake against his chin. He waited and after a minute Tom’s hands dropped.

“Tom!!” he demanded pointedly.

The blue eyes flicked open, startled out of sleep. “What?!”

“The gift!”

“Oh.. yes.”
With extreme difficulty he watched the ruined looking boy drag himself upright. He fumbled around in his pocket and pulled out a silver chain with a pendant.

“A necklace? You wanted to give me jewellery?”
Harry looked at it. It didn’t look familiar at all. The pendant was a silver framed onyx in a square cut. It wasn’t ornate or even particularly appealing.

Tom nodded, his eyes falling closed and mumbled “Here.. let me put it on.”

Harry leaned in and allowed the chain to be fixed around his neck and then leaned up and unexpectedly collected a ringing slap across the cheek.
Tom swayed slightly but looked angry.

“What the hell?!?” Harry spat, upset and confused, his hand on the heated stinging patch on his cheek.
Tom blinked and forced his eyes open wide, struggling and succeeding in focusing on Harry. He looked at him sternly

“Never, ever allow anyone.. ..even if they look and sound like me..to put a necklace on you without testing it or at the very least considering whether it is magical. Your life depends on knowing these things automatically!! Try and take the necklace off!”

Harry reached around behind his neck to find the catch and, not finding it, turned the chain. He realised soon that there was no catch and tried to pull the necklace off over his head. It was too tight to fit.
He pulled on it frantically. “What is it?! What have you done now?!?” he demanded, panicking.
Tom shook his head, disapprovingly.

“It’s a little late to be asking that now. If that necklace were cursed you could be dead already.”
Draco Malfoy’s face drifted up wretchedly in Harry’s mind

“If it was something other than what it is.. you might be a mindless slave.. you might be a squib.. there are any number of things you can do with necklaces. They are like oaths. Allowing someone to put one on you is implicitly agreeing to whatever the necklace is empowered to do. This one however will only prevent anyone from penetrating your mind – or removing the necklace.. besides myself. Consider yourself lucky.”

Harry relaxed slightly.

“You didn’t need to slap me..” he muttered resentfully.

Tom smirked, sinking back down into a horizontal position gracefully.

“I felt it wise to express the full measure of my discontent at your foolishness. It would be a shame to become a widow to an idiot.”

Harry frowned at him but felt unaccountably pleased with the comment. ‘he doesn’t want me to be hurt’ he thought happily.

“I am going to be late to arithmancy.” Tom said pointedly. Harry scowled.

“Polite hint?! I’ll get ready right now. Don’t worry”

“The others don’t know today, Caed.. Make certain you don’t run into anyone on the way to class. And deal with Abraxas. He seems to be very irritated with you today. I realised last night that he
may..possibly.. be a little jealous of you. Take that into account in your dealings with him.”

Harry turned away and went to the desk for the polyjuice he’d left last night. He’d just about make it till lunch with what was left.

“He’s not jealous” he said absently as he changed out of his own uniform and put on one of Tom’s somewhat larger uniforms from the closet. “He just hates me.

Apparently I’ve ruined everything. You were going to be minister of magic and now you’re going to be a terrorist and it’s all my fault.”

Tom emitted a vague mmm sound that told Harry he was half asleep and not really listening.

“And then monkeys flew out of his arse and he invited us both to high tea with the queen of hearts on Tuesday. I’m going to wear my flamingo suit. What do you think?”

There was a muffled response of “that’ll be nice. Pink isn’t your colour although I’d like to see you wearing nothing but a few feathers. I’ll speak with him about the ministry.”

As an afterthought Tom added “and the monkeys also perhaps.”

Harry wandered over in the robes and clothes that were too big and smiled down at him.

“Go to class” the reclining boy urged him. “I’ll see you later.”

Tipping the bitter pear flavoured polyjuice back, Harry swallowed, shuddering through the transformation.

“Kiss goodbye?” he asked, grinning nastily, when it had finished and he stood in Tom’s body.

The reclining proto-Voldemort held an arm up for him, without opening his eyes so Harry dropped down eagerly and kissed him with abandon.

“mmmmph” the exhausted boy protested.

He opened his eyes slightly and started slightly in shock, then, smirking evily, pulled Harry back in and snogged him with great enthusiasm.

Harry caught his breath when he was released.

“I wish I had been standing watching that..” he said wistfully.

Tom cracked open his eyes again and frowned, then preened at Harry’s hair and adjusted his tie.

“better” he smirked and made a run-along-now motion with his fingers.

Stepping into arithmancy a few minutes too late he plastered an apologetic expression on his face, opening his mouth to make an excuse but the teacher smiled at him and gestured to his place, turning back to the board.

He sat down between Abraxas and Antonin with relief, taking out his things and preparing to take notes.


If you are asked something I will try to give you the answer. Hopefully you will not be asked.”

Harry looked at him in surprise and gratefulness. whispering in his ear “What gave me away?”

Antonin just smiled secretively and turned back to the front.
As the class progressed Harry found that he did understand some of what was taught. There were some bits...a lot of bits.. that were mystifying. He assumed that those were related to things he hadn’t seen yet.

All in all it was not entirely beyond imagining that he’d eventually be able to do this. He got away with sitting silently attentive for the whole class, although Abraxas was called to answer a question on something Harry hadn’t the foggiest idea about.

Wechsler adendives.

He couldn’t even figure out how they related to the matrix they had been looking at before. Were they a part of it or something else that could be applied to it?!

When they left class, Abraxas said quietly to him. “I need to speak with you regarding Caed.”

Harry raised a brow in a manner he’d seen Tom do frequently and nodded, gesturing for Abraxas to precede him.

Antonin caught his eye and grinned, apparently finding it all a wonderful joke. As Harry followed Abraxas into the next corridor and assumed a stern expression, he caught, out of the corner of his eye, the impression of the Russian surreptitiously following them both.

Abraxas turned to him with a tense frustrated expression. “What are your long term intentions regarding the boy?” he demanded. “I can perhaps see that the official notation of the bonding is suppressed - possibly even arrange for it to disappear entirely, but if you intend to make a spectacle of yourselves, there is nothing I will be able to do to save you.”

“Tell me you have not abandoned your plans to go to the ministry at the end of the year!”

Harry frowned thoughtfully and wondered what Tom would say.

“My.. intentions..are somewhat fluid at this stage. They are also none of your affair, Abraxas! You dare to question me on my plans? You forget yourself!”

“As for whether I am likely to make.. as you put it.. a spectacle.. of myself.. oreille cafard!”

He gripped his wand in his pocket, pointing it subtly at Abraxas through the fabric. The other boy leapt back in horror and gave a girlish shriek as cockroaches started to crawl out of his ears and up into his hair.

”Get them off, get them off!! Take the hex off ! – I don’t know it !! Please Tom !!”

He squealed again and beat at his head, drawing his wand and casting finite to no avail. A particularly large brute crawled over his cheek toward his mouth.

Abraxas dropped to his knees. “PLEASE!!!” he yelped, swiping the bug on his face onto the floor. “I’m sorry. I take it back. I won’t question you about him. You know better than I. Take it off take it off !! MERLIN.. They’re in my HAIR!!! TOM!!!!”

Harry struggled to suppress the wide evil grin that urgently wanted to spread itself over his face and managed to curb it down to a small smirk.

”défaire les cafards” he murmured and the brown crawling insects evaporated into dust.

Abraxas heaved a sigh of relief and then scourgified himself three times, shuddering.

“That was truly awful” he said resentfully. “I’m only worried about your best interests, you know.”
Harry raised an eyebrow. “For suggesting I might make a spectacle of myself, you are lucky you weren’t vomiting slugs. I will have no more of this insolence, Abraxas. Have the record removed – you are right. It could be detrimental in ministry hands. We will talk later. I will be late to Herbology too if I do not leave now.”

The blonde looked down and seemed to bite off whatever he wanted to say. “Later then.” He muttered. Harry nodded curtly and stalked off in typical Tom fashion back toward the main corridor.

After walking a few metres down toward herbology, Antonin had appeared by his side, keeping step. “You really are very good at this, you know.” The boy said softly. “I think if you could watch Tom in his classes.. and if you knew the material.. even I might not be able to tell soon enough.”

Harry offered him a Tom-ish smile. “Thank you.”

Antonin nodded, acknowledging the thanks and continued. “I was worried this morning when he came in. He was not in good health. It is good that you are helping him.”

Harry murmured softly “He was wearing a glamour. You should see him! I couldn’t let him go to class like that.”

Antonin smiled suddenly. “Congratulations also. I ..think you are suited. It makes no sense but it is so.”

Harry stopped suddenly and looked at the Russian in surprise and, he realised, pleasure. He ..liked hearing that. Someone thought they were good together. Someone was pleased about what had happened. He wanted to hug Antonin for a brief insane moment. It passed with the warning look on the boy’s face.

“Do not let him get bored. He sees disasters as interesting challenges.. but when it is easy and predictable.. he is quickly bored. Do anything to avoid that! Injure yourself, get into trouble with the ministry, run away, poison him – but don’t be boring.”

Harry half smirked, unsure how serious the other boy was being right now.

“I do not have herbology class and I must go upstairs now.. I think you will be ok if you meet anyone. You convinced Abraxas. That was a beautiful hex, by the way. I will remember it for when he is getting in my nose.”

Harry snickered in amusement but didn’t correct him, nodding simply and heading down to the greenhouses. He hadn’t been to this class yet. Hopefully it would be just like it had been in his own time.

As it turned out – it was, only worse. The teacher, Professer periwinkle was nothing like his name suggested – he was a wretched, grumpy old geezer in a dirty robe with a beard approaching his knees and black horny fingernails. He walked around like professor Snape through the entire class and Harry had to apologise for
preparing his roots untidily, saying that he was under the weather today. The old man had sneered and walked on, mumbling disparaging comments.

Darius, next to him had whispered. “You must be really tired today.” Harry had offered only a tense expression and nodded. This had seemed to surprise Darius more even than his messy pinning.

The class couldn’t end soon enough.

As he stalked through the halls with his friendly distant compassionate head boy expression on he was stopped not once but three times. Two were boys he didn’t know at all who asked him about things he had no idea about. One seemed to be a prefect. He had made his very best apologetic excuses and said he would have to get back to them. He was late for a meeting. The third was Elana.

She pounced on him as he was walking up the last corridor toward the mermaid portrait and had her arms around his neck and her lips affixed to his before he could blink. He snogged her back almost defensively, then remembering who he was, tried to kiss her as Tom had kissed him.

It was... a little more difficult to imitate than the way Tom walked but by the way Elana tried to climb him, he assumed it was fairly successful.

After a minute of this, when he felt himself rising to the occasion so to speak, he pulled away gently. “Not right now, Elana. Caed is in my room studying. I must retrieve him for potions” he offered apologetically.

The girl launched into full throttle pout and clung to him. “But.. it’s been a week!! I miss you.. You said you’d find time this week and the week is almost over now. When, Tom?!”

Harry cringed inside. Never!! Never ever ever again! He’s mine now.. you can’t have him again!

But his mouth operated on some kind of self-preservation auto pilot it seemed. “I will speak with you after dinner. You can surely wait a few.. more.. hours.” He leaned down and captured her rosebud lips again. They were strange, he observed clinically. Much softer and puffier than Tom’s. He didn’t like kissing them as much. Nevertheless, he backed the blonde against the wall and kissed her for a while longer, conscious of every minute he was wasting here which he could be spending alone with Tom in his room. When the girl’s hand wandered down to stroke his growing erection through his robes he pulled away again. “I can’t right now” he smirked. “I’ll have the boy thinking I fancy him when I walk in there if I continue this any longer. I will speak with you later Elana.” He kissed her lightly on the cheek and spun, walking on quickly.

Looking back over his shoulder he offered her a charming smile and she beamed back joyfully before turning and walking away slowly with her arms wrapped around herself.

Harry felt awful as he whispered the password and stepped into Tom’s room. Elana really was in love with Tom. Probably.

The hand came out of nowhere, grabbing him by the throat and slamming him back against the closed door. “Tom?!” he squeaked, too stunned to react. Tom looked murderous.
“WHO!!” he demanded furiously. “To whom did you respond?! I felt it! Your lust!!”

Harry tried and failed to speak, clawing at the hand around his windpipe. “Ia na..” he mouthed. Tom’s expression did not soften.

“You want her? You like blonde girls? Is that it?”

Harry tried to shake his head and tugged ineffectually at Tom’s arm, feeling dizzy. Just before he thought he’d pass out, it was removed and he tumbled down to the floor like a sack of potatoes coughing and gasping.

Tom stalked away, his hand raking through his hair tensely.

After a minute he muttered “I’m tired.. not thinking. The sensation of your betrayal woke me. I assume she launched herself at you.”

“Yes!” Harry spat. “And since I didn’t have anyone there to push her stupefied body at, I just went with it. Sorry. Next time it happens I’ll punch her and walk off.”

Tom walked back and crouched down beside him.

“I.. perhaps...overreacted.. It ...bothers me to think of you with others.” He reached down to help him up but Harry held his handswarding him off.

“No.. just.. don’t touch me. The polyjuice is wearing off any minute anyway. Leave me alone, Tom. Go and.. sleep some more or something.. you’re actually more of an asshole when you’re tired, if that’s possible.”

Tom rose gracefully and looked down disconsolately.

“Oh come now.. don’t make a fuss about this. You’ll be back in your form in a moment. There won’t even be a bruise..”

Harry, feeling the telltale tingling in his skin grimaced and curled up on the floor, covering his face. He was getting used to polyjuice and it just somehow felt better when the skin was compressed.

When he looked up next Tom was sitting on the couch.

He wandered over and tossed himself down beside him, his clothes feeling too large.

“So what else happened?” Tom asked in a neutral careful voice.

Harry rolled his eyes and leaned back, slouching down on the couch.

“I hexed Abraxas.. oh.. no I’m sorry – you hexed Abraxas.”

“WHAT!!” Tom looked alarmed. “Why?! What happened. I leave you alone for a few hours...”

Harry cut him off. “He presumed to question you. I think his little spiel started something like – just what are your long term intentions regarding the boy?! And then he went on about getting rid of the ministry record – which I told him to do after I’d finished hexing him by the way – and about you making a spectacle of yourself with me in public.”

Tom sat up furiously. “How dare he-“

Harry smirked

“Yes. Exactly. So I hexed him. Cockroach ear hex. They went all through his hair. He screamed like a little girl! He got down on his knees and begged me.. you.. to take it off.

It was priceless.
Antonin knows. He was watching I guess. He knew I wasn't you when I first came into arithmancy.
I like him. He..” Harry trailed off and blushed, not wanting to continue what he’d been going to
say – he congratulated us. He thinks we’re good together.

Tom, of course, seized upon the hesitation in a millisecond and made him admit it, then smirked
smugly at him.
He tried to get off the topic of his perhaps.. just maybe.. not entirely disliking being bonded with
Tom and told him about the rest of the time, finishing with his promise to talk with Elana after
dinner.

Tom looked at him dubiously. “And what would you like to happen when I see her? I can only
assume from your instruction to Abraxas that you have decided that a low profile is advisable.
Am I to believe that you wish me to continue dating her?”

Harry bit his lip and looked at Tom, unsure. He wanted to scream out – NO!! Don’t touch her
again.. You’re just mine! You promised! You promised! I killed someone for you! You have to be
with me only now!!”
The other boy seemed to read his expression and his face softened.

“I will end things with her this evening. I had been intending to do so already – your actions
merely..surprised me.”

Harry found he actually couldn’t prevent himself from throwing himself at Tom and clinging to
him. Tom tipped over onto his back with the force of it and wrapped his arms around him, not
seeming at all averse to the demanding embrace.
He shifted and adjusted himself until he could nestle Harry beside him on the couch and curl
around him.
It felt..wonderful. Warm and ridiculously safe. For the last seven years he’d been afraid of
Voldemort..afraid of Tom, in essence.. and it felt like now that Tom was protecting him, he was
untouchable.
Tom kissed the top of his head and Harry snuggled tighter against him.
“We could just skip..” he mumbled into the hard chest.
“No.” Tom said decisively. “You should attend arithmancy and we both cannot afford to miss
potions. This evening you will work on charms while I speak with Elana.
We must find time to work. We have lost two days already.”

Harry nodded but in truth he didn’t care. It was so good to be where he was right now. He hadn’t
the slightest care for charms, arithmancy or potions. He just wanted to lie in front of a fire with
Tom and be stroked and cuddled.
He hadn’t had anything like this before and it was amazing.. even better than riding a broom. It
was better than the sex last night after it had stopped hurting.
He didn’t know how it might have been if he and Hermione had ever had a chance but he had a
sneaking suspicion it might not have felt as good as this.
Somehow the weird wrongness of it made it better. Like a sharp tang against a sweet taste.
He kissed Tom’s robe surreptitiously and nuzzled his face against it.

“Don’t try to persuade me. We’re going to class” Tom said muzzily.
He was falling asleep. Harry crowed inwardly. If Tom fell asleep then they could stay here until he
woke up. He tried not to move or disturb him again and soon the other boy’s chest started to rise
and fall in slow even waves.
Of course Tom woke up with ten minutes to spare. Harry wasn’t even particularly surprised when the perfect git shook him roughly awake and commanded him to change back into his uniform and hurry up about it, then proceeded to nap while he did.

Potions was...strange. They were making the draught of peace – another potion which Harry knew he could have improved if he wanted, but Dumbledore had been right – it was a bad idea to use the things he knew.

Slughorn floated about their table almost the entire lesson watching like a hawk and Harry followed the procedures in the book exactly, preparing the ingredients Tom trusted him with – which were, astoundingly enough, not only the easier ones.

It was strangely pleasing that Tom Riddle thought he wasn’t an absolute waste of space in potions.

Their finished product was, as expected, perfect, and Tom gifted him with a smile as they walked from the class.

Arithmancy was mostly baffling. Not nearly as much as Tom’s arithmancy class had been, though. He realised that there must be advanced and basic classes in some way just like in his time. Only the difference was – in the future they would be called advanced classes.

It didn’t matter though... he didn’t need advanced arithmancy.

He sat next to a huffelpuff girl who smiled shyly at him from time to time. She looked a little bit like Ginny and he wanted to ask her name, but the teacher – professor Marksmux - set them problem after problem. He was too busy trying to work out the bits he knew to worry and after class the little redhead had gone.

Tom wasn’t in his room when he got back either. He wasn’t sure whether he’d be in the great hall having dinner or already with Elana.

He didn’t feel like going down to the great hall anyway and Gopper quite happily brought him a plate of the roast chicken everyone else was having down there.

He ate it and waited for Tom.

He waited for Tom and he lay down and stared at the ceiling.

He stared at the ceiling and wondered whether the diary fragment Tom was doing the same thing or reading a book right now.

He looked up and saw that the diary wasn’t on the desk anymore and then the hide and seek began.

It was peculiar how he could actually feel it... it was a little tingling in his mind just like Tom had been when he’d looked for him in the forest.

In the end he found it hidden in a recess behind a painting of stormy seas. It didn’t seem to be warded again and he shook his head, smirking, taking it back to the desk and flicking it open with more than a little pleasant anticipation.

What to write. What to write...

Hello again. I’m back.

There was only a brief pause and then

Hello!
What happened?

You came back from Grindelwald and found me talking to you. You were not happy. I am not to touch this book again!

You are not very good at following orders then.

I’m allowed to not follow them when I know unquestionably that they are flawed.

And my orders are flawed in this instance, you feel?

Yes.

You really should listen to me this time. This book is designed to trap you. You feel drawn to write in it because of an attraction charm. It will kill you.

My primary self may perhaps be disappointed when that occurs.

I know all that. I’m not affected by it. Trust me. You did diagnostic spells yourself. I’m fine.

The charms do not work?!!

Harry winced at the panic he could almost feel emanating from the unassuming leatherbound book. The Horcrux was horrified. He supposed he didn’t entirely blame it. It had seemed lonely after only one year. The thought of never seeing another person again...

Calm down. They work. I’m just not affected by them.

But how do you know they work?! Why are you not affected?!!

You are the first person I have communicated with. If the charms do not work then I will be useless. I will not be able to rise if anything happens to my body out there!

I will be stuck in here forever!

Or at least until the diary is destroyed.

I just do. Trust me. It doesn’t matter why I’m not affected. Isn’t it just good to talk to someone anyway?

...

Tom.. what did you do today?

I went for a walk around the lake and reread a manuscript in the restricted section on blood magic. Why?
I was just curious.
...Hey...what are Wechsler adendives?

Do you not possess an arithmancy textbook?

I lost it, alright. Do you know or don’t you? You’re a sixth year student, aren’t you?

I mastered the seventh year curriculum by fifth year. 
Wechsler adendives are logarithmic multiplication factors applicable to the location section of a sindlow matrix which compensate for the influence of psychological and physical state of the arithmancer upon the outcome.
They are measured by means of several charms or potions – the most common being the pralix interorethia, the most exact - the Wechsler derivation potion.

Thats..interesting.
You know.. you’d make a good teacher.

Thank you.
I cannot imagine anything more insipid than teaching.

Oh there are LOTS of things. What about working in a shop?

I will not work in a shop either.

Uh huh..

What did you do today?

I had a fight with Abraxas (who blames me for RUINING you!!!) and then I replaced you in classes till lunch because you were tired - and got to hex cockroaches into his hair because he was insolent.
And you let me prepare the liver in the draught of peace in potions.

And some hufflepuff in my arithmancy class smiled at me. So i’ve had arithmancy twice today.
Yours and mine. Yours was where Wechsler adendives were mentioned.

Why might Abraxas blame you for ruining me?

Because he’s a colossal dick.

Caedmon..

Because.. he’s jealous. You said so yourself this morning

CAEDMON...

That look doesn’t work when I can’t see you.

Answer the question. What have I done?! Why is Abraxas upset?

You..bonded us last night.

I WHAT?!! WHY IN BLAZES WOULD I DO THAT?! WAS IT YOUR IDEA?!

Do you have me under some potion of influence?!
You are male, are you not?! Why would I ruin my chances to pursue the career I have worked for six..seven years to attain?!

...I guess for the same reason you went to Grindelwald. Shit.. I have to ask you about that. It was a bit chaotic when you got back.. and then I was tired and stuff.. Damn.. You looked really exhausted when you got back too.. And I never asked!!

Why are you so important that I would risk my life and throw away my future for you?

Harry stared at the page for a while, unsure what to write.
He didn’t want to write – because I’m from the future and you want to use me in some way. It might (probably) be true..almost certainly in fact.. but he wanted to pretend that there was a reason that wasn’t about Tom owning him like a useful tool.
He wanted to think that there was a little part of it that was about protecting him.. teaching him.. helping him.
It was stupid. He swallowed. Better to say nothing.

...I should probably go and study charms for a while. You’ll be annoyed if you come back and find me talking to you again.
You’ll probably still be annoyed if you come back and don’t find me talking to you but find i haven’t done any work on charms.

I will help you study charms if you stay.

I...don’t know.. It’s not a good idea
and

And?

And you’ll probably think I’m an idiot when you see how far behind I am. I dropped charms before sixth year and you’re helping me catch up. In arithmancy too.

If you do not think the Tom Riddle out there thinks you are an idiot – why exactly do you believe that I will?

Oh you probably think I’m an idiot out here too. I guess. But then.. everyone’s an idiot compared to you. You’re just so...

Thank you. I try.
Where are you up to in the sixth year text?

Chapter four. But it won’t work.. I need to watch you cast them and then I can do them.

Indeed? You learn by observation?
Well then. We will work on arithmancy instead. My other self can concentrate on charms with you.

Where are you up to in the arithmancy text?

...um... chapter six.
of the sixth year text.

That far behind?! Nevermind. One moment. I’ve summoned the book.
Tom closed the door quietly and walked away down the hall.

He hadn’t gone five paces before it opened again and Elana, much less attractive now that her face was red and swollen from crying, opened it and leapt upon him, flinging her arms around his neck and sobbing.

“Please Tom.. I can wait. I CAN!! I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to be demanding. Just.. don’t leave me.”

Tom held her with a tenderness he did not feel. “It’s for the best Elana. I think it is clear that I simply don’t have the time to date at present. We’ve been seeing less and less of one another. It isn’t fair toward you. You’re far too lovely to spend your time waiting for me and I cannot neglect my responsibilities – particularly now that Caedmon is depending upon me to help him if he is to have any chance at a later occupation in the wizarding world.”

The girl screwed up her face and clutched at him. It was all Tom could do not to shake her off and inform her how pathetic she was.

“You’re too good, Tom. Don’t you deserve a life too? You’re happy with me aren’t you? I make you happy? Why do you have to spend all your time with that new boy?! Let someone else do it! You already do so much!”

Tom patted her back absently wondering whether he had been at any point happy with her. Most of the time Elana irritated him. She was so..wet and needy.. shallow.. vain..
She was a tolerable fuck, flexible, reasonably tight and willing to do anything he wished.. but that was about it.

Elana obviously saw some aspect of the thought on his face and pulled at him, trying to kiss him. He allowed it, considering whether or not it might not be worth having her just once more. Caed wouldn’t like it.. but he didn’t necessarily need to know – the infidelity notification was not bidirectional after all.. and even if he learned of it...they were bound now... The boy was so desperate to have him to himself that he’d killed...

He hadn’t been willing to cast a dark spell last week and last night he’d taken his first life...lives.
He had certainly gained the respect of most of Tom’s death eaters.
Well.. perhaps not Abraxas.

He groaned inwardly. He had yet to speak with Abraxas. The blonde in his arms drew his attention back with a whine.

“Please Tom.. please.. if you have to help him – I’ll wait! Or... Or maybe I could help you? I’m in some of your classes – it would go even faster if I helped him catch up too and then you’d have more time again.”
He shook his head decisively. There was no way he could allow that thought to seed in her mind.

“No.. I volunteered and I will not allow you to jeopardise your own future so close to the NEWTs. It is better this way Elana. I... must go. I have to speak with several prefects tonight and then check that Caedmon has completed the charms work I set him.
Please.. don’t make this any harder than it has to be.”
He kissed her on the forehead and then pressed her away firmly, turning and striding quickly down
the corridor.

He heard her bawling increase in volume and then a faint sound that he assumed was her sinking to her knees. He didn’t turn around.
As he walked toward the mermaid an hour later he felt strangely drained.

Elana and then Abraxas.

He had told Abraxas why Caed was important.. why he needed to keep him from Dumbledore.. It was either that or risk more insubordination in future and possibly a loss of trust over time.

Abraxas hadn’t believed him at first and when Tom had assured him that it was incontestably established, the silvery eyes had grown large and Tom could see the galleons floating about in them.

Abraxas was, at the end of all things, a Malfoy. He was about money. Money and power.. however he would sacrifice a small amount of the latter in order to attain more of the former and thereby regain the latter.

The knowledge that Caed would know the state of the future wizarding world obviously set his business senses twitching and aching.

Tom had considered obliviating him again, but he would then be back to the original problem and if Abraxas realised he’d been obliviated – which he might well do – the trust he placed in Tom would be even more quickly eroded.

So instead he had demanded.. sternly.. that Abraxas not ask Caed anything about his past – or, more specifically – the future, at all..

He should not even hint that he knew until told that it was acceptable to do so.

The blonde had nodded and agreed quickly but the greedy expression didn’t leave his eyes.

Tom was mildly concerned that Abraxas might be difficult in future if he didn’t bring Caed to willingly share information within a relatively short time.

And if Abraxas was foolish enough.. or intelligent enough.. to share this information with his father.. well then all bets were off.

The Malfoys had resources beyond imagining. If Carvell Malfoy learned of Caed, he would move mountains to acquire him.

And, paradoxically, Tom doubted he would be as easily calmed as Grindelwald had been.

He stopped still and lowered his head, groaning. Fuck. He had to get information for him and quickly. The man wasn’t known for his patience. He demolished entire settlements because it was more expedient than negotiating for the surrender of mudbloods and blood traitors.

He had to get Caed to talk.

He placed his hand on the portrait frame and whispered the password, ignoring the silly slattern making kissy faces at him and walked in with his mind hovering uncomfortably between what Grindelwald versus Malfoy Sr. would do to him if he appeared to stand in the way of their getting their hands on Caed.

He stopped dead in the doorway.

NO!! Damn it.. he’d hidden it!! How had the little idiot gotten hold of it again.

It was warded. Severely! It was KEYED to him. The wards couldn’t be removed and only he could pass them.
Even if he’d found it, he should never have been able to touch it! Hades! Was it too late?!

He leapt across the room in four steps and dragged Caed off the chair backward, throwing him to the ground and pinning him, casting the diagnostic charm in panic. It showed clear.
The boy was unaffected.

He cast it twice more.

No. he was fine!! However that was possible.. he was fine. That was all that mattered.

The boy was sputtering and making excuses. Anger overtaking terror as his primary emotion he roared and punched Caed in his stupid babbling mouth.
The boy shut off his noise as if by switch. He hit him again.

“I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE IT ALONE!!”

He was on his feet in half a second and had his wand on the disobedient little curr, cursing him. Caed kicked and scratched at his skin in pain as it burned invisibly. Tom ignored the pleading and begging and held it on him.

Blood.. blood on his face.. on his arms where he scratched himself.. Caed was shaking, pale and sobbing pitifully when he finally took the curse off.

“You will remember for the future, Caed, that if I give you an order – I expect it to be followed. This directive happened to be for your own good. You recall the lesson with the necklace that I gave you only hours ago. This book WILL kill you. I have already warned you before!! There is NO excuse for this!”

He stalked away to the desk and looked down at the page.

Caedmon? The third line?

Caedmon?? Have you gone?

To the side, the sixth year arithmancy text was open to chapter eight. Several pages of finished matrices lay around the desk and a half finished one, completed to the end of the third line of the substance box sat with the quill dropped haphazardly on it.
Swallowing uneasily he sat down at the desk and pulled the diary closer.

Caedmon is indisposed at present.

Ah. And you have forbidden him to touch the diary again, I take it.

Yes.

He assured me that he was not affected by it.

He refused to elaborate why exactly.
But he said he knew with “incontrovertible certainty” that my..your.. order was flawed.
Can you imagine why he might believe that?

I warned him several times after he informed me that he is your..our.. bond-mate.

Why have you abandoned our plans to rise within the ministry?! A male bonding??!

Tom looked at the lines thoughtfully. It seemed his..glorified appendage.. was somewhat irritated with him.

“Caed..” he said in a low voice. “Why exactly are you certain you will not succumb to this book?”

There was no response.

He half turned and saw the boy had moved closer to the door and was giving a convincing impression of being unconscious. A thin little blood trail traced the movement.

Sceptical he cast a diagnostic charm, the colours displaying that the boy was weakened and likely in some form of mild pain but not injured.

“I know you are awake and you are far less hurt than you are going to be shortly if you do not answer me now.”

There was a long pause and then Caed said dully “I’ve seen the diary in my time. If I were going to be trapped by it.. it wouldn’t be there in my time. It doesn’t matter how much I talk to him...”

Tom nodded. He had thought it might be something like that.

“It. Not him.” He corrected absently and turned back to the book.

Caed didn’t say anything.

He picked up the quill.. not entirely sure why he was bothering to write with something that was only a thin memory captured in parchment. He’d made it himself. It wasnt a person.

It appears he may be correct.
This does not change the fact that he disobeyed orders.

I fail to see any reason to explain myself to a book infused with a few spells and a sliver of soul.

Perhaps I can be useful.
We were working on his arithmancy, as I assume you see. I cannot demonstrate charms for him from here, obviously.

What do you hope to gain from this? Your purpose is to draw energy from the writer to resurrect my soul fragment. You will not succeed with this boy.
Why would you waste the energy you are infused with?!

Stop speaking to me as if I were...a..an..object!

I am not a few spells and a bit of soul.. I am..me.. that is - you.. no!.. ME!
I created this diary.. I cast the horcrux spell over that mudblood’s dead body and then I opened my eyes..here..
And since then.. every day has been the same.
Not even the weather changes.. I have read and reread every book in the library and in the chamber.. even the basilisk is gone.
There is nothing here!!

I would rather speak to the boy about arithmancy than go and reread Goetelinds ‘Resurrection and Preservation’ for the twenty-second time.

Nothing changes here. It is always silent, unless I speak.. always still unless I move an object.
Everything returns to its place if I turn my attention away for a moment.
This world is dead and I am trapped in it.

You might easily be where I am but for an act of chance!

And then.. as the last lines faded out.

I am not some spells and parchment and a little bit of soul
I AM Tom Marvolo Riddle.

Get me the fuck out of here!

Tom slammed the diary shut and sat back in the chair heavily. No. it wasn’t true.. it was just a very clever spell design.
He drummed his fingers on the desktop in internal disarray.
If it was true, what did that mean? It didn’t matter really, did it?!
The diary was an insurance policy in case he was killed and his servants failed to resurrect him from other horcruxes – a means of resurrecting himself through time and chance.

He imagined for a moment being trapped inside a dead world. Hogwarts a prison..

“If you touch that door, I shall be very angry” he said absently and heard a faint gasp.
He half turned at the bloody trembling blonde curled at the foot of the door miserably and sighed.

Getting up from the chair he walked over slowly and cautiously as if approaching a wild animal.
Caed’s wand peeked out from beneath his arm, pointing at him but the boy was so weak that he lost it the moment Tom summoned it wandlessly.
“Don’t point it unless you intend to curse me.. and I would not advise attempting to curse me unless you are in perfect health and accompanied by a lot of support.”

Caed curled himself up more tightly, bracing himself.

Tom sighed and lowered himself to his knees beside him. He could see the boy’s lip was split and drew his wand, ignoring Caed’s shying away, and healing the small wound.
The weakening effects of the dark spell would not be able to be healed.. he would have to regain his strength naturally with sleep ...but the rest of his bruising and cuts..

Tom tried to pull Caeds sleeves up but the boy refused to unclench.
In the end he stupefied him and levitated him to the bed, divesting his clothing and then setting to fixing all the minor damage he’d caused.

Caed looked miserable, even asleep. Tom stroked down his breastbone and regretted for a moment his rash reaction. He reassured himself quickly enough that it had been both appropriate and restrained in comparison with what he might have done if Abraxas had disobeyed him in such a manner.. or Gyphus. But still.. he might have lay with the boy. Caed might have leapt on him happily again.. he might have had him again tonight before taking him to his dorm. Now.. Caed was damaged and afraid of him.. more afraid of him than he had been since the first night.. and after yesterday..

it was..a poor reaction.

He rolled his eyes, knowing what he would have to do and hating it.

“Enervate” he whispered softly.

Caed’s eyes flickered and then opened in shock and disorientation, focussing quickly on him, dazzling green jewels pinning him like knives.

“I’m sorry.” He said immediately.

Caed looked sceptical and wary.

“I was ...concerned.. that I was too late.. angry.. worried. As with the necklace.. I ..am sorry Caed.”

The boy shook his head. “-means nothing. You’ll do it again in five minutes. Tomorrow morning I’ll say something you don’t like or do something.. or I’ll refuse to ..whatever.. create a bloody inferius in defense or something.. and you’ll do it again. Worse probably”

Tom swallowed and turned away. He could lie and say he wouldn’t.

“possibly” he managed in a tense voice.

Caed turned away with difficulty and curled up protectively again. Tom reached out tentatively and stroked over his hair, disappointed when Caed shivered.

He was certain that revulsion and not arousal was at the core of it this time.

“I..will try..” he started but he saw the boy tense in anger.

Giving up he stood, disconcerted by how much Caed’s righteous anger and cold shoulder bothered him, and transfigured a blanket, levitating it over the naked blonde and walking around the bed until he could kneel on the floor by Caed’s head.

“I really do regret...reacting..in that manner.” He murmured , scanning the closed face for any response. Caed didn’t meet his eyes.

“Will you..please.. remain here tonight? I will sleep on the sofa. I wish to be sure that you are safe and well.”

There was a low mutter as he half turned and he looked back, searchingly, leaning in and stroking over the boy’s shoulder above the blanket.

“I’m sorry Caed..I reacted.. on..on instinct.. a habit.. I will try to curb it...” he said again.

The boy didn’t respond and he stood and stepped away hesitantly, waving the lamp out and lowering the fire.

He returned to his desk and the familiar brown book he’d spent years writing in.
Lighting the candle he sat again and after a moment to compose his thoughts opened it and stared at the blank page.
What should he say?
If it truly was an entity with a sense of self much like himself.. if it was in a sense a version of himself.. he now knew that it would be alone in there for the next fifty years.

He picked up the quill.

I cannot release you.

The response was a long time in coming.

I know.
I wouldn’t release me either.
It rather defeats the purpose of a self resurrecting horcrux, doesn’t it?!

He smirked. It had been his first thought too, even in light of the apparent sentience of the diary.

You must remain tied to the diary.. but I will think on how I might perhaps make your existence more tolerable. Perhaps you could be placed in some form of stasis for a period of time?

How long?
No.
I do not wish to lose track of my own perception of the passing of time. My calculations were already off by a month when Caedmon informed me of the date.
There is neither day nor night here. All clocks show the same time..

Do you have any suggestions? I assume you have been thinking about this.

I did not expect to have any option but to wait for some hapless idiot to write in the book. How is the hapless idiot, incidentally?

Upset.
Afraid. Resentful.
Physically weak. I used the tangia flamare hex.
I have put him to bed.
He is not speaking to me.

There is some reason you do not wish to obliviate him?

Yes.

Something in his mind is valuable.

Very.

Do you care for him otherwise?

Tom sighed and stared at his own ghostly face reflected in the dark window glass.
Did he?
He was perhaps...fond.. of Caed.
Last night when the boy had been lost in his release..and earlier today..when they had fallen asleep on the couch.. he had felt ..happy.. perhaps.
The boy..pleased him.. It was irritating to know that Caed would not welcome affection from him right now. He wanted to hold him as he fell asleep..
if the boy was to remain here unwisely overnight.. then he should be in Tom’s arms and not curled away, prickly with pain and hurt.

Yes.

There. It was said. Yes. He was not ambivalent toward the beautiful waifish little pain in the arse.
If he had been some run of the mill urchin with no particular value.. he would still have insisted upon possessing him.
He had wanted him from the first moment in the forest when he shone the wandlight in his shocked and frightened face.

What does he look like? He told me himself.. but I would hear your opinion, for obvious reason.

Tom swallowed and thought about Caed again.

Beautiful.
He has eyes of the palest emerald, golden silky smooth skin.

He has the most varied array of expressions. His face betrays his emotions constantly. I cannot understand why it does not bother me more. He is a pitiful excuse for a slytherin.

His hair is perpetually a messy sand blond catastrophe hanging in his face

His body is slender but built of lean muscle and sharp angles. He is perfect. From any side he is delectable.

Even his cock is lovely - pale, straight, circumcised and slender; tipped with rose. And his seed tastes more sweet than bitter. Like fermented honey.

He is infinitely superior to any I have had before.

Tom stopped, horrified at what he’d written and wished he could erase it. He clenched his hand, accidentally snapping the quill as the words sank into the page and disappeared.

Are you absolutely certain you are not under the influence of some love potion? You’ll pardon my scepticism – I cannot imagine writing any of that drivel.

I know that my own security precautions are far beyond paranoid, but are you quite sure you have not been accidentally drugged somehow?

Tom snorted, rolling his eyes. He supposed it was fair. He’d cringed at the words himself. Still.. it infuriated him to be dressed down by himself.

He repaired the quill. Waste not want not.

I am not under the effect of a potion. I desired the boy from the first and I was in the forbidden forest when I found him. No potions in sight.

Why is he important? What is in his mind?

He is the victim of a temporal accident. He comes from fifty years in the future. He knows about me.

Us.

Us then, if you insist.

He knows about who I become because it has already happened for him. He told me about things I have not told anyone in this time.
He told me I was Lord Voldemort. He feared me. Fears me still in fact.

Well..
That certainly changes the complexion of things slightly.
And I take it Dumbledore knows and is interfering. He said you went to Grindelwald to protect him.

Yes. When he first arrived he sought out Dumbledore and asked for help. Apparently he knew him from his own time.
He does not appear to think fondly of him.
The bastard offered him no quarter either. He wanted to refuse him entry to all but four classes!
And no arithmancy!
I have no idea what prompted him to seek help from him other than the fact that he was extremely distressed at seeing me here.

Although.. in light of some of the other things he has said.. I think perhaps he was part of whatever force Dumbledore will mount against me in time.

That too?
The news gets better and better.
Do you prevail?
Does he know what happens to me?

Tom hesitated. How should he tell the ghost that he would be in there for fifty years? Should he perhaps lie? He considered what he would prefer and wrote reluctantly:

Dumbledore dies eventually on my order.
...in fifty years or thereabouts.
And he is already headmaster of Hogwarts at the time.
You..are still in the diary in Caed’s time. He was quite clear.

There was no response. He stared at the page feeling as if he himself had been sentenced to fifty years solitary confinement. Which in a sense.. he had.
It was a sick ache as if he had been hit in the abdomen with a blasting charm.
He put the quill to the page again and wrote slowly; determination crystalising with each letter.

I will find a way to improve your circumstances.
If I cannot.. I will put you into stasis until a day which I will inform you of beforehand. You will not be as you are now for fifty years.

There was a long pause and then the words appeared faintly and untidily as if the writer were distressed.

Thank you

Tom grimaced. The two words betrayed the horror, abject desperation and humiliated dependence of his horcrux self. He felt a sudden need to leave the trapped figure and put the terrible fate which might as easily have befallen him from his mind. He scrawled hastily

I must go to bed. I have a lot to do tomorrow.

Wait! When will you return? Will you allow Caedmon to speak with me?

He had his hand on the cover of the diary and itched to close it but that aching sick feeling inside stopped him. Against his will he picked up the quill and wrote quickly.

I will allow Caed to speak with you. You may continue to tutor him in arithmancy and potions theory. I will speak to you when one of us finds something of use.

Closing the book quickly he blew out the candle and undressed in the near dark. The leather sofa was cold against his naked back and he was disturbed by the events of the evening. He turned slightly, staring at the embers of the dying fire and felt..strange. Chilled inside. Where there was usually nothing.. there was a small sharp bitterness now.

He twisted his head and looked over at the dark expanse of the bed. He wanted to be with Caed. He wished, if only briefly, for the physical reassurance.

For minutes he lay indecisively weighing out how much worse he might make things by frightening the boy again now with the thought that he might be set upon in his sleep.
But he... wanted... to be near him.

He got to his feet amid faint creaking of the sofa leather and padded over to the bed, slipping in on the other side and listening to the soft breathing from a metre away. It was better. Not ideal but better than the sofa.
He wished the boy would turn... wished he would come to him. He... no... he didn’t need him... he merely wanted him right now.

And then, as if on command Caed rolled over in his sleep and wriggled slightly closer.

Tom blinked in the dark. Caed’s warm naked form was only inches away. He could almost feel his radiant heat.

‘Closer’ he demanded silently.

The boy emitted a snuffy little grumble and sigh and curled toward him, reaching out arms to touch him. He froze, worried that the hands meeting his body would cause Caed to wake and panic but quite the opposite occurred. When the blindly stretching hands found his chest Caed emitted a happy little gasp and sigh in his sleep and then in the next second the boy was pressed against him, arms and legs wrapping themselves around him like a clinging vine.

Tom nearly groaned aloud with how much better it felt. How relieved... how content... how comfortable he was.

It was unreasonable to be this affected by Caed. Perhaps his diary self was not wrong. Something strange was at work.

Admittedly the bond he had chosen was designed to bring the partners together... it enhanced those things that would foster closeness.

It was possible this was simply part of it.

Caed might have felt his ne... want on some level and responded unconsciously.

He wrapped his arms around him and breathed in the scent of the blond hair. He thought he felt a kiss pressed to his chest but he couldn’t be sure.

Thus warmed and enfolded, he allowed himself to think for a moment on his soul fragment in the ghostly Hogwarts.

How relieved must it have been when Caed first wrote in the diary. Perhaps he could feed it half a muggle? Would a little energy allow the horcrux to escape partially? He doubted it although he couldn’t place why exactly.

What would happen, he wondered, if a horcrux, like that in the diary... a horcrux infused with a full persona... a sense of self... an identity... – what would happen if a horcrux like that were resurrected? Would there be two of him in this world? Would it be automatically reabsorbed?

Kissing Caed’s head he settled himself and relaxed his mind for sleep.

Harry woke and swore under his breath as he realised he was lying nestled against a warm chest.

Bastard had said he would sleep on the sofa! Liar!
He inhaled the wonderful scent of Tom’s skin and considered punching him in the groin. “I hate you” he growled.

Tom sighed deeply and shifted slightly, cuddling him closer. “My wand hasn’t gone off yet. Go back to sleep.” He mumbled against Harry’s hair.

Pissed off at how comfortable he was feeling curling up against the psychotic asshole, he turned his head and bit the nipple closest. Hard.

Tom jerked in shock, gasping but instead of swearing and pushing him away he gripped him harder.

Harry let go in confusion.

Tom’s hand slid suggestively down his back. “Then again.. I could be persuaded to wake early” he said huskily. Harry pulled a grimace of disgust.

“I wasn’t trying to turn you on, you perverted fuck. You bloody hit me last night. You cursed me! For nothing!! You said you’d sleep on the couch.”

Tom rolled suddenly and Harry found himself lying beneath him. The larger boy held himself balanced on his elbows to look down into Harry’s face. Tom Riddle looked gorgeous at the best of times, but he looked truly devastating first thing in the morning with that perfect hair in disarray and sleep softened eyes. Their morning wood was stacked warmly side by side between them.

“I apologise again for that.. It was perhaps excessive – although I’m sure you realise that any other of my ..death eaters.. would have received far more if they had directly disobeyed me when I was trying to protect them. Nevertheless..I acted out of frustration. I was angry at you because you.. “ He broke off, a slightly irritated look on his face.

Harry watched the expression, reluctantly fascinated. “I what?” he asked.

He could actually feel the shape of the answer and it was surreal.

“You startled me. You..worried.. me”

A faint smile curved Harry’s lips. “I scared you. You were frightened. Admit it. You were scared.” Tom’s eyebrows lowered warningly.

“I didn’t say that.”

Harry’s smile widened in genuine pleasure. Tom hadn’t hit him because he disobeyed.. at least not only.. maybe not even mostly. He hit him because he had felt afraid and he hated it.

Harry tentatively traced his fingers up the warm skin on Tom’s sides. “And you came to bed because?” he asked softly.

Tom looked uncomfortable at the question and leaned down to kiss him.

Harry turned away slightly, still looking at the strange expression on the other boy’s face. Tom huffed in frustration.

“The sofa was cold. It is MY bed..”

Harry shook his head dismissively. Tom probably knew more warming charms than the charms teacher. He could have transfigured another bed without even drawing his wand.
The dark head dropped and rested its forehead on his shoulder. “Fine.” He huffed
“If you must know.. I was bothered after talking to the horcrux in the diary. I... You were right. He
is..lonely.
...From now on he will teach you arithmancy and potions theory.”

Harry smiled even more widely, relieved. He felt truly sorry for the tom in the diary.

“Good” he whispered.

Tom raised his head and looked at him with something between resolution and apprehensiveness.

“Tell me what you remember about the diary, Caed. What happens to him? Does he escape the
spells?”

Harry swallowed hard. Tom’s eyes darkened in response and his face twisted slightly. “Caed.. I
must know..”

Shaking his head, Harry looked away, staring at the wood grain on the mahogany wardrobe.
Tom turned his head back very gently.

“Please Caed.. As you are now part of me..irrevocably bound.. he is part of you also. What
happens to the diary?”

Harry bit his tongue. He had always been irrevocably bound to Tom. This new binding couldn’t be
any more relevant than actually carrying a piece of his soul.
He had been a horcrux when he had destroyed the Tom Riddle in the diary. What real difference
was there now? It couldn’t be changed. Voldemort wouldn’t even be corporeal when it happened.
He sighed.

“The diary was destroyed” he said softly. “The Tom Riddle inside it was destroyed too.”

Harry grimaced as Tom’s face broke..
The transition from painful dismay into a maelstrom of anger, disbelief, sadness and frustration
was like storm clouds boiling. He pushed himself up off the bed and onto his feet and paced away,
shoulders bunched tightly and hands delving through his hair. Harry could hear him breathing hard.

“NO!!” he growled anguished. “He cannot ..I cannot..endure fifty years alone in there, only to die..
I REFUSE TO ALLOW IT!!”
Tom turned back with a furious glint in his eye.
“Tell me everything!.. “ he demanded.

There was a faint threatening undertone that bespoke thumbscrews if answers were not
forthcoming. Harry pushed himself up in bed and looked around for his wand as subtly as he could
manage.

“CAED!!! TELL ME!!”

Wherever his wand was, he reasoned – it was nowhere within reach. He wet his lips nervously.

“Ok.. ok.” he said hesitantly, trying to think fast. His brain refused to respond, pushing only the
truth forward.

“The diary fell into the hands of a girl. A first year student.
Nobody noticed she had it and there was a lot of fear and pointing fingers when someone started
writing nasty things on the walls in blood and some students got petrified.
Someone figured it out and one of the girl’s friends followed her down into the chamber of secrets – she’d opened it somehow – and saved her; destroyed the diary.”

Tom strode to the side of the bed frustratedly “How?! How was it destroyed?”

Harry raised supplicating eyebrows
“.um..basilisk venom. It.. kills horcruxes.” His eyes widened as he saw the shocked look spread itself across Tom’s face. It bespecked extensive questioning on his knowledge of horcruxes to follow.

But Tom only asked “The girl summoned the basilisk?”
Harry shook his head slightly. “It was the horcrux Tom Riddle.. by then it had almost drained her of life. He was strong enough to call the basilisk.. strong enough to touch things”

Tom looked physically ill..
“Who else was present?” he asked hollowly. Harry furrowed his brow not understanding. “No one? Just the girl’s..friend.. why?”
Tom shook his head.
“I assume the girl’s friend was a boy. How did he evade the basilisk”

Harry hesitated warily. He felt like someone venturing out onto a black frozen lake and hearing the ice creaking and cracking faintly.
He couldn’t think of another plausible response though.

“He...killed it. With the sword of Gryffindor.”

Tom snorted and nodded, a twisted rictus smile distorting his features
“ah. Of course”

A peculiar wash of guilt broke over Harry. The trapped resigned lonely boy.. Tom.. dying as he stabbed the diary. Blood.. The basilisk.. blinded and killed..
He wondered whether this tom thought of it as some kind of pet or something. He looked shattered.

As the guilt and remorse ached in him, Tom’s eyes flicked to his own and he saw comprehension there.. a black knowing look before the boy turned his head away and strode into the bathroom without a backward glance. The shower started.

Half a second later as the various unpleasant possibilities of that knowing look burst in his mind, he leapt out of bed and, finding his clothes, got dressed at light speed, finding his wand on the desk and going to the door.

He was racing through the corridors down to the dungeons when he ran into exactly the person he least wanted to meet.

An arm snagged him as he raced past an alcove and pulled him off balance, he spun and crashed to his knees, sliding across the stone painfully.

“Out of your dorm during curfew, I see, Caedmon. You spent all night in the head boy’s room. That will be seventy points from Slytherin I think.”

Harry looked up at the somehow cruel looking face of the young Professor Dumbledore. The points lost did not even rate a mention in his catalogue of worries.
He was equally concerned that Tom would come running out of his room to collect him.. and that he wouldn’t.

“I fell asleep over my books, professor” he said apologetically. “arithmancy. I’m trying hard to
catch up with everyone” Dumbledore rolled his eyes.

“Spare me your lies Caedmon. I warned you to stop associating with Tom Riddle. You obviously chose to ignore me. Get up. We are going to have a little talk before breakfast.”

Harry shook his head frantically.

“Mr Piper! Get up or you will serve a week of detention with me. Perhaps you shall even so.. it would keep you from your dangerous new friends.”

Harry got to his feet as if on springs. “No!! Please don’t, Sir! I’m sorry!” he spluttered urgently.

Dumbledore snorted and gripped him by the material of the shoulder of his robe as if to prevent him turning and scurrying.

“Come along then. My office. We shall see how much detention you deserve.”

The door closed quietly behind him as he wrung his hands nervously.

“Sit down.” Dumbledore instructed coldly.

Harry padded forward and lowered himself gingerly into the wooden tall backed chair, feeling suddenly as if he were before the wizengamot again. That feeling increased exponentially as he found he could no longer move his arms or legs.

Dumbledore walked slowly around him and leaned against the front of his desk. His auburn hair curled as it met his shoulders and the pale blue eyes were like ice chips. The long fingered hand slid into his opposite sleeve and drew an unfamiliar black wand. Harry’s eyes followed it as it was levelled against him and he waited to be cursed.

Dumbledore frowned after a moment and then said, irritably “Legilimens!” soon frowning even more deeply and stalking forward.

“Take down your shields, boy!” he demanded. Harry shook his head helplessly “I don’t have any. I can’t. I’m not!”

Dumbledore’s eyes narrowed and then he twitched aside the collar of Harry’s shirt with the tip of his wand. “New jewellery, Mr Piper?”

Harry nodded. “it was a gift.”

Dumbledore raised an eyebrow querulously. “From Tom Riddle, I take it” Harry nodded and the man’s face darkened. “And did you put it on yourself?”

Harry shook his head and Dumbledore turned away in furious irritation. “I TOLD you to stay away from him. Now look at what you’ve done! Did he tell you anything about the necklace?”

Harry shrugged his shoulders slightly. “He said it would protect me” he mumbled.

Dumbledore snorted and stalked to a tall corner cabinet in the cluttered little room, opening it and taking out a tiny phial from the back of a shelf full of phials.
“Our Mr Riddle is a dangerous boy” he said quietly. “Last year he was responsible for the death of a student – and the framing and expulsion of another student for the crime. Did you know that?”

Harry’s eyes were fixed on the tiny ornate bottle of clear liquid. Veritaserum. He was sure of it. He bit his tongue. ‘Tom! Tom.. help’ he thought desperately. What good was a mark if he couldn’t activate it?!
Dumbledore unscrewed the top of the phial very carefully.

“This.. Mr Piper is a recent invention of the department of Ministries. I have no doubt that you will be familiar with it in your time. It elicits a completely truthful answer from those who generally cannot be relied upon to provide it otherwise.”

Harry felt his breathing speed. What did he even want to know?! TOM!!

“I feel.. for some reason.. you are not being completely honest with me, Caedmon..or whoever you are.. Your manner since you first arrived here has been most suspicious – as was Tom Riddle’s instant desire to be of any and all assistance to you. Tom, despite appearances, is no altruist. I want to know what you have told him already. And you are going to-.” A deafening caterwauling drowned out his final words. Harry cried out, ducking his shoulders, unable to cover his ears.

Dumbledore’s eyes narrowed.
“I imagine that is our friend Mr Riddle now.” He yelled over the deafening noise. “This distraction will not work.”

He cast a charm and the noise cut off as the room was insulated from the rest of the castle. Stepping forward quickly he gripped Harry’s nose and tilted his head back.

He pressed his lips together and held his breath but it didn’t take very long till he had to gasp for air.
A splash of tasteless liquid landed on his tongue and then his mouth was held closed for a moment.

Harry felt reality tilt slightly. He felt a bit drunk and his head lolled.

Something was ..bad... he was...scared..of something.. couldn’t remember what. Dumbledore looked funny. “Your beard is gone” he told him.

The familiar face smiled thinly and Harry grinned back sloppily.

“Now.. What happened the night you arrived here” Dumbledore asked quietly.
Harry remembered back and found himself slurring out the answer automatically

“I was having dinner in the great hall when the death eaters attacked the wards and I went outside and the battle was everywhere.. I was looking for Voldemort in the forbidden forest and I heard him... And then a spell hit me and.. I think he kicked me... He was standing over me...and then I don’t remember...and then.. and then.. I was at the edge of the forest and there was snow everywhere and everyone was gone. ..So I ran up to the castle to find everyone but ..it was all quiet and headmaster Dippet was there and Tom Riddle too! And then you came and you weren’t nice like you usually are. ...And you wanted me to tell me about the future!! ..You were the one who told Hermione never to ever do that.. and she just about drove me spare going on about all the things you couldn’t do if you used a time turner and the end of the universe or something. So you wouldn’t ever do that!!”

Dumbledore frowned at him again. “This is a special exception. What year was it when you left
your time?”

Harry responded promptly “1997”

“And who are the death eaters?”

Harry’s head lolled and he struggled to think. “I don’t know them all. Um.. Bellatrix Lestrange and Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestrange.. Lucius Malfoy..uh..Antonin Dolohov... or wait.. that’s one of Tom’s friends. Um.. Abraxas and Alphard and Palmer and Darius and Roan.. and Draco .. um.. and professor Snape and ...I don’t know. Lots of other people I don’t know. And me. I didn’t want to be but I had to anyway.”

Dumbledore raised his eyebrows..

“No Mr Piper..I meant what is a death eater. Who are the death eaters? Who attacked Hogwarts and why?”

The floo flared green and headmaster Dippet’s head poked into the room.

“professor Dumbledore! I require your assistance at..er.. at once!” The headmaster blinked, confused and peered at Harry. “Mr...Piper? What are you doing here?”

Harry smiled dizzily and opened his mouth to answer ‘being interrogated’ but Dumbledore silenced him.

“Mr Piper was speaking with me regarding his courses.”

Dippet looked uncertain. “er... at..five in the morning on a Friday?!” He seemed to remember himself. “Nevermind.. Come through at once.. the school is in chaos. I need you to deal with it!!”

Dumbledore made agreeing sounds.

When dippet had gone he rounded on Harry and growled “I will return and we will continue our conversation when I have dealt with whatever Tom Riddle has done now.”

Harry nodded and let his head fall back against the chair, closing his eyes dizzily.

The sound of the floo informed him that he was alone shortly afterward. He wondered vaguely what Tom had done.

He seemed to sit there for a long time.. half dozing when the sound of the door opening quietly behind him roused him.

He cracked his eyes and tried to sit up a bit but his head felt large and unbalanced. Tom walked silently into his line of view, looking disconcerted. He raised his wand and cast some charms over Harry and the chair and his lips thinned in irritation.

Two minutes of different spells later Tom reached forward and gripped Harry roughly by the upper arm, dragging him out of the chair. Overbalancing, with Harry dizzy and limp, they both nearly fell. It was only Tom’s quick wand that righted them both.

Buoyant with a weak levitation charm, he was pulled swiftly out of the room and down corridors screaming with sirens and running with ankle deep water until they reached a statue of Eliza Winthrop-Baggert and Tom opened a passage, shoving Harry through and closing it after them.

Inside there seemed to be, rather than a way, simply a room. It was filled with chaise lounges, rugs and oversized pillows in gold and grey tones.

Harry looked around confused. He wasn’t really sure what was going on. The meaning faded in and out a bit.
Tom was here. Tom had saved him. Where was Dumbledore? Why was it so loud?!
There was some reason he should be afraid right now.. he had the feeling.. it was on the tip of his
tongue so to speak but he couldn’t for the life of him think why.

He sagged against tom and mumbled. “You saved me. I wished you would.”

Tom tossed him down on a chaise lounge roughly and examined him with his wand.
“What is wrong with you?!” he demanded. “What exactly did he do? Are you under the effect of a
potion or was it a spell?”

Harry tried to focus. Too many questions.
“I’m confused..and..afraid.
He gave me veritaserum. It’s a potion.”

The familiar face blinked, surprised, and leaned down. “Veritaserum is ..truth serum obviously? I
was not aware that a reliable potion for that existed. Is it still working?”

Harry closed his eyes. The diffuse worried feeling was growing. “Yes. It exists in my time.
Dumbledore said the department of mysteries just invented it here. ..yes.”

He cringed as the sapphire eyes glinted with mercenary glee and Tom’s lips tightened.
“Excellent. Did you tell the truth in my room regarding the fate of the diary horcrux?”

Harry responded automatically “Yes.” Tom nodded thoughtfully.

“And were you the boy in the story – did you destroy the diary..kill the basilisk?”

Harry struggled to focus. He needed to think. There was some reason not to answer. But already his
mouth was responding of its own accord “Yes.”

Tom’s face darkened thunderously and he snarled angrily “What else do you know about my
horcruxes?”
Harry bit down on his lips with difficulty. He wasn’t supposed to answer that for some reason. He
was almost sure. It was wrong to answer it.

“What do you know about my horcruxes?” Tom screamed at him, furiously.

Harry gasped and his mouth started to run by itself “You wanted to make seven. The ring, the
diary, the locket, the award, the diadem, the cup, and the snake.
The ring was made with the murder of your father. The diary with the murder of moaning myrtle. I
don’t know about the others.
They all had curses on them. Except Nagini – she was just a bloody big curse all by herself.
The ring caused anyone who wears it except you to wither and blacken and die. Dumbledore
destroyed it – I don’t know how.
The locket makes the wearer slowly go mad.. become violent.. fall apart..I destroyed it with the
sword of Gryffindor-.”

Tom took two weak steps back and dropped heavily onto the chair.
“All three are destroyed?” he asked in an unnaturally hollow voice. “You destroyed two pieces of
my soul?!”

Harry hesitated indecisively between finishing his answer to the first question and answering these
new questions.
“yes. yes.” He said, feeling relieved as the horrible nagging tug of the questions vanished.
Tom looked at him with a torn expression, fluctuating between murderous and forlorn. “What happened to the others? The ones you mentioned that I have not made yet?”

Harry let his head flop to the side, turning his face against the back of the chaise. He knew he would answer. “I destroyed them.”

Tom emitted a wrenching cry. “You and Dumbledore destroyed all my horcruxes??!” he almost wailed.

Harry turned his face back dazedly “No.”

Tom blinked and frowned, seeming to review everything said. “Do I have any horcruxes left in your time?” he asked slowly. The pause dragged on as Harry’s mind tried to process the truth. “No.” he said finally. There were no horcruxes left in his time since he was in the past now.

Tom wiped a hand over his face in frustrated despair. “What do you mean? The two answers are contradictory”

Harry sighed, giving up on fighting it. “I mean.. I didn’t ..we didn’t.. destroy all your horcruxes. There was one left. But it’s not in my time anymore. You have no horcruxes left there.”

The dark boy stared at him, not blinking, a strange expression twisting his face.

“Are you telling me that you are a horcrux – MY horcrux?” he whispered.

Harry responded softly in the affirmative. What did it matter?! There was some reason not to say any of this but it didn’t seem very important if he couldn’t remember what it was.

Tom had moved while his eyes were closed and Harry blinked slowly in surprise at seeing the too perfect face a few inches from his own, tom kneeling on the floor beside the chaise.

“and I am alive in your time?” he asked softly. Harry nodded. “Tell me what the last thing you know with certainty that I did was”

Harry stared at the deep royal blue shimmers in the almost imploring eyes. “You were standing over me and you cast a spell I didn’t know” he murmured. “Then I woke up on the edge of the forest in this time”

Tom leaned in and Harry felt his warm silky lips brush over his own deliciously. “I sent you here.” he said softly, sounding relieved. A thought seemed to occur to him. “What did you tell Dumbledore before I reclaimed you?”

Harry wanted tom to kiss him and stop asking questions that made him feel anxious. He looked at his lips even as the answer rushed to the front of his mind. “I told him about the evening I was sent back in time and the names of some death eaters.”

This was not good for some reason he couldn’t place. Tom’s reaction proved as much when he growled under his breath in frustration. “What.. exactly..did Dumbledore ask you and what did you tell him in his office before I rescued you?”

Harry found it was quite easy to recite word for word the entire interaction he had had with the professor. He was surprised when he finished with Dumbledore’s final questions.

“How long does this potion last?” Tom asked quickly.
“I don’t know. In my time it lasts for six hours without the antidote.” Harry mumbled, closing his eyes and leaning closer. When he opened them again the grim look on Tom’s face had deepened.

“You cannot attend classes, obviously” he said to himself. “I will need to clear this with Dippet somehow.” He rose fluidly to his feet and paced away, muttering. “I cannot leave you here unattended..” Harry watched ambivalently.

Soon enough Tom returned and pushed him back on the chaise gently, seating himself on the edge of the lounge beside him.
Harry wriggled closer, greedy for the contact.
Tom smiled down on him, but the smile was tight and somewhat pained.

“What do you recall about Grindelwald’s defeat? – tell me everything you remember reading or hearing about it”
Chapter 19

He walked down the stairs from the headmaster’s office with a smug smirk.

Dumbledore had been there when he had arrived fortunately. When he had asked headmaster Dippet to confirm his acceptance of Dumbledore’s suggestion - (namely that he, in light of his own position far ahead of the grade, might take the day and weekend to assist Caed with catching up on his subjects – as the boy had come to Dumbledore this morning expressing that he only needed a few good days tuition to catch up and could he please participate in charms?) - Dumbledore had been nearly apoplectic with barely hidden rage.

He had tried to say that Tom had misunderstood.

Tom had countered that Caed remembered it well, since he had been there and he could go and fetch the boy if it would clear up the confusion.

Dumbledore had detracted and shifted attention and generally tried to move Dippet (who looked more than bemused by the argument after a morning of caterwauling alarm charms, four fully flooded floors and three others suddenly infested with transfigured nifflers and beetlebats) to forget the point of the conversation.

Tom moved it back on course skilfully each time and reiterated his wish to retrieve Caed to make his case himself.

Eventually, seething, Dumbledore had backed down and endorsed the plan, unwilling to have Caed brought in and the events of the morning perhaps exposed, in the headmaster’s office, in front of countless former headmasters who could not be obliviated and who could provide evidence in the wizengamot against him.

It was rather a suicidal bluff, since Tom was not willing to risk that level of exposure either – so he felt elated and powerful when Dumbledore gave in first.

Dippet though seemed to be operating on an entirely different understanding of the situation and, to Tom’s mild surprise accepted the suggestion immediately.

He had at least expected him to make some protests about Tom sacrificing his own studies.. or about Caed missing three classes.

The mystery was solved when he winked at Tom conspiratorially as he was leaving the room.

For the first time he wondered briefly whether Dippet might not be quite as daft as he gave the impression of being.. he was after all a Slytherin.

He chastised himself for the thought. Dippet supposing that he wanted to skip class for an officially sanctioned day of shagging only served to confirm the man’s obtuse daftness.

He had barely stepped out into the corridor when Dumbledore caught up with him angrily and demanded in a tight voice “Mr Riddle. I would like to speak with you immediately in my office.”

Tom snorted, amused, raising his eyebrows and responded insolently “With all due respect, Professor – I have seen the state Caedmon Piper was in after being in your office alone with you. I believe I will have this discussion here.. in the presence of portraits who might report my assault should you try to hex or drug me.”

Dumbledore glared acidly and cast a muffling charm Tom recognised.

He fixed his face into that of the ever diligent head boy and prepared for the confrontation he had
known would come.

“Where is he?” the professor growled.

Tom shrugged equivocally. “Who can say. Somewhere safe. Why are you questioning him about Grindelwald?
He told me that you were pressing him for information about the future.
I gave him the enchanted necklace in protection of both of you – him against you and you against your own apparent temptation.
What is your interest in Grindelwald in particular, Professor?”

He thought for a moment that Dumbledore might actually attempt to hex him.

“I do not believe for a minute that you are truly interested in the answer, Tom, nor am I obligated to provide any answer at all to a student. However my interest in Grindelwald is the same shared by the entire british wizarding world.
He must be stopped!
His barbaric purges are tearing Europe apart.
He is a dark wizard.. It is every wizard’s duty to fight against the spread of dark magic.”

Tom shook his head faintly. This was too easy.

“So you are determined to stand against him? You sought information on whether he would be defeated.. how and by whom.. in order to hasten that outcome?”

Dumbledore responded unhesitatingly that he was and did and asserted that Tom of all people should be eager to assist him to bring down the madman, in light of his own heritage.
Tom smiled thinly, imagining drowning the bastard in a pot of boiling oil.

Forcing himself to remain polite and responsible he probed carefully

“So.. whatever connection you may have at one time had with Grindelwald – those are Caed’s words, not my own, professor – you now wish only to see him defeated?..”

he plastered a hopeful look on his face and Dumbledore ate it up.

“Yes Tom. I wish only to see Grindelwald stopped. He must be imprisoned for his crimes!
Now.. where is Caedmon?! It is imperative that I finish our conversation. Take me to him.”

Tom looked at Dumbledore pensively.
He was sorely tempted to use the information Grindelwald had given him.. but the man had been extremely clear on that point. He needed his permission.
It grated against Tom to ask anyone for permission.. but Grindelwald had been useful.. the charm he had given had probably prevented Caed from revealing any more information than he had.
And..if the mark upon Tom’s chest operated at all similarly to his own marks, it was likely that he could be placed in considerable pain regardless how he might shield or distance himself, should the dark wizard be displeased with his decision to act independently.

More importantly – if Grindelwald was not angry with him, on their next meeting he might follow through with his agreement to share knowledge and allow Tom access to his library.

“No.. I’m sorry. I need to think about this first professor. Caed is vulnerable at present and I have promised to protect him.
I will speak with Caed about your wish. I will try to persuade him of the importance of this matter.”

Dumbledore’s cheeks darkened with temper. “That is unacceptable Tom! You have no authority to
deny a professor access to a student.
You will bring me to him immediately or there will be repercussions. Far reaching implications –
for your future.”

Tom stiffened and narrowed his eyes at Dumbledore.
“I believe you are threatening me, professor Dumbledore.. after physically restraining, drugging
and interrogating another vulnerable orphan already this morning and in the process breaking every
ministry regulation regarding interaction with victims of temporal displacement.
Perhaps we should end this conversation now and you might think about your actions.”

Dumbledore flicked off a spell without warning, to Tom’s astonishment. He had not expected the
man to lose control to that extent.
It bounced harmlessly off his high level shield.

It had been colourless but reflected in a silvery splash.

It was not dark but bordering on it – some kind of influence spell, Tom thought. It always paid to
be safe rather than sorry when dealing with enemies.

Tom glanced at the portrait of a shepherd boy on a hillside who had pulled a horrified face and
now ran off out of the side of the frame. An elderly lady wearing a tiara next to that picture looked
equally dismayed and shook her head, tutting.
He looked scornfully at Dumbledore. He had not thought the man was that foolish.

“I hope you know who that portrait reports to, Sir. I will see you if I am summoned to provide an
explanation for why the head boy was hexed with an offensive spell out of the blue in an open
corridor.
Do not attempt to follow me please - or to locate Caed. I feel he is in significant danger in your
presence at the moment.
If you try to harm either of us, or indeed any other student to my knowledge again I will have to see
about taking further action.
I would prefer you did not put me in that position, Sir.”

He didn’t wait for Dumbledore’s sputtered enraged answer but turned, confident in his shielding
and strode quickly off down the corridor, after a few steps casting a disillusionment charm,
silencing himself and breaking into a sprint.

He took the first best passage and spent half an hour running disillusioned around the castle and
throwing detection spells off at intervals to see if he was followed.
Finally he felt secure returning to the hideaway room.

As he slipped in quickly he breathed a sigh of relief. Caed was lying on the chaise lounge on his
back, his eyes closed, apparently sleeping safely.

Sensing the weight of eyes upon him he turned and saw Antonin hidden in the shadows on the wall
with the door.
He smiled approvingly. Antonin had been a good choice. He wondered whether the Russian might
have taken advantage of Caed’s state.

The black eyed boy stood without prompting, apparently already realising that he would not be
needed further.

“A useful potion, whatever did that to him.” he observed suggestively.
“What did you ask?” Tom demanded softly.

The Russian smiled secretively and shook his head.
“Nothing of concern. Ask him. He will tell you. I will see you later perhaps my Lord.” He inclined his head and moved to the passage.

Tom let him go with a nod back, pleased at Antonin’s obvious immediate acceptance of the new title, and turned back to the sleeping boy.

He should despise him, he realised.

He should hate him. Caed had apparently destroyed most of his soul.

But he found he couldn’t quite pull together the feeling.
He was a horcrux.. it explained the tingling.. the great sense of comfort when the boy was close.. He wondered how it had happened – apparently it was not intentional. Caed had known he intended to make seven horcruxes. Obviously that information would one day become public in some way.
And he had in the future for some reason decided to send his last remaining horcrux back to the past.
Why? It seemed a dangerous plan.
Was he vulnerable again in the future now?

He thought again about Caed finding the diary.. it made sense now that the boy had passed his wards without difficulty.. that he had found the diary hidden twice.
But... it was somehow morbid and distasteful that the boy was so interested in talking with the soul fragment in the book, in light of what he would do.. what he had already done.

On the other hand.. perhaps that was the reason behind it.

Perhaps Caed felt some form of remorse?

Tom snorted.
He would be waiting a long time if he tried to seek forgiveness and redemption from any part of Tom’s soul.

He may not be able to hate him.. may not desire to see the boy dead.. but that did not mean that he would not suffer for his actions.
Not now. Not while he was in this state. He wanted to see the understanding in the green eyes.

Perhaps though.. knowing what would happen was the key.
Perhaps if he knew exactly what had occurred, he might find some loophole in reality into which he could insert a crowbar.

Surely that would be the reason he had sent the boy here.

He stepped close and carefully transfigured the chaise below the boy until it was wide enough for two and then lowered himself to lie beside Caed.
The blonde stirred slightly and then, as if influenced by a deeper gravity, turned and curled up against Tom.

“Wake up” he whispered next to the soft shell of Caed’s ear.

“Mmmm..” Caed purred and snuggled closer.
Tom snorted and stroked the blonde hair out of the boy’s eyes.
“Wake up my beautiful pet” he urged.

“m’ntapet” Caed mumbled, not opening his eyes.

Tom stroked him. “No? What are you to me then?”

Caed’s response was soft and sounded sad. “I don’t know…”

“What did Antonin ask you?” Tom wondered aloud, remembering suddenly. The boy in his arms flinched. Interest piqued he asked again.

“He asked me what was wrong with me and if you did it”

“And? What else?”

Caed ducked his head and mumbled the answer against Tom’s chest. He could make it out even so.

“How I feel toward you. Whether..whether I’m in love with you. Whether-...”

Tom dragged Caed’s face up with a finger under his chin. “Whether-?” Caed looked uncomfortable and avoidant. Tom kissed him lightly and brushed his lips over the soft angular cheekbone. “Tell me” he murmured.

Caed sighed
“Whether I’d give my life for you..” he breathed.

Tom’s lips quirked in surprise. He hadn’t expected that.

“And? What did you answer?”

Caed tried to kiss him and he let him for a minute or two, giving himself over to the deep satisfying tingle of meshing with the boy like this. When it seemed like Caed was trying to escape the question altogether he gently pulled away and fixed him with a questioning expression. The green eyes dropped unhappily and he detected a blush.

“Caed?” he whispered.

The boy sighed deeply and answered “I told him you didn’t do it. I said Dumbledore drugged me. I... I told him I feel unsure and confused about you. I don’t know what to think. I’m...afraid... of you. And I feel bad. Guilty. About..what we talked about after I woke up this morning. And it just makes me even more unsure and worried. And.. and I feel excited and..safe..sometimes.. and ...happy”

Tom kissed his forehead, pleased – Caed did seem to be experiencing remorse. Normally he despised remorse in others – it was a sign of a weak character.. however in this particular instance, remorse in Caed was a useful thing.

“Mm?” he prompted him. He could feel the boy start to tremble under his fingertips and wondered whether he was fighting not to answer the remaining questions or whether the answers themselves made him tremble.

Caed’s voice was barely there at all when he answered. “Yes.. I ..I am... I..told him i’m in-...”
He heard Caed swallow and whisper desperately “It just came out. I-I don’t. It’s not.. I don’t want to be..”

The boy shook harder.

Tom marvelled at the strangely warm feeling hearing that the boy was in love with him created inside. Peculiar. He couldn’t remember really wanting another’s love.. ever.. although he had been informed he possessed it in various desperate fanatical pleading tones over the years. Elana had only last night told him over and over she loved him and begged him not to go...

Adorno Prince was perhaps the worst - he had been quite obsessed with love for him.. had composed poetry and music in his honour and done anything required of him. Once Tom had given him to Gyphus to fuck, for a laugh. The little wretch had cried and pleaded, confused and hurt, but had done as asked rather than ‘disappoint’ Tom. By the end of Tom’s little affair with him, Adorno had practically climaxed on command. He’d hardly needed to touch him at all to bring him off..or he could conversely refuse to allow him to come for hours.. use him over and over and leave him wanting, if the boy displeased him.

Adorno was utterly destroyed when tom lost interest in shagging him. These days he was quiet and withdrawn from the others in Slytherin. Tom had instructed him not to attempt to speak with him or his friends again and, to his credit, the boy had not needed to be reminded and had not made any problems.

Sometimes he would catch him staring in his direction with a lost, sorrowful longing expression. It pleased him to know that Adorno still had not recovered, a year later. He hoped he never would. Before Caed had come, he occasionally enjoyed salting the wound by smiling at the boy or parading others in front of him. Adorno left quickly whenever he saw him with Elana – knowing the display that would inevitably follow if Tom noticed him there.

He hadn’t thought much about love in the case of Caed, beyond an instrumental value in bringing the boy to talk.. but inexplicably he found it pleased him greatly. It...wasn't the same kind of satisfaction he had felt at possessing Adorno’s or any of the others’ love. It was..strangely gripping.. moving.. it..meant more than mere amusement inexplicably.

He held Caed more tightly and experienced a sudden rush of overwhelming possessiveness. This pretty creature belonged to him utterly. He would protect it. No one else would have Caed. Ever. He would have him in every way it was possible to have another. No other hand would ever know him.

A sudden perverse desire to hear the actual words of love spoken aloud flickered through him and he crushed it under the bootheel of reason.

He could feel Caed’s hands clench in the robe on his back and then the blonde breathed against his chest faintly “Yes.. I would...give my life.”

The strange warmth inside increased to a roaring fire and he dragged the boy’s head back by his hair and kissed him passionately. Caed whimpered into his mouth and responded with helpless abandon.
“I want to be in you” he growled low between fiery kisses and, noticing that the boy was crying, licked away the trails of salty tears on his cheeks. Caed nodded and kissed him again, almost as if in despair.

Tom didn’t bother divesting their clothes but simply vanished them, casting the colonic and lubrication spells quickly, lifting Caed’s leg and pushing him roughly onto his back to position the boy sufficiently.
When he embedded himself deeply with one hard thrust through the unprepared ring of the boy, Caed yelped and cried more.
He kissed and licked the tears away and moved more carefully until he rested skin against skin, balls deep inside him and then he drowned the faint gaspy sobs in a deep hungry kiss.
He didn’t start moving until Caed started to squirm beneath him and then only in tiny grinding circles as he rubbed his own abdomen against the blonde’s hard cock.

Caed’s gasps had changed and he moaned in pleasure.

Tom drew back to look down on him.. he was breathtaking.. the pale green eyes half lidded in lust drunk abandon.

“Feels..so good..” he mumbled.. “Please.. move.. need you to move..”

Tom leaned down and caught his lips again, teasing him as he drew slowly back.
The grunt of pleasure the boy expelled when he drove back into him hard was delicious. He did it again and again, enjoying the smack of their flesh and the groans and whimpers.
He leaned down and whispered through his exertions in Caed’s ear. “mine.. forever.. beautiful..”
The boy seemed to shudder all over and moaned loudly. His arse fluttered around him.
Tom looked at him in delight. He hadn’t spilled but it had felt very much like the boy had come apart for a few seconds.
His arms dragged Tom down for a bestial kiss, tongues sliding and wrestling slickly. Tom felt himself losing his rhythm.. climbing too rapidly to the crest of his pleasure.

He didn’t want to stop. He wanted to let the hot tight glove of the boy pull him over the edge.
Quickly he reached a hand between them for Caed’s cock. It was weepy and throbbing.
The boy wailed into his mouth when he started to stroke it in time with his thrusts.
He broke away from the kiss and looked into the euphoric face.
Caed was rocking his hips eagerly between the hand on his cock and the cock in his arse, obviously chasing his own release and looked up with something like overexcited, faintly confused wonder.
“Tom..” he moaned in rapture, lifting his legs higher and pushing his arse against him.

The impression overcame him suddenly and Tom felt himself lose control, groaning in sudden release as ecstasy blunted his mind and the pale green eyes, rolling back in bliss seemed to fill his entire perceptive world.

Distantly he heard Caed’s own cries and felt the warm droplets painting both their chests. He pumped the boy still.. fucking him in thrilling spasms as he sucked out the last marrow of the climax ...till he let himself sink down in sated contentment, kissing the equally dazed and exhausted face below.

He started to pull out but Caed’s arse clenched, making him jump and shiver sensitively.
“No!!” the boy protested. “Please.. don’t go yet..”
Tom reluctantly let the arms pull him down to lie on top of the suddenly clingy blonde. The legs that were still slung around him were loose and he felt them shift slightly as Caed made himself comfortable beneath him. A kiss was pressed to his forehead, making him snort faintly against Caed’s collarbone at the strange juxtaposition of the aftermath.

They lay in stillness for a while until it began to get cold and Tom cast warming charms.

“Caed?...” he asked quietly, hoping to get the exact note of intimacy needed across to the boy.

“Mm?” Caed murmured, sounding half asleep.

Tom waited for a moment.

“I had a small fight with Dumbledore in the corridors on the way here. He tried to hex me.”

Caed tensed beneath him. He felt the boy’s sphincter tighten automatically around his soft cock and he twitched slightly in response.

“What I’m saying is..you are on my side now, aren’t you? Against him? That was what you meant before when you said you’d give your life for me?”

Caed didn’t respond.

Tom frowned slightly. Was the potion still working?

“I don’t know. Yeah.. I guess. Yes.” Caed said uncertainly.

Tom nodded against his skin, irritated at how long it had taken for him to answer.

“How did you find my horcruxes and how did you destroy them?” he asked decisively.

Caed growled and pushed his shoulder angrily. “I’m not telling you! You’ll just try and stop it and you can’t. It’s already happened. You shouldn’t even know about them. Dumbledore is a massive asshole for giving me veritaserum”

Tom raised his head and recognised the clarity in the pale eyes. The potion had worn off. He had thought he had six hours... it had barely been three. Damn. If he hadn’t wasted time fucking him...

He nodded again resignedly and dropped his head back down.

Breakfast wasn’t even finished in the great hall. They could still go to class, he considered although it was a half hearted thought.. it did lead to another more useful one though. Caed would, more than likely, wish to skip classes.

“I... did persuade Dippet to give us both the day off..” he said neutrally.

“But if you are no longer affected by the potion then I suppose there is no reason for you to miss charms.”

Caed’s breath caught and he huffed frustratedly. “So either I tell you or you’ll make me go to classes, is that it?”

Tom raised himself up, feeling his soft cock slip out of the blonde’s arse completely now, and fixed Caed with a playful smirk.

“If you answer.. I’ll reward you.. and you won’t need to go to class all day.. otherwise.. you could go to class and we could spend the weekend working on charms and arithmancy.”
Caed rolled his eyes.

“I’ll tell you about one.. and you’ll reward me and all the rest.”

Tom smirked. “Two.”

“ONE!” Caed growled.

Tom’s smirk widened and he stated quietly “two”, moving down the other boy’s body until he could lean down and lick at the soft cock, sticky with the blonde’s strangely sweet cum. Caed gasped and his cock stiffened dramatically.

It seemed, Tom thought, that Caed very much liked the sight of him licking and sucking him. He reacted very quickly to it.

“One..” Caed whispered desperately.

Tom sucked the half hard cock into his mouth and felt it harden to rock against his tongue. He swirled and sucked before releasing and looking up in amusement.

“Two.. and if you don’t accept it now.. it will be three the next time I come up..or I’ll petrify you and keep you on the edge for an hour .. and then make you go to class in that condition.”

He dropped his head and worked the hard stick again, wringing groans and expletives from Caed. The boy moved helplessly, fucking his mouth gently. He found he didn’t mind it.

Looking up with his lips still tight around the boy’s shaft he saw him biting his lip, deliciously undone again.

He raised a sardonic eyebrow at him and Caed nodded vigorously. “Ok.. two.. please.. deeper..”

The plea dissolved into a delighted gurgle as Tom opened his throat and swallowed the whole length of him; impatient to get to the matter at hand – which was impossible with the boy so excited.

He finished him quickly.

Caed wove his fingers through his hair and Tom, surprised at himself, allowed it.. Allowed the blonde to guide him, urge him deeper. The way Caed’s fingers teased gently at his scalp felt unexpectedly pleasant. He didn’t try to pull or push or force the movement.. he didn’t try to take over.. Tom had the feeling that Caed mainly wished to touch him.. reciprocate the contact.

When he came with a whimper and an ohhh of pleasure, Tom sucked him dry.

It was just as he was swallowing that an idea came to him out of the blue. He hadn’t even been thinking about the matter in question.. but suddenly he had an idea that, at least in theory, seemed perhaps a useful starting point for further thought. Perhaps he could somehow connect the diary to something else. Another magical object. Perhaps create a second book..populate it differently. Or.. a crystal ball? An oculum?

Something to give the horcrux a view into this world?

He made a mentalnote of it and crawled up Caed’s body to lie beside him and hold him in the aftermath.

After a few minutes of stroking his arm and chest slowly, Caed finally began to speak.
After he had installed the blonde on his sofa with a list of charms, defense spells and transfigurations to practice (Caed was furious at the prospect of having to study after all, when he’d told him about the cup and award horcruxes and expected to be coddled, hugged and romanced for hours for it) -he slipped out of the castle and down to the forbidden forest, creating an illegal portkey as soon as he was out of the wards and travelling to Antonin’s family estate.

Once there it was a small matter to have a servant floo Evgene Petrovich to ask permission for the use of an owl.

Granted, he sent the two securely warded phials of memories off to Grindelwald. The first contained Dumbledores argument from the morning and the second Caed’s veritaserum mediated response to the interrogation on Grindelwald’s defeat.

He had considered activating his mark and having the wizard come to him but he suspected that if he did that he wouldn’t get away again quickly and he’d made no preparations with Caed for an extended absence.

More importantly – there were other things he wanted to do today, namely to look through the library to see whether there was anything that would suggest how successful increasing the scope of the diary with some secondary object was likely to be.

He portkeyed back and crept back into the castle past the great hall where he could hear that the rest of the school was having lunch.

Caed.. he would have lunch with Caed and then he would look into the matter of the diary.

Hurrying upstairs he let himself into his room. The boy was sitting at the desk writing in the diary. Frowning slightly he cast disillusionement and silencing charms on himself and closed the door noiselessly, then stalked over and peered past Caed’s shoulder at the words being shown on the page.

Prove it.

if you truly regret it – you will do all you can to undo what you have done. You will offer me the information I require to find loopholes that comply with the events you recall in the timeline.

He looked at the torn expression on Caed’s face and the way he fiddled with the quill and waited thoughtfully.

His other self was being quite useful again it seemed.

But it can’t be undone. It happened. I’ll destroy everything if I try to stop it!

Tom bit his tongue against the logical protests that welled up inside himself at that and smirked when the diary voiced them all.

Don’t be ridiculous. It is impossible to destroy everything.
Do you imagine you are the first victim of temporal displacement?!

Whatever you do here and now will lead to the events you remember – yes – but you must consider that you do not have a universal perspective. Your viewpoint is subjective. The interpretation you have of events is limited by context and your own knowledge.

Perhaps things were not as they seemed to you then.

If you wish to help me you will assist me to build an impression of the parameters we have to work within.
If I know how things must appear.. then I may find a way to escape destruction while recreating the memories you have.

Tom agreed wholeheartedly and in fact that was the very approach he was taking himself. Caed chewed on the end of the feather quill and Tom had to clench his fists to prevent himself from cuffing his ear and removing it. Didn’t the little twit know the kinds of diseases birds carried?!

Maybe..

but..I don’t know if I should help you..

you’re terrible. You destroy the whole wizarding world.

Maybe I feel a bit guilty and I’d really rather you didn’t die but I don’t think that everyone else in the country would agree with me.
I really don’t think that myrtle or hagrid would agree!

All the people you killed – wizarding and muggle – it was SO hard to find all your horcruxes and even harder to get rid of them.

You almost killed me dozens of times in my life so far. It’s easy to forget about that here. You’re so drop dead gorgeous and you’ve been nice to me but in my time you’re an insane snake faced monster.

What am I even saying – HERE you’re a monster too! On Wednesday you made some poor guy eat human flesh, and then you tried to convince some girl she had damned herself to hell. And.. and you shagged her even though you’d only JUST bound us. I need to stop being so stupid.

Snake-faced?
Are you speaking metaphorically?

Tom sighed inwardly. Caed had himself filled some ‘poor girl’s’ breasts with boiling tar – it really seemed to him that his own little games were more innocuous.
Obviously the boy still felt betrayed.
He cancelled his disillusionment charm and put his hand on Caed’s shoulder slowly.
The boy nearly jumped out of his skin.
Exactly that reaction he’d hoped to avoid by moving slowly.

Wide frightened green eyes turned to him, flicking back down to the diary and then back up. Caed apparently expected to be punished.
He softened his eyes and let his hand move to massage the boy’s shoulder gently. “It’s quite alright.” He said quietly. “You are safe.”

He saw the blonde’s throat work as if his mouth had gone dry.

“Move.. I wish to write.” he said as gently as he could. Caed nodded and got up.
Seating himself he took up the quill and wrote quickly.

Caed is standing to the side here.

I have been wondering whether it might be possible to tie the diary to a physical object.. perhaps a crystal or a window or even a second book. Have you read anything that might support such a plan?

I have been scouring the library constantly since we spoke – when I was not speaking with Caed.
There is nothing here that seems helpful.
There are no books at all that deal with horcruxes, obviously – but the texts on cursed and possessed objects do not offer anything of value.
Perhaps the malfoy or black libraries?
If you did manage to do it – it might override the ethivoric charms on the diary.
I might not be able to resurrect at all.

Well.. it seemed like the most feasible option for broadening the dimensions of your reality.
and perhaps you might survive the basilisk venom if there were a refuge to retreat to. then again.. its possible the poison would simply spread across the connection.

::What happened when you visited Grindelwald?::

Tom hesitated at the question, glancing back at Caed uneasily even though reason informed him that the boy would simply see a line of squiggles and dots.
He didn’t want to answer.
He knew the diary horcrux would be furious if he told him he was foolish enough to allow himself to be marked – He was furious with himself already..
...and if he heard about the parameters of the marking... worse.. it might decide to tell Caed at some point.
The fear wasn’t entirely rational, he knew but he did not want the blonde to find out.

::He was not initially very receptive but in the end he entered an agreement with me.::

::And what did you agree upon?::

::perhaps we might discuss it another time.:: I will speak with Abraxas regar

He paused midway through the word and sighed.
He knew himself that there was a much more likely prospect for works on the darkest magic.

The malfoy library was diverse and held an enviable wealth of information on dark magic, spells and potions - however he had looked through it on several occasions when he was searching for information on horcruxes and the literature it held had been vague and unhelpful. Perhaps Carvell Malfoy kept a hidden cache of his most illegal books but if so – he would unlikely divulge the contents to Tom. The man had been quite frosty to him in the past, despite his best efforts.
Carvell’s view of him was even less accommodating than Grindelwald’s had been, since the man had no idea he was descended from the great founder, Salazar Slytherin.

The black library was tiny in comparison with the Malfoy collection.
His best bet was probably elsewhere.
If the German did not possess what he needed, chances were that he would be able to lay hands upon something if he truly desired to.

I will speak with Grindelwald. If he possesses something of use I will need to exchange something of comparable value for it.

He was interested in Slytherin’s library.

Do we wish to share something of real worth or merely offer a taste?

Perhaps Slytherin’s second workbook. It will need to be translated.

I will have it finished by tomorrow evening if I begin immediately.

I will take care of half of it – from the diagram of the Cipry beetles – that way we shall be finished tonight.

If I leave tomorrow early then perhaps he will not keep me too long.
The man surely must have things to do. The paper reported that he took the Italian ministry of magic yesterday!

The movement of Caed behind him drew his attention. The boy had turned away with an angry concerned expression.

“Caed?” he asked softly.

“I don’t want you to go!” the tight-voiced response came.
He smiled weakly.

“Come now.. don’t be childish. I’m a monster – as you say.
Besides – if anything were to happen to me you have a replacement right here.”

Caed’s head shot around in wretched guilt.
“I’m sorry.. I..shouldnt have said that. About you being a monster. Please don’t go!”

He glanced at the words on the page

We will speak about Grindelwald later then.
I will go and retrieve the text at once.

Caed moved close and asked quietly “What did happen when you went there? I meant to ask but.. well.. the mark.. and the binding and..and everything...”

Tom cursed inwardly.
“It actually went better than I expected” he responded lightly. “I spent longer arranging to meet him than I did in his presence. He had me chained in his dungeon for all of twenty minutes perhaps and then we spoke civilly in his study.
He agreed to give me the information I required about Dumbledore”

Caed’s brow furrowed. “For nothing? That makes no sense. What did you agree to give him?!”

Tom looked away. “I agreed to share some of Slytherin’s private library. As I said.”

Caed stepped even closer “Tom?? What else?”

He stood and moved away, distancing himself when he knew he should turn and lie openly.
“Nothing of significance” he muttered “I need to go to the chamber. Wait here.”

Caed followed him quickly, scooping up the diary.
“No – I want to come with you.”

This wasn’t ideal. He wanted the boy away from him – hopefully he’d forget his questions by the time he had returned to him.
“It’s better that you remain here and work on-“ Caed bared his teeth at him in a snarl. The surprise of it stopped him mid sentence

“No! I want to come with you!” he growled, pushing past and going to the door.
“Fine” Tom huffed irritably. 
“You will be in the way. Go and get your text books. You can work down there while I translate the notebook.”
Chapter 20

Caed walked off in the wrong direction when they left his room and Tom had to call him back.

“This way. Where are you going?!”

The boy frowned confused. “The...bathroom?”

Tom blinked at him bemused. “No. We’re going to the dungeons. Come along.”

He smirked inwardly – if Caed only knew about the bathroom entrance... he imagined the boy staring down into the darkness and then flinging himself in typical Gryffindor fashion into the unknown.

They reached the dungeons in silence and he led them down into the deeper levels, finally stopping beside the wall in which the entrance was hidden.

“There’s another way in.” Caed said flatly, stating the obvious.

Tom raised his eyebrow at him “Do you think Slytherin himself climbed up and down a filthy cistern?”

He turned to the wall and hissed softly ::reveal the way::.

A dark wooden door pressed itself up out of the stone blocks of the wall as if rising out of water. He grasped the handle for a moment, holding on as the metal pricked at his flesh and tasted his blood.

As always there was a long moment of indecision. Sometimes it lasted longer than others. He wondered whether one day the door would decide he had too much muggle taint and refuse him access.

Today, however, it swung inward silently, exposing only darkness.

“Come on then” he muttered at the blonde who had moved closer to him.

Stepping into the darkness he felt it envelop him almost as if passing a membrane into a denser substance.

A moment later Caed walked into the back of him.

“Close the door – don’t touch the handle.” He told him quietly.

The blonde complied and then the darkness was complete.

He felt the slight shudder of the floor that told him it was moving down into the depths and turned, wrapping his arms around Caed, discovering with mild surprise that the other boy was trembling.

“Are you afraid?” he enquired curiously.

There was no reply but Caed pressed closer and he felt the boy’s arms wrap around him tightly. He allowed himself to drop his face against Caed’s warm neck and relax. This was better than he usually felt when riding this moving floor down to the tunnel.

After a minute or so there was a jolt that let him know that they had reached the bottom.

The first time he had found the door and had entered, he’d almost walked over the edge of the platform in the darkness that brooked no lumos and extinguished all torches.

Extricating himself from Caed’s embrace he took the boy’s hand and led him in the direction he
know by heart. The hand in his own clenched tightly as they walked and once Caed stumbled, but caught himself.

“Why isn’t there any light?” he whispered as if in a church or library. Tom smiled.
“It is another of Salazar’s precautions. Like the Slytherin entrance into Hogwarts that I showed you once upstairs – the entire area is enchanted against flames and light bearing spells. I am currently leading you along a narrow bridge over a deep chasm.”

Caed gripped him more tightly but didn’t reply.

After a while he felt the slight change of surface beneath his feet, the harder, regular texture of blocked stone rather than hewn and turned in a sharp right angle to the left. Caed trailed after unquestioningly, holding on for grim death.

They walked a while longer in this direction and then Caed whispered “I think I prefer the other entrance.”
Tom snorted snidely. “Try to imagine being here alone.. having to discover the geography for the first time by touch. We are almost there. The other way is riskier. Particularly since the blasted mudblood’s ghost haunts it.”
There was no response.

The texture underfoot changed again and their footfalls echoed off walls that were much closer. Up ahead there was a faint greenish glow barely distinguishable from the complete darkness all around.
“See.. up ahead is the chamber” he reassured Caed absently.

Caed’s hand was cold and damp and the closer they moved to the green shimmer, the tighter he gripped.

Shaking him off as his hand was squeezed uncomfortably, Tom muttered “You wished to come along. I’m not walking you back up now. Pull yourself together.”
He could see the greenish glow shimmering off the still pool now. It emanated from the moss and stalactites overhead in the chamber. Drawing his wand he swept it to the side imperiously and torches lit along the length of the long hall.

The absence of the second set of footfalls caused him to stop and look back questioningly. Caed had stopped and in the faint light thrown by the torches he looked terrified.

Sighing in infuriation he walked back and blocked the boy’s field of vision with his body. “You are safe. I am with you” he said quietly. “Come now.”
Caed’s wide eyes darted about in panic that he was trying, and failing, to control.

Tilting his head back and looking up in irritation Tom stepped closer and wrapped Caed in his arms again.

The boy hesitated only a moment and then clung to him like a limpet to a rock.
“You were here last time too” Caed murmured faintly. “You set the basilisk on me.”

Tom swallowed. He was going to have to summon the basilisk out of Slytherin’s head in order to gain access to the library. The antechamber it rested in, in stasis, was too small to permit them to pass through into the deeper corridors without removing it first. It was another of Salazar’s little barriers to invaders not of his blood.
“I am not going to set it on you” he said softly next to Caed’s ear.
“But.. I will have to call it out.”
The boy started to tremble even more violently in his arms and he felt him shake his head frantically.
Holding him more tightly, he shhhed, stroking Caed’s back in a manner he hoped was calming.
“I did try to leave you upstairs, you recall. Do not worry. It will close its eyes. You will not be in any danger. Come along now.” He tried to pull away but Caed gripped him tightly.
“Caed.. calm yourself.” He forced himself to soften and stroke the boy’s hair. Gently he kissed him until he got a response.
It took longer than he expected.

He interspersed little teasing kisses with small steps, moving them both by inches out into the large chamber until finally he stood where he wanted to be.
Caed had required more kisses for fewer steps the further out they came into the damp torchlit place.

Holding the boy tightly he informed him “I’m going to call it now.”

Caed nodded against his shoulder, burying his face against him. He pressed a light, mildly irritated kiss to the blond head and raised his wand, pointing it at the mouth of the great statue head of Salazar Slytherin.
::Seshastra I summon you. Hear my voice. I am Slytherin’s blood. Rise and serve me, faithful guardian::

There was a low gravelly grinding as the mouth of the statue slid down, opening the door to the antechamber.
::Close your eyes Seshastra. Close your eyes and come to me::

In his arms Caed clung tighter.

The nose of the basilisk emerged slowly from the black shadows in the head.
Tom lowered his eyes to look down at the pool. If the beast’s eyes were not closed at least the reflection would not kill him outright.
Not that Caed appeared to be in any state to remove them both safely from the chamber.
But the beast would obey. It always obeyed. It smelled Slytherin’s inheritance on him.. the parseltongue made it obey.
Every time he summoned it the tiny concern that it might not obey troubled him at first.

The great scaly beast drew itself out swiftly. He saw in the water, before the basilisk disturbed the smooth black reflective mirror surface, that its eyes were closed. The massive creature dragged itself up out of the water on the stones next to him, resting its head alongside Caed and himself. He smiled at the deadly power so docile and obedient.

“Look Caed” he whispered against the boy’s ear, unpeeling the boy’s arms from him with difficulty.
“I don’t want to” Caed said low. Tom snorted. “Don’t be so daft now please. Look. She’s not going to hurt you.”
He walked the two steps over to the massive head that reached above waist height and stroked the cold shiny scales. The basilisk hissed softly in recognition ::My Lord::
He trailed his fingers over the smaller leathery folds behind the creature’s ear hole.

::Seshastra. I must visit my ancestor’s library:: he informed it.
Caed, who was standing with his arms wrapped around himself and eyes screwed shut opened them a crack and glanced at him standing by the basilisk.

::Have you brought me this one as a snack?:: the great beast hissed then.
Caed took two steps away in panic, ripping his eyes wide in fear.
Tom looked at him disappointedly. He reacted very badly to the sound of the serpent language it seemed.
He saw Caed gulping and looking around as if for another exit.

::You are not hungry:: he informed the basilisk. ::I gave you all those muggles only yesterday morning. You cannot physically have finished digesting them::. The basilisk emitted something that he knew was its equivalent of a chuckle.
::This one is alive.. so much better. Bring me them alive next time::. He scratched it around the base of its horns.
::No.. this one is mine.. He is my precious. You cannot eat him:: He sighed grudgingly
::But I will try to leave some of the muggles alive for you next time:::

The serpent opened its mouth in a toothy grin and thanked him.

Recognising that Caed was apparently not going to thaw to the creature he drew his wand and summoned the path up out of the water.
Round pedestals raised themselves in a line between the stone edge they stood upon and the mouth of the great statue. “Come along then, Caed” he said with a sigh and stalked off toward the antechamber.
Caed didn’t hesitate and almost crashed into him, trying to follow so close behind. He glared at him over his shoulder briefly and the boy backed off a half step.

Inside he stepped through the ankle deep scales and crushed bones to the corridor on the far side. It lit up with small green witch lights on the walls when he approached.

They walked past four or five doors before he turned and opened one on the right, revealing an intimate little library. Its walls were curved and lined floor to ceiling with books. There was no fireplace but a desk and chair stood in the centre of the room. Upon the desk there was a tall milky glass column that started to glow softly and then increasingly brightly as he approached.
He summoned a blank parchment from the desk and transfigured it into a chair, placing it on the far side of the desk.

“Sit. Work.” he instructed absently as he scanned the shelf he thought to find the notebook in.

Caed was looking around the room curiously. “What else is in here apart from the library?” he asked.
Tom smirked.
“Secrets. It’s all in the name. Work, Caed.” The boy frowned and sat down, pulling out the shrunken books from his pocket and dumping them on the side, and then pulling out the diary with more anticipation and laying it in front of him.
“No!” Tom chastised mildly. “Leave him. He will transcribe the text – as will I. You’ll simply have to work on arithmancy or charms in the meantime Caed.”

Spotting the notebook he pulled it out and flipped through it to reassure himself that it was the one he had been thinking of sharing. It was. There was very little of real magical value in it. It was all
Slytherin’s private thoughts. He spoke at length about blood purity. Grindelwald would like that. It didn’t contain any sensitive spells or potions information but held a few simple spells in parsel of limited use. One was quite good at linking small items together so that whatever occurred with one occurred with another. He frowned slightly and thought about this. Could the diary be linked with another book in such a way? It would appear then that the horcrux were writing in the other book but in fact there would be no etheric link at all, merely a magical communication.

Flicking through he found the spell in question and sat down slowly in Salazar’s chair. Ignoring Caed’s sulky aggravated expression he pulled the diary to him and opened it, drawing quill and ink quickly.

The linking spell?

I was thinking the very same thing. It seems like it might be of possible use if the diary were in danger of being destroyed – however it would also prevent the real charms from guiding the energy transfer. It would prevent me from resurrecting.

Yes... but I am still alive in Caed’s time. I could keep the original and when the memory Caed remembers has completed, I could give you a victim under more controlled circumstances.

Perhaps.. I do not think it is feasible. The boy said that a girl was possessed by the diary. That would be more difficult to simulate.

Tom looked up at Caed speculatively. “Caed.. I want the memory of your dealings with the diary horcrux.”

The boy’s head flew up and he looked immediately concerned once again. “No! you can’t have it! Tom.. you can’t go through my memories! I won’t give them to you! You’ll...upset time.”

Tom offered a wan smile. “Either you will give me the memories I want for Salazar’s pensieve or I will take them by force from your mind. If you force me to use legilimency – I will look at far more than the memories I currently seek”

He had every intention of doing this anyway.. another day perhaps.. when he did not have quite so much to do. His legilimency abilities were still comparatively untrained. It was a blunt instrument and difficult to wield.

He watched the anger, frustration and despair fluctuate across the boy’s features. Finally, visibly unhappy about it the boy spat “I’ll tell you what you want to know”

Tom frowned. He wanted more than an account. He needed to see what Caed had seen.
At that moment his thoughts were derailed as he felt the terrible dizzying flutter from the right side of his chest that told him he was being summoned. He gasped and struggled to open his robe and shirt wide enough to slip his hand in and respond to the call in order to get the bastard to stop that sensation. It stopped. He looked up again at Caed who was gaping in something that was equal parts dismay and disgust. His wand hand itched to curse him. The boy, in so many things naive, had obviously realised what his reaction had been about.

“Shut that. Get to work. Not a word!” he hissed poisonously at him and turned back to the diary, scrawling quickly that he required the translation as soon as possible. Then he turned to the notebook and parchment, beginning the laborious task of transcribing the parsle by meaning or phonetics into English.

He could feel Caed continuing to look at him with that horrified expression. He had only completed two lines when Caed demanded in a low voice “Tell me what you agreed with him.” He narrowed his eyes and looked up into the suddenly hard face of the pretty blonde wizard.

“No. I should have left you upstairs. Be quiet and let me finish this. I’m sure you realise that I have far less time to complete it now.”

Caed was not at all affected by this.

“You asked me all about Grindelwald this morning. You’ve agreed to give him all the information Dumbledore wants, haven’t you?! Are you insane?!.. you’re going to change the timeline!! You’re going to destroy everything! I thought you were mental in my time but you’re way beyond mental. You don’t just want to ruin the wizarding world – you want to ruin reality!!..”

Tom rubbed a hand over his face in irritation, sorely tempted to use just a small obliviate. Or a stupefy.. or at the least an incarcerous and silencing charm.

“I am not changing time. What you remember happening will probably still happen. I will merely assist Grindelwald to find a loophole in recorded events. As I will assist my own diary horcrux to do the same.”

He sighed long sufferingly

“Caed.. He wouldn’t have given me any information on Dumbledore without it. When he found out about you, he wanted to take you. I had to make agreements to prevent that. I agreed to give him the information you held about him in exchange for the information about Dumbledore. I agreed to share some of Slytherin’s library.. He agreed to protect us. Both of us, should Dumbledore or the ministry attempt to remove or incarcerate either of us. Now please... stop making a fuss and let me translate this. If I ignore his call for more than a few hours he will be...intolerant. And at present I require something from him so I do not wish to put him in that mood.”

He turned back down to the notebook.

::I will help:: Caed hissed.

Tom leapt up in shock, knocking the chair over in the process.

::You speak parseltongue:: he hissed back, knowing that it was stating the obvious but unable to prevent the exclamation.

::Yes. Copy some of the pages and I’ll translate them with you::: the blonde said grumpily. Tom noticed that his speech wasn’t quite as fluid as his own. He wondered how often Caed had used the gift and how he’d discovered it. Against his best will, he found himself extremely affected by this discovery. He’d never been able
to speak to anyone except Sesastra in this way and, while the basilisk was intelligent, it was not
one for long extended conversations.

He swallowed and moved around the table as if led on an invisible line.
He needed to touch the boy again.
This was one more way in which he was..perfect.

Caed was looking at him warily, as if he might be cursed.
::Calm.. Not going to hurt you:: he hissed softly, coming around the table and moving close.
He stroked his fingertips down the boys cheek and leaned down slowly, trying to communicate
with his eyes the things he was not prepared to say aloud.
Caed seemed to understand at least a small fraction of the emotion he felt and tilted his face up,
responding eagerly.
He dragged him up by the shoulders to his feet and set about devouring him with hot bruising
kisses, breaking off only to hiss excitedly ::Mine!:: before returning to passionately melting the
boy’s mind. Caed moaned and gripped him tightly, trying to grind against him.

The knowledge of what he needed to be working on weighed on his mind like a cannonball on a
rubber sheet.
He wanted to take this little perfect wanton and have him again and again. He did not want to go
and surrender himself to Grindelwald again tonight.
Reluctantly he slowed his kisses and prepared to withdraw but Caed tried to hold him in place.
When he pulled away the boy hissed pleadingly ::I want you:: and Tom couldn’t help setting upon
him again, groaning.
He wanted him too. But he needed grindelwald’s assistance.

He forced himself to back away a step. ::Later::. he hissed, working to slow his breathing again.
::Later my beautiful mate. I must complete this now. We must complete this now::

Caed licked his lips and swallowed but nodded.
They returned to their places and Tom could see the disappointment he felt reflected on the
blonde’s face.
Later..
later.. when he had given Grindelwald whatever he wanted ..he might not.. probably wouldn’t..
have the energy to satisfy Caed.

The bitterness welled up inside. Damn it.

He stood again and swept around the table, grabbing Caed by the elbow and dragging him up and
to the door. They were down the corridor and into salazar’s bedchamber in the wink of an eye and
he was tossing Caed roughly down onto the large bed.
::Yes!!:: the boy hissed and reached for him.

Vanishing their clothes with a wave he climbed up and over him, pouncing and kissing him again.
He could hear happy little moans from the boy beneath him who was already hard and moving his
hips trying to rub his cock against Tom’s own.
He lowered himself further and allowed it. The burning silky skin was divine and Caed groaned
into his mouth.

He found... he wanted..something...
possibly it was the idea of going and giving himself to Grindelwald again – he highly doubted the
wizard would allow him to leave without having had him again – he found..strangely.. he wanted
suddenly to feel Caed inside him. His mate should be the only one to know that particular honour..
It was..appalling..to have to submit himself to Grindelwald. He wanted to erase the stain of the wizard’s touches with the balm of the soft green eyed waif.

He was certain the boy wouldn’t know what to do even if he offered so he didn’t offer. He cast the scourgifying colonic and lubrication charms on himself silently and then dragged his lips away from the boy currently making himself drunk on them. Reaching behind, he gripped Caed’s shaft and lifted it, positioning it against the place he wanted it. The simple act seemed to drive Caed mad.

::FUCK!! YES!! PLEASE!!! PLEASE TOM!! I WANT YOU!!!:: he hissed urgently.

Lowering himself slowly and pressing against the sharp pain in his unprepared arse, he set about swallowing the boy. Caed only writhed and cursed in parsel – almost incoherent with excitement and pleasure. Finally he’d seated himself fully. He breathed through the uncomfortable sensation.

When he rose up Caed cried out in bliss ::SO GOOD.. You feel SO GOOD:: As he started to lower himself the boy thrust up in counterpoint impatiently. It was painful, but the reaction on the beautiful face was worth it. Curling around the hot tight body below he kissed Caed avidly, again and again.

::Beautiful:: he whispered in the boy’s ear.

Caed’s hands came up to hold his waist and the boy bucked up into his arse urgently. The angle was not as pleasurable as it felt when he was on the bottom. Caed wasn’t brushing up against the place that felt good ...but it wasn’t unpleasant either, he thought. A strange feeling of stretching and being full.. The tingle that came when Caed was close.

He gripped him and rolled them both and then the angle changed and it felt wonderful. Caed, now in the more powerful position, seemed to know instinctively how to move. When he caught the right angle and Tom gasped out in pleasure, he struggled to duplicate it and then moved like that over and over again.. Tom panted and blinked to clear his vision and see the gorgeous creature currently fucking him. Caed wore an expression of utmost concentration and focus. He was trying not to come, Tom realised. He wanted to make Tom shatter before he allowed his own release.

And then coherent thought ceased because Caed had reached down and gripped his cock and was stroking it slowly. Not in time with the quick slapping thrusts that were making tom groan and mewl.. much more slowly. He let go and spat into his hand, returning it to the slow tight pressure and Tom shuddered all over at the sight. ::You are mine! My mate. ..always!: he choked out, his mind reeling. The boy fucked him harder and groaned. ::love you.. fucking love you Tom:: and that sent him over the edge, crying out in pleasure and tossing his head as he came hard around the cock...came hard into the hand...losing himself for a minute or two and barely registering Caed’s own cry of ecstasy. He lay with his eyes closed and panted, Caed’s hot weight draped over him and breathing fast against his shoulder.

“I’ll...help you..” the boy panted faintly and he tried to regain the presence of mind to interpret what he meant.

He turned his face and kissed Caed’s neck lightly. His waif shivered and curled his arms around him, one insinuating itself beneath Tom’s neck to hold him gently. Caed murmured, decisively
“I’ll help you win. I’ll help you save all the horcruxes.. and...Grindelwald if you have to. I’ll..protect you.”

Bright incandescent triumph ignited in his heart and he wrapped his own weak arms around the hot damp creature above him. ::We will protect one another:: he hissed softly.

Caed turned his face and pressed soft gentle kisses to his jaw.

He felt a strange warm feeling inside. ‘Is this happiness?’ he wondered. Surely it was simply satisfaction at bringing the boy to the place he wanted him. He allowed them both to lie comfortably entwined for a couple of minutes more before nudging Caed, who had been drowsing, and reminding him of the task they had yet to complete. Surprisingly the boy didn’t protest at all, but unwrapped himself slowly and sat up, yawning. Tom scourgified them both and after countering the vanishing charm, they returned to the other room to work on the translation.

I’m finished.

Tom looked up at the diary they’d left open on the desk. He was almost finished his own section. The much smaller set of pages he’d given Caed were mostly laid to the side while the boy worked down the final page. He broke off and wrote on the page.

One moment. I have another few lines.

He finished quickly and looked over at Caed. The boy needed perhaps another five minutes. He could see by the scrawl however that he would have to alter Caed’s handwriting. They wrote nothing whatsoever alike and he was supposedly the only living parseltongue.

Ok. Transfer what you’ve written.

A small chunk of pages filled up promptly with neat translation. He copied and transferred it to parchment with one spell and added his own pages behind it. Caed finished the page he was working on a few seconds later and looked up with a focused intense expression.

Within a few minutes he’d summoned, altered and bound Caed’s work with the rest of the pages. He looked at the finished manuscript pensively and flicked through it. It was..passable. Hopefully enough to secure the assistance he sought.

“I had better go. Caed... I wish you to remain here. You are safer here than anywhere else in the school when I am not here to protect you. “
Caed’s expression shifted to mild panic. “I don’t want to stay in here. The basilisk.. I won’t be able to get out if anything happens.”
Tom frowned slightly. “The basilisk will not harm you if I instruct her not to. You speak parsel. She ..should..obey you.”
The blonde was shaking already he realised. He sighed. “You will have to pass by her if you wish to go upstairs. ...or you could remain here and read from the library.. perhaps sleep if you are tired.. speak with the diary. If I leave you in my room it is possible that Dumbledore may see me leave and attempt to take you again.”

He could see the thoughts ticking over in the green eyes and relaxed, already recognising the direction they would take.

“Ok. I’ll stay. But.. um..”
Tom tilted his head curiously. “um?”
Caed looked away embarrassed. “uh.. Is there anything to eat down here?”

Tom nodded, relieved that it was nothing important. “Come. There is a cornucopia in another room. I will..give you the tour, as it were.”

After the echoing steps faded away into the distance Harry sat still, trying to ignore the creeping fear.

Well. That was it then. Tom had gone.

Horrible heavy slithering sounds that were terrifyingly familiar began. He looked at the open door in panic.. would it come and get him now?! But after a long time there was the sound of stone grinding and the slithering stopped.

The basilisk was in that room they’d passed through. He couldn’t get out now.
And if anything happened to Tom.. maybe he couldn’t get out ever.
His bones might have been the ones he landed on when he first crashed down the cistern pipe into the tunnels when he was fourteen years old. He would never have even realised.

But.. that wouldn’t happen. He had a cornucopia. Tom had showed him.. There was water and food.. and books.. If the worst came to the worst he could live here for a long time.

Unless the basilisk came in here after him.. would it do that? If it got very hungry? Nobody had been feeding it for decades when he came in all those years ago. It didn’t look any the worse for wear.
How often did it eat? Perhaps it went into some kind of hibernation..
but would it hibernate or would it try to eat him first, if Tom never came back.

He shuddered, remembering the huge head bearing down on him, mouth gaping wide full of teeth like sharpened palings.
How quickly it moved.. how enormous it was..
He remembered the feeling of its tooth sinking into his arm even as he stabbed it. The venom had felt..cold. cold and slow and dulling. Painful... like his blood was becoming thick and sluggish..
like turning to stone slowly from the inside out. cold sweat had poured off him.

He got up uneasily and went to the door, peering down the avada green passage way toward the
Massive coils filled the entire doorway, scales glinting blackly. The creature was silent and still. He stepped back again and gingerly went to close the door - stopping with his hand an inch away from the handle and suddenly shaking.

Don’t touch the handles. Tom had said not to touch anything. What would happen if he did?!

He didn’t want to find out.

If he closed the door he would have to use the handle to open it again. And it would be far worse to leave the door open only a crack. He would be blind to what was going on in the passage and the door would afford no protection.

Hating the fact that there was no obstacle between him and the basilisk he reluctantly gripped the wood of the door and opened it all the way, then retreated back into the room and shifted the furniture with his wand until he had the desk arranged facing the door. He sat down behind it and looked down at the diary, forcing himself not to look up again fearfully.

The basilisk was not coming. He would hear it. The thing couldn’t move without loud scraping and slithering.

Opening the diary he picked up the quill and wrote quickly.

I’m still here. Tom left.

There was barely a pause before it answered.

...you are in the chamber?

Yes. In a library.

I am in the same room. When will he be back?

I don’t know. I..

He faltered. Not sure what he wanted to say. ‘reassure me because i’m afraid of the big snake’ didn’t seem quite right.

I don’t want to be down here.
Don’t be ridiculous. You are perfectly safe. I would not have left you here, were you not. Why did you call me snake-faced?

Harry groaned out loud. Trust him to go back to that. He considered closing the diary and looking through the library.. or maybe going and taking a nap? No! not a nap. He didn’t want to sleep while he was down here. The thought of waking up and finding the basilisk arching over him ready to bite...

Just a metaphor. He lied. There was no response for a while and then

I assume that I have never mentioned to you that this diary informs me when what you write a lie intentionally...

He froze. Shit. Was that true?! He had no way of knowing either way. He couldn’t remember if he’d lied to the diary before. There was that time in the beginning but those had been obvious lies.

You let Grindelwald mark you I think.

There. That would distract him, he thought.

WHAT?!!
WHY?!! WHY WOULD I..
HAVE I GONE MAD?! GRINDELWALD?!!

You were summoned, I think. Or HE was summoned.. he made this weird flinch and clutched at his chest. I didn’t see any marks anywhere though.

What have I done?!

I don’t know. You were very snippy about it. Even if you don’t actually change time.. I can’t imagine how fucked the world is going to be if you manage to save all your horcruxes AND Grindelwald too. There’ll be a world war or something!
Grindelwald is a threat. As much as I may respect the wizard. I could not possibly wish to perpetuate his existence indefinitely – he would constitute one more extremely powerful enemy over time. and this.. Now he is supposedly my master also?! I..He.. must be intending to twist this to my advantage somehow. He could not truly intend to let Grindelwald live if the wizard marked him.. Us.
The situation must have been far more volatile than he wished to admit.
In the absence of mortal peril, I doubt I would voluntarily accept a binding.

The basilisk.. does it ever come into the back rooms here?
...
You are afraid..

There was something like a sardonic inflection in the words, impossible as that was. He scowled and wanted to snap back that he wasn’t. But he was.. if he wrote that and the diary really could detect lies..

Does it?

No. The basilisk has never moved beyond the antechamber.
...It made me uneasy at first also.
Now I miss it. It would be pleasant to hear another voice.

I’ve decided that I’m going to help you. I’ll help find a way to save you. I.. I’m sorry.

It’s

You almost killed my best friend’s - well at least he was my best friend at the time. You almost killed his sister. She was just a kid.

You set a bloody twenty foot snake on me. You almost killed ME.
I didn’t know you.
If I hadn’t destroyed the diary you’d have killed me..and probably everyone else too.
He swallowed, biting his lip. He was afraid to ask the question. He knew... just knew... that he was going to try to save the bloody Tom Riddle in the diary no matter what the answer was. It didn’t matter how much he might want to pretend that wasn’t the case. It was. He’d made his choice when he’d taken the mark and sworn to stand by the psychopathic git.

He didn’t think he could kill him again.

If I save you... If i find a way – will you... that is... you won’t try to kill anyone in the future, will you? I won’t know you then. I’ll only be twelve.

You won’t hurt anyone, will you? Please?

The page remained blank for a long time. He decided that was probably a good sign. Tom was thinking about it. It suggested that whatever he might answer would possibly be the truth.

I cannot say. It depends upon circumstances. I cannot promise that.

Harry’s heart sank. Had he really expected anything else? No. No it had come as no surprise at all. He should probably just be grateful that Tom hadn’t lied.

I guess there’s nothing more to say about it then. I’ll still try to help you. I...

I think i’ll go and sleep for a while.

Caedmon...

He closed the diary slowly and pushed it a little way away on the desk, sighing.

If the diary horcrux hadn’t been destroyed in his second year... –But that was ridiculous! He’d seen it die. He’d watched it disintegrate, screaming and cursing him. There was no way in hell that that had been faked. It wasn’t possible. He had destroyed it.

He dropped his head down onto his arms and tried to ignore the horrible diffuse sense of worry. He hadn’t felt this bad in a while now. Things had seemed actually better now Voldemort wasn’t actually trying to kill him anymore. Now that he wasn’t a terrifying white monster but a diabolically gorgeous seventh year student.
But now he felt that impending doom feeling again.

What was Tom doing now? Was he ok? Voldemort may have been an evil sadistic monster – but Grindelwald wasn’t supposed to have been much better. And Tom, whatever his future, was still only a seventeen year old wizard here with a handful of sycophantic hangers-on.

...He hadn’t wanted Harry to know about what had happened with the Dark Wizard.

That was..really probably quite bad.  
Harry made a mental note to try his hardest to weasel the facts out of Tom when he came back.

Because he was coming back.  

Obviously, he was coming back. There was no reason to worry. Tom was amazingly powerful.

He’d be fine!  
He’d seemed a bit worried though..when he left.

It would be fine.

He should probably worry more about the possibly not destroyed diary horcrux in his past than about Tom’s current well being.

that is –the diary horcrux in his future past. Or past future.

If he had succeeded... just assuming for a moment that he had somehow survived.. what had it been doing since then?!
Tom waited in the shadow of the dreary bridge in the light misty rain, ignoring the quiver of his nerves telling him that he was being watched. He didn’t bother to cast detection spells. He trusted the feeling. Grindelwald was no doubt here somewhere.

The rain disrupted the grey brown surface of the slow moving river with circles and wavelets that faded almost immediately. He appreciated the sound of rain on water. Were he here for any other reason, he could possibly enjoy the somewhat gloomy vista around him.

“Could we dispense with the intimidation. I do have other things to do, you know.”
His voice was cool and did not waver in the slightest, but he had the strong feeling that it had not been convincing.

“Ah..Marvolo.. such an impatient boy.”

The voice came from inches behind his right ear. He stiffened and resisted the temptation to spin, wide eyed.

“Yes..Gellert?” He allowed his lips to twist.
It was probably presumptuous of him to speak with the wizard this way. Nevertheless...presumptuousness was almost certainly what had kept him alive around him thus far. The man, as he put it, was not bored.

Hands stroked down the outside of his arms lightly..possessively. He waited for the side-along and was not surprised when the pull of apparition gripped his intestines in a vice and snapped him away from the riverbank.

...into the bedroom.

He groaned inwardly. Damn it.. He had hoped that they might conduct a civil discourse. He wanted permission to threaten Dumbledore.. and he needed to ask for access to the Library – that was what all the blasted translation had been for. It seemed though, that the great wizard had other plans.

A hand stroked slowly down Tom’s spine. Grindelwald still stood behind him. In the silence of the room he could almost hear his own heart thudding faster in tense reaction at what he knew was inevitably to come.

“You left far too soon last time, boy. I was not nearly finished with you. I know you wish to speak with me about Albus..however we shall see in what disposition I find myself ...afterward. On your knees, Marvolo!”

Tom didn’t bother to even consider protesting. What point would there be?! He dropped lightly to his knees, lowering his head to stare in mild irritation at the intricate pattern of the oriental rug below him.

Grindelwald ruffled his hair gently.
He hated that. He hated it when anyone untidied his hair. Perhaps not quite as much as Abraxas. but he certainly never tolerated hair ruffles from his sexual partners.
He had the feeling that the man knew that somehow.

In the periphery of his vision he took note of the robed figure which now walked around him and came to stop directly before him, facing him.

A hand passed through his view and a finger under his chin tilted his head up to face the blonde curly haired man. Grindelwald wore an expression of supreme satisfaction in his sharp blue eyes. His fingertips skated up Tom’s jaw lightly.

“You really are quite pretty...Marvolo.. Almost as pretty as Albus was. Take off your robe.”

Tom bit the inside of his cheek and began the work of unfastening his clasp and buttons. He peeled the school robe off and folded it haphazardly, placing it on the floor beside him. Then he waited. The pale blue gaze narrowed.

“Very good.. You understand then. What I instruct and no further. Continue. Remove the rest of your clothing.”

Grindelwald stepped back to watch him as he unbuttoned and removed his shirt. He felt the weight of the appraising stare. He could almost scent how much the older wizard was enjoying his infuriated obedience.

Removing his trousers was more difficult. He had to shuffle on his knees a bit to get them off. However he remembered well that he had made a bargain which allowed this man to harm him physically on a whim. Admittedly at the time he had not quite realised in what situation this would place him. He did not realise he was being marked; that he would not be able to defend himself against the wizard in the slightest.

He had no wish to receive a demonstrative punishment for rising from his knees and he was almost certain that Grindelwald was nearly chomping at the bit to give him one.

He could identify with the feeling. The first time he had punished Adorno it had been heady. The wounded shock in the boy’s eyes which had become defiance and then finally resignation as he accepted that ..no matter what Tom might do.. he would not choose to leave him. The onyx eyes floated in his mind’s eye for a moment. So broken.. and still so desperately needy.

“Continue, Marvolo!”

The voice knocked him out of his reverie. He fumbled at his underwear, trying to suppress the violent rage that burned through him. It was counter-productive to allow that emotion to seep out. Right now it was best to show willing.. best not to resist. He wanted something from the wizard, after all.
That was what it was. An exchange.. it wasn’t..enslavement. It was a bargain - nothing more.

He ignored the way the other man’s eyes crawled over his now completely exposed body. The wizard’s own silken midnight blue robes were cut so conservatively that they buttoned very nearly to his adams apple.
He sneered inside. Grindelwald had no doubt dressed purely to emphasise Tom’s own nakedness. To underline his own dominance..his superiority.

“You have too much pride.” Grindelwald informed him critically.
Tom objected to this silently. He had sufficient humility to admit that he had made a grievous error in allowing himself to be marked. He did not have such an overabundance of pride that he would not obey in order to get what he wanted.

“I think we shall work on your pride first. Bend. Place your forehead on the ground, boy.”

He complied, privately making oaths to kill this man, as soon as it became possible to do so. In fact that should be the principal object of his thoughts, rather than the green eyed boy he’d left in the chamber or the blasted emotional well being of his thrice damned horcrux. If he had killed the boy in the forbidden forest, he would not be here right now.

Something cold and wet drizzled down onto his tailbone.

He clenched his hands into fists forcing himself not to move, although every nerve in his body was screaming at him to fight… or if not fight then to run.
He was not foolish enough to believe that either would be successful.
He had seen the failure of his magic when he’d attempted to attack Grindelwald last time… and this entire domain was no doubt warded to the hilt. Apparition without permission from the dark wizard would be impossible.
No.. he was in a tiny boat at sea in a colossal storm and the only hope for him was to ride out whatever occurred with as much presence of mind as he could manage.

He didn’t know how much presence of mind he would realistically be able to manage.

Grindelwald was no longer within his narrow field of vision now that his forehead was pressed down against the plush rug.
He jerked away when something cool and rounded touched the base of his spine lightly. It slid over his skin down to his tailbone and then it was manipulated around in the slick substance there which had warmed slightly upon his skin..
He knew what it was.
He had never used one.. not on any of his partners and certainly not on himself but he was almost certain of what it was..and what the older wizard was currently doing with it.
What he was about to do with it..

He closed his eyes and gritted his teeth as the rounded object was moved down between the cheeks of his arse and over the small ring of muscle.

“This will…hurt…somewhat, Marvolo.”
Grindelwald’s voice sounded both eager and smug. Tom drove his nails into his palms as the object being stroked over his anus was forced forward slowly but resolutely.
He bit his lips hard, breathing fast through his nose, trying not to make a sound in the face of the sharp stabbing stretching pain. It felt like he was being ripped open. It grew worse and worse.
Surely it must stop soon!

He couldn’t quite stop a whine in the back of his throat from escaping and a hand stroked the skin of his lower back as if seeking to calm him. Then at once the object was driven forward roughly and he yelped out loudly, trying to get up.
The hand moved to his upper back and pushed him back down hard.
He rested his cheek on the floor panting in pained discomfort, blinking prickling tears from his eyes.
The... plug.. - and it had to be a plug, surely, to have hurt that badly.. to have stretched that much.. – was still inside him.
He felt a large heavy mass in his arse and his anus burned, stretched around the neck of the thing.
He received a pat on the head.

“Good boy...
I will warn you.. do not attempt to remove it. It is charmed against such interference. You will adjust. Try to think of other things..”

Tom thought of other things. He thought about all the many spells he could use to kill the man standing behind him right now. He thought of all the muggle methods by which he could bring the man to scream.. to bleed..to die.
He would kill him.
It was certain. No matter how long it took.. no matter what it might cost – he would eventually kill Gellert Grindelwald.

There was a slight watery clink sound. He opened his eyes and saw that the bastard had just placed a metal bowl on the marble floor beyond the rug. Oh circe..no. No... he couldn’t.. he..

“Come here, Marvolo.”

The voice was quiet and measured but it also promised that it would not brook resistance.
He let his gaze wander up the midnight blue robes to the blond wizard’s face. The man looked absolutely pitiless. Quite the contrary – he was visibly deriving great pleasure from Tom’s own misery.

Tom pushed himself to his hands and knees, twitching slightly at the pain in his rear that this caused and, gritting his teeth against it, crawled in the direction of the wizard’s feet.
The bowl, he was relieved to discover, as he approached, held a liquid of some kind. He had been apprehensive that it might be some form of animal feed.
His relief did not last as he came closer and found the liquid to be yellowish in hue.
Surely not..
His stomach rebelled at the thought and he stopped where he knelt, bowing his head and fisting hands that were shaking.

“Closer. Do not make me tell you again, boy” Grindelwald chastised in a dark amused voice.

Taking a deep shuddering breath, Tom moved forward once again. The plug in his arse ached with every movement.
Finally he knelt just before the bowl.

“Drink. I will tell you when to stop.”
Tom wrapped his arms around his middle and shook in dread and revulsion. 
He couldn’t. 
He refused to do that.

“Marvolo... you are beginning to annoy me now. Drink or I will have to punish you.”

Tom shuddered in horror. How had he put himself in this situation?! For what?!
When he returned to Hogwarts Caed was going to bleed for this.

He couldn’t do it! He would not drink..that...It was not a matter of pride..
it was disgusting...repugnant.
it was unhealthy. It was a matter of hygiene.

If he tried he would empty his stomach all over the floor. Thinking about it was already making him ill.

“Very well. I see that you need a further lesson in the consequences of direct disobedience. Crawl to the chair. Now.”

Grindelwald sounded pleased to have a reason to punish him. It didn’t matter however..whatever the man chose to do, it would be preferable to this.
Tom turned away from the repulsive bowl of.. of.. waste water and crawled uncomfortably to the low wooden chair against the wall beside the wardrobe.

“Up on your feet. Bend over. Place your hands on the seat.”

The position was not unfamiliar to him and he was confident that he knew what was coming next. 
He had received the strap many times at the orphanage.. for various justified and unjustified reasons. It was unpleasant but not unendurable. Certainly preferable to the alternative.

He caught, in his peripheral vision, the impression of Grindelwald drawing his wand. 
Tom’s brows furrowed slightly. Was he to be cursed then?! He searched his memory for curses that might necessitate such a position. 
Burning and cutting and stinging hexes certainly.. Perhaps it was to be something along those lines.

Grindelwald shook his wand slightly and it emitted several hair-thin tendrils of silvery light. They grew and lengthened till they reached almost down to his knees as he held the wand at his side. 
Tom groaned inwardly. It would be more along the lines of the strap after all. The silvery lines were no doubt a scourge of some kind. They whisped and waved slightly as they hung, almost as if they were alive.

“You shall have... three.. I think.” Grindelwald informed him with a judicious tone.
Tom gaped inside. Three?! Either the man was really taking it easy on him or whatever those things were, they were truly brutal!

It was the latter.

The first time the wizard behind him brought the silvery scourge down upon his arse his knees buckled with the pain. He had not experienced anything like it before. It burned and stung and seemed to electrify his nerves, making his whole body shake violently. He had cried out
And he continued to gulp and fight the moisture that sprang to his eyes, because the pain did not abate after the stroke.
It increased.
It was worse than the worst stinging hex, worse than burning hexes...Almost on a parallel with the cruciatus.
it made him wish to amputate his own rump.

The second stroke made the pain exponentially worse, landing in the same general area as the first. He collapsed to his knees wheezing and trying to get breath to scream. He hadn’t the strength in his hands to grip the chair.

“please.. no..more” he choked out with extreme difficulty.

“Stand, Marvolo. You will take your final lash and then you will drink.”

He sobbed and gasped silently in misery. It took him three tries to get up off his knees again, he had no strength in his shivering limbs. All he felt was radiating stinging burning aching agony. Inside and outside.

He would not be impudent with Grindelwald again. He should not have dared to be so with the man beside the bridge in Belgium. No,. he would be very careful not to do anything to earn another such..punishment.

The lash fell

He crashed to the ground and screamed inaudibly, all his breath stolen out of him at the shock of the blinding torment that gripped his entire body. Pain..agony.. were too weak to describe it
No more! No more! He would do it.. whatever it was. Drink? He would drink. Anything to escape more of that horrific lash.

A hand stroked his head, fingers delving through his hair almost tenderly.

“Good boy. Now.. come.. Bei-Fuss! (heel) You will drink now.”

He was not immediately able to climb to his knees and crawl. He lay a while longer, panting and sobbing silently, his eyes clenched tightly.

“Drink and I will take the pain away” Grindelwald promised soothingly.

At that he did fight to get up. It was more dragging himself than crawling but he reached the bowl and unhesitatingly dropped his face to drink.

It was firewhisky.
Not urine at all. Firewhisky.

He whimpered in blind gratitude and slurped at it as if it were water from a pure mountain spring, hearing the low, thoroughly entertained laugh of the dark wizard above him.

“There.. Good boy, Marvolo. I think next time you will obey, won’t you?!”

The hand returned to pet his head and stroke his neck and shoulders. He ignored it and continued gulping at the alcohol. Much as the man had promised, the pain in his body dropped away rapidly the more of the burning liquid he consumed.

“Finish it all..” he was told in a dark pleased voice. He did not require a second instruction.

By the time he had finished the rather large bowl he was feeling no pain. His mind was also slightly fuzzy. He was vaguely aware of this – if only by dint of the fact that he seldom indulged in any substance to excess and generally stopped before he reached this stage. It was perhaps this blunted state that delayed his awareness for a second or so when the intrusive sensation of the scourgifying colonic spell fizzed through him.

‘Sex’ his mind supplied dully. ‘He will want to fuck me now. Now that I have been degraded sufficiently.’

He moved obligingly, eager to end this entire episode, and placed his forehead on the ground, receiving a low purr of praise from the German for it, as the man retrieved the plug with more care than he had inserted it.

It still hurt, however his scale of interpretation of pain had shifted now, in light of the whipping he had received and the painful stretching of his anus barely rated a mention now.

In the aftermath of the plug he tried to clench his arse and was disturbed to find that he could not quite do so now.

Grindelwald chuckled softly behind him.

“Don’t distress yourself.. you are..barely.. stretched.. Perhaps I will have you wear such a device for a day or two..to break you in fully.

Stand now. Go to the bed.”

He obeyed immediately. Both unwilling to risk more punishment and eager to get this part of their little interaction over with so that he could move on to what he truly came here for.

He stopped by the bed. Grindelwald had told him to go to it, not get on it.

He heard the sounds of clothing being removed behind him but did not turn.

His mind wandered and after a minute or so, he jumped at the sensation of hands on his arms gently pushing him forward. He placidly allowed himself to be manipulated into the pose the German wished, positioned bent over with his arms from the elbow down on the mattress and his head resting between them. His feet were nudged into a wider stance by a warm foot.

He allowed it all.

It was...close to how the muggle Phipps liked him.. but it didnt matter. It would be over soon.

Fingertips traced the links of his spine down his back lightly. He could feel a warm body standing close behind him, the heat radiating off it onto the skin of his thighs and buttocks. The man rocked forward slightly and he felt the burning hot bar of his cock tap him lightly on the tailbone.

The cool smooth tip of a wand traced the circle of his anus and he shivered. It was..a dangerous thing to have so near him. He feared for a moment that the wizard might hurt him a little more for his own amusement, but the cool soothing sensation of a lubrication spell reassured him for the
moment that this was not likely.

The large appendage was placed at his entrance as the man’s other hand slid down his side to grip his hip firmly. Then the wizard was sliding into him. It barely hurt at all. It was merely mildly uncomfortable. He tried to relax. Grindelwald was much bigger than Caed.
He wished that it were caed... not only for physical reasons, he conceded.

The man behind him had pushed himself in deeply and was now retreating again slowly.

He imagined for a moment that it was Caed.. and that he had offered..wanted.. this... rather than..the way things actually were right now. He remembered the soft excited glow of the pale emerald eyes, the awe with which the boy had looked at him.

A hand stroked over his thigh and slid around beneath him to stroke at his now hardening length.

“Enjoying...this part.. aren’t you..” the accented voice behind him sneered, breaking the illusion he was constructing that he was back in the chamber with Caed. His erection wilted somewhat. The hand around it tightened and stroked almost angrily.

“Let go, Marvolo.. relax... allow yourself to enjoy it..”

It was no good.. He softened further. He could not help it. The thought of Grindelwald..after imagining the soft golden angles of his little naivling...was simply grotesque. He did not desire the man at all.

The cock in his arse pulled out and he was roughly turned. He caught the impression of the pale ice chip eyes narrowed in frustration before he was shoved backwards onto the bed to land on his back. The larger wizard pursued him immediately crawling up and over him, overpowering in his insistence.

Tom stared up at him, his nerves on alert at the thought that the man was angry again and could well decide to punish him shortly.

“You will learn to respond when I wish it, boy. It may be a hard lesson but you will learn it.”

Tom struggled and controlled his face, which wanted to grimace at the threat. “Yes Sir” he answered quietly.

Grindelwald’s expression softened slightly. He appeared to be struggling against an unwelcome idea. Finally he lowered himself slowly.. almost warily.. until his body was pressed lightly against Tom’s own.

Tom held still, waiting for whatever the man wanted now.

The blonde man dropped his head and nuzzled gently at Tom’s jaw, nudging his face to the side until he could access his neck, which he then began to kiss and nibble teasingly. Tom sighed inwardly. It was apparently important to the wizard that his partner enjoy the act. Although he probably preferred a dominant ..even sadistic.. role.. it seemed he would default to a more..affectionate..approach if only to ignite Tom’s own arousal.

He breathed in deeply and closed his eyes, allowing the kisses and gentle stroking touches. It was difficult to believe that they came from Caedmon. The boy did not feel like this at all.. but he
pretended all the same.

When Grindelwald suckled his small nipple into an excited pebble, he moaned softly and brought his hands up to embrace the body over him. It was wrong.. entirely wrong.. far too large and muscled and the hair... the hair was curly..
He lowered his arms back down to the bed, preferring not to disturb his fantasy that it was Caed teasing and delighting his body.
Lips traced down the length of his abdomen..and then a hot wet tongue. It felt good.. he shifted his hips slightly in eager anticipation, breathing fast through his parted lips.

When hot breath ghosted over his hardened shaft he murmured “yesss...” and bucked slightly, anxious to be inside the hot wet cavern of Caed’s mouth.
Hands traced up the inside of his thighs, parting them without resistance and then the searing slick tongue slid over the tight wrinkled skin of his balls. He moaned loudly and wound his hips, wanting more.

“If you want that.. you must beg.”

The illusion of Caed shattered again and Tom opened his eyes in guilty disappointment. He stared at the ceiling feeling a mix of frustration and infuriation. The hot breath of the dark wizard was still tantalisingly whispering over the skin of his cock.

“I won’t. You don’t need to tell me again. It will never happen” he said tightly.

He hissed softly as the hot tongue flickered over the base of his cock teasingly.

“No? A pity... You are such a pretty boy that I have wondered how you might..taste. But if you do not want it...”

Grindelwald pressed a light kiss to the head of Tom’s cock as he raised himself up once again.

“Turn over, Marvolo” he murmured low. “I would have you that way today.”

Tom gritted his teeth and turned, responding with compliance when the older wizard pulled him up onto his knees. The cock was back tracing the pucker of his arse within seconds and then he was carelessly penetrated, Grindelwald thrusting in roughly and burying himself up to the balls in his body.
He heard the man sigh in apparent relief before he started to move. Far from the slow strokes of before, the wizard set a punishing tempo immediately. He did not bother to touch him overly either. Tom clenched his eyes tightly as his body was reminded strongly of the feeling of the muggle over him...fucking him in just such a manner.. It was a paralysing sensation. Horrible. The violent aversion it automatically aroused made him feel physically nauseous.
He dropped his upper body to the bed, burrowing his head in his arms and concentrated on clearing his mind. Thinking nothing. It would do no good to think of Caed right now. He did not want to be reminded of it at all when the boy next touched him.

It took a long while before Grindelwald reached his climax.. and when he did it did not sound particularly satisfying. He spilled himself deep inside Tom and then pulled out immediately, moving back and retreating briskly from the bed.
Tom opened an eye a crack to see him standing by a cabinet by the window, pouring himself a drink of something.
He let himself slide down onto the bed and relax somewhat, ignoring the sensation of the wizard’s release beginning to drip from his body. In a minute he’d scourgify it. At the moment he simply wished to remain still and concentrate on pushing the feeling of sick horrified repulsion from his mind.

“You do this to yourself, you know” the deep accented voice informed him, betraying irritation.

“It does not have to be unpleasant for you.. I have shown my willingness to make it otherwise.. yet you continue to defy me..
You are self destructive, Marvolo”

Grindelwald moved into his field of vision, still naked, but apparently scourfiged, holding a tumbler of something black.
He was almost certain that it was Bruello.
If the man decided to kiss him now, he’d probably require serious medical attention.

He wondered whether the bastard was drinking it for pleasure or purely to rub his own pristine pureblood roots in his face.

“I will not beg you to do that” he said quietly, hoping for an inflection which did not sound insolent.

“Do not play ignorant, boy. It doesn’t suit you. You resist..everything. I might almost believe that you were thinking of another for the small time that you became excited while I touched you. If you insist upon being so difficult, I will use you as nothing but a convenient hole.”

Tom said nothing. Under no circumstances did he want to acknowledge his thoughts of Caed and he was not certain he could convincingly deny them at this moment.

But this was exactly what he did not need.

The blasted man had already expressed at the beginning that his willingness to entertain Tom’s wishes would depend upon how pleased he was at the conclusion of their little interlude. After all the pain and discomfort it was unacceptable to think he might miss out on the things he had come here for. He could not allow Grindelwald to be unsatisfied.

The thought was like a black cloud, ominous and threatening.

He would have to.. to.. convince him... seduce him.. bring him to a point where he was content with Tom’s own engagement.

He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to summon the resolve to do what needed to be done.

Finally composed, he roused himself, gliding up onto his knees on the bed and crawling toward the Wizard standing sullen at the side of the bed sipping his drink.
When he reached him he sat up on his knees and leaned in, tracing his fingertips up the warm abdomen.. the heavy muscled frame. He looked up into the ice-chip eyes that were watching him rather cynically and offered a small..tentative smile.

“I apologise.” He murmured in his best bedroom voice.
“I do not take well.. to such...treatment.”
He leaned in and pressed a soft lingering kiss to the other man’s collarbone. His presumptuous actions were tolerated for the moment it seemed.
He scratched his nails very lightly up the wizard’s sides and was privately delighted at Grindelwald’s barely suppressed shiver.
“You will adapt” The wizard asserted gruffly.

Tom shook his head slightly and half shrugged. “perhaps..”

He wrapped his arms around the larger man and kissed a slow trail down to his nipple.

“But perhaps..we are not all suited to slavery.” He licked a circle around the tightening bud. He could feel that the man’s breathing had increased a very small amount

“I can...endure.. your other...tastes..” He punctuated his comment by sucking the hard little pebble of flesh into his mouth and nibbling it gently. A hand touched the back of his neck very lightly, as if unwilling to frighten him away. “But..do you not enjoy this more.. when I desire you in return?” He nipped sharply and pulled away, sucking as the hand on the back of his neck tightened momentarily in reaction.

He traced his tongue up the centre of the broad chest, gliding over the soft pale blonde hairs and then looked up at Grindelwald with his very best smouldering eyes.

The dilemma was clearly visible on the great wizard’s face.

He wanted to be in control even allowing this measure of freedom grated against him.. but he truly preferred Tom to look at him this way.

Tom suppressed the smirk that might ruin everything and wrapped his arms gently around the man’s neck, pulling him slowly down to kiss. He flicked a wandless scourgify at him to rid him of the traces of Bruello. Grindelwald allowed it. He leaned down and caught Tom’s lips with restrained hunger, his own arms winding around the younger boy’s body and dragging him closer.

“Mmmmmm” Tom allowed the moan of enjoyment, knowing it would only help his case. He felt the hands on him tighten possessively.

Pulling away he gazed with unfocused eyes up into the pale blue pools of the dangerous man above.

“Will you...lie down? Will you ...come back to bed?” he asked softly and chewed on his lip disingenuously.

Grindelwald snorted, unconvinced, but a slow smile twisted his lips even so.

“You are an unconvincing innocent, Marvolo..But..I will ..give you a chance to persuade me...if you wish.”

He moved forward, urging Tom back on the bed with strong arms and climbed to straddle him. Tom frowned inwardly. He pulled the blonde curls down gently and kissed the warm firm mouth of the older wizard, wrapping his legs about him smoothly and using them to press the larger body even closer.

“Let me ride you again” he hushed between kisses, the fingers of one hand playing in Grindelwalds locks.

“Gellert.” Grindelwald growled against his ear. Tom found himself shivering involuntarily at the low purr of it.

“You will call me by my name, Marvolo.. If you wish me to treat you other than a slave..”

“Gellert” he whispered against the smooth throat. “Please..”

He closed his eyes as he felt the other wizard delve hands beneath him and then roll, till he lay atop the hard body, his legs freeing themselves from beneath it and splaying wider lazily. He felt the
hard cock against his own and rocked against it lightly.

“Thank you” he murmured, his lips skating lightly over the slight prickle of the man’s jaw.
“Thank you” he whispered as he captured Grindelwald’s...Gellert’s warm hungry mouth again.

“Mmmm... Thank you” he mumbled as he began to crawl down the other wizard’s body, peppering his chest with licks and nibbles, till he reached the strident organ and dropped over it, sucking it hard and burying it deep..
Gellert moaned softly and muttered something in German that Tom’s own vocabulary did not cover. He thrust his hips gently against the hot mouth swallowing him.
Tom redoubled his efforts, fingertips tracing circles and patterns on the inside of the thighs that the dark wizard parted eagerly for him.

He came up for air and glanced up at the man. Gellert had tossed his head to the side and his eyes were closed. He wore an expression of concentration.
Dipping low he dedicated the requisite attention to the heavy balls that had tightened and were firm and full with need. He nuzzled them with his nose as he trailed his tongue deeper, wondering whether the powerful wizard might.. with persuasion.. allow him to –

No. Apparently not. A hand fisted lightly in his hair guided him up again to the cock that was purpling pleasantly in unsated desire.
“No. Marvolo. Do not try to take the whole hand if I offer you a finger” Grindelwald growled distractedly.

Smirking slightly, Tom returned his attentions to the heavy cock.

If he could not escape this situation.. and if he could not yet kill this man.. he privately decided that he would, whenever this duty was forced upon him, do his very best to maneuver the other wizard into exactly that position. He would fuck Grindelwald eventually. If at all possible.
Gellert would whimper and mewl upon his cock. It would be greatly satisfying.

Feeling the tension in the organ in his mouth he pulled away slowly, displaying his apparent reluctance to stop and crawled back up the taut body beneath him till he could straddle the shaft. He leaned down and mouthed the hot neck of the wizard, whose face was still turned, eyes still closed, a soft mien of pleasure on his face.
“Put it in..please..Gellert.” he breathed against his ear.
Gellert shuddered. It surprised Tom. He hadn’t thought that he was making that big an impression upon him. It seemed he was however. The wizard fumbled to grip his cock and position it at Tom’s arse.

Slowly, teasingly, he lowered himself to swallow the thick bar. It didn’t hurt. After the preparation and the earlier reaming, all he experienced was a slight ache and a curious little hungry eagerness.

He seated himself and rocked his hips in little circles, squeezing the cock inside him even deeper. “Ohhhhh..” the man groaned softly. “Move... You must move.. Ride me”

Tom blinked, curiously. Grindelwald was very affected right now.
He slid himself up and down, tightening as far as he was able and sucking at the shaft as he withdrew.

Leaning down he wrapped his arms around the man’s neck and proceeded to kiss and tongue it as he moved slowly. He was rewarded for his initiative with an urgent embrace. The large arms curled around him and held him close, held him gently as if he might break.

He breathed against Gellert’s ear as he started to move faster and the man actually whimpered,
clutching him closer. Astounding, he thought.. wondering what exactly changed.

Nibbling on the wizard’s earlobe, he gasped in pleasure when the other man tightened the muscles of his abdomen, which not only caused his own cock to grind against them wonderfully but also somehow changed the angle of the cock inside him, brushing up against the arousing little nub inside.

He nipped at the tender place below Gellert’s ear urging him to do it again. He wasn’t disappointed.

He moaned softly and reached around for the man’s hand, finding it and guiding it between them to his cock.

Gellert responded immediately, gripping him and manipulating his cock with expert skill. He turned his face roughly and plunged his lips down upon the older wizard’s, kissing him hungrily as he moved on him like a creature possessed. He received a growl into his mouth and a hand on the base of his spine guiding him as the man started to thrust up into him in counterpoint.

They came swiftly. Gellert exploding inside him almost immediately he felt Tom’s own release cascade onto his chest, slippery between them.

Tom’s face had been buried in the crook of his neck, biting gently in his urgent need and he heard the whispered word.. barely breathed as the man shattered

“Albus!..”

He told himself that it was completely irrational to feel the petulant resentment that he did. He had done the very same thing to the man earlier. Had he thought he might get away with it, he could easily have allowed himself to fantasise about Caedmon as he seduced the older wizard too

Still. It was vaguely insulting to know that his efforts were only as effective as they had been because the other man had imagined him as the apparently superior partner he preferred. And it was absolutely abhorrent to imagine that Albus bloody Dumbledore was considered more desirable than he.

Huffing slightly, he let his head drop against the man’s shoulder.. the man who was now stroking his back with weary, contented, fingertips.

He relaxed, still straddled atop him..curled around him..the slick softening shaft slipping out of his arse with a thin dribble of the second load of semen Gellert Grindelwald had injected into him in the space of an hour.

“You present a convincing argument, Marvolo.” Gellert sighed softly, turning his head and sniffing lightly at his hair, his arm tightening around him slightly.

“Perhaps.. I prefer..your active participation, after all.”

Tom smiled to himself.

That was a good thing. Anything that reduced the chances of him feeling that lash again was a very good thing indeed.

“Your hair.. your skin.. smells of him, you know” Gellert murmured. “I assume it is..Hogwarts soap..hair oil...something of the kind.

Tom growled inwardly. Was it necessary to explicitly reference the bastard?! Associating Dumbledore with anything sexual at all was horrific.

“You will always shower and use it before you come to me.” Gellert instructed. It could not be mistaken for a question or a request.

Tom nodded against the shoulder, sighing softly, resigned.
He received a chaste kiss on the head for it.
“Good...”

“I believe I am prepared to discuss the memories you sent now.”

Tom groaned inwardly at that too. He was more interested in accessing the man’s library and to discuss the memories now might put him in a less than amicable mood if he tried to press the point regarding his wish to threaten Dumbledore.

“I have..something else for you..with me” he said quietly against the skin of the man’s neck.

He could feel the change of atmosphere as the man’s interest was piqued sharply.

“Oh? What might that be?”

“I spent the day translating one of Slytherin’s journals...”
The body beneath him tightened at once in excited anticipation and then tightened further in defense.

He felt the rumble of the man’s voice in his throat against his lips

“What exactly do you hope to secure for this?”

He wriggled on him slightly, as if making himself more comfortable and nuzzled at the neck gently.

“Very little. You don’t need to jump like that.
I have a ..private project.. that I require some information for. I was hoping I might find something that could help in your library somewhere.”

He could feel the irritation and the temptation of the man to refuse on general principles.

“We don’t have to trade.. I can take the journal back with me when I go..”

Grindelwald growled beneath him.

“Marvolo.. you are trying my patience again. What information do you seek?!?”

Hesitating Tom waivered between telling and inventing something tangentially related.

“Ethivoric charms on objects and the potential for linking these to further objects after the charm is cast.”

There was a snort of derision.

“Foolish. Simply dispel the charm, link the objects and then recast the charm upon both.”

If he could do that he would hardly have needed to look for information obviously. He informed the man as much.

“The charm cannot be dispelled on this particular object. It ..resists further spells at present. I thought to use it in the passive sense as a target of another object – I would cast upon this object and, ideally, evade the limitations in this way.”

Gellert was silent for a while, apparently thinking.

“I may have something on that subject.. however it would depend upon the nature of your target object – this thing you apparently do not wish to tell me about. I suspect your plan will not succeed. Whether or not it is a pointless line of research – you will give me the journal for the books I possess on linking spells and ethivoric charms”
Tom realised that he needed more than that.
If he wanted books on horcrux behaviour—assuming that there existed such books and they had not all been destroyed—he needed to ask.

“Can you not allow me to look for myself?”

Gellert snorted in amusement. “As you allowed me to select from Slytherin’s library?!
You are lucky I did not limit your exchange to one book.
It seems you have put me in a generous mood, Marvolo. Do not push my goodwill too far.”

He swallowed and nodded.
“Thank you, Gellert”

The wizard beneath him seemed to relax again slightly.

“Very well.. I have agreed to your little exchange.. we will discuss the memories now.
I require more proof to determine Albus’ true agenda. You will secure it for me before I will permit you to attempt to make him aware of what you know.”

‘What I know’, Tom thought disparagingly. The memory Grindelwald had given him had been sealed. He hadn’t even been able to open it to watch it. The wizard had meant it when he said that Tom would not be allowed to use what he gave him without his permission.

“What proof do you want, exactly?!?” He asked, privately suspecting that there was probably no measure of proof that would be enough to convince the blasted besotted wizard.

“I wish you to find out why he has changed his intentions. Why he would turn against me..”

‘Oh is that all’ Tom groused internally. ‘convince the man who despises me most to open his heart
and reveal his most desperately guarded secrets to me. Certainly.. Can I do anything else for you
while I’m at it? Perhaps empty the ocean with a thimble?’

“I will see what I can do” he answered dryly.

Grindelwald seemed satisfied enough with that answer. No doubt he did not expect him to succeed
– it was merely a way of refusing his demand without appearing to renege on their deal.

“The memory of the boy..was interesting..if not particularly useful.”

Tom felt his hackles rise.
He would not allow Caed near Grindelwald, irrespective what the man might offer him. If he was about to suggest that-

“...I did not mean that the boy was interesting. He is a sweet faced thing but my tastes run to dark
haired partners and he is ..perhaps.. too frail..for my liking. Weak..
It seems that your..interests.. in him have shifted. He is no longer purely a useful object to you.
But let us ignore that for now. What was the spell you used to make him talk? Or was it a potion?
He did not seem willing to tell you the things he did.”

Tom took a breath. That was the obvious answer to his problems with Dumbledore!
It would be almost impossible to carry out however. He did not think he was currently capable of
incapacitating the man. He would need to think on it.

“It was a potion. Dumbledore gave it to Caed. He dragged him from the corridors into his office
this morning at an ungodly hour and interrogated him.
Thankfully he was not able to get much out of him before I had engineered a distraction and
reclaimed him.”

He couldn’t see the face of the other wizard but he could tell from the shift in his body that the man was perturbed by the information. Did he truly see Dumbledore as some kind of saint – incapable of the cruelty that Tom himself had observed the man perpetrate over and over again upon himself?!

“Caed recognised the potion. He called it ‘veritaserum’ – apparently the Ministry of Magic unspeakable division has recently developed it. It is more effective in his time. He expected it to last for six hours but its effects had vanished completely after only three.”

The hand on his back stroked him slowly, thoughtfully.

“It sounds a very useful thing to possess...” the wizard hinted obviously.

“I imagine that it is.” Tom responded circumspectly.

They lay quietly for a while, each distracted by their own thoughts until Grindelwald spoke again.

“Would you perhaps like to take dinner with me..Marvolo? I ..hope you do not have to rush away so suddenly this time. We could dine and then read for a few hours.”

Tom smirked against the warm skin.
It had been phrased as a question.
It seemed the dark wizard had now realised that he had more to gain by currying favour with him than by disciplining and seeking to intimidate his new charge..

“I would like that. Thank you” he replied politely, tightening his arms around the man and forcing himself to..snuggle down against him.
The arms around him tightened slightly and he thought he felt the man emit a soft sigh.
Harry stood pressed up against the wall in the green lit corridor breathing fast.

He’d been asleep and when he’d woken he’d been disoriented and, for a moment, terrified at the unfamiliar surrounds. The bed beneath him was huge and ornately carved in serpents and runes. Everything had had a greenish tint.

He’d remembered suddenly that he was in the chamber of secrets and had sat bolt upright in bed staring in horror at the door where he was certain the huge head of the basilisk was going to emerge at any second. Its eyes would be lidded – it wouldn’t want to kill him with a glance – oh no! that would be too easy. It was going to pour into the room, taking up all the space and blocking the door and then it was going to rear over him slowly and spread its mouth wide, gaping.. exposing all those huge teeth like sharpened horns and the dark tunnel to an acid soaked grave.. and just when he thought he would go mad with fear it would lash down like a whip and snap him up, bite him in half and swallow the pieces..

He tried to tell himself that Tom would not have left him here unless it was safe –but it didn’t stop the absolute conviction he felt as he sat, shaking.

He’d dreamed of the basilisk.. breaking his nails off climbing the stone head of Salazar Slytherin, fighting not to drop the heavy unwieldly sword. He’d dreamed of its vile breath blowing over him like a foul wind as he stood..so small.. on the pate of the dead wizard and waited for the huge thick muscle of it to strike.

He’d had to check.

He needed to know whether it was awake or asleep. He needed to make sure it was sleeping. it could be hibernating or something.

He needed to know whether it was just waiting for him to let his guard down before it came in and finished him.

And so he was here, standing pressed against the stone wall with his wand in his hand, feeling unarmed and suddenly very, very, young again. He should be beyond this level of pure childlike panic..Particularly about anything related to snakes – he’d never feared snakes... but this was different. He knew this great big bloody snake had wanted nothing more than to kill him before. It had hissed its vile murderous promises as it chased him.. Standing here, he felt, irrationally, as if he had become twelve again. As if he was hiding in the tunnels while the blinded basilisk hunted him.

He was only three metres away from the doorway into the basilisk’s antechamber and he could see the massive coils of the beast blocking most of the door, glinting black in the green light.

He was afraid to move closer.

What if it wasn’t asleep.. or hibernating. What if it was staring at the door and the moment he looked around the corner he would be struck dead!!

There was no way to know.
If the only reason he was safe now was that it was asleep and he actually tried to speak to it to make sure it wasn’t looking his way – then it might suddenly decide that he’d make a good snack after all.

If he went away and it was only waiting, then he might be standing in the library or the bedroom...or the bathroom...standing emptying his bladder when the great thing slithered in behind him and reared up, out of his view.

He might only hear its hiss of anticipation in the moment it had positioned itself over him to strike..

He really needed to use the bathroom.

Swallowing against his suddenly ash dry throat he croaked.

::Hello?:

There was a loud hiss and then the huge coils..thicker than two of him suddenly moved. He ran down the corridor as if voldem-.as if-.. exactly as if a massive twenty foot basilisk was coming after him – which it was!! He ran for his life, hearing the sound of gritty, slithery, enormous movement behind him.. From the corner of his eye he could see the head emerge from the antechamber. At the end of the corridor he turned the corner and found..nothing.. a dead end. There was a dog leg corner and a small stone room with nothing inside it. He spun, hearing the horrifying echo of a vast body slithering through the corridor.

Closing his eyes, he raised his wand, trying not to let his hand shake. He fumbled to think of a spell strong enough to even dent basilisk skin. He didn’t know any. That was why they were so hard to kill... there were so few things that could damage them. The crow of a rooster – which he didn’t have with him.. and the sword of Gryffindor..at least.. the sword of Gryffindor at the tender inner palate of the mouth. It had had no effect on its outer hide.

::Are you afraid, little ssserpent sspeaker:: the deep rasping voice of the basilisk preceded it into the small stone room.

::Tom said you can’t eat me. He’s coming back soon:: harry managed, his eyes clenched tightly. He could smell its breath now. It was right in front of him.

::You sssspoke with me..child. I did not realisssse you underssstood our wordss. I would not have moved to harm you after he claimed you. Ssslytherin forbade it. I do not eat ssserpent sssspeakerss. ...I will not look at you. You may open your eyesss::

Harry shook his head slightly. He didn’t want to offend it but he was not going to open his eyes now.

He leapt back when a large leathery surface nudged at him. There was a puff of reeking air and more loud slithering. He could feel movement on all sides. The stone floor seemed to vibrate with it. The basilisk was coiling around him!

::Stop!!:: he cried

The slithering sound abated and he reached out to the sides. Left right, in front.. even behind. On all sides there was a curved wall of huge scaly muscle. It reached higher than his head.

::My eyesss are closssed. What isss your call ssssound, ssserpent sssspeaker?::
The voice emanated from further away and above. His mind painted the image of those wide toothed jaws gaping, waiting for him to look up and see his end coming.

::my call sound? What?::

::The other isss ‘Tom’ – a sssstrange call ssssound.. what isss your call ssssound::

::Harry:: he mumbled.

::Alssso a ssstrange sssound. I am Ssseshassstra::

Harry nodded numbly

Suddenly he realised what he’d just told the Basilisk.
His name.
His real name.

Shit.

In shock he actually opened his eyed.

And screamed and closed them again.

Enormous yellow orbs the size of dinner plates had been hanging a metre in front of him watching him in the dim green room..

::you are a very ssstrange choice for my massster’ss mate.. Sssso easssily frightened..::

Harry, processing that he was apparently not dead, therefore whatever he had seen must not have been the full strength gaze of the basilisk, opened his eyes again indignantly.

::I am not easily frightened!::

::Perhapssss only the timesss I sssee you... the great serpent amended. ::are you lesss frightened now?::

Harry looked up at the massive head barely visible in the gloom, only the large yellow rings of its eyes shone. He realised that they were covered with a pattern. The creature really did have its eyes closed. It could see through its lids apparently.

::Yes. I’m ..ok now:: he offered uncertainly.

The basilisk moved back and there was a loud slithering and shifting around him. He panicked

::What are you doing??! Stop!!::

The animal stopped. Its coils were much closer now.

::You are warm:: it hissed at him. ::It iss sssso cold down here. Alwaysss sso cold. You will share your heat with me::

it started to move again and harry froze in horror as it curled and coiled itself tighter until he was encased in a cold tube of black scales. He looked up to the hole overhead and the basilisk’s head appeared above, looking down on him.

::ssso much better:: the creature hissed with quiet satisfaction.

::There’s a fire in the library:: harry told it desperately. ::you can lie in there! Let go::

The serpent hissed disapprovingly.
Massster inssstructed that I wasss never to enter the library. Ssssleep little snake. Ssleep here::

::The bedroom! Are you allowed in the bedroom?!:: Harry tried. There had been a fire in there too. A smaller one. It hadn’t been lit. He could light it. He’d gladly light it to get the huge body of the basilisk off him.

::Massster did not tell me not to enter hisss ssssleeping chamber...:: the basilisk mused thoughtfully.

::Good! Get off. We’ll go in there!::

The creature uncoiled itself carefully. Harry was astounded that the scales did not even graze him as it withdrew. This had to be one of the runners-up for weirdest day, he realised.
The basilisk was waiting, leaving the corridor free, obviously expecting him to go first.
..Of course, the size of the beast – he probably wouldn’t fit in the corridor once it started down there, he thought uncharitably.

In the bedroom he used his wand to levitate the bed to the side slightly and make more space in front of the tiny fire. It lit without any trouble.
He moved and leapt on the bed as the huge snake spilled into the room. It was like his fear upon waking had come true.
The basilisk was waiting, leaving the corridor free, obviously expecting him to go first.
..Of course, the size of the beast – he probably wouldn’t fit in the corridor once it started down there, he thought uncharitably.

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The vast black body piled in and coiled itself messily in the centre of the room, blocking the door.
He pointed his wand and amplified the fire slightly. The basilisk gave a soft hiss of approval and lowered its head to lay upon a black coil.

::Good. I will ssssleep here.: it announced in a pleased tone.
Harry frowned at the upper portion of the door visible over the black mountain of snake.
Damn it. He really needed to go to the bathroom still.
He was lucky, in fact, that he hadn’t already gone when the bloody snake chased him down the corridor. But now.. he would still need to get out of here to go.

::Um.. could you maybe.. move a bit.. I need to get out::

The basilisk wanted to know why and then when he finally explained why it sniggered and then it wouldn’t let him go. It insisted it had to be between him and the chamber. He was getting quite pissed off and more than a little uncomfortable by the time he persuaded it that he’d be right back and that there was nobody outside and that nobody except Tom could get in. In the end he reminded it of how cold it was out there and how warm it was in here and it relented and shifted its coils somewhat to let him past.

He slipped away, dashing down to the open bathroom (whose door he could not close, due to Tom’s bloody vague warning about doing so) and experienced the most profound, if embarrassed relief he’d felt in a long time.
He hesitated about going back.

He knew that if he didn’t, the bloody snake would come and see where he’d gotten to. It would probably be angry with him. It certainly wouldn’t be persuaded to let him wander off again. So he stopped off in the library, only to pick up Tom’s diary, ink and quill and then returned to the bedroom.
The basilisk didn’t stir as he edged past it and returned to the bed.
He opened the diary, keeping one eye on it.
Hello?

Caedmon.

I did not intend to upset you earlier!

I am sorry that I could not promise what you asked.

He felt a surge of guilt again suddenly. He’d been a bit ticked off..or.. really... more disappointed with the Tom in the diary earlier.
Or.. maybe it was just the situation. The thought of Tom Riddle wandering around in the flesh while his twelve year old self had nightmares about killing him.. nightmares about being killed by him.

He wasn’t sure how time worked.. no matter what Tom and his paper-bound counterpart insisted - perhaps the diary tom really could kill him if it lived.

One of them was going to have to die, after all, weren’t they? If bloody gin-soaked Trelawny could be believed..

...Or if Dumbledore could be believed...

The prophesy had been made in the presence of Dumbledore alone.
Perhaps that thought deserved more attention.

Caedmon??

Are you angry?

He refocused on the page in front of him.

No. I was thinking about something else.
It’s ok. About earlier I mean.

I’m relieved.

I was...concerned... you might not wish to speak with me any longer.

I cannot make promises about things I may or may not do when I do not yet know the situation ...but I will not harm you. Obviously.

It’s fine. I don’t want to think about it anymore.

The basilisk is here. in the room.
it apparently does leave the antechamber.

WHAT??!

Why did it.. are you safe? I can’t speak to it. What is it doing?

Caedmon??

I’m fine.
It’s sleeping. It was cold. I put the fire on for it.
It doesn’t seem to be about to eat me just now but it doesn’t much like me leaving the room for any reason. It seems ok though.

Why did it leave the antechamber? What happened?

I um..called it.. sort of. I just wanted to make sure it wasn’t awake. It was awake. It followed me.

I thought it was going to kill me.

You called it? What did you say? And it came after you?!

I said ‘hello’

The diary didn’t respond immediately. Harry assumed tom might be confused. He was about to tell Tom that he spoke parseltongue when the basilisk hissed at him in an amused tone

::Hogwartssss iss looking for you, little ssssnake::

The bizarre comment through him off totally. What did it mean?! It reminded him of some kind of recruitment drive – your country needs you. Hogwarts needs you. Was that what it meant. He asked and the snake laughed.

::No... sssomeone is in the heart.. they are asssking Hogwarts to find you.. I can hear it whissspering.. looking for you. It will not sssee you here. My Massster was very clever:::

Harry experienced a paradigm shift.

::You say it as if it would be a person. You mean that someone’s using some spell to track me don’t you. And they’re keying it to the founders spells?::

::No. Hogwartsss is alive. It issss looking for you. Sssomeone hass asssked it to do sso.”

Harry blinked. Obviously it would be Dumbledore.. but.. Hogwarts is alive?! He didn’t know what to do with that statement. He looked down at the diary where four rows of his name with increasing size, punctuation and untidiness showed just how worried the tom on the other side was that he hadn’t responded again after telling him that he was alone in the room with the basilisk.

Tom – is Hogwarts alive?!

CAEDMON!! YOU IDIOTIC LITTLE WAISTREL – I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!!

He smiled. That somehow gave him a warm feeling. Tom cared if he lived or died. Tom didn’t want him to die.

I’m sorry. I was distracted. I’m fine. The basilisk is not doing anything.

Is Hogwarts alive?!

I..
I don’t know. Possibly. Define alive.
Technically I might not be considered by some to be alive. And yet.. I am sentient.

Why do you

The writing trailed off strangely. Harry frowned at it.

Tom?

There was no response. His frown deepened. He was about to close the diary when the words appeared again. They were messy and appeared quickly.

Hogwarts is alive but not alive!
Caedmon you are brilliant.

Don’t go away. I need to think.

He raised his eyebrows at it.
He was brilliant?! What had he done?!

When will my other self be returning?!

Harry cast tempus and was horrified to see that it was almost midnight. He’d slept all afternoon. Tom should have been back by now, surely. What if something had happened to him?!
No..he’d have felt it.
Why was he still gone?! Was he researching? Maybe Grindelwald changed his mind and threw him in a dungeon or something?!
Maybe he did something worse.

I don’t know. He should have been back by now. I can’t say. Anytime hopefully. Why?

I need him to..

I think I may have a means of escaping the diary. At least while it is kept within the school grounds.

If Hogwarts is alive.. or at least sufficiently alive to possess an essence, an energy.. then perhaps I can feed on it. Perhaps I can tie myself to it.

Harry blinked. It was a horrible idea – Voldemort sucking the essence of Hogwarts like some kind of vampire. Whether or not it was possible – it was definitely horrible.
What would happen to Hogwarts?!

Well obviously, his mind supplied – nothing - Since it was fine when he arrived fifty years later to attend school. It didn’t feel any different now to him, so either whatever Tom’s idea was hadn’t worked or it hadn’t damaged the school at all.
It’s a building. It can’t exactly write down all its secrets in a diary, you know.

I did realise that Caedmon, thank you.

I was just wondering what I might substitute.

Perhaps the heart might advise me if It was willing to accept the connection.
I doubt it would be possible to bind anything to Hogwarts without its permission.
The founders were rather paranoid about that sort of thing.

I must think about this. It is very promising.
I could just kiss you right now, Caedmon!

Direct my other self to the diary as soon as he returns, if you would.

Harry read the words which had a vague finality about them. Tom needed to think about things and didn’t want to be distracted.
He suppressed a scowl. He was apparently brilliant enough to come up with the idea (even if he hadn’t actually realised it was an idea) but not intelligent enough to discuss said idea with.

He frowned up at the basilisk which hadn’t moved. He didn’t know whether it slept like that – with its glowing yellow eyes visible - or whether it was watching him.

::Where is the heart of Hogwarts??:: he asked it.

The head moved slightly and the creature opened its mouth, flickering out a black forked tongue briefly.

::What hass upssset you little sssnake??:: it asked

::Do you know where the heart of Hogwarts is??:: Harry asked again, trying to get rid of the vague irritation he felt that Tom didn’t think he would be of any help.

::Yesss.. Why do you want to know??:: it responded with a slightly reticent tone.

Harry swallowed and held up the diary.
::Tom.. part of Tom is in this and I need to take it to the heart of Hogwarts so that he can get out.
..That’s why he left – he went to another wizard to look for information on how to get this part of himself out – but i’ve just realised that he can get out if I take him to the heart of Hogwarts.::

The basilisk raised its head and slithered closer till the enormous scaled snout was inches from the book in his hand. He felt the cold of its inhalation.

:: It sssmells not alive. It doesssnt sssmell of massster::

::I don’t know if you know what a soul is. Part of his soul is in it. If I connect it to Hogwarts – then he might be able to get free::

The basilisk nosed the book again tentatively. Feeling an entirely peculiar temptation, Harry put his hand out and stroked his fingers over the large leathery scales of its snout. Its head moved slightly to place his hand near its slitted nostril and it inhaled. Then it surged forward slightly and the surprisingly cold forked tongue flicked out and slid over his wrist, tasting him. He froze.
The massive head moved closer until it could rest on the bed beside him. It was shoulder high.

Swallowing, he stroked it on the smooth slightly softer patch below the sharp horns that extended backward from the head. It emitted a soft hiss that he imagined was the snake equivalent of a purr.

::Massster will know where the heart isss when he returnssss:: it hissed, sounding uncertain.

::Yes, but I have to do it now. You said that I was a weak mate for him. I have to save him myself – to show him that I am not a weak mate:::

The basilisk shifted slightly as if it was considering this.

::It isss right that you try to sssave your mate. I will help you. I will bring you to the heart. Massster insstruccted me to guard you. I will guard you:::

Harry laughed in glee inside. Tom would come back and he would have solved the diary horcrux problem! Hah! He wouldn’t have to go back to Grindelwald again. He’d think of Harry as more than.. well.. more than a source of information. More than.. Well.. more anyway.

::Can we go now Seshasta?:: he urged.

The snake seemed to be agreeable to this as it pulled back from the bed and turned its huge head about, pointing itself out the door and pouring into the corridor. Harry tucked the diary into the back of his pants under his robe and followed it.

It seemed the basilisk couldn’t open the stone entryway. He asked it what he needed to say to open it and after it told him, he opened the way and it slithered out of the gap in Slytherin’s mouth.

He had no idea how to get the stepping stones to rise in the green-black waters around the stone head. After he stood uncertainly mulling over whether to swim, the basilisk extended its head back toward him, pushing him gently back through the gap and resting on the bone and scale covered floor.

::I will carry you acrosssss:: it informed him.

He grimaced slightly, shifting from foot to foot anxiously before stepping forward and, with difficulty, throwing himself up onto the thick body which reached higher than his waist. It was cool and smooth and dry.

He tentatively gripped hold of the horns behind the creature’s head and then he clenched down against it, as it suddenly moved backward swiftly. He had a horrible memory of clinging to the whomping willow as the basilisk moved fast.. its body whipping behind him as its head was propelled rapidly across the chamber.

It turned and darted into one of the large tunnels. Harry ducked in fright as the ceiling swooped past him at speed.

He stretched his body out along the snake somewhat and held on tight, in as far as he was able.

It was pitch black in the tunnel now. He assumed the basilisk knew where it was going, considering the speed at which it was moving.

It was somehow.. not altogether unpleasant to feel the wind of its movement and the sensation of an insanely powerful animal below. He didn’t think he could admit it to anyone.. not even Tom.. but he was kind of enjoying riding the basilisk.

::You mussst open the passsssage:: the snake hissed, its gritty voice echoing in the tunnel.
He couldn’t see anything.

::How do I do that?:: he asked it. It told him.

When the passage opened, a tiny measure of light fell down upon them both and Harry blinked. Through the gap that had opened in the wall he could see another stone wall a few metres away. A corridor then. Somewhere in the dungeons perhaps. It hadn’t seemed like they were moving upwards much.

The basilisk moved to the opening and halted, scenting with its tongue and moving its head from side to side. It apparently decided the coast was clear because it surged into the corridor, turning to the left and slithering at an even greater speed down the stone floors. Harry gripped its horns tighter. They were moving away from the faint distant torchlight and it became darker.

Corridors flashed by and harry hadn’t the faintest idea where they were but eventually the beast turned down a rather narrow passage. It barely had room to wriggle forward. Harry had to pull his legs up to lie atop it. He could hear its hissy complaints as it struggled on.

::I wasss much..younger.. the lassst time I wasss here:: it explained.

Eventually the passage opened out into a vast octagonal chamber. It was the heart of Hogwarts. It was in fact unmistakeably the heart of Hogwarts. A bright white light emanated from the centre of the room. It threw off sparks every so often in red, green, blue and yellow in four different directions. Below it on the hewn stone floor was a great and complex carving. Circles, interwoven and bisected with angles and lines were inscribed with millions of tiny runes and cuniform characters. It was amazing. Silvery slivers of light crawled over the lines of it here and there from time to time.

The overall impression was that of a massive white fire burning over a vast round carved pit.

::The heart of Hogwartssss:: the basilisk announced unnecessarily.

Unable to take his eyes away from the brilliant white glowing tongues of light in the centre of the room, harry slid down off the side of the great black body and stumbled a few steps forward to the edge of the outer rune circle. He wanted to stumble even closer but he had the feeling that it would be wrong to do so. Perhaps even dangerous.

He took out the diary and wondered what to do next. How was he supposed to communicate with it?! The basilisk had said it whispered. He didn’t hear anything.

::You said it talked to you?!:: he asked Seshastraa.

::It issss talking to you now... can’t you hear little ssssnake:::

He shook his head, strangely disappointed. He’d hoped that it just hadn’t started to speak to him yet. Turns out he was just deaf. Great.

::What is it saying:::

The snake emitted something like an amused serpentine snort.
Harry’s hand tightened on the diary. Tom was in there. He felt a bit uneasy about letting it out of his grasp. What if he couldn’t get it back. What if he couldn’t get it back and it didn’t work... But... this was what Tom had thought was the best option.

True... he hadn’t actually known Harry was going to bring him up here and give him to a big white fire in the air.. But it seemed like that was the thing to do. The basilisk probably wouldn’t risk any part of Tom knowingly.

And unknowingly?

But it was Hogwarts. Hogwarts wouldn’t harm a student, surely – and Tom was still technically a student. Even if this was the foulest most evil magic there was.. They were bloody learning dark magic in their defense class. He didn’t think that the founders would necessarily be principally opposed to dark magic. Salazar loved dark magic after all. He’d be represented in this big design thing somehow..

Reluctantly he raised the diary and tossed it in an underarm throw into the incandescent white flames.

It froze in midair and the pages ruffled as if turned at speed, then the book opened at about halfway and hung there in the air.

::it sssays you musssst bring the four elements from the ssseat of the four powers. Now::

Harry gaped.

What?!

He cast tempus. It was one thirty in the bloody morning.

He knew what the four elements meant in general terms.. Earth, Air, Fire, Water, right?! He could even figure how they would apply to the four houses.. but .. bring them from the seat of the powers?!

What exactly was the seat then?

He asked the basilisk and it, after a moment, told him that it was a gathering place. The place where the students gathered. So. The common rooms then?

The heart of bloody Hogwarts wanted him to somehow get into the common rooms of the other three houses at bloody one thirty in the morning while accompanied by a forty foot snake?! That was insane!

The white fire in the centre of the room flared bright yellow suddenly. Harry jumped back slightly. What?! Calling the insane plan insane was rude or something?!!

::It isss whissspering sssomething about loyalty..unity..: the basilisk informed him mildly.

Harry took a deep breath.

Oh.

Oh. That was somehow better then?! Take a forty foot basilisk into the Slytherin dorms and somehow persuade Abraxas to make all the others go and do his bidding and get the things he needed.
Of course.. a forty foot basilisk would probably go a long way to persuading any Slytherin to obey..

He snorted.

But he..probably wouldn’t be able to do it as himself.
How the hell would he explain to the others that he could talk to snakes?!
It would be unnecessarily complex and someone might somehow figure out why he had this extremely rare and unusual ability. That or they’d think he was related to Tom. Also not good.
Polyjuice?

It was up in Tom’s room.. There was no way he was taking a basilisk up to the first floor.. and he doubted it would be allowing him to go anywhere without it.

But there was probably some in the dorm, surely – if they had been keeping Willowstead there..
So.. some of Tom’s hair..

There might be some of that there too..

Alright then. Fine.
He could do this.

The basilisk required no persuading to take him to Slytherin dormitories, although it at first refused to venture up to the first level of the dungeons, bringing them instead to a blank wall in the third sub-dungeon level which it insisted was a passage. Harry spent almost twenty minutes tapping every stone in the section before he, infuriated, demanded the damn thing take him to the shield and let them enter through the common room. It was the middle of the night. Who the hell would know?!

He didn’t think an enormous killing machine with death ray eyes could be afraid, but the creature seemed more than skittish as it slithered rapidly up the stairs to the first basement level. It writhed impatiently in front of the shield as Harry whispered the password and no sooner had the thing started to open, it was forcing its way through the gap and rushing into the common room. It skated across the long dim hall at speed and plunged down the stair to the boy’s dorms. Harry held on for grim death.

::The last door. Wait when you get there. I have to summon something from the room::

The snake didn’t respond - it did obey however.

Harry climbed down lightly and moved to the door, ignoring the restless slithering behind him of the snake impatient to remove itself from such a vulnerable corridor.

He opened the door no more than a hand and a half’s width, peering in gingerly. The room was still and sounds of sleeping reassured him.

“Accio polyjuice” he whispered, waiting.
There was a glassy clink and he flinched, afraid that it might have woken one of them. But the soft breathing and snoring continued unabated and he grasped the jar floating in the air before him.
He barely breathed the accio for Tom Riddle’s hair.
There was no immediate reaction - at least not from the room. He noticed though three hairs
floating in the air before his hand. They must have been on his robes, he supposed.

He mixed and gulped the bitter pear syrup and less than a minute later he was tossing the door open and silencing the entire room.

His eyes met the steady gaze of Antonin. He seemed awake and alert. His lips curled slightly for a moment and Harry cursed inwardly. How the hell did the Russian keep bloody recognising him. Was he not acting quite like Tom?! He’d have to find out somehow.

Gyphus had jolted awake at the feel of the spell and he could see Abraxas and Alphard were coming around too, blinking blearily through the dim room toward his figure in the door. He stepped forward and, smirking nastily, tossed the door wide.

::You can come in now:: he hissed softly.

The basilisk needed no further permission. It surged into the room like a black wave of moving death – which it was, he supposed.

Chaos erupted. He closed the door after the serpent’s tail was through the door. Several of the boys were screaming in terror. A spell splattered on the basilisk’s skin harmlessly and dissipated.

::Sorry about that:: he apologised to it. It turned and bowed its head slightly at him.

“Calm down” he commanded them all, barely raising his voice. He flicked a charm to light the torches and was now able to see a room of terrified faces. With the exception of Antonin, who looked both fundamentally shocked and inexplicably understanding, the others all looked petrified.

“I apologise for waking you so harshly..” he offered, still with the tiny smirk. “But I have need of your assistance. Immediately.”

He watched them sputter and bite their tongues.

“I require some things retrieved from the common rooms of the other houses. I need these things now-..”

“Why do you have a...a..the Basilisk with you, Tom?!!” Abraxas managed finally, unfortunately interrupting him. Sesastra darted forward, incensed, and hovered over the terrified blonde.

“Please do try to remain focused, if you would. Nevermind the basilisk – You are in ..negligible danger.. And those of you who set off right now to retrieve the items I desire will not even be in the room with him. Volunteers?”

Every hand went up, with the exception of Antonin. Harry cursed over that too. No doubt the damn observant Russian would want to know things now.

“Very well. I will need someone to retrieve the elements from the common rooms of the houses – that is – Someone will retrieve a torch lit on the hearth fire in the Gryffindor common room, a jar of compressed air taken from a draft or breeze in the Ravenclaw common room and some earth found somewhere in the common room of Huffelpuff. Perhaps in a potted plant, if necessary.”

“H-How are we supposed to get into the-“

It was Roan. Harry sighed slightly, feeling sorry for him.

“That is for you to decide. Show me how resourceful you are. I might suggest.. if any of you are capable of projecting a full patronus, you might use it to wake and summon any contact you perhaps have in the houses to open the door for you. You will need to obliviate them afterward
however. Use whatever method you consider most suitable – provided it does not lead to alarms and attention of teachers."

He observed Abraxas nod slightly.

“There’s a girl in Huffelpuff...maybe..” Gyphus started uncertainly. Harry nodded

“Very well. you’ll take Huffelpuff. Does anyone else have any links there?” No one did apparently.

After he had asked each in turn it transpired that Abraxas and Darius would take Ravenclaw, Alphard and Roan would take Gryffindor and Gyphus and Palmer would take Huffelpuff. They all departed soon thereafter in a hurry, although he suspected that had more to do with the bloody great big snake in their dorm room than any eagerness to bring him what he needed.

“Where is Tom?”

He groaned at Antonin’s perceptive question.

“He had to visit Grindelwald again this afternoon. He isn’t back yet. Would you tell me how you know every time?!”

Antonin smiled distantly and shook his head. “If I did that, I would be as helpless as the others, no? What do you need these things for? Why is there a snake..a basilisk in the room? No... how is there a basilisk in the room is more important.. you are a zmeagovorya”

Harry moved to stroke the black scales of the waist high coil next to him. He found, unaccountably, that he kind of felt differently about the ‘monster’ now. Sesastra turned his massive head and looked at him curiously, before slithering back and carefully coiling himself around Harry where he stood.

“I need the elements for Tom. Sesastra is here because he is helping me. Also.. you have no idea how fast he moves through the corridors. Its crazy. I have no idea what a smaya..whatever is. If you mean a parseltongue – yeah. Since the binding..I can talk to snakes it seems.

Antonin’s eyes widened in slight discomfort. “I hope I never find out how fast it moves..” he muttered. “You know Dumbledore has been looking for you all day?”

It was an hour later when Abraxas and Darius returned from the Ravenclaw common room. They flinched when they came in and found that the others weren’t back. Abraxas couldn’t take his eyes off the enormous serpent baring its teeth at him evily.

Harry was amused.
He was sure that Sesastra was doing it for his own entertainment.

They had successfully captured a jar of wind crossing the room from a crack in the pane of the Ravenclaw stained glass shield panel. Darius crept closer nervously to where Harry stood wrapped in a coil of basilisk.

“Can I touch it?” he whispered uncertainly. Harry asked the basilisk respectfully and then granted the boy who was now marginally more fascinated than terrified permission to touch .

“It feels so hard” he observed. “Like stone.. not like a living thing at all.”
Harry called the snake to bring its head closer and showed Darius how to rub the soft leathery pads by its ears. The boy took to this with great enthusiasm, only jumping away in fright once when the enormous snake started to hiss softly, before Harry explained that that was an expression of pleasure.

Gyphus and Palmer returned next and both were very much of the Abraxas camp of things, keeping far away from the snake and the two boys stroking it. Antonin seemed thoughtful as he watched however. Gyphus gingerly approached and passed Harry a small pottle of earth with a hole in the middle. The charitable boys had obviously nicked the pot and left the plant lying. Nice of them.

Alphard and Roan did not return until the tempus showed nearly four in the morning. They both stalked back looking extremely pissed off but attempted to rein in their discontent in the face of Tom and a big man-eating snake. Roan crept over, seemingly forced by Alphard into the task, and offered a burning fackel in a jar, frozen in place with a stasis charm. He looked in dismay at Darius petting the snake, as if the boy had gone insane.

“Well done, all of you. A difficult task achieved admirably... “

He praised them all and stroked their egos for a few minutes before leaving them with the basilisk in order to go and collect the water sample from the Slytherin common room. That completed he was off, the creature needing no encouragement to move rapidly and get them out of the exposed upper level of the dungeons.

::Massster will be angry:: it muttered as it whipped its way down to the darker deep sub-dungeon levels.

Harry held on and laid his cheek against the black shiny scales. They felt like fingernails on this part of the basilisk. They were slightly smaller than the size of his palm. He wondered whether Tom had ever ridden the basilisk and if so, why. For the hell of it? He hissed softly just as he’d heard the basilisk hiss when he was being rubbed beside the ears. It gave a soft answering hiss

The tiny little passage irritated it once again and it made what was probably the serpent equivalent of expletives as it wriggled and forced itself through. He didn’t understand the words. Perhaps there was no equivalent for them in english.

::What is sisthashash?!::

The snake told him it was this stupid passageway. He asked again – making clear he didn’t know the word. The basilisk laughed hissily

::Sisthashash is the feeling when your sssskin is caught and refusses to be shed, sssso you must sssscrape and bite it away. It issss mossst annoying::

Harry nodded against the animal’s back thoughtfully. Obviously he wouldn’t have a word for that.

They inched into the Heart chamber again and the basilisk stopped struggling as soon as there was enough space for him to slide off into the room. It left its body in the passage. Harry privately thought that wriggling out backward would likely be even more difficult. Perhaps it was weary.

::It issss calling you clossser little ssnake.. go to the flamesss:: the basilisk hissed impatiently.

Harry pulled the elements he’d gathered from his pockets and restored them to regular size. The
fackel was still a bright orange shard of frozen flame in the glass tube Abraxas had transfigured for it.

Uneasily, he stepped over the first carved circle, placing his foot down gingerly on the elaborate runes and markings. They seemed to shiver in his vision, shimmering blue for a moment. Each further step repeated the strange reaction of the thing.

He had the feeling that he was doing something bad... or wrong... He should perhaps have at least taken off his shoes...

but then.. the thought of putting his naked feet down on those shivering somehow unnaturally alive lines.. no... maybe not. Maybe he’d rather be a bit rude.

The closer he moved to the white flames in the centre of the thing, the larger they seemed to grow. He could see the book hanging in the centre of the flames still open.

::They whisssper sssomething... They sssay it isss good that an old anger isss undone.. they will assist the heirsss::

Harry frowned slightly. Did the heart of Hogwarts know about the future then?.. and Voldemort and everything? Perhaps it was reading his mind? The hat did after all. How much of a stretch was it to think that the castle could do it to when it wanted to.

Maybe all those times when you didn’t catch the stairs and had to wait on every bloody level it wasn’t just your dumb luck. Maybe Hogwarts was mildly peeved at you for whatever reason and was being a bit passive aggressive.

::What do I do now?: he called back to Seshastra

::Go into the flamessss:: came the slightly irritated answer, as if he were dense.

Harry gulped thickly and turned back to the massive fire only a couple of metres in front of him now. It didn’t feel hot.. but it was still burning and flickering and sparking.. This seemed like a very bad idea all of a sudden.

::Go... go.. little ssssnake.. ssstrong mate! Go and sssave masster::

Setting his jaw he grit his teeth. It would be alright, surely. Hogwarts wouldn’t hurt him.. whatever this was.. it probably wouldn’t burn him.. right? He’d be fine. It seemed pleased to see him before didn’t it?

Or at least the basilisk said it was. It had pretty much seemed like nothing more than a great big white fire to him..

Pulling together his courage he stepped forward the last few paces and into the flames
Chapter 23

He writhed, pinioned, caught between the incessantly moving.. teasing hand and the hard body behind him. Gellert panted against his ear.

They had both been reading.. He was sitting by the fire.. reading Asmodeus chapter on ethivoric adaptations. Grindelwald had been sitting at his desk, reading Slytherin’s second journal with great delight.

The second journal.. one of the great wizard’s lesser works, in Tom’s opinion.. filled with rhetoric and fire about the sanctity of the great houses.. the purity of blood.. very little magic of significant import contained within the pages. Just.. the wizard’s very particular beliefs on the role of those of lesser blood..

Perhaps it had been a poor choice to give Grindelwald that journal. Perhaps he should have selected one of the others.. one of the ones focussing on herbology.. biology.. perhaps that would have been less inflammatory.. He had thought that this journal would appeal to the dark wizard. He had been right.. but perhaps it would have been better not to emphasise those ideas.

Grindelwald had called him over. Summoned him, as it were. There was no.. refusing.. obviously.

Unceremoniously he had torn away the robe he had only hours before offered him ..the silken robe he’d given while he was in that generous reasonable mood.. when he’d asked him to remain.. He’d torn it away and dragged him down upon his lap. Fondled him.. bitten him.. a thing.. a toy for his pleasure once more.

There were no tender whispers.. no kisses.. He’d simply freed himself, muttered a charm to slick the channel and taken what he wanted.

Tom’s legs were splayed over the robed form below, his hands gripped the arms of the chair, white knuckled as he raised and dropped himself on the man.. worked to bring him.. bring them both to end.

“Unworthy little mudblood” Grindelwald growled against his neck, dragging him up by the hand on his cock.. forcing him down.. faster.. harder..

He panted; he could feel.. his own climax within grasping distance.. In this state, his mind was blunted to the sting of the words.. a little more.. if the hand holding him would only...

The wizard’s other hand stroked up his chest, owning him.. smearing the tiny pearls of sweat. The hand around his cock gripped only.. not stroking.. denying him the relief he sought.

“Gellert..” he murmured impatiently as he ground himself down against the cock impaling him.. He was dragged back hard against the man’s robed chest.

“It was.. a mistake.. You do not deserve the honour.. of .. using my.. name” was gritted out against his neck.

He let his head fall back on the broad shoulder, turned his face to reach the skin of the other man, bucking against his tightly gripping fist, trying to get him to allow him his release.

::Gellert::.. he hissed softly, needily. “again, Marvolo..” Grindelwald groaned, sucking on his jaw. “Say it again..”

::Gellert.. Gellert..:: he hissed and wound his hips. “more.. let me come..” he demanded in a needy whine.

The hand gripping him began to stroke him in fast brutal movements. It was almost painful.. but it was enough. He jerked up against it in tact, racing after his climax.. catching it.. diving into it. His cock spilt over the warm fist.
“Master.. Call me Master..” the wizard behind him panted hungrily.
He knew he didn’t mean in the human language..

::My Lord...:: he hissed, limp and malleable in his aftermath. ::My Lord...Gellert::

With a grunt of release, the wizard pumping into him broke..clamping him hard to him.. clinging.. hands rough on Tom’s sensitive skin.. wrapped around him tightly..

“Uhhhh..” Grindelwald sighed..his head leaning against him.

His mind reassembling itself, Tom struggled with difficulty to suppress any outward sign of the revolted anger now burning him up at being obliged to call any wizard his Lord..
It did not matter if the meaning was not the same for serpents.. for Grindelwald it meant master.. that was his understanding of it.
He would find a way.. in time he would find a way to repay this indignity.

“Get off, boy.” Grindelwald’s voice was impatient, if weary.

He slid away, naked and slick and scourified himself. The robe he had worn earlier lay in tatters at the great wizard’s feet.
He considered repairing it but instead scowled and stalked back to the chair by the fire, lowering himself back into it in his unclothed form and reclaiming his book.

There was nothing in the book of much value that he had seen.
Everything had been a waste. He’d sacrificed a lot... for nothing.
He could not use Grindelwald to keep Dumbledore at bay – he’d have had a better position if he had simply used what Caed had told him initially and done his own private research...
Of course, without the charmed necklace the bastard had given him, Dumbledore might have acquired a lot more information from Caed...
But still.. he was a leashed dog. Unable to truly put Dumbledore in his place.. unable to access the books he needed to find the answer to his horcrux problem.

The man had sworn to offer him knowledge.. to take him as an apprentice.. Instead he was no better than Adorno.. A warm body to use whenever the mood struck.
And a large portion of blame for this state of affairs could be attributed to the weak little wretch back at Hogwarts, probably out of his mind with fear at being left alone with the basilisk.
Caed would pay for this.

He would remove the necklace, extract every useful piece of information from the little cur’s mind and then spend the weekend taking his ire out upon him in pain.
He shifted the large book on his lap, aware of the attention of the older wizard.

“You pout like a child, Marvolo” he was informed.
He ignored it and tried to focus upon the information which, while not pertaining to his problem, was not completely worthless, and could probably be of eventual value in some other endeavour.

“You tell me about your private project.. as you described it. What are you truly looking for? It is obvious that it is not in that book.
Perhaps I may help.. if you explain.”

He snorted. It was unlikely.
And if the dark wizard had not yet realised the potential of possessing a horcrux, Tom had no wish to direct his attention to the possibility. He was after all looking for means by which to prevail
against the oncoming defeat, not to prolong his existence indefinitely. He had promised to try to prevent him from internment, not to tolerate his treatment forever. At worst, he could hope that if he was unable to destroy him, Grindelwald would eventually grow old and die.

“Do not trouble yourself...Master” he said, the word dripping off his tongue like acid “...I will resolve my problem one way or another. I am...thankful.. for the chance to access these books”

Grindelwald was at his side in a second and he gasped, his hand flying to his chest where the hidden mark burned painfully.

“insolent wretch. You will learn to curb your tongue, boy. It has caused you difficulty several times already. Perhaps I should relieve you of it.”

Fear flared in him. Thanks to the mark, he couldn’t defend himself against this man. But no, he’d agreed to pain... without permanent physical harm. This was an empty threat.

“My...apologies...Gellert” he breathed with difficulty gripping at the place where a burning coal seemed to have been embedded in his flesh.

The pain abated.

“Get out of my chair. You should sit on the floor, as befits your station” The tone was snappy..irritable. No generous afterglow at present then, he reasoned. Although, perhaps there had been one.. perhaps the man’s question about his research had been the generous impulse.

He unfolded himself gracefully from the chair, keeping hold of the thick tome and gestured, perhaps slightly sardonically for the robed man to take his place. Moving to the hearth, he lowered himself to his knees and then his back, charming the book to levitate above him and folding his arms behind his neck. The warmth of the fire on his skin was pleasant. He returned his attention to the influence of substrate in ethivoric charms.

He read another five pages and had come to the conclusion that a diary was perhaps a rather weak choice for a self resurrecting horcrux, in light of the much more rapid energy transference possible with some stones and metals. The horcrux might perhaps only have been sentient at all due to the particular parameters he had set upon the charms. It needed to have the ability to communicate... to interact with the host it was leeching... in order to facilitate the transfer. He was no longer convinced that sentience in such an object was such a positive thing. Musing on this he was miles away when the other wizard spoke.

“it is..such a pity..about you, Marvolo...”

He became aware that the man was, once again, staring at him. Inwardly he groaned and hoped he didn’t want to fuck him again. “If it were not for your dirty blood...”

The man looked at once wistful and disappointed. “You are..such..a pleasing creature... if your foolish whore of a mother had not destroyed your noble heritage... I would keep you here.. I would keep you.. teach you.. In time perhaps we would have...” he trailed off.
Tom felt a sudden irrational impulse to defend a woman he had despised his entire life long. He ignored it.

“Yes well.. we all are as we are, Gellert. I shall make the best of what I am. It seems I am not quite so ruined that my noble ancestor would deny me. His spells allow me access to his works and his chambers after all.” He turned the page of the text. There was silence for a few minutes before the response came. Grindelwald sounded thoughtful.

“Yes.. Perhaps you are right. Slytherin himself has accepted your corrupted flesh.”
“And after all.. you are.. quite powerful... clever... attractive...” He looked pensive.

Tom returned his attention to the matter of ethivoric charms. The next few pages dealt with temporary variants which would merely store energy to be reclaimed at a later point.

“Have I been.. unreasonable in denying the evidence before me? Your noble blood is clearly stronger than the muggle infection... “
Glancing up from the text Tom could see the indecision on the man’s face. What was he weighing up?! This was perhaps not a matter that could be safely ignored.

“Gellert?” he asked uncertainly

“Tell me of your recent marking of your servants. Your binding of the boy.. how did you fare?”

Tom reached up and gripped the book, releasing the charm and laying it aside. Grindelwald was not going to allow him to attend to reading either way, it seemed. He raised himself on his elbows, bending one knee and admiring the glow of his own skin in the firelight.

“It all proceeded to my satisfaction.” He offered vaguely.
The expression on the other man’s face communicated that this was insufficient. He smiled and let himself slide down again onto his back, bending one arm under his head and stroking the skin of his abdomen absently with the fingers of the other hand.

“I collected nine muggles from various settlements and cities around Britain; seven females, two males.. ranging in age..” He bit off the comment remembering the tiny blonde that Caed had informed him had been only ten years old..
“I brought my servants alcohol.. various lesser drugs... music... toys.. They were all quite enchanted with the offerings laid before them..” he smirked faintly, letting his eyes slip closed.

“I bound and marked them all with a promise of absolute servitude..
...Except caed.. he would not be drawn to concede without clarifying the terms.. “ His smile widened..

“It was... pleasurable... to enslave them. I did not seal my mark with.. pain.. as you did. Caed in particular was quite.. lovely.”

“Pain is necessary for understanding” the older man criticised mildly.

“They do not.. fully.. understand yet..” Tom countered. “They believe we are all joined as brothers.. I worded myself somewhat.. inexact.. It will take them a while to realise that they belong to me for life now.. that they no longer have the option of dissent.”

He stroked slowly up and down the slight valley between his lean abdominal muscles, enjoying the sensation.

“I bound Caed to me immediately afterward.. while the others were enjoying their rewards. It
was..” he drifted into silence, thinking back to the sight of the beautiful tanned waif clutching at him needily..breathing his desire..
“It exceeded all expectations..” he stated ambiguously. He heard the leather creak as the other man shifted in his chair slightly.

“Afterward he was persuaded to participate in the games with the Muggles.. He tortured and killed one.. a girl.. He performed admirably; using several Surinaste hexes and finished her with something even I did not recognise. I was pleased with him..”
He snorted softly, allowing his amusement to show.. “I forced another of the muggles to dine on the remains of Caed’s kill..since she was so well cooked..”

He thought he heard a soft vaguely disapproving tsk from Grindelwald.

“It was early in the morning when they had all finished.. I sent them back to school and took care of the remains. That is all there is to tell.”

The sensation of the warm hand on his chest made him flinch and open his eyes in surprise. The man sat on the floor by his side, resting on one arm. He had not heard him move.

The warm hand stroked him slowly as if he were a cat on the hearth.
“I would like to see the memory..” Grindelwald stated with a neutral tone, while his eyes glittered hungrily.

Sighing he closed his eyes again..
“Gellert.. Not to put too fine a point on it.. but you have already fucked me quite raw.. I sense it would not be in my best interests to give you that memory at present. Perhaps I shall give it to you in the morning, before I return to school”

The hand on him paused but then continued its gentle stroking.
“..very well Marvolo..”

He listened to Grindelwald’s quiet breathing and wondered whether his acquiescence could be construed to mean that he would be allowed to leave in the morning.

“I have.. one or two things to do for the next hours.. I wonder if you might like to take your book to bed.. or perhaps the bath?”

Tom raised an eyebrow without opening his eyes. He was to be allowed to take books away from the wizard’s view?.. it surprised him that the man was letting him out of his sight at all. Particularly in light of how much time he had spent today touching him.. looking at him.

They had dined at a rather intimate little table in a room with a view over seemingly endless dark green forests.
As he had consumed the perfectly medium rare filet mignon with red wine sauce, he had felt the pale blue eyes constantly gliding over him, scrutinising and assessing him.

A part of him didn’t really mind, to be perfectly frank.

He had come to realise a long time ago that he actually enjoyed the attention of others. When that attention was mixed with a healthy portion of desire, even more so. So he had taken the meal with poise.. enjoyed each dainty bite and pretended to be entirely oblivious to the stare of the other man.

He had listened, with genuine interest, as the blonde wizard spoke idly about his frustration with the French ministry of magic and the difficulty of waging a battle on multiple fronts.
He was certain that the information might come in useful to him at some point later in his life, so, sipping his wine, he had paid full attention, barely questioned at all, and when, then only to clarify points he lacked the context to immediately grasp.

It had been quite heady, to be spoken to in that manner by the man in question.

Admittedly he had not discussed anything truly sensitive. Everything mentioned could perhaps have been gleaned from public record and other sources available to Tom, and he had the feeling that Grindelwald had been speaking largely in order to allow his own mind to chew over things, rather than to actually inform his conversation partner. Nevertheless, it had been ... pleasing.

Thus it was even more infuriating when the man, after only a few hours reading, had seemed to relapse entirely to his original view... He had called him mudblood... His treatment had been extremely callous...

And now he was to be allowed to leave the dark wizard’s presence... to read in private... Tom mulled this over. Grindelwald had a frustratingly changeable nature. There was nothing to say that he would not go to bed or to the bath only to have the man storm in suddenly and commence beating him.

“I would appreciate the chance to bathe... if I may...” he responded softly. The hand on his chest continued to stroke him slowly.

“You may... I will have the elves prepare one. I think you know the way...”

Tom’s other eyebrow joined the one dubiously raised. He was allowed to find his own way back to the wizard’s bedchambers?!

What exactly was he playing at now?!

The whispers were all around him. He couldn’t understand what they were saying. This was a place without perspective, white... formless. He felt disoriented immediately. Looking around it was white and shimmering mist in all directions, and above.

And below...

He hung in the void regretting his somewhat foolhardy choice to step into a magical fire because a basilisk said so. There was no book. There was nothing here. Just him.

“Harry”

A voice, but it wasn’t a voice, was it. He hadn’t heard anything. He just had the memory of the word, as if it had been said.

A man’s face flashed in his mind. He was... hard to describe. It was all vague impressions... He looked strong, hearty. He had red wavy hair that just brushed his shoulders. A short goatee and mustache. Dark green eyes. He was smiling.

The image was there in his memory for a moment.

‘Godric’
Tom’s face fluttered in his mind’s eye for a second.. an older tom. Perhaps that was what Voldemort looked like before he’d lost his body.

‘Salazar’ the thought whispered surreptitiously.

He shivered.

‘I’m talking to the founders’ he thought with an unease that he couldn’t quite place. Except he wasn’t. -Talking that is.. Why could the snake understand them when all he heard were these soft unintelligible whispers. Where were Rowena Ravenclaw and Helga Huffelpuff then?

There was a faint, faint, flash of black hair.. and then the memory of the scent of baked bread.. Nothing more..

The faces of Gryffindor and Slytherin burned in his mind again. And then...blood.. The final idea was much clearer. There were a lot of examples of it in his memory.. a cut finger, a fallen death eater in a puddle of it, a droplet poised to fall.. The scent, the taste. The idea was simply fuller.

It was hard to understand what was being communicated this way. He didn’t like the sensation of strange information simply placed into his memory.

“What do I have to do?!” he asked..but couldn’t hear his voice.

It seemed that the founders.. or at least those two he could get any halfway clear impression of.. were not quite ready to get to the point.

He was reminded of his connection with Tom... his binding.. and there was an unaccountable positive feeling around him. Happiness.. satisfaction.. hope.. But it soured then and felt quite bittersweet. Like regret.

Harry wondered for a moment whether the feelings were about him at all. An impression of joined hands.. The two founder’s faces flickered again.. and the wistful sad feeling struck him again.

Then the book shimmered into view in front of him, as if it had been hidden behind a veil the entire time. He reached for it in relief.

And remembered the feeling of pouring something. A hint of green – a robe, a forest, a crayon, the Slytherin crest.

The water.. the water first.. He drew the small phial from his pocket and opened it, hesitating only a moment before pouring it over the middle of the page. It seeped in..just as his writing seeped in when he wrote to tom.. It vanished. A moment later there was a bewildered response from Tom Caedmon?

What is happening? What was that?!

He caught the memory of sitting astride his broom and feeling the wind in his face. It was peaceful.. he felt free..

Ravenclaw.
But how to apply it?! In the jar it was merely air..
ok.. compressed air, admittedly.. but it was hardly wind. He had no idea how to make it so. He unscrewed the jar carefully and held it close to the page. Then he opened the jar only a tiny crack. The air rushed out of the slit onto the page. There was no sign on the page that anything had happened.

Caedmon?? What are you doing?! Caedmon??

He knew..just knew that the earth came next.. It was a feeling without words or colours.. He dug a handful of dirt out of the miniaturised pot and smeared it over the clean page. It seemed to become slightly less...
When he dusted off the large grains that remained, the page was clean again.

He ignored the frantic writing that scrawled across the page demanding answers.

The fire then..

He was a bit uneasy about the fire, to tell the truth. No matter that everything else had been absorbed.. he had a horrible mental image of the book catching alight.

Worse.. of the Tom Riddle inside screaming in pain as he was burned..

He drew the fire out and used his wand to cancel the stasis charm on it. Its orange tongues returned to life, moving and dancing.

If he did this.. if he touched the flame to the diary horcrux and this.spell.. this..was it a binding in some way?
If it worked.. there was a good chance that Tom Riddle would not die.. That everything he had believed had happened in the past might unravel.. might be picked apart as Tom drew out the information from him and devised ways to thwart fate.
As he Invented ways to trick him into believing..well.. into believing what he believed now.

And if the diary horcrux lived.. who knew what it might do.

But it seemed like the founders wanted him to do it.. They’d made it possible. Even now he felt a heaviness in his arm.. a temptation to lower it slightly from where it hung over the diary.

Why would Hogwarts want to help Tom?! Surely if it knew his name.. if it could manipulate his memory like this.. it also knew what Tom would do..
How could it condone this.. How could it help ...

He swallowed and shut that thought down as far as he could.

‘bond’ ‘mate’ ‘husband’ the concepts shivered faintly in his mind.

And an overwhelming sense of hope and faith somehow. It was undirected. It wasn’t his.

He lowered the flame to the diary page.

The orange ephemeral flickering heat caught and flared across the surface of the page, vanishing immediately as if sucked into it. The book shimmered suddenly as if through a heat haze and then glowed brightly with a white light.
Harry cried out in surprise as he was thrown backwards without warning.

He landed in a heap on the stone floor, the runes around him coruscating blue momentarily.

There was a slap sound as the diary fell to the floor beside him, as if dropped from a great height. He looked at it in horror.

Was Tom alright?! What if it had killed him..

No., no it couldn’t kill him – But what if it did something else..

He opened the diary and looked at the blank page in the glare from the white fiery light. He had no quill., no ink..

Something moved beyond the flames. It caught his eye.

There was a shadow.

“Where-..” the familiar voice broke off and, apparently seeing the basilisk it hissed silibantly.

::Seshastra!!.. I have missed you. If you are here.. if I am here.. my other self must be here.. or perhaps...::

“Caedmon?...” Tom’s voice called, sounding thoughtful.

Harry blinked.

The diary horcrux Tom was here. Physically here, apparently.

He had changed time!

Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck.

Climbing to his feet, worried, he wondered whether the soul fragment could be put back in somehow., or something..

He felt a treacherous tug toward it.

::Massster.. your mate is ssstrong.. he sssaved you..:: the basilisk informed the shadow on the far side of the fire sounding pleased with itself.

::I assisissted.. sslightly:: It added as an afterthought.

“Caedmon??” Tom’s voice sounded hopeful now. There was a strange note in it though. It was almost a tinge of fear; as if he couldn’t quite believe this was truly happening, was afraid it was a dream.

He sounded different to Tom..

Harry chastised himself..

But well.. What the hell else was it if not Tom?! What else could he call him?!

“I’m here” he answered quietly.

The faint diffuse shadow glided to its feet quickly. It moved around the fire and then when he saw it ... it was so...absolutely indistinguishable from Tom.. it was actually frightening.

He stayed where he was, warily, watching to see what the elegant uniformed boy would do next.

Tom approached slowly, clearly reading his apprehension.

“I take it you did not realise what the effect of your actions would be, Caedmon” he said quietly, his eyes inspecting Harry from top to bottom with great interest.

“Even though I instructed you to defer action until I had had the chance to consider the ramifications of this act..
...even though you disobeyed me... Tom’s eyes flashed in momentary irritation but softened again immediately.

“I thank you... This is... infinitely... superior to the endless tedium of that tiny world. I cannot... begin... to describe it.”

He stepped closer, till he was no more than an arm’s length away.

“Perhaps we might return to the chamber...” he said quietly, a tiny smirk twisting the corner of his mouth as his eyes continued to devour Harry like a starving man before a banquet. “It would be wise not to remain here too long... Seshastra is somewhat exposed in this place...”

Harry swallowed... looking up at the familiar eyes that were so desperately hungry.

“Ok...” he managed, feeling like an idiot.

The Tom he had never met before reached out boldly and brushed his hair aside slightly, his fingertips barely grazing Harry’s skin.

“You are as lovely as he described...” Tom informed him softly. “I am.. pleased.. that you are mine.”

Harry was unable to suppress the shiver that tingled up his spine.

He wasn’t his... surely.. He was Tom’s... this wasn’t... well ok... but it wasn’t his Tom.

Tom would almost certainly view his horcrux counterpart as a separate entity. Harry was willing to bet on that.

“Oh... Ok... Um... We’ll... have to ride Seshastra. I don’t know the way.” He admitted it easily but then felt foolish for having done so.

The glint in Tom’s eyes suggested that he did know the way but he gestured for Harry to precede him to the basilisk anyway.

Seshastra who had been wriggling about through the narrow way with renewed vigour, had almost dragged his entire body into the heart chamber once again.

He hissed softly, happily, when Tom moved close and, as if unable to resist, ran his hands over the black shimmering scales.

::Such a beautiful creature:: he praised him. ::Wise.. loyal... Seshastra.. I had feared that I might never see you again:::

Harry turned away, guilty and feeling bizarrely as if he were intruding on something private.

He moved to the place immediately behind the large horns on the beast’s head and carefully jumped and threw himself over the large black body, rearranging his position until he sat comfortably straddling it and could grip the horns.

He looked back to find that Tom was staring at him with wide glistening eyes.

He looked... so different... to his Tom. He looked painfully grateful, somehow... and in awe... Those were expressions that were not generally at home upon Tom’s face.

Although...

He had looked at him that way when he had discovered that Harry spoke parseltongue.

“Um... What??” he blurted uncomfortably.

It was a stupid thing to say, he knew – but he just had to break the long moment in which the other boy stared at him.

Tom blinked and snorted softly as if amused, shaking his head slightly in wonder.

“You... cut a fine form... upon his back. Do you mind my asking, however, how exactly you persuaded him to carry you... to bring you here?”
Harry fidgeted.

::Come on:: he hissed quietly. ::We have to get back down to the chamber. We can talk there::

This Tom didn’t flinch back in shock. His eyes widened marginally but he nodded as if he had expected it.

::I could imagine no other way he would have carried you:: he explained softly, moving to stand near Harry’s dangling leg

A moment later he had leapt and was lifting himself up gracefully astride the serpent behind him.

Harry grumbled internally at the annoying way that everything Tom did was always so elegant and perfect. Even climbing up a shiny, slippery chest high tube of snake.

Tom slid himself forward until he sat close behind Harry.

::Go, Sesastra:: he commanded absently as his hands, lightly..tentatively, laid themselves on Harry’s waist. It was as if he were afraid to frighten him off..

Or afraid that he would disappear any second.

Harry jolted as the snake beneath them moved suddenly, its body rearing up. He had to grip the horns tightly and clench with his legs and he still slid back against Tom, who, in turn, had had to wrap his arms around Harry’s body not to fall backward.

The basilisk gave the equivalent of a snicker before it moved to shoehorn itself through the narrow passage once again.

It was clear that it was too narrow to leave their legs at their sides.

On the way in, Harry had solved the problem by laying himself along the animals’ body. But now...Tom was behind him. He couldn’t do that. Perhaps if he curled his knees up against his chest?

As if the boy behind him had seen the problem at the same time he moved back slightly and his arms unwrapped themselves from the embrace, his hands quickly gliding down to Harry’s thighs with feather-light brushes.

In one sudden motion he tugged his legs backward and up and Harry found himself suddenly on his belly, legs straddling the firm body behind him, face lying against the cool black scales.

He felt himself responding helplessly in an almost pavlovian way. His cock hardened.

If Tom realised... he didn’t say anything. He simply gracefully swung his own legs up and back, lowering himself to lie, cradled between Harry’s parted legs. He reached his arms up the length of Harry’s body and stretched himself taut, sighing in contentment before relaxing and delving his hands beneath Harry, lowering his head to rest his cheek upon Harry’s back.

It was horribly..wonderfully..comfortable..

This was not Tom however.

He felt guilty for not even trying to adjust their position to something that felt less..intimate.

When they had left the narrow passage and Harry moved to lower his legs, Tom’s hand on his thigh arrested the movement.

::Stay, Caedmon:: he murmured, moving slightly as if snuggling down against his back and stroking Harry’s thigh with his fingertips..

Harry shivered again.

And blushed immediately afterward for his inappropriate attraction.
Seshastra hissed soothingly. It seemed he was moving with particular care for his passengers. It was probably a lot more work to hold this large a section of his body still and still slither. It probably explained why he seemed to be moving much slower than he had on the way here.

Tom’s hand moved gently down his side, stroking him. The hand moved away and then he felt both of Tom’s hands placed on the basilisk’s scales either side of his waist. The sensation of Tom slowly dragging himself up his body was sinfully exciting. When he stopped he could feel Tom’s groin pressed against him and the warm rosepetal softness of lips traced the back of his neck.

“Stop..” he mumbled, not wanting him to stop at all.

::Sshhhh...:: the deep smooth voice hissed near his ear and licked him, trailing kisses down, as he pulled aside the neck of his robes and bit him gently where his neck met his shoulder.

He moaned and couldn’t prevent himself from grinding his hips against the hard surface below. There were two softly hissed chuckles and he blushed, embarrassed.

::Stop...:: he pleaded.. ::You’re not..him.. I can’t..::

::I AM him... I am me, Caedmon. And you do not truly wish me to stop::

He punctuated his words by delving a hand in Harry’s hair and pulling his head to the side gently but firmly in order to better access his neck, which he then proceeded to nibble up and down, until Harry was a boneless puddle of shuddering want.

::You musst open the way, Massster:: Seshastra hissed reluctantly.

Harry regained a small amount of rational awareness and tried to wriggle away slightly. The Tom currently above him sighed in mild infuriation and placed his hands on Harry’s wrists, pinning them to the scaly surface effortlessly as he raised his head and hissed the incantation absently.

::Stop that:: he commanded softly releasing Harry’s wrists and trailing his fingers up his arms.

Whatever Harry might have wanted or felt he should do, what he did was promptly melt into a mindless pile of goo again as soon as Tom had returned to gently trailing little bites up his neck.

He didn’t feel the hand slip into his pocket at all.

He did become abruptly aware that his robes were missing. However, not soon enough to even react before his shirt followed them. The cold air in the dark tunnel seized his naked flesh.

“HEY!! STOP!! What the fuck!!” he demanded loudly, struggling hard now.

The smooth tip of a wand trailed up his side, over his ribs.

::I told you to stop that::: Tom hissed distractedly, ::Your wand responds well to me, you know::: Harry felt Tom’s robes, that had been pressed against his back, shift away and then Tom’s tongue was trailing down his spine slowly, flickering here and there suggestively.

God... it felt ..so good.. He tried to make himself keep fighting.. but it was just ..counter to every desire in his body right now.

What he wanted was to turn over and let Tom suck him.

He had no doubt he would, given half a chance.

And that idea was what he needed not to think about because there was almost nothing more beautiful than the sight of Tom’s lips wrapped around his cock.

The wand in Tom’s hand had obviously been put away somewhere since fingertips returned to his skin, tracing down the delicate skin at the side of his lower abdomen. They ventured beneath him slightly and down to the waistband of his trousers.

::You know that you will give yourself to me::: Tom’s hiss was the serpentine equivalent of a sultry purr.
It did things to Harry’s groin.:: After all.. you already have::: He felt the smirk as Tom bit his shoulderblade gently.

With a twist as the basilisk turned the 90 degree angle into a new tunnel, the quality of the light changed. There was a definite greenish tinge on the black shiny surface against which Harry’s cheek was pressed.

It was mere seconds before they emerged back into the large dark chamber. Tom did not cast the incantation to light the torches, although he did lift his head and raise the wand, pointing it ahead. He hissed the command to open the hidden chamber and then dropped his face back down to where he was kissing the back of Harry’s neck and his shoulders slowly, Seshastra did not even stop, but glided smoothly across the black glassy liquid and through the door.

He didn’t stop in the antechamber either but proceeded all the way down to the bedroom, hesitating just a few metres into the room and lowering his head to the ground carefully.

Tom made no move to allow Harry to escape. If anything he increased his exploration. The fingertips that had traced the top of his trousers before now returned and delved under the fabric. Harry squirmed as he felt the feathery touch on his hard cock through his underwear.

And then, without warning, Tom had slid smoothly off the basilisk and dragged him down, catching him neatly in his arms and carrying him to the bed quickly.::Masssster...:: Seshastra’s voice was quietly wheedling.

::Yes::: Tom responded distractedly. :: You may stay and enjoy the fire if you remain quiet and do not disturb us::. Harry whined at the seeming inevitability of this. Tom was going to fuck him now and apparently the basilisk was going to watch. And there was nothing whatsoever he could do. These things would happen.

Tom was unbuttoning his trousers impatiently and he tried to push his hands away in order to explain that he couldn’t do this – that at the very least they needed to talk to Tom about whether this was allowed. The very idea that it would be was so ludicrous. Sensing his reluctance, Tom didn’t bother removing the rest of his clothing and simply used the wand to vanish them, quickly divesting his own at the same time.

He was so.. breathtakingly gorgeous.. Harry shook his head and tried to stop staring. He blinked and averted his eyes.

“No.. don’t turn away..” Tom said in a soft, almost pleading, voice. “I am equally taken with you Caedmon.. Please.. Don’t be difficult.. It has been so very long since I have touched.. since I have kissed... You are the loveliest creature .. and you are my mate.. or so I am told.. You would not refuse me.. when I need you so.. would you?”

He cupped Harry’s face and turned it back toward him, leaning down very slowly in order to make his intent absolutely clear, and then he kissed him.

He kissed differently to Tom. That was impossible, right? They were the same person.

This Tom’s kiss was more hesitant.. less certain of itself. He kissed as if he truly feared that Harry might not want him.
It was a gentle investigation.. the hot tongue invading tentatively and exploring him.. testing his response before teasing and tangling with his own.

He knew he wasn’t going to reject him. He could never refuse Tom.
He had probably already been doomed to this needy infatuation from the moment the other head boy pinned him against the tree only the day after he arrived here. At the time he had thought it fear but he realised now that there had been an element of this heady dangerous excitement even then.
He hesitated and then wrapped his arms around the larger boy’s neck. His legs parted themselves of their own accord and wrapped themselves around the strong thighs.
Tom’s moan was muffled through the kiss but he ground against harry slightly. The hot silky skin of their cocks rubbed, making both shiver and breathe faster.

“He’s not going to like this” Harry broke away from the kiss and panted, catching the deep blue eyes, whose pupils were like wide black tunnels.

“Damn him! I need you..” Tom growled and captured his mouth again, kissing him harder now.

Harry accepted this logic without difficulty. The hot driving kisses and nips definitely made it a lot easier to forget the little issue of Tom’s probable anger and punishment. By the time his..soul mate.. was kissing his way down his body, Harry was perfectly willing to accept whatever punishment Tom would invoke upon his return.

This Tom didn’t only kiss differently..

He seemed to derive pleasure from teasing and sucking Harry to the edge of his climax over and over, revelling in his moans and gasps and pleading.
His Tom had never been so deliciously..cruel.
But.. it wasn’t..cruel.. it was all.. so.. so.. good. Harry nearly screamed in oversensitised panic when the monster had stopped swallowing his prick for a while, had kissed down his legs and had then started sucking his toes..
He had no sensation to compare with that. It was.. horrible.. and overwhelmingly compelling at the same time. It was.. too much.. even though.. it felt.. it felt..

Ok.. it felt..fucking hot...

There. He admitted it.. When Tom sucked his toes he wanted to scream and fight and empty his balls at the same time.

Soon afterward he had dragged Harry up onto his knees, twisting him about like a marionette and had then lowered himself to lie beneath him.
Harry got the picture quickly. Tom’s mouth felt so different from this angle. He tried to pump his hips gently, but it was so hard like this..
Tom’s own erection twitched as if calling his attention to itself politely.
He bent down over the smooth hard body and cautiously licked over the slit of Tom’s cock, where a small pearly bead had formed.
The sensation of Tom moaning around him nearly undid him.
He gently grasped the organ and applied himself to the business of making Tom repeat that vibrating moan.

He found he couldn’t suck it all.. he could only manage about half. There was obviously some trick to it or something..
That or he had a small cock.
Well.. he knew he didn’t have the biggest but he was sure it wasn’t that small either.
Tom was just merciless. He effortlessly shaped Harry’s behaviour through his own responses, until Harry was sucking him just as he apparently wanted to be sucked... sucking him desperately, straining to take more, suck harder in the hope that Tom might let him come.

He kept him right on the edge all the time, teasing and pulling back... Harry’s completion was so close... but never quite close enough to reach.

It was only after he had come himself - one hand holding Harry’s head fixed in place as he exploded against the back of his throat - that he allowed Harry the pleasure. The unpleasant bitter taste in his mouth was forgotten in light of the blinding, relieving, rush of bliss. He bucked wildly, crying out. Tom held his hips relatively still and sucked every last drop out of him with a low hum of enjoyment.

Afterward he tossed Harry down on the bed and dragged him around till he was facing the correct way. Harry just allowed it all. He didn’t much care right now while his heart was thumping fit to jump out of his chest and his entire body felt overheated.

“He was right... you do taste like bitter honey” Tom said thoughtfully, as he pulled Harry against him to spoon.

“Perhaps I begin to see how it may not have been entirely burdensome to have to bind with you.” He nuzzled with his nose against the back of Harry’s neck and Harry tried to ignore the small warm delight that being held like this evoked in him.

They lay for a long while, with Tom’s hands stroking over him wonderingly.

Harry was dozing lightly when Tom’s soft voice woke him.

“I want to see the others. After.”

Harry didn’t need to struggle to imagine what the other boy meant exactly by ‘after.’ The idea that he could prevent the expressed intent of returning upstairs was also laughable. With any luck his Tom would have returned before they got to that point.

He was more than a little worried about whether this Tom would be able to convince his dea... Fuck.. He’d still think they were knights.
And what if he had no intention of even trying to pretend that he was Harry’s Tom.. what if he decided to tell them it was some kind of accident.
No.. he wouldn’t. In any form, Tom Riddle would never give away something that could be a hidden advantage.

He allowed himself to let go of the thoughts for just a while as the warm lips started to kiss along his jaw.

Tom lay in the large clawfoot tub, the book levitating above him in easy view. Every so often he gestured for the page to turn.

He had found something that might be peripherally useful. It was possible to absorb energy and voluntarily choose to return it. Perhaps he might not simulate the possession of the girl... perhaps the entire event might possibly play out exactly as Caed remembered, with the exception of the ending. If he substituted the diary in the chamber...and if the girl’s life force could be voluntarily returned at the correct moment.. It would be a small matter to simulate the death of his horcrux, perhaps.

It didn’t solve the problem of the entity’s so called ‘quality of life’ in its little box. However, since his own priority was preventing its destruction first and foremost, it was not so disappointing.

As a result of the idea he had ceased looking for useful information and was simply reading the
The chapter he was on was related to the keeping of ethivoric creatures – this section dealt with Dementors. He was finding it fascinating.

Halfway down the page, he became aware of the eyes on him. He ignored it. Grindelwald had returned, it seemed. He unobtrusively observed in his peripheral vision as the man moved to lean against the wall and watch him.

He could only attend to the book marginally now as he monitored the unpredictable bastard.

It had seemed too good to be true when he had been allowed to return to the bedroom independently (still naked naturally. Grindelwald had not moved to offer him clothing since ripping off the silken robe earlier).

A bath had been prepared and waiting by the time he reached the bedroom. He had wondered how long it would last before whatever pseudo-generous little fancy the man might by indulging in right now would metamorphose into something sinister and brutal.

He didn’t even consider the possibility that it would not. It was virtually inevitable.

“Are you thirsty?” the accented voice asked quietly.

He looked over at him, hesitating and wondering whether it would be safer to say that he was or that he was not.

“Perhaps.. a little.” He offered

Grindelwald clicked his fingers and summoned an elf, commanding it to bring him ice water with lemon.

Tom sipped at the refreshing liquid after it had left again, enjoying the clirr of the ice cubes in the tall frosty glass.

The other wizard seemed on the verge of saying something further but he apparently thought better of it and, smiling softly, retreated once again from the room.

He remained in the bath for over an hour, periodically warming the water, until he had finished the book. When it was complete, he accepted that he could no longer delay what he considered was likely to be unavoidable. He would have to go to bed. Grindelwald would almost certainly be waiting.

Possibly waiting in irritation now, since he had taken so long.

He rose, the water sloughing off his body softly, and summoned a towel. Out of habit he dried himself off before leaving the tub.

When he walked into the bedroom, naked and dry, the book in his arms, Grindelwald was lying back in the bed, reading Slytherin’s journal. One muscular arm was thrown behind his head and he seemed the very picture of content relaxation.

Tom couldn’t tell whether he was still reading or reading again but he remembered clearly the effect the book had had on the man last time they had been reading. He moved into the room warily.

Blue eyes glanced up at him briefly before returning to the page.

“Come to bed, Marvolo” Grindelwald instructed mildly.

Tom padded carefully over to the other side of the bed, placed the book on the floor beside the bed and slipped between the covers, sliding down to lie flat on his back. Forcing his alert state into a casual posture he folded his arms behind his head. He received another glance but the other wizard made no immediate move to leap upon him.

“Sleep.. if you will. I shall not read much longer”
Tom treated the statement as an instruction, closing his eyes. He did not sleep however. He could not possibly sleep around the dangerous wizard unless he knew without a doubt that the man in question was already asleep... and even then – it would be a fragile, unconsciously alert, sleep, he suspected.

“Calm..Marvolo. You shall sleep safely. I will neither hurt you nor take my pleasure with you in the night.”

His attempt to more effectively simulate relaxation was apparently unsuccessful. Grindelwald sighed and he heard the sound of the man laying aside the journal. A moment later the room beyond his eyelids had darkened and he felt the body next to him sliding down deeper into the bed. “I wish you to truly rest, Marvolo” the deep voice gravelled beside him. “You will forgive me, I think, for this.”

Tom tensed, expecting a spell. His instincts were proven well founded when he felt it strike him a few moments later.
In that split second he was surprised that it was not a stunner. The Somnis spell was far gentler.

The last thing he felt was a soft kiss pressed to his cheekbone before his mind dropped away pleasantly and he thought no more.
Chapter 24

Harry awoke to the feeling of lips tracing up the back of his neck. Talented... purposeful hands were exploring his chest... plucking lightly at the tiny beads of his nipples... stroking his warm skin... heating it further. He was barely awake and he found his cock was a steel bar of want.

“Yes..” he groaned sleepily, arching his back against the hot hard chest behind him, rubbing his arse against the silky member pressing insistently.

“ohh.. fuck...” he moaned as the other boy bit down gently in the curve of his neck and shoulder while his hand wandered lower, skating nails down his abdomen... down further to fondle his balls.

“Please..” he whined, pressing back more urgently... “Now..”

He felt the warm slickness of the lubrication spell and sighed in relief. The hand at his balls slid away for a moment and he felt his knee lifted up against his chest, spreading him. It was held there by the arm beneath him and then Tom was rubbing the head of his thick cock over the unprepared rim of Harry’s arse.

A tiny shiver of fear made itself apparent now. Tom hadn’t bothered to stretch him. He would be too tight... it would hurt... He remembered what it had felt like when it hurt... and he remembered how good it had felt last night when Tom had tongued him and fingered him gently, widening him and teasing him before he slipped his cock in and finally fucked him half mad.

“Wait..” he whimpered, suddenly panicked, but Tom thrust in forcefully, driving past his clenching rosette.

Harry yelped in pain and struggled against the hand holding his knee up against his chest.

“Shhhhhh” Tom’s lips whispered at his ear. “It will feel better shortly... I had no patience to wait this morning...you were so... warm and ..inviting... Relax... Let your body adjust... Stop panicking..”

Harry appreciated the sentiment but Tom clearly didn’t understand that he was being torn in half by a subway train at the moment. The huge piece moving slowly in and out of him felt like it had swollen to about the side of Big Ben.

“It hurts..” he complained, wriggling and trying to get away from the constant tight stretching and aching.

Tom leaned down over him, pressing him further down onto his chest on the mattress and holding him in place, capitalising on his position to gain more leverage. He began to move in longer rougher strokes and Harry gritted his teeth until the angle abruptly caught his prostate and he twinged in sudden pleasure, arching back against the larger boy.

“Oh.. oh.. fuck..” he whispered and Tom did it again.

Soon he felt the hand clamping his leg in place release and he had absolutely no will to move it from where it lay, pressed up against his chest, widening the way for the wonderful... brilliant... fucking amazing amazing evil bastard to make him see stars with the absolutely magical bloody organ the perverse fates had gifted him with. He was yelping in enjoyment, whining and grinding back against Tom.

The other boy’s mouth had returned to his neck and was alternately licking and biting him hard. He fucking loved it.

When the hand that had been beneath him slid up and two fingers stroked over his lips, seeking entry he opened his mouth and sucked them eagerly. Tom groaned and his other arm clamped around Harry, over his chest, compressing him even tighter. He found himself panting around the fingers in his mouth, sucking them and rocking back against the hard pumping cock, yowling and slurring his urgent need.

He wanted this... this.. forever..

The fingers were pulled from his mouth and Tom’s hand roughly grabbed his hair, dragging him
back, at an unnatural angle until he could reach his mouth. Kissing him and breathing hot and heavy over his lips, as he punched over the tight bundle of nerves deep inside his arse with every stroke. It wouldn’t take much...more... for him to..

It didn’t... four strokes and Harry was panting and wailing in euphoric release. His cock beneath him, untouched, exploding over the mattress.

“Caedmon...” Tom’s deep groan in his ear as he expended himself deep inside his arse moments later caused a sudden aftershock of shudders to ripple through Harry. Tom hissed a soft expletive in parseltongue ecstatically against his neck, interspersed with burning kisses and hot panting breaths as he slowed his movement, subsiding against him and finally dropping his warm forehead against the back of Harry’s cold-sweat soaked neck. Harry groaned happily, sated and content.

“Damn...” Tom whispered behind him, his arms around him, “You were right. I imagine that I am going to be rather possessive of you, when I return. At present I feel quite unwilling to relinquish you to another... even if he is me... You are... so...” he trailed off as if preoccupied.

Reality suddenly hit home for Harry’s lust addled mind.

This wasn’t Tom.

He stiffened. What time was it?! Where was Tom?! Why wasn’t he back yet?! He’d... he’d... actually forgotten this morning who he was with. And... well... it was easy to confuse them when he was half asleep.

“Where’s my wand?!“ he managed. Tom, behind him, caught his unsettled tone and wrapped his arms a little tighter around him. “Caedmon... You are not thinking to be difficult again about this, are you?! We have been through this last night. You cannot betray me with myself – even if I might decide to be somewhat petty about the fact when I return. It is logically impossible. I will calm down again when I think about it.”

Harry didn’t answer and tried to convey a ‘non difficult’ impression so that the horcrux might release him again.

Tom groaned mildly.

“I see that you are going to be difficult.” He moved away slowly and swung his legs over the side of the bed.

“I am going to shower... You have no notion how urgently I have wished to shower over the last year.
You may come or you may wait. The choice is yours. He stood and, picking up Harry’s wand, stalked, naked and sinfully gorgeous, past the still massive black mountain of the coiled Basilisk and out the door.

::The mating wassss not sssuccesssful?::: the great snake enquired softly, sounding concerned. Harry scowled up at the ceiling.
Wonderful. Just what he bloody needed. Now there were two of them ...and he’d had sex... several times... in front of a basilik. Just freaking brilliant. Where the fuck was Tom?! Why wasn’t he back yet?! Gingerly he traced his fingers over the mark on his arm, wondering whether it was possible to call to Tom with it. He had seen him notice it last night briefly but he hadn’t seemed too interested. He’d presumed that Tom had already understood the nature of the mark.
Apparently not.
“What is this exactly!? It is not a normal tattoo, is it!” he asked suspiciously. “I... can feel that... when you touch it... it is... like a..” he narrowed his eyes as if trying to capture what the feeling was like.
“Like... a tingle... in my head...” he finished. “This is a mark.. I did not think I meant that I had marked you when I said that I had bound you to me.”

Harry looked up at the version of Tom that seemed somehow marginally more innocent than his own.
“You did both. You bound the others too. They aren’t knights anymore either. They’re Death Eaters. They all wear your mark.”

Tom looked startled and then pleased. He smiled and his eyes grew distant for a moment.
“Yes.. Yes.. now that you say it.. I can feel them.. they are.. I can tell where in Hogwarts they are. Alphard is.. I believe he is playing gobstones as we speak! How convenient! If I had had this earlier..” He trailed off looking thoughtful.

Harry gave him a sidelong look and edged to the side of the bed, slipping out.
“I’m..going to shower.. alright?”

Tom looked disappointed but nodded and waved him off.

As he walked down the chilly corridor he heard the basilisk hiss, concerned (::Did you not pleasssse him? What isss wrong!?:)
He paused for a moment, listening.

::I think he does not want me...perhaps it is merely guilt.. He may be regretting rescuing me::: The horcrux Tom sounded..sad..

Harry tried to push away the small clench of regret and the sudden impetus to turn around and go back to the other boy.
He seemed somehow more innocent than his Tom..
He had been so..tender..last night.. The way he’d looked at him.. it had felt almost like worship..
And this morning.. even though he maybe.. didn’t take quite as much care as last night.. the way he touched him.. He felt so utterly wanted.

He sighed and forced himself on into the bathroom. The shower was large and he felt weighed down with guilt and worry as he turned in circles under the hot water, letting it run over his face and stroking his fingers through his hair. There was a bottle of some kind of liquid. He sniffed it before deciding that it was something like shampoo. After he had tipped a measure into his hand he determined that the bottle hadn’t gone down at all. Perhaps Slytherin himself had used this stuff, he mused, rubbing it into his hair and lathering. It smelled a bit..herby.
But he supposed that if it really was some kind of ever replenishing shampoo from the founder era – there were unlikely to be any of the common chemicals they put into soaps and hygiene products. He should probably just be thankful there was anything here to wash with.

When he returned to the room, as dry as he could make himself with just a towel – which was less dry than he was used to being with drying charms – he was horrified to find that Tom wasn’t there.

::Where is he!?:: he demanded of Sesastra. The basilisk turned its head away as if in a snit and didn’t deign to answer.

Harry gripped the towel at his waist and raced back out of the room looking in the open doors for Tom. He wasn’t in the library, he wasn’t in the kitchen.. he wasn’t in the strange little room at the end of the corridor. Any of the other doors would require him to touch handles and he couldn’t do
that.
Running and picking his way barefoot through the scales and the bones he hissed open the door to
the outer chamber and looked down the vast dark length. There was no Tom in sight.

Fuck.

Had he gone upstairs!? The most important thing had been to keep him down here until his Tom
returned – what the hell might the horcrux get up to if it was wandering around up there.
He might have gone to find some of his former friends.
THAT wouldn’t be a good idea. Antonin would probably only need to talk to him for a minute at
best and he’d figure out that something was off. Maybe Abraxas would notice something wrong
too! Fuck..fuckfuckfuck.
Harry dashed back to the bedroom.
He had no wand. He had no clothes. What the hell was he supposed to do?! He had no idea how to get back to that hidden door he’d used to get down here with Tom and the
sound of that bridge in the dark over a chasm hadn’t been appealing.
What was he supposed to do?! Ride the basilisk up the cistern into the girl’s toilets while wearing a
towel?!

...He considered the idea.

Tom strolled through the corridors, marvelling inwardly at familiar faces.. faces that he had not
seen in the halls for so long, which looked older but still quite recognisable. It felt.. somehow
glorious.. simply to view other students. A large number of them smiled and nodded at him.
He was head boy now. He had missed out on the adoration that went hand in hand with the role.
His other self was fortunate. Far too fortunate. He had Hogwarts. He had Caedmon
A bitter little twist in his stomach almost pulled the confident pleased smile from his lips.
Caedmon.. The boy was delicious.. enticing. He was his damn it.. Branded and bonded his own.
The sensation of his cooling and turning away ached inside.

He would need to have a rather serious discussion with his other self when he returned from
whatever unwise things he was doing with Grindelwald – He needed to force the other part of him
to instruct Caedmon that there was nothing to fear in giving himself to both of them.
Of course.. he rather suspected that he would be disinclined to do that. It was one thing to take pity
on himself and allow him to speak with the boy when it was materially beneficial and freed up his
own time (and his highly limited resources of guilt also, obviously) – but to invite any other to
touch... to kiss.. taste..enjoy that boy.
If he himself were feeling possessive – how aggressively might his other self react to this
development. He had after all been the one to seal the binding.. to find the boy.. He had spent more
time with him

He wondered what Caedmon might be able to tell him about the future. About his future.
Obviously that was no longer his primary purpose in desiring the boy.. however it was more than
thought provoking.
Perhaps he should be down there right now legilimising him.
Still.. it seemed better to give him time alone to think about his behaviour. If he forced his way
into the naive creature’s mind then it would be so much harder to win his preference later..
He wanted his preference. He wanted Caedmon to choose to spend more time with him than with
his other half.
“Tom! You missed breakfast!”

He turned and found Abraxas smiling uncertainly at him. His friend looked older.. more polished.. he had grown silkier and more attractive, he noted objectively. It was good... so good.. to see him.

“I hope that all of our efforts last night.. that is.. this morning were of value in whatever it was you needed.”

He smiled back, extrapolating events in his resurrection.

“Yes. They were vital. Without your assistance my endeavour would have failed. I thank you, old friend.”

Abraxas furrowed his brow slightly. “Are you feeling alright, Tom? Last night you were acting a bit.. off.. and you still seem.. Are you certain you aren’t coming down with something?”

Tom hesitated and swallowed. “Perhaps I am. I feel in a strange mood this morning. Accompany me down to the dorms.. I want to visit with the others.”

Abraxas brightened and nodded.

After a minute of walking peacefully side by side down the corridor Abraxas asked tentatively

“What has happened to Caedmon? Dumbledore is tearing his hair out looking for him you know. He was in the common room this morning making somewhat pointed inquiries. I am certain that there will be more made of this if the boy doesn’t reappear by later today.”

Tom startled. He had known that Dumbledore wanted the boy.. he knew why also- at least vaguely -. but.. “more made of it” sounded rather ominous. He was not certain whether it would be best to bring Caedmon out or continue to hide him. Perhaps his other self would return soon..

That thought gave him pause.

What would happen to him when he did return?!

Assuming that they would not both gravitate together and merge if in the same room – something which he did not really imagine likely, considering the connection Caedmon had formed between the diary and the heart of Hogwarts – would his other self require him to wait down in the chamber of secrets alone all the time? That would be even worse than being trapped in an empty school.

Why couldn’t the other him wait in his room or in the chamber. He had had the chance to attend classes and meals. It would be only fair for them to switch.

He might be amenable to alternating, he reasoned more realistically. Anything that he himself would reject out of turn – such as being perpetually interred in the chamber of secrets – was unlikely to be accepted by his other self.

Abraxas leaned in and whispered the password to the Slytherin shield. Tom scanned the familiar faces in the Slytherin common room. A boy that his mind vaguely recalled was called.. something.. Witherstead.. was glaring at him and muttering with a small knot of other equally disapproving looking students. What was that about, he wondered. He could hardly ask Abraxas. His friend would think he had lost his memory and drag him to the infirmary. They had reached the stairs and were just descending when they met Clemens Wilkes and two of his little clique coming up the stairs the other way. Tom smiled engagingly. He wondered whether he had eventually followed through with his intent to bring Clemens into the fold.

From the snarl the other boy emitted and the way his eyes narrowed, he imagined not.

“What have you done with the new fish, Tom?! We had bloody Dumbledore in the common room AGAIN this morning.

The head of Gryffindor! In HERE! Sluggy is pissed and everyone else isn’t far off. Just what are you playing at?! Who is this kid!? You better have him back by lunch or there’ll be hell to pay!”

The athletic boy he had once found to be quite promising shouldered past him roughly.
This was unacceptable.

No one dared to shove him.
What the hell had his other self done here? Was he losing his grip on Slytherin house!?

“Wilkes.. I’d advise you to adjust your attitude” he responded coldly without turning around.
“If you employ that tone with me again.. we will have words..”

The Slytherin quidditch captain didn’t respond. Tom caught Abraxas’ concerned glance.
“Tom.. Where is Caedmon!?” he asked quietly.

Tom just kept going down the stairs to the first floor. He realised he had no idea which room he was going to. Slowing, he tried to subtly allow Abraxas to lead. The blonde however slowed deferentially, remaining a half step behind him.
Damn it. He cursed inwardly.

The idea suddenly occurring to him, he probed at the sensation of their marks as he’d felt it in the chambers. Yes. He could feel three of them very close nearby. Further down the corridor somewhere. He couldn’t be sure which side yet. It was..he was sure it was Gyphus. the feeling of the boy was inexplicably associated with a brassy golden hue in his mind. It tasted earthy. There were.. Darius.. and..Roan? Roan seemed like a kind of sad peppermint colour to him.. a twanging chord.. Darius was the sensory equivalent of a snicker. It was very strange to register them this way.

He turned his attention to the other marks, looking for them, and was immediately assaulted by the awareness that Abraxas at his side reminded him of the smell of fresh snow. A crisp fresh icy perfection. He looked at his silky friend in surprise. Where was Alphard? He looked up at the stones above them on the ceiling of the corridor as they walked slowly down toward the three pulses in, what he was now sure was the final room on the right. Alphard was far above.. perhaps on the second or third corridor. He felt like a sour taste – like sucking a battery. It was not particularly pleasant. Palmer when he sorted out the note in what he assumed was the Great Hall, was even more irritating.. he was a low unsettling vibration..reminiscent of instability – the sound before an avalanche..or an earthquake. Antonin.. he brightened. Antonin tasted of salt and sounded like a held breath. There was something compact to his feeling.. as one who is very contained and ordered. It was an interesting feeling. The Russian was somewhere outside the Castle. He caught the association of water faintly. Antonin was near the lake.

He reached out for the door handle as the idea of Caedmon sprang to mind again. He had felt him before but had not thought to examine the sensation as he was currently doing. Doing so, he was immediately overwhelmed with a powerful clenching feeling. As if he wanted to grip onto something and draw it into him. Possessive and dark and almost violently hungry, the feeling was combined with the sound of fast breaths, the sweet bitter taste of the boy’s seed and a bright green glow. It was by far the strongest of the signals he was receiving.

He stepped through the door, still thinking on the impressions in his mind and stopped involuntarily at the sight of Gyphus, Roan and Darius sitting on Darius’ bed laughing. It was almost painful to see them. They were... so...familiar.. His friends.. his confidants.. those he had allowed into his trust. He had missed them. He was sorely tempted to activate the marks of the others and call them down, simply to see them also – but he really had no other reason to summon them.

He realised that his face must be showing his emotions at the shocked expressions on the three kni...what did Caedmon call them? Death something.. It had sounded rather strange.

“Has something happened?!?” Gyphus demanded, alarmed. “Where is Caed?!?”
He jumped to his feet and approached.
Tom struggled and managed to school his face to its usual confident distant expression. “No..
nothing. You will forgive me. I am under the effects of a ritual I performed last night. I was distracted by other matters for a moment.”

Gyphus seemed to calm slightly but still looked mildly alarmed. “What ritual? What did you need all that stuff for? Where is Caed?!!”

Tom frowned slightly. More insubordination?! “Gyphus.. use your indoor voice” he reminded curtly, glancing behind and ushering Abraxas in that he might close the door. When it was in place he answered “Caed is still below in the Chamber. I have not decided yet whether or not to bring him up today. As I understand it – Dumbledore has been searching for him.”

Gyphus nodded, becoming upset again. “What does he want with him?! Why is he so desperate to get his hands on him? Is Caed hurt!? ”

Tom lost patience and pulled out Caed’s wand, flicking off a sharp slicing hex at the strongest of his knights. The thin cut appeared a centimetre beneath the white scar on Gyphus face. Fat red droplets immediately raced down the other boy’s cheek. Gyphus cursed and put his hand up to the wound.

Abraxas stepped in at that point, ever the pacifier. “Gyphus.. perhaps you should go and sit down. You are somewhat uptight this morning. You would benefit from a clearer head.” He turned to Tom and gestured for him to sit on his own bed.

Tom, marginally mollified, strode over and lowered himself, examining the visual differences in his knights.

Darius seemed more hazy and drug addled than he had been. His eyes were bloodshot. Roan was quieter – which was in itself a feat. The boy had always been rather mousey and academic. ...

Gyphus had blossomed into a muscular ruffian. With, it seemed to him now, an undesirable preoccupation with Caedmon.

“That isn’t your wand..” Roan murmured thoughtfully and then put his hand over his mouth as if afraid he would be hexed next.

Tom raised an eyebrow and glanced down at the darker wood in his hand. His own pale yew was probably somewhere in Russia at present he surmised. Caedmon’s wand responded beautifully however.

“No.. it is Caedmons. It appears that the binding has enabled us to use one another’s wands interchangeably. I thought to explore whether any effects might be observable should I use his wand for a longer period.”

Abraxas flinched.

“That is.. an unusual effect” he observed in a neutral voice. “I have never heard any other report such a thing. Might it have something to do with the ritual you performed last night?!” He hesitated as if indecisive about continuing.

“Do you think we might learn a very small amount about the nature of what it was you did last night? What was the purpose?”

“No.. it is rather delicate. Perhaps in time I shall tell you more” he answered obliquely. “I do need to find a way to control Dumbledore however. When I bring Caedmon back up, I wish him to go nowhere alone. This is rather a serious concern.”

He was met with uneasy frowns. Abraxas spoke up. “If it becomes too problematic.. might I suggest pulling him from the School.. he could stay at Malfoy Manor.. he would be safe there..”
Gyphus railed in horror – “What the fuck are you talking about, Brax – pulling him from school?! Have you gone mad?! And safe?! You can’t fucking stand him. I’ve heard you talking. Why in hell is Dumbledore even after him?!"

Abraxas hated Caedmon?! He looked at the blonde, controlling his expression with care. Abraxas was sputtering. “I don’t hate him, Gyphus! I was merely ...irritated.. that he had placed Tom’s bright future in the ministry at risk.. however the notation of their binding has been removed and Caed does seem to have some redeeming qualities...
I have changed my opinion. That is my prerogative, Guy..
You are hardly in the position to cast aspersions over my motives, i’ll point out!

Ah. It seemed that Gyphus apparent fondness for Caedmon was observed by the others, Tom realised. He wondered whether he had already spoken with his friend about it and laid down the law. If he had then another such discussion would run the risk of exposing his lack of memory for the previous. He would need to make certain to have his other self share his memories of the intervening time in which he was in the diary. If he was to take his place, he would need this information.

That thought dawning in his mind he imagined suddenly what might happen if the other him were to walk in here now. It was an alarming prospect. He probed in his mind around the sensation of the marks but could feel nothing that seemed like another him. Which meant he would have no idea where he was.. he would run the risk of being seen in the same place at the same time as himself. That would cause no end of problems.
He needed to return to the chamber to ensure that it did not accidentally occur.
Besides.. Caedmon would be concerned at his absence by now, he was certain. The boy would no doubt regret his withdrawl this morning and would try to make up for it.

He stood. “Thank you, Abraxas. I will take it into consideration. You have reminded me of something further I had planned to do this morning. I will see you later for lunch.. or failing that – dinner. With luck, I shall bring Caedmon up also.”

Both Gyphus and Abraxas seemed to have more to say to him but each looked at the other darkly and held their tongues. He smiled at the familiar rivalry of his old friends which, it seemed, had become more pointed over time and had now polarised in view of their opinions of his pretty blonde possession languishing below in the dark chamber.

Walking back down, through the dungeons and then through the black expanse of the chasm entry to the chamber, he allowed his next great anticipation to slip into the front of his mind.
Food.
He could eat again, finally.
Perhaps the boy might have even prepared some kind of breakfast for him from the cornucopia. It was unlikely but possible. He strolled contentedly down the long dark green glowing chamber, hissing automatically for the statue and the stone steps across the water.

“Caedmon?” he called lightly, stepping into the dim basilisk debris covered antechamber.

There was no response.
He frowned and walked just a little faster toward the bedroom. Was the boy sulking? Ignoring him? Asleep? Injured?

The bedroom was empty.
Both basilisk and blonde were gone.
Tom grit his teeth. He was still holding out hope that he might be permitted to return to Hogwarts today, however that hope was currently extremely fragile. He was naked, kneeling on a broomstick, with his hands clasped at the back of his head, elbows wide.

He had been this way for almost an hour and a half, as indicated by the fact that the hourglass had been turned once and was half empty again. The pain and shortness of breath he was feeling was entirely disproportionate to the ridiculous simplicity of the punishment. He really, really wished it to stop now.

Grindelwald sat at his desk, writing. The man was not even looking at him. This was a punishment for obstinance. Essentially the reason behind the punishment was irrelevant, he had realised. The other wizard enjoyed inflicting pain almost as much as he apparently enjoyed fucking. His preferential outlet for his sadism leaned toward the kind of endurance agony that would drive a victim slowly but surely toward begging and sobbing.

Tom was not quite at that point yet, however he could see it from where he knelt. He would reach it somewhere in the next hour.

He had woken when he was rudely reenervated and impaled in bed that morning. It had taken him a moment to reorient himself to his environment. The surprise and the position, compressed against the mattress with his wrists held in place, had suddenly jolted him back to his childhood in the orphanage. He'd panicked. His wandless magic refused to work to throw the filthy muggle off him and only when the German accent had growled his name in his ear did he manage to dispel the uncontrollable terror for a moment. Fury had replaced it, and frustration at his own inability to defend himself.

He was certain the wizard had known he would react in that manner.

Grindelwald had become the wizard he most wanted to kill. He had surpassed Dumbledore’s ranking. Everyone he had ever despised more than Dumbledore was already dead. They had all been muggles. His father, Phipps. Billy Higgs. Each further hour spent with the unpredictable, oversexed and sadistic dark wizard currently sipping lemon tea from an ornate royal blue and gold teacup, drove him to greater internal disorder.

He was furious with himself for having taken the wizard’s mark and put himself in this position. Most of all he was beginning to despair that the precise terms of their agreement would force him to prolong Grindelwald’s existence — that he would not be able to kill him... not be able to escape this fate...

The man could summon him whenever he chose. He could keep him here as long as he desired. While here he could quite apparently do whatever he wished to Tom.

“Are you ready to discuss the matter again, Marvolo?”

He looked up, blinking against the sharp pain that throbbed, stabbed and ached at once and managed breathlessly.

“I... still... fail to see... why... that memory is necessary to you.”

“It is not needed for you to understand when I tell you to do something, boy. You do not say no to me.”

After Grindelwald had finished using him in bed that morning, he had immediately risen and
hurried Tom along to shower. Then he had walked him, naked, back to the study – straight to his pensieve, in order to see Tom’s memory of marking his death eaters, which Tom recalled he had said he would show him ‘before he left’.

This had been fine. It had reassured him that he would indeed be permitted to leave soon. He pulled the memory out and shared it with the man, actually feeling slight anticipation to receive the other wizard’s reaction. He’d been quite proud of marking his servants. It was a complex piece of magic.

Grindelwald had criticised his behaviour with them as inappropriately familiar and unbecoming. He had been particularly irate at Caed’s marking – calling it gratuitous and unnecessary. His manner was unmistakeably flavoured by jealousy and possessiveness. Thus when he had demanded to see the memory of Tom’s binding with Caed – Tom had thought it better not to share it and provoke him further.

Of course – refusing to share it had been met with an ice chip stare and the slight disapproving shake that told him he was to be ‘punished’.

At first the broom had not been so bad. It had been uncomfortable.. The raised arms clasped behind his head had not bothered him, although they forced him to keep his back straight. Grindelwald had watched him intently for a few minutes, the pale eyes gliding over his naked body, an expression that was both hungry and satisfied at once on his face. Then he had pulled out some papers and every awareness of Tom had seemingly been switched off.

“IT was logical...to bind.. Caed..” he tried, “You ...suggested.. it yourself.”

“Marvolo.. I will see the memory. You will remain as you are for as long as it takes. You are only hurting yourself with your silly arguments.”

He shifted slightly, wobbling and the pain lanced up through his thighs again.

“DAMN IT..” he choked out with laboured breath. “Take it then!!.. May ..I get ..up.. please”

The other man rose from his chair with the slow ease of one not in horrendous pain. “No. For your tone you will wait there until I return.”

He walked over in a leisurely manner and drew his wand, placing it lightly to Tom’s temple. “No. For your tone you will wait there until I return.”

He needed to find a way to dissolve the mark he had taken. Principally he knew it was impossible.. but that merely meant that no one else had yet achieved it. He would find a way. He refused to accept this treatment. He would free himself and then he would kill Grindelwald. Forget his horcrux – this was the matter he needed to first dedicate himself toward.

He thought again of Caedmon. Perhaps there was something in the boy’s memory that might help. If he had achieved it – perhaps there were signs that might point to what he had done. He needed to return and take all of Caed’s memories.

And perhaps he might take a little skin also for the suffering he had had to endure here.

“What disease of the mind persuaded you to use that binding spell” the irate accented voice snarled behind him. “You have placed the creature as a partner.. not merely a bound slave. There is no advantage to it.. There are many spells that would allow you to restrict his movement. Are you attached to the boy?!”

The German stalked into his field of vision. He scowled up at him silently. Yes. The spell he had used was possibly somewhat unnecessarily kind.. he had wanted to possess Caed in that manner. He was certainly not going to defend it to the other wizard.

“You know you will be killing him – it was discussed, Marvolo. When you have retrieved all information from the boy, you will dispatch him quickly and efficiently and come to me here. It
was your agreement. You wished to..learn.. from me – did you not?! It will be inadequate to teach you while you remain in Hogwarts.”

Tom experienced a mental derailment. He had no intention of killing Caed. Caed belonged to him. He could not kill him in fact – he would be killing a piece of his own soul. He was, however, hardly going to inform the dark dictator about that little piece of trivia.

It was disturbing that Grindelwald had, over the course of the last day, changed his tune to the extent that he was now seemingly demanding that he remain with him permanently.

He did not spare a second thought for the suggestion that he would remain here to learn something from the man. No., he had seen enough of the older man now – if he had him here at his disposal perpetually, Grindelwald would probably have him naked most of the time and in agony for a decent percentage of the total.

“May..I..”

“Yes yes.. get up” the German snapped irritably vanishing the broomstick with his wand. Tom crashed the two inches to the ground, crying out at the sudden sharp increase in pain to his already screaming knees. He lowered his arms and curled forward over his knees, his eyes clenched, trying to catch his breath which was suddenly speeding.

“I am.. disappointed.. in your choices.” He heard the man above him say in a dark voice.

“Maybe you do not learn so well with discipline alone. Perhaps I must.. coddle.. you, a small amount to make you see what is best for you.

Tom didn’t care. He wanted to do or say whatever was required in order to be allowed to leave now.

“I must.. return to Hogwarts..Gellert..” he panted.

“Stand, Marvolo.”

He groaned inwardly. He didn’t know whether he could at present. The German seemed to understand this a moment later and he felt the man crouch down next to him.

“Turn then.. Lie down on your side. Let me see your knees. Perhaps I was overzealous. You are obviously not used to physical rigours.”

Tom subsided gently to his side, despising himself for feeling grateful.

He felt the other man’s fingertips trace over his bruised knees lightly. It twinged slightly. A moment or two later he flinched at the sensation of something cold and slick being rubbed into his skin.

“This should dull the pain and assist the bruises to heal” Grindelwald informed him quietly.

“Remain as you are for a few minutes, Marvolo..”

He opened his eyes at the feeling of the now dry fingertips brushing his hair to the side slightly. Grindelwald was looking down on him with a strange expression. He felt uncomfortable and moved to straighten his legs and distance himself. The hand that had touched his hair moved to press lightly on the centre of his chest, stilling him.

“I will teach you for an hour or two.. and then you will be permitted to return to your school.”

Irritatingly – a small curious eagerness ignited in him at the thought that the wizard would actually teach him something. It was mostly overwhelmed by dubiousness. Grindelwald’s behaviour was volatile and unpredictable. He would just as likely show him one useless spell and then decide to string him up over burning coals or bend him over his desk.

The man in question rose effortlessly from his haunches and paced away to the desk. Tom sighed
under his breath in relief.

Surprisingly, he was allowed to rest on his side for ten minutes while Grindelwald returned to whatever the correspondence was that he had been working on previously. He relaxed and slowly flexed the muscles in his calves. The punishment was effective – he made a note to employ it on Gyphus the next time the boy pushed his patience too far.

“You should be able to stand now, Marvolo” the voice floated over to him distractedly. “Prepare yourself..”

He climbed to his feet and shook his limbs slightly. He still felt somewhat stiff but it was tolerable.

“Accio Marvolo’s wand” Grindelwald raised a hand without looking up. When his wand came sailing through the study door into his hand he held it out to him absentl

It felt better to hold his wand. He stroked the pale twisted wood with a finger in a manner that had long become habitual. The room was slightly cool on his naked skin and he hoped he might be allowed to wear his robe again.

After a minute, Grindelwald stood and looked him over appreciatively. The wizard walked over and cupped his jaw in a hand. “You should show more gratitude, boy” he was told mildly and released.

“I will show you something simple first. Your ability to perform what I show you will decide what else I might teach you.”

He drew his wand.

“Karphron lux”

Tom watched as a tiny flame appeared and then grew until it resembled a Chinese dragon of fire. The entire creature was the size of his hand. It danced through the air and circled around Grindelwald’s wand when he raised it. It was a beautiful little thing. And entirely useless, as far as he was concerned. The great wizard chose to teach him something and the spell he selected made tiny dragon illusions. Perfect.

“Do you know what it is?” Grindelwald enquired curiously.

He hesitated. Something in the way he had asked.. Was there more to the spell?! He thought about the incantation.. it wasn’t familiar. Something about the dragon itself? He inspected it. It was turning in lazy circles over the other wizard’s palm. Orange and red flames coruscated over its liquidlike surface slowly.

He had a sudden inkling.. but that was impossible. There was only one spell and it was quite famously uncontrollable.. This little illusion was seemingly obedient to the other wizard’s very thought. And it had not destroyed anything.

“Is it..somehow related to..fiendfyre?” he asked hesitantly.

Grindelwald smiled approvingly. “Clever boy, Marvolo. It is a very old spell.. almost as old as that spell that you know. This was created by Carocus Moloch in the 1400s as a training tool toward mastering the other spell. You have observed me cast it – show me it now.”

Tom duplicated the incantation and wandwork as he had seen it. A small orange flame appeared and started to grow. It became a more slender serpentine creature than Grindelwald’s dragon. The tiny thing curled and twisted for a moment and then it turned and attacked his hand. He hissed in irritation as it burnt him and kept coming, slithering over his skin painfully.
Grindelwald was laughing.

“It is not such an easy spell after all, hm? Your face when I showed you.. a wonder. You thought me a fool?
It is a very useful spell and known to few. If you can master it.. you may perhaps someday master fiendfyre. Dispel it and cast anew. The moment you lose grip on the creature, it is impossible to regain.”

Tom, who had been struggling to figure out just how to do that, frowned and finite’d the tiny snake. He tried again and managed this time for seven seconds before the little flame serpent turned and set upon him. His hand was one massive knot of burned lines now. It hurt terribly. Grindelwald had him attempt the spell another five times before he summoned murtlap ice in a silver bowl and allowed him to bathe his hand.

“Be thankful it did not strive for your face” the german smirked quietly as he inspected the healing wounds in the silvery dish. “Are you able to cast with your left hand?”

Tom shook his head slightly. He had actually been meaning to work upon that. He had seen that it could be very useful under certain circumstances to be able to cast with both hands.

“You will practice it. There is a spell I would teach you but it must be cast left handed or it can be dangerous to the caster.”

To his relief and mild astonishment, the dark wizard upheld his intent to teach him for a few hours before releasing him. Three hours later almost to the minute, he was allowed to dress once more in his school robes and was apparated to the Belgian bridge. Exhausted and with a wand hand that still smarted mildly he created a portkey back to the forbidden forest. In the wake of the experience he found that his fury with Caed was diminishing somewhat and he was more anxious to return to the daft little waif and take what comfort he could find there than to curse him bloody and retire to bed alone or with a lover who did not want to be there.
The portkey gripped his intestines and ripped him away powerfully.

It was darkening when he arrived back at the clearing in the forbidden forest. He wondered whether Caed had panicked much at being alone in the chamber with Seshasra. The basilisk would have left him in peace no doubt..
Unless he talked to it first perhaps. He wondered though.. Caed had been terrified of it. It was unlikely that he would take it upon himself to have a conversation with him.

He stalked through the lengthening shadows up the grass toward the castle.
Chapter 25

Tom limped slowly across the wet stone floor of the chamber of secrets toward the huge stone head of Salazar Slytherin. His body was starting to ache again. The trek up to the castle from the forbidden forest and down to the Chamber had not been particularly kind to his sore body. He was looking forward to bathing and pulling his little ‘husband’ into bed for some needed rest. He hissed the stone steps up from the black ‘moat’ and was about to call the door open when it opened by itself.

He blinked. Had Caed braved Sesastra after all in order to open the door for him? Had he sensed his approach?! It made no sense and then there was even less sense in his world because he found himself looking at his own doppelganger, who looked equally shocked.

“Caed?!” he asked, confused. Was the boy polyjuiced? Why? And how? There was no polyjuice down here... how was this...

“No.” the double said, sounding alarmed. “I just returned to find him gone. Sesastra is gone too.”

He shook his head. The obvious answer to who this was, was simply impossible. But how else would whoever this was have gotten down here. He had had to speak parseltongue to open the hidden chamber door. If it truly was not Caed then it could only be..

“How is it that you are here.. in the flesh...”

The other version of him rolled his eyes and stepped quickly across the stones toward him. “We can discuss this when Caedmon is found and safe down here again. I can feel him. He is on the first floor. He is wandless.” The horcrux removed Caed’s wand from his pocket, displaying it. “I should not have left him alone for a moment. He is an impulsive little twit – that was obvious last night. I merely wanted to see Abraxas and the others briefly.. It has been so long.. “

Tom experienced a flare of fury at this interloper who was apparently responsible for his Caed wandering around the castle unarmed when Dumbledore was itching to get his hands on him. He snatched Caed’s wand out of ..well out of his own hand essentially. The other him had the decency to look repentant although he knew himself well enough to recognise the simulated expression. No doubt if the same thing had happened to him, he would be irritated at Caed for daring to embark independently upon such a daft endeavour. Whether or not this version of him had done so, HE had told Caed to remain in the chamber in his absence.

“YOU will remain here.” he hissed at him furiously and turned, trying to stalk out angrily and only managing a haughty limp. The Horcrux was at his side in a second. “You appear to be injured” it said with mild alarm. “We must discuss Grindelwald later, you realise?! For the moment.. I will go in your place. Share any pertinent memories with me now and I shall bring the boy back.

Tom wanted to hit him. It was his fault that the boy was missing in the first place.

“See reason” the horcrux insisted. “You are in no state to confront Dumbledore.. and you are not up for a pursuit either. Give me your memories and go and rest. I will reclaim him and bring him down.”
Tom stopped and tipped his head back in frustration, glaring up at the stalactites on the stone cupola far above.

He knew that he was right. He was him after all. His logic was unflawed.

“If you fail…” he threatened pointlessly.

The horcrux rolled its eyes. “Yes, yes.. I assure you – I wish him back at least as much as you do. I concede that you were right about him. I had truly thought you addled. But we are wasting time. Give me the memories!”

Tom sighed and pulled his wand. He needed to know..everything that had happened with Dumbledore at the very least. There were too many memories to share and inadequate time for the horcrux to process them all. He needed to be selective.

Harry ignored the angry muttering of the basilisk. It had not wanted to bring him up through the pipes.. In fact it had not really been talking to him since he came back from the shower and found the Diary Tom gone. He’d ordered it in his most determined tone to take him and it had obeyed after some hesitation, but it was clearly upset for some reason. He wondered what Tom might have said to it. Why was he suddenly the bad guy?! Didn’t the bloody snake understand that that wasn’t the real Tom?!

He adjusted the towel he’d wrapped around his waist and tried to ignore the strange hard smooth feeling beneath his balls. This was just so wrong. What had happened last night had been fucked up but.. there were parts of his body that really should never touch a basilisk.

He yelped and dove forward frantically spreading his arms and trying to grip onto the smooth scaly surface as the creature suddenly twisted and then shot vertically up a shaft Harry hadn’t even noticed was there. Gravity was tugging at him and the tuck of the towel quickly unfolded. He gasped as it fluttered down away from him, baring his arse to the dark pipe. It was the least of his worries right now. He could feel his grip slipping, his feet scrabbled at the smooth sides of the snake, finding no purchase.

::I’m going to fall!!:: he tried to scream, discovering that it was actually impossible to scream and hiss at the same time. Parseltongue was really only executable within certain vocal registers.

::You are a bad mate:: the basilisk hissed back, sounding resentful. ::and you are a bad masssster!::

Harry sputtered and tried urgently to think of a persuasive argument quickly. ::Tom should punish me.. if I die.. he won’t be able to and he’ll be angry::

Somehow, although upward progress was not arrested, the basilisk somehow compressed itself and Harry found that a slight bulge appeared beneath his legs, allowing him to grip slightly better.

::You inssssteed I bring you here.. it iss not for humansss to use::

::I have to find him. He could be in danger up there::. Harry explained again pointlessly.

::You have no coveringsss.. and you are weak. I can ssssmell it:::

Harry glared at the black shiny wall in front of his face. :: I am NOT weak!::

The basilisk didn’t answer again but he felt it slowing. Above, the slithery sounds of the basilisks progress echoed strangely. Harry realised that they were coming to the end of the pipe, He needed to open the sinks..
When he hissed the word, cracking sounds harked down, echoing and reverberating. He felt dust sift down on him.

Above, a bright star shape appeared and grew as the sinks parted in the centre and drew apart, sinking down into the floor.

Seshastra rose up slowly and sniffed sharply. Harry could feel his wariness. It was day and the girls bathroom probably smelled of students even if it wasn’t so favoured due to the presence of moaning myrtle.

Deeming it safe enough apparently the creature rose above the rim of the hole and drew out over the floor, laying its head down on the tiles. Harry found himself pulled down into a horizontal position again.

Bare-arse-naked.

If he had been uncomfortable about his balls touching occupied snakeskin before.. that was nothing compared to the full body spider-monkey cling that he was in right now. God.. he couldn’t imagine how it must look. His head darted up quickly then and he gave the room a once over – either she’d run off when she first saw him or she was somewhere else. Thank god. Facing Myrtle right now would have just made the whole experience that much more special.

He peeled himself off the animal’s scales, sliding down onto the ground with legs rubbery from mortal fear of falling to his death.

::You should probably go back down to the chamber:: he hissed nervously.

He didn’t need to tell Seshastra twice. The snake withdrew like a whip and was gone without another word.

It really was incredibly pissed off at him, he thought again uncomfortably.

Right. Um. Ok.

He closed the sinks absently and then looked down.

He was up here. Step one in getting the escaped horcrux back down to the chambers.

er... clothing. Clothing would probably be necessary for all the other possible steps he had.

He didn’t have a wand either – so stunning some hapless student and nicking off with their clothes probably wouldn’t be happening.

Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea..

But he could hardly just sit down there while the horcrux might be exposing Tom and possibly getting into deep trouble.

He tried not to think about the various implications of the word exposed just at this particular point in time.

Horcrux-Tom had no idea what had happened over the last year – and he had no idea what would happen if anyone dragged him into the infirmary because they thought he was suffering from amnesia. Would the mediwitch discover that there was something very wrong with him?!

It would be fine. He just needed to somehow get from the first floor down to the dungeons to his room.

That was quite a long way away. He’d have to go down the main staircase and pass the great hall.

He’d have to go through the Slytherin common room...

No! No he wouldn’t! Tom’s room was just down the corridor from here! The clothes would be a little big but at least he wouldn’t be naked! He walked uneasily to the bathroom door. He had his hand on the handle when a peevish voice behind him let out a shrill scream.
“Oh my GOD! you’re NAKED!!!..”

Harry grimaced and leaned forward, banging his head against the closed bathroom door in frustration. Now.. NOW..everything was just perfect.

“Hello Myrtle” he said wearily, cupping his privates in both hands and not turning around as he glanced over his shoulder at her.

“What are you DOING in the girl’s bathroom NAKED??” The goggle eyed girl floated closer wearing a partially translucent expression in which shock and indignation was giving way to excited fascination, as she blatantly ogled him. He could have really done without this. It was bad enough dealing with Myrtle the time he’d used the prefects bath during the triwizard tournament. But this Myrtle was much younger. She didn’t have the courage to be quite as obnoxious as the ghost in his own time. Myrtle back home would have been wolf whistling or making suggestive comments by now, trying to peek. This girl simply stared as if she’d never seen a boy unclothed before.

He realised, with a little guilt, that she probably hadn’t. Myrtle was not the most attractive of girls. It was possible she’d never even been kissed before she was killed. It was sad. Nevertheless – he had no intention of being her object of study.

“Um.. I’ve got to go, ok?” he tried, swallowing at the painfully disappointed expression on the ghost’s face. “I’ll come back another time maybe. But right now I’ve got to find someone.”

“Liar. You won’t come back. No one ever comes in here.. They all hate me! Why are you naked? Where are your clothes?! You don’t even have your wand!!”

Harry grimaced. “I really will come back” he promised, wishing that he had the callousness not to. “As for my clothes – Tom Riddle took them. He has my wand too!” The girl’s face stretched into an O of surprise. “Not Tom!!.. He’s so dreamy. He’d never do something so awful. Did you do something to deserve it?!”

Harry scowled internally. The bloody bastard kills her and she still thinks he’s sex on legs. He hated himself for the little purr of agreement that he couldn’t quite suppress. Bloody snake.

“I didn’t do anything to him. I’ve got to go now Myrtle – before someone comes in here and finds me.”

Course.. it was Saturday. If it was a weekday and students were in classes – the corridor would probably be empty about now. But it was Saturday. As he opened the door a crack and put his eye to it, he could see more than a handful of students milling about on their way to wherever. He closed the door again with a low groan.

“Are you going to stay then?” Myrtle said from about three inches behind him, causing him to nearly leap out of his skin.

“DAMN IT! Don’t do that!! No.. I’m not staying. I’m... I’m just going to have to streak. I have to get some clothes!”

The scandalised expression on the frumpy girl’s face said it all.
He tried to tell himself that he could just say it was a dare. When the rumour went round the school he would just say that he and Tom and the others had been in a game of wizarding truth or dare and he was literally unable to back out of it once he’d chosen dare.

yeah. That was fine. It was just.. just a few dozen metres or so of probably screaming and pointing and possibly laughing.

He sighed.

Right then.

Sliding the door open as unobtrusively as possible he sidled out into the corridor. No one had seen him yet. Great. Most students were walking down in the direction he wanted to go. They were all facing the other way. Cupping himself awkwardly he slid into step behind them. If he could just be..casual enough.. maybe no one would..

“BLOODY MERLIN’S BALLS!! HE’S STARKERS!!”

It was a boy. Probably a third or fourth year somewhere in the corridor behind him. They must have just come up the stairs. Bugger. The students ahead were turning around to see what the fuss was about – someone starkers was an unusual sight in the corridors. Merlin knew that if he and Ron had heard that they’d have been jeering and whistling like the rest.

Well.. at least.. back in the day.. before..everything went to hell in a handbasket they would have..

Harry decided that now was the best time to run like the clappers.

He launched himself off, running with difficulty since he was clutching his jiggly bits, and dodging the now wide-eyed, loudly reacting students.

Just as he’d feared there was pointing. And shrieking. And laughing.

His bare feet slapped the stone floors as he put distance between himself and as many of the students as possible.

A few were running after him, delighted at this entertainment and grinning at the reactions of the students he ran into who were still unawares.

It took longer than he thought it would and he could feel his face burning with embarrassment when the mermaid portrait was finally in sight.

They would see him go in.

God. Tom’s precious reputation would be in tatters. Fuck. He’d be bloody furious!

Well.. What other choice did he have?! Run all the way down to the dungeons. They were in the other direction. NO. Not bloody likely.

He ignored the saucy kissyfaces of the mermaid who leapt off her rock and swam right up to the surface of the painting. He whispered the password and when she didn’t open, he hissed it angrily and told her to hurry up.

She huffed, insulted, and folded her arms. He growled and then urged her. “Please.. Please just open.. I’m sorry. Let me in please.”

The portrait swung out slightly and he almost threw himself inside Tom’s quarters.

Ok. one step closer to finding the horcrux Tom and dragging him back down to the chamber of secrets. Harry caught his breath and then sighed. All of this was so unnecessary. If he’d just..stayed with Tom this morning..

or ok. Tom II. If he’d stayed with Tom the second this morning instead of brushing him off in his guilt, then none of this would have happened.

and really.. maybe the horcrux was right – maybe it was daft to feel guilty. Maybe it didn’t matter since they were really the same person.
But that was stupid. They weren’t. They didn’t act the same. They didn’t know the same things. Saying they were the same person because they were parts of one soul was like saying that he himself and Tom were the same person just because he carried a piece of the Slytherin’s soul. They were different people. Even if they looked the same. It was as much a betrayal of his Tom as it would have been if he’d slept with an identical twin. It was just wrong!

But...

But what?! But nothing! It was wrong and that was that.

Last night had been amazing though. and this morning.. at least until his guilty conscience caught up with him.

He moved to the wardrobe and dug through, looking for something that didn’t scream ‘I’m wearing Tom Riddle’s clothes’.

Tom.. that is the real Tom, as he had decided to view himself, watched his double disappear into the darkness toward the bridge over the chasm. He felt a strangely paralysing sense of unease. It had sublimated his anger the moment he’d given the other his memories of Dumbledore, leaving him feeling physically ill.

Caed was going to prefer the horcrux.

Tom had no idea what had happened while he was away tolerating indignity and pain again at Grindelwald’s hand – but from the way his other self had behaved, Caed had somehow been involved in his resurrection and the time since had not been spent drinking tea and discussing the weather.

And when Caed discovered...
as he was sure to, one way or another since his horcrux insisted upon knowing what had occurred with the Dark Wizard..

- when he discovered that his..for want of a better word, mate,.. had become..a sexual toy to the man - that after punishing Caed upon the mere suspicion of betrayal, his own fidelity was not even magically possible – It would make it so much easier for his twin to usurp his position with the overly emotional blonde.

How had he done it?! How had he returned?! Had Caed somehow changed the timeline?! Was that possible?! It contradicted every theory he had developed about the operation of time and those who travelled through it.

He questioned himself.. his logic. Was he wrong? Had Caed somehow managed to lure a student into writing in..

But no.

In one night? No one could write that much. The processes he’d instilled in the diary required a slow energy transfer. It was exactly the thing that he’d berated himself over when he had been reading the book that Grindelwald allowed him access to. Anyone who had begun to write in the diary would be trapped by its charms., would be compelled to return time and time again, each time losing more of their will, more control over their mind – but they would not be consumed in the course of one night!

What then had Caed done?!

He regretted allowing the horcrux to persuade him to remain here. He was on the verge of
convincing himself that it would not in fact be unacceptably dangerous to risk two versions of himself wandering around up in the castle looking for the dratted brat when a distant scraping echo drew his attention.
The sound was familiar to him.
Seshastra was in the pipes.. drawing closer. He was returning. Perhaps with Caed.

He waited, listening to the scraping gradually become a slithering and then the black nose edged out of the darkness of the wide dry cistern pipe.
Closing his eyes he waited, hearing the basilisk approach until he felt a large cold surface press lightly against him. The snake was ...sniffing. Its black venomous tongue flicked out and tasted the air.

::Massster... you have returned:: the raspy voice pronounced with great relief. ::Where isss the other?! The...one who iss almossst Masssster.”

Tom opened his eyes and frowned at the creature who had become something of a friend over the years.
::That does not matter for now. Sesastra – Where is Caed - the boy I left with you? Where did you take him?!::

The snake drew back and seemed to cower slightly, its large head bowing and pressing against the ground. Its body coiled and uncoiled nervously. The sight of one of the most deadly creatures imaginable cowering before him pleased him on some deeper level, he realised.
::The mate iss a bad mate.. He wasss not recssseptive and other Massster was disssappointed. I do not undersssstand why the mating failed. It had sssseemed correct. I do not underssstand human mating.::

Tom found this very interesting and encouraging for his own position with the boy, but it had nothing to do with the question he had asked.

::WHERE is Caed, Sesastra. I instructed you to guard him. He should be here!::

::Bade me bring him up the pipessss. He hasss no coveringsss. Sssstupid human.::

Tom blinked, shocked. Caed had no coverings? Clothes? He was naked?! What would possess the little fool to go up that way and do it naked?!
The answer was obvious to him almost immediately. The horcrux had either vanished or hidden his clothing, taken his wand and left him downstairs. To any right thinking wizard the absence of clothing and wand would encourage them to remain where they were and wait for assistance – however Caed was a wilful little bastard and for whatever reason he had determined to go up even so.

::Why did he want to go? Did he say?:: Tom frowned, panicking just a little more. There were very few places Caed might go.
He knew where he was most likely headed first.
The question was whether he would still be there.

::Nevermind. Take me up the same way:: he demanded, dragging himself forward and trying to pull himself up onto the basilisk. He couldn’t seem to climb up. His legs were not much use right now. The snake noticed at once and started to fuss at him. Irate, he snapped at it.
::Silence! I have tasked you with one thing in all the years that I have spent with you – guard and protect that boy for ONE day. Now he is wandering the castle naked and unarmed while Dumbledore hunts him. I am angry with you Sesastra. Caed is my bond-mate and you have endangered him.”
The mournful hissing and writhing of the animal betrayed its intense distress.

::But massster is hurt::

Tom drew his wand, ready to snap at the creature and levitate himself up onto its back when a single rational thought penetrated his panicked mind. He had sent the horcrux up. If he now followed it up, not only would it be exceedingly dangerous – their duplication could be detected by students, or worse, by Dumbledore – but also, the horcrux would (as he himself would if the situation were reversed) perceive his behaviour as a slight upon his abilities. At the present time it was perhaps better not to add further insult to the doppelganger’s reasons to potentially conspire against him.

::I am well:: he responded to the basilisk somewhat lamely. ::there is no cause for concern. I will retire to my rooms. Wait here, Sesastra. I do not wish them to be forced to delay in calling you from the antechamber.

He turned and hissed the way free, trying not to limp as he made his way inside. Once out of the snake’s view, however, he allowed his pain to show again, dragging himself to the closed door after the bathroom. The door deliberated for a long time before opening at his touch. Tom wondered whether the existence of two Tom Riddle’s might be problematic for it. Letting himself in, he took a deep breath of the heavy steamy air and almost sighed in relief.

The thermal spring was dark and lit only by phosphorescent algae, just like the larger chambers outside Slytherin’s rooms. The room he stood in was about the same size as the generous bedroom and quite foggy with perfumed steam. A series of stone benches and moulded platforms were grouped around a roughly circular pool set into the natural stone of the floor. It had an almost entirely organic appearance, with the exception of the stone steps carved into one side. Its temperature remained at a constant 41 degrees celcius.

He rarely used the thermal bath – He did not spend much time down here and the prefects baths upstairs offered a more than adequate substitute without the risk of detection that was associated with venturing down to Slytherin’s chambers. The water of the spring was however infused with some form of healing charm or perhaps merely muscle relaxing charm. He had observed in the past that the positive effects of bathing here were too great to be merely due to hot mineral water.

Tugging off his uniform with less care than he would usually apply, he undressed and limped over to the pool, wincing at the extreme heat when he dipped a foot in. He cast a wandless cooling charm upon the water, knowing it would not last. By the time the charm wore off, he would have adjusted to the temperature sufficiently. He walked down the steps until the water reached his waist and then lowered himself gingerly, hissing at the uncomfortably warm temperature.

Swimming a brisk breast stroke over to the far wall of the bath, he turned and sat upon the large stone that he knew was beneath the water here.

The pool was deep in the centre. He did not know how deep. The idea of it had unsettled him greatly at first, nevertheless, if he remained at the edges of the pool, it was very pleasant and the effects were undeniable. Already he could feel the tightness in his legs beginning to give. He rested his head back against the lip of the pool and closed his eyes. It was quite dim within the room anyway and the strange effect of the luminescent algae over the ceiling and walls blurred through the steam was reminiscent of the Avada Kedavra glimpsed in a dream.
His mind turned back over the events of the last day.

What had possessed him to make such foolish choices?!

Well... Greed.. and arrogance.
And need..
but also ambition. The idiotic desire for approval from one who he respected.

Without Caedmon’s unexpected arrival, he would never have been in the position to consider pledging himself to the Dark Lord Grindelwald. Nevertheless.. he had accepted the terms.. he had been anxious to gain access to the great wizard’s library.. to be viewed as his apprentice.

And perhaps..with the exception of the fucking..and the humiliation.. the physical torture.. the impulsiveness and possessive obsession of the man, it had not been...so..unsuccesful. Grindelwald had allowed him to read a valuable book from his library.. had shared several potentially useful spells with him and given advice on how he might further his abilities – whether it pertained to ambidextrous casting or the most effective application of legilimens.

He had in fact, in some ways, given him precisely what he had hoped for. It would be a lie to say that he had not at any point considered how the most powerful wizard in the world might be as a lover. Of course he had. While he was amusing himself with foolish, pretty, desperately-in-love schoolboys and collecting his wealth of information on Grindelwald, the curiosity had been present now and again.

He had not imagined it this way.

Perhaps it was short-sighted, but on no level had he ever considered the possibility that he would be willingly sexually subservient to any wizard. To have rendered himself permanently so, was beyond comprehension. He had been blinded by the thought of what he might attain in exchange.. and concerned that the dictator would not be reasoned with much beyond the concessions he had made. He thought back to the first time he had submitted himself to the dark wizard’s attentions. It had been.. quite different.. to the way he had been treated this time. Not to say that he had not enjoyed any of it.. had not found pleasurable release.. The first time, he realised now, Grindelwald had been ...gentle... with him. That was his equivalent of gentle. He was not naive enough to miss the way that the man’s sexual behaviour had been geared toward conditioning him... training him...

The thought of returning there troubled him greatly. He had a strong feeling that, now that the other wizard had decided he might like to keep him, he would become increasingly demanding. For several hours, Tom had been concerned that he would not be allowed to leave today. However, Grindelwald still required the information from Caed’s memory, such that there was sufficient information present there to help him – something which Tom was no longer confident about, and in truth no longer particularly cared about. It would be best if Grindelwald were killed in duel with Dumbledore – he imagined the man would have his mark burning constantly if he were merely incarcerated. If Grindelwald got his hands upon Caed.. If he suspected that there was no more information to be gained.. Tom was sure that if it became merely an issue of completing his studies.. not being observed to be missing.. or his own wish to be resident in England as opposed to Eastern Europe – He would quickly find himself permanently detained at the dark wizard’s pleasure.
Chapter 26

He could feel him. Caedmon was moving. Moving quickly in fact. He was approaching from several levels above. Relative to Tom’s position deep in the dungeons, the boy was where he estimated the stairs from the ground floor to lie. Caedmon was progressing toward the Slytherin common room.

He could almost sense the moment when the blonde paused at the door to whisper the password and quickened his own pace, although he was certain that he was too far to reach him before he had attained his ultimate destination, which was no doubt the dorm room where all of his knights bar one were located. The one missing was Alphard. He was seemingly still preoccupied with gobstones.

He felt a spike of disembodied emotion. Shock and fear. Caedmon?
The boy was not with the beacons from the other knights. He must be in the common room

Breaking into a run, Tom remembered just how hostile the atmosphere in there had been when he had been in there earlier.

Would any of them dare to directly challenge his authority by attempting to detain Caedmon while Dumbledore was summoned?

He’d had a troubling brush with Clemens Wilkes. Wilkes was arrogant enough to do something like that purely in order to show he was not intimidated.

Tom fairly flew up the stairs to the first level of the dungeons, sprinting down the corridor to the Slytherin shield and darting through as soon as the door began to open.

What he found was enough to cause Caedmon’s wand in his hand to spit red sparks furiously.

Wilkes had Caedmon pressed up against him on the sofa, with his arm around the smaller boy’s shoulders. Caedmon looked uncomfortable and anxious. Callista Kent was sitting on his other side and had her hand on his thigh. She was employing the full force of her, admittedly stunning, green eyes to try to warm Caedmon to remaining. Across from them, on the opposite sofa, Belico Yaxley and Benjamin Travers were sitting. All four were talking and joking together, and clearly trying to animate Caedmon to calm down and socialise with them comfortably.

Around them, the common room was full of younger students who hadn’t the sense to realise exactly what was likely to happen and far fewer older students brave enough to want to be here to see it when it did.

The latter had fallen abruptly silent when Tom entered and the former silenced in response, trying to work out what was happening to cause such a reaction.

With great satisfaction he activated his knights’ marks and felt them all snap to shocked attention as the sudden awareness of where he wished them to be flooded their minds. He felt their hesitation and smiled wider as Antonin began to move closer to his position.

Upstairs, Alphard continued playing gobstones.

He would have to remind his other self about that later. An example would have to be made of Alphard. His behaviour was intolerable. The over-privileged child needed to be made to accept certain inescapable realities about the position he had willingly placed himself in.

Service was not optional and could not be postponed. When he was called, he was to appear immediately.

Tom considered sending a painful reminder through the mark but abandoned the thought. Alphard was foolish enough to draw others attention to the cause of his pain if not sternly warned against
He stalked closer to the group on the sofas, wanting to curse the sly smirk from Clemens Wilkes face and knowing that it would be unwise to do so in front of so many witnesses.

“Wilkes. Kent, Yaxley, Travers.” He acknowledged with a curt nod. “Caedmon. I have been looking for you. Come with me now.”

Caedmon, with an expression of desperate thankful relief, tried to get up, only to have Wilkes arm tighten around his shoulders.

“Now, Riddle. We were talking. Caedmon was just complaining to us that you have been stalking him and locking him away in your room. Why, we wondered – but he didn’t seem to want to admit it. What have you been doing to him?! He’s very nervous. Look at how nervous he is around you!”

Caedmon was shaking his head and tried to get up again.

“That’s not true!” he started to say but Clemens drowned him out again.

“Does this have anything to do with your recent break with Elana Galloway?! She was very upset. Apparently you had no time for her anymore.. You’ve been spending a lot of time with poor Caedmon.
I have to wonder.. if you might be forcing your own preferences upon a vulnerable war-orphan. After all, we all know you lean that way.. what with the way pitiful Adorno Prince still cries in his sleep and calls your name... and Caedmon is..quite pretty..I suppose.. if you like that kind of thing.
His fingers dug into the blonde’s shoulder when Caedmon started to struggle angrily.

Tom felt it as his knights filed up the stairs into the common room.

He glanced to the side and confirmed that they were taking in the situation and moving to positions where they might best control the room. Something odd in Antonin’s face caught his eye, but he couldn’t have identified just what it was. The Russian moved off toward the door to the common room and began casting sticking spells and sealing spells.

Some of the more intelligent older students were already heading for the stairs down to the dorms now. Their curiosity was not sufficient to risk being present, and therefore part of the problem. The more generous among them caught up some younger students and shoved them toward the direction of the stairs – the direction of ‘not being involved and not knowing anything about what happened’.

The few remaining ones scattered when Gyphus and Abraxas turned around and drew their wands, nodding to them to get out.

Tom noted that while Clemens Wilkes smug smirk hadn’t faded, his little cronies, Kent, Yaxley and Travers were looking vastly more unsure of their circumstances.

The room was soon clear of observers and Abraxas flicked up a ward and a silencing spell around the common room.

“Oh, unhand him, Wilkes, if you wish to have continued use of that arm”
Tom’s voice was low and perfectly, icily, calm.

Wilkes made no move to comply, although Callista removed her hand from Caedmon’s thigh discreetly.
“You can’t do anything, Riddle” the mouthy boy sneered.

...To think that he had considered Wilkes a potential servant.

“Everyone knows that you and your little..gang.. are here. Dumbledore will be here soon too. And it won’t matter what you do now anyway – the younger students heard everything I said.. it’ll be all over the school within hours. no one will ever need any proof. They’ve all noticed you with the new boy. Suspicion will be enough to ruin you!”

Tom felt his temper rise as he acknowledged the truth in the words.

He was considering whether there might be time enough to obliviate every student in Slytherin before Dumbledore got here, when Caedmon apparently had enough of Wilkes hanging all over him. He drove his elbow back hard into the other boy’s ribs and then brought his arm up sharply, his fist driving back into Wilkes face as he jerked forward reflexively. The result was a beautiful crack and a spray of blood down the Quidditch captain’s face as his nose broke.

“Get the fuck off me you piece of shit” Caedmon snarled and leapt up, darting away and, to Tom’s great satisfaction, moving to stand slightly behind him.

Neither Kent nor the others tried to help the cursing and spitting Wilkes, who had to episky his own nose. Tom sighed inwardly at the regrettable thought that whatever he did to them, they wouldn’t remember anyway, since he would have to obliviate them all.

He cursed them all anyway with entrail twisting curses, enjoying the pleasant sound of their pained screams before silencing them and turning to his knights.

“Go and find the students who were present for Wilkes little rant. I want them obliviated.”

To his pleasure, no further instruction was needed. Abraxas, Gyphus, Roan and Darius headed toward the stairs at once. Abraxas shot him a look before he descended that stated clearly that they would need to speak about this later.

Antonin, by the door tensed suddenly. “Someone is undoing my spells” he said sharply, his wand flicking rapidly to renew the charms that were being dismantled.

Tom growled in irritation and sent off his own, more complex, spell at the door. It was a little known stasis spell of Eduardo Talin from the sixteenth century. He doubted Dumbledore would know of it.

The pressure reduced for the moment, he turned to the four silenced, but still writhing, students, quickly dispelling the curse upon them. Callista Kent was crying, as was Benjamin Travers. With rapidity, he cast both a tongue tying hex and a babbling hex upon each of them before summarily obliviating them and turning to hurry toward the stairs to the boy’s dorms.

When he noticed a second later that Caedmon was not following him he turned, just in time to see the blonde plant his boot squarely in Wilkes groin. The latter gave a choked high pitched wail. Caedmon turned and the gratification on his face was plain. It was possibly the loveliest thing he’d ever seen, Tom realised, floating on a wave of temptation to push the boy up against a wall the moment they were in safety and have him again before he discovered that the other Tom Riddle
was back.

Caedmon glowered defensively.
“What?! You! you jerk! Give me back my sodding wand! I had to sit there while the git breathed all over me and that blonde girl pawed me. What the hell made you think it would be ok to take my clothes and wand and leave me there?! Give me my bloody wand!!”

Tom smirked faintly.

“I do not have time to put you in your place right now and this is hardly the best location for it. Come along now.
Antonin – You had better make yourself scarce.”

The Russian was looking at him strangely again. He narrowed his eyes as if trying to work something out. There was no time for this either.

“Tell the others that I will return and speak with them later” he said, suppressing the inward grin at the thought of sending his other half and having even more time alone with their delectable bonded mate.

“Yes. I will tell them” Antonin answered, still looking thoughtful.

Tom realised that he found the expression disquieting and made a note to watch Dolohov more carefully in future.

“They were telling me that Dumbledore is looking for us” Caedmon said quietly as he descended the stairs a step ahead of Tom.

Tom made a sound that might have been agreement or merely disinterested acknowledgement. He did not intend to have this debate with Caedmon either. The memories he’d received from the other version of himself were still settling into his mind and he had the strong conviction that he was missing pieces that were of relevance. It didn’t seem to make sense. Dumbledore was a cad in his time but he had never been so foolishly aggressive. He had never seemed motivated by any will to power either, though. And yet.. he had apparently, according to Caedmon, been the lover of the Dark Wizard Grindelwald.

Collaring Caedmon as he missed the turning onto the fourth year dorm level where the passage that Tom wished to take was located, he wondered again what exactly his other half had bartered to Grindelwald. Information, certainly – that was obvious from the translation that he had worked upon with him. But his behaviour was odd at best and ..the way he had been limping when he returned.. Something was very wrong there. He had looked more than physically damaged. The expression was one he’d seen in the mirror. He knew well the expression he himself had used to hide the things that no one could know.. It convinced others.. even Caedmon, it seemed, but one cannot lie to themselves.

He strode down the dungeon corridors quickly, alert for any sound. No one else came down to this level. There should be no sounds other than those made by their passage.

As he impatiently waited for slytherin’s door to decide to allow him access, Caedmon began to harp again on the topic of his wand.

“You do not require it at present” he informed him curtly just as the door decided to open. He
stepped through and when the blond lingered with a disgusted expression on his face, Tom, standing in the impenetrable darkness within and having had enough, reached out, gripped him roughly by the shirt and dragged him bodily over the threshold. Caedmon flew toward him, amusing surprise all over his face. Tom caught him effortlessly and pulled him flush against his own body. He felt the subtle queasiness that told him that the moving platform was descending. When Caedmon struggled, he knocked his legs out from beneath him and lowered him to the pitch dark ground, straddling him and hauling his wrists up above his head.

The area resisted light bringing spells and vision enhancing spells but it had no problem with fixation or binding spells.

“Let me go! Damn it! STOP! Get off me!!”

The brat that had caused so much trouble was thrashing and fighting beneath him. Tom allowed it for a while, and, as it became tedious, he slid his hand up the boy’s body to rest on his throat. A very small amount of pressure was sufficient to cut off his pet’s air supply and this quickly rendered him more docile.

“If you have quite finished behaving like a child..” Tom murmured, leaning down over the Caedmon, his lips a bare centimetre away from the other boy’s.

“You are such an asshole” the choked voice rasped in the dark. “..You're even worse than Tom”

Tom narrowed his eyes in the darkness and sent a wandless stinging charm through his fingertips on the sensitive skin of Caedmon’s throat, feeling the boy flinch sharply and enjoying his pained yelp.

“Now now.. Do not compound your woe by adding insolence to disobedience! I have just rescued you not only from Wilkes but from Dumbledore also. Over a dozen underage Slytherin’s will be obliviated by inexperienced wizards because of you. Your foolish wilfulness is risking their minds.. And as they are my future servants, I am justifiably irritated by your thoughtlessness. Yes. I removed your clothing. I removed your wand. You were to stay where I left you. I do not for one minute believe you did not comprehend that. And yet.. somehow.. you decided to venture up even so.”

“What else could I do?! You went upstairs! They’ll figure out you’re not Tom. I had to-“

“I AM Tom Riddle. I am myself. You will stop thinking of me as.. as.. someone else. As.. a thing.. I refuse to tolerate it any longer.”

He concentrated on Caedmon’s mark, causing it to burn. There was a hiss in the dark.

“Do you feel that?! You wear my mark. You are bound to me.”

“Stop it.. it..it burns. Make it stop. Damn it. I never wanted your mark. I never wanted to bind myself to you . Get off me!”

He increased the pain and held the thrashing boy in place until Caedmon realised his own powerlessness and, with difficulty, stilled. A pitiful, resigned whimper echoed in the wider chamber the platform had descended into.

“Please.. Tom..make it stop” Caedmon whispered hoarsely.

Satisfied, he released the mark again, softening the burn to the faintest tingle.

“Much better.” He praised the blonde in a low voice “I ask very little of you, Caedmon. Give me your respect.. your obedience.. your affection.. and I will protect and care for you. You enjoyed
what we did last night.. did you not? And this morning?” He leaned down and brushed his lips against those of the boy below him, feeling the way Caedmon’s bottom lip trembled in the unbroken darkness.

“You like this.. don’t you?” He kissed him gently.

Caedmon hesitated only moments before responding, another faint whimper escaping as he worked at Tom’s mouth above him.

Tom smiled through the kiss and shifted himself, inching lower against the boy’s body, enjoying the hard warmth below. He could feel Caedmon press his hips up against him and broke off the kiss to turn his attention to the pretty waif’s neck, drawing an appreciative moan from the other boy.

“Do you truly wish me to stop?” he prompted teasingly. “or shall I...continue?” The word was punctuated with a gentle grind of his groin against the hardening one below.

“Bastard..” the smaller boy growled. “just fucking do it. I’m not going to ask you for it!”

Tom wavered only a second on the cusp of stopping, purely to prove a point. The point was not worth it and could be made on another occasion. With his other self already back in the chamber, it would be best to take this opportunity now, while it was available. There would be an almighty drama soon when they returned and he would be better served if the boy remembered exactly how good it felt to be with him. No doubt his other self would attempt to be possessive toward Caedmon.

That would not be permitted.

In addition.. sating himself on the young wizard now would leave him much more patient and able to deal with the unpleasantness he was likely to discover upon pressing his other self regarding the events that had occurred with Grindelwald.

Thus decided he began to unbutton the white shirt that the boy wore. It was too large for him – no doubt one belonging to his other self.. to him in effect. Caedmon wriggled, testing the strength of the spell Tom had placed upon his wrists binding them to the floor. The spell would hold, Tom knew. He preoccupied himself with kissing a line down the warm smooth chest as he parted the shirt with each button. The darkness was complete and no doubt rendered their other senses more acute. By the time he had reached the top button of Caedmon’s trousers, the boy was breathing harder and a large insistent weight pressing up against his fly testified convincingly to his motivation to continue.

Tom slipped the button and reached for the zip; drawing it down carefully and freeing the straining cock below.

He could feel a small wet circle of precum in the underwear the boy wore, before he slipped his hand within and grasped the silky rod, drawing a tense “ahh!” from the boy, that was equal parts relief and need.

“Suck it.. oh.. god.. please Tom.. Suck it.. I..I need you to.. please..” Caedmon’s words were rushed and half whisper-half whine. He wound his hips slightly and tugged at his arms again ineffectually.

Tom smiled wider, though he knew that the other boy could not see it.

“I..enjoy.. your pleading, Caedmon. Do not hesitate to ask for things that you desire.”

He ghosted a hot breath up the shaft in his hand, feeling the other boy tense in response.

“I like being in your mouth” Caedmon whispered. “Feels so good.. and..”

Tom caught the slight note in the hesitation. “and?”

“Nothing..” Caedmon said hurriedly. Tom could hear him swallow thickly.
Slowly he trailed the point of his tongue up the narrow vein on the underside of the boy’s organ. Caedmon whined again and started in with his ‘please please’s’

“And?” Tom prompted pointedly.

“I don’t remember.. please.. just.. just do it.. please”

He nipped the side of his shaft lightly in warning. The slight yelp became a groan of arousal and he felt the cock in his hand harden still further. It seemed to grow slightly. He bathed it with his tongue in reward, feeling it twitch responsively.

“what were you going to say before you thought better of it?” he reminded the boy and then, without warning swallowed the entire length of Caedmon’s cock smoothly, sucking upon it hard and flickering his tongue against the underside.

The young wizard wailed his pleasure. His hips that wanted to buck up were held in place by Tom’s hands and he cried out in frustration when Tom pulled away again almost immediately, allowing his cock to slip out and hang wetly in the cold dungeon air.

“It doesn’t matter. Fuck! Tom.. don’t stop! It hurts.. I need.. I need..more..”

When no further attention to his weeping shaft was forthcoming, Caedmon bit out “I like the thought of Voldemort sucking my dick. Thats all.”

Tom considered this remark from all possible angles and came to the conclusion that he did not like it. Caedmon had thought better of saying it because at core it was intended in a degrading manner. He saw this act as one in which he exerted superiority over Tom.. regardless whether his own hands might be bound.. whether he was in fact unarmed and helpless... he viewed it as a degradation.

That was unfortunate. It meant that, irrespective how much he might enjoy sucking his little blonde pet, he could not allow it to continue. He would not have Caedmon thinking of him..of Lord Voldemort in that way.

“You were not a Slytherin in your own time, I see” he remarked wryly. There was no answer. He pegged the boy as a Gryffindor or a hufflepuff.

He cast the divesto upon himself silently. Caedmon’s pleading and protesting was ignored as he moved back and peeled his trousers and underwear off the boy completely. He had cast the lubrication charm, pushed the blonde’s legs back against his body and positioned himself at the hot tight little pucker before the other boy had time to really struggle against him. Then he was pressing himself in against the resistance of the small muscled ring. The sharp pained cries bounced and echoed around the vast cavern. He ignored them and held Caedmon in place while he forced himself inside.

When he was fully seated he stopped moving and carefully released the straining muscled thighs he’d been holding down, lifting them and wrapping the boy’s legs about him.

“That was for your implication that I am sexually subservient to you” he informed Caedmon softly. “We shall see if I ever choose to pleasure you orally again.”

Caedmon made a pitiful little sound that led Tom to suspect that he was crying. “I’m sorry” he choked out wetly “I didn’t mean.. Please don’t hurt me anymore”

A faint whisper of regret floated through Tom’s mind. His little mate sounded so miserable. He leaned down over the smaller boy and began to place gentle kisses upon his face. He could taste the cold salty tracks of tears trailing down from the sides of his eyes and licked them away, feeling incongruently apologetic. By the time he had traced Caedmon’s jaw with soft lingering kisses and moved to his lips, the other boy had seemed to calm somewhat. After a while he began
to kiss back. Only then did Tom draw back and whisper, feeling mixed feelings about doing so, that he had not intended to hurt him quite so much. Caedmon pleaded to have his arms released and, in the sentiment of the moment, he acquiesced.

He had feared that the boy would begin to fight him immediately, but that did not occur. Caedmon wrapped his arms around Tom’s neck and dragged him down again, capturing his lips more forcefully even as he tightened the muscles in his arse. The combination of pleasure and challenge was unmistakable and he smiled, nipping at the other boy’s tongue as he began to draw back and ease in again slowly, the motion hot, tight and greasy with lube. They both groaned at the sensation. Tom held himself up on his hands above Caedmon and, experimentally, thrust in harder. Rather than a yelp, this drew only a gasp and the arms and legs about him tightened.

“More..” he thought he caught the boy breathe. So he did it again, setting up a slow tempo of hard thrusts, the meaty slaps echoing perversely around the dark cavern. Now Caedmon’s groans were impossible to miss.

“Fuck.. that’s so good.. so good Tom.. Harder.. “

Becoming somewhat lost in the delicious sensation himself, it was all he could do to recognise the words and comply, leaning further forward and changing the angle as he slammed slowly down into the boy below. He felt the legs unwind from about his waist, followed by the arms and, in the darkness it took him a moment to recognise that Caedmon had pulled his own legs up against his body and was holding them there. Every pump drew a soft gaspy cry from him now and when Tom stopped and circled his hips, seating himself even deeper, the boy mewled in pleasure.

It did not take very long at all after that till he was begged to go faster and after that, it would not have mattered if Caedmon had made any further requests because Tom was completely absorbed in the tension and ecstasy of his own body. The boy beneath him in the dark had faded away – had become nothing more than a hot wet hole to plug and his own cock was dictating his movement, demanding harder, faster, now now now. He was not at all aware of the duet of gasps, grunts and moans filling the darkness, he was aware only of the approaching point of his own release, like a bright light in the darkness, and his own race to reach it.

The awareness of Caedmon returned bare moments after he had yelled his euphoric release, before his movements had even ceased and he was suddenly horribly alert to the fact that he had completely forgotten the panting boy beneath him. Had Caedmon climaxed? Had he been hurt? fuck. He lowered himself hesitantly, till their abdomen’s were pressed together and almost groaned in relief when he felt the telltale slick wetness over the skin below him. Yes. Caedmon had found his pleasure. At least that. He shifted, rocking his softening cock inside the hot wet sheath and leaned even lower, pressing a chaste kiss to the parted, panting, lips of the boy. “Are you hurt?” he asked tentatively, unsure whether it might not have been better to leave the question unasked.

“Are you fucking kidding?” the incredulous breathless response came. When he did not answer Caedmon responded more soberly “No.. i’m not hurt. I’m.. i’m the opposite of hurt. That was.. that was fucking amazing..”

Tom allowed himself to grin, only because he knew that the other boy could not see it. He preened inwardly. Amazing. Hopefully it was far more amazing than his other self had been with Caedmon. He drew the boy into a less than chaste kiss, drawing his softening cock out of his body, but lingering and curling himself into him, reluctant once again to continue to Slytherin’s chamber. Finally, he broke the kiss and sighed. It could not be avoided.

“My other self has returned” he murmured softly.
As expected the result did not please him. Caedmon stiffened and tried to pull away. “He’s just gotten back now? You can feel it? Let me up!.. we have to.. we’ve got to.. He can’t know!”

“No.” Tom disconfirmed disappointedly. “No. he returned earlier. We spoke in the chamber before we decided that I would go and collect you to bring you back below.
Caedmon. He is quite aware that you and I have not been playing wizarding chess all night. I do not want you to behave as though nothing has happened.”

The boy seemed to panic suddenly. “No! You don’t understand. Let me go! You’re.. I shouldn’t have. I.. I fuck..I basically married him. I..this is wrong.. he’ll be-“

“You married both of us. I am him. We have discussed this. Caedmon.. you are bound to both of us..

“No! Maybe you can activate the mark and stuff but you weren’t there. I didn’t bind myself to you. You aren’t him. You’re like.. his twin or his brother or something. It’s wrong to be doing this. He won’t like it. I bet he was upset when he-

“He’s been fucking Grindelwald” Tom bit out venomously and then cursed himself. The silence was thick in the pitch darkness. Tom held his breath and seriously considered obliviating the boy, even with the danger of harming his memory.

“you lie”

Caedmon sounded very small and afraid.

“He wouldn’t.. He was so angry at the thought that I might have kissed someone else”

Tom closed his eyes and tried to calm himself. He could feel his heart beating. This was the perfect opportunity to twist the boy’s affections away from his other self and onto him.. but he couldn’t quite persuade himself to say the words that would break Caedmon’s heart.

“I do not know the circumstances surrounding their interaction” he said softly, the snake within him screaming at him that this was the opposite of what he should be saying.
“I..I.. think it is possible that..he was not an entirely willing participant” he breathed.

The smaller boy beneath him jolted in shock. “are you saying that he..that he was raped?!” he yelped in a voice that was tight and far-too-high.

“I..don’t know” he conceded truthfully and swallowed. The information he would need to reveal in order to explain his suspicion was something he really wished never to admit to another living human being.
But it was dark. He could not see Caedmon’s face. The boy could not see him. It made it slightly easier.

“He... we.. are not unfamiliar with being forced to...” he trailed off.

There was another silence.

“I..recognised his expression upon returning... I..have not spoken with him about what occurred. It is merely my strong suspicion. Some of the things he had written to me in the diary have suggested as much..but mainly it hit me when I saw that damned mask.
I know that mask..believe me..”

“But you don’t know for sure!” Caedmon seemed to leap upon this ice floe of hope. “You could be
imagining it. It’s not true. He could have been upset about something else. He .. he would have
told me.. if he’d been.. if he’d.. And he wouldn’t do it willingly – he promised.”

Tom bit his lip
“Believe what you wish then.” He said finally. “But do not demand his answers on the matter. Do
not force him to choose between lying to you directly or admitting what he may not wish to admit
to himself. Be a Slytherin, if you are at all capable of it. Observe his behaviour. Listen to what he
says and to what he does not say. This is a delicate issue. If he has indeed..submitted.. himself to
Grindelwald’s advances, or perhaps those of another wizard, upon Grindelwald’s order – he will be
quick to anger on the matter. He will be...ashamed. It will be easy to vent his anger upon another
target.
It is probable that in some way, whatever has been done, was done toward what he believed was
your benefit. As I understand it – he sought Grindelwald out in order to protect you from
Dumbledore...”

The boy below him was very still.
His voice was barely audible when he spoke. A mere whimper of a voice - “But.. You wouldn’t,
would you?! You wouldn’t do..that.. for me?

Tom snorted wryly. It held little amusement.
“As you say.. it was not I who was present for your binding and marking.. It was not I who first
found you.. who first took your innocence..
I daresay that I ...might..be persuaded to go to quite some lengths to protect you, Caedmon. You are
mine. You cannot possibly understand what I mean when I tell you that I can feel you inside me. I
would kill before I would allow you to be taken from me.. I do not know whether I would
tolerate...that...rather than lose you, but it is possible I suppose – if the circumstances conspired to
offer me few alternatives.
You must not view it as ..infidelity.. Do you understand? If anything, it is the ultimate symbol of
his commitment to you. To place your welfare above his own... It is not something that either of us
have done before.”

Feeling that he had said all that could be said on the matter, Tom climbed off the boy, who was
now trembling once again. He summoned Caedmon’s clothes in the dark and pushed them into his
hands.
“Dress. We have taken too long and he has been concerned since returning and finding you absent.
I should perhaps have taken you back directly..but I could not stand the thought that you might
grow cold and refuse me upon his return. After your words to me this morning.. and on the way
down here.. I needed to feel you once again.. just in case it should be the last time. It was selfish, I
am aware. I do not regret it.”

Caedmon did not reply.
He used the reverse divesto to reclothe himself and waited while Caedmon silently put himself
back together.
When the boy spoke, it was in a sad little voice “Could you..scourgify me. It’s.. I’m..sticky..”

He did so immediately, surprised that he had forgotten such a fundamental courtesy.

The walk through the black caverns proceeded in silence, Caedmon was led docilely by the hand
along the narrow ledge over the chasm and through the tunnel until the dim green light allowed
their silhouettes to become visible.

He could see Seshasta coiled upon the damp stone outside the head-chamber. The door was open.
Obviously his other self was impatient.
The large snake shifted as he approached. There was something nervous and floundering in its movements.

::Other Massster:: it acknowledged when he drew closer ::You have found the mate..I am ssss::

::Be silent:: he interrupted it coldly. ::You disregarded my command and took Caedmon up the pipes. And in the state he was in! Others have seen my mate unclothed.. they have dared to lay hand upon him – and the blame rests at your feet. You have failed me and I do not wish to entertain your foolish excuses at present. We will speak of this later::

He dragged the limp blonde onward and over the stones to the entrance. Inside, all was still and quiet. Tom paused hesitantly inside the door, Caedmon bumping into him.

“What?” the boy asked in a whisper. Tom shook his head slightly. “it’s nothing”

He continued on more warily, almost creeping. The doors were closed all along the hallway. He had no idea where to look for his other self. The library.. the bathroom.. the bedroom?

“TOM?!?” Caedmon called out suddenly, making the horcrux-Tom flinch slightly and glance back over his shoulder in irritation.

The door next to the bathroom swung open slowly. Tom swallowed, but Caedmon had already pushed past him and rushed to the door, slipping inside.

The door closed with a bang.

Tom swore and tried the handle, knowing before he did that it would be locked. It should open for him.. just as it had locked on his other self’s wishes.. As expected it did not open. No doubt there were other spells upon it. His other self had had enough time while he himself had been retrieving the boy to consider exactly which spells he wished to use upon the door.

Perhaps he should be grateful to Caedmon for entering first. If the other version of him had desired to speak with the boy uninterrupted, he may have had spells planned to eject Tom himself from the room before securing it.

Resigned to a long wait, he moved to the opposite wall of the corridor and, after placing cushioning and warming charms, slid down it to sit on the stone floor.

Harry crept into the darker room, coughing slightly at the thick steamy rancid smelling air. It smelled like a potion in here.

Tom’s voice floated through the thick atmosphere with a quiet warning.

“Be careful. You are approaching the edge of a pool of water”

Harry immediately stopped in place, peering around, trying to make sense of where he was. There were strange dots of green that wavered and it was far far too hot.

“Undress.” Tom instructed lightly. “You may join me.”

It was disturbing how similar his Tom was to the one he had just been walking with, and who was now, he knew, locked outside.

If his Tom wanted to curse him for betraying him, the other Tom would not be leaping to his defence.

“I.. can’t see” he protested. “I’ll fall.”
He heard the softly spoken “divesto” and then found himself dancing and squirming as his clothing flew, slid and crawled off his body rapidly, leaving him naked in the hot, steamy, dimly-lit room.

“You are two and a half paces from the edge. If you take three paces to your right before moving forward you will find yourself at the base of some steps leading into the pool. The air is clearer nearer the floor.”

Processing all of that and taking the most relevant point, Harry dropped to his hands and knees and found himself looking across a black expanse of liquid toward Tom, who was visible only from the neck up, resting his head against a stone wall on the far side of the pool. Harry breathed out, relieved.

“Come and join me.” Tom said softly and Harry did not mistake it for a mere invitation. He crawled forward on the smooth stone till he found the edge. The water was very hot. His feet hurt when he forced them in. It felt like his skin was too tight and being split with knives. Tom was watching him though and he was keeping him waiting so he forced his legs in deeper to the calves, biting his lip against the almost unbearable burning. For a moment he entertained the thought that Tom was punishing him.

When he eventually managed to submerge himself enough to swim over to Tom, his face bright red, dizzy with heat, he found that the pool was very deep indeed. It frightened him and he swam even more frantically to try and reach the other side. Tom was smirking faintly when he got there, although his eyes were closed as he relaxed against the wall. Harry, paddling in place could find no floor anywhere to stand upon.

“You may sit on my lap” Tom offered generously just as Harry was beginning to think of asking for the same. His legs were tiring and the heat was making him feel woozy. He climbed onto Tom without a moment’s hesitation, straddling him and letting his legs fall down to either side. It seemed there was a rock just here that the other boy was seated upon. Harry found that it sloped away gradually, offering a surface against which to rest his feet, but which probably wouldn’t have been sufficient to stand upon.

To his great surprise, Tom reached out and wrapped his arms around him, pulling him closer. The other boy’s skin was warm and smooth beneath the water and the silky friction was pleasant. Tom pressed him closer still, until he was leaning against his chest with his head upon his shoulder. Harry felt the boy – who would one day be Lord Voldemort – sigh.

“Start at the beginning, Caed” he murmured, the vibration tangible against Harry’s own chest. “What happened after I left? How is it that I returned to meet my own Horcrux restored to flesh. Leave nothing out...I wish to know..everything.”

Grimacing, Harry struggled to think of how to explain. He pressed his face against the warm smooth neck, feeling inexplicably comforted by Tom’s proximity, even when he knew he should be afraid.

“I...was worried about the basilisk..” he began.

When the door finally opened, Tom was on his feet in half a second, looking for all the world as if he hadn’t been dozing lightly only seconds earlier. He was faced with.. well.. his face. The other version of him was scrutinizing him with narrowed
eyes, as if considering exactly which potions might be made with his organs. Caedmon, who appeared at his doppelganger’s shoulder, looked nervous and guilty. He avoided meeting Tom’s eyes – which was more unnerving than the reception he’d received from his other self.

“We must talk.”

It was an observation rather than an invitation. Tom nodded automatically. Indeed they must.

“Caed – if you would be so good as to wait in the bedroom, I shall be there when we have finished speaking.”

I. As in not we. Was the other Tom thinking to eliminate him? Tom found himself reaching for Caedmon’s wand nervously. His counterpart’s eyes went to the movement immediately and matched it. Suddenly Caedmon was between them, his pale green eyes pleading.

“Stop!.. Don’t..”

Both Toms raised a querulous eyebrow at him. “Move aside” they demanded in unison before glaring at one another as if each had done it on purpose to irritate the other.

“No!..” Caedmon insisted. “Look.. There’s no reason to fight. You’re the same person! There’s no competition when you’re the same person! You’ve both said you’re the same person! Don’t-“

“Go to the bedroom Caed, or I shall stupefy you and levitate you there myself”

Tom smirked at his other self, agreeing entirely. “This is nothing to do with you Caedmon. Do as you are told. We shall return when we have concluded our conversation.”

This drew a slight frown from his double. Tom raised his eyebrows as if to say “Problem?” and gestured with Caedmon’s wand for his counterpart to precede him to the library. Neither of them moved for a long minute. Finally the other Tom made a visible show of casting strong shields and then stalked off toward the library. Tom glanced meaningfully at Caedmon and nodded in the direction of the bedroom before following his doppelganger into the library and closing the door behind him.

“Astounding..” was the first thing that the other Tom said, accompanied by another examining gaze. “My own thoughts had been moving in an entirely different direction. Had you considered uniting the diary with the Heart?”

Tom smirked. “Not at all. Caedmon asked me several questions pertaining to the heart and by the time I realised his intent, he had closed the diary and was underway. I would have counselled him against trying it. The risks were far greater than he realised.”

“nevertheless.. it appears that you have emerged unscathed. What of the diary?”

“I am not certain” Tom replied uneasily.

His opposite snorted and rolled his eyes. “Oh calm yourself. I was not thinking to destroy it. The boy is correct. You are..we are one. Far closer than twins or brothers. I will not move to attack you unless I feel you are threatening me. Logic would suggest that you view matters similarly – is this the case?”

Tom nodded cautiously. “To a certain degree, perhaps” he conceded. “but we are not one.. as you
put it. Even Caedmon has observed differences. I imagine our differing circumstances may contribute to your animosity toward me. Simply put – I cannot leave Hogwarts while you, unless I am very much mistaken, have sworn yourself to Grindelwald..both magically.. and physically.

The curse bounced harmlessly off his shield and struck the ceiling. Both Toms shifted in shock. Tom voiced the horror that had flashed through both of their minds. “Idiot! The tomes in here are irreplaceable!”

“Does Caed know??” The other Tom sounded frantic. “Did you tell him?? Damn it. I would. Of course you’re enough of a bastard that you’d tell him. How did he react??”

“So it’s true” Tom observed unnecessarily, sighing in discontentment. He had not wanted to learn that his suspicions were founded. It was a terrible thing to imagine happening to himself.

“yes.”
The word fell like a lead slab.
“Yes. I had no choice. He is..far more powerful than I..we.. imagined. It was among his requirements.”

Tom watched as his own face cracked and seemed to crumple in misery.

“I made a mistake!” he hissed “I shouldn’t have agreed.. I.. I didn’t think.. He promised all I had sought. The necklace to preserve Caed’s mind against legilimency, the information to use against Dumbledore... he even agreed to share his library.. to teach me..as an apprentice of sorts..”

Tom startled at that information. He knew how often he’d dreamed of learning at the side of the greatest dark wizard in the world. He could see how he might have been tempted, had that been offered to him.

“I had thought that it was a favourable agreement.. But he marked me.. He MARKED me.. and his terms were more restrictive than I envisaged at that time, blinded as I was by the thought of receiving what I had imagined I wanted for so long.” The other version of him hung his head and seemed suddenly so weak.

“He despised me at first, you know. He called me..a mudblood.. When he learned that I..we were..Slytherin’s heirs, he was even more appalled that such an ancient line could be ruined. He... He was going to geld me..”

The expression of revulsion was not to be suppressed. Tom choked out, before he could think better of it. “But he did not..”

Misery flooded his mirror image’s eyes. “No. No he did not. He merely extracted an unbreakable oath that I would never allow offspring to eventuate.”

Tom turned away, pacing. It was worse than he had feared. Far, far worse. “And the..terms.. that you mentioned – was that one of them or can it possibly be worse??”

“It can.” The other Tom said simply.
“I agreed to give him all information Caed might possess related to himself, Dumbledore and his future defeat. I.. I agreed to do all in my power to prevent his death or internment.. and to seek to free him should he be incarcerated. I.. I was blinded by the prospect of learning from him.”

Tom could not reply. He was gaping in disgust at the stupidity he had apparently shown. “And that is how you phrased it? All in your power?”
The other Tom nodded tightly.

“Then we are in a rather difficult position, do you not agree? Since we are bound to extract and use what Caedmon knows in order to preserve your..”

“-Sexual slavery” his doppelganger muttered, avoiding his eyes.

“- Indeed.” Tom finished with another grimace of revulsion. “And how exactly is that working out for you, if I might be so bold?”

The other Tom dragged himself over to the chair and threw himself down in it, putting his face in his hands.

“I..cannot endure it..” came the muffled response before he dropped his hands again in despair. “He is a sadist. He is entirely unpredictable and he is magically stronger than I. The terms of the mark prevent me so much as defending myself. Yesterday.. yesterday for several minutes it appeared he was intending to have me lap urine from a bowl like a dog. You cannot imagine what he is like!!”

Tom truly couldn’t. Didn’t want to. He felt such self-pity at present, he could barely contain it.

“And it is worse..” the other version of him went on, to his dismay.

How could it possibly be worse?!

“I am almost convinced that he is.. is.. becoming attached to me in some way. He has intimated that he wishes me to remain there permanently. No.. more than intimated. He has stated that when I have extracted the information from Caedmon, I am to kill him immediately and go to our meeting point, where he will collect me at once. I do not know how I am to dissolve the oaths made! I have thought about it at length. And i’m certain we both know how well pain can concentrate the mind on these things – nevertheless I have come up with no solution.”

It was indeed worse.

Tom found himself sliding down into the other chair and simply staring at himself across the table.

“Fuck.” He said with feeling.

“Indeed” his other self agreed with a wry, humourless, grin.

After a few minutes Tom sighed and muttered another expletive.

“Share the memories with me.” he demanded reluctantly. “if I am to assist you to locate a loop hole – I must first understand exactly what you have agreed to and the circumstances that have since eventuated.”

After another minute of staring, his counterpart agreed equally reluctantly, knowing that his reasoning was sound.

It was far, FAR worse than Tom imagined. It was one thing to be told of such things.. but quite enough to have experienced them. And thanks to the fact that the memories came not from another person but from someone whose brain was wired quite similarly to his own, the memories settled into his head as if they belonged there. He did not experience them as something second hand.

He excused himself urgently, almost flying into the bathroom and threw up.

It was when he was panting, hanging over the bowl with clenched eyes that the doppelganger
stepped in after him.
“I felt much the same” he said unnecessarily, casting a scourgify and assisting Tom to his feet.
With a faint smirk, he brushed his fingers through Tom’s hair, setting it into the gentle wave that they both favoured.

Tom sighed, offering a faint ghost of a smile back, and stared into his own calm, unhappy eyes.
“Let us veer from that particular problem for the moment then. I require time to think on what I have learned.”

The other Tom nodded and turned, leading him back to the library.

They spoke of Dumbledore and then of Tom’s knights – who were apparently Death Eaters, solely because Caed had informed the other Tom that they were known as such in his own time. The matter of Alphard was dispassionately related and both agreed that, while the Black heir required a lesson in the realities of his present position, it would not be politic to engage in such immediately, but rather at the next ‘celebration’.
This in turn only started an argument about who was to attend said celebration – which then broadened into a general argument regarding who would attend classes and who was to remain below in the chamber.

The other Tom seemed to believe that because Tom had been alone for so very long, and had missed so much information pertaining to the situation in school at present, it would be best if he remained below. Tom did not agree.
In his opinion – it was the very fact that he had spent so long without the advantages his other self had enjoyed that conferred the right to attend classes while his other self remained below and thought on exactly how massively he had erred with grindelwald. Hopefully he would thus come up with a solution to the problem.

They did not reach agreement, not even with compromises. The other Tom would not agree to an equally shared arrangement.
And that was how the conversation turned toward Caedmon.

“Under NO circumstances are you to touch him! He is mine. You are freed from the diary. You are tangible. That should be enough. I will bring you others to enjoy if you insist that you require lovers.”

Tom narrowed his eyes. “You are being unreasonable. As you have said – we are the same person. He is bound to both of us. I am not your twin!”

“I will not share him.”

“You will share him or you will lose him.” Tom bit out, and then regretted it, when his mirror image raised his wand immediately with murder in his eyes.
He tried to backtrack.
“That was perhaps inflammatory. However...Caedmon already knows that you are ...involved.. with Grindelwald. Yes.. I was indeed enough of a bastard to mention it. I will not submit to watching you...that is, myself.. with him from a distance. He is mine as much as he is yours.
If you insist upon being unreasonable, I will use the time in which you are busy servicing the wizard you were foolish enough to enslave yourself to, to poison the boy’s mind against you. You know quite well how convincing we can be.
Do you believe that Caedmon will not be difficult, every single time that you leave at Grindelwald’s call? Do you think he will not view it as a betrayal? That he will not obsess over
what you are doing together while he waits? Even if you were to succeed in destroying me, and I rather think that my connection with Hogwarts would prevent that – Caedmon would grow to hate you in time.

On the other hand.. You could be reasonable and agree to share.. Under which circumstance, I would employ my considerable persuasive talents to ensure that he views your absence as a sacrifice – an unwilling act performed in order to preserve his safety. He will come to view you as a near saint for the pain you are enduring for him.

Is that not preferable? Would you not rather his guilt and worship, rather than his resentment and hate?!

And all you must do is to cease viewing me as a competitor for his affections and come to realise that we are the same person. I am no more than exactly who you yourself would be, if you had been alone inside an empty world for a year."

Tom resisted the temptation to draw Caedmon’s wand, even as his own in his counterpart’s hand did not waver.

After the longest time, in which he forced himself to breathe slowly and evenly and give no sign of the inner distress he was feeling at the familiar wand levelled at him, the other Tom finally growled agreement, lowering the wand slightly.

“An oath..” he demanded.

Tom refused. The wand was raised again.

“This penchant for making agreements has already gotten us both into serious difficulty. If you cannot take your own word, who then can you trust?! “

They both snorted simultaneously and then laughed at the fact.

No.. neither trusted themselves in the slightest.

“I won’t be making any agreements even so” Tom clarified. “however for the moment I assure you sincerely that I will endeavour to persuade Caedmon that you are not to be faulted and that we are both to be respected and desired. Is that sufficient?”

It would have to be.
When the door opened, Harry wasn’t at all sure which Tom had returned. The absence of clothing and the predatory look in Tom’s eye gave him no hints. He sat up and scuttled backward on the bed nervously.
And then the other Tom entered just behind. Similarly attired and with an even more wolfish expression.

“What..are-“ he started up in fright before stopping - realising the question was stupid – it was clear what they were doing.. or thinking to do. Knowing didn’t settle the anxious churning that had started in his stomach. He had no idea which of the two was ‘his’ Tom.

“We have come to an agreement, for the moment” one of the Tom’s informed him quietly. “We intend to..share you.”

“Naturally this will not be the usual configuration” the other Tom amended. “However.. in the spirit of...forming trust.. Each of us wished to witness the other with you. It was determined that this would be the most convenient solution.”

Harry looked from one to the other in distress. “But.. I... It..”

The two exchanged a dark amused look with one another.
It was truly disturbing to face two future Lord Voldemort’s when one was enough to outnumber Harry on the best of days.

The Tom on the left moved forward smoothly and climbed onto the bed beside him, reaching for him and unwrapping the robe he had been wearing after the hot pool.

“Come Caed. You know we will not hurt you.”

“Well.. Not much at least” the other added with a small smirk. “Not enough to outweigh the pleasure, certainly.”

He moved to join them both on the bed, slipping to Harry’s other side and assisting his counterpart to remove the garment. Harry found himself drawn back to lie down upon the bed and stroked by gentle hands while they conferred about him.

“The most beautiful eyes I have ever seen..”

“Yes.. and his form.. slender.. delicate.. “

“And he tastes-

“Yes.. I know.. bitter honey. It’s quite exquisite.”

Both Toms smiled in delight.

“How would you like to begin?”

The Tom on his right glanced down over Harry’s body suggestively, to which the other nodded in intuitive understanding. “Very well.”

It was not immediately apparent what exactly they’d agreed to since both leaned down and began to kiss his chest and collarbone at once, almost exactly mirroring one another. Harry had to blink and try to focus through the strangely hypnotic feeling.. the vision that made his mind ache. When
both Toms began to intersperse kisses with delicious little nibbles and sucks, and then to direct their attention to his nipples, Harry thought he might lose his mind. He could hear their snickering at the noises he was making and someone was pressing down on his abdomen, holding him in place when his body wanted to arch and squirm— it was the most overwhelming thing he’d ever felt. It was surpassed when both Toms kissed their way up to his neck and devoted their considerable talent to all of his many sensitive spots there. He was moaning and struggling helplessly in pleasure, his hands exploring two identical perfect bodies leaning over him even as he bucked at air. It was almost simultaneous that each Tom wrapped his leg around one of Harry’s, limiting his movement considerably and making him yelp in frustration.

The Tom on his left took the opportunity to smother his noises with a deep devouring kiss. Harry kissed back hungrily—he had been needing this since they first started touching him. He needed to taste.. to lose himself in Tom’s lips.. his skilled tongue, his intoxicating kisses. He was vaguely aware that the sensations on the side of his throat were replaced by Tom’s fingertips stroking and teasing while the other mouth receded.

He was not prepared for the sudden immersion of his cock inside a hot, wet, mouth, where the counterpart of the tongue he was presently sucking immediately demonstrated its other considerable talents.

His yelp of joy was swallowed by the boy whose kisses became yet more demanding. Helplessly, he was sucked to a rapid ecstatic climax, his mind re-emerging from its blind joy just in time to watch the Tom straddling his legs offer the one kneeling at his side two fingers coated in pearlescent white fluid.

The latter Tom accepted his twin’s fingers eagerly into his mouth and closed his eyes, sucking with an expression that reminded Harry of Hermione enjoying chocolate.

He felt himself harden at once. Just the sight of them touching each other that way.. He couldn’t prevent the low groan of desire.

It drew the attention of both Toms. They seemed surprised, but then the surprise softened into a far more Slytherin look and they glanced at one another. The one on the left raised his eyebrow a barely perceptible millimetre and the other tilted his head an equally subtle fraction of a degree. Then, slowly, the Tom straddling Harry’s legs crawled with catlike grace further up his body till he sat astride Harry’s cock, pressing it down against his abdomen, while the other knelt up next to his twin, leaning closer.

Harry felt his heart stop. He knew he was holding his breath.

Warily, the Tom kneeling at Harry’s side leant in and was met in a chaste kiss by the other. Harry thought he might die of lust! His cock hurt.

The pair, subtly observing him, apparently upon mutual decision then deepened their kiss, Harry could see their mouths working against one another, it was clear that their tongues were tangling and exploring.

He lost it.

It didn’t even take him grinding up against Tom. He just lost it.. He felt himself popping again, coating his abdomen in warm milky splashes as he groaned, his head falling back and brow furrowing in pleasure.

“It seems he likes that..” Tom observed quietly. Harry no longer really minded which one was which.

“Hm.” The other agreed thoughtfully. “Yes. Perhaps we might.. revise.. our original plan?”
Harry opened his eyes to see them looking at one another speculatively. “Are you quite certain?” the first asked quietly. 
The other replied with a shrug “Not in the slightest, however I cannot conceive of any strong argument against it either. I will admit to a certain.. curiosity. I had never thought to experience my own kiss first hand.”
They exchanged another long thoughtful look before the first stated, smirking slightly “Very well. So be it.”

Harry prodded his brain into movement and it supplied the brilliant yet unthinkable prospect that there would be more involvement between both Toms. The thought alone had him hardening again. The Tom sitting astride him noticed it at once and directed the other’s attention to the fluid drizzled across Harry’s abs.

He groaned as he was licked clean with visible enjoyment. On the final lick the Tom in question lapped up the last dollop of cum and then knelt up, offering it upon his tongue to the other.
The kiss was hungrier.. more committed than the previous one they had shared. Harry heard one of them mmm in audible enjoyment and panted, watching them, and then, unable to take any more, sat up and reached for the closest Tom’s hair, tugging him off the other and pulling him to his mouth.
He felt the broad grin through the kiss and then the other Tom was kissing his neck and nibbling on his ear. Without sight he reached out for the perfectly identical cocks that he knew were straining and dripping in need. When he started to stroke them rather inexpertly, he received twin sighs of relief from both wizards.

“Will you have his mouth first?” he heard Tom’s voice purr close to his ear. The other broke off the kiss and responded “Certainly.. unless.. you would be prepared to-“
“No.” the first growled. It was met with an amused sniff from the other.

Harry was just overwhelmed by the entire situation. He wasn’t entirely following the somewhat intuitive conversation the two were capable of carrying on. He only reacted when the one that was straddling his own weepy cock dismounted and both boys moved to turn him onto his hands and knees.

“Shhhh” one of them purred against his ear when he squeaked a protest. “You will be prepared this time”

Harry looked up at the towering expanse of perfectly toned body, registering that the other Tom had moved to kneel before him. He did not direct Harry to suck him, but it was subtly implied by his posture.
He felt a hand stroke his spine lightly and then gentle fingernails scratched from his buttocks down the length of his thighs.
“So beautiful..” Tom’s voice purred from behind him.
“Yesss” the one looking down on him hissed softly, reaching out and stroking fingertips over Harry’s jaw.

Harry yelped in surprise at the internal scourgifying spell, although he had expected it in light of the position he was now placed in. When he felt a soft kiss pressed to the globe of his left buttock though, he realised that he was not going to be simply fucked, as he had been earlier, before the hot spring – It was going to be more along the lines of what the horcrux had done to him last night. He had enjoyed that greatly – even if it had been a little embarrassing.

“Caedmon..” the soft voice called his attention back to the matter before him. Tom was looking down with a patient expression, his hand gripping his shaft and stroking lightly.
Harry nodded distractedly and Tom knelt up and offered his cock to his waiting lips.

...
It was difficult to concentrate on what he was doing with the sensations that his nether regions were being subjected to. The tongue swirling maddeningly around the ring of his arse and dipping in; hot and slippery. The fingers very gently stroking his balls. He moaned around the cock in his mouth and was rewarded with a rougher thrust that made him gag. The hands stroking his head seemed to soothe him apologetically.

He really wasn’t any good at this. He knew it. He had no idea what he was doing. It was probably terrible!

“Good..Caedmon” Tom’s tight voice came from above him stroking his head and urging him deeper. “Just.. Just.. like that..” He sounded a little breathless and Harry struggled to keep up as his mouth was fucked a little faster.

His yelp was muffled when a finger was inserted into him, followed soon by another. By the time the Tom playing with his arse had finished stretching him and had positioned his cock ready to enter, the one who was fucking his mouth was nearing his completion.

He knew this by the way he was instructed in no uncertain terms that he was going to swallow everything..

He did manage to swallow everything when the moment came.

It tasted awful. He swallowed repeatedly, trying to clean the horrible taste from his mouth and wondered whether he had some amazing jizz that tasted magically better than everyone elses, whether Tom simply tasted worse than other wizards (perhaps because of the innate evil inside him that would one day turn him into an insane megalomaniac dickwad) or whether his tastebuds were just different to the other two.

“Mm. It is an acquired taste” the Tom currently rocking against his arse gently observed. The other was too busy enjoying his afterglow to have noticed Harry’s discomfort.

“Although you do taste better than any other I’ve met.” He completed his statement by pressing the head of his cock through the somehow still far too tight ring of Harry’s arse, prompting the latter to squeal and try to move away.

He was not permitted to. Tom dragged him back, using the movement to force himself deeper. It burned and hurt. Harry found himself whimpering and begging Tom to stop, even though part of his mind knew he’d be moaning and loving it if he could just get past the horrible pain stage.

This did wake the other Tom up from his smiling daze though.

“If you would be so good..” Tom behind him said tightly. The other sniffed and responded “of course.”

Harry found himself maneuvered to kneel above the head of the Tom not currently half buried in his arse. Then his thighs were nudged further apart and his shoulders pushed lower until he found himself dipping into the mouth of the boy below. It was very distracting to have the head of his cock sucked and he almost didn’t notice himself being more deeply penetrated.

He was yowling and trying to orient his movements between bucking back into the cock behind him and down into the mouth below when the Tom who had been sucking his cock wriggled out from beneath him again.

His protest was ignored, however equally it was forgotten by him in less than thirty seconds in the face of the thoroughly enjoyable fucking he was receiving. It was perhaps not quite as amazing as the one the horcrux Tom had delivered earlier.. but it was definitely up there with the best things he’d ever felt.

“Harder”

The order came from the Tom now reclining on the bed watching them both with enjoyment as he stroked himself slowly.
Harry nodded enthusiastically. Yes. Yes.. Harder.. Fuck yes.
With a growl from his partner, the percussion became twice as firm and he felt himself starting to see stars. “Oh god.. yeah..” he groaned, fisting his hands in the bedsheets and trying to get purchase to rock back against the source of all pleasure behind him.
“Caedmon, put your cheek to the bed” the observing Tom instructed lightly.
He obeyed at once. Tom knew what felt good. He needed to do what Tom said. It would feel better.
It did feel better. It felt so much deeper like this. Harry was mewling and scratching at the bed almost immediately and squealed in pleasure when the Tom fucking him did so even harder and faster. He couldn’t hold back the feeling and screamed as he exploded yet again all over the bed below.
He heard Tom’s exultant groan and felt him bury himself to the balls inside him as he spilled. He moved again once or twice, jerkily, gasping in over-stimulated satisfaction as he wound down, before pulling out and flopping down on the bed beside Harry.

He was damp with sweat and panting like an animal, a soft smile on his face. He looked absolutely gorgeous. Breathtaking in fact. Harry moved to kiss him but found that he was restrained by hands gripping his hips again.
He had just started to turn and caught the devilish grin on the other Tom’s face before he was roughly penetrated again. This Tom didn’t bother with easing him into it, he moved directly to fucking the crap out of him. Harry yelped and tried to keep up.

“Stand up” The Tom behind him purred. At first Harry thought he was talking to him and tried to comply. He received a slap on the arse for it. “Not you Caedmon. I was..” the Tom snorted “talking to myself.. I suppose is the only way to describe it. Stand up. I’ll show you what it feels like to be sucked by you..”
Harry gasped as he felt himself impossibly hardening again. He couldn’t! He’d fucking come three times already! Not to mention the time earlier. He just didn’t have anything left in his balls.

When the Tom reclining at his side, watching him with interest, then actually got up and stood on the bed, moving till he could straddle Harry, he just about broke his neck trying to turn and watch.
“I can’t see!” he complained “Please!”

With low laughs, the Tom straddling him stepped away again and the other pulled out in one slick movement, pushing Harry over effortlessly and dragging him back on his back before burying himself inside him again.
He didn’t move, but Barry could feel him throbbing. It was like a heartbeat inside his arse.
The Tom on his feet moved closer and remained standing at an angle to Harry, giving him a perfect view. He was not yet fully hard, although the look on his face showed that he found this an interesting prospect. Tentatively he reached out and stroked a hand over the other Tom’s hair before fistling it firmly in his locks at the back of his head.
“Bastard” The kneeling Tom said with a sardonic smirk. The smirk was returned by the other. Harry was bemused and entranced.
The cock that was pressed to Tom’s lips was hard and strident now. Harry couldn’t prevent the low moan as he watched the beautiful boy begin his talented worship of.. himself.. It was.. so.. so.. He bucked against air and gasped as his cock was seized by the distracted cocksucking boy and clamped at the base. He pulled away only long enough to growl down at Harry “No. You will not come until I say. You may watch only” - then he turned back to the cock being nudged impatiently at his lips and returned to swallowing it expertly.

“Never.. realised... I .. was.. this.. good” The other boy on his feet panted, tossing his head back and reveling in the feeling of being sucked, before seemingly remembering that he was missing a rather unique view and returning to watching himself sucking..himself..
When he came, it was with such a dark look of satisfaction that Harry begged to be allowed to come. He wriggled against the hand clamping his cock. But the Tom who was still buried in his body seemed to have other ideas. He held Harry’s cock like a rudder and fucked him slowly and gently. After a time he leaned down and caught his lips, teasing him into a deep kiss as he ground into him.

The feeling was so different and so sweet compared to everything else he’d experienced today. He wrapped his arms around Tom’s neck and clung to him, moving slowly in time with him, rocking himself back and forth as the racing need he’d felt lowered to a simmer and then slowly... very slowly grew to a boil.

When Tom released the tight pressure on his cock and Harry tipped pell mell into euphoria, he did so whispering mindlessly his love for the other boy, and holding him tightly as if he might evaporate any moment.

It was the wrong thing to do, apparently. He only heard the low growl of fury and then Tom was ripped away from him. There was a crash as the two spilled off the edge of the bed onto the floor, the one making a solid attempt to beat the other to a pulp. The Tom who had been, until that moment, taking him so tenderly, was simply trying to defend himself, shielding his face as best he could with his forearms.

“Not Yours! He’s MINE! MINE!! Conniving bastard! What did you think you were doing?!”

It was clear to Harry now which Tom was the horcrux. Apparently the one he’d just said he loved. When he moved to try to separate them, his Tom raised one hand and sent him flying back into the centre of the bed. Apparently summoning absinthe fountains was the least he could do with his wandless magic. Harry scrambled back to an upright position hearing meaty thuds interspersed with grunts and growls.

He inched to the edge of the bed, peering over it and finding his Tom with bloodstained fists, the other with blood smeared around his nose and mouth.

“STOP!!” he cried, horrified. “Please Tom. Please stop! I didn’t know! I thought he was you. He.. he is you. Please.. don’t.. don’t hit him anymore.”

The enraged boy turned stormy eyes up at him and snarled. “You thought he was me?! You have not whispered those words to me in that tone. You thought he was better than me. You are mine, Caed. Mine! I’ll kill him before I allow him to take you.”

He turned back down to the battered, no longer identical, twin on the floor below him and wrapped his hands around his neck.

“NO!!!” Harry screeched and launched himself off the bed at them both. The violently incensed Tom was thrown to the floor beneath him but twisted like a snake and climbed over him at once seeking to get back within arm’s reach of the horcrux again.

“STOP!!” Harry yelped “Tom.. Stop! I didn’t mean it! I don’t love him. Just you. Just you – ok?! Stop now!”

Tom only bared his teeth at him, glaring, before turning back to his counterpart on his back on the floor. He leapt upon him again, seizing his throat and squeezing.

...and was then levitated up and away and placed down on the floor quite gently several metres away.

Harry blinked. The horcrux hadn’t even bothered to raise a hand.

His Tom looked incandescent with fury.

Sitting up and rolling his shoulders, the Horcrux Tom pressed his hands to his face, cupping his nose. There was a very quiet click and then a muttered scourgify. He felt around in his mouth and
then withdrew a tooth scowling. There was a noticeable gap in the front of his teeth when he pulled his lips back, feeling them with his fingertip. He closed his mouth and whispered a spell and when he ran his tongue over his teeth again they were smooth and undamaged.

“You realise” the horcrux said neutrally to the still fuming original “that he had no idea which of us was which until you made it clear to him.”

“It doesn’t matter what he believes” Tom hissed. “He said he loved you. I will not stand for this any longer.”

“You will tolerate this and a lot more besides” The horcrux returned, again in the neutral voice, but there was a clear undertone of steel to it. “We have discussed this and nothing has changed in our circumstances. You are behaving childishly.

Tom turned to him and, strangely, Harry was almost sure that he was embarrassed and near tears. He took a step closer, wanting to go to him and reassure him, but Tom’s face just hardened dismissively.

“Fine. I’ll go up to the dorm to speak with the others then. Caedmon will need to return upstairs for dinner. You have an hour and a half before I return to collect him.”

And then he was gone. He stalked out of the room without bothering to get dressed. Harry supposed, as he had entered unclothed, he would retrieve clothing elsewhere. Perhaps the spring room or the library.

He turned back and found the Horcrux Tom looking at him narrowly.

The stone door of the entrance ground closed a few moments later. Its scraping echoed down the corridor distantly.

“It is true, isn’t it” the other boy demanded obliquely. Harry was startled and thrown off balance by what felt like a sudden attack.

“You do not.. will not.. love me. You love only him. You would not have spoken the words had you not thought that it was he that you were feeling. In your mind you chose to believe it to be him.”

Harry sputtered. What was he supposed to say in response to that?! In truth, he had actually suspected that it was the horcrux, simply because of the kinds of commands he’d issued earlier when Tom had been fucking him. He had thought that the issue was resolved.. When they’d all been..together.. he hadn’t made such a distinction between them. They were Tom. But it seemed now like there was a massive difference between them. They were balanced upon a very precarious peace at present. As recently demonstrated, it could erupt into homicide at any given moment.

“I’m sorry” he muttered. “I.. no. I didn’t mean it.”

He didn’t see what else he could do. At least his Tom wouldn’t be hurt.

He could see the same hurt hardening in the other boy’s eyes that he’d just seen before Tom had rushed away.

“Fine” the horcrux snarled, turning away. “It matters little. I should not have allowed myself to..” he broke off and seemed to stiffen. After a couple of deep breaths he turned back and there was a cold determined look in his eyes.

“it is time that we examined your memories, Caedmon. I have several difficult problems to solve and the answers are all within your mind. Don’t make a fuss about it. I will extract what I need with or without your cooperation. It will merely be less painful for you if you cooperate. However..
in my present state of mind, I will be only too willing to hurt you, if you insist.”

He had hurt him.

His other half would be returning to the chamber at any time to retrieve the boy and Caedmon was lying unconscious on the library floor.

It was foolish and petty. He had known that the boy would not be able to endure such a deep and prolonged probe, and he’d done it anyway because Caedmon had dared to reject him in favour of.. well.. him.. and because after a certain point.. when he’d seen what had apparently become of himself in the future, he’d been unable to look away.

Half heartedly he shook the smaller boy’s shoulder.

“Caedmon.. wake up.. I have finished.”

Although he stared down at the limp body, his mind was elsewhere. Still in a graveyard where a ghastly white inhuman creature was restraining.. was torturing a small boy that he knew was Caedmon, although he looked so very different.

His hair was black!.. And his eyes.. no more the soft pale emeralds – they were almost the exact hue of the killing curse. He wore glasses too! He was so young.

He knew now what Caedmon was. Why he was so important.

His last horcrux.

Everything was different to how he had expected. Somehow.. all of these things were going to happen.. and he could not quite understand how. How did he bring himself to become.. that?! He had wanted power.. wanted to rule.. but at what cost?! The thing he had seen in the boy’s mind no longer looked human.

Why did he attempt over and over to kill that boy when he knew that he was this boy.

He stilled, musing on that point. It felt like the key somehow.

...All of these things were only possible because he did not know of Caedmon.

...And that was perhaps possible because there was not one Tom Riddle, but two.

That was the key. No one else knew of his existence. Not Grindelwald, not Dumbledore – Caedmon.. or.. or Harry.. as Caedmon thought of himself in his mind.. as his friends referred to him.. Harry did not know anything of a second Tom Riddle, beyond the episode with the diary – and he believed that that horcrux had been destroyed..

He’d looked at the memories surrounding the diary horcrux in detail and he saw..things..small things that Harry.. Caedmon.. had obviously never noticed in enough detail.

The effect upon the girl..Ginny.. had been similar to some of the older and less efficient biological stasis spells used in potions. Place a mouse under them and they were similarly cool and limp to the touch. Leave the mouse under them long enough and it would eventually die.

He could see the faint regret on his own face, barely masked under determination and glee when he addressed the Basilisk.

It was truly him and he knew that the creature was going to be slain.

The effect evoked when the small boy.. the small dying boy.. had stabbed the diary with the
Basilisk fang – he couldn’t quite explain how it was achieved. But it didn’t matter. No doubt he had fifty years to determine which spell to use.

He was certain that he would.

He was almost certain, too.. or at least quietly confident.. that he knew how to send Caedmon back to his own time. 
...And it was imperative that he return to his own time. 
The answers seemed clear to him. Knowing that the boy felt nothing for him made it that much easier to see things rationally.

His other self had made a number of mistakes because he had been led by his emotions. Lust, greed, fear, anger.. love.. Tom sneered. There was nothing more foolish than acting in the name of love. A miasma... a dream. Love was a mirage. 
But he would repair these errors. 
Next year Dumbledore would defeat Grindelwald. The dark wizard would be interred within Nurmengard; all magic stripped from him. His control over the mark that Tom’s counterpart wore would be gone.

Every promise contained a loophole. Sometimes the circumstances needed to take advantage of it simply happened to be a little odd.

And.. with the way that things would develop in time... he would perhaps no longer need to share Caedmon. The disgust and fear that the small boy had felt for the white skinned, flat faced creature in the graveyard would certainly not dissipate with the mere understanding of who that gestalt had once been. Presented with an alternate choice, the blonde would run into Tom’s own arms. He would no longer love or desire the other part of Tom. Given patience to wait for fifty years for the boy, he could have him to himself. Forever. And when the ..loose ends were cut away, he could again mount a campaign to seize power over a weakened and complacent world.

Although it had seemed an error over the course of the last year in which he had been trapped inside the diary, he was now certain that choosing to make the horcrux, and thereby accidentally segmenting a portion of his awareness, was a wise decision. 
...Perhaps not for the part of himself that remained..however in light of circumstances - namely that he would remain youthful and powerful forever.. that he would not die, doubly protected by the ageless magic of Hogwarts and the presence of Caedmon fifty years in the future – it was an achievement that he could not have hoped for, augmented as it was by strange loops in time and chance.

Tom’s pleasant musing was interrupted when he heard the stone at the entrance grate upward with a low gravelly rumble. He leaned over Caedmon with more impatience.

“Enervate” he whispered, his hand on the tragically pretty boy.

Caedmon’s return to consciousness was accompanied by a low pained groan. “ow.. fuck.. ow.. My head. Damn...” His eyes flickered open but looked quite dull and unfocussed.

“Hush” Tom murmured quickly. “I regret the pain but you must not reveal to him what I have done. He is in danger at present. Grindelwald. I will remedy the situation if you remain silent about the legilimency.”

The blonde was alert enough to comprehend the meaning behind the statement. He fixed his mouth
into a grim resolved line, which became a surprised o when Tom suddenly leapt upon him, straddling his body and diving to capture his lips in a kiss. The action was clumsy and barely in time. His doppelganger stepped noiselessly into the room a half second later and Tom heard him huff in irritation.

“Must you provoke my anger in that manner?!”

Tom sat up and smirked mildly up at his mirror image. “I wished simply to enjoy every moment allotted to us. Will you bring him back down after dinner?”

The expression that was barely sublimated on the other Tom’s face was clearly legible to him. He was very upset and hated the fact that he was not able to hide it sufficiently.

“No. He will sleep in the dorm room tonight” he said tightly. “The others will guard him. A certain amount of damage has been done already by my.. or rather your behaviour. I must see it repaired. Attending dinner and behaving normally tonight will go some way to achieving that. We shall see about tomorrow. Caedmon has not studied for the past two days, as I instructed him to.. and as I promised Dippet that he would. Tomorrow he will have to focus upon that.”

Tom no longer considered studying with Caedmon to be the best use of his time, in light of the fact that the boy would not be in their time for very much longer. On the other hand.. if he was correct.. it would be a very long time before he would have the chance to spend time with his delicious little husband...soul-mate to both of them, so to speak.. He should perhaps take advantage of the time offered.

“I will study with him..”

“No. We both shall. We will alternate between assisting him and translating another text for Grindelwald.”

“Very well” he agreed amiably, unwilling to argue. He would not do well to make a determined enemy of himself at this stage. It would only make it more difficult to achieve what he had set himself.

The other version of him nodded pensively, looking at him with suspicion. Tom considered whether an earnest declaration might be of benefit. He did enjoy candour when married to respect.

“I... It behoves me to apologise for my earlier behaviour...You know as well as I that I would not do so, but for the fact that it is you.. or rather myself that I have offended. No other deserves such respect.

I realise now that Caedmon is yours. It was not I that he offered himself to in bond.. nor I that placed that rather ominous looking mark upon him.

Whether intended or not, my seduction was an affront and, had I been in your place, I would, no doubt, have reacted much as you did...“

His counterpart responded with a raised eyebrow and mildly dubious expression. Tom mirrored the look and then smirked at the irritation on the other’s face.

“...I do appreciate your...compassion.. for the almost irresistible desire that I too feel for him.”

Tom continued “It pains me to imagine that I might be prevented from seeing him..” He hesitated, realising how closely he was paralleling the truth and how tragically genuine what he had to say next would be.

Not only this..” He turned his face up and dropped the smirk, emphasising his seriousness “but I regret the loss of the fragile affection I had begun to feel for you. We have never had.. family.. or true affiliation..my other half. Who else might truly know us.. in absolute understanding accept us.. and still...” he swallowed and looked away, unwilling to say the word. A flicker of a glance
confirmed the conflicted expression on the face of his mirror image. He waited and remained still, gazing away at the Bookshelves as the other Tom Riddle approached him. He did not look up even as he felt the tentative hand stroke his hair, brushing it into the easy flattering style they favoured.

“I accept the apology”
The words were soft, barely breathed above him. He allowed a soft relieved smile to twist the corners of his lips.

He had not been certain of the reception to such an overt propositioning. But the worry was needless. His other self was as conceited and greedy as he himself. Even in the midst of viewing the other as a dangerous competitor, very nearly an enemy.. he would not deny himself the unparalleled satisfaction of a lover who knew exactly what he enjoyed in the secret depths of his somewhat chilly heart.

He only became aware of Caedmon when the boy shifted beneath him slightly. Both he and his other self standing to the side of him took in the slightly flushed excitement on the blonde’s face. Tom smirked broadly. The boy was so helplessly affected by the mere thought of them together. It was flattering.

“Now now, none of that Caedmon.” He chastised with amusement. “You must go up for dinner shortly. How will you achieve that if you work yourself up as you are now? You do not wish the entire school to view that which belongs to..” he hesitated and then looked up into his own face with mild consternation.

“I find it odd to refer to you by my own name. As if I were speaking in the third person.”

The other Tom tilted his head thoughtfully. “Yes.. I can see that it will become disturbing, should our association continue for any significant length of time.” He seemed to think for a moment and then snorted softly, rich delight dawning in his blue eyes.

“The solution is obvious. You.. are..and always will be Tom Riddle.” He stroked Tom’s head again with something that felt like approving appraisal.

“I am Voldemort. You will both address me as such when we are together.”

“NO!!” Caedmon’s protest was almost a yelp. “No! Tom! Don’t! – Don’t do it! Please!! You don’t understand!-“

He was cut off by the “now and ever Tom Riddle”s quick wandless silencing spell. “Caedmon! You will not challenge your Lord. You have taken his mark. You will accept any order he gives.” Tom glanced up at his other half.. the one who would be Lord Voldemort.. future marble white, snake faced fiend.

“I agree. It is for the best that we differentiate ourselves thus. I will remain tied to Hogwarts.. In my present state, I can never fully express those particular desires that we share. You shall be the dark Lord. I will remain.. a memory of who you once were. Arguably yours.. but not as they are yours.

...Never as they are yours.” He fixed the blue eyes with a warning glower but softened it almost immediately.

“Perhaps.. from time to time, you might share a memory with me.. and allow me to live a small portion of your fate vicariously.”

The gleam in the other’s eyes suggested that he found the thought quite appealing. Having someone with whom to share experiences.. someone who would not reveal anything.. who would comprehend exactly.. it was a rare thing. Something entirely new for both of them.

“Perhaps,” Voldemort agreed.
Caedmon, on the ground, was glaring and shouting silently. When he tried to struggle Tom bound him to the floor effortlessly with wandless magic.

Lacking his wand for a year, he had had no choice but to train his wandless abilities. He knew that they surpassed his other self by leaps and bounds. He had felt it when the other had fought him; had seen it in the furious surprise on his face when he was levitated away.

“May I?” he asked of his twin standing above him, without shifting his eyes away from the wriggling wizard below. Although it was not certain which of them would prevail, should they duel seriously, it was simply politic at present to defer to the other. He required a certain degree of trust from his counterpart if he wished to achieve his goals.

Receiving a brief nod from ‘Voldemort’, he smiled and lowered himself to curl around the furious blonde. Roughly, he took his mouth, avoiding the snapping teeth and nipping Caedmon’s lip sharply in chastisement. It was a delicate maneuver to kiss his way down the boy’s jaw, with Caedmon struggling. In the end he held his chin in place firmly and resolutely nibbled his way down to the boy’s ear.

“This was always going to happen, Caedmon” he murmured softly against the shell of the pretty wizard’s ear. “Do not fight what has already occurred.” He took the opportunity to suck Caedmon’s earlobe gently, nibbling and enjoying the unwilling pleasured spasms of the smaller boy.

As an afterthought, he reiterated clearly in a barely breathed whisper “And do not tell him anything unless you wish him to be perpetually enslaved to Grindelwald.”

When he shifted his attention to the length of Caedmon’s extraordinarily sensitive throat, and the boy started to writhe and mewl, Voldemort grew less tolerant.

“Enough! My patience is rather thin at present and you are testing it again. Release him!”

Tom complied at once, even going so far as to offer a subservient little nod to the other boy standing above him. He climbed lithely to his feet and stepped back, dispelling the restraining charms upon Caedmon with a wave.

The waifish blonde got up hesitantly, his eyes flicking between them both distrustfully.

“I’m not going to call you Voldemort” he said in a peevish voice. Tom smirked inwardly even as he placed a disapproving frown on his face that he knew, without even looking, mirrored that of his twin exactly.

It was obvious that he was right by the way Caedmon stepped back in surprise and swallowed meekly.

“Could.. er.. could you not both do that..” the blonde mumbled unsettled.

“Caed.. You may call me Tom when we are above ground.. when we are among my death eaters or within this chamber, I wish you to call me by my chosen name. Say it.”

This provoked a nervous headshake. Caedmon refused.

‘Voldemort’ stepped closer, a dangerous expression on his face. Tom was not sure whether he was thinking to punish Caedmon. As it turned out, he did not. He moved against him and wrapped his arms around the smaller boy gently.

“Caed.. It is only a name.. You are my bonded. What need have you to fear me as the others will?! Say the word for me.. Say my name. You have spoken it before.. Nothing has changed.”
Caedmon snorted. “I don’t want you to be Voldemort. I hate him. I’m not going to call you that all the time. I don’t even want to think about it when I’m with you. The only way I can live with what i’m doing is by telling myself that you’re not Voldemort yet; that Tom Riddle is not the same as Lord Voldemort.”

Both Tom’s laughed softly and glanced at one another, knowing they had each thought the same thing. Voldemort voiced it.

“Tom Riddle is not the same as Lord Voldemort. He is Tom Riddle. I am Lord Voldemort. No more confusion. As you are mine.. as you have told me that you love me.. it is Lord Voldemort that you love. Do you understand?”

Shaking his head, Caedmon protested again weakly. “No. I won’t do it. You’re not him.. I can’t let you become him.”

Tom interjected at this point, irritated with how close the boy was to expressing exactly what the problem was. “Caedmon – you have no choice. This is the way things are and the way they must be. He is Lord Voldemort. You will accept it. It is pointless to debate this further.”

“Yes.. quite. And we will be late for dinner if we do not leave soon” his doppelganger added.

“But..”
It was clear that the blond was weakening. The despair on his face was quite beautiful. Tom mused for a moment upon how enjoyable Lord Voldemort might find it in the future to torture the tragic little analogue and wondered whether he would be offered the memory to sample. Probably not, he reasoned. Whether the other man realised it or not, he would be jealously possessive of the boy called Harry Potter. Tom suspected that the memories he would willingly share, should he share any at all, would likely revolve around his other activities with his servants.

It would matter little though. From what he had seen, Lord Voldemort would be indisposed for over a decade and would be a monster thereafter.
He, on the other hand, would be an immovable fixture of the castle. He could watch Caedmon grow up. He could sleep in his bed next to him if he wished, and no one would ever discover him. Of course.. Caedmon would be a child for much of that time unfortunately. Tom hoped suddenly that he would not be so maddened by the years of separation from his bonded that he no longer cared for Caedmon’s age. He reassured himself – the memories had proven that Caedmon had been virginal when he had bonded. That was evidence enough that he would be able to control himself.
He sighed, thinking of the long wait that was unavoidably looming ahead in his future.

‘Voldemort’ misinterpreting his sigh, informed him in a low non-negotiable tone that he would return in the morning with Caedmon. He nodded and stepped away from them both, turning toward the shelves of books broodingly.

“Which-“

The hand on his shoulder stopped him. He half turned and sucked in an inadvertant gasp as his mirror image caught him up in an unexpected kiss. It was sweet and unnaturally graceful as they each moved in seemingly perfectly choreographed intermeshing patterns; their motions mirror imaging one another automatically. He groaned as his questing tongue met the tip of Voldemort’s and they each delved, unwilling to retreat. When they pulled apart Tom observed that he was not the only one breathing hard and knew that the fire he saw in the blue eyes was reflected in his own.

“I regret that you must remain down here alone tonight” his doppelganger said quietly with a
slightly husky voice. Tom smiled at him, understanding his implication well. Voldemort continued with a mien of faint indecision - “We will speak again tomorrow regarding who is to attend classes and what the other will do in the interim.”

This was encouraging. His other self might be prepared to compromise somewhat now, Tom thought. He swallowed to clear his throat, hoping to clear the same lust from it that he had heard in the other’s tone.

“Which text will you require translated? I shall begin it tonight. I will have ..very little else to do.” The words were suggestive enough without the low faint breathiness of his voice. He cursed himself for the weakness he had displayed.

Voldemort smiled. “I had thought... Mercebo? It is of some value – I would prefer not to offer it, but I do not wish him to think that Slytherin had no works of great worth. The spells in the Mercebo text will appeal to his hate for all things Muggle.”

Tom did not need to acknowledge it. It lay unspoken between them both – ‘if Grindelwald is preoccupied with cursing and toying with muggles, perhaps he will leave me alone.’

“It is a good choice. I will begin it after I have prepared my evening meal. With concentration I may be finished before I retire for the night.”

“I appreciate that”

The words sounded genuine. Tom wondered whether his other half might be motivated to show his appreciation tomorrow. He knew from experience that he had done so with others more than a few times. Obedience put him in a generous mood if the wizard in question was worthy of respect.

“Caed. Come now.”

Tom watched as the blonde, still flushed and excited from watching them, trailed after his other self as he strode imperiously out of the room.

After a few moments there was the soft crunching as both made their way through the bones and dry scaly skins of Seshastra’s antechamber. Then he heard the Basilisk slithering back into its nest and, finally, the grinding of the door.

Seshastra moved about for a while, ordering his coils into a more comfortable configuration, but soon enough all was silent.

He sighed softly. The silence was loathsome to him. He had been too long in silence. Pacing restlessly to the bookcase he drew Mercebo’s “Subjugating the Barbarian” from the third shelf.

Hopefully, if all went well, he would not have to endure the silence down here perpetually. He would have his other half to visit him and break up the months. It was almost certain that he could find or create some form of invisibility spell that might allow him to walk among the students undetected. He could spend his time observing them, when he grew weary of the silence. Perhaps he might even have the opportunity to select the promising individuals for his doppelganger who would be out in the world. It would be a small matter to pass the names on to him every few months or so.

Assuming that everything proceeded as he anticipated, it would not be too burdensome to remain here, he told himself.
Somewhat reassured he summoned parchment and picked up the fine black feather quill, opening the text to the first page.

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