Desert Flowers

by Gleas

Summary

Azkaban is destroyed in War and there's nowhere to put prisoners. Ministry decides to allow 'good' citizens to take charge of a prisoner. Despite all he gave up, Severus finds himself one of the prisoners with no one willing to be his jailer until an unexpected savior steps forward.

This Fic is written in two distinct POVs to start off. You may notice the first few chapters showing same dialogue, showing Severus' and then Harry's Experiences. I initially wanted to do them as two companion fics but this seems to be the better way. I hope it makes a good read.

It may seem like a depressing story but I promise there is plenty of fluff in there! Please pay attention to the warnings.

Warnings: Angst, Slash, slavery, Dubious consent (nearly rape), drunkenness, mentions of abuse.

Notes

Disclaimer: The Characters and the original story are not mine; All credit goes to JK Rowling. This is my version of after and purely for fun. No profit is made from this work!

Warnings: Please read the tags. If you have issues with any, do not read this fic! I promise
you a happy ending even if some parts may make you cringe or cry....!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Too many Criminals?

The Ministry has recently announced a disturbing fact. Azkaban is unable to hold more than fifty odd inmates while there are hundreds of criminals yet to be tried for crimes against magic itself. The Wizengamot has been in meetings these past two days to determine a solution to this problem while the accused are cramped in ministry holding cells and at Hogwarts under strong wards.

One might wonder how a fortress such as Azkaban has so little space but it is a fact. The blame lies squarely at the feet of the recently destroyed dark lord Voldemort. In his two successful attempts at freeing his followers, the leader of the terrorist organization called death-eaters had in fact destroyed majority of the Azkaban castle. This left less than an eighth of the castle not in ruins and thus led to the present issue.

To repair the castle, it would take tremendous amount of gold and manpower, both of which are in shortage while we are still rebuilding our society. In the future, the castle may be repaired sufficiently to resume its full capacity but for now the governing bodies have concluded that only the most dangerous criminals would be held in the prison.

Most active Death-eaters are expected to receive the 'kiss' or the 'veil', however a choice few have not committed heinous crimes. Some were forced into the service of the mad-man to protect their own and some were too weak to resist the allure. Though they too will face punishment for their crimes, they will be spared the trip to the dreaded prison.

"We have to consider those who took their marks when underaged under orders from their parents and those who did so to protect their families. Many marked at the onset of the second war were underaged, Hogwarts students and to punish them for something they did not choose is simply not right." Interim Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt commented. "The crimes they did commit during the war will be taken into account, however their sentence will be carried out with upstanding citizens who are able to help them reintegrate into society."

The ministry is still deciding on who they would consider to watch over the young miscreants, however, it is clear that they are aiming for fairness, so as to avoid events like Lord Sirius Black's illegal incarceration.

Some speculate all 'junior' death-eater will serve a blanket sentence of five years either in a group settlement or individually. Their assets will be frozen and released to them once the house arrest (essentially) is completed. The ministry is set to provide a stipend for day-to-day expenses to the good citizens who would be entrusted this task.

Others who may get leniency include the spouses of active terrorists who were unable to or unwilling to escape, those who spied for the Light, and those who stood against the dark in the end. The sentence duration is expected to vary depending on several factors. For more information on the trials turn to page 5; for more on final battle page 8, for rebuilding efforts pages 10-11.

Severus read the article with growing horror. His instincts were warning him that this was not good
news at all—well at least he had managed to get his hands on the paper that day and actually knew what the hell was going on out there. He wasn't sure what would happen or who would get him— for he knew Albus ensured his true allegiances would be known once the war was over. He just wasn't sure about whoever would be made his minder. He had no doubt it would be an unpleasant experience.

He was proven right when a few days later the 'temporary bonding' idea floated around. No bonding was temporary. One could break a bond but there would always be a link of sorts but of course, that was overlooked. What bothered him was the rumors that the 'bond' was a slave bond. The ramifications were immense. They were horrible. They wouldn't die but there could be worse things. The 'juniors' were somewhat protected as their assets were being frozen. However, people like himself had not safety for material possessions. Should his third, unwanted, master decide to drain his vaults and steal all his hard work, he would not be able to stop him or her. His dreams, his plans of a potions business, everything was vanishing before his eyes.

His dread though turned to mortification when not one of them came forward to help him. The thought of the bond was distasteful but he had hoped one of his Slytherins would take pity on him or someone on the light side would stand up for their spy. He had watched as his too young students were claimed by neutral sides of their families and in some cases friends who managed to escape the war. He watched the lower level death-eaters being relieved when someone they knew took on the responsibility for them. However, when it came to him, not one person rose, not one met his pleading eyes.

"I'll do it." A clear strong voice rang out, quite suddenly.

Severus blinked and tried to turn to face the male voice but it was hard in these heavy chains. murmuring broke out making Severus even more nervous.

"I also believe the sentence is unjust; Severus Snape has been a spy for the light since the first war. He deserves more consideration. Treating him, a hero by all rights, like one of those cowardly death-eaters is unfair. He was never there due to fear or helplessness. He could have escaped anytime… but he stayed so we could have a chance to win." A hush fell over the chamber and Severus closed his eyes trying to stop his tears; someone understood, someone stood up for him.

"It was a decision made previously."

"This case is a special case, if there ever was one. Snape was a spy for the light, he is one of the war heroes that should be honored." The deep male voice said softly, daring anyone to disagree- it reminded Severus of Albus, bringing more unwanted emotions to the fore. Maybe he would get away with nothing?

"We will deliberate." The Chief Warlock sighed and motioned to his peers to follow him into the antechamber. While Severus wondered about his fate, the Wizengamot returned and took their seats.

"After much deliberation, we have decided that this case is indeed an unusual case. As Severus Snape was not a willing Death-eater, he cannot be awarded ten years of punishment as the other older followers of the dark lord." Severus took a deep breath, waiting for the axe to fall. "It has been decided to award the accused the five year term. However, taking into account his active contributions to aid the light and protect our children, the sentence will be split." Oh, he just knew there was a 'but' in there somewhere. "The first three years will be spent under close scrutiny with the bond in place. The bond will be dissolved thereafter and the following two years will only require distant monitoring by the minder… Is that acceptable, Mr. Potter?"

"So, I have to keep him locked up for three years or accompany him whenever he goes out. After that he can have a semblance of freedom with regular checks from me." The deep voice summarized, sounding annoyed. "Fine. Let's do this."

Footsteps approached the dais where Severus was tied up. Rough hands pulled him up and pushed him down on his knees and his head was forced down for the binding ceremony. A spell later his chains vanished, leaving behind only the magic-inhibiting cuffs. A hand was laid on his head; it felt heavy and uncomfortable but Severus dared not move. A chant was taken up and Severus felt pain shoot through his core, binding his magic and will to his new 'master'. He would have collapsed if not for the hand threaded through his long hair. He gasped as his breath was momentarily stolen and then leaned against the strong legs in front of him. A moment later, the hand withdrew and he was made to stand. He wobbled a little but soon blinked up at the man who had fought for him and at the same time became his master.

"Potter…" He whispered, horrified.

"Let's go. We're done here." The voice was cold and the emerald eyes devoid of glasses and all emotion. Severus felt himself nodding and walking with the Man-Who-Conquered, vaguely realizing the other wizard had a death grip on his upper arm.
Unexpected Choice

Chapter Summary

Severus is horrified and numb at what is happening. What about Harry? Read to find out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He should have known the moment that the article came out, he would be dragged into it. Harry was none too happy housing a dark git in his house but the Wizengamot all but ordered the majority of the seventeen to thirty year olds to offer their services. He knew he'd be saddled with at least one. What he didn't know was that he would willingly choose to take in someone.

When he saw the potions master and ex-spy dragged to the unforgiving chair, his heart had tugged at him painfully. The man had given practically his whole life to protect the students and had done what he could to help end this war. What did he get in return? Just looking at him was a disgusting display of the thanklessness he had come to expect from the wizarding world. Snape's clothes were barely held together, torn and tattered, showing his bruised and no doubt abused body.

He had sat stiffly, sure that the ex-spy had allies on both sides and someone would stand for him and he'd have to suffer no longer. This was a man he grudgingly respected, the bravest man he knew, braver than himself and Dumbledore combined… to have done what he did. He sighed heavily and waited.

At first he thought someone had immediately spoken for the dour man but the expression on Snape's face soon told him that despite the number of sacrifices he had made for a number of people in the chamber, not one of them wanted the responsibility of looking after him. Not only that, he realized with a start that Severus Snape was getting the full ten-year sentence like those bloody cowardly death-eaters who only defected because they realized which side was winning! Before he knew it righteous anger overtook him and he was standing, several pairs of eyes staring at him in bewilderment.

"I'll do it." His voice came out clear and strong, and entirely too foreign to even himself. Apparently, he was able to have a biting tone to his voice- he almost snorted but that would have been counter-productive.

He could see Snape trying to turn towards where he no doubt noted his voice had come from but it was hard in those heavy chains. He was quite annoyed when murmurs filled the chamber- as if he didn't have enough of a headache. He decided to push ahead, and say his piece, showing his full disapproval and ire in his words… ironically or not, it was skill he tried to copy from Snape himself with a dash of Dumbledore.

"I also believe the sentence is unjust. Severus Snape has been a spy for the light since the first war. He deserves more consideration. Treating him, a hero by all rights, like one of those cowardly death-eaters is unfair and wrong. He was never there due to fear or helplessness. He could have escaped anytime… but he stayed… so that we could have a chance to win." A hush fell over the chamber as his words sunk into the rather small brains wizards and witches tended to have.
"It was a decision made previously..." One of the fools spoke; a miracle surely.

"This is a special case, if there ever was one. Snape was a spy for the light, he is one of the war heroes that should be honored." He said softly, stressing on the important words, daring anyone to disagree. He almost wanted someone to say something so he could unload all his frustrations on that being... unfortunately, it seemed the Wizengamot weren't complete fools.

"We will deliberate." The interim Chief Warlock, Amos Diggory, sighed and motioned to his peers to follow him into the antechamber. Harry folded his arms across his chest and glared at anyone who even looked like they wanted to comment. The chamber remained utterly silent until the Wizengamot returned. Hermione was beside him, biting her lip but she knew better than bother him at the moment.

"After much deliberation, we have decided that this is indeed an unusual case. As Severus Snape was not a willing Death-eater, he cannot be awarded ten years of punishment as the other older followers of the dark lord." Harry raised a brow; wasn't that fairly obvious? Idiots. "It has been decided to award the accused the five year term." Diggory continued. Harry wondered if he should bash their heads together- the man had helped them win, he deserved better! Just as he was about to speak, Diggory continued hurriedly, sweat forming over his forehead. "However, taking into account his active contributions to aid the light and protect our children, the sentence will be split. The first three years will be spent under close scrutiny with the bond in place. The bond will be dissolved thereafter and the following two years will only require distant monitoring by the minder... Is that acceptable, Mr. Potter?"

Acceptable? No, no it was not. However, given the obstinacy of the Wizengamot, this was better than he had expected. It would no doubt be unpleasant and his house might end up getting blown up or maybe they'd kill each other... but at least, he, Harry, would treat Severus Snape with the respect (within reason, of course) he deserves. He had no doubt some of those on the 'light' and 'neutral' side would torture the man further with malice matching Voldemort's. He needed to get his 'saving people thing' under control, he mused and straightened.

"So, I have to keep him locked up for three years or accompany him whenever he goes out. After that he can have a semblance of freedom with regular checks from me." He really could not help sounding annoyed and Hermione gasped a little, realizing he was willingly doing this. "Fine. Let's do this."

He approached the dais where Severus was tied up. Harry frowned when Snape was pulled up and pushed down on his knees, none too gently. Did his words fall on deaf ears? Snape wasn't even struggling! They had no reason to treat him like that, other than being royal prats. He kept his face emotionless when the normally proud man's head was forced down in submission and humiliation for the binding ceremony. How he wished to strangle whoever had this brilliant idea.

A spell later the heavy chains vanished, leaving behind only the magic-inhibiting cuffs. After only a moment, Harry put his hand on Snape's head. He suddenly wanted to collapse as the realization he was binding someone to himself as a bloody slave hit him and made him nauseous. He almost harshly gripped the grimy hair under his hand but centered himself as well as he could. A chant was taken up and he felt magic swirling around them and something made contact with his core, binding Snape's magic and will to his new 'master'. Harry was utterly disgusted with himself at that point but there was no turning back. His hand threaded through Snape's long matted hair and he realized, belatedly, he was holding up the man by his hair... but there was no way in hell he would let Severus Snape fall any further, he would not allow this man to be humiliated anymore! He gently pushed so that Snape's forehead rested on his knees. It was a subtle move, one no one would even
notice. He gave Snape, he supposed he should use his first name given their situation, a moment to collect himself and lifted him up by the shoulders. He left one of his hands there as support, pretending to study his new 'slave' until Severus regained his footing. He withdrew his hand as obsidian eyes looked up at him for the first time that day. Merlin! The man hadn't even known who he was being bound to!

"Potter…" Severus Snape whispered, horrified and Harry's stomach fell at the utter desolation in the face that he was so used to seeing be strong.

"Let's go. We're done here." His voice came out cold but right now, he was too emotionally distraught to care. He vaguely realized he had a death grip on Severus' upper arm, probably creating a bruise but his hand refused to loosen the grip, as if afraid that doing so would mean he would fall apart right there… he would not allow either of them to show weakness to those fools; with that thought, he quickly marched them to the apparition point.

Chapter End Notes

The first few chapters are slightly repetitive, especially dialogue, as the POV shifts between Harry and Severus.
Severus was a bit dazed as he was apparated away and then dragged none too gently to the kitchen of Grimmauld place. He recognized the surroundings immediately and looked around at the few changes, like the color of the curtains.

“Sit.” The order came and Severus didn’t, couldn’t resist. “I am only doing this because it is the right thing to do.” The man sighed wearily. Severus understood. There really was no love lost between Harry Potter and he, but he was still thankful to the man for what he had done earlier.

“This place is large enough for both of us… we should be able to get through this without killing each other.” He mused; Severus nodded slightly. “I have some rules.” Potter announced and Severus stiffened. “I want you to be civil. It doesn’t matter if it’s me or one of my guests, you will try your best to not insult people. Understand?”

Severus nodded, it was only expected. Then he frowned, he would have required a verbal answer from his students and he should follow his own standards. “Yes, sir.” He winced at how submissive he sounded but he couldn’t help it. Potter could beat him black and blue, if he wanted and it would now be his right… as long as he didn’t kill Severus.

“Just address me as Harry.” Potter… no, Harry sighed again. Severus was starting to hate all the sighing.

Alright, Harry. Please call me Severus.” He said politely. Well, his tone could have used some help but he did say please…. He peeked at the shocked teen for just a second before lowering his eyes back down, fighting a grin.

“I was planning to.” Harry choked out finally. Severus wanted to snort but he didn’t fancy getting punished just yet; he was still sore from the ‘fun’ his guards had the previous few nights, throwing painful hexes at him.

Anyway, Severus… I know you’ll be bored in here, so I’m letting you use the potions lab. Let me know if you need anything. I suppose you could brew all the ones we’d need around the house…” It was a thinly veiled order or was it a suggestion? However, Severus would feel much better if he had his own brews to use when needed- just some burn salve and blood replenishers and maybe a few other mild draughts.

“I suppose you could help clean this place up when you can.” Harry wrinkled his nose. “There are a few places you won’t have access to.” He continued. Severus looked up in interest. “The library for one.” Severus frowned. “Some of the books bite and you’re not allowed your wand yet.” He explained and the potions master nodded in understanding. “There’s a trophy room up in third floor with similar enchantments; avoid it as well.” There was a pause. “Any questions?”
“Where shall I sleep?” Severus asked softly. Potter was likely to give him some cold dungeon cell with barely a cot and maybe a chamber pot. He’d be surprised if he wasn’t locked in.

“I’ll show you.” Harry said. “Come.” And Severus followed dejectedly. He was very confused when they went up the stairs instead of down, where the cells were. He was led into a beige colored room, roughly the size of his old quarters, a bit larger since it was not divided into rooms. There was a queen sized bed covered with a warm looking comforter and a multitude of fluffy pillows. The room had a large window overlooking the back garden, a dresser with a medium sized mirror, a set of armchairs by the fireplace and a sofa set surrounding a tea table. Under his bare feet was a plush brown carpet which Severus enjoyed immensely. There were two mahogany doors to the side but Severus dared not ask.

“You’ll stay here.” Harry announced. “I’m just up the hall… the big black door with all the silver embellishing.” He informed the man. “One of those doors leads to the bathroom and the other a wardrobe.” He pointed. “The window is charmed to only allow air and light in, so don’t do anything foolish.” He added. Severus sorely wanted to point out that the action was more the green-eyed man’s style, not his, but he held his tongue. “First things first…. get out of those clothes.”

“What?”

“Those are filthy.” Harry waved his hand to indicate the torn, bloodied and barely held together robes. “Remove them and take a bath.” Severus sighed… that was an order but was he allowed to go into the bathroom first? Probably not, how else would he be humiliated? He tugged at his buttons and slid out of the tattered robe, noting idly that it actually only managed to cover his sides all this time. His once pristine white shirt was in similar state, slashed several different ways to show his pale, bruised skin.

“What in the world….” Harry hissed.

Suddenly, Severus was very scared as his hands were pushed away and his shirt ripped off of him. Harry stared at his front riddled with whip marks for a while. There may have been some hex marks and burns as well.

“Turn round.” Harry demanded. Severus really didn’t want to… but it was a command and a slave couldn’t disobey. “They hexed you…” Harry said quietly, cold fingers tracing a particularly painful welt. “Are you hurt anywhere else?” He asked softly, almost kindly but Severus knew better than to trust that voice. He shook his head.

“Tell me the truth.” Damn it, not again.

“My… derriere… thighs and soles…” Severus whispered.

“Remove them.” Harry ordered and watched as the last piece of tattered clothing left his body. Severus felt exposed and ashamed and definitely humiliated. He hoped Potter would leave him be soon.

Instead of laughing or mocking him, Harry took his hand and led him into the bathroom. Severus stared confused as Harry ran the bath, checking the temperature. He led him into the bath and told him to stay there. He returned a moment later with something light green and poured it into the bath. Severus recognized the substance as a healing bath potion and stared at the man confused. His confusion increased as his hair was washed for him and he did not struggle at all.

He was finally allowed out when his skin was rather wrinkled and was wrapped in a large warmed white towel. Another towel was used to dry his hair. Severus wondered at his docility but was too
tired to really care.

“Your hair is rather pretty.” Harry commented, brushing the length of it with his fingers. It had grown rather long in captivity, reaching his waist. He personally thought the length was cumbersome but didn’t comment.

“Lie down on the bed.” Harry commanded. Severus did so fearfully but soon he had gentle fingers rubbing in what must be a healing paste. He wondered where Potter got these things but didn’t actually care. “Turn over.” He did, not even bothered that he was essentially on display for his former student. He did notice when Harry’s fingers covered a particular welt that went dangerously near his traitorous member. Before the blush could become a stutter, Harry was done and he got up.

“Put these on and come down to the kitchen.” He told the older man and left. Confused, Severus put on the dark brown silk (silk? Why silk?) pajamas and followed, completely unaware of just how well the clothing fit his slim body. He didn’t notice Harry’s sharp intake of breath as he entered the kitchen either.

“Sit.” Harry said shortly, placing two bowls of hot soup on the table, one at the head and one beside it. Severus automatically went for the seat he had commonly occupied in order meetings, beside Albus at the head.

“Eat up. There’s more.” Harry informed him. Severus dug in thankfully and grabbed a warm roll to go with the soup. Halfway through the meal Harry spoke again. “I’ve fitted the place with muggle appliances, so if you need to, you can cook. Kreacher is really no good at cooking, so you’ll probably end up cooking quite a bit.”

“That’s fine.” Severus said quietly.

“More often than not I get take-out.” Harry added and received a small nod. “I’m done, so I’ll head up to sleep…”

“Okay.” Severus said softly, not meeting Harry’s eyes. “Goodnight, Harry.” He added, to be polite.

“Good night.” The answer came after a pause but it did come. As Harry trudged up the stairs, Severus finished up and gathered the dishes. He knew it’d be his job to cook and probably clean up as well, and it was better than what he expected. Harry had given him a comfortable room and so far was treating him well, so he should probably cooperate and not irritate the man. He quickly washed the dishes and secured the food, before tiredly making his way to bed. Just before he slipped in, he found two vials of potion- one pain relief and the other a general healing potion. He downed them both without thought and slipped into his warm bed.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the wonderful response!
Expectations

Chapter Summary

The first interaction between Severus and Harry. Harry's POV.

It was obvious Severus was a bit dazed but at the moment, Harry just needed a moment to collect himself and just dragged the wizard to the kitchen. Severus likely recognized the surroundings immediately as he was looking around at the few changes Harry had made.

“Sit.” He winced as he realized it was a direct order and Severus didn’t, couldn’t, resist. “I am only doing this because it is the right thing to do.” He declared, deciding to just get through this and ignore any missteps; after all he was supposedly the ‘master’. He sighed wearily; why him? Why did he take on these ridiculous thankless tasks?

“This place is large enough for both of us… we should be able to get through this without killing each other.” He mused; Severus nodded slightly. “I have some rules.” He announced as it was only appropriate to outline what was expected- he didn’t want a bloody house-elf and he didn’t want any misunderstandings later on. He did notice when Severus stiffened but decidedly ignored it. “I want you to be civil. It doesn’t matter if it’s me or one of my guests, you will try your best to not insult people. Understand?”

Severus nodded, slowly, an action that was a bit resigned. Then the man frowned and suddenly answered clearly “Yes, sir.” Harry winced at how submissive Severus sounded; ‘sir’… never in his wildest dream would he have imagined Snape calling him ‘sir’. It was testimony to how truly helpless Severus must feel to do so, without prompting. Harry found himself softening despite himself.

“Just address me as Harry.” He sighed again- this was going to take a lot of work.

“Alright, Harry. Please call me Severus.” Severus said politely. That … was… completely, utterly, weird and Harry was fully aware of the gobsmacked look he must be wearing.

“I was planning to.” Harry choked out finally. Merlin, he was going to die young… of a heart attack, of all things under the sun.

“Anyway, Severus… I know you’ll be bored in here, so I’m letting you use the potions lab. Let me know if you need anything. I suppose you could brew all the ones we’d need around the house…” He suggested, pleased when Severus’ face immediately turned calculating, probably deciding which ones he should brew.

“I suppose you could help clean this place up when you can.” Harry wrinkled his nose, he would actually appreciate any and all help- the place was nearly a dump. “There are a few places you won’t have access to.” He continued carefully. Severus looked up in interest. “The library for one.” Severus frowned, as he knew he would. Harry almost smirked; who knew he could guess the man’s responses so accurately? “Some of the books bite and you’re not allowed your wand yet.” He explained and the potions master nodded in understanding. “There’s a trophy room up in third floor
with similar enchantments avoid it as well.” He paused, allowing for all that to sink in. “Any questions?”

“Where shall I sleep?” Severus asked softly. It looked to him as if Snape was expecting to be locked up in one of the cold cells in the dungeons and frankly, it broke Harry’s overly kind heart to see it.

“I’ll show you.” Harry said softly. “Come.” Severus followed dejectedly but Harry knew that expression would soon leave him when he saw which room he had selected for his house-guest (yes, that was a much better moniker than ‘slave’). He led them into a beige colored room, roughly the size of two Gryffindor dormitories combined, maybe a bit larger since it was not divided into rooms and didn’t have as many wardrobes. There was a queen sized bed covered with a warm looking comforter and a multitude of fluffy pillows. The room had a large window overlooking the back garden, a dresser with a medium sized mirror, a set of armchairs by the fireplace and a curved sofa seat surrounding a tea table. Under their feet was a plush brown carpet. There were two mahogany doors to the side leading to a bathroom and a decent sized wardrobe.

“You’ll stay here.” Harry announced. “I’m just up the hall… the big black door with all the silver embellishing.” He informed the man. “One of those doors leads to the bathroom and the other a wardrobe.” He pointed. “The window is charmed to only allow air and light in, so don’t do anything foolish.” He added, just in case. It was one of the protections already in place on all the windows and he had not seen any wisdom in removing the enchantments. He observed the potions master take in his new room in quiet awe, holding back his reactions but still managing to look pleased. Harry’s eyes trailed over his thin form and his eyes flashed in anger.

“First things first…. get out of those clothes.” He told the man.

“What?!” Severus jumped and unconsciously crossed his arms around himself.

“Those are filthy.” Harry said casually as he waved his hand to indicate the torn, bloodied and barely held together robes. “Remove them and take a bath.”

Severus sighed… He probably was embarrassed about his less than perfect state but it would be soon fixed. Harry’s eyes widened as the man unbuttoned his robes and let it fall. Bloody hell! He hadn’t meant right here! He was supposed to go into the bathroom and do his thing… privately! He was about to shout something to that effect when he froze. The once white shirt was practically hanging on his shoulders covering very little; there were a few strips going across the torso but that was not what had Harry’s attention.

“What in the world….” Harry hissed. The shirt was red and from what he could see, the man was covered in worse bruises than he had imagined. He was bleeding and some of those deeper wounds were definitely infected! What had those morons done to him?! Harry ripped away the shirt in his rage and stared at the damage. The whip marks criss-crossed Severus’ chest and there were marks indicating hexes and unmistakable burn marks.

“Turn around.” Harry demanded stiffly. He could tell Severus really didn’t want to… but it was a command and he couldn’t disobey. “They hexed you…” Harry said quietly, cold fingers tracing a particularly painful welt. “Are you hurt anywhere else?” He asked softly, trying his best to stamp down his anger and be gentle towards his charge. Severus shook his head adamantly.

“Tell me the truth.” Damn it, did he think he couldn’t tell a truth from a lie?

“My… derriere… thighs and soles…” Severus whispered.

“Remove them.” Harry ordered and watched as the last piece of tattered clothing left the painfully
thin body; did they even feed him? Harry examined all the wounds, mentally cataloguing them and then took the older man’s hand and led him into the bathroom. Harry was aware of Severus staring at his back as Harry ran the bath, checking the temperature. He led the older wizard into the bath and told him to stay there. He returned a moment later with a potion which would draw out and neutralize most of the infection and start the healing process. From what he had seen, Severus would benefit from a nice soak in it with some salve applied afterwards. He popped the cork and poured the entire vial into the bath, knowing the usual dose might not be enough.

Harry ignored the confused stares and gently washed the long straight hair; it would have been torture in itself to have to do it himself, Harry figured, as was washing his own back with all the injuries. He allowed Severus to come out when he was properly resembled a prune and wrapped him up in a large warmed white towel. Another towel was used to dry his hair; by this point, Harry was almost on automated mode. He mused that Snape must be very tired and sore to not even protest at his treatment.

“Your hair is rather pretty.” Harry commented, brushing the length of it with his fingers and finding the strands silky, though a bit dull; no doubt due to the bad treatment Severus must have received in the past two months. It had grown rather long in captivity, reaching his waist and Harry may never admit it, but he liked how the length framed the man so well.

“Lie down on the bed.” Harry commanded. Severus did so allowing him rub in some healing balm. He was very careful not to aggravate any wounds and made sure to cast that spell that kept the balm in place despite clothing and such.

“Turn over.” He again unconsciously commanded and winced; he had gotten used to telling people what to do during the war and it would take conscious effort to *not* do it with Severus. It was a little strange that the older wizard was not bothered that he was essentially on display for his former student but he supposed it was all due to tiredness; the evil bat of the dungeons would likely be back the next day or so. He discreetly waved his wand to find any internal injuries and noted a bit of bruising and a hairline fracture along his femur. He nodded to himself and quietly spelled a pain potion into the man, until he could get some more potions into him.

“Put these on and come down to the kitchen.” He told the older man, handing him a set of pajamas and left.

Harry went and set about heating up canned soup and warmed a few bread rolls that Kreacher had made earlier. He was thinking about what he could do to get back at the gits who hurt Severus like that when the man himself entered wearing the silk pajamas. Harry had to blink and take in a sharp breath. The chocolate brown actually softened Severus’ dark brown eyes. The sizing spell on the pajamas meant that they fit the man precisely right and hugged him in all the right places… like that slim waist or the gentle curve of his hip… The flowing raven hair did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm he felt in his pants. He gulped and turned around to grab the soup.

“Sit.” Harry said shortly, trying very hard not to blush at his reaction to a man who was twenty years his senior, his former hated professor and now his charge and house-guest. He sat down placing two bowls of hot soup on the table, one at the head and one beside it. Severus automatically went for the seat he commonly occupied in order meetings, beside Albus at the head. Harry smiled a little at that.

“Eat up. There’s more.” Harry informed him softly and watched as Severus dug in thankfully and grabbed a warm roll to go with the soup. It was obvious he had been starved as the amount he ate was nowhere near enough for a man his size but Harry was satisfied he ate all his soup, at least.

Half way through the meal Harry spoke again. “I’ve fitted the place with muggle appliances, so if you need to, you can cook. Kreacher is really no good at cooking, so you’ll probably end up cooking
quite a bit.”

“That’s fine.” Severus said quietly.

“More often than not I get take-out.” Harry added waving a hand to the number of take-out menus on the table and received a small nod. “I’m done, so I’ll head up to sleep…” Harry hesitated as he didn’t want to order the man to bed; he simply trailed off in a private huff.

“Okay.” Severus said softly, not meeting Harry’s eyes. “Goodnight, Harry.” He added, surprising the younger wizard.

“Good night.” Harry said after a pause, figuring Severus was responsible enough to get himself to bed.

Harry made a quick stop at the potions lab where he stored his home-made and bought potions, selecting the few he wanted Severus to take. He found a higher level pain relief potion and the a general healing potion for the deeper bruising and the minor fracture; he toyed with the idea of giving the man dreamless sleep but decided to hold back the addictive potion to avoid any future dependency and for the times when either of them had nightmares. He left the two vials on Severus’ bedside table, wondering what was taking the man so long, but he decided not to crowd him and left for his own bed.
Severus settles in as best as he can while Harry tries his best to ignore he has a house guest!

They never talked beyond a civil ‘good morning’. Severus never knew where Harry was, only that he would return late each night and stumble into bed. It was like they really didn’t live in the same house. It was most certainly a fact that Harry Potter was ignoring his very existence.

It hurt but he had expected it. He was a nobody. He was worse than that to Potter; he had treated the boy with utter contempt and derision, why then would Potter want him anywhere near? The only reason Potter had spoken for him was because it was the right thing to do, not because he cared.

He went about his day tiredly. It was tiresome to live, to eat and to function in any way. However, things were expected of him in return for Potter’s kindness. He got up early and cooked breakfast. There was no way to avoid Potter in the mornings so they sat in silence as they ate what he had prepared. After they were done, Potter left to wherever he went these days while Severus cleaned up the kitchen.

Each day he chose a room to clean, the first being the half done living room. The carpet was crusted with years of grime and it was honestly disgusting. He had taken Kreature’s help to try and clean it. Once it was apparent the carpet would stay dirty, Severus pried a corner up to see what was underneath. There was a beautiful wooden flooring under the carpet. He busied himself with the dusty cabinets and the few repairs in the room. When Harry got home, he enquired if he could get rid of the carpet with Kreature’s help.

“Why?” Harry blinked in confusion.

“I’ve tried every way to clean it… it’s not salvageable… but underneath is a lovely wooden flooring…” Severus trailed off.

“That’s fine. Do what you think necessary.” Was all the man said before he took a shower, changed and left again- Severus was used to this already.

He and Kreature ripped off the carpet with glee after a simple lunch for which Potter was, as usual, not present. They set to scrubbing the floor clean and soon they had a gleaming wooden floor. Kreature was happy to help levitate the heavy ornate furniture. The old elf was also happy to restore the furniture to their former glory, making Severus’ task easier. The repairs were left for the next day.

Dinner was made and eaten with no sign of Potter. This too was the usual. Thankfully, Kreature knew warming charms quite well and Harry had a microwave, so Severus was able to leave Harry’s dinner on the table. Each night the food would disappear but Severus did not expect, nor did he receive any acknowledgement.

The days continued in this vein. Each week a new room was tackled and restored. Severus used half his time making potions and the other half cleaning with Kreature. He almost never saw Harry and he had the feeling it was on purpose. He didn’t mind. He had a good place to live, enough food and
his potions… he had survived on less. His only regret was driving Harry from his own home but he didn’t see any alternatives.

Perhaps it was guilt that drove him to do these things? He had started doing the laundry- the old elf nearly useless for longer than an hour or two. He had taken to cleaning all the common areas regularly, putting the vacuum cleaner to good use. He even cleaned up Potter’s room daily, remaking the bed and ensuring everything was in it’s proper place- the dunderhead was messy like most Gryffindors.

Kreature helped when he was able but Severus gathered the elf was over two hundred years old and didn’t have much energy to do much of anything. That explained the state of the house as it explained why Harry rarely, if ever, asked Kreature to do something. He was very curious why the elf now liked its half-blood master and the story Kreature regaled him with had him gobsmacked. Regulus had been a friend and he had truly mourned his passing. He wished the quiet man had come to him for help but back then no one could trust another. He understood Kreature’s devotion to Harry better and felt himself respecting the boy who had overcome his anger to help the distressed Kreature. Maybe one day, Harry and he could have something like trust and maybe friendship between them. Probably very, very far into the future.

He concentrated on the books Harry had thoughtfully allowed him to have- they were his own collection from his time as a professor and he was glad to have them. Apparently, Harry had sent his elf to his rooms to collect every one of his belongings. Excepting his wand, his second wand and his collection of poisons, everything was made available to him. Kreature had found an old bookcase for his room, so everything was well organized. He wondered if Harry had looked through the small sandalwood chest which contained his most precious items- Letters from Lily, pictures that had her and her parents and small mementoes of the woman who had meant so much to him. Maybe he would show them willingly to Harry one day…. maybe.
Harry made sure he was as busy as possible. He volunteered himself at Hogwarts in the morning, usually had lunch with one or more of his fellow helpers then headed to Diagon alley to help repair the damage there. He returned exhausted and barely ate the food Kreacher no doubt left out for him before literally falling into bed and deep sleep- he was fairly certain Kreacher snap-changed him into his pajamas each night. It was easy to forget there was someone else in the house and that suited Harry just fine.

Severus probably preferred it that way. The older man hated his father and hated him. There was so much history that Harry couldn’t even begin to understand the complexity of their relationship. On one hand, he respected the man, on the other, hate came as natural as breathing to them both. On one hand Snape had been his protector, on the other his constant tormentor as a child. It was confusing at best and Harry didn’t want to unravel it… not yet.

There usually was no way to avoid seeing Severus for breakfast as both rose around the same time. So Harry politely sat and ate with Severus, as fast as possible and in silence. He felt bad for some reason… maybe he should make conversation but he didn’t want to risk an explosion and in the end he left it alone. It didn’t help that Severus looked absolutely gorgeous each and every morning, sending his mind and body, traitorous the both of them, into dreamland.

He soon noticed Severus cleaning the rooms to pass time. Who knew the stern professor would actually want to do this kind of mundane household task? He knew Kreature was unable to expend that much magic in a day, so was certain the changes were Severus’. His suspicions were proven when Harry got home one day and Severus enquired if he could get rid of the carpet.

“Oh!” Harry blinked in confusion.

“I’ve tried every way to clean it… it’s not salvageable… but underneath is a lovely wooden flooring…” Severus trailed off.

“That’s fine. Do what you think necessary.” He said quickly. He was fine with Severus’ rather good tastes and more than thankful for his interest in fixing up the house. He had quickly escaped further questions as he had an appointment to keep.

He had been putting off meeting Hermione for a while now and he could no longer avoid his best friend. She was sure to grill him, over the fire if possible, about his latest disastrous decision. He was half drunk when she arrived at the pub in his private booth.

“Harry…”

“Mione!” He greeted cheerfully. “Have a drink.” He offered her a glass of firewhiskey which she thankfully took.
“How is… Professor Snape?” She asked.

“Fine. He likes fixing up the house… good taste… Kreacher helps him.” Harry answered happily.

“Oh? So you ordered him to clean your house?” Hermione said sharply.

“No!” Harry looked very offended. “I only suggested he could help, if he wanted… Only I’ve been busy so he’s sorta doing whatever he likes… asked if he could rip out the carpet today.” He giggled. “Says the wooden floor under is beautiful… can’t wait to see it.”

“You’re seriously going to let him do manual labor?” Hermione asked aghast.

“He doesn’t have to do it.” Harry said, suddenly fixing her with his stern gaze. “He has free reign of the potions lab. Kreacher has the key to a smaller vault for household expenses like food, potion stuff and more.”

“So… he chose to clean?” Hermione asked with a small frown.

“Remodel.” Harry corrected her with a goofy smile.

“Why did you do it?” She asked seriously. Harry stared at her with that scary gaze again- it was unnerving how he could turn serious from drunk silly in a matter of a moment but she was rather used to it. He remembered everything with crystal clarity too.

“If I didn’t who would have?” He asked finally.

“I don’t know…” She admitted softly.

“Whoever it would have been, would not have treated him right. To most everyone he was on the wrong side. To the dark he was the traitor. To the light and neutral… he is a death-eater.” He paused and took a deep breath. “It was the right thing to do.”

“How do you know?” She demanded.

“Mione… he came to me, bruised and bloody… After he slept, I spelled him into a short coma to fix his ribs and such.”

“What?!”

“They weren’t injuries from the battle.” He added.

“No…” She whispered horrified.

“I’m afraid this new arrangement might actually turn out to be worse for some of them…” He sighed.

“We should report it…”

“They’ll only say I did it, Mione.” Harry said tiredly. “It’s not worth it right now… but do me a favor and keep your ears open for the others… especially the juniors… There’s lot of potential there.”

“You really think…”

“Humans often turn into monsters when they hold fear and hate in their heart… it doesn’t matter if they are muggle or magical.” He stated.

“Isn’t there hate in your heart?” She asked softly.
“I make sure I’m not around enough to act on it if it is still there.” Harry sighed. “I respect him, Mione… I owe him my life, many times over. As long as he keeps on not provoking me, we’ll get along fine.”

“I see.” Hermione nodded, satisfied her friend wasn’t taking advantage of Snape. She was still troubled over the possibility of abuse among the other house-arrested death-eaters but knew she couldn’t do a thing… yet.

Harry had arranged with Minerva to send Snape’s stuff over… all of it. The aurors had only given him two sets of clothes and that was it. Minerva had one of the Hogwarts elves deliver a trunk and Harry had seen the books Severus would no doubt enjoy having. He asked the elf to wait a bit and called Kreacher to set up a bookcase in Severus’ room, to buy a new one if needed. The elves then worked together to put away all of the potions master’s things, including his special cauldrons and rare ingredients. Harry imagined the smile on those thin lips and grinned to himself.

He was soon brought out from his reverie as Hermione started to tell him something about her studies. He put all thought of Severus away and concentrated on his best friend.
One Eventful night....

Chapter Summary

Tired of never seeing his house-mate, Severus waits for Harry who comes home drunk. Things digress. Lemon alert! Slightly dub-con...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One night Severus decided to wait for Harry to come home. He had an early dinner and wasn’t in the mood to turn in. He settled in ‘his’ chair in the kitchen and read through the latest Potions Weekly that somehow had appeared on his bed one day.

It was nearly one when the man stumbled in cursing as he stubbed his toe on something. Severus merely raised a brow and ignored it and continued reading. When the man finally made it into the kitchen, it was obvious he was drunk. This fact scared Severus as he still recalled clearly when his own father came home in that state and hurt both himself and his mother. He stiffened in his chair and dared not move an inch.

Harry didn’t seem to notice the extra presence in the room as he shoveled the food down his throat sloppily. Severus didn’t even grimace at the mess that was being made. He just hoped the drunk savior would continue to not notice him but whenever was lady luck on his side?

“You…” Harry’s eyes narrowed. “Wha you doin up?” He slurred.

“Just reading, master.” Severus said softly, hoping that showing his submission so blatantly would stop any violent outbursts. He didn’t dare look up to see if it worked but knew it didn’t really when his hair was grabbed none too gently.

“You made deesh…” Potter waved over the empty plate.

“Yes…” Severus whispered, meeting the unfocused eyes. Harry Potter hummed a bit before Severus was yanked out of his seat by his hair. Before a sound of protest could even think to escape his lips, rough lips covered them and silenced the severely confused Potions master.

“Ish good.” Harry said slurring and licking his lips a bit. Severus just stared wide eyed until he was kissed again. The hand in his hair dug deeper to find a stronger hold and another hand went around his waist pulling him as close as humanly possible.

It wasn’t an angry kiss, it was passionate and rough. Severus wasn’t really sure if he wanted to respond or push the man away. His neck was attacked and his throat involuntarily produced a sound making Severus blush.

“What are you… Please… Po… Harry…” The man leaned his head against his own and Severus saw desire in the green depths as the slightly chapped lips smiled. “Please, master…” Severus whispered. Apparently, that was the wrong thing to say, as the following kiss was brutal and managed to draw blood from Severus’ abused lips.

“I’m sorry…” Severus whispered, now struggling to get out of the strong hold.
“Sh…” The man kissed his nose and temple and then licked his lower lip to sooth the hurt. Severus stopped struggling to stare once more. Then there was another kiss, an exploratory kiss, demanding, pleasurable and Severus gave up. If his master wanted a blasted kiss, he should just oblige and get it over with. His hand, previously trying to push the broad chest away, clutched at the thin fabric of the shirt and the other slid around Harry’s neck. His mouth opened of it’s own accord and the green-eyed man lost no time delving in deeper.

Severus wasn’t really sure what was happening anymore. The appendage in his mouth was everywhere, eliciting the strangest reactions from him. Then his own tongue was being sucked in and a moan ripped from his throat. He was mortified and mentally wished this torture to be over. However, Potter had other ideas as his lips moved to Severus’ slender neck and nipped at it, sucking and kissing it to soothe the skin, leaving a trail of unmistakable marks.

When the shirt he wore was in the way, it was simply ripped off. Severus started and quietly mused that that was one of the only two shirts he owned presently. His thoughts went back to being jumbled as his chest was attacked. He vaguely wondered how far Potter wanted to go.

He was pushed back until his back pressed painfully into the table, though he refused to be toppled back. He wasn’t given a choice when Potter’s foot tripped him and pushed him down triumphantly. Severus scowled at the man on top of him but it was lost as he was being kissed again. A gentle hand cupped his chin and the kiss changed, aiming to melt him on the spot. When the action made him buck into the man, Severus knew he was done for. He couldn’t resist; for some odd reason his mind was unable to think. The gentle kisses continued, making Severus moan and writhe to his eternal embarrassment, gradually becoming more demanding and possessive. Time lost all meaning as Potter ground their hips together; Severus wasn’t even aware what was happening as he was a bit lost in the distracting kisses all over his face and the deep breath-taking ones he was being bombarded with. Well, that is until, he came with a shout. Potter sucked on his neck as he seemed to loose himself entirely.

When he came to, he was alone, spread on the kitchen table, sticky with his own mess and that of Potter’s. He felt the humiliation deeply and curled up into a ball allowing his tears to fall after so many years. He hadn’t expected Harry to care but he hadn’t expected Harry to use him so either. He felt dirty, used and he felt the shame crushing down on him. What would Lily think of the pathetic man he had become- one who would enjoy being used thusly?

Chapter End Notes

Don't hate Harry just yet!
Harry is very drunk and finds Severus waiting for him. Lemon alert! Slightly dub-con...

Harry had taken to returning late at night, usually quite drunk. He found, it helped him to stop thinking about the other man in his home and allowed him a few hours of sleep. Severus was always on his mind. If he hadn’t already figured out he was gay, and had Hermione not told him it was semi-acceptable in the magical world, he’d have freaked out. As it was, he knew and accepted his growing physical attraction to Severus Snape.

And who wouldn’t be attracted to those deep, expressive dark eyes and those shapely cheeks? His long, now very silky and lustrous hair always begging to be stroked. His body had steadily filled out, showing some of the strong muscles which he had lost during his imprisonment and ill-treatment. The brown pajamas were replaced by Severus’ own clothes but they were just as well fitted and he no longer wore the bulky robes which probably hid his figure at Hogwarts. Seeing him each morning, sitting there, elegantly sipping his coffee, was maddening and soon Harry found himself rising even earlier to escape temptation.

However, one night, really late into the night, probably more like morning actually, he had returned home to find the kitchen lit with the soft light of candles. He had automatically went into the kitchen, not registering this fact (more interested in his throbbing toe), to get his meal as usual. He sat down at his usual place and dug into Kreacher’s surprisingly good cooking; maybe Severus was teaching him?

As soon as the thought crossed his mind, he froze and turned his head sideways to see Severus calmly reading something.

“You…” Harry asked, eyes narrowed. “Wha you doin up?” He slurred. Was Severus wearing just his nightshirt? Did it have to cling in that manner? And his hair… it was bloody beautiful.

“Just reading, master.” Severus said softly. Harry frowned. Why did the man insist on irritating him? He taunted him with his gorgeous body and tantalizing hair and his beautiful voice… and then he angered him by calling him that hated title! He had told him to call him ‘Harry’… he was just Harry, dammit! He didn’t think much when his hand went to the silky hair, finally happy to be touching it. He wanted to pull the man closer and run his hands through the silkiness but Severus was stiff.

“You made deesh…” Potter waved over the empty plate, the thought suddenly occurring to him-Kreacher was a bad cook, so maybe…?

“Yes…” Severus whispered, meeting his eyes steadily. This pleased him and Harry hummed happily. Tired of trying to pull Severus closer, he abruptly got up bringing the other man to stand very close to him. Harry’s eyes fell on the thin lips, pink with health and looking so soft… if he could just... Suddenly, he was kissing Severus. It felt wonderful and so right, so good.

“Ish good.” Harry said slurring and licking his lips a bit. Severus just stared wide eyed until he couldn’t take it anymore and kissed him again- he was just so adorable when he looked confused. His hand buried deeper in the thick hair and the other naturally went around Severus’ slim waist
pulling them impossibly close; well he wanted to be closer but this would have to do, Harry decided.

Harry wasn’t sure if he was dreaming or not. Severus hadn’t pushed him away but he wished he would respond at the least. He tried to get a response kissing his neck and all over his face, nipping and sucking as he went… but Severus only moaned lightly.

“What are you… Please… Po… Harry…” He leaned his head against Severus’, trying to make out what Severus had said. “Please, master…” Severus whispered. Harry frowned. Again with the ‘master’… he would get him to stop that nonsense right away! The following kiss was brutal and managed to draw blood from Severus’ abused lips… that was strange why did his blood taste good? That should have been disgusting but Severus’ sweet taste with the hint of the coppery undertone was just perfect.

“I’m sorry…” Severus whispered, now struggling to get out of his arms. Harry frowned, surely, he hadn’t hurt Severus that much. He immediately set out to soothe him- he didn’t want Severus to be in distress.

“Sh…” He kissed Severus’ nose and temple and then licked his lower lip to soothe the hurt. Severus stopped struggling to stare once more. Harry decided another kiss was in order, an exploratory kiss, demanding, pleasurable and he felt Severus respond hesitantly. Severus’ hand clutched at the thin fabric of his sweaty shirt and the other slid around his neck, Severus’ long fingers playing with the soft hair at his nape. Harry was ecstatic when Severus opened mouth a little and lost no time delving in deeper, eager to taste and feel the older man.

When Severus moaned, Harry knew he wanted to hear more, so he kissed harder and when breath wouldn’t allow that course of action anymore, attacked the slender and pale neck vigorously. He couldn’t get enough of the soft skin and the hard body and before he knew it, Severus’ shirt was gone- he wasn’t sure if he had ripped it off or if Severus had taken it off but either way he had beautiful skin in front of him which he desperately wanted to kiss and caress.

To do that, however, they couldn’t be simply standing, so he pushed Severus onto the table. He expected the resistance and toppled the older man, relishing in the scowl and a bit amused. He went back to Severus’ lips, exploring his exposed body with his hands. He kissed him softly, with all the desire he had been holding back… after all it was just a dream and it wouldn’t ruin their tentative truce… right?

Positive, now, that he was in a particularly wonderful dream, Harry kissed Severus possessively. He wanted this man and it was frustrating not being able to have him. The thought enraged him for a moment as his fingers dug into Severus’ hip, grinding it against his own, and his mouth made a pretty large bruise on Severus’ tender neck. With that, Severus released within his pants. Feeling his slight tremors and hearing his throaty moan, Harry too reached his zenith and fell against the older man.

It was a startling moment of clarity when Harry realized he was, in fact, not dreaming. The sticky mess, the numerous bruises and an unconscious Severus were proof of that. The moment of clarity was truly unwelcome at that moment as Harry cursed colorfully and rushed to the bathroom to get a soft flannel to help clean up his maybe willing partner… dammit what had he done?!

When he returned, Severus was already up and staring at the ceiling. He curled up into a ball and tears escaped his beautiful eyes. Harry slid down the wall outside silently and listened, unwilling to go in there and embarrass or humiliate the man further. What had he done? He had practically forced Severus and now… Severus was crying… the strong, brave, Severus Snape was weeping like a child. It was all his fault and his lack of control. After a while he picked himself up and silently went into his own room, sure that the beautiful man still in the kitchen wouldn’t want him, of all people, to hear him cry.
Beautiful?

Chapter Summary

Severus finds himself of two minds about one Harry Potter. More mature stuff even if it is a short chapter!

Severus heard clatter downstairs and tensed. It must be Potter, coming home drunk once more. He unconsciously pulled the covers more securely under his chin and closed his eyes firmly. He was not going to acknowledge that drunk. A few moments later, heavy footfalls indicated the man-who-conquered had come up the stairs. There was heavy silence but Severus refused to open his eyes even if his heart raced and sweat beaded on his forehead.

“Sev’us…” Potter slurred and fell on his stomach. Severus did not dare move. “Don’ ignore me! Ish… Shevush!” The drunk had his hand in his hair and now was pulling painfully. Still Severus did not move, he had high pain tolerance. Just because the mistake a few days ago… what was Potter…

“Potter stop it!” Severus hissed as he realized the insufferable halfwit was under his covers.

“No!” Potter declared and claimed his lips in a rough kiss reminiscent of the incident. Severus wanted to push back, he really did but his limbs had lost their strength and he allowed, once more, the insensitive bastard to ravish his mouth and rub against him as if he were some common whore.

Potter bit his lower lip drawing blood and sucked as if he were a Vampire before his rough tongue invaded Severus’ moist cavern and wrecked havoc. Meanwhile rough hands tore at his sleep shirt, rendering it useless as a covering. Potter’s fingers dug into his skin, pinching, kneading and taking their pleasure while his mouth marked his pale skin once more. Severus himself was in a daze from the pain in combination from the pleasure as his groin was amply stimulated. He fervently wished it to be over but it wasn’t to be so. Potter wished to humiliate him and harm him and he would of course remove his last vestiges of modesty freeing his traitorous body part from it’s confines. Harsh hands stroked it and Severus whimpered. A thick finger pushed into him roughly with nothing to ease its passage and he hissed in fury. His fury though was lost in yet another bruising kiss.

A part of Severus wondered if this was how he would loose his virginity, raped by the very boy he had dedicated his life to protect. This wasn’t what he wanted but then why was he allowing it? Why wouldn’t he push the brat away? In his inebriated state, it would have been easy to knock the man out… he need only stretch a little to reach that holly wand but his hands were much too busy mapping Potter’s hard chest. His confusion must have shown because Harry Potter stopped.

“Ish noth gonna hurt Shevush…” He mumbled as his finger found the little knot of nerves to drive Severus over the edge. “Beautiful…” Potter muttered before he bestowed another bruising kiss as Severus released his seed between them.

When Severus finally came to, he noted two things. One, he was probably covered in bruises and his arse was going to be a literal pain. Two, Potter was half sprawled over him, fast asleep but he didn’t care at the moment. He tiredly closed his eyes, ignoring the mess and slept. The next morning he would wake to find his bed devoid of a green-eyed stranger and his night shirt beyond repair with all the mess cleaned up. However, the bruises would remain… they would fade slowly, reminding him that Potter had wanted him if only for a while. The bruises would remind him that he existed for the
green-eyed man…. until they faded and left him feeling all alone again.
Harry had been more diligent in avoiding Severus since the ‘incident’, as he called it in his mind. He was understandably mortified that he could even think of doing such a thing. Harry’s apparent self-loathing did not go unnoticed, however, not when one had Ms. Granger as one’s best friend. The fact that even Ron had noticed was something to be noted.

“Mate, come on, what’s wrong?” Ron asked quite suddenly during one of their drinking sessions. “Don’t shut us out again…” He pleaded, though he knew Hermione was better at this sort of thing, he cared just as much for his best mate.

“Nothing is wrong…” Harry told him half-heartedly.

“I’ll believe that when dementors make one happy,” Ron flatly stated, surprising a laugh out of Harry.

“That was an interesting analogy.”

“Well… pigs can technically fly in our world so…” Ron grinned. It had been amusing when Hermione had used that particular expression for the first time and Ron had immediately replied ‘but pigs can fly, Mione…’ Ron stared at him for a moment. “Talk, mate. It helps.”

“Alright… well… there is this person… that I am attracted to…” Harry said carefully.

“That’s a good thing! Wait… did you get rejected?” He asked worriedly.

“No… that’s not… We don’t have a good rapport, so I didn’t even try… I avoided him all this time and…” Harry closed his eyes in pain. “Suddenly, I wasn’t…”

“Huh?” Ron asked intelligently. Harry smiled a little at his friend.

“I… was drunk, though that’s not an excuse… and I… I… Merlin I actually…” He hid his face in his palms.

“What?” Ron asked alarmed.

“I forced him…” Harry whispered, his green eyes filled with unshed tears.

“What?!”

“I kissed him and did… things to him…” Harry explained.

“Did you… uh… all the way?” Ron gulped, he hated discussing these sort of things but this was for Harry.
“No… just a lot of kissing and touching and… er… yeah…” Harry blushed.

“You’ve got it bad, mate.” Ron noted. “So did he flip out or something?”

“No, well… I haven’t talked to him since.

“So you fucked and ran?” Ron asked bewildered.

“No! Merlin… I went to get something to clean him up and… I found him …distraught.” Harry said miserably.

“And you ran.”

“What was I supposed to do? He’d have been mortified that I saw!” Harry protested.

“Fine but why didn’t you talk the next day?” Ron asked softly, genuinely curious.

“I don’t know how to apologize… I… I’m not sorry for what I did… even if I hate myself for hurting him… If I see him again… I don’t think… I can…”

“You’re afraid you’ll loose control again.” Ron stated, understanding in his blue eyes.

“Yeah.” Harry nodded.

“Mate, I really am bad at this sort of thing… but… I really think you shouldn’t avoid him so much.” Ron advised. “Talk to him, whoever he is. What’s the worse that could happen?”

“Um… I’ll get murdered?” Harry asked.

“I highly doubt that, maybe a hex or two… or maybe…” He left it at that. Harry nodded.

“I’ll… Thanks, mate.” Harry said softly, taking another swig of his drink. A few more drinks later, he stumbled home, thinking about Severus and how he did not want to hurt him. How was he supposed to tell him that?

His feet automatically took him to Severus’ room. It was the first time he had entered here. He felt a nervous energy in his blood but pressed on. He knew Severus was awake by how stiff he appeared and his magic was practically humming in agitation.

“Sev’us…” He slurred, frowning as he realized he must be more drunk than he thought, and fell on Severus’ stomach. Ah… How wonderful Severus smelled, like pine and something that Harry could never place. However, Severus did not move, nor acknowledge his presence.

“Don’ ignore me! Ish… Shevush!” His hand found the silky hair and tried to turn Severus to face him properly. When he didn’t respond or move at all, Harry pouted and slipped under the covers, intent on hugging the stuffing out of the dour man.

“Potter, stop it!” Well, it got him a response! Harry grinned in the dark, his hands automatically roaming.

“No!” He exclaimed as Severus tried to wriggle away and claimed his soft lips in a rough kiss reminiscent of the incident. Once again, Severus didn’t fight the kiss and Harry was elated. Surely, Severus would push him away if he truly did not like it? His lips were even parted slightly in invitation and he wasn’t about to refuse.

He bit Severus’ lower lip seeking that taste he had been dreaming about since the ‘incident’ and his
tongue invaded Severus’ moist cavern, trying to taste him and devour him. Meanwhile his hands wanted to touch Severus’ warm soft skin and he inevitably tore at his sleeping shirt, musing Severus would soon be out of clothes if he kept doing this.

His elation when he felt Severus’ response through his pants was unparalleled and Harry was determined to pleasure Severus. This time he would give and make sure Severus would enjoy every second. He removed the pants releasing Severus from his confinement. He stroked it slowly, enjoying Severus’ needy whimper. His finger brushed Severus’ opening a few times but the older man only moaned, so Harry decided to push one in. Severus’ harsh hiss, startled him as he realized too late that he should have lubricated it a bit. He kissed the hurt away, and sought to find that spot he knew would make Severus forget any and all discomfort. He soon noticed how still and stiff Severus was being and nuzzled his neck tenderly.

“Ish noth gonna hurt Shevush…” He mumbled as his finger found the little knot of nerves to drive Severus over the edge. The deep keening and soft rumbling had Harry mesmerized and he whispered more to himself than anything. “Beautiful…” He bestowed another passionate kiss as Severus released his seed between them.

Harry smiled happily and fell into deep sleep, dreaming of holding his Severus and being kissed passionately by him. It was a pleasant place to be.

Chapter End Notes

His apology doesn't exactly go the way he wanted, did it?
Chapter Summary

Severus takes things into his own hands.

Severus gritted his teeth each time Harry stumbled into his room and invaded his privacy. Since his only sleeping garment had been destroyed, he had no choice but to sleep in the nude- well the covers were warm enough not to care but the fact that it encouraged Potter was irritating.

The man kept away and aloof for days on end and then suddenly he would invade his personal space taking his pleasure as he liked. His hips were now used to being bruised and his virgin entrance used to being invaded by thick fingers. The man always had the stench of Firewhiskey on his breath, always seemed threatening but curiously enough he never tried to go further than using his fingers.

Harry always kissed him over and over again and touched him as he pleased. He brought him over the edge and then he disappeared. The worst realization was that Severus allowed it and even looked forward to it… especially when those marks disappeared. It was truly puzzling why he liked having those bruises on his person. He could have easily brewed a bruise paste and got rid of them in an hour but Severus kept them and even admired them in his mirror. The bruises shaped like Harry’s fingers on his hips, arms and wrists, reassured him. The small red-purple ones all over his chest and neck were the ones he enjoyed the most- it was like Harry was saying he belonged with him and that feeling never went away, no matter how much his mind reminded him that this was wrong. He never treated his sore nipples or his cracked lips. He never complained either.

He wondered why Harry would not simply have him and be done with it but at the same time was thankful for it since he truly was scared of such a thing. At the same time, he wanted more. He wanted Harry to stay, touch him more, make him moan some more, stretch him to the limit and possess him completely. He was unsure where these thoughts were coming from. It certainly wasn’t something that was common with him- he liked control, he abhorred giving up the control but with Harry it no longer mattered, he just wanted.

He wished this wasn’t just a convenient thing but knew better than to delude himself. Harry only wanted him because he was there and available. He was probably imagining some person he wanted badly when he touched Severus and there simply couldn’t be anything more to it. It wasn’t Severus he wanted- no Severus felt he was too old, too ugly and too unattractive for it to be otherwise. He couldn’t help but hope, however, even if he knew it was foolishness.

For an entire year, Severus had his master come to him every few days. The pattern continued until it was broken. Harry had not come near him for a month. He avoided him like the plague. They never saw each other. Harry left at the crack of dawn, leaving behind whatever breakfast he decided to make under warming charms. He remained away until late night when Severus was in bed, waiting. Then he simply crashed into his own bed, without even stopping at Severus’ door.

A month turned to two, two turned to three and Severus’ resolve to remain passive broke. He had decided he would let Harry take what he wanted, when he wanted and he would not demand for anything. However, it was painful, knowing Harry was about and was actively hiding from him. In anger and hurt, he waited by the door one night.
He could smell the firewhiskey before he saw Harry stumbling through the hall. He followed until they reached his door, then shoved the inebriated man into his room. The confused savior fell over onto the soft carpet and blinked up.

“Do not ignore me.” Severus told him and crashed their lips together. This was the first time Severus had kissed Harry. Harry had kissed him and he had let him but he held himself back from reciprocating. However now, the pent up feelings had broke through and alcohol breath or not, Severus needed this kiss.

It took a moment but a strong arm circled his waist and he was pressed close to the warm muscled body under him. A hand, as usual, buried itself in his hair and the slightly chapped lips that always tasted like whiskey, kissed him back hungrily. Severus sighed in relief and melted against the man who he thought he would forever hate. His lips moved of their own accord, returning kiss for kiss, nip for nip and his hands sought warm skin under all the layers of clothing.

Meanwhile Harry had once again destroyed his shirt- his last good shirt. Severus mused he’d have to hunt down a sewing kit somewhere soon as he relieved his master of his sweater and worked on the shirts buttons. Harry trailed kisses everywhere, occasionally biting and sucking, wrecking havoc as usual. A hand found its way to his opening under his trousers. It was a welcome intrusion. Severus had found that his own fingers did absolutely nothing but Harry’s could make him moan in need. His own hand had found Harry’s own member, intent on torturing Harry Potter like he had done to him so many times before. He hadn’t expected the pleased moan from the man beneath him though he relished in it.

Severus found himself over the edge too soon and felt Harry trying to get away. He growled fiercely and kissed the bastard roughly, making sure to punish him for ignoring him for so long. Harry froze for a few seconds but soon his hand was back in the long silky raven hair and he opened his mouth, allowing Severus to do whatever he pleased. For a moment Severus was stunned but he didn’t stop and mapped out Harry’s mouth just as he had wanted to for many weeks now.

Harry went back to stretching him slowly much to Severus’ delight. He pushed back onto the thick fingers, moaning and meeting green eyes as he did so. Harry smiled and a third finger was added for the very first time. Severus swooped back down to kiss the swollen lips in approval until the fingers disappeared entirely.

“Sev’ush…” Harry slurred only a little. “Are you shurre?” He asked even as his hands tightened almost painfully around him. Severus’ answer was another bruising kiss. Harry responded by turning them over, settling himself between his legs. “Beautiful.” Harry commented for the second time Severus could recall and in the next moment he was filled with something much more satisfying than mere fingers. He ignored the pain that shot up his spine and the probable tearing and held onto Harry with all his might, urging him to move. His questing hands were secured above his head as Harry perused his pale body, silently. Severus flushed at the scrutiny but didn’t look away. Harry smiled again- such a wonderful smile!

Those strong hands were on his hips again, bruising him and Severus smiled to himself. This time, however, there was accompanying burn and it was wholly welcome. Harry leaned in to kiss him deeply as he thrust slowly. The kiss seemed to never end, just as the ancient dance seemed to go on forever. Once more, Severus sported several bite marks and various bruises and he was happy. His happiness changed to awe when Harry abruptly stiffened and spent himself completely deep within him. The feeling was enough to prompt Severus’ own release.

Harry slumped onto him, his weight completely over him and it felt so good- warm, safe. Severus finally moved his hands from above his head to wrap them around Harry. They stayed like that until
Harry rolled off him, taking his presence from within him; Severus could not stop the pathetic whimper that escaped him.

He was sure he had been left all alone again and curled into a ball until a warm cloth started cleaning him. He looked behind him to see Harry with a strange expression on his face and a soft flannel in his hand. Once both his front and back were thoroughly cleaned, he was lifted up in strong warm arms and settled into his bed. The blanket was tucked in around him and Harry made to leave.

Instantly, instinctively, Severus shot out his hand and grabbed Harry’s and whimpered. He snorted at himself understanding how pathetic he must sound but Harry simply looked at him and brushed his hair off his face. He cupped his cheek gently and tilted his head.

“You want me to stay?” He asked softly. Severus wanted to nod but he was too tired, he squeezed Harry’s hand instead. After a tense moment of silence, Harry dropped his clothing (which he had just picked up) on the floor and kissed Severus’ forehead.

“Move over then.” He said and Severus stared balefully at him- he did not have the energy to do so! Harry seemed to have realized this as well and he gently withdrew his hand and went to the other side of the bed to slip in. Severus smiled happily and the grin broadened when Harry placed his hand over his hip and pulled him closer. With Harry’s hard, warm body spooning him from behind, Severus slipped into a deep sleep.
Bravery

Chapter Summary

Harry doesn't feel very brave and panics over maybe forcing his Sev.

Harry knew he should actually talk to the man but his legendary courage was nowhere to be found. He still tried to avoid Severus, afraid that he was not someone Severus could ever truly want. However, his self control only lasted so long and alcohol helped only so much. He had wanted precious few things in his life and Severus was undeniably one of those… one he might even give up a lot for. It was strange just how badly he wanted that man near him all the time, wanting to touch him and kiss him… he should really not go there.

He found himself in bed with Severus more often than he liked. Most of the time it was his want overcoming his fears aided by his impaired sense of limits that made him stumble into Severus’ room. Severus seemed to be fine with it as he had taken to sleeping in nude, no doubt trying to preserve his remaining clothes- Harry was quite amused by this.

He was however in control enough, and aware enough, to never go too far; he would touch Severus, make him experience intense pleasure and would fall asleep beside the warm body. He’d then awake before his bedmate did and would disappear again, oft times for days. He began sleeping in the nude as well, just to feel Severus pressed against him intimately- it was a heady feeling.

Harry always kissed him over and over again; it was something he found addicting. There was however one thing that bothered Harry. It seemed he could never remember his own strength when he was with Severus. Maybe it was because of the alcohol in his system or maybe it was just his eagerness to hold Severus, but the end result was Severus bearing numerous bruises from him. It was on a full moon that he noticed the bruises- purpling finger-shaped ones that looked like they’d hurt. He wondered why Severus wouldn’t just brew a bruise salve but that was not the point. Once again, he was hurting the man he was becoming quickly attached to and Harry did not like it. Added to that were the rather vicious love bites and Severus’ permanently bruised lips and Harry felt like a right bastard. He wondered how the man could even tolerate him.

The issue weighed on his mind and he searched for an answer to the mystery. When it finally came to him, it was as if someone had taken a sledgehammer to his stomach. How could he be so blind? Severus only allowed him these liberties because he was unable to say no to him… they had a master-slave bond, no matter how much he tried to forget all about it. Severus was afraid of the repercussions of refusing Harry… Severus was afraid of him. The knowledge nearly destroyed him, if not for Hermione’s quiet support.

“Harry, you didn’t realize… you thought he wanted to…”

“But that doesn’t change the facts, Mione!” Harry protested. “I took advantage of him… how he must feel about it all! He must hate me…”

“Sh… it’ll be alright…”

“No it won’t… I… I… I may be falling for him… I want Severus so much… and I probably destroyed everything.” Harry was now openly crying in his best friend’s arms.
“Mate… I’m sure if you explained, he would understand…” Ron said from across the table, meeting Hermione’s eyes to see if his statement was right. She gave him a slight nod. “Maybe, once you explain, you could properly date him and things may still work out.” He said gently.

“How can I face him?” Harry moaned. “I can’t… It took me months to realize Severus might feel cornered and forced! Months! How could he ever trust me?”

“Harry James! Collect yourself!” Hermione said sharply.

“Wha…?” Harry stared wide eyed at her, tears still falling.

“Is this bond permanent?”

“No.”

“Right. It will dissolve in another two years. Show him you care, really care, Harry. And when the bond dissolves show him you care despite the obligation. Win him over slowly. Don’t force yourself on him anymore and use simple gestures… make breakfast, get him things he may need or like… small things you know?” She suggested. She hoped internally it would help but when it came to the potions master, she could not be sure.

“I’ll… try.” Harry said finally.

He did try but it was impossible. He was feeling so guilty, being in the same room as Severus physically hurt. So he resorted to avoiding him again. He had Kreature get Severus the potions Weekly when the issues came out and made breakfast and left it under warming charms a few times but mostly, just the thought of the raven-haired man was painful to him.

A month turned to two, two turned to three and Harry’s resolve did not waver. He was not ready to face Severus in a rational manner and had long decided to keep aloof, much to Hermione’s displeasure. She was of the opinion that he was making things worse but Harry knew if he so much as looked at Severus he would attack him and probably would loose all self control- something he refused to let happen.

He had started drinking even more heavily and came home, miraculously not splinched, each night barely aware of his own name. It was hardly safe but Ron or Neville or one of the others escorted him to the doorstep each night. Only Ron and Neville understood what was wrong, the other guys knew better than to ask.

One night, much like any other night, Harry stumbled home. He was thinking how it had been over three months since he did more than glimpse Severus’ beautiful form. He wanted to see the man so badly, just a long look, but he forced his feet to move past the door he sorely wanted to open. He didn’t expect the door to open on its own or to find himself thrust unceremoniously into the said room with the very man from his thoughts sprawled over him.

“Do not ignore me.” Severus hissed at him and crashed their lips together. This was the first time Severus had kissed Harry. Harry had realized as he thought on the situation that Severus always let him do the kissing and barely responded- Severus always held back and it was another bit of proof he hadn’t wanted to realize. However, now, Severus was kissing him with all he had and Harry pushed his shock aside and kissed him back, holding Severus gently to his chest.

It was a needy and hungry kiss- one that put Harry’s mind to rest about what was currently happening. Severus had approached him and aggressively kissed him. The irony of his words was not lost on him but his heart was elated. His hands reacquainted themselves with the contours of
Severus’ body and the smooth silky mass that had grown even longer in his absence. Severus relaxed into his embrace and Harry gave up the last vestiges of his control- Severus wanted this as much as he did!

Harry divested his own clothing even as he trailed kisses everywhere, occasionally biting and sucking, wrecking havoc as usual. An eager hand found its way beneath Severus’ trousers and wriggled a finger into him, wandlessly casting a lubricating charm as he did so. The resulting moan was all Harry needed to know he was doing it right. He was however surprised, though pleasantly, when Severus tentatively slid his hand into his pants to Harry’s pulsing member; it was the first time Severus was touching him in that manner and for the first time Harry held hope that all was not lost between them. He hadn’t expected the pleased moan to rip out of his throat but Severus’ smug smile was worth it.

All too soon it was over as Severus shuddered above him. Harry held him close for a few moments before deciding he should relocate them to a comfortable setting. However, Severus growled and kissed him roughly as if punishing him. It confused Harry and he admittedly froze for a few seconds but his hands, thankfully, knew what to do. He relaxed and waited for what Severus wanted to do and simply enjoyed being wanted back by the man who was always on his mind.

Harry went back to stretching him slowly mindful of Severus’ reaction. When he pushed back onto his fingers, moaning and meeting his eyes with want clear in them, Harry knew Severus was ready for more and was even eager for it to happen. Harry smiled and a third finger was added for the very first time. Severus swooped back down to kiss the swollen lips in approval, confirming Harry’s suspicion.

“Sev’ush…” Harry slurred only a little. “Are you shurre?” He asked even as his hands tightened almost painfully around Severus. He didn’t want to make another mistake with Severus; he was too precious. Severus’ answer was another bruising kiss. Harry responded by turning them over, settling himself between long legs.

“Beautiful.” Harry commented as he gazed at the man beneath him and in the next moment he thrust gently into the willing body. Severus held onto Harry with all his might, urging him to move with his actions and small endearing noises. Harry grabbed his questing hands and secured them above Severus’ head and took a moment to peruse the pale, well muscled body; he was utterly gorgeous especially with that lovely blush spreading down his neck. Their eyes met and Harry was glad Severus had not turned away either in shame or regret but had met his eyes steadily, confidently. He couldn’t help but smile down at his Severus before he grabbed the narrow hips and began gently thrusting. He leant in to share a gentle kiss which quickly deepened.

Harry slumped forward, releasing completely deep within Severus, his weight completely over him. Before Harry had a chance to help Severus find his release as well, he felt the tremors and the warm wetness between them and knew somehow, Severus had found release without being touched. Harry smiled into the bare shoulder, a smile which only broadened when Severus finally moved his hands from above his head to wrap them around him. They stayed like that until Harry rolled off him, taking his presence from within a whimpering Severus.

Harry trudged to the bathroom and brought back with him a soft cloth soaked in warm water. He found Severus in the same fetal position he had been in after that first ‘incident’. Realization dawned on him- had Severus been upset at being left alone rather than being touched? Had he misunderstood? This time, whatever the reason was, he wouldn’t leave Severus alone to cry, Harry decided. He gently cleaned up their mess, causing Severus to look back at him with an unfathomable expression. He ignored the emotion in those beautiful eyes and finished cleaning them and banished the cloth. He then lifted the frail but strong man in his arms and tucked him into bed.
Harry contemplated slipping in beside Severus but he was wary of forcing himself on the man. He decided it was best to leave and gathered his clothes with a wave of his wand. To say he was surprised when Severus grabbed his hand, was an understatement. The quiet whimper and the unspoken request told Harry what Severus wanted. He also saw the bit of self-loathing seep into those expressive eyes. Harry brushed the raven hair off Severus’ face and cupped his cheek gently and tilted his head to look into his tearing eyes.

“You want me to stay?” He asked softly. Severus tiredly squeezed Harry’s hand. After a tense moment of silence, Harry dropped his clothing (along with his wand) on the floor and kissed Severus’ forehead gently.

“Move over then.” He said and Severus stared balefully at him- the look was so much like the old Snape he knew, it almost made Harry laugh but he realized the man must be tired and sore and likely could not move. Harry gently withdrew his hand and went to the other side of the bed to slip in and placed his hand over Severus’ hip and pulled him closer. With Severus’ warm body tucked comfortably in his arms, Harry slipped into a deep sleep.
That Odd Comfortable Feeling

Chapter Summary

Title says it all.

Severus awoke alone once again. He felt his eyes burn with tears but controlled himself. He didn’t actually mean anything to Harry so this should have been expected. He sighed and rolled over, wincing as he did so. He trudged to the bathroom for a hot shower, trying to rid himself of the tiredness or maybe it was to get rid of that awful dirty feeling he had after being used. He allowed himself a few private tears and examined his bruises for a while before finally deciding to hunt for breakfast.

He only realized he didn’t have any more proper shirts to wear when he got out… Harry sure loved destroying his meager clothing. He wondered if one of his sweaters would do but it really was too warm at this time of the year. He sighed and approached his mostly empty wardrobe and blinked. There on a hanger were a pair of clean, pressed trousers and a deep red shirt. Beside it were his old clothes repaired. He could imagine who would place those Gryffindor colors in his closet and growled.

Then he paused. Harry had realized his lack of clothes and probably had given him a new set to use instead of reusing the same set each day. It was probably one of Harry’s own sets resized for him. Suddenly, he wanted very badly to wear the red shirt. He put them on and observed himself in the mirror. It didn’t look too bad, really, and it wasn’t an obnoxious shade of red either and it even lent him some color. He wondered if Harry would think he was a little bit attractive if he saw him now.

Scolding himself for hoping once again, he trudged to the kitchen only to stare. Harry was calmly sipping coffee and reading the paper with a breakfast spread, probably under heating charms, laid out on the table.

“Good Morning.” Harry greeted when he noticed him.

“Good morning…” Severus murmured, afraid Harry might disappear if he was too loud.

“I made breakfast.” Harry pointed. Severus nodded and took his seat, dazed as he saw Harry serving both of them. Had he been waiting for him to come down?

“Thank you.” Severus managed to force out as he squirmed a little to find a comfortable position to sit his behind was sending shockwaves through his body.

“The color suits you.” Harry commented after a very long time. Severus blushed.

“Yes…” Severus agreed.

“You should wear more colors than black.” He said softly. Severus wasn’t sure how to respond. He only had black, now a red, in his wardrobe. Was Harry making fun of him for having so little? Or was he hinting that he should buy them? Then again he wasn’t allowed to go out… but if he went with Harry that would be alright…. He decided to stay quiet.

Once done, Harry deposited all the dishes in the sink and made to leave. He told him he’d be home
for dinner, a first in itself, and lightly carded his fingers through his hair before leaving abruptly. Severus sighed happily and basked in the small change. He then gingerly got up and washed the dishes.

He had wanted to start on the blue bedroom across the hall from him that day but soon decided he’d rather rest. Kreature hovered around him worried and supplied a simple fare for lunch in bed. Severus spent the time after lunch in bed reading aiding his body with a few well placed pillows. He remained there until he deemed it late enough to start on dinner.

Kreature tried to protest and finally gave up and simply helped the man with dinner. Severus had some meat already marinated and it was a simple thing to pop it into the oven along with some potatoes. While Kreature prepared the vegetables, Severus started on the chocolate mousse. The potatoes were soon levitated out (by Kreature) and the meat was just about done when Harry entered the kitchen.

“Smells good.” He commented and silently set the table. Severus smiled to himself. Kreature got out some of his pre-baked bread rolls and magically warmed them and placed the butter next to it. The rest of the food followed except the dessert. They ate silently, but it wasn’t an uncomfortable thing. Once done, Harry excused himself, saying he had a letter to write and Severus washed up once again before heading to his room.

The pale gold pajama set with a matching night robe was hard to miss. Severus blinked at it quite a few times before deciding Harry must have decided to fill his wardrobe some. However, he had become accustomed to sleeping in the nude and wondered what he should do with the garments. He neatly folded the pajamas and placed them in the wardrobe and draped the robe over one side of the head-board, figuring he could pull it on when he got out of bed. He smiled in satisfaction before undressing and preparing for bed.

Severus had just about nodded off when he felt cold air on his back. He frowned sleepily and smiled as something warm attached itself to his back. He snuggled back unconsciously until he felt something breach him. He processed the feeling slowly, wondering if Harry wanted to repeat the previous night’s activities. It certainly seemed so and Severus truly did not mind. The lone finger worked in and out and all around but Severus wanted more. He was disappointed when the hand disappeared only to reappear around his waist.

“Goodnight, Severus.” Harry said softly into his ear and seemed to settle down for sleep.

“What…?” He asked before his brain processed it. There was something obviously hard between his cheeks and he was most certainly willing… what was Potter about?

“Sleep, Severus.” A gentle kiss was placed on his neck and a hand slid under his head. Suddenly, it was like Severus was wrapped up in something warm. There was a slight tingling in his orifice hinting at the use of a healing salve- Severus smiled realizing Harry had noticed his discomfort. Harry’s hand drew lazy circles on his hip, with light flighty fingers and soon his eyes drooped and his breathing evened out.
Harry awoke quite a bit early with something warm and alive in his arms. It felt good and he didn’t even think about it until his mind supplied a name: Severus. His eyes shot open to see the beloved face, relaxed in sleep and a long strand of raven hair falling gently over Severus’ face. Harry smiled and tucked the stray strand behind Severus’ ear. His eyes trailed over what skin he could see and sighed, it seemed he was unable to stop himself from making Severus porcelain skin bruise- Severus’ neck was once again riddled with red-purple marks.

He watched the man sleep for several more minutes before he slipped out of the warm bed to use the toilet. As he washed his hands, he happened to look at his reflection and paused. He too now sported one or two bruises himself! He smiled softly and traced the ones that were plain to see on his neck.

Overcome with some strange feeling he went back to Severus and kissed his forehead lightly. He wasn’t quite sure why there were tears threatening to fall but he knew they were happy tears so wasn’t too bothered… since Severus was still asleep. He slid into his clothing slowly, still watching Severus. However, when he went looking for Severus’ clothes he realized he had once more ripped the shirt irreparably. What was the deal with him, ripping shirts and leaving bruises?

Shaking his head wryly he went to see if he could lay out another set for Severus. He opened the closet to find… nothing. The wardrobe was practically empty save for a pair of sensible shoes and a few pairs of socks that probably came from Dumbledore given their garish colors. There were a few sweaters and a single pair of slacks. Harry blinked and softly called Kreacher.

“Kreacher? Where are Master Severus’ other clothes?” He asked softly, gesturing the elf to be quiet. Kreacher’s eyes trailed to the tattered one in Harry’s hand and he pulled his ears.

“Oh noes… Master Harry be destroying the last good shirt!” The elf accused.

“Last?” Harry frowned. “He only had two pairs?” He asked softly, mindful of the sleeping man. Kreacher nodded. “Thank you Kreacher. See if you can fix this and clean it with the rest.” he handed the tattered shirt to the elf, wondering why Severus had not mentioned needing clothes to him before. He would have taken him to at least a muggle store, since he doubted either one wanted to be seen in magical places.

He walked to his own room and selected a deep red shirt that he was sure would look good on Severus and picked out one of his overly long new trousers. He had been meaning to get them shortened but since Severus’ legs were longer than his, it was probably for the best. He put sizing charms on both items ensuring the few centimeters here and there would adjust themselves when Severus put them on. He left the clothing inside the closet for Severus to find when he awoke.

He headed to the kitchen and made a pot of coffee as well as a full english breakfast spread. He charmed the food to remain warm and sat sipping at his own cup of coffee, waiting for Severus to
join him. An owl delivered the paper and he was on the third page when he noticed Severus was by the door, looking splendid in the clothes he had previously chosen for him. He smiled softly and greeted the man.

“Good Morning.” Severus looked a little startled but soon composed himself.

“Good morning…” Severus murmured softly.

“I made breakfast.” Harry pointed out unnecessarily. Severus nodded and took his seat, as Harry served both of them.

“Thank you.” Severus squirmed a little to find a comfortable position to sit. Harry frowned a little, realizing Severus must be sore from the previous night… it must have been a while since the older man had any liaisons. However, he didn’t want to embarrass him, so ignored the squirming, resolving to make sure he’d have a balm to use later.

“The color suits you.” Harry commented after a very long time.

“Yes…” Severus blushed, looking rather delectable.

“You should wear more colors than black.” Harry said softly, hoping Severus won’t take it the wrong way- he really thought the man would look good in a lot of different colors… black really did very little for his beauty. He could tell Severus wasn’t sure how to respond and apparently he decided staying quiet was appropriate.

Harry waited until Severus was done eating before gathering all the dishes and depositing them in the sink. He washed his hands and wiped them on the kitchen towel before informing Severus he’d be back for dinner. He couldn’t help card his fingers lightly through the unbound hair before leaving with a small smile on his face.

Harry realized too late that he had forgotten to take his wallet and returned home. He was about to apparate back out when he heard a clatter in the kitchen. He peeked in to see Severus standing at the sink, his hair tied back with a leather tie as Kreacher stood on a stool drying the dishes Severus washed. He had assumed Kreacher did all the house-work but it seemed he was more of a helper for Severus. All the scrumptious meals were made by Severus and dishwashing was apparently his task as well. Perhaps the cleaning like remodeling and other things around the house were also somehow Severus’ doing. Harry smiled at the man and slowly snuck out to return just in time for dinner.

“Smells good.” He commented, knowing the cook was Severus (and not Kreacher as he had thought until the day before), and silently set the table. Kreature got out some of his pre-baked bread rolls and magically warmed them and placed the butter next to it. The rest of the food followed except the dessert. They ate silently, but it wasn’t an uncomfortable thing. Once done, Harry excused himself, saying he had a letter to write and took the opportunity to shower as Severus, no doubt, washed up once again.

He had first deposited a new set of pale gold pajama set which he thought would look especially good on Severus- though he might be a bit peeved at the color. He quickly showered and put on his own rarely used Pajamas and made his way back to Severus. He saw the robe draped over one side of the head-board, and smiled; so Severus wasn’t too offended at a gryffindorish color.

Since, Severus was sleeping in the middle, Harry simply slid in behind Severus. He felt the man smile as snuggled back into him but wondered why Severus was nude- he did have a new pair of PJs. Well, that wasn’t too important at the moment. Harry scooped up some of the healing balm he had bought from the apothecary, meant specifically for minor tears and swelling, and gently smeared
it around Severus’ opening before gently breaching him. Severus seemed asleep but did wriggle a little and it helped him get the balm deep enough to heal any and all damage. Satisfied he had covered every inch of the damaged tissue, he pulled back, recapping the small jar and placed it on the side table. Severus stirred a little, obviously not completely asleep.

“What…?” Severus gasped softly.

“Sleep, Severus.” Harry kissed the nape of his neck sleepily and his arm slid under his head to form a pillow. He curled around the other man and dozed off… it had been a long day.
Awkwardness

Chapter Summary

Lot of Awkwardness. A bit of sad ending.

The nights following that one went the same way. Harry spread the balm where needed in the dark and then snuggled with Severus as they fell asleep. He was always up and gone by the time Severus woke, but he knew Harry had stayed all night. Sometimes there would be breakfast waiting for him and sometimes, probably when Harry was in a hurry, there would be evidence of a hasty toast and the jam bottle sitting on the counter.

It was a bit awkward. Severus wondered how long Harry was going to simply snuggle with him since he himself wanted a repeat of \textit{that} night. He decided not to push as long as Harry was willing to touch him. He understood it wasn’t the passion he was addicted to but the sense of belonging he had when ensconced in Harry’s arms. He knew it was an illusion and it would one day end, but he couldn’t help but want the most out of the situation for now- he was a Slytherin after all.

For an entire week this continued until Severus decided he should let Harry know he was fine and was able, not to mention willing, to receive him once again. So that night, a week from their first time, Severus allowed Harry to do his thing before turning around in his arms.

It was a full moon and Harry’s eyes lit up like emeralds. For a moment he was speechless before he found himself leaning in to place a chaste kiss on Harry’s lips. Harry brushed his hair back to cup his cheek. He seemed to search for something in his eyes and Severus did not back away from the intense gaze. It took a while but Harry finally found what he was looking for and their lips met in a slow dance.

There was something to be said about Harry and his habit for pulling his hair since he had been doing it yet again, as if afraid Severus would pull away. Severus didn’t really mind, since that enabled his ‘master’ to tilt his head to just the right angle for proper ravishing. He didn’t mind the rough handling either. He was however surprised when Harry brought out the lubricant and cast a few spells to stretch him properly in addition to his fingers. He relented.

This time was better, unhurried but just as intense. Severus was left feeling completely sated and content. If he could just feel like this all the time, he’d gladly continue this odd arrangement for ever. Of course, he immediately repudiated this feeling when he regained his senses. That night they had slept facing each other, Harry’s chin resting on his head, Severus’ head on Harry’s arm, their remaining limbs tangled together intimately. Severus found this position to be extremely comfortable, even more so than the other they tended to assume.

However, something had upset Harry. Severus could tell. Harry would be awkward and would fumble then decide to just sleep. Soon his alcohol intake went up again… he had never stopped drinking but Severus knew he had limited himself for a short while. This worried him greatly. Harry seemed to be holding back and when that metaphoric dam broke, their coupling was violent. The day after their violent rendezvous, Severus would find a small jar of healing balm on his dresser and an empty house. Harry would stay away for few days, returning to almost ignoring Severus but he
eventually returned to ravish his housemate.

After much thought, Severus concluded that Harry must be feeling guilty about enjoying himself with him, when he had someone else on his mind. The Gryffindors were sentimental fools in these matters. Now assured of the reasons, Severus relaxed. He wished whiskey was not involved as that still made him queasy but he had some of what he wanted so he accepted it.

As usual, he never healed his bruises and only used the balm on his sore behind, since pain there was quite distracting and counterproductive. He wasn’t worried about losing them because Harry inevitably made new ones before the old ones faded. He also decided against cutting his hair. His long hair seemed to fascinate Harry and he wanted Harry to desire him, so he left it to grow as long as it would. He didn’t enjoy learning how to braid it, but he managed to learn the difficult art somehow.

As Harry’s behavior continued, Severus felt he needed to do more to attract his master. Surely there must be ways? He didn’t want to be thrown away just yet so he researched, of all things under the sky, beauty potions. There was an amazing array of such things that he was unaware of. It helped that the library had been sorted into safe and unsafe sections for a while now. There was one he decided to use to get rid of the wrinkles, born out of a stressful life. There was another that renewed the skin. He wished there was one for old scars but his wish went unanswered.

Harry’s surprise only showed in his face for a split second before resuming his usual blank look. Severus realized pretty soon that all these minor changes didn’t really matter to Harry and he was at a loss as to what else he should do.

“I have to go away for a month.” Harry announced at breakfast after their latest passionate night. Severus was sore in the most strange of places as he had been thoroughly tired out by his master.

“A month?” Severus repeated with narrowed suspicious eyes.

“But…”

“You’ll have to stay here… Kreature can do the shopping…” Harry continued.

“Harry….”

“There won’t be any issues, the wards won’t let anyone in…”

“Please…” Severus pleaded.

That got Harry to look up from his plate. Some odd emotions flitted across the handsome visage before Severus found himself held against the wall, being brutally kissed. His clothes were magicked off and without a warning he was breached, his only support were the wall and Harry’s hard body which was thrusting quite vigorously into him. Hands in his hair forced him to bare his neck to the unforgiving teeth and lips. Severus’ own hands dug into Harry’s shoulders and his throat was raw screaming Harry’s name. As soon as it started it was over… or so Severus thought. He was firmly lifted by the buttocks and relocated to the granite kitchen counter where his master had his way with him until he was ready to pass out. Releasing one last time into Severus, green eyes met the failing obsidian and Severus saw the pain etched in their depths. However, his consciousness left him before he could question it. He woke hours later, in his own bed, clean but naked with the house devoid of another human. Once again he allowed himself to cry bitter tears.
Questions and Doubts

Chapter Summary

Harry is obviously overthinking and decidedly needs time to think about his feelings for Severus... Well the execution has something to be desired (as usual...)

The nights following that one went the same way. Harry spread the balm where needed in the dark and then snuggled with Severus as they fell asleep. He was always up and gone by the time Severus woke, but he stayed all night with him. Sometimes, he would be able to make breakfast and left Severus’ share under a warming charm. Other times he rushed through barely a slice of toast before he rushed off, leaving a mess in the kitchen.

It was a bit awkward but it was sweet. Harry enjoyed being close to Severus and he soon realized it was more than Severus’ body that he was attracted to. He liked the sometimes shy, sometimes bold, sometimes snarky and always hard-working man he was currently living with. Unlike other times, he didn’t feel the need to jump the man at every opportunity; he felt at ease and happy just holding him, not that he would mind if Severus jumped him once more.

For an entire week this continued until Severus himself initiated something more than a cuddle. Framed by the light of the full moon, Severus looked almost ethereal and Harry scarcely believed it when he was kissed softly. Harry brushed Severus’ hair back to cup his cheek gently and tried to decipher what Severus was feeling- could he really want a repeat? He tentatively kissed Severus and slowly deepened the kiss.

His hand slid further back into Severus’ hair and tilted his head to better gain access to the sweet mouth. Meanwhile, Harry summoned the lubricant he had prepared for when Severus was ready again- it wouldn’t do to hurt him every time they made love! He had even learned all the available spells designed to help the whole process along. He took his time preparing the man, never leaving Severus’ lips idle for long, reveling in the muffled moans and gasps.

Harry could feel Severus completely relax and give himself over to him. It was a heady feeling to be trusted, to be wanted. It was unhurried, passionate and intense. Harry soon found his control snapping as his body took over thrusting wildly into his bedmate. That night they had slept facing each other, Harry’s chin resting on his head, Severus’ head on Harry’s arm, their remaining limbs tangled together intimately. It was extremely wonderful to wake up thus entangled.

However, something kept upsetting Harry… it was those bruises. Despite his best attempts to not hurt Severus, there were once again bruises on those narrow hips and smaller ones all over Severus’ chest. Harry hated that he never could control this obviously brutal side of him. Why couldn’t he be gentle? He was so distraught with it all and confused as to why Severus did not remove the bruises… was it to remind himself of how much of a brute Harry was?

Harry went back to drinking more than one glass of firewhiskey in his daily jaunts to the pub. and he tried his best to only hold Severus but he soon realized he only ended up being harder on Severus later. No matter what he did, he hurt the man he wanted to protect so much. It was hard, confusing and it hurt. A small jar of balm would not heal the breach of trust Harry acutely felt he was
responsible for. He started disappearing for days and once more his loyal friends noticed.

He still assaulted Severus on occasion but he was managing to keep his distance most of the time. He didn’t like it. He wanted to hold the man close to him and give him everything he desired… instead he was once again running.

It didn’t help that Severus seemed to become more attractive as the days went by. How could Severus become even more beautiful? As if it wasn’t hard enough to resist him! What had he done to get that bloody glow that made him look years younger and absolutely gorgeous- Thank Merlin Severus kept inside the house or he’d have to contend with his suitors! And that braid, done up loosely was just… let’s just say Harry wanted very badly to pull it out of its orderly confines and play with it like a cat. He was, however, very careful not to show his surprise at either change in the man.

What confused Harry was why Severus kept the bruises but never tried to push him away. Surely they must hurt? Surely, Severus must hate him? He was so confused and once again talked to his best friends.

“I don’t know…” Hermione mused.

“Do you think he sees them as you marking him or something?” Ron asked suddenly.

“Huh?” Harry asked with a frown. Ron blushed.

“You know why people leave hickeys right?” He asked uncomfortably and received blank looks. “It’s like saying ‘this person is taken, move along’ said in nicer terms.” He explained, a small blush making itself known.

“That only explains the hickeys.” Harry mumbled unhappily. “I actually leave serious bruises on him… and he doesn’t even heal them… they have to hurt… not like those….”

“Hm… There’s a sure way to find out.” Hermione said softly.

“What?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Ask him.” She said flatly.

“No,” Harry immediately shook his head.

“Why not, Harry? There may be a simple explanation…” She pleaded, almost.

“What if he says it’s to remind him how horrible I am or worse yet… what if he lies because he thinks he has to?”

“I thought we were over this issue?” Ron groaned. “Mate, he came onto you… ergo, he likes you to some extent… You aren’t taking advantage of anyone here!” He sighed exasperatedly.

“I know.” Harry knocked back his third Vodka for the night. “He may have been… lonely or something.”

“Right.” Hermione rolled her eyes. “Listen… why don’t you go away for a bit?” She suggested. “A bit of space may help… go somewhere quiet to think about all this… maybe to a muggle campsite or something.”

“Does that actually help?” Ron asked skeptically.
“Do you have a better idea?” She raised a brow. “With some distance, maybe you’ll see some sort of an answer to your doubts and it’ll give the professor a chance to think things over as well.” She explained her idea.

“Alright… it’s better than everything else I’ve been trying… it just keeps getting worse.” Harry sighed. He leaned his forehead on the table tiredly. Hermione hugged him from the side.

“It’ll be alright, Harry.” She said softly. Ron’s arm joined her’s on his back but Harry didn’t move for a long time. When he finally did, it was to announce he was going camping for a while starting the very next day. He didn’t wait for their reactions before flooing home, straight to Severus’ bed.

“I have to go away for a month.” Harry announced at breakfast after ravishing Severus once more the night before.

“A month?” Severus repeated blandly.

“Minimum. May need to stay a little longer.” Harry nodded, not meeting obsidian eyes.

“But…”

“You’ll have to stay here… Kreature can do the shopping…” Harry continued.

“Harry…”

“There won’t be any issues, the wards won’t let anyone in…”

“Please…” Severus pleaded.

Harry wondered why Severus was pleading with him- he should be happy to be rid of him! He made the mistake of looking up to see the dark eyes covered with a layer of moisture, a desperate plea in their depths… a plea not to abandon him…. Harry did the only thing he could, he kissed Severus hard, more or less slamming him against the wall. He wasn’t going to abandon him! It was just a little trip and he was going to return soon… maybe he would only need a week or two after all. Knowing Severus was still soft and pliable from the previous night, he simply entered him and sought to reassure the man of his desire. He recalled Ron’s remarks about ‘marking’ someone and sucked especially hard to make some very nice hickeys. He himself felt the sharp nails digging into his back and was only encouraged by them. Severus’ throaty moans didn’t help nor did it help when he kept shouting his name in that beautiful voice.

However, it wasn’t enough, the thought of being without Severus for so long consumed him and he kept going desperately. He lost all sense of time until he realized Severus was no longer conscious. He did catch the look of pain in obsidian eyes before they closed and it caused a fresh wave of guilt to wash over him.

He had done it again… and it was the worst yet! Harry sobbed into Severus’ shoulder before gently lifting him and taking him to his room. He washed him thoroughly in the bath, astonished the man was still asleep, dried him properly and laid him on the bed. He reached for the ever-present balm and gently smeared it in and around Severus’ swollen opening with tears tracking his cheeks, unheeded. He left the bruises on his hips alone as Severus had the right to remind himself of just how horrible a person he was. He tucked the older man in and gently kissed his bruised lips then his cheeks and eyelids finally pausing at his smooth forehead.

“I promise… I’ll figure out what’s wrong with me and come back to you… please… just don’t…
hate me, Severus…” With that he kissed the sleeping man’s forehead and rushed to his own room.

He took a satchel and threw in a pair of spare jeans and a few T-shirts, a sweater, a travel blanket and his stash of muggle money and left as soon as he could physically get out of the house. He didn’t notice Kreacher watching his departure sadly.
Chapter Summary

What is Severus going to do while Harry is away?

After a whole week of moping, Severus decided to do something productive. He half-heartedly cleaned and re-cleaned. He tried making potions but only sludge managed to be produced. He finally resigned himself to simply stare into nothing. Kreature did what he could to make him eat during this time but Severus more often than not left his food untouched.

“Master Severus, should be eating!” Kreature insisted; finally having had enough of the depressed man.

“I am not hungry.” Severus told the elf with a sigh.

“Not eating will not make Master Harry happy!” The elf reprimanded. “Master Harry likes yous to being healthy.” The elf continued, realizing his statement had effected his charge.

“Healthy?” Severus asked softly.

“Yes!” Kreature nodded vigorously.

“He doesn’t care…” The man said mostly to himself.

“Master Harry cares. Kreature be knowing. Master Severus must bes eating.” Kreature shoved a plateful of sandwiches at Severus who slowly nodded and started eating.

After that little confrontation, Severus ate whatever Kreature put on his plate. He also started thinking what else he could do to be ‘healthy’. To the elf’s utter delight, Severus started taking walks in the back garden, gaining a golden glow within days. Severus also looked up spells and such to improve his health and appearance. He was vaguely aware of his obsessive nature regarding Harry’s attention but he did not care. He wanted Harry to hold him without reservations, without thinking of another person, without having guilt after the fact. To that end, he decided, he would do anything.

Had it been a few years ago, Severus would have questioned his sanity and commented harshly on his own pigheadedness. However, the war, nearly dying and having a taste of something he never knew he had even wanted had changed him. Severus Snape was stubborn if not anything else, and he was determined to make Harry Potter want him.

That brought him to his mirror once more. He scrutinized himself carefully, looking for imperfections. He had a thin and tall frame with long limbs and slender fingers. He had decent muscles form years of dueling practice and lifting heavy cauldrons, though a little flab was starting to form- he decided he should devise an exercise plan to get rid of it and maybe rebuild some of his atrophied muscles… especially in the abdomen. He traced the old scars that sadly would never completely leave him and turned around, to examine his back. This was even more riddled than his front with scars but at least his buttocks were still firm, despite his age. He couldn’t find much wrong with his limbs either, except maybe he did need a bit of meat on them; Molly Weasley had told him as much on many occasions but it was not easy to gain weight in specific areas. A bit of targeted
exercise may help, he noted, along with nutrient potions.

If there was really nothing too wrong with his body, then why was Harry finding this so difficult? He asked himself as he watched the rippled effect on his long raven hair. Ever since he had started taking care of it, using a special shampoo and potions to keep it less oily despite his frequent brewing, his hair looked more like a silky waterfall more than anything else. It caught light in the most interesting manner and served to sometimes amuse him; no doubt the reason Harry liked it in the first place.

He idly stared at himself for quite a few minutes before it him him. The problem was his face! One side of it was scarred heavily due to Nagini’s bite, but he knew Harry didn’t mind that so much, since he never shied away from touching it. However, his nose was another matter. He was born with a straight, narrow and elegant nose. However, the appendage had been broken too many times. Since his family had been poor, and his father hated all things magical, his nose was never quite set properly. The bastard had enjoyed re-breaking it whenever he could. Tobias Snape was a bloody sadist and he was still ruining his life! His poor nose had gradually become hooked, crooked and rather large and was quite prominent. He was told nothing could be done to save it, save for re-breaking it several different ways and setting it properly and even that was dangerous as it could end up harming his brain in some way. No sane healer would recommend it.

No one said Severus Snape was sane. Dangerous, sneaky, determined, but definitely with a few screws loose- he thought to himself as he contemplated a way to ‘fix’ his not so little problem. This would be a project to work on.

He spent the next two weeks looking up anatomy books and healing books, including anything muggle Kreacher managed to find for him. He learned surprising facts about the muggle world and the interesting branch of plastic surgery and more specifically reconstruction surgeries. However, he wasn’t sure how he was supposed to get to a muggle hospital, especially as he was currently under house arrest and he didn’t want Harry to be in trouble because of him.

Maybe he could use a magical equivalent? The thought had merit. In reconstruction, damaged cartilage was sometimes replaced with whole piece taken often from the ribs, the extra bits of bone were shaped in a somewhat barbaric manner. However, Severus realized, he could use a bit of transfiguration to reshape the bone, though still risky (even muggle doctors agreed with that part). He had means to regrow any bone with judicious use of Skele-grow which also worked for cartilage.

Maybe he could simply vanish a part of his facial bone and regrow it like Lockhart did to Harry’s arm- then again that might end up harming one of his most sensitive organs- the brain.

It took him another week of deliberation before he decided on a plan of action. He had found a mild form of banishing hex, meant for banishing small pieces of shattered bones, which would suffice. He had actually practiced this wandlessly on a few rocks from outside, happy that it had worked. He knew the general range of the spell and calculated the power he’d need to put behind it to banish only the cartilage and the mangled bit of bone in his nose. Then he simply needed to take a dose of Skele-grow and endure the pain for a few hours as the potion remade his nose to how it was meant to be.

He finally was ready with his improved potion and confident in his ability to banish his nose. He stood, once more, in front of his mirror, wrapped in the pale gold robe Harry had got for him and took a deep breath. He concentrated and keeping his eyes focused, he cast the spell. It was an odd feeling loosing a part of your skeletal structure. It was even odder to see shapeless skin simply hanging onto his lips. He quickly downed the potion when his mind started comparing his non-existent nose with Voldemort’s; that was a really unpleasant comparison.
Unfortunately, he didn’t count on the inflammation that would result from the spell reacting with the potion. Through his tearing eyes he noted his swollen red nose, looking rather like it belonged on Rudolf. He hoped the thing would settle soon and tiredly slipped into his bed. The pain was unbearable. The nose was more sensitive than other body part and even if Severus was used to pain in general, this was enough to make him tear up and wish fervently for it all to end.

“What did you do to yourself?” A deep, familiar voice demanded from somewhere. Severus turned his head slightly and groaned.

“Harry…” He immediately pulled his blanket over his head.

“What in bloody hell…” Harry whispered, frozen to the spot in the door.

“Master Severus being fixing his nosey.” Kreature offered, obviously disapproving of Severus’ plan.

“Fixing his… how?”

“He be vanishing it…” Kreacher gleefully informed Harry.

“Vanishing…” Harry whispered. He pulled the covers away, the action conveying some anger. “Kreacher, get ice.” He ordered. “You, Severus Snape, are a bloody idiot.” He declared. Severus fought his blush and struggled to get away; he had hoped he’d be all healed by the time Harry got back! He must look very ugly right then- how embarrassing!

“Look here.” Harry hissed annoyed and Severus had no choice but to obey. “Honestly, stupid.” He muttered, gently placing a cloth covered piece of ice on the inflamed nose to help with the swelling; it also numbed the pain some.

“No potions or charms.” Severus said softly.

“And why not?”

“Skele-grow… it won’t react well with any magic.”

“Again… idiot.” Harry sighed and continued holding the cold cloth to the nose. Reassured and happy to see Harry after so long, Severus drifted off. He wasn’t aware of the soft kiss delivered to his forehead and the fact that Harry had stayed with him until the swelling did start to go down on its own.
Startling Realizations

Chapter Summary

Harry's impromptu 'find self' camping proves useful.

It was very hard to not turn on his heel and go back to Severus but Harry persevered. He could not keep doing this and he needed to understand what was going on. Hermione’s idea may be just what they needed, maybe a little distance would help him see what he was missing? If only he didn’t feel so miserable.

It wasn’t exactly camping season and so it was easy to rent a place for a month for a relatively cheap price. It was a small cabin deep in the woods with no electricity and only dirt tracks leading to it. He had told the manager that he would trek once he had the tools ready. For tools, he had his wand of course and he stocked up on canned foods to keep him fed. Maybe he’d even hunt an occasional rabbit or deer for food. It was simple enough with a wand, especially as his aim was rather good.

The problem was his mind refused to let go of Severus. It supplied relentless images of the man crying, accusing him and hexing him. He even had a few nightmares where he had strangled Severus in his enthusiasm. It was beyond disturbing. Was he turning into his uncle? He didn’t notice his aunt ever hurt but he supposed she could have hid any bruises just as well as he had back then. The issue was that he never meant to hurt Severus but always ended up doing so anyway.

He spent his days dreaming or day-dreaming of the dark man who used to remind him of a bat once upon a time. It wasn’t long before he started examining his relationship with Severus starting from the moment he had laid his eyes on the scary professor.

At first he had been scared of the man who had such piercing dark eyes. It felt as if he could see right through you and those eyes were so cold and distant, he could have easily believed he could cut one down by his sharp gaze alone. He had been only a naive little eleven year old, desperate to fit in and Severus… he was the stern professor who never gave an inch. That and he hated Gryffindors and more so Potters. It had taken a long time for him to understand the hate was a sham. At the time, though, he thought it to be real and hated back. They had suspected him of wrongdoing, of deliberately trying to hurt him and of stealing that stone when in fact he was the antithesis of their expectations.

To his young mind, saving his life did not amount to much good. How wrong he was. It was almost hilarious when he thought of how exasperated Severus must have been with him- always getting himself into strange situations, often ending up fighting for his life. His threats to get him expelled were just that… threats… to get him to behave, to stay in and not wander the halls late at night, to stay safe. How much sleep did he cost his Potions professor?

Third year must have been hard for Severus as it was for him. His life had been under threat constantly due to those dementors while a supposed mass-murderer and Severus’ childhood tormentor was out to get him. Harry knew he had been foolish, venturing to the village without anyone knowing and wanting to ‘get Black for what he had done’. Severus was especially critical of him and others that year, possibly because of the close proximity of two marauders. Then he was told of Sirius’ innocence and when he disbelieved, they had stunned him. Harry shook his head. How could he have trusted a man who had just escaped prison over the man who had already saved his
life twice or more? In hindsight, he saw that Severus only sought to protect them, since he knew how easy some could lie and convince you their lie was a truth. If given a chance, maybe he would have dosed Sirius with Veritaserum and he probably had Remus’ potion on him too. It was his foolishness that led to Peter escaping and the following snowball effect.

Fourth year had been even more stressful. He hadn’t found out until much later how hard Severus had fought to try and get him out of the tournament, all the while appearing to utterly detest Harry. He hadn’t known until Minerva told him how agitated Severus had been when they had been told about the dragons or how he almost jumped into the stadium when he simply stood there waiting for his broom. The second task, he had thought Dobby had helped him. While the elf did help him, the idea had come from Severus. When he had asked Dobby how he knew about it he had actually said “Scary Professor Snapey sir was being mumbling how Harry Potter sir never be thinking to use such a goody plant. Dobby being sneaky and taking the gillyweed.” Harry had not realized until later, actually only recently, that Dobby had overheard precisely what Severus had wanted the elf to hear- the sneaky Slytherin. He did put up one big show of suspecting him of stealth later- Harry was beginning to think it was entertainment to him to watch him flounder, knowing Dumbledore would never expel him. He couldn’t imagine what the third task did to the poor spy- always the protector, forced to watch from the sidelines. It had been Severus who noticed he had disappeared after arriving back with Cedric’s body, even if the headmaster had been the one to find him.

After all that, he still was too naive and stupid to believe Snape would ever lead him wrong. He could have slyly showed Severus his hand in potions and Harry now knew, he would have received help subtly but surely. The man actually spiked his food with nutrient draughts and such under Poppy’s nose… it wouldn’t have been too hard to do something similar. Maybe he did, in some small way help… that he might never be aware of. It saddened him that after all of his experiences with the man, he had not trusted him enough to check on Sirius. Granted his occlumency lessons and Voldemort’s influence clouded his brain… he should have trusted Severus… even if the man had been very upset with him for breaking into his memories.

Sixth year was a bit slow. It was filled with learning, a sense of doom, a sense of duty. A weight had been placed on his shoulders and he wasn’t really coping. Learning about the horcruxes had been hard and so was learning defense from Severus. In that one year, the man had prepared his students for war, even if no one realized this. His service went far beyond simple duty and they were all fools to believe he would ever heartlessly kill Albus Dumbledore.

How alone Severus must have been? Hated by practically everyone and still working so hard to get things to come to a favorable end. Protecting his students in the face of their scorn and risking his life to save theirs. Such selflessness was not expected of him and they had all turned on him.

Then to see him dying… he had almost rejoiced until he saw something new in those eyes, something that had probably been hidden until then. “Lily’s eyes.” Severus probably didn’t know what those words from him meant to him… or maybe he did. It was his way of saying he knew he wasn’t James and he was not hated. Two words had changed the perceptions he had of the bat of the dungeons. Hate morphed to pity and pain, and Harry had wanted to save him. He didn’t think Severus’ prior preparations would help him enough for them to actually save him after the battle but the man was stubborn as a mule and had pulled through miraculously.

Even after everything came to light, Severus had not been spared the stupidity of their world. He hadn’t been spared the pain he, Harry, and others bestowed upon him. Severus deserved more… so much more but Harry knew he couldn’t let go anymore. He needed Severus in his life. He was a fixture, he was his reason for continuing to live. Severus was his comfort, his anchor. Severus was what made his dreary house a home. He had never been happier than when holding the man he suspected he was madly in love with. How could he give him up without even knowing how
Severus felt? They had to talk. Hermione was right.

It took three weeks to get to that point and another two by the time Harry managed to muster enough courage (after many failed practices) to return home. What he found was a severely hurt Severus. Since his wards were set to only allow him entry or exit (even an animagus could not get in) and he had not been alerted to any guests, he correctly concluded Severus had done it himself.

“What did you do to yourself?” He demanded appalled at what he was seeing, yet disbelieving of it all. Severus turned his head slightly and groaned, pulling the covers up to no doubt hide his swollen face.

“Harry…” He moaned, sounding guilty and exasperated at the same time. Harry briefly wondered what had caused the injury…. was it a potion explosion? Had Severus been in danger while he had been wallowing in self-pity and cowardice?

“What in bloody hell…” Harry whispered, unable to understand.

“Master Severus being fixing his nosey.” Kreature offered popping up beside him and glaring at Severus disapprovingly.

“Fixing his… how?” Harry frowned down at the elf.

“He be vanishing it…” Kreacher glared harder at the lump in the bed.

“Vanishing…” Harry frowned, horrified. Head injuries were dangerous by themselves but to vanish pieces of the skull was unheard of! Why would Severus do something so foolish?

He marched up to the shivering lump and pulled the covers away, assessing the damage. “Kreacher, get ice.” He ordered. “You, Severus Snape, are a bloody idiot.” He declared. Severus fought his blush and struggled to get away.

“Look here.” Harry hissed annoyed and Severus had no choice but to obey. “Honestly, stupid.” He muttered, gently placing a cloth covered piece of ice on the inflamed nose to help with the swelling.

“No potions or charms.” Severus said softly.

“And why not?” Harry huffed.

“Skele-grow… it won’t react well with any magic.”

“Again… idiot.” Harry sighed and continued holding the cold cloth to the nose, wondering why Severus wanted to do something so drastic… nothing was worth endangering his life. Severus drifted off soon, the ice apparently relieving the pain along with the swelling. Harry shook his head and stoked the silky soft hair. He had missed his Severus. He smiled down at the man gently as he slept and placed a gentle kiss on his forehead.

“I’m home, Severus.” He whispered. He waited until he was sure the swelling was taken care of before leaving Severus’ side.
Home

Chapter Summary

Things become a bit domestic. Severus is happy but wishes for... more.

Severus’ nose finally settled after a day, though it was still a bit red as if he had a bad cold. The shape was back to it’s original linear and elegant self making Severus very proud of his accomplishment. It was no longer hooked or crooked and even if he felt silly, Severus spent quite a bit of time admiring his new appendage.

However, Harry seemed to disapprove and even disappointed in Severus’ actions in his absence. He wasn’t cold per say but would occasionally throw sad looks at his companion. It was disconcerting at first but Severus soon decided to ignore it, since this was an informed decision he took- he was an adult and allowed that much! Harry and he barely talked but they did have an occasional breakfast and dinner together. Sometimes Harry cooked but most times Severus took on the task.

The issue Severus was having was that, he found himself quite alone at bedtime. Harry would casually touch him- maybe a pat on the shoulder or hand, a light brush through his silky hair or other gestures but he never crossed the threshold of his bedroom again. Severus was awfully put out by this. Hadn’t he gone to great lengths to attract Harry? What was preventing the stupid dunderhead now?!

“Severus?” Harry called. “Can you meet me in the study, please?” Harry asked. Severus blinked. He hadn’t ever been invited into the study- it was where Harry worked when at home and where he stored important papers and such; he didn’t even enter the room to clean, just in case.

“What is it?” He asked softly as he followed Harry.

“Sit.” Harry waved his hand to a comfortable sofa by the tea table, taking the one opposite himself. The room was surprisingly well kept and seemed organized. Severus observed his surroundings until Harry cleared his throat.

“As your… custodian…” The younger wizard started. “I had been given full access to your assets until you are allowed to handle them yourself.”

“I know.” Severus said quietly. It was one of the sore points with his imprisonment.

“I have been clearing up my own inheritance so far and wondered if you’d like me to manage yours as well.” Harry pushed a folder towards him. Severus blinked at it but didn’t take it. “You have quite a few investments but some have become obsolete and some are a drain on your finances…” He explained.

“Why are you…”

“The circumstances dictate I make any changes but I wouldn’t ignore your wishes. They are your assets, you should have the final say.” Harry declared. “If you want me to leave them alone, I will. If you’d prefer for me to make some changes, that is also fine.”

“But I don’t have any investments… just savings and a vault full of potions journals and tomes…”
“Of course you have investments!” Harry exclaimed. “As part of your Prince inheritance…” Severus paled. “What’s wrong?”

“Prince?”

“Yes, you are the last Prince, are you not? Lord Prince actually, though the title is suspended for a while. Were you unaware?”

“I was… under the impression my mother was disowned.”

“You weren’t.” Harry told him. “It seems you were always the heir Primus… according to the documents.”

“Oh…”

“Do you need time to think on it?” Harry asked softly.

“No… just do what you think best… I trust you.” Severus smiled a little since he did trust his Gryffindor. “I just wonder if I could have some of my experimental potions journals from my personal vault?” He asked shyly.

“Of course… I’ll take you in a day or two.” Harry nodded. “Severus…” Harry’s hand found his. “I’m not going to take what is rightfully yours, you need not worry over your finances at all.”

“I know, Harry.” Severus nodded.

“Good. Now I have some ideas on the investments and we’ll meet your account manager to get things going. That done… I have some news.” He continued. “We’ll be having a few people over this weekend. Most of them were your recent students.”

“I should stay out of sight.” Severus nodded; it wouldn’t be good to be seen really, from Harry’s point of view.

“Merlin no! What gave you that idea?” Harry exclaimed, confusing him. “I just wanted to warn you so you’re not surprised. We’re doing potluck and I was going to bake a turkey. You could make something as well if you’d like. This is your home, at least for now, and you should at least mingle a little… I understand if it is too awkward but…”

“You want me there?” Severus asked astonished.

“You’re one of the hosts, Severus.” Harry rolled his eyes. “Of course you have to be there.”

“Oh… Alright then…” Severus nodded. Harry smiled at him.

“Well, take the file with you and go over it. Let me know if there is something specific you want to do.” Harry told him, clearly dismissing him, so Severus gathered the file and wandered back to his own room. He didn’t really look at the file however, he was too focused on the fact that Harry said this was his home.

Home. His home had always been Hogwarts and he had not realized. This was his home. He enjoyed taking care of it and Harry. He had practically redecorated at least half the place… yes it was home… for now. It was sad he’d have to give it up in a few months. There was only a year left of his house arrest, then he was on probation of sorts. He wondered idly if Harry would mind if he wanted to remain here…at home.
He eventually did look at the file, overwhelmed with the amount he actually owned. How he remained oblivious to this was strange but he wasn’t complaining. He himself had amassed a small fortune with his potions and could support himself with or without the immense Prince fortunes. However, the fact that he was apparently ‘Lord Prince’ was something to look into. If his memory served correctly, he would have a seat or two on the Wizengamot and that was a responsibility he would have to prepare for seriously. It wouldn’t do to be frivolous about it even if he would rather spend time brewing rather than politicking.

“Harry?” He knocked on the study door.

“Come in, Severus.” Harry called distractedly.

“May I have a moment?”

“Sure.”

“I was wondering if you had anything on the Wizengamot and such.”

“Wizengamot?”

“If I am correct, being Lord Prince, I should have a hereditary seat or two in the Wizengamot. I thought to prepare myself early.”

“Ah…” Harry nodded. “You’re in luck, I have all the pertinent books for newbies like us.” Harry grinned and went over to his bookshelf and picked out a veritable stack of books.

“Us?” Severus blinked.

“Us.” Harry nodded amused. “You do realize I am the last Potter and Sirius’ sole heir?”

“Last… you’re Lord Potter?” He asked gaping.

“I have until I turn twenty-one to get my act together. I am also Lord Black, being the only eligible male with Black blood as well as Sirius’ legal heir.”

“Black blood…”

“Are you repeating everything on purpose?” Harry asked with a laugh. “My Grandmother, dad’s mum, was Dorea Black, Sirius’ great-aunt, I believe. Other than me, there’s only Draco but he is Heir Secundus, since I have a more direct relation to the previous Lord Black or something like that. It’s a bit confusing.”

“I see.” So, Potter’s mum was a Black and thus a Slytherin; it made him wonder why James had hated Slytherins.

“Well, read up… Maybe we can discuss some of these stuff… the jargon is unbelievable!” Harry groused as he handed over the books.

“I’d like that. Thank you, Harry.” Severus gave a small nod and smile and left for his rooms.

“Wait!” Harry called.

“Yes?”

“There’s a second study at the end of the Hall, if you want to use it.” He offered.
“That would be appreciated. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Harry smiled at him and returned to his work, leaving the door open. Severus smiled at the serious picture the man made at his large mahogany desk before he trotted to the study he was to use; thankfully, it was one of the rooms he had already cleaned and remodeled.
Harry leaned back into his chair and rubbed his eyes. His mind instantly went to Severus and what he might be doing. He smiled sadly as he recalled Severus’ new and improved nose. He had no reason to think Severus was vain but recently he had been interested in such things. Harry thought he was beautiful before and though he looked even more attractive now, Harry didn’t think it made a difference… at least to him it was the same old Severus. He had simply smiled when Severus had obviously used some potions that he was familiar with thanks to Hermione. He thought it was something for Severus to occupy himself with and didn’t think further but now, Hermione’s words a long time ago haunted him.

She had once ranted about how some women had such low self esteem to radically change themselves in a misguided attempt to be ‘liked’. She actually had plenty gruesome examples where their attempts had ended badly. When he had processed what Severus had done, he realized, almost intuitively, that the instance was similar to Hermione’s examples, though it seemed Severus had succeeded despite the lack of a wand.

Once he realized why Severus had tried to change his nose, it became all too apparent that he thought he was unattractive. Currently, the only person he saw was Harry and it followed that Severus wanted Harry to think he was attractive. On one hand Harry was a little touched that Severus would go to such lengths for him even if it was utterly foolish. On the other hand he was disappointed that Severus thought he was that shallow- didn’t he know that Harry would always like him just as he was? Apparently, that little fact hadn’t gotten across to Severus.

Harry decided to make Severus understand that his company was appreciated and not only in bed. To that end he decided he would not ignore him like he had before (frankly he had been running scared) nor would he seek him out sexually. He would show Severus gently that he was more than just a passing fancy.

It had been going well so far. Severus hadn’t shown signs of being agitated but seemed more curious about his changed behavior than anything. He seemed content and Harry was happy with that. They met for most meals now that Harry had been released from many of his obligations and more often than not stayed home. It was a quiet domestic life, comfortable and warm.

It wasn’t until recently that the ministry cleared Severus’ accounts and gave him access to his assets. The mail had surprised him and before he went about getting Severus’ things in order, he decided to see about his own. He had received a shock when he realized just what was meant by being Sirius’ heir and well as the last Potter. He had a new thing to focus on and started using his study more often. Hermione had gotten him a few books to help him out with all the finance stuff and Wizengamot. It was nearly Christmas when he finally tackled Severus’ files.

“Severus?” Harry called, walking to Severus’ room. “Can you meet me in the study, please?” Harry had long ago decided Severus should get to have a say in his own assets, no matter what the ministry said.
“What is it?” Severus asked softly as he followed Harry.

“Sit.” Harry waved his hand to a comfortable sofa by the tea table, taking the one opposite himself. “As your… custodian…” Harry started, clearing his throat. “I had been given full access to your assets until you are allowed to handle them yourself.”

“I know.” Severus said, sounding resigned to the fact.

“I have been clearing up my own inheritance so far and wondered if you’d like me to manage yours as well.” Harry pushed a folder towards him. Severus blinked at it but didn’t take it. “You have quite a few investments but some have become obsolete and some are a drain on your finances…” He explained.

“Why are you…”

“The circumstances dictate I make any changes but I wouldn’t ignore your wishes. They are your assets, you should have the final say.” Harry declared. “If you want me to leave them alone, I will. If you’d prefer for me to make some changes, that is also fine.”

“But I don’t have any investments… just savings and a vault full of potions journals and tomes…” Severus frowned and stared at the folder as if it would burst into flames any second.

“Of course you have investments!” Harry exclaimed. “As part of your Prince inheritance…” He stopped as he noticed Severus pale suddenly. “What’s wrong?”

“Prince?” Severus whispered.

“Yes, you are the last Prince, are you not? Lord Prince actually, though the title is suspended for a while.” Harry frowned as a look of shock overtook his house-mate. “Were you unaware?”

“I was… under the impression my mother was disowned.” Severus managed.

“You weren’t.” Harry declared, sure that must have been it… he did actually read that book Hermione sent about inheritances and such. “It seems you were always the heir Primus… according to the documents.” He pointed in their general direction.

“Oh…”

“Do you need time to think on it?” Harry asked worriedly.

“No… just do what you think best… I trust you.” Severus smiled a little, unknowingly making Harry’s heart soar. “I just wonder if I could have some of my experimental potions journals from my personal vault?” He asked shyly.

“Of course… I’ll take you in a day or two.” Harry nodded, trying not to choke on his sudden elated emotions. “Severus…” Harry’s hand found his, squeezing lightly. “I’m not going to take what is rightfully yours, you need not worry over your finances at all.”

“I know, Harry.” Severus nodded.

“Good. Now I have some ideas on the investments and we’ll meet your account manager to get things going. That done… I have some news.” He continued, deciding to plough on… he wasn’t as sure as Hermione that this was an entirely good idea. “We’ll be having a few people over this weekend. Most of them were your recent students.”
“I should stay out of sight.” Severus nodded sagely.

“Merlin no! What gave you that idea?” Harry exclaimed, appalled Severus even thought he’d exclude him! He was only doing this because Hermione pointed out how isolated Severus was! “I just wanted to warn you so you’re not surprised. We’re doing potluck and I was going to bake a turkey. You could make something as well if you’d like. This is your home, at least for now, and you should at least mingle a little… I understand if it is too awkward but…”

“You want me there?” Severus asked, clearly astonished.

“You’re one of the hosts, Severus.” Harry rolled his eyes. “Of course… you have to be there.”

“Oh… Alright then…” Severus nodded. Harry smiled at him.

“Well, take the file with you and go over it. Let me know if there is something specific you want to do.” Harry told him, deciding they both had enough of the embarrassing conversation. Severus gathered the file and wandered back to his own room.

“Harry?” He knocked on the study door, returning barely a half hour later.

“Come in, Severus.” Harry called distractedly.

“May I have a moment?”

“Sure.”

“I was wondering if you had any materials on the Wizengamot and such.”

“Wizengamot?”

“If I am correct, being Lord Prince, I should have a hereditary seat or two in the Wizengamot. I thought to prepare myself early.”

“Ah…” Harry nodded. “You’re in luck, I have all the pertinent books for newbies like us.” Harry grinned and went over to his bookshelf and picked out a veritable stack of books.

“Us?” Severus blinked.

“Us.” He nodded amused. “You do realize I am the last Potter and Sirius’ sole heir?”

“Last… you’re Lord Potter?” Severus asked gaping.

“I have until I turn twenty-one to get my act together. I am also Lord Black, being the only eligible male with Black blood as well as Sirius’ legal heir.”

“Black blood…”

“Are you repeating everything on purpose?” Harry asked with a laugh. “My Grandmother, dad’s mum, was Dorea Black, Sirius’ great-aunt, I believe. Other than me, there’s only Draco but he is Heir Secundus, since I have a more direct relation to the previous Lord Black or something like that. It’s a bit confusing.”

“I see.”

“Well, read up… Maybe we can discuss some of these stuff… the jargon is unbelievable!” Harry groused as he handed over the books, silently thanking his bookish friend.
“I’d like that. Thank you, Harry.” Severus gave a small nod and smile and left for his rooms.

“Wait!” Harry called, suddenly getting a brilliant idea (even if he was being a tad narcissistic).

“Yes?” Severus half turned.

“There’s a second study at the end of the Hall, if you want to use it.” He offered, nervously, if he cared to admit it.

“That would be appreciated. Thank you.” Severus nodded once more.

“You’re welcome.” Harry smiled at him and returned to his work, leaving the door open…in case Severus had any more things to talk about. He half hoped Severus would take up the offer soon and often but it was up to the older man, really. He smiled softly to himself recalling how Severus trusted him before hunkering down for more serious work.
Things are... nice. Harry decides to throw a party. Severus decides to decorate. A little early for Christmas but meh!

Things remained calm in number twelve Grimmauld Place. Harry was still a bit aloof but not cold. They hadn’t shared as much as a kiss since his return from wherever he had gone and Severus was still treated to occasional sad, calculating looks. Severus figured this was another one of those periods of time where Harry was readjusting or deciding on something concerning him and it would all soon blow over, returning things to normal… or maybe even better than before.

Instead of worrying over what Harry was constantly thinking about, Severus decided to focus on the party, loathe as he was to call it that. It was actually December now and it was appropriate to have gaudy decorations about the house. At least the places the guests were likely to visit should be decked but Harry seemed oblivious to it. In his self appointed role of Harry’s caretaker, Severus decided to hunt down any Yule decorations the house may have had.

Kreature was happy to bring out the dusty old box with baubles of all shapes and sizes. He also offered to get sprigs of Holly but sadly informed Severus that he couldn’t manage a proper tree on his own. Severus decided Harry could get that and mused where he could drape the colorful cloths that he had found. He used a cream one with Holly design for the kitchen table, keeping aside a grand gold runner for use on the day of festivities (Christmas eve to be precise). Finding a rich and very large table cloth, Severus wondered how many they were expecting.

“Harry, how many friends have been invited?” Severus asked walking into the study.

“Hm… Quite a few…” Harry frowned.

“Will they fit in the kitchen?”

“Probably not. We’re having the entire Weasley brood, along with the Grangers, Longbottoms, Luna is coming too, there’s Dean and Seamus and everyone’s dates…” He trailed off eyes wide.

“I suppose we should get the ballroom ready then.” Severus mused. “Good thing it’s already been scrubbed clean and the magicked silverware has been removed.”

“Really?” Harry asked surprised.

“Really, Potter. One would think you don’t live here.” Severus smirked as Harry blushed.

“Been a bit busy… so Ballroom… Well, I suppose… Kreature can set it all up.”

“Potter, Kreature is old. He can’t be expected to do it all alone.” Severus pointed out, resisting rolling his eyes.

“Oh… should I help?”

“I’m sure you can make yourself useful.” Severus drawled and paused with a small smile. “We need
a tree.” Harry blinked.

“What?”

“A tree… Pine, perhaps?”

“You mean you want a Christmas tree?” Harry asked slowly.

“You are obviously hosting a Yule celebration, you must have the appropriate atmosphere.” He shrugged uncomfortably; was he perhaps wrong in his assumptions?

“Oh… right… you’re right… uh… the tree is actually going to be delivered this evening. I figured Hermione and Ginny would murder me if I didn’t at least get that.” Harry blushed. “I’m not very good with decorating.” Severus considered the younger man a moment before deciding they could both learn together.

“You can help by transfiguring things.” Severus decided and marched to the ballroom. Harry followed without being asked. They spent hours making wreaths adorned with all the holiday fittings like bright ribbons and the like. They stuck boughs of Holly everywhere, and managed to get the table covered with the pure white thick cloth; it took all three of them to do so. A colorful runner was added giving the room a festive appearance. Chairs were arranged around the ridiculously long table which was set to one side, allowing ample room for dancing. Kreacher advised them to situate several seating arrangements around the room; Severus agreed since the elf was old enough to know what he was talking about.

Once the tree came, Kreacher and Harry set it up in one corner and Harry used magic to wrap the large red ribbon and fairy lights around the tree. They then randomly hung the baubles they had, Harry conjuring some more or transfiguring pieces of firewood into interesting baubles. Severus smirked as he noticed Harry creating suspiciously familiar shapes but pretended to have not seen. Harry deserved some fun… Merlin knew the Dursleys had never allowed him much of it. He doubted if he even decorated a tree before… judging by the haphazard hanging he was doing. He, on the other hand, was forced to do this pointless task every year at Hogwarts- not that it was tiresome with a grinning Harry beside him.

Unknown to either of them Kreacher had been doing his own decorating in the living room when he was not needed. It was his own little present to his masters and when they were ready for dinner, he led them to the living room, instead of the Kitchen.

“Woah… what’s this?” Harry gasped at the sight.

“Amazing… Kreature? Did you do this?” Severus asked curiously.

“Yes sirs! Kreature got tiny tree from the forest and be using elf magic for decorating the tree.” Indeed the tree itself was glowing in several colors and there were frozen droplets on the end of each branch that dispersed the light in a pleasing manner. It was simple yet beautiful. There were also free fairies, not the chained variety they had used earlier, humming quietly around the tree. It was one of the best arrangements Severus had seen.

“Wow…” Harry repeated his amazement as he looked around. He seemed a bit taken with all the green.

“Thank you Kreature… this is just perfect.” Harry knelt down to give the elf a hug which was returned with a huge smile.

“This being Kreature’s gift for masters.” The elf said shyly. Severus smiled softly; he had become
rather fond of the elf, now that he didn’t curse his blood status and was actually helpful.

“It’s the best present ever.” Harry said firmly as Severus nodded, patting the elf on the head.

“I suppose we could eat in here…” Severus allowed knowing Kreature was hoping for just that. It took only a moment for the elf to return with loaded plates with lasagna (one of the few dishes Kreature could make properly) and two long flutes of white wine. Severus idly wondered where the wine had come from.

“You’re missing a plate Kreature.” Harry said gently, a kind smile on his face. Severus started himself; was Harry actually asking the elf to join them? It wasn’t anything a wizard would ordinarily do but he supposed to Harry, Kreature was a friend first, servant second.

“Kreature is bringing two…” The elf frowned.

“You forgot yourself.” Severus supplied helpfully. The elf stared wide-eyed for a minute before popping away with tears in his eyes. He returned with his own plate of food and looked to Harry who nodded in approval.

They sat around the warm crackling fire and enjoyed their food. Harry and Severus conversed about the Wizengamot and what they were hoping to do once they gained access to their seats. Sometime after Kreacher supplied eggnog, much to both their amusement, and sat on the rug in between the two of them listening to their ramblings about the ministry.
Preparations

Chapter Summary

Harry perspective.

Things remained calm in number twelve Grimmauld Place. Harry was happy with the progress he had made with Severus. He no longer was stiff around him and took certain liberties he had not previously taken. Harry doubted Severus even realized these little things, he was fairly certain Severus was waiting for his rather shaky control to break. They hadn’t shared as much as a kiss since his return and it was quite obvious Severus was miffed about this fact. However, he seemed content to wait it out which was just fine with Harry.

Harry had noticed Kreacher and Severus trailing brightly colored items behind them but didn’t comment. He was glad Severus felt comfortable enough to decorate their home without nervously asking him like he had with the carpet. Harry didn’t mind, in fact he was thankful because he may yet escape the wrath of the females in his life about not celebrating.

They didn’t understand that to him Christmas meant very little. To him, it was a time of solitude, of watching as others got things while he was locked away. Hogwarts hadn’t changed his feelings either because more often than not he was left all alone there as well. Sure he enjoyed the decorations and such when presented with them but he wasn’t truly into the holiday in terms of celebration… he simply didn’t get it and felt uncomfortable when he was asked to hang something on the tree or help with some strangely colored things. It was just as well Severus seemed to enjoy these things and left it at that… well, until Severus managed to drag him into the mess.

“Harry, how many persons have been invited?” Severus asked walking into the study, not even knocking on the door. Harry hid a smile at the familiarity and at hearing Severus’ strong commanding tone.

“Hm… Quite a few…” Harry frowned in thought. How many were going to self-invite themselves was the real question, actually.

“Will they fit in the kitchen?” Severus asked, probably noting his confusion.

“Probably not. We’re having the entire Weasley brood, along with the Grangers, Longbottoms, Luna is coming too, there’s Dean and Seamus and everyone’s dates…” He trailed off eyes wide, realizing they were going to end up having quite a few guests.

“I suppose we should get the ballroom ready then.” Severus mused. “Good thing it’s already been scrubbed clean and the magicked silverware has been removed.”

“Really?” Harry asked surprised, he hadn’t been aware of that.

“Really Potter. One would think you don’t live here.” Severus smirked as Harry blushed, while privately thinking Severus did think of this place as his home.

“Been a bit busy… so Ballroom… Well, I suppose… Kreature can set it all up.”

“Potter, Kreature is old. He can’t be expected to do it all alone.” Severus pointed out haughtily, as if
he was in potions class and was being a dunderhead.

“Oh… should I help?” Harry offered automatically. He blinked at his own words but smiled at Severus.

“I’m sure you can make yourself useful.” Severus drawled and paused with a small smile. “We need a tree.” Harry blinked again. A tree?

“What?”

“A tree… Pine, perhaps?” Severus said a little condescendingly. Harry had to admit he was acting daft at the moment and deserved it.

“You mean you want a Christmas tree?” Harry asked slowly.

“You are obviously hosting a Yule celebration, you must have the appropriate atmosphere.” Severus shrugged. He looked uncomfortable as if the idea was foreign to him. Harry smiled, maybe they could muddle through it together.

“Oh… right… you’re right… uh… the tree is actually going to be delivered this evening. I figured Hermione and Ginny would murder me if I didn’t at least get that.” Harry blushed. “I’m not very good with decorating.” He added, just in case.

“You can help by transfiguring things.” Severus decided and marched to the ballroom, expecting to be followed. Harry smirked at him before doing just that. They spent hours making wreaths adorned with all the holiday fittings like bright ribbons and the like. They stuck boughs of Holly everywhere, and managed to get the table covered with the pure white cloth; the runner was extremely colorful and was a good contrast to the table cloth. Chairs were arranged around the ridiculously long table which was set to one side, allowing ample room for dancing.

Harry had never realized Severus liked color so much since he always wore conservative clothing, usually black. It made sense. Like him, Severus too probably did not know about his inheritance, so he got used to economize- a pair or two of work clothing and few articles besides as necessity arose. In Harry’s case, there were annoying females to fill his wardrobe and in Severus’ case, Harry was all too happy to become the annoying bug himself.

Harry Potter also found he didn’t mind decorating with Severus Snape. It was even fun transfiguring things and critiquing each other’s work and then working to make it better. It was interesting how Severus would ask for specific shapes and grouse about Harry’s color blindness until he charmed it to whatever color Severus had wanted. It felt right sitting in the middle of the room amongst colorful baubles… it felt like home… a home Harry actually belonged in.

Once the tree came, Kreacher and Harry set it up in one corner and Harry used magic to wrap the large red ribbon and fairy lights around the tree. They then randomly hung the baubles they had, Harry conjuring some more or transfiguring pieces of firewood into interesting baubles. Harry had never thought he’d be making little Dumbledores and Minerva’s feline form to hang on their tree… but there he was! He even snuck them past Severus who would surely have made him re-transfigure them.

Unknown to either of them Kreacher had been doing his own decorating in the living room when he was not needed. It was his own little present to his masters and when they were ready for dinner, he led them to the living room, instead of the Kitchen.

“Woah… what’s this?”
“Amazing… Kreature? Did you do this?” Severus asked.

“Yes sirs! Kreature got tiny tree from the forest and be using elf magic for decorating the tree.” The elf explained exuberantly. Indeed the tree was glowing interestingly in varied colors and there were what looked like water droplets or the frozen version of them that sparkled. It was simple yet beautiful. There were also real fairies humming quietly around the tree. It was ethereal.

“Wow…” Harry repeated his amazement as he looked around. It seemed greenery was everywhere and Kreacher had taken great pains to make the evergreen leaves hang just right to frame the bright Holly berries. The room was a personification of a homey living room at Christmastime.

“Thank you Kreature… this is just perfect.” Harry knelt down to give the elf a hug which was returned with a huge smile.

“This being Kreature’s gift for masters.” The elf said shyly.

“It’s the best present ever.” Harry said firmly as Severus nodded beside him, patting the elf on the head.

“I suppose we could eat in here…” Severus allowed slyly, probably knowing Kreature was hoping for just that. It took only a moment for the elf to return with loaded plates with lasagna (one of the few dishes Kreature could pull off easily) and two long flutes of white wine.

“You’re missing a plate Kreature.” Harry said gently, a kind smile on his face. Kreature was part of the family and he really should be joining them.

“Kreature is bringing two…” The elf frowned.

“You forgot yourself.” Severus supplied helpfully, not seeing the approving smile Harry threw his way. The elf stared wide-eyed for a minute before popping away with tears in his eyes. He returned with his own plate of food and looked to Harry who nodded in approval.

They sat around the warm crackling fire and enjoyed their food. Harry and Severus conversed about the Wizengamot and what they were hoping to do once they gained access to their seats. Sometime after Kreacher supplied eggnog, much to Harry’s amusement, and sat on the rug in between the two of them listening to their ramblings about the ministry.
Joy and Pain

Chapter Summary

The party is a hit but what else is going to happen?

I was going to post this near Christmas but I guess I got carried away with posting and it'll be too long until December... so you all can have an early (very very early) present.

Christmas eve came with a sense of excitement as well as a sense of foreboding. Something in Severus told him this day would not be all good. He rubbed his chest absently, trying not to think too hard. What will happen will happen, he mused. Harry had already popped his roast in and Severus had now taken over the kitchen to put together his casserole, something to complement Harry’s contribution. In another two hours, the early guests would arrive. Within three hours the house would be teeming with people.

Severus was a little apprehensive, if he was being honest. It wasn’t everyday he met so many people, especially his former students who had more or less hated him. He knew Harry advocating on his behalf might have at least softened some of them but he wasn’t expecting much. Just as he popped his Casserole into the oven, Harry called softly.

“Do you have a moment, Severus?” Harry asked.

“Of course. I just have to clean up.” He waved a hand over the mess. Harry rolled his eyes and waved his wand to clean it up in a moment. Severus sneered half-heartedly; show off.

“Done.” He grinned and took Severus out of the hot kitchen. They went into the living room and Harry sat them both down side by side. Severus was more curious than anything.

“I figured I’d give you your gift early.” Harry announced and handed him a small wrapped parcel.

Severus blinked. They had barely acknowledged the holidays and other special events between themselves for two years- why was Harry suddenly giving him a gift?

“You shouldn’t have…” Severus mumbled. “Thank you.” He added before Harry’s smile could fall. The younger man could be so sensitive.

“Open it.”

“Why is it so urgent?” Severus asked suspiciously.

“You’ll see.” The man looked like he was a child again. Severus shrugged and carefully opened the package. There was a small velvet box which he slowly opened, his heart hoping for something it could possibly be not. It wasn’t but it was nonetheless impressive.

“It’s…” Severus didn’t know how to explain it. It was obviously expensive and beautiful, well more than….

“It’s just you’ve taken to wearing your hair long and I figured you’d like something to hold it back… It matches the dress robes… you don’t have to wear it, but well… I thought it’d be useful….”
“You’re rambling, Potter.” Severus smirked.

“Sorry… do you… er… do you like it?” He asked softly.

“It’s … beautiful.” Severus stated just as softly and handed Harry the box.

Harry looked at him confused until he turned his back to him, undoing the leather tie he had been using whilst cooking. Slowly, rough hands gathered his hair, carding through the long tresses and brushing along his neck. The clip was fastened below the base of his neck, allowing his hair to remain mostly loose as opposed to pulled back tightly. Harry then placed a kiss on Severus’ neck and his hands slid around him.

“Beautiful.” He muttered. Severus got the sense that he wasn’t referring to the ornament but he didn’t think further on it, instead leaning back, enjoying the intimate touch.

“What was that about robes?” Severus asked, after basking in the silence for as long as he dared.

“Uh…”

“Harry…” Severus turned around within the arms. “You didn’t.” Severus frowned disapprovingly.

“You don’t have anything appropriate.” Harry defended. “And I know you don’t like the muggle attire I prefer, so I ordered a set of robes for you… Malkin has your measurements already…” He trailed off at the glare he was receiving.

“Harry James Potter…” Severus growled.

“They’re simple! I promise! They’re the simplest design, deep green with very little silver… you’ll like them.”

“Harry… I don’t want you spending your gold on me…” He paused. “I have my own.” He pointed out.

“I know you do… it’s just… I wanted to… think of it as a present.” Severus raised a brow. “A second present.” he amended.

“I will overlook it… this once. No more random shopping for me.” Severus insisted. It seemed every week Harry bought him something or the other since he had discovered his wardrobe’s state. Sometimes they were simple like a pair of good socks, sometimes more expensive like sensible boots… in dragon-hide. He didn’t like it much, since it made him feel like a kept woman more often than not but he knew Harry was just being kind and meant well.

“Great.” Harry beamed. “They’re pressed and waiting on your bed.” Severus merely shook his head.

After a while they decided they should get ready and started up the stairs together. Suddenly, Harry grabbed his arm and stopped his ascent. Severus raised a brow and followed Harry’s gaze up, wondering at his mischievous grin. Mistletoe. Severus blushed but didn’t resist as Harry lightly kissed him. He had missed those chapped lips of his. They stared at each other until Harry decided on a second, more passionate kiss. Severus was pulled up against Harry who had leant back on the wall. Harry’s hands as usual were in his hair. The kiss was not one of their usual brutal kisses but was gentle and sweet and Severus struggled not to simply melt under it.

Once they finally pulled away, Severus practically ran to his room and tried to calm his heart. It wouldn’t do to hope… that kiss being different meant nothing. It could not possibly develop into something more, even if he wished for it with all his might. It wouldn’t do to allow himself hope. It
was also useless ranting in his head, since his lips and his body could not forget the almost loving 
nature of the kiss.

Ignoring the kiss for the moment, Severus set about taking a shower and changing into his new 
robes. He brushed his hair carefully and gathered his hair just like Harry had done earlier. He noted 
he looked quite dignified. He smiled at Harry’s choice and patted himself down. He’d wait in the 
living room for the guests as a host should- he felt a little odd being one of the hosts but Harry had 
been adamant about it so he went along with it. When he got to the living room, he saw Harry in a 
deep red fitted shirt and simple black trousers that hugged his hips and thighs. Harry’s hair was 
tousled as usual but seemed slightly more control as if it was *meant* to be messy. He had a simple 
locket at his throat- a memento of his parents, he knew. Severus felt himself blush as he realized he 
had been staring at Harry for a few seconds now. Before he could clear his throat and announce his 
presence, the fireplace turned green and a surprising person stepped through.

“Minerva.” Severus whispered, suddenly wanting to hide in his room. Minerva’s light green eyes 
focused on him as Harry stayed out of the way.

“Severus.” Minerva McGonagall said softly. She purposefully stalked up to him causing Severus to 
glance at Harry in a panic- he was sure Minerva would slap him and braced himself. He squeezed his 
eyes shut as his old teacher and colleague came near… and stiffened when her arms came around 
him and squeezed the breath out of him. He slowly relaxed into the impromptu hug and slowly 
returned it, patting the older woman’s back awkwardly and meeting Harry’s smiling green eyes over 
her shoulder.

Flitwick arrived just as he was released from the embarrassing hug and was kissed on both his 
cheeks before he was more or less tackled by the excitable half-goblin. The Weasley clan followed, 
headed by Arthur who greeted him with a smile and a firm handshake He wasn’t prepared to be 
smothered by the motherly creature, Molly, nor was he prepared to have most of her brood shake his 
hand respectfully. The littlest Weasley, the girl, even dared kiss his cheek in greeting as did the 
insufferable know-it-all Granger. Longbottom stared at him an awful few seconds before he gave 
him a manly *hug*— where was the boy’s fear of him?! Lovegood breezed in commenting on some 
creatures over his head before kissing him… on the lips… the nerve of that girl! Everyone was 
laughing at him now!

After the embarrassing greetings, things settled down and Severus was astonished to find he was 
included in several discussions through the night. He indulged in a bit of the excellent scotch that 
Minerva was kind enough to bring and generally enjoyed himself more than he thought possible. He 
was glad to see the ballroom put to good use as the younger guests danced on the open floor.

“Well, sir? How did you you get Harry to have this place decorated?” Hermione sat beside him with 
a drink in hand. Somehow the witch had become Hermione in the past hour or so.

“I asked.” Severus blinked.

“And he did it? He always dodges people saying he doesn’t know how to decorate… Personally, it’s 
probably because he feels awkward… given his *relatives.*” She spat. Severus blinked and nodded 
slowly- he knew from Harry himself that he was never allowed in any festivities so it might explain 
his reluctance. Suddenly, he was very proud of making Harry come out of his shell.

“I had him transfigure firewood into baubles while Kreature and I decorated.” Severus told her.

“Ah… since you don’t have access to a wand, he felt obligated to help.” She smirked. “He looks 
happy.” Severus gave a non-committal grunt. “You’ve been good for him.” She told him softly. “He 
has so much anger and sadness within him that I was afraid he’d do something stupid.” Her lower lip
trembled. “You replaced all that with responsibility and that’s something Harry takes seriously.” She smiled. “I guess, I’m trying to… to say thank you.”

“It is not necessary, I did nothing but be a burden on him.” Severus sighed and glanced at Harry longingly. He didn’t notice Hermione’s calculating look. “I should check on the table.” Severus made to get up but was stuck. He frowned as the woman beside him pointed up and groaned.

“George released a few of these earlier.” She explained. “We can’t move unless we kiss.” With that she leaned in and gently kissed his cheek. He was thereafter red, but free to move from the couch-damnable Weasley tricks! He made his way to the table to check if anything needed refilling, stopping a few times to talk to people. He determined everything was plentiful and turned around, only to freeze.

There was a couple kissing steamily in the corner of the room, unnoticed by anyone. It looked like a serious kiss, nothing like the magic mistletoe induced ones. As such he didn’t have a problem with it, since he had grown accustomed to kissing himself. However, what was he supposed to feel when his kissing partner was currently lip-locked with some she-devil? He barely believed his eyes as he watched Harry pull away and smile, his lips swollen from the kiss and eyes sparkling. Just a few hours ago he had been gently kissed by that same man! He dazedly made his way to the door, unable to remain in the room any longer. He grabbed Granger on the way, informing her he was feeling tired and was retiring. He bid goodnight to Minerva and the few others he was familiar with, each showing concern at the sudden tiredness to his posture. He soon managed to escape the suddenly stuffy gathering to his room.
Harry was happy and looking forward to seeing everyone. Lately, he had been more often in his study than anywhere else and he missed seeing his friends. He hoped Severus would enjoy himself too. Once he thought about it, it made perfect sense that Severus would need some of his own friends around… if only to know not everyone hated him. It was really quite thoughtless of him to isolate Severus for two long years.

There was also a nervousness within Harry. He had been getting Severus things ever since he returned from his impromptu camping trip. However, none of them were very expensive and he was able to pass them off as ‘necessities’. He wasn’t sure how Severus might react to his new dress robes or his early Christmas present. He procrastinated until almost the last minute before he found Severus.

“Do you have a moment, Severus?” Harry asked, coming up behind him.

“Of course. I just have to clean up.” He waved a hand over the mess. Harry rolled his eyes and waved his wand to clean it up in a moment.

“Done.” He grinned and took Severus’ hand and led him out of the hot kitchen. They went into the living room and Harry sat them both down side by side.

“I figured I’d give you your gift early.” Harry announced after a tense moment and handed Severus a small wrapped parcel. Severus blinked at it as if he was questioning the existence of the gift. Harry almost laughed at his comical expression.

They had barely acknowledged the holidays and other special events between themselves for two years; part of it was because Harry had never really been part of things like that. He tended to forget the events and ignored most of the festivities. However, this year, things were different. It was the first Christmas that Harry would remember fondly- first one where he was excited to share the day with his love in their home.

“You shouldn’t have…” Severus mumbled. “Thank you.” He added just as Harry looked down dejectedly.

“Open it.” Harry urged softly, back to smiling like a loon.

“Why is it so urgent?” Severus asked suspiciously.

“You’ll see.” Harry grinned. Severus shrugged and carefully opened the package, looking as if he expected the gift to blow up in his face.

“It’s…” Severus gasped. Harry smiled, knowing it meant Severus liked it… but was probably
worried about the expense. Sure it was a gold piece with encrusted precious stones but Severus deserved only the best and Harry could spare the cost.

“It’s just that you’ve taken to wearing your hair long and I figured you’d like something to hold it back… It matches the dress robes… you don’t have to wear it, but well… I thought it’d be useful….” He explained hurriedly.

“You’re rambling, Potter.” Severus smirked. Merlin did that let the butterflies loose!

“Sorry… do you… er… do you like it?” He asked softly.

“It’s … beautiful.” Severus stated just as softly and handed Harry the box.

Harry looked at him confused until Severus turned his back to him, undoing the leather tie he had been using whilst cooking. Slowly, Harry gathered the beautiful raven hair, carding through the long tresses and brushing along his neck form time to time. It had grown quite a bit and now brushed Severus’ slender hips; Harry wondered if he shouldn’t trim it as Severus was soon going to be in danger of sitting on his own hair. He fastened the clip below the base of his neck, allowing his hair to loosely frame Severus’ face. Harry couldn’t resist placing a kiss on Severus’ neck and his hands slid around him.

“Beautiful.” He muttered. He wasn’t referring to the ornament but the man who was leaning back into him.

“What was that about robes?” Severus asked, after basking in the silence for a while.

“Uh…” He should have known Severus would pick up on that.

“Harry…” Severus turned around within his arms. “You didn’t.” Severus frowned.

“You don’t have anything appropriate.” Harry defended. “And I know you don’t like the muggle attire I prefer, so I ordered a set of robes for you… Malkin has your measurements already…” He trailed off at the glare he was receiving.

“Harry James Potter…” Severus growled.

“They’re simple! I promise! They’re the simplest design, deep green with very little silver… you’ll like them.” Harry protested.

“Harry… I don’t want you spending your gold on me…” He paused. “I have my own.” He pointed out.

“I know you do… it’s just… I wanted to… think of it as a present.” Severus raised a brow. “A second present.” he amended.

“I will overlook it… this once. No more random shopping for me.” Severus insisted. Harry silently disagreed with that sentiment and beamed at him.

“Great. They’re pressed and waiting on your bed.” He informed Severus who merely shook his head.

After a while they decided they should get ready and started up the stairs together. Harry grinned as he spotted foliage hovering above them and grabbed Severus’ hand. Severus raised a brow and followed Harry’s gaze up landing on the Mistletoe. A lovely blush spread across Severus’ cheeks and Harry pulled him closer slowly. Severus did not hesitate or protest when Harry leaned in and
pressed their lips together gently. Harry had missed kissing those soft thin lips and most certainly wanted more. They stared at each other a moment before a second more passionate kiss overtook them. Harry pulled Severus up against himself as he leant back on the wall. Harry’s hands found their favorite spot in Severus’ hair, the hair ornament doing nothing to hinder his fingers. He was determined to show Severus what he felt and so the kiss was gentle and sweet, filled with promises of a deeper connection between them. Harry took his time to taste Severus and mapped out every crevice he could find. It lasted an eternity but, as far as Harry was concerned, ended too soon.

Once they finally pulled away, Severus practically ran to his room. Harry smirked after his retreating form. He hoped his kiss delivered its message properly. He really hoped Severus understood just how much he meant to him. He was itching to hold him again but didn’t want to risk returning them to the awkwardness they had shared before; he hoped that meaningful kiss would be the first of many and would be a predecessor of many more things to come.

Harry hummed a little tune and went up to get himself ready. He was going to be wearing semi-formal muggle attire with a well fitted red shirt and black dress pants with leather boots to complete the look. He took the time to use some gel to make his hair look more controlled- Ginny had drilled the process into him one fine evening soon after the Battle of Hogwarts. He smiled at his reflection and put on the small locket he had found that once belonged to his mother, a gift from James. Inside there was a picture of young Lily with her parents and a smaller version of Severus. On the other side was a picture showing an older Lily with the marauders, sans Peter (apparently his mother never did like the rat). The locket meant a lot to him- it contained his family, including Severus. He wondered what Severus would think when he found out his best friend had kept him close to her heart all along.

Still in a rather good mood, Harry headed down to the living room where the public floo access was. The one in the kitchen was keyed to specific fireplaces- the Burrow, Hogwarts, floos of trusted friends. The one in Harry’s study was keyed to only Harry, and now Severus, and would allow only the two of them to travel through it. For the party, since there would be a few unknowns, Harry had told his guests to use the living room floo.

Soon, Severus, dressed impeccably in his deep green robes, joined him. Harry knew Severus was staring at him and fought not to react. He was quite pleased that Severus found him ‘stare-worthy’ and was enjoying the attention. He caught the small blush when Severus himself realized he had been ogling and was about to turn to him to compliment him or something equally mundane when the floo activated.

“Minerva.” Severus whispered, astonished at seeing his older ex-colleague. Harry smiled knowingly and stayed out of the way.

“Severus.” Minerva McGonagall said softly. She purposefully stalked up to him causing Severus to glance at Harry in a plea for help- Harry gave him an amused smile but stayed where he was. Severus squeezed his eyes shut as if Minerva was going to hit him. Harry frowned, realizing that was exactly what Severus might be thinking. Before he had a chance to intercept the older woman she had Severus in her embrace. He waited to see Severus’ reaction and smiled softly when Severus slowly returned the hug, patting the older woman’s back awkwardly. Harry met Severus’ amazed obsidian eyes over her shoulder and hid a grin.

Flitwick arrived just as Severus was released from the firm hug and was kissed on both his cheeks. Harry was quite amused as his former charms professor excitably tackled Severus. The Weasley clan followed within a few moments, headed by Arthur who greeted Severus with a smile and a firm handshake while Molly smothered Harry. Harry was standing a little to the side so most people actually saw Severus first as they exited the floo; plus he got to see Severus all flustered.
Poor Severus grew more confused as each red-headed individual greeted him warmly. Harry knew he had done well in listening to his ‘girl’ friends this time. Seeing all these emotions on Severus’ normally impassive face was heartening. He almost laughed when Ginny, bold as ever, kissed Severus’ cheek and Hermione, who had arrived just at the moment, followed Ginny’s example and kissed the other. Amusingly, Severus turned pink. Neville’s hug must have been the most shocking of all for the potions master who frowned even as he awkwardly patted Neville’s back. Finally, Luna’s attitude had broken out the smiles on everyone. Frankly, Harry didn’t enjoy seeing someone else kissing his Severus’ lovely lips but he knew Luna meant it as a friendly kiss and let it slide.

The good cheer followed them as they made their way to the ballroom admiring the decorations as they went. Severus and Harry were the last to follow the lot. Severus was more or less whisked away by the older generation, with a bottle of scotch that appeared from somewhere, while Harry settled with the younger guests. It was a good thing Kreature suggested they scatter few sofas and the like around the room to facilitate casual mingling.

“Hey little brother.” George greeted, Angelina by his side.

“George! Angie!” Harry hugged him and his date.

George had been delayed at the shop and had arrived a bit late, so no one but Harry had yet noticed the duo. George had been a mess over Fred’s death and it had taken almost a year to get back a sparkle in his eye. Harry and the others barely left him alone until Angelina came around one day and scolded George for wasting his life. It had been monumental for the man to realize he was dishonoring his brother’s memory by moping; sure he missed him but Fred would want him to cheer up and spread the cheer. So he had started their shop back up, and with Angelina there to support him, he had come back to himself slowly- it wasn’t the same, of course, as war changed people but it was loads better than the zombie they had been afraid George had turned into. It wasn’t a surprise when they had found out George was dating Angie- it was a very good thing indeed.

“Listen, mate, I got mistletoe.”

“So do I.” Harry raised a brow.

“No, no… Weasley specials!” George explained. “I need help releasing them.” He twinkled like Dumbledore used to, putting Harry instantly on alert.

“And what do they do, good sir?” Harry asked.

“They’ll freeze people where they are until they kiss. Most of them only require a kiss on the cheek, some on lips.” George laughed.

“Trust me, they’re fun.” Angelina smiled.

“Then why do you need me, exactly?”

“Oh… we need you to activate them all… we weren’t able to charge all the runes on them.” George explained.

“Ah…” Harry nodded; it must have been one of those random ideas of his friends.

They went to a corner where a box was waiting and Harry was given a few mistletoes to work on. They charged the runes on each one, letting them fly over unsuspecting guests. Harry grinned as the one he had just activated caught Bill and Charlie, much to the brothers’ horror. George had guffawed loudly when Harry pointed them out. A few people, notably Ginny, started chanting ‘kiss, kiss’ softly. It was amusing to see the eldest Weasley kids blushing until Bill sighed and kissed Charlie’s
forehead, mumbling “used to do this all the time… it’s a big brother thing… yeah…” Thereafter both men kept looking up to stay away from the sneaky things.

After about ten minutes, all the mistletoes were airborne, causing several people to share friendly kisses. A few demanded a lip lock but those, colored silver and red instead of just red, seemed to pair up non-family members. Harry was enjoying watching everyone so happily that he didn’t see George activating one last mistletoe, this one a mix of green, red, gold and silver, which promptly hung over his head, following Harry everywhere. Several people snickered but no one told him about it, assuming it was George’s doing.

Harry saw Severus get stuck to his seat with Hermione and laughed when the man reddened as Hermione kissed him on the corner of his mouth. He had gotten over his earlier annoyance and wished Severus would loosen up some more. He watched Severus head towards the table, probably to check on the food and drinks until someone tapped on his shoulder.

“Hello, Mr. Potter.” A petite brown haired woman smiled up at him.

“Hello, Audrey, right? Please call me Harry.” He smiled back. Audrey was Percy’s girlfriend, someone he wasn’t acquainted with.

“Harry, then.” She grinned. “Why are you standing here alone?” She asked, seemingly concerned he wasn’t enjoying his own party.

“Oh no reason.” Harry laughed and swept his eyes over the large room. “I was just watching my family laugh and be happy…” He smiled at a laughing group around Luna fondly. “It’s sometimes hard to believe we all came out able to laugh like this.” He told her.

“So you’re taking a moment to enjoy the moment.” Audrey nodded. “I had thought something was troubling you, frankly.”

“Oh no, everything is perfect… for once in my life… it’s just perfect.”

“That’s good then.” She grinned and made to leave. “Oh no…”

“What?” Harry asked alarmed. She just pointed up. Harry grinned and kissed her cheek.

“That… didn’t work.” She blushed furiously.

“Oh dear…” Harry said noting the silver. “Kiss on the lips then.” He flushed as well and chastely kissed the petite woman. When even that didn’t let them part, Harry sent a stinging hex at George.


“We’re stuck…”

“Care to explain?” Harry glared.

“Uh… oops? Uh…”

“George…” Harry groaned. “What do we have to do?” He asked resigned.

“A steamy kiss?” George squeaked.

“I knew this was going to go wrong.” Angelina claimed. “We meant it to trap… someone else. You’ll have to do a French…” Harry’s eyes darted to find Severus and sighed.
“If Percy decides to kill me, I’m haunting you.” Harry decided. “Sorry about this Audrey…”

“No problem… I get to kiss the savior, can’t complain.” She grinned mischievously.

“Atta girl!” George cheered. Harry rolled his eyes and kissed Audrey gently. He closed his eyes, pretending it was Severus and slipped his tongue in. Merlin, it was so wrong! As pretty as Audrey was, she was simply the wrong size, wrong scent, wrong taste, wrong everything! Harry pulled back as quickly as he was sure the condition was met.

“That was nice. No offense… but I like my Percy’s kiss better.” Harry grinned.

“None taken.” He agreed, deciding to run as he saw Percy advancing angrily towards them. “You better fix this!” He told George before he took refuge with Molly and Arthur.

Inevitably, the news spread all around and Harry was teased mercilessly. Basically, since Harry felt everyone but Severus was his family and thus not romantic interests, the mistletoe would only trap him and Severus. However, George forgot that not everyone was a Weasley or a friend, ergo extended family. Audrey, Regina (Charlie’s date) and Gerald (Luna’s date) did not fit the ‘family’ category and unfortunately for Harry, he had not come in contact with Severus after the mistletoe charging.

“Harry?” Hermione approached him, biting her lip.

“What is it? You look worried?” Harry asked instantly worried himself.

“Severus said he was feeling unwell, he went up early.” She informed him, seeming to decide that was enough.

“Oh… I wonder if it was the alcohol after so long.”

“Maybe.” Hermione said faintly. Harry peered at her curiously and didn’t press the issue. He discreetly asked Kreacher to keep an eye on Severus since he could not get away just yet.

When the guests finally left, Harry breathed a sigh of relief and headed up to do what he had been itching to ever since Hermione told him Severus was feeling unwell- check on him.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone did not stop to think about Harry's perspective... honestly! By now it's obvious these two are kings of misunderstandings!!!
Severus lay curled up on top of his bed, fully dressed and his eyes oddly dry. He wished he could cry. He wished he could scream and rant and maybe hex that bastard. However, all he felt was a numbness, as if he was floating in ether, detached from his self. The soft humming noise from the ballroom eventually faded and Severus was still staring at the wall.

He tensed slightly when he heard the familiar footsteps come up the stairs. He found himself hoping Harry would go to his own room- for the first time in past however many days he did not want to see the man he co-habited with. However, as usual, his wishes were not heeded and Harry stopped at his door. Severus winced as the door creaked open and listened anxiously as the footfalls came closer and the door softly closed by itself.

“Severus?” Harry called softly, his hand stroking his hair slowly, as if worried for him. Severus didn’t reply; what was he supposed to say? “I know you’re awake… what happened? Hermione said you weren’t feeling well?” He asked, his voice filled with concern.

It was like a dam had broken and all the pain in his chest came pouring out in the form of hot tears and Severus was barely aware of his body shaking. The soft scent of female perfume mixed with the all too familiar firewhiskey tickled his nose, mocking him and his tears flowed faster, uncontrollable. He suddenly turned to face Harry and smashed their lips together desperately. Why could he not have this one beautiful thing? Why must fates conspire to take this man, his Harry, from him?

Harry seemed surprised but his arms came up to hold him close and kissed him back softly. He murmured softly but Severus didn’t want to hear anything Harry had to say, he wanted Harry, so badly. His hand frantically ripped away the shirt, going to the trousers in record time. Harry didn’t try to stop him. Severus removed his own clothing, just pulling the whole thing over his head and since he wasn’t wearing any underwear as usual, that was all that was needed. He pushed Harry onto his back and straddled him, still kissing him desperately. His hair had been released and Harry’s hands were once again buried in it.

Harry allowed him to do as he liked until, with a soft cry, Severus took hold of Harry and impaled himself on him. Harry immediately tried to still his movements but he only succeeded in making bruises on Severus’ hips, much to the potions masters glee.

“Severus….” Harry groaned as he moved with reckless abandon. He knew he must have torn up his flesh and was really doing no favors to his body but Severus didn’t care. He smiled triumphantly
when Harry grabbed him roughly and kissed him hard, flipping them over to take over the fast uneven pace he had set. His body would hurt as bad as his heart and that was how he wanted it. He wanted to be bruised enough that the marks would remain for a long time. He wanted to hurt and drove Harry to fulfill these self-destructive desires.

Severus awoke feeling strong arms around him and a body forming a sort of protective cocoon around him. For a moment he was elated that Harry was with him then everything came back. The smell of that awful perfume permeated his nostrils and his eyes watered. After he had proof Harry did not care… why did he not only allow this to happen but why in the world had he initiated it? As tears once more flowed from Severus silently, he thought about his strange actions and reactions and realized something he had been hiding from all this time- Love.

He, Severus Tobias Snape, Potions master, ex-spy, once best friend to Lily, was undeniably in love with Harry James Potter. There was no escaping it. That was what it was all about. He loved Harry. Enough that he’d risk killing himself to look prettier for him; not that it had worked. Enough that he’d willingly gain bruises to remember the man by. Enough to allow Harry to crush him whenever he wished and not fight back.

For the first time in his life, Severus felt a kinship with his mother- was Tobias like this with her? Abusive one minute and caring the next? Had she too loved her man enough to forgive all the hurts, enough to welcome them even? Was he doomed to suffer in this manner until Harry killed him, whether literally or otherwise… just like his mother had died by his father’s hand?

No. There were only a few more months left, then Harry would have no cause to seek him out. They’d be more or less rid of each other. He had been alone before, he could be alone again. In a few months, he’d be free of the bond, he’d get his wand back, he would get his house and assets back. He could finally start on his long ago dreams of a potions business. He would only have to see Harry once a month for another two years- suffer his company for a while and they could both go back to what they were comfortable with. This cycle will not repeat itself. He would not become his mother- he was no weakling.

Even as he thought and made future plans without Harry in it, Severus knew he’d never forget his green-eyed menace. The pain in his heart would possibly never ebb and he would never seek human companionship again- beyond his old colleagues and his future customers he would have to once more seclude himself and the thought hurt. He had become accustomed to being wanted, to being included and to have a home. He almost snorted at that but knew this house had become his home- he could not and would not deny it, at least to himself.

He gathered his wits about himself and slid out of the strong arms. He would have rather stayed right there for eternity but it was not to be. He sighed heavily, gazing at the beautiful man who was currently in his bed and reluctantly turned away. He went about his morning rituals and when he emerged from the shower, dressed, his room was empty save for himself.
Understanding the Pain

Chapter Summary

Harry is concerned.

Severus lay curled up on top of his bed, fully dressed. He looked tense to a worried Harry who instantly knew Severus was not asleep. He stepped in allowing the door to close behind him and sat next to the man whose back was to him. He gently started stroking the hair in comfort.

“Severus?” Harry called softly but Severus didn’t reply. “I know you’re awake… what happened? Hermione said you weren’t feeling well?” He asked, willing his voice to not waver. What was wrong? Why was Severus being unresponsive? What had happened?

As Harry internally panicked, Severus broke into silent sobs. His body was literally shaking with the effort making Harry feel helpless and utterly useless. He was thus unprepared for Severus to kiss him suddenly, desperately. Did someone say something unkind to him- perhaps something about their relationship? But no one really knew apart from Ron, Hermione, Neville, Ginny and George- they would never say something hurtful!

Confused as he was, Harry held the older man close and murmured softly to get him to calm down enough to talk. However, Severus was not to be consoled and he managed to rip Harry’s new shirt. Harry almost snorted, he supposed it was high time Severus destroyed his clothing in retaliation. Whatever was wrong, Harry decided to let Severus get it out on his own. He let the older man remove all his clothing as he kissed him almost violently. He didn’t mind, Severus was hurting and if Harry could help, he wanted to help. Severus’ own clothing came off much easier and was discarded soon after. The hair clip had at some point fallen off and Severus’ hair framed his pale body as he straddled Harry. Harry held him close as they kissed passionately- he would not deny Severus, even if he was slightly fearful of hurting his Severus again.

Harry allowed him to do as he liked until, with a soft cry, Severus took hold of Harry and impaled himself on him. That alarmed the green eyed man very much and he tried to still Severus’ movements in an attempt to not hurt him but he only succeeded in making bruises on Severus’ hips, much to Harry’s annoyance. He despised and struggled against the suddenly too strong man above him but nothing could stop Severus’ movements, laced with a self loathing that Harry didn’t know what to do about.

“Severus….” Harry groaned as the man above him moved with reckless abandon. He knew it must have been hurting him, Severus was hurting both physically and emotionally but Harry’s body was taking over his rational mind fast. He couldn’t help but grab his partner in a rough kiss and flip them over to continue the fast furious pace the other man had set; all the while his mind screamed at him to stop and control himself.

It wasn’t until they had spent themselves that Harry saw the tears flowing even when Severus was obviously unconscious. Harry gently wiped the tears away and cleaned up Severus, confused at the behavior. He winced as the soft flannel came away bloody and banished it, summoning another to resume cleaning. After, he reached for the ever-present balm and gently spread it over the fairly obvious wounds. He soothed the sleeping man when he moaned in pain and spelled some pain relief potion into his system. He looked upon his housemate sadly, before gathering him into his arms and
gently rocking him until he himself fell asleep.

Harry had woken early, unable to sleep when his mind was so troubled. He was sad and ashamed that he had hurt Severus again but this time there was so much confusion within him. Severus had been reckless and had knowingly hurt himself. He was feeling guilty because he did not know nor understand why Severus would want to do that. Had he done something to initiate this? He held the other man closer, thinking hard.

He knew the exact moment Severus had woken and Harry pretended to sleep. It was proof of how disturbed Severus was that he did not realize especially as Harry’s heart was hammering away. He almost gave up the ruse when he felt the soft tremors and knew Severus was crying. He took a peek to see the familiar frown that meant Severus was thinking. Deciding to give him time, not to mention privacy, Harry continued pretending to be asleep, resisting the urge to tighten his arms around his love.

He knew the exact moment when Severus pulled himself together, probably determined to put the hurt away. He felt the resolve, whatever it was about flowing out of the warm body in his arms, before it slid away quietly. He felt eyes watch him for a long minute before he heard a door closing softly. He watched the door to the bathroom thoughtfully until he heard the shower running and slipped out of the room. Experience had taught him Severus needed time to gather himself and had a need to preserve what he perceived was his ‘image’, he would have the rest of the day to figure it all out.

There were several possibilities floating in Harry’s mind. It was entirely possible that someone had cottoned on to their private life and commented harshly on it. However, none of his guests would do something so callous. Maybe the ministry fools would scorn them but not his family. The new additions were not in the know really to have said something… had they perhaps said something hurtful without realizing it? It was possible, he supposed.

As he showered and headed downstairs he thought about the night. He stopped at the kitchen door suddenly as a thought popped into his mind. The last he had seen Severus before finding him curled on his bed was just before he was forced to kiss Audrey. However, surely Severus heard the full story? Surely… but he had left early… how early? Harry rushed to the fireplace and threw in a pinch of floo powder.

“Hermione Granger!” He bellowed. “Hermione! Hermione!”

“Harry?” A sleepy voice called back weakly. A moment later, Hermione clad in a silk slip slid to her knees, blinking confusedly at her best friend. For Merlin’s sake, it was just five in the morning!

“Sorry to wake you, Mione… but this is important.” Harry said quickly.

“What’s wrong?”

“When did Severus leave?” He asked.

“Is he okay? I was so worried…”

“He is fine, he wasn’t sick… but he is hurting.” Harry sighed. “I need to know when exactly he left.” He said firmly.

“Um… It was right after…” She blushed a little. “The Mistletoe caught the two of us. He went away embarrassed after we managed to be rid of it… about ten minutes or so later, he grabbed me and told me he was unwell and was going to rest. He bid others goodnight, mostly the old crowd…” She
paused as she noticed Harry’s face scrunched up in pain. “What is it?”

“I think I know what went wrong…” Harry said thickly.

“He saw you, didn’t he?”

“Possibly. The timing fits… he wouldn’t have heard the whole story which would explain…” He trailed off. “Thanks Mione. Love you, go back to sleep.” With that the connection was severed abruptly. Hermione blinked at her not-green-anymore flames and shrugged. She would worry later… she needed more sleep.

Harry thought about how to get Severus talking as he prepared breakfast absently. It wasn’t going to be easy to convince Severus but maybe, the mistletoe would help. He summoned the box he had stored under the stairs to him and continued making breakfast, now happier since he had a plan.
Forced Cheer

Chapter Summary

They make up and open presents!

Chapter Notes

A lot of people were sad and concerned about Harry and Severus habit of misunderstanding each other. Many couples go through this before settling into a strong relationship- a test through fire, if you will.

And I'd just like to take a moment to point out each of their pasts- Both were abused and have had a hard, harsh life. It is difficult for them to trust anyone and even more difficult for them to think anyone would want them. Add to that, a war takes toll on everyone involved (or not in some cases)- they are struggling to get out of the 'funk' and it reflects in their non-communication and other issues. That said, you will notice a subtle shift towards trust and acceptance (I hope); from being avoidant to sharing a quiet evening, these two have come far!

That said... read on! Enjoy.

Severus came down with a false smile on his face. He knew Harry would be able to discern his falsehood but he didn’t feel up to strengthening his shields at the moment and maintaining a mask. It was simply easier to pretend everything was fine.

“Good morning, Severus.” Harry greeted, brightly. Severus breathed a sigh of relief since Harry didn’t seem to want to ‘talk’ about last night.

“Good morning.” The voice was hoarse and came out raspy since he had overused it.

“I hope a full english spread is satisfactory, then we can open the gifts.” Harry said cheerfully, placing plates of food in front of Severus. Severus felt a bit frozen. He truly did not want to eat and nothing, not even his usual favorites seemed appetizing. While he debated whether to eat or not, Harry had filled his plate with various things. He ate quietly, deciding that not eating would probably raise questions he didn’t want to answer.

“Did you enjoy the party?” Harry asked suddenly. Severus paused a second.

“Yes.” He replied. He had enjoyed it until… no he would not think of that.

“Minerva was excited to see you, she’s been very busy with Hogwarts management and reconstruction. I had been helping until earlier this year. This only calmed down recently… after two years!” Harry chattered happily, making Severus wonder if he had a date with the woman from last night.
“Rebuilding takes time.” Severus replied sagely.

“I suppose.” Harry nodded. Severus casually removed his hand from its resting place before Harry could grab it. Any contact with Harry was bound to make him emotional and he did not want to become an embarrassing mess… not in front of Harry at any rate.

He waited until Harry was done to clear up the table when Harry stopped him, holding up a hand. He curiously sat back down. Perhaps this was when Harry told him he had finally bagged the girl he was in love with and would not be entertaining Severus anymore. In a way it was fitting, it had all started in this very kitchen. A sharp pain tore through his heart but he ignored it.

“Alright… I know you are upset. Why?” He asked softly, fixing Severus with an intense stare.

“I’m fine.” Severus said, stiffening in surprise. He thought Harry was avoiding the issue!

“Of course.” Harry nodded. “That’s why you are forcing that smile. Not to mention how reckless last night was.” He added. “What happened, Severus? Tell me?” He asked gently. Severus felt the pressure build behind his eyes and puzzled over why Harry sounded so gentle- maybe it was so his announcement wouldn’t hurt him much?

“I…” Severus looked away before tears could fall.

“Does this have anything to do with the kiss?” Harry asked finally. Severus whipped his head towards him and glared at him. So, he knew that he had seen and still acted so nonchalant? Was he going to mock him now? Tell him that she was better than anything he could give? Did he know how much that had hurt? How much pain he was in? Did he still talk so cheerfully as if his feelings were inconsequential? As if he did not matter?

“You…” He choked, unsure what to say.

“I only figured it out this morning.” Harry said conversationally. Severus found he was unable to stomp to his room due to a blasted sticking charm and glared harder, letting anger blot out all the pain and tears that threatened to fall.

“Let me go, Potter.” He growled.

“Severus, at least let me explain.” Harry said firmly. Explain? What was there to explain? There was nothing between them and nothing mattered!

“It does not matter.” Severus bit out, struggling in his chair.

“The kiss meant nothing.” Harry said calmly, ignoring all his struggling. That snapped something in the Potions Master.

“You were down her throat!” Severus screamed with his already hoarse voice and started coughing uncontrollably. Harry was beside him in a moment, holding a glass of cool water to Severus’ parched lips.

“Drink.” Harry said softly. Severus pushed Harry away as soon as he realized he was so close. He hadn’t meant to say that at all… but it was unbelievable that Harry would deny that such an obviously deep kiss meant nothing!

“Go away.” He muttered unhappily.

“No.” Harry said simply. Severus decided to ignore him but the younger wizard started stroking his
hair gently; it was one of those things that made his defenses come crashing down and Severus growled in frustration as he felt himself calm down against his will. “George had released mistletoes yesterday… well, I helped but…” He sighed. “I had to kiss her to get out of the enchantment.”

“All those things needed was a **chaste** kiss.” Severus said softly, accusingly. He knew about those mistletoes and he knew they were **not** meant for deep kisses. Who was he trying to hoodwink?! He was a Slytherin for Merlin’s sake!

“Most all of them.” Harry nodded agreeably. Severus narrowed his eyes in suspicion. “But not the one I got caught with.” Harry pulled the box out and showed him a strange mistletoe. “This one was special, french kiss version and it was keyed into me.” Harry informed him.

“You expect me to believe you?” Severus asked; did Harry really think so little of his intelligence? Sure he had softened a lot recently but he still was the ex-deatheater, ex-spy and the potions professor an entire generation of witches and wizards had learned to fear! His job was often filled with **lies**; he’d at the least be able to pick out the lies from truth.

“Not immediately.” Harry smiled and kissed his cheek before he could dodge. “It was a mistake. George meant for you and I to get caught in this…” What? Why would George Weasley try to get him and Harry to kiss? “…but didn’t realize the definition of ‘family’ as in those ‘one wouldn’t feel romantically attracted to’ would actually exclude more than just you.” He quickly worked that out in his mind as complicated as the explanation seemed; so the prankster’s parameters were apparently inadequate. “There was Audrey and others’ dates who didn’t fit. Unfortunately, I was talking to Audrey and she got stuck under it with me.” He explained, fingering the mistletoe absently.

“That’s just an excuse.” Severus said stubbornly. It still didn’t explain why he would be literally down her throat; of course that is even if he was accepting this story as the truth.

“Perhaps you’d like to test it?” Harry as he unstuck Severus and handed him the mistletoe before activating it. Severus stared at the piece of foliage which rose to float above his head as he stood. Harry stepped up to him and it started spinning ridiculously.

“Now try to get out of the enchantment.” Harry ordered and stood there calmly. Severus frowned up at the supposed culprit and back at Harry before he leaned in to kiss his cheek resolutely before stepping away.

“It didn’t work.” Severus noted and **chastely** kissed Harry’s lips. He tried to step back again, astonished when he got pulled back to Harry. This crazy story could **not** be the truth! Severus tried every affectionate gesture he knew of that did not involve tongues but got nowhere. He was invariably nudged back to stand barely an inch away from the smirking man. He huffed unhappily, forgetting his anger and pain completely.

“Severus.” Harry said gently cupping his cheek and tilting his head to meet his eyes. “I don’t **want** to kiss anyone like that… except you.” He said softly and kissed Severus. A part of Severus protested loudly while the rest of him cheered just as noisily. However, he was still wary; his revelations earlier in the morning were disturbing to him and it scared him how much control Harry had over him. What if it was all a lie and a mere game to Harry? Where would that leave him? Harry gently pried open his lips eventually and delved in gently. Severus lost all his resistance as he was kissed so tenderly; he felt cherished and wanted again and his heart had picked up its usual rhythm. He stared into expressive green eyes, searching for any falsehood, any hint of hesitation or malice or anything but there was only an accepting, inviting, longing look in them.

“You left before the story percolated.” Harry explained.
“It doesn’t matter…” Severus whispered, shaking himself and taking several small steps back, now free to do so. He would not become his mother… he couldn’t… He couldn’t let Harry or anyone run roughshod over him- he had enough of that to last ten lifetimes.

“Of course it does.” Harry said calmly, though his face showed his feelings clearly. “You were hurt.” He said sadly. How did that make it matter? Harry still would never love him or even care about him. He would still end up with a broken heart.

“Come here, Severus.” He commanded gently. Severus grudgingly came, grumbling about people who took advantage of others- it really was quite unfair.

“I’m sorry I didn’t realize… I was busy hiding from Percy half the night.” Harry said apologetically, kissing Severus’ ear. Did he know how distracting that was? He probably did which was why he was doing it to irritate him.

“It doesn’t matter.” Severus said stubbornly after a moment.

“Why not?” Harry asked.

“Because I don’t matter.” Severus said before he could stop his traitorous tongue but since the sentiment had come out he glared defiantly and dared the Man-Who-Conquered to deny it.

“You matter to many people…” Harry whispered, almost as if in pain. Harry was being delusional, Severus decided, until he continued. “Most of all… you matter to me.”

“Lies.” Severus hissed. If he believed this one thing, it would be over for him. He’d be helpless in front of this powerful man. He could not allow himself to believe that Harry cared… because one day he would declare he never did and Severus would fall apart. He was lost in his own head until he heard his name said sharply.

“Severus, I don’t share a bed with just anyone…” Harry said sounding very annoyed. Irrationally, Severus wanted to run and hide. Which was stupid and unnecessary… especially since Harry was not drunk at the moment. “I… You don’t know how much you mean to me…” That really was the crux of the matter, Severus mused as he slowly relaxed into the fierce embrace. “I would never hurt you knowingly, Severus…” Deep down he knew Harry was not violent like Tobias had been but he still drew too many parallels to his own mother’s situation that it made him wary. Harry often forgot his strength and left a few bruises but they were unintentional and it showed how much he wanted to hold Severus; nothing Harry had done really pointed to someone who would abuse another- he was forceful at times and frustratingly docile at other times but he always had been sensitive to his needs. “I don’t know how to prove it but… I care about you a lot more than you seem to think I do.” Severus stared into green eyes filled with so much unfathomable emotion that he made a quick decision. He would believe in Harry, wherever that may lead him. Harry cared about him, really cared, his eyes spoke far more clearly than his vocalization of the emotions could. Severus trusted Harry and he wanted to believe that this could be real.

“Harry…” Severus whispered when they broke apart a little, intending to convey his resolution but not knowing how to phrase it.

“Just don’t… hurt yourself like that again…” Harry’s voice broke. Severus looked up to see immense pain in Harry’s eyes and he felt horrible for causing that feeling in him. However, he was frozen in wonder that the pain was because he had been hurt… how could Harry be in so much pain just because he got hurt? His pain was actually all gone since his Harry had already treated him thoroughly… “Don’t let anyone hurt you in any way…” He said stroking his cheek.
“Why?” Severus asked softly, needing to know the answer.

“I don’t like it when you hurt.” Harry replied honestly. No one has ever said that to him… granted it wasn’t something that was said usually but Severus was very often hurt as a spy and no one, not even Albus had expressed the desire for his wellbeing. It was war and such sentiments were a hindrance but he secretly had wanted someone to care about him. Severus buried his head in Harry’s neck and cried softly, overcome with strange emotions. They stood there for long minutes in a healing embrace.

“I don’t know about you but I’m getting a bit stiff…” Severus commented, sniffling and trying very hard to stem his tears.

“Old man.” Harry muttered with a laugh. He glared at the impudent brat in return; he was not that old! Harry gently wiped his still wet eyes and chastely kissed him. “We should open the presents.” He declared, guiding Severus to their living room. Severus followed confused, wondering why they were going to the living room. It wasn’t until they got there that he noticed the huge piles of presents sprawled around their little tree and his expression cleared in understanding, though he was sure he would have maybe one or two presents. Harry had Severus sit in the sofa and levitated the gifts over to the tea table. They had automatically been divided into three piles.

“Well those are yours.” Harry pointed to one of the the large piles of brightly wrapped gifts. Severus stared astonished… all of them? “These are mine and those there are Kreacher’s.” He smiled just as the elf popped in with huge eyes.

“Kreacher has presents?!” He exclaimed. Severus snorted in amusement, only Harry.

“Of course. Kreacher is Family.” Harry said seriously. Severus smiled at the elf.

“Is Master Severus being okay?” The elf asked softly, glaring a little at Harry. Severus mused his eyes must be red from all the crying for Kreacher to notice.

“I’m fine.” Severus nodded once, not willing to expound on it. “How do we do this?” He asked abruptly.

“I don’t know… I don’t usually have people to open presents with…” Harry grinned. “But I do believe the Weasleys take turns.”

“Turns?”

“Well, one of us goes first and opens a present, then the others open one from each of their piles in turns… until all the presents have been opened.” Harry explained seemingly in thought, then he got a sudden mischievous smile on his face. “Or we could just dive in and rip it all up like my cousin.”

“At Hogwarts, my usual presents appeared on the table in the morning.” Severus said remembering all those forced Christmases. “Albus used to come down bright and early to force me to open them, starting with his first.” He recalled the jolly manner in which his quarters were invaded consistently, every year, at an unholy hour. “Minerva joined us at a later time and we shared a pot of coffee and discussed random things before going down to breakfast.” He thoughtfully frowned as he realized something strange. “They made me open them all before they opened theirs.” He scowled; that was as if he was a little child! Well, age-wise he could actually be either one’s son or even grandson … but still!

“You miss him, don’t you?” Harry asked gently, sitting beside him.

“Everyday. He was an annoying old coot but…” He smiled fondly. He missed his flamboyant
“He loved you.” Harry stated, startling Severus. How did that surety come about? “He always said he trusted you but sometimes I saw him look at you as if in pain. For a while, I had thought he had been rethinking on his opinion concerning you… but now I understand.” Harry shook his head. “He was worried and fearful for your life. He knew he could not stop you from your dangerous path but he cared.”

“He cared for you too.” Severus said quietly. “Indulgent beyond reason. I always said he treated you like a favored grandson.” He chuckled.

“He sent me something every year, something small, quirky but something I appreciated.”

“He sent me ridiculous robes, fluffy socks and once he bought me a set of neon green pajamas.” Severus laughed. “I, of course, charmed them black much to his disappointment.” Harry laughed along.

“What did you get him?” Harry asked curiously.

“Rare books, fine alcohol and the like. Sometimes, I provided that ghastly lemon liqueur he liked.” Severus made a face.

“He always moaned about socks.” Harry remembered. “Never was a wish more easily met.” He smirked.

“Ah, so you were the one giving him those outrageous socks!” Severus snickered. “He almost strutted, putting those on display.”

“Really?” Harry asked astonished. “I rather thought he was joking about that but well, I couldn’t think of anything but socks and lemon drops.”

“He loved them. Advocated their fine qualities and recommended them to everyone.” Severus assured him making Harry laugh. “I wish he was alive.” Both of them sobered quickly.

“It was his time, Severus, nothing either of us could have done would have saved him. He lived a long full life.”

“I know but… it seems so unfair sometimes.” Severus admitted. “And ultimately, I was the one…”

“Hey, you allowed him a meaningful, dignified death. You allowed him to go before he had to experience huge amounts of pain, he planned it that way for a reason, Severus.” Harry said gently. “It’s okay to miss him but don’t blame yourself… he may just decide to haunt you indefinitely if you do.” Harry joked.

“He might.” Severus smirked. “How did you know… about the curse?”

“Hermione. Right after you gave me those memories, I outlined it all to her and she searched for the curse. I daresay Tom had modified it, so it must have been worse. It’s amazing enough you were able to stop it as long as you did.” Harry told him, a note of sadness and pride in his voice.

“Headmaster Whiskers is no being happy if masters being mopey.” Kreacher decided to butt in.

“You’re right, Kreacher.” Harry laughed. “Let’s open these gifts.”

“The youngest goes first.” Severus said immediately.
“Alright.”

Harry grabbed the largest packet and carefully opened it, finding a green Weasley sweater which he put on immediately. Severus did the same and found a matching green sweater only with a snake on the front, making an S-shape.

“I got a Weasley sweater.” He deadpanned. Honestly, he was flattered and wholly, pleasantly surprised.

“You’re one of us now.” Harry chuckled.

“Merlin save my sanity.” Severus moaned but he was smiling and stroking the soft wool gently. He soon was wearing his sweater like Harry. To their astonishment, Kreacher too got a sweater.

“Kreacher got clothes…” His eyes filled with tears and he looked at Harry balefully.

“Kreacher, those clothes aren’t to free you but keep you warm.” Harry explained. “You’re a good elf, I’m sure Molly was just being appreciative of how good you are… and she knits everyone a sweater, it means you’re family.” He told the elf.

“Kreacher can be wearing clothes? He not be free?”

“Yes, Kreacher can wear clothes. I’ve been trying to get you to at least make yourself something for a while, you know?” Harry asked with an air of having this type of conversation often.

“Okay.” Kreacher nodded. “Kreacher be understanding.” He said, gently putting his new sweater on. Now all three of them were wearing matching green. Severus raised a brow but did not comment. They must look utterly ridiculous!

Severus had gotten a few presents with the help of Kreacher and the gold Harry had gotten for him from his vault. They hadn’t gone together yet but he at least had a means to buy gifts. He had sent Minerva her usual Odgen’s finest, double since he missed two years, and Flitwick had gotten a rare charms book that detailed the use of charms with other mainstream subjects like potions and transfiguration; he had told Kreacher to find rare books on charms and apparently he found three in Knockturn alley- he of course bought the biggest of them and Severus felt it was satisfactory. He would have to include the Weasleys and a few others next year.

He had ordered Harry an eagle quill- not an ordinary one but one that would continuously draw from the paired inkwell, would be hard to destroy, would stay sharp for a remarkably long time and was charmed to avoid those inkblots Harry always managed to get on his parchment.

Harry gushed about his present a while before he decided Severus had earned himself a snog and leaned in. Severus flushed and met his lips hesitantly. He had just opened his mouth slightly to welcome a deeper kiss when Harry stiffened and abruptly pulled away.

“Sorry… emergency.” Harry muttered before quite literally jumping into the floo, leaving behind a very confused Severus.
Severus came down with a false smile on his face and Harry knew this was going to be far from easy. Severus usually hid behind an emotionless mask when he was upset. Before coming to live with Harry he had that mask up all the time but slowly he had allowed his emotions to show but never the negative ones. However, Severus had never tried to force emotions and it was worrying. If a kiss affected him this badly… Harry wondered just how attached Severus was to him. Suddenly his worry about hurting him didn’t seem big enough, was Severus becoming dependent on him? Was he truly wanting him or was it some sort of desperate attempt at something… Stockholm syndrome came to mind. He decided to talk to Hermione about it later.

“Good morning, Severus.” Harry greeted.

“Good morning.” The voice was hoarse and came out raspy and Harry winced.

“I hope a full english spread is satisfactory, then we can open the gifts.” Harry said cheerfully, placing plates of food in front of Severus. He frowned when Severus didn’t reach for the foods he liked like he had been lately and instead waited until Harry served him. Harry sighed at this obvious regression and served Severus the foods he knew the older man liked.

“Did you enjoy the party?” Harry asked.

“Yes.”

“Minerva was excited to see you, she’s been very busy with Hogwarts management and reconstruction. I had been helping until earlier this year. This only calmed down recently… after two whole years!” He shook his head in bewilderment. He honestly did not grasp why it had taken two whole years to get things back to normal… well better than before but still…

“Rebuilding takes time.” Severus replied sagely.

“I suppose.” Harry nodded and fought a frown when Severus dodged his hand. Honestly, he was just going to brush against it casually. Harry wanted to pout but he understood. When he saw Luna kissing Severus on the lips, he had felt angry and strange. However, he knew Luna and trusted his friend as well as Severus. Severus, on the other hand, didn’t know Audrey and even if he trusted...
Harry, he didn’t know how much he meant to Harry.

Once they both were done, Harry stopped Severus from clearing the table. He simply stared at the older man for a minute before deciding he should ask outright what was wrong instead of going in circles.

“Alright… I know you are upset. Why?” He asked softly, fixing Severus with an intense stare.

“I’m fine.”

“Of course.” Harry nodded. “That’s why you are forcing that smile. Not to mention how reckless last night was.” He added mournfully. “What happened, Severus? Tell me?” He asked gently.

“I…” Severus looked away, tears in his eyes. It seemed he would burst into sobs any moment.

“Does this have anything to do with the kiss?” Harry asked finally. Severus whipped his head towards him and glared at him with accusing eyes.

“You…”

“I only figured it out this morning.” Harry said conversationally, casually sticking Severus to his chair to keep him from stomping (gracefully) to his room.

“Let me go, Potter.”

“Severus, at least let me explain.” Harry said patiently. He wished he could take the man into his arms and soothe him.

“It does not matter.” Severus bit out, struggling in his chair.

“The kiss meant nothing.”

“You were down her throat!” Severus screamed with his already hoarse voice and started coughing uncontrollably. Harry was beside him in a moment, holding a glass of cool water to Severus’ parched throat.

“Drink.” Harry said softly. Severus sipped obediently but almost immediately pushed Harry away.

“Go away.” He muttered.

“No.” Harry said simply. He stroked Severus’ hair gently, wondering if the man knew he was leaning into his hand. “George had released mistletoes yesterday… well I helped but…” He sighed. “I had to kiss her to get out of the enchantment.”

“All those things needed was a *chaste* kiss.” Severus said softly, accusingly.

“Most all of them.” Harry nodded. “But not the one I got caught with.” Harry pulled the box out and showed him the troublesome mistletoe. “This one was special, french kiss version and it was keyed into me.” Harry informed him.

“You expect me to believe you?” Severus asked.

“Not immediately.” Harry smiled and kissed his cheek. “It was a mistake. George meant for you and I to get caught in this but didn’t realize the definition of ‘family’ as in those who one wouldn’t feel romantically attracted would actually exclude more than just you. There was Audrey and others’ dates who didn’t fit. Unfortunately, I was talking to Audrey and she got stuck under it.” He
explained, fingering the mistletoe absently.

“That’s just an excuse.” Severus said stubbornly.

“Perhaps you’d like to test it?” Harry said. He unstuck Severus and handed him the mistletoe before activating it. Severus stared at the piece of foliage which rose to float above his head as he stood. Harry stepped up to him and the thing started spinning excitedly.

“Now try to get out of the enchantment.” Harry ordered and stood there calmly. Severus frowned up at the troublesome thing and back at Harry before he leaned in to kiss his cheek.

“It didn’t work.” Severus noted and chastely kissed Harry’s lips. He tried to step back, astonished when he got pulled back to Harry, who was smiling softly. He tried kissing close-mouthed, then hugging and various other affectionate gestures, varying the lengths but not trying to kiss passionately. Frankly, it amused Harry and he found it difficult not to laugh lest Severus take offense.

“Severus.” Harry said gently cupping the agitated man’s cheek. “I don’t want to kiss anyone like that… except you.” He said softly and kissed Severus, gently prying open his stubborn lips. He pulled back after a few moments and leaned his head against Severus’.

“You left before the story percolated.” He explained.

“It doesn’t matter…” Severus whispered, shaking himself and taking several small steps back.

“Of course it does.” Harry said. “You were hurt.” He said sadly. “Come here, Severus.” He commanded gently. Severus grudgingly came, grumbling about people who took advantage of others. Harry hid a small smile.

“I’m sorry I didn’t realize… I was busy hiding from Percy half the night.” Harry said softly kissing Severus’ ear.

“It doesn’t matter.” Severus said stubbornly.

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t matter.” Severus said, looking at Harry defiantly, daring him to deny it.

“You matter to many people…” Harry whispered in pain from those words. “Most of all, you matter to me.” He told him, putting his emotions into his voice as much as he could.

“Lies.” Severus practically hissed at him.

“Severus, I don’t share a bed with just anyone…” Harry said exasperated. What was he to say if Severus was unwilling to believe him? “I… You don’t know how much you mean to me…” Harry whispered softly, hugging the man to himself, willing him to understand. “I would never hurt you knowingly, Severus… I don’t know how to prove it but… I care about you a lot more than you seem to think I do.” Harry stared into the beloved eyes and slowly kissed Severus, willing all his jumbled emotions into the kiss.

“Harry…” Severus whispered when they broke apart a little.

“Just don’t… hurt yourself like that again…” Harry’s voice broke. “Don’t let anyone hurt you in any way…” He said stroking his cheek.

“Why?” Severus asked softly.
“I don’t like it when you hurt.” Harry replied honestly. Severus buried his head in Harry’s neck and cried softly. They stood there for long minutes in a healing embrace.

“I don’t know about you but I’m getting a bit stiff…” Severus commented.

“Old man.” Harry muttered with a laugh, receiving a glare in return. Harry gently wiped his still wet eyes and chastely kissed him. “We should open the presents.” He declared, guiding Severus to their living room. Severus followed confused. It wasn’t until they got there that he noticed the huge piles of presents sprawled around their little tree and his expression cleared in understanding. Harry had Severus sit in the sofa and levitated the gifts over to the tea table. They had automatically been divided into three piles.

“Well those are yours.” Harry pointed to one of the the large piles of brightly wrapped gifts. “These are mine and those there are Kreacher’s.” He smiled just as the elf popped in with huge eyes.

“Kreacher has presents?!” He exclaimed.

“Of course. Kreacher is Family.” Harry said seriously. Severus smiled at the elf.

“Is Master Severus being okay?” The elf asked softly, glaring a little at Harry. Harry found the elf’s reaction amusing and he liked that his elf liked Severus.

“I’m fine.” Severus nodded once. “How do we do this?” He asked abruptly.

“I don’t know… I don’t usually have people to open presents with…” Harry grinned. “But I do believe the Weasleys take turns.”

“Turns?”

“Well, one of us goes first and opens a present, then the others open one from each of their piles in turns… until all the presents have been opened.” Harry explained from what he remembered from the one Christmas he spent with Ron and the others at Hogwarts. “Or we could just dive in and rip it all up like my cousin.”

“At Hogwarts, my usual presents appeared on the table in the morning.” Severus said as his face showed great pain. “Albus used to come down bright and early to force me to open them, starting with his first.” He smiled sadly, picking at a loose thread. “Minerva joined us and we shared a pot of coffee and discussed random things before going down to breakfast.” He looked up. “They made me open them all before they opened theirs.” He scowled.

“You miss him, don’t you?” Harry asked gently, sitting beside him.

“Everyday. He was annoying old coot but…”

“He loved you.” Harry stated, startling Severus. “He always said he trusted you but sometimes I saw him look at you as if in pain. For a while, I had thought he had been rethinking on his opinion concerning you… but now I understand.” Harry shook his head; how could he have mistaken Albus’ worry for doubt? “He was worried and fearful for your life. He knew he could not stop you from your dangerous path but he cared.”

“He cared for you too.” Severus said quietly. “Indulgent beyond reason. I always said he treated you like a favored grandson.” He chuckled.

“He sent me something every year, something small, quirky but something I appreciated.”
“He sent me ridiculous robes, *fluffy* socks and once he bought me a set of neon green pajamas.” Severus laughed. “I of course charmed them black much to his disappointment.” Harry laughed along.

“What did you get him?” Harry asked curiously.

“Rare books, fine alcohol and the like. Sometimes, I provided that ghastly lemon liqueur he liked.” Severus made a face. Harry could imagine how that might have tasted, considering the old man’s preferences.

“He always moaned about socks.” Harry remembered. “Never was a wish more easily met.” He smirked. He had bought him all manner of socks—multicolored, animated, charmed six ways and there was even one which cycled through Christmas themes each hour.

“Ah, so you were the one giving him those outrageous socks!” Severus snickered. Harry was glad to see his lover laugh freely. “He almost strutted, putting those on display.”

“Really?” Harry asked astonished at the information. “I rather thought he was joking about that but well, I couldn’t think of anything but socks and lemon drops.”

“He loved them. Advocated their fine qualities and recommended them to everyone.” Severus assured him making Harry laugh. “I wish he was alive.”

“It was his time, Severus, nothing either of us could have done would have saved him. He lived a long full life.”

“I know but… it seems so unfair sometimes.” Severus admitted. “And ultimately, I was the one…” If anyone doubted Severus’ feelings for the old man, they only need see his forlorn expression to be disabused of the thought. Harry’s heart ached for the man and his loss.

“Hey, you allowed him a meaningful, dignified death. You allowed him to go before he had to experience huge amounts of pain, he planned it that way for a reason, Severus.” Harry said gently. “It’s okay to miss him but don’t blame yourself… he may just decide to haunt you indefinitely if you do.” Harry joked.

“He might.” Severus smirked. “How did you know… about the curse?”

“Hermione. Right after you gave me those memories, I outlined it all to her and she searched for the curse. I daresay Tom had modified it, so it must have been worse. It’s amazing enough you were able to stop it as long as you did.” Harry told him, a note of sadness and pride in his voice.

“Headmaster Whiskers is no being happy if masters being mopey.” Kreacher decided to butt in.

“You’re right, Kreacher.” Harry laughed. “Let’s open these gifts.”

“The youngest goes first.” Severus said immediately.

“Alright.”

Harry grabbed the largest packet and carefully opened it, finding a green Weasley sweater which he put on immediately. Severus did the same and found a matching green sweater only with a snake on the front, making an S-shape.

“I got a Weasley sweater.” He deadpanned.
“You’re one of us now.” Harry chuckled.

“Merlin save my sanity.” Severus moaned but he was smiling and stroking the soft wool gently. He soon was wearing his sweater like Harry. To their astonishment, Kreacher too got a sweater.

“Kreacher got clothes…” His eyes filled with tears and he looked at Harry balefully.

“Kreacher, those clothes aren’t to free you but to keep you warm.” Harry explained. “You’re a good elf, I’m sure Molly was just being appreciative of how good you are… and she knits everyone a sweater, it means you’re family.” He told the elf.

“Kreacher can be wearing clothes? He not be free?”

“Yes, Kreacher can wear clothes. I’ve been trying to get you to at least make yourself something for a while, you know?” Harry had been trying for a while to get Kreacher to wear something other than a pillow case.

“Okay.” Kreacher nodded. “Kreacher be understanding.” He said, gently putting his new sweater on. Now all three of them were wearing matching green. Severus raised a brow but did not comment. Harry thought that they looked cozy and like a family but held his tongue as well.

Once they opened all the presents, Kreacher had fruit candy (from Harry), a Weasley sweater, a pair of new socks (from Hermione) and, to his astonishment, a strange green potion (from Severus) which would help heal the damage the locket had done to Kreacher. Harry was especially proud of Severus for that thoughtful gift for the ever faithful elf.

Severus had in addition to his new robes, hair clip and the sweater, a pile of various books- rare and new, a few boxes of dark chocolate from various former students (some sent with an owl as they had been last two christmases). Astonishingly enough, Harry had given him a flat envelope which contained movie tickets for two. Severus had blushed at the implication and gave a slight nod to his… house-mate… and more.

Harry had received some Quidditch memorabilia, books on enchanting (since it was something Harry was interested in) and quite a few boxes of sweets, including a homemade basket from Molly. From Severus, however, he received a beautiful new quill made from a majestic eagle feather spelled to never run out of ink (as long as the accompanying ink-well was not empty) and to avoid any blobs as well as being tipped in silver to make it last indefinitely. Since Harry had so much paperwork, what with all the businesses, having such a well balanced and long lasting quill was a blessing.

Harry decided Severus had earned himself a snog and leaned in. Severus flushed and met his lips hesitantly. Harry could tell he was still wary of trusting him but he knew things would fix themselves soon. He was just about to deepen the kiss when the charm on his hand grew hot and he stiffened.

“Sorry… emergency.” Harry muttered before quite literally jumping into the floo, his mind far from the pleasant morning he had been having.

Chapter End Notes

I like this Kreature very much... don't you?
Worry

Chapter Summary

What was so important that Harry had to go so abruptly? On Christmas morning???
Enter the character everyone has been waiting for.

Warning: mention of severe abuse and the aftermath (Those with empathetic hearts-
grab tissues)

Chapter Notes

All concerned are in a bit of shock. Healer Hermione!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Severus sat dumbly as he stared at the now orange flames. What was that? Everything was going
well and then Harry just up and left! He knew he shouldn’t have let the brat talk him into trusting
him… but something inside him told him there was something serious going on. Deep inside, his
worry grew and he soon started pacing, trying to not think about where Harry was… and with who.

His answer came in the form of a bloody and bruised boy that he recognized well. Harry had just
stepped through the fire not half hour after he left and in his arms, bleeding and unconscious, was his
godson.

“What in Merlin’s name…?” Severus lost what little strength he had in his legs and crumpled.

“Severus!” Harry barked. “Get a hold of yourself!” He commanded. Severus visibly shook himself
out of his shock and stood shakily. “Call Hermione and tell her to bring her kit. Meet me in the blue
room.” He instructed, taking Draco up the stairs with him.

“Granger!” He called as he poked his head in.

“Professor?” The extremely intelligent girl he knew walked into view. “What’s wrong?”

“Emergency. Harry said to get your kit. Blue room.”

“I’ll be right there. Gather all the potions you have.” She said and hurried away. Severus grumbled
about bossy brats and marched to the lad. He wandlessly summoned a tray from the kitchen and
arranged all the general potions he had stored. He hoped they were enough. He hurried up to the
blue room.

He stopped dead as he saw Harry gently cleaning up Draco… Draco who was quite naked. He
shook off the odd feeling and rushed in to help. Between the two of them, they had cleaned up the
dried blood and grime off the blond by the time Hermione arrived.

“Merlin.” She gasped and had her wand out in no time, scanning Draco. Harry took a step back to
allow her more room and Severus followed wondering why Hermione was called.
“She is one of the most promising new healers at St. Mungo’s, works part time as she studies muggle medicine on the side.” Harry murmured anticipating his question. Severus nodded; it made sense with how sharp the girl was and how much compassion she possessed, second only to Harry.

“What happened?” Hermione demanded as she read the scan report.

“I was alerted to his state and rushed there… Draco was barely breathing. I had to cast a few spells to get him to breathe and I may have set his ribs wrongly, in an effort to get his lungs to work.”

“You did. I’ll have to re-break two of them, the rest are set fine.” She nodded.

“I got him here as soon as he stabilized.” Harry informed her. “Which was about ten-fifteen minutes ago.”

“He’s in a bad shape. What did that bastard…” She trailed off, biting her lip. “I need stronger pain relief and more skele-grow as well as a few select potions… to fix the muscle and nerve damage.” Hermione looked at Severus.

“Just give me a list, I shall brew them as fast as I can.” Severus promised. She nodded.

“He almost died.” Harry whispered.

“He’ll be fine. He’s too stubborn to die.” Hermione muttered. “He’s going to have to rest for a minimum of a month. Then he’ll have to re-learn how to do normal things on top of nutrient potions. I need those bracelets off.”

“Is it safe?” Harry asked nervously. Severus noticed the thin silver bracelets for the first time and he was filled with anger and sadness at the pain his godson must have suffered. Those were disgusting artifacts that blocked the use of one’s magic and were used on the hardest criminals once upon a time. In view of the madness that resulted in even the most composed of the victims, the bracelets were termed dark and banned. His eyes saddened as Hermione handed him a list of potions and squeezed his shoulder comfortingly.

“Harry…” Draco called, stiffening in his bed and apparently in a nightmare. Harry rushed to him.

“I’m here Draco, you’re safe…” Harry murmured softly, holding Draco as if he was fragile china. “Safe with me… sh… you’re home….” He murmured over and over again. Draco opened his eyes eventually and stared at Harry for a few tense moments before he practically fell into his lap sobbing.

“You came… you came…” Draco’s long litany continued as Severus slipped away, unable to see his godson so broken any longer.

He immersed himself in making the required potions for the next three hours during which he heard Draco cry out at least three times in panic. He had to close his eyes in pain and force the tears back as he heard the pleas to ‘stop’. He didn’t quite understand what had happened and wasn’t sure if he would ever be ready to hear the full story. He soon ran out of excuses, namely potions, to stay away from the blue room. With a heavy heart he made his way up, carrying yet another tray of potions.

“Where is Hermione?” He asked, trying his best to use the girl’s given name.

“She’s gone to take an extended leave.” Harry answered absently.

Draco was in Harry’s lap, wrapped in a soft blanket, looking more like a child than a twenty year old. His head was resting on Harry’s shoulder and his hands, though wrapped in thick gauze, attempted to clutch at Harry’s shirt. Harry’s chin rested on Draco’s forehead and his arms were wrapped
around Draco protectively. Severus fought down his jealousy; Draco needed Harry right now!

“Did she leave instructions?” He asked sitting beside the two men on the bed. Harry momentarily shifted to point at a parchment and returned his hand almost immediately. Severus scanned the instructions and nodded. “Did he eat something?” He asked.

“Some soup and a slice of bread.” Harry told him tiredly.

“It’s best if he drinks them…” He said softly.

“He just got to sleep…” Harry sighed.

“I know but one of them will make him drowsy again.” Severus assured him. Harry nodded.

“Dray? Hey, Draco… wake up sweetie…” Harry gently shook the blond.


“Sh… you’re with me, Sweetie. Come on, wake up… open your eyes.” Harry said gently stroking Draco’s hair and rocking him, ignoring the flailing limbs.

“Ha…Haa…rry?” He asked fearfully.

“You’re not hallucinating, you’re really here with me.” Harry told him softly. “And look who else is here…” He waved to Severus. Draco stiffened as his eyes swiveled to his godfather.

“Sev…?” Draco’s eyes filled with tears. Severus put the tray down on the bedside table and opened his arms for his little dragon. “Sev!” The boy literally jumped into his arms relieved.

“Hello, my little Dragon…” Severus murmured softly and held him close. “Are you feeling better?” “A… little…” Draco stuttered a little, curling up a bit more.

“Pain?” The blond nodded slowly. “I made you some potions, can you take them for me?” He asked.


“These will make you feel better.” Severus told him and reached for a vial. When Draco refused to open his mouth, Severus sighed and stroked his back soothingly. “This is a nutrient potion… you remember how one looks?” He asked, hoping the boys’ natural talent in potions will pull through.

“Dark green, thick and yucky… smells like cabbages.” Draco mumbled staring at the vial.

“Correct.” Severus said proudly. “Now, please drink this.” He brought the vial to his chapped lips. This time Draco sniffed the concoction and drank.

“Yuck.” Draco made a face. Harry laughed lightly.

“Severus’ potions are always yucky.” Harry said playfully. Draco snorted. Severus was glad he was as relaxed as he was and picked up the second one. “Muscle restorative.” He announced as Draco obediently drank it, apparently deciding Severus wouldn’t feed him bad potions. “Skelegrow… it is an improved version.” He explained calmly. “Pain relief. It will make you sleepy. You need plenty of rest so that’s good.” Draco drank them all, nodding at the appropriate places.

Soon Draco was knocked out and Severus gently laid him on the bed and tucked him in. He glanced at Harry and saw him getting ready to keep vigil even if he looked dead on his feet. Severus grabbed
Harry’s hands and gently pulled him from the room, into his own. He led the younger man into the shower, ordering him to shower. He waited with a warm towel and dried the unresponsive man. Harry followed him to bed and allowed Severus to tuck him in.

“Sleep, Harry, I’ll keep an eye on things.” Severus murmured softly.

“I… He almost died.” Harry muttered.

“You saved him in time.”

“He was assigned to Diggory.” Harry sighed, rubbing his eyes. “He was drunk and beating Draco up… it was horrible… more horrible than seeing Hermione under crucio.”

“It’ll get better.” Severus hoped fervently.

“I’m glad I met him earlier.” Harry said softly.

“Draco?”

“Yes. For a while… I’ve been concerned how the junior death-eaters were faring. I couldn’t legally do anything to help them unless the minders actually crossed a certain line. I found quite a few being used as slaves… Draco was the worst. He had those bracelets on and I knew he was hurting. I never… Never saw him that scared… even before Voldemort he stood proud but… he was broken.” Harry was now sobbing. “Still, I could not help him, since Diggory could claim discipline or some such rot. I gave him an amulet discretely, one that would not be removed by anyone save myself and told him I’ll come if he needed me.” Harry sniffled, burying his face into Severus’ thigh. “I didn’t expect him to need me so soon.” His voice came out muffled but Severus understood. He stroked Harry’s messy hair, not knowing how else he could comfort the young man. He summoned a dreamless sleep.

“Drink this and rest.” He ordered. Harry wrinkled his nose and smiled a little. He drank the potion however and soon was snoring softly. Severus gently kissed his forehead and went to sit with his beloved godson.

He was soon lost in thought. The two young men currently in the house were special to Severus. Draco was his godson, a child he saw grow up too quickly, a child he tried to help as much as he could. Harry was the child of the prophecy, Lily’s son, his ‘protectee’ and now his love. Both boys’ lives had been so intertwined with his own as they were with each other. It was particularly disturbing to realize all three now shared something else in common- abuse. He sighed wearily—things were supposed to get better after the war but it seems they were determined to get worse before they got better. He called Kreacher for some fortifying coffee and waited.

Chapter End Notes

To all Draco fans... Sorry his entry is so heart-wrenching but it was a necessary plot twist!
Rescue and Comfort

Chapter Summary

What Harry did after he jumped into the fire, leaving poor Sev confused. Sev steps up to caring for his distraught lover, even though he feels as he does.

Harry arrived in the Weasley home and shouted out a greeting to Molly before rushing off to the residence he needed to get to quickly. He ran as fast as he could and battered down the door to the Diggory residence. His heart pumped furiously as he searched the small manor and finally reached the basement from where he heard a muffled scream. He burst in with his wand blazing and stunned the overweight man who was mercilessly beating a small huddled form with blond hair.

Amos Diggory had gone downhill in the years since his only son’s death. It had become worse, if anyone had cared to look, when his wife had died fighting the bastards responsible for her beloved son’s death. Amos had survived with many scars but he was all alone. Given his continuing job in the ministry and his clean record, he was chosen as one of the minders. No one considered the pure hatred that had taken root within the man after his loss.

And why would anyone care? The only person that would be effected was an ex-deatheater, someone who should have been kissed. Never mind that the man had been a mere boy trying his best to survive and protect his family when he had taken the mark. Never mind he had helped as much as he could risk to put an end to the war. Never mind that without that very same death-eater doing what he did, Harry would have been unable to finish his mission.

Harry had realized a few months after he had been given the custody of Severus that there was too much potential for abuse. After he had suffered under his relatives, he was none too keen on letting anyone be hurt in that manner. So he had tracked down all the younger members who had been more or less caught up in the war. Some had been reduced to workers which wasn’t so bad since they were fed and given a proper bed- their minders were of the belief that hard work would help them reform and Harry agreed as long as they weren’t overworked. Some basically ignored the new additions to the household- the prisoners, for that is what they were, were given a small room, few clothes and meals and were expected to stay out of the way. It wasn’t an ideal existence but it did give them time to heal from the war.

The last category were those abused for being what and who they were. The inmates were treated worse than slaves and received tasks they were incapable of, followed by harsh punishments they did not entirely deserve. They withheld food, water and threw them in inhospitable conditions. Some went as far as beating those in their care on occasion, some more often than others. However, given the bond in place, there was nothing Harry could do for them unless their ‘masters’ endangered their life. He had soothed himself by providing each boy and two girls with a special medallion which was tied to him. They could use these to call on him when things got too bad and they needed help. They would alert him automatically based on the heartbeat and also could be activated with a password.

Draco Malfoy was one of the few with the amulet and he had activated the amulet with the password, probably realizing he would need help. Harry rushed to the prone boy and held him close, willing his tears to dry up. He soon noticed the boy was not breathing and frantically cast several charms to revive him. He had to finally set his ribs, however badly, so that the lungs could be inflated
and Draco could breathe. Once his breathing stabilized some and he was sure the blond could be transported, he lifted the frail, too thin and light boy and marched to the fireplace. He stepped into the floo without a glance at Diggory and took his bleeding charge home.

He had been in a sort of daze and wasn’t aware of his actions or words. He stayed by Draco and when he noticed Hermione, he assumed he had told Severus to call her. He vaguely remembered explaining to Severus why he had asked for Hermione. He recalled telling Hermione how he had found him and then removing those ghastly magic suppressants from Draco’s wrists. He remembered cradling the blond and soothing his anguished cries several times that day until his potions knocked him out completely. However, it was all as if someone else was doing them… a different Harry. Somewhere he knew he was in shock but he held on for Draco’s sake.

He hadn’t wanted to leave Draco alone but Severus had given him no choice, not when he looked so worried. He allowed his sweet Severus to help him bathe and smiled when he was tucked into bed (it was the first time in his conscious memory someone had done that).

“Sleep, Harry, I’ll keep an eye on things.” Severus murmured softly.

“I… He almost died.” Harry muttered, focusing on Severus with some difficulty.

“You saved him in time.” Severus assured him softly, carding his long fingers through his messy hair.

“He was assigned to Diggory.” Harry sighed, rubbing his eyes. “He was drunk and beating Draco up… it was horrible… more horrible than seeing Hermione under crucio.”

“It’ll get better.” Severus told him, looking as if he needed to believe it himself.

“I’m glad I met him earlier.” Harry said softly, suddenly needing to talk about it.

“Draco?”

“Yes. For a while… I’ve been concerned how the junior death-eaters were faring. I couldn’t legally do anything to help them unless the minders actually crossed a certain line. I found quite a few being used as slaves… Draco was the worst. He had those bracelets on and I knew he was hurting. I never… Never saw him that scared… even before Voldemort he stood proud but… he was broken.” Harry was now sobbing, not in the least worried about Severus seeing him like this. “Still, I could not help him, since Diggory could claim discipline or some such rot. I gave him an amulet discretely, one that would not be removed by anyone save myself and told him I’ll come if he needed me.”

Harry sniffled, burying his face into Severus’ thigh. “I didn’t expect him to need me so soon.” Severus stroked Harry’s messy hair and summoned a dreamless sleep.

“Drink this and rest.” Severus ordered. Harry wrinkled his nose and smiled a little. He drank the potion however and soon was snoring softly.
Insecurities

Chapter Summary

Draco is recovering nicely but how does having a new addition to the house affect our couple?

Over the next few days, Draco got slowly better. Hermione was always around the house and Harry more often than not sat with Draco or slept (only when Severus forced him). Severus brewed all the required potions and made the meals, acting as the home-maker.

Watching the three younger members of the household, Severus started feeling like an outsider. He knew it was silly and that he was the godfather to one of the boys and lover to the other but he couldn’t help feeling out of his element. He felt awkward around Draco, not knowing how to comfort the boy and he felt that even kissing Harry was inappropriate at this time. He wished he could have one evening with Harry, at least share the bed to just sleep or share some sweet kisses but he knew Harry was too worried to do so. He tried to be patient and tried not to be selfish but after one week, it was getting hard.

His heart was pained every time he saw Draco cuddled into Harry. He didn’t want to hate his godson but seeing them so close was difficult. What if Harry decided Draco was better looking and made for a better lover? What would happen to him then? He knew he should trust his Harry but he also knew between Draco and he, Draco was the more beautiful. He hated himself for thinking this way and had taken to sequestering himself in his room whenever possible to avoid possible blow ups. It wasn’t, however, easy to avoid them all the time.

“Harry?” Draco whispered one day. The boy was once again in Harry’s lap like a child.

“Yes Sweetie?” Harry asked with a soft smile. Severus stopped at the door, hidden in the shadows and watched with jealousy blooming in his heart.

“Where is Sev? He doesn’t come see me… does he… does he hate me? Now that I am so… weak…”

“Draco… no!” Harry rushed to reassure him. “Severus has brewed all your potions and I’m sure he is just unsure how to act around you when you’re bedridden.” He said gently.

“But he hates me?”

“Of course he doesn’t.” Harry laughed a little. “Didn’t you realize he makes all your favorites? Each meal has at least one dish.”

“Huh?” Draco blinked. Behind the door so did Severus; did he really?

“Yeah… Like last night’s dinner had shrimp, this morning he made waffles with your favorite fruit, the lunch had that chocolate pudding you like so much.” Harry recounted. “Severus, I suspect, is a bit confused about how to treat you, that’s all. He’ll come around.” Harry pet the blond head.

“Okay…” Draco slowly nodded. “Thank you Harry.” He said softly, giving Harry a swift hug.
“Anytime.” Harry smiled. “Now take your potions and sleep. I need a change badly.” He wrinkled his nose causing the blond to laugh lightly. Soon Draco was fast asleep and Harry tucked him in. Severus stayed where he was, frozen.

“Severus.” Harry shook him gently. “Are you alright?”

“I didn’t realize…” Severus murmured.

“That you included something he liked every meal?” Harry smiled. “I know.” He said simply. “What’s wrong, honey? Why have you not visited him? He misses you.”

“I… don’t want to hate him.” Severus said unthinkingly.

“Why would you…” Harry shook his head and dragged the older man to his own bedroom.

“Let me go, Harry!” Severus protested.

“Not until we clear this up.” Harry said sternly. “Now, why would you hate Draco? You love that boy to death.” He made Severus sit down on the soft mattress and stood before him.

“I…” Severus averted his eyes.

“Please, Sev… it helps if you talk about it.” Harry stroked his hair. Severus cursed in his head… that action just ensured he would spill everything!

“He is so close to you…” He muttered unhappily.

“Yes… he seems to trust me to protect him.” Harry nodded.

“Not like that… he’s always in your lap and cuddling when you don’t even kiss me anymore!” Severus said angrily. “I understand if you’d like him more than me… he is more beautiful and everything… but it hurts….” Severus whispered, clutching his chest with tears in his eyes.

“Oh Severus… were you jealous?” Harry asked softly. “Silly man… there is no need for it, beautiful, since you’re the only one for me. I am fond of Draco and may have concentrated on him since his almost death, but that doesn’t mean I do not… care for you.” Severus ignored the slight pause. “I am not going to replace you.” Harry said tilting Severus’ head to look him in the eyes. “I won’t abandon you and I won’t cheat on you either.” Harry smiled slightly and leaned down to kiss him.

“I am scared.” Severus whispered more to himself.

“I know…” Harry nodded and hugged him tightly. A moment later he casually commented… “You know, you could have just greeted me with a chaste kiss whenever you saw me, right?”

“I… uh… thought it was inappropriate.” Severus flushed.

“Why?” Harry tilted his head.

“There are people in the house.” Severus hissed.

“Honey, you aren’t a secret.” Harry sighed in exasperation. “Hermione knows we are together and I don’t mind if Draco knows.”

“What if he likes you?” Severus demanded.

“He’ll get over it.” Harry said firmly. “Besides, I think he has his eye on his healer.”
“Hermione?”

“I don’t know if anything will come out of it but it seems so.” Harry grinned. “There is no need to hide.”

“Okay.”

“Now… I believe I have been neglecting my sweet lover?” Harry grinned mischievously.

“Uh…”

“No more, rest assured.” Harry declared and a spell later both men had lost their clothing.

“Harry!”

“Come, bathe with me, beautiful.” Harry murmured huskily.

Harry didn’t wait for Severus to answer and simply lifted him into his arms, kissing him deeply and marched to his bathroom. Harry held him close even as he twisted around to start the bath. As it filled, they stood there in a tight embrace kissing each other with gusto. Harry nudged Severus in first and then settled behind the older man. The tub was larger than the one in Severus’ room and fit both of them easily. Severus blushed heavily as something hard settled in the cleft in his posterior but did not pull away, instead choosing to lean back into the broad muscled chest. Harry kissed his neck softly, nipping and sucking the pale skin. Severus moaned as a hand started mapping out his chest, brushing against a sensitive nub. His hair floated around them delicately and draped over powerful thighs. He couldn’t help but caress those thighs, satisfied when Harry sucked in a breath.

“You’re so beautiful… so perfect.” Harry whispered in his ear, nibbling the appendage.

“Harry…” Severus moaned, no longer able to articulate anything.

Harry smiled against his ear and kissed down his neck while one of his hands slid down to prepare him slowly. Severus gasped when he felt a finger breach him… it had been a while and he was unused to not using lubricant. However, Severus found, he rather liked the dull burn and shifted around to allow Harry better access. A low rumbling chuckle sent shivers down his spine and Severus turned a little to capture the perpetually chapped lips with his own. He smiled when he was able to gain entry into a warm mouth and took his time exploring Harry even as he felt himself being stretched expertly.

Severus didn’t expect Harry’s patience, since he was used to being more or less attacked. He smiled happily at first, feeling wanted and cherished but his happy mood turned to annoyance fast; he wanted Harry and soon! He wiggled uncomfortably on the four fingers patiently stretching him when Harry brushed against that special spot making him arch against him and keen loudly.

“Harry… please… want… you…” Severus gasped, grabbing Harry’s head and forcing his lips onto his neck. Harry obliged by kissing and sucking on the soft skin there.

“Lift yourself a little, beautiful.” Harry murmured huskily. Severus did as asked and gasped as he felt Harry at his entrance. He realized soon that Harry wasn’t going to move and scowled back at the younger wizard who smirked back. He slowly seated himself around the hard length, relishing the feeling of being full with the man he loved despite the burn he felt. He panted heavily as he adjusted to the feeling and was thankful that Harry stayed still. His breath was soon stolen by the fierce kiss however, swiftly followed by slow steady movements.

They ignored the splashing water as they made love slowly, tenderly. Harry’s hands were around his
torso and his lips explored his neck and shoulder as they moved deliberately. Severus lost all sense of reality as Harry kept brushing against the nerve bundle within him and he tried to urge his partner on but Harry wasn’t in the mood to listen and continued the excruciatingly slow pace, driving Severus mad with need. He eventually threw away his last reservations and begged and pleaded.

“Harry… please… faster… please… I… can’t… need more… Harry…” Severus moaned.

“So impatient, Severus.” Harry chided gently, a smile in his voice.

“Please…!” Severus groaned pitifully. “More…”

“Very well, beautiful.” Harry murmured, turning Severus’ head to kiss him hard as the pace finally picked up. Soon after Severus found himself shouting out his release and lay shuddering against Harry as he continued to slam into him. A few moments later, Harry released deep into him and held him close as the after-affects shook his frame.

“Amazing…” Harry commented, breathlessly. Severus nodded tiredly, snuggling into the warm body. Harry chuckled and cast a warming charm on the water before kissing Severus’ temple and holding him close.

Severus gave up the fight to stay awake, trusting Harry to take care of him. Thus he was unaware of his hair being washed, nor his skin being scrubbed pink and he wasn’t aware of being carried to Harry’s bed to be tucked in gently. He didn’t wake as Harry slid in beside him and gathered him close, letting their nude bodies meld once again.
Harry smiled softly as he realized Severus had fallen asleep. It amazed him that he’d actually trust him, Harry Potter, to not let him drown. He chuckled softly and washed the long raven hair he loved so much. It was a bit complicated washing someone dead to the world but he managed it with a bit of magic. He eventually lifted his lover from the water and used a bit of magic to dry both of them. He didn’t see the point of dressing as they were quite used to each other in bed and tucked them both in.

Once certain his Severus was comfortable, Harry turned to examine the past week and a half. It was true that he barely saw Severus as he had been no doubt absorbed in caring for Draco. He didn’t expect Severus to feel jealous however and didn’t think the older man would feel insecure seeing him close to another. He should have known though, since Severus had reacted quite violently to the kiss on Christmas Eve.

He stroked the long hair as he thought about what Severus meant to him. At first he was just his former professor, one that saved his life but also the one man who made him miserable throughout school. He was a hero, respected not necessarily liked. He chuckled as he recalled his annoyance and anger when he was saddled with the custodianship. Who would have thought that it would lead to this? This wonderful companionship and love. He sighed happily, placing a kiss on Severus’ forehead.

It had been a rocky journey, from unwanted attraction and angst to this feeling like a gently burning ember within his soul… he was quite sure he wanted Severus, not only his beautiful body but the man himself with all his quirks. The man who made his house into a home. The man who brought out his worst as often as he brought out his best. The man who trusted him and the man who he trusted above everyone else. The man who knew pain, compassion, and longing. The sweet beautiful man who was still insecure about some things, while being self-assured about others.

No, he wasn’t going to let Severus go anywhere. Harry knew he wanted this amazing and complicated wizard beside him always. The only problem was how to tell him as much. The recent events told him Severus more or less believed that Harry would prefer anyone but him, even if it was far from the truth. To tell him something like that now might be ill received, considering Severus’ position as the weaker one in the bond. Harry began planning in his mind about how to make sure Severus would choose him. He shifted closer to the man and settled down for the night.

“Harry?” Hermione called. Harry groaned and looked around groggily. Severus was also up, looking wide-eyed at the door.

“A moment, Hermione.” Harry called. “Good morning beautiful.” Harry whispered and bestowed a good morning kiss on his beloved.

“Good morning…” Severus replied distracted.
“It’s alright. She knows, remember?” Harry smiled softly and stroked Severus’ hair, knowing it calmed the older man. He summoned two silk robes and got out of bed. “Come on.” He grabbed Severus’ hand and helped him put on the grey robe. He put on the green one himself and went to open the door.

“Harry…” Severus hissed.

“It’s alright. You can slip back in bed if you want.” He kissed Severus again and greeted Hermione.

“Everything alright, Hermione?” He asked as he allowed the girl entry.

“Oh yes… I was worried when I didn’t see you. Draco was a bit agitated. I also needed Severus to make another potion; do you know where he is?” She asked.

“Yes, actually. Severus is right here.” Harry waved to the bed where the man was trying to hide himself among the pillows.

“Oh… I hope I didn’t disturb you.” She blushed lightly.

“It’s fine.” Severus mumbled.

“I need to go to work for at least two hours today… I’m sort of leaving now.” She informed them. “Sorry for the short notice but they owled me only last night.”

“That’s fine. Draco is stable and you can visit after your shift. You could go back to doing full shifts as well.” Harry mused.

“Two hours for now.” Hermione decided. “Draco will need this potion to help with the nerve damage, sir.” She handed a piece of parchment to Severus who had given up on hiding and had come to stand with them.

“Very well…” Severus frowned. “I assume this needs to be taken before bed?”

“Yes sir.” Hermione nodded. “Well, I’m off. Draco is sleeping so you can take your time!” She said brightly and ran off.

“Impudent brat.” Severus grumbled.

Harry grinned and grabbed his lover around the waist.

“And what, pray tell, are you doing, Potter?” Severus drawled.

“She said we can take our time.” Harry shrugged and gently kissed him. “Did you sleep well, Severus?” He asked softly.

“Very well, thank you.” Severus replied warily.

“Great.” Harry beamed and walked them back towards the bed, intent on ravishing his lover again. Severus chuckled softly as he fell back on the soft bed and threaded his fingers with Harry’s own.

Over the next few weeks, they had established a sort of routine. In the mornings, Hermione would visit and sit at least an hour with Draco. They would often have breakfast together. Harry and Severus would make their way to the kitchen just as Draco’s first course of medication knocked him out and Hermione left for work. Most of the morning both of them spent time in the study, either together or in their respective studies, and went over their paperwork and other things related to their inheritances. There were correspondences that also needed to be seen to and Harry was tasked with
most of it, even if Severus helped. Lunch was usually had with Draco in his room. As the days passed and the blond was stronger, he was coaxed to the kitchen for the meal. Once the three men finished their meal, Severus would disappear to make potions or work on the latest room he was redecorating with Kreacher in tow. Harry spent this time chatting with Draco, sometimes managing to take the blond on short walks in the garden. They would reconvene for tea and Harry would go off to do his extra paper-work while Severus and Draco shared some time playing chess or undertaking another leisurely activity. After dinner, Draco was once again visited by Hermione and Harry took the opportunity to whisk Severus away to the bedroom.

Hermione and Draco become more comfortable in each other’s presence. It seemed Hermione’s vast knowledge fascinated the blond and they had plenty to talk about. Harry was just waiting for them to kiss to start things off. Severus was of the opinion that it would not happen until Yule but Harry was vying for Halloween. It was amusing to watch the two look at each other tenderly and blush when they thought no one was looking- it was entertainment enough for them.

Meanwhile, Harry and Hermione had held a few random meetings with various Wizengamot members, the minister, and the head of DMLE. They were trying to get an investigation going into the treatment of young people who would, in two years, be released into society. The minders were charged with reforming their charges so they could rejoin normal life and obviously some were destroying them and the little bit of innocence they possessed. To Harry’s great relief, quite a few members, old and new, of the Wizengamot agreed with him. The major problem was to do with the alternative since there was only Azkaban and many, including Harry and Hermione, felt that it was better to be beaten than sent there. Harry suggested they use one or more of the old abandoned manor houses in the ministry’s possession and appoint trustworthy castellans- it would be the wizarding version of a muggle juvenile detention center. The idea was well received and some select people debated putting it forward and others prepared to second the motion.

Hermione though insisted on talking to all members if possible to get them on board. While Harry was passionate about this, he felt it was tiring to convince each and every person. It was why he hated the thought of being a politician. However, he did recognize that he as Lord Potter would never escape this environment… well at least until he foisted the responsibilities on a son. Then again, he would probably not have any sons with Severus.

Harry had paused for one long moment when he inadvertently imagined a green-eyed, raven haired little boy running around their home. He couldn’t help but wonder if it was possible. If magic could make cars fly and make flames that would not burn… then maybe, just maybe, magic could help him get children with Severus. The idea was insane but through the years he had accepted that sometimes magic could do some very strange things. He decided to look into the possibility- if nothing else he’d love to adopt and raise a child or two with Severus. He wasn’t sure if Severus would like children of their own but resolved that it was one of those things they’d eventually talk about. He spent quite a bit of time thereafter imagining Severus with a rounded belly.

It was already the beginning of April when the Wizengamot finally started discussing the juvenile prison. It might take a while yet to finalize things but there was hope for a future. He hoped he would be involved somehow to make sure things started off well and waited for any news. He had also talked to Severus about the idea and how he’d like to help those same age as him or younger. At first Severus had not been very receptive to the idea but he eventually conceded it was a good idea considering what happened to Draco.

With all the things going on, Harry’s mind weighed heavily with one particular thought. Come June, Severus was no longer required to stay with him. He wondered, once he had been given a choice, if Severus would choose to live on his own. He didn’t want him to and a part of him wanted to conveniently forget the issue but another part of him wanted Severus to choose him… and for that to
happen, he needed to have the choice. He knew he would offer the out to Severus despite how much he didn’t want to. He wanted the man beside him for all time but he wanted him there of his own free will. So, Harry began to plan.
PDA

Chapter Summary

Draco POV after he is rescued.

Chapter Notes

PDA: Public Display of Affection.... for those who didn't know!

(7-Nov-17)
Since so many people commented on it, I realize my delivery was a bit off with the Shakespeare/Pride and Prejudice bit. I've changed it slightly so it makes more sense... It doesn't impact the story much though.

PS: Yes I know Jane Austen wrote it... -sigh- Thanks to all who brought it up. I'll be more clear in the future!

It was amazing how comfortable Severus felt with Harry but even he was surprised when he looped his arms around Harry and kissed him back, ignoring his godson altogether. They had just returned from a trip to Daigon Alley, the first time Severus ventured out of the house. If lavishing Severus with all the material things wasn’t enough, Harry’s genuine remorse at having been aloof right at the beginning was moving. Severus hadn’t even blamed the man for behaving as he had done and deep down he had understood even back then. He also had a habit of not expecting people to apologize or thank him and when Harry did so, he was frankly overwhelmed. He had realized only today that Harry truly cared for him and was not ashamed of being with him. That led to a decision he had been hesitating to make for days. If Harry didn’t mind others knowing, he would not either. It felt rather good when he had casually touched his lover’s hand earlier, in full view of Daigon Alley. It was even better, though slightly embarrassing for a man his age, when Harry had not pulled away, instead turned his hand so he could hold Severus’ hand.

He could hear Draco chuckling at them and found he did not mind in the least. He belonged here and he was happy. He laid his head back on Harry’s shoulder when they broke apart and glared half-heartedly at his voyeuristic godson. Harry chuckled softly but did not let go, for that Severus was glad.

“You two look good together.” Draco commented, watching them with a soft smile on his face.

“Thank you, sweetie.” Harry beamed at him. The nickname had somehow stuck and Draco had yet to protest its usage.

“What are you doing down here?” Severus asked, reluctantly pulling away from the embrace and sitting across from Draco. Harry sat to his right, in his usual spot.

“I was hungry and wondered if Kreature might fix something.”
“It is almost time for lunch.” Harry mused. “If you can wait fifteen minutes or so, I’ll have something ready.”

“I can wait.” Draco nodded. Harry smiled and went to the pantry, returning with several ingredients.

“I shall help.” Severus muttered.

Severus took over making the salad as Harry put some pasta on and started adding things to the skillet for a simple sauce. The sauce was a simple tomato basil sauce with added pieces of cold cuts from the ice box. Draco was intrigued as he had never before seen what looked to be canned pureed tomatoes and several dried herbs as opposed to fresh herbs he had seen his family elves use. It also amused him how skillful his ex-rival seemed in the kitchen, not to mention his godfather who was deftly draining the cooked pasta and oiling it lightly. A few more minutes later, once the sauce reduced to an acceptable consistency, a large round bowl was placed on the table with a delicious smelling pasta. Another bowl with the salad joined it along with serving spoons.

Interestingly enough, Severus took over serving for everyone as if he did this everyday… maybe he did and Draco had not observed him? Draco mused how domestic the scene was but did not comment as he once might have. These two were his family, the ones who took him in and cared for him and he owed them a lot. He did not wish to ridicule something he himself longed for; instead he silently congratulated them for finding each other and wished them a long and happy life together.

Over dinner, Severus told his godson what they had been up to which prompted the blond to question his own finances. It took a while to make Draco understand that his wealth was in fact frozen and barely accessible until his term was up. However, given Harry had been formally awarded Draco’s custodianship, Severus told him any investments and the like can be taken care of.

“Do not worry, dragon. Harry can take care of things for you.” Severus told his visibly worried godson.

“It’s not that… I am just hearing about this and am worried what Diggory did to my family’s investments.” He admitted. “I did not realize he would have the same authority as a magical guardian…”

“It’s alright, sweetie. Whatever he did or didn’t do can be fixed. Once you are better, you can even tell me what you want done… like I do with Severus.” He added.

“Wait… you’re in control of Severus’ assets?” Draco gaped.

“Full control.” Severus nodded. “However, I trust Harry. He has allowed my participation in any decisions…”

“You say that as if I do whatever I want.” Harry snorted. “He makes his own decisions, I just legally sign off and stuff.” Harry explained. Severus scowled at him.

“Okay… um…”

“Don’t worry, I can’t touch your gold anyway. I can't avoid looking through your stuff since I need to see if anything needs to be done or not… but I promise I won’t take advantage of you or anything.”

“I know you won’t… I’m just a bit shocked.” Draco muttered. “Thank you for everything, Harry.”

“Anytime, Sweetie.” Harry ruffled the blond hair fondly. “I actually did procure your files today, I should know in a few days if anything needs to be done. In addition, Hermione says you’ll be able to
move around more by next week, so I am going to take you clothes shopping… we shall get some casual cottons, same as Severus and one formal as part of your standard wardrobe. I believe you may be able to take out money from the trust vault, which you may use to buy any additional items.”

“Okay.” Draco’s eyes lit up at the prospect of shopping… especially for his own clothes. He had been wearing Harry’s resized clothes for the past few months. Draco’s mental health aside, his body had been heavily damaged and had needed intensive therapy. There had been brain damage as well complicating the treatment and prolonging it over months. Hence, it was simply not possible until now to take Draco to get clothes; the clothes he was allowed to take from his own closet at home were no more than rags due to Diggory.

“Did you take your potions, Dragon?” Severus asked softly.

“I did. Now that I don’t sleep my mornings off like an invalid, I don’t mind them so much.” He grinned happily. It had been a sore point with the boy that he was forced to rest as much, even if his body needed it to recover well.

“Yeah, Mione is tapering off the doses as well.” Harry smiled happily. “What do you say to a walk after we’re done here?” He asked suddenly.

“I already walked around the grounds twice Harry… maybe you and Severus should go on a romantic walk.” He suggested cheekily.

“Hm…” Severus hummed as he thought about that. They had yet to do something so simple. It was almost always business in the study or something in one of their rooms. He glanced at Harry quickly to gauge his thoughts but dared not look too long. It seemed, however, that Harry quite liked the idea.

“I’d like that.” The younger wizard said softly, reaching for Severus’ hand. “Severus?”

“I would not… mind.” Severus swallowed nervously. This was the closest he had gotten to a date in a very long time; they had to cancel the movie plans due to Draco’s situation. Harry beamed at him.

“What are you going to do though?” Harry asked the blond.

“I have a muggle shake pear Hermione got for me… and she said she’d be early today.”

“Shake pear?” Harry blinked.

“I believe he means to say ‘Shakespeare’.” Severus chuckled. “Which one?”

“Pride and Prejudice.” Draco answered through his small blush. “It’s interesting enough.”

He shot Severus a look, when he tried to protest the author and nodded encouragingly at Draco, not wanting to criticize the still recovering teen’s muggle knowledge. Draco got upset too easily these days, besides he was so animated as he regaled them about the book that even Severus let it slide. As for Draco and Hermione getting together, he was still betting on Halloween. They soon after finished up their dinner listening to Draco’s bright chatter.

When Draco offered to clean up, Harry was so proud of him that he gave him a big hug before taking Severus’ hand and leaving for the garden. Severus smiled at his godson as he was dragged away; it was truly a big change for the Malfoy heir to even offer to clean up. He might not show it much but he was proud of his godson who had risen above his trials and become a better man.

Soon, however, all thoughts fled his mind as a pair of warm lips kissed his neck and an arm weaved
around his waist. Harry was smiling softly as the warm wind gently ruffled his hair. The setting sun added a sense of ethereal beauty to his lover, so much so that Severus could not help but kiss him. He put his own arm around Harry and they started slowly walking through the flowers. Eventually, Severus gave in to his urges and rested his head upon a strong shoulder, causing Harry to hold him more tightly.

After an hour of walking and talking softly about various things, Harry sat down under a large tree, pulling Severus into his lap. At one time, Severus mused wryly, he would have been offended by the move, however now he did not mind so much as long as it was Harry. It felt comfortable and even right to be held thus, safe from the world, warm and cherished.

It did not take long for Harry’s hands to wander, brushing his sides and causing the potions master to smirk. Soon, however, Severus started fidgeting. Harry stopped his questing immediately and hugged the man gently.

“I’m sorry… It’s just… you’re so irresistible.” Harry sighed against his skin.

“That word applies to you, Potter.” Severus sneered halfheartedly. He fidgeted some more until Harry let go. Severus turned to see a melancholy look on his lover and bit back a smile; to think Harry Potter would like his company so much! He soon was completely facing Harry and slowly crawled into his lap, much to Harry’s wide-eyed surprise.

“Sev…erus?” Harry stuttered uncertainly.

“I should like to touch you as well.” Severus stated as a matter of fact and looped his arms around Harry’s neck. A moment later he swooped in to kiss the shocked younger man. Slowly but surely Harry relaxed and his hand found purchase over Severus’ derriere. The other of Harry’s hands delved though the robes and found Severus’ soft skin to caress. For once it was Severus pulling on Harry’s hair as they lost themselves to sweet passionate kisses. Eventually they made it back to the house to Harry’s bed to finish what they started under the first twinkling stars of the night.
Chapter Summary

Title says it all. Severus finally gets out of the house.

Chapter Notes

Chapter 33 was posted as well; please read that first!

From here on the repetition is at a minimum. Ch 34 follows after the events of ch 33

They eventually decided to find time to visit Gringott’s though both had been worried over Draco. However, the blond was much stronger and more confident and didn’t mind in the least to be left alone with the elf. It was a good thing too as the goblins had some specific instructions for Severus to follow. First was the claiming of the ring; even if Severus’ accounts were inaccessible to him, the ring was important. The next was a series of documents he was to look at. Harry himself had been stolen by his account manager and didn’t see Severus until it was time to leave.

“All done?”

“I am.” Severus nodded, showing Harry his family ring. “I will have more things to do when they allow me access in two years.” He added.

“Alright. Anything you need before we go home?”

“Hm… I was hoping to stop at the apothecary…” Severus blushed.

“Sure.” Harry chuckled. He knew Severus would never not stop at the apothecary if he could help it. “We can stop by Madame Malkins before we go.” He said casually. Severus had promised to buy his own wardrobe to stop Harry from getting something every other day but he never got round to it; this was a good opportunity as any.

Severus was akin to a kid in a candy store as he browsed the various ingredients. Harry watched from a quiet, dark corner as Severus walked around with a basket and collected a wide range of, sometime very strange, ingredients. To a casual observer, Severus looked as if he was doing a boring task but Harry could see the excitement in the beloved face as he bought things to his heart’s content. They spent an hour in there, much to Harry’s astonishment.

“I’m done.” Severus announced, slinking up to Harry.

“You sure bought a lot.” Harry noted with a smile, showing he was only curious and not admonishing him.

“I wish to experiment…” Severus mumbled.

“Ah… that makes sense.” Harry agreed. “Does the lab have protective spells on it still?” He asked as
they made their way up to the cashier.

“They could use strengthening.” Severus admitted.

“We’ll do that when we get home, then.” Harry decided. Harry hovered in the background as Severus spent another five minutes haggling the prices and got a the total price lowered by about five percent. Harry chuckled at the smug look Severus wore as they exited the apothecary.

“That man always marks up his selling prices, though he does sell good quality.” Severus explained as Harry steered him to the next destination. “He also enjoys haggling and I always manage to get him to lower the prices a little.”

“You’re a regular, aren’t you?” Harry asked amused.

“Of course. Wilfred is one of the best potions ingredients suppliers in the country. The one in Hogsmeade and the others here are passable but Wilfred always delivers the best. He also has contacts to procure any rare ingredient one might require, which is often when I start experimenting.”

“I see.” Harry smiled. “Let’s get you a wardrobe, shall we?” He pushed Severus, whose face reflected horror, into the robes’ shop.

“I really don’t need…” He protested.

“You do need a weeks worth of casual wear and at least one more formal.” Harry insisted. “Madame?” He called, keeping a firm hold on Severus’ arm.

“Mr. Potter.” Madame Malkin herself glided out of the backroom. “What can I do for you?”

“My friend here needs several sets of robes. Seven casual and at least one formal.”

“Very well. Right this way.” She led the scowling man over to a partition, looking at him curiously.

“Three casual is enough and I do not need another formal set!” Severus insisted.

“Fine you buy three and I’ll get the rest.” Harry retorted.

“I don’t need them!”

“Yes, you do. Now hush.” Harry lightly hit him over the head with the newspaper with a grin. “No more arguments.” Severus grumbled unhappily about tyrants and stupid brats.

“It can’t be…” Malkin gasped. “Professor Snape?” She asked softly, apparently only now realizing the man as such.

“No longer a professor.” He grumbled.

“Of course… my don’t you look wonderful! You remind me of yourself from your seventh year!” She exclaimed happily. “What did you use?” She asked excitedly.

“Nothing much…” Severus fidgeted uncomfortably.

“You must have! Come now, it’ll be our secret.” She giggled.

“I made my own potions…” He admitted reluctantly. “Some anti-wrinkle and another that renews skin. I did improve on them both somewhat… nothing drastic, you understand?” Severus seemed happy enough to talk about potions, Harry noted.
“It seems the improvements worked miraculously!” The witch gushed. “I assume you brewed something for the hair as well?”

“I did. I had time so decided to experiment.” Severus smiled. “It appears one’s hair type affects the efficacy of the shampoos and conditioners. The store bought ones never managed to combat the oiliness or the damage from potion fumes.” He told the older woman as her tape measure whizzed around him. “I just combined protective qualities of certain ingredients with oil control properties of others and it worked.”

“I wonder if you would brew a specialized one for me.” Madame Malkin smiled. “I do so have a problem with frizzy hair and end up using gel or some such nonsense to make it behave.” She moaned as she called back the tape and wrote down it’s observations.

“I may be able to…” Severus mused as he allowed the lady to drape a bolt of cloth over him. “I’d imagine something to combat dryness, perhaps Shea butter or avocado… and a few hair relaxing components… I imagine it to be possible madam.”

“Well, if you can, good sir, I shall offer you a permanent discount on all your purchases for a year. That’s on top of paying for the products.”

“An order?” Severus perked up.

“Of course.” She smiled. “I trust your work any day, Master Snape.”

“I am flattered, my lady.” Severus said smoothly, though his eyes gave away their pleasure and excitement.

“You should accept it, Severus. It’ll be a good start on a potions business.” Harry encouraged.

“I suppose.” Severus smiled. “I shall owl you, if that is alright.”

“Of course dear.” The lady smiled happily. “And for considering this, you’re getting a ten percent discount today.” She announced.

“That is not necessary, madam.” Severus flushed.

“Nonsense. Now which shade do you like?” She asked holding up several green bolts of cloth against Severus. They were all made of soft cotton. Predictably, Severus picked out the Slytherin green and a darker green (that incidentally matched Harry’s eyes). Harry suggested blues of which a deep navy blue as well as a lighter summer sky blue (much to Severus’ annoyance) were set aside. There were a few shades of red contemplated before a dark red was added to the collection. A dark cream and magenta joined them. It seemed all colors suited Severus well and Madam Malkin was clearly over the moon.

Finally, they had twelve different cloths to consider. Since Severus already had a red and the Slytherin green, those were taken away. The navy blue was also removed, against Severus’ demand to remove the sky blue, as the formal robes in silk were to be navy blue. Harry decided to get the remaining nine.

“What designs would you like?” The witch asked, handing a book with various styles to Severus to look through. For once, the man did not protest and looked through available designs.

“I like the older designs…” Severus murmured.

“Ah, the traditional type then?”
“Yes… well with a modern twist perhaps.” He added.

“What did you have in mind?” Harry asked as he peered over Severus’ shoulder.

“Some thing like… this?” The older man asked shyly, pointing to a full, flowing set of robes that were fitted to form up till the waist and had several buttons from the low collar to waist. The robe overlapped in the front and a cord held it together to the side.

“It would suit you well, dear.” Malkin nodded. “You could also go for the open fronted ones, wear loose-fitting or tight shirt and any trousers of your choosing, perhaps even a T-shirt and jeans. It is versatile.” She pointed at a picture.

“That looks good.” Harry noted as he pointed to another robe which was essentially open but had a few buttons at the waist to hold the lapels together. They selected a few other models before leaving the remaining choices to the master seamstress.

“I’ll have them ready in three days.” She told them. “Would you like a potions robe as well?” She asked as an afterthought.

“A what?” Harry asked.

“It’s fashioned after a smock and spelled to protect one’s clothing from spillage and other common mishaps in the lab. They are more recent additions to our collection. They are even spells to repel the smells unobtrusively and come with a cap to protect one’s hair.” She added, rummaging around a desk. “I believe the idea came from muggle chemists, though I do not tell every customer that.”

She winked and withdrew a cream colored garment that would come to Severus’ knees with a loose design and mutton chop sleeves. It had stitched-in cloth belts at the wrists and waist to hold the garment out of the way of any potions and flames. The witch promptly informed the potions master he’d need one made since her sample had wider hips than Severus had and narrower shoulders. Severus looked at the item curiously and examined the runes etched in and asked questions about its protections. Finally, he decided to get one to try out and evaluate its usefulness. Madam Malkin requested he let her know of its success and promised to have one ready for pickup.

“I may not have to shower after each brewing.” Severus commented as they left the shop.

“Hopefully.” Harry agreed. “If that smock works as she said, you’d only need to wash your face and hands after each brewing session.” He added. Severus nodded happily. “What say you, we go for coffee? Or ice-cream if you prefer.”

“How about both?” Severus grinned and took Harry’s hand and marched to Fortescue. “Two coffee ice-creams with dark chocolate bits, please.” He called to Flortescue who grinned and waved at them.

“He seems to recognize you.” Harry noted with a smile.

“I always order that, Florian actually came up with a bitter enough concoction for me.” He admitted. “Else I always ordered a coffee…”

“You’re friendly with quite a few people, aren’t you?” Harry asked amused. This was a new side of his love that he appreciated greatly.

“A few.” Severus nodded. “It’s easier to be on good terms when neither party is desirous of a favor.” He added sadly. “The shop-keepers and other regular people, don’t expect much more than politeness and good business.”
“For a while…” Harry swallowed a bit, wondering how to say what he meant. “I was afraid of the public’s reaction to you… I mean if they will accept you or charge you with crimes you have already paid for… I came prepared to defend you if need be and am… relieved that it is not necessary.” He smiled softly.

“I believe without the ministry’s interference and the newspaper’s negative stance, we shall have no issues.” Severus said, somehow understanding Harry was more worried about when their relationship would come out; friends and family were one thing but the public another.

“Well, we better work on them then.” Harry grinned. “Severus, do you wish to open your own business?”

“Why do you ask?”

“You seemed happy to receive an order. It seemed you’d like to make it official one day.” He shrugged.

“I did dream of such a thing… I have gold saved up in my personal account. Unfortunately, I will not be allowed such freedom yet.”

“Well… What if I take out a license and hire you?” Harry suggested. “When the term is up, I can transfer the license. This way you can start early and do mail orders and such… build up a reputation.” He suggested.

“I do not wish to trouble you…”

“It is not a trouble.” Harry insisted. “It would help you find your feet again and it would make you happy, right?” Severus nodded. “Then it is settled. Think of a name for the business and we’ll do an add in the papers.”

“I do not wish for you spend so much on me.” Severus glared.

“Severus…” Harry sighed and then immediately brightened. “I could get shares in the business? I gave twins the startup money and they gave me shares for it. Considering you’re doing everything and I am only using my name to get a license… I could get a nominal amount of shares…”

“You’re getting attached to doing business aren’t you?” Severus asked with a smirk. “Very well, for the license and any advertisement needs for the next two years, you will have ten percent shares.”

“Done.” Harry said cheerily.

“Potter, you’re supposed to haggle! Not accept the first offer.” Severus glared.

“If it were up to me, I’d take zero.” Harry commented.

“Impertinent brat. You will not take anything less than a twenty percent.” He declared.

“Hey I agreed for ten.” Harry protested as their ice-creams appeared before them.

“That will be after I take full control of the business.” Severus informed his partner.

“Fine, do what you want.” Harry grumbled and concentrated on his treat. He looked up when Severus covered one hand with his own.

“Thank you, Harry. It means a lot to me.” Severus told him, eyes soft.
“It’s nothing.” Harry smiled, turning his hand so he could hold Severus’. “I just want you to be happy.”

“I am.” Severus asserted seriously before withdrawing his hand and diving into his own treat.

“This is rather good.” Harry said savoring the bitter sweet cold confection. “I wonder how popular it is…”

“Thank you, Mr. Potter.” Florian Fortescue had been approaching them and had heard Harry’s absent-minded comment. “That particular ice-cream is popular among the older generation, usually dads and granddads accompanying their charges.” He winked.

“I love it.” Harry beamed.

“Hello, Florian.” Severus greeted with a smile.

“I have missed you, my friend.” Florian squeezed Severus’ shoulder and sat down in the free chair. “How have you been?”

“Keeping busy.” Severus shrugged. “How is business?”

“Splendid. I am curious, however, why you would appear with Mr. Potter.” He smiled at the younger man.

“That is…” Harry fidgeted.

“… a long story.” Severus finished. “Wasn’t the whole thing in the papers?” He asked warily.

“Actually, no, I may have threatened them citing I had enough on my plate than to deal with well meaning fans whining about it all.” Harry blushed. “I did an interview on the war instead.”

“You gave an interview?”

“Well, had I allowed them to publish the thing, they’d have blown it out of proportion and I’d have to deal with hate mail directed at you and everything.”

“You two aren’t making any sense.” Florian noted. The other two shared a look and Harry shrugged, leaving the decision up to Severus.

“Do you recall the mass trials after the war?” Severus asked softly as Harry put up the privacy wards.

“I do.”

“They tried me.” Severus told the older man.

“What?! But you were a spy and helped protect the children!” Florian snarled.

“Yes, but the fools decided he needed to be punished for the crimes he was forced to commit during his time as a spy… both actively and passively.” Harry scowled.

“Harry here, offered to be my custodian and talked them into a lighter sentence.” Severus added. “Three years under house arrest and two under watch.”

“Oh… then why have I not seen you around?” Florian raised a brow, staring at Harry.

“That was my fault.” Harry admitted with a sigh. “It didn’t occur to me to take him out or anything
and until last year I was pretty much busy with the rebuilding and repairs. It wasn’t until a friend told me I was isolating Severus, that I realized the mistake.”

“Quite alright, Harry. I was not ready to face people and thus did not request an outing.” Severus smiled a little. “This is the first time I have been out in almost three years… well past our home’s wards.”

“I see.” Florian nodded. “I hope I will see more of you then?”

“You may.” Harry smiled. “It depends on whether or not Severus locks himself in his lab the moment he gets his freedom.” He teased.

“I am not that bad.” Severus protested.

“We’ll see.” Harry grinned.

“Well, I must return to my post. Good seeing you Severus, Mr. Potter.”

“Please sir, Harry.”

“Harry. You may call me Florian.” He nodded with a small smile.

“We will see you around, Florian.” Severus waved a little.

They quickly finished their treats and left the shop, heading for their home. Once they flooed in, Harry grabbed Severus by the waist and kissed him soundly.

“I’m sorry.” He whispered.

“For what?” Severus asked confused.

“I should have been more considerate and at least asked if you needed to go out… even for shopping and such… I’m sorry I thoughtlessly isolated you.”

“I was fine, Harry.”

“Still… weren’t you lonely? Especially at the beginning?” He asked softly.

“I…”

“I wasn’t ever home either…” Harry said sadly. “I was too wrapped up in myself and for that I apologize.”

“There is nothing to forgive.” Severus whispered against his lips. “Had I but asked, would you not have made time to take me for whatever errand?” He asked.

“I guess.”

“Then there is nothing to forgive. I understand you were overwhelmed and confused about your own life. It was unfair to expect you to look after someone else.” Severus kissed him lightly.

“I wish I did better by you.” Harry insisted with a sad smile.

“I am grateful you gave me a home, Harry.” Severus sighed and laid his head on Harry’s shoulder. “You gave me time away from everyone to adjust to no longer being a spy… a safe place where I could simply be. I thank you for that.”
“You deserve so much more.” Harry hugged him tighter and kissed his hair.

“I have all I need.” Severus murmured. They stayed that way in silence until they were interrupted by their guest.

“No way!” Draco exclaimed, loudly. “You and Severus?! Godfather are you quite well?” He asked with a huge grin.

“Insolent whelp.” Severus glared at his godson, not letting Harry go. “I’ll have you know we’ve been together for well over two years now.” He sniffed. Harry grinned; Severus had just acknowledged their relationship for the first time in such a clear manner and it elated him.

“Nice.” Draco whistled lowly.

“Now shoo, Draco, I’m not done.” Harry added, resuming kissing Severus. At least he didn’t have to worry about Draco finding out anymore.
Falling Apart

Chapter Summary

Sev POV.

I'm not exactly sure whose fault this is actually... both? :P Enjoy.

Things were going rather well for them and Severus could not be happier with his life. Draco was almost fully recovered and was probably in love. Harry and he were happy together. He was rarely ignored and received many soft touches and kisses to let him know Harry cared. He had completely moved out of 'his old room' into Harry’s; now only his clothes resided there. They didn’t make love every night but that was alright because he could sleep in Harry’s warm embrace, surrounded by his unique scent, every night.

He was in total bliss which is why he did not understand why Harry seemed a bit preoccupied and worried. He hoped his lover would share his worries with him but decided not to push. He tried to be comforting and did his best to cheer Harry up but he didn’t fail to notice that his smile only lasted so long. Whatever it was, Severus decided would eventually pass. If only Harry stayed home more often, maybe he could figure it all out but as it was he often spent the day in meetings and such… but such was life. Harry had things to do outside and Severus didn’t mind as long as he came back home safe and sound.

He was sitting in his study one day early July, reading the latest potions Journal, when Harry sought him out nervously. He wondered what was wrong and put away all his thoughts on Harry’s surprise birthday party out of his mind… for now.

“What’s wrong?” He asked his lover.

“Nothing is wrong, per say.” Harry smiled softly and stroked his hair almost longingly.

“You look worried.” He noted, trying not be sarcastic at the moment.

“Hm… I took some liberties with your things…” Harry fidgeted. “Guess I am worried you won’t like it.” He smiled.

“What things?” Severus demanded with narrowed eyes; had the man been in his lab? That could be dangerous.

“Come with me.” Harry gently pulled him from the chair and led him outside. With a pop they were gone from the Black ancestral home.

“What…” Severus looked around at the strangely familiar surroundings. Harry just held his hand and led him towards a very familiar building. Severus frowned in confusion as they approached and walked across the ward line. He stared at his family home.

“What in Salazar’s name…?”

“I fixed it up a bit for you.” Harry said softly.
“Oh…” Severus didn’t know what to say. All of a sudden, he didn’t feel very good but he followed the younger man.

“The place was crumbling, more or less. I hired some goblins to fix the structure and redo plumbing and wiring. They fixed some standard wards over the property as well. Then I had to slowly put the place back together. I cleaned out the attic too; don’t worry all the salvageable stuff is stored neatly in trunks or boxes. I took the liberty to buy you a few things here and there… and upgraded your existing lab.” He waved to the panel that hid the entrance to the lab. “Basically it’s all ready to move into when you are ready.”

“Why?” Severus whispered.

“Have you forgotten, Severus? Today is the last day of your imprisonment.” Severus swallowed; it didn’t feel like freedom at all. Harry took him through each room with a smile. The bedrooms were redone, the wallpapers replaced and furniture fixed. The bathrooms were scrubbed clean and several broken tiles had been replaced and he noted some small newer things here and there… including towels and such. They finally stopped the tour in the kitchen.

“I checked the particulars and you get back your personal vault. The Prince vaults I still have control over for the next two years. We can sit down once a month and as needed to figure things out…” Harry chattered and picked up a thick file from the table. “This is pretty much everything over the past few months, so you know what I’m up to. The potion business we talked about is also set up… the papers are in here.” Harry grinned.

“You didn’t…” Severus tried to speak but something was obstructing his throat.

“I just wanted to do something for you and let me assure you… this is a small thing. No take-backs.” He wagged his finger. “Now, I’m sure you want to look around your lab… it’s fully stocked and equipped, by the way. Oh right, the wards are in your control as of today so you can make any changes and finally….” He withdrew something from his pocket. “Your wand.” Harry grinned and handed him the ebony stick that Severus had started to not miss.

“Thank you.” Severus whispered.

“I’ll… uh… get out of your way, then. I’ll… be …at home.” He said softly, kissing Severus’ cheek and apparated from the kitchen.

Severus sank down on one of the chairs, numb from the day’s events. What had just happened? He knew he should be happy that he had his freedom and his wand back; that he had his house back and he could finally start on his dreams. However, it felt like his heart had been ripped out and crushed. Harry had prepared his house for him, taking into account all his comforts… but wasn't this a way to ‘nicely’ kick him out? He couldn’t help but feel betrayed and sad to loose what he had with Harry. He wanted to be with Harry but he had his freedom back and he belonged here… in Spinner's end. He put his head on the table and closed his eyes, tears slowly pooling beneath him.

How was he to live now? He knew this day had been coming yet he foolishly allowed himself to forget. It was entirely his fault for letting Harry too close, letting the Gryffindor into his heart. Merlin, it hurt. He had been thrown away once more and it hurt. His heart cried out for Harry and he was just a moment away from apparating and hexing him… but he knew Harry had promised nothing and he had no right expecting anything.

It had been a fling, a passing fancy nothing more. No matter how many times he repeated it, his heart insisted that it loved the green-eyed man and it longed for him. His mind, his very soul longed for
Harry and he could do nothing… nothing but cry bitter tears.

He eventually went to his new lab, disdaining everything within. He immersed himself in the repetitive task of making potions and set about occluding his mind tightly. The desolate feeling did not go away no matter what he did. When he grew too tired, he dragged himself to the mockingly comfortable bed and fell into it, unconcerned that he was fully dressed and smelling of botched potions.

His sleep was troubled and he dreamt of more hurtful words and actions from Harry, should he ever express his true feelings for the younger man. He woke up disgusted with himself but knew deep down that he wanted nothing more than for Harry to come back for him… to tell him to come home and that he missed him… that he loved him.

He managed to get out of bed late into the morning and went back to his lab to try and brew something harder than the previous day. He ended up blowing up his cauldron and thus realized Harry had personally warded his lab to be safe… according to his own exacting standards. His mind supplied the day when they had worked on the lab at home together, Severus had to guide Harry and they had relative fun discussing warding as Harry set up the wards just as he liked them. Severus, covered in slime from the failed potion, slid to the floor and cried himself to sleep.

He woke nearly at dinner-time, dried potion in his hair and clothes and decided to eat something. The pantry had been fully stocked and he stared at the array of canned foods in dismay. Why did everything remind him of his lover? He picked a can of soup and magically heated it, gulping the scalding liquid down to sustain him. He decided he needed a shower; just because he was upset (he sneered at himself) did not mean he could be filthy.

He realized his wardrobe still contained his old clothes and he slipped on a pair of boxers and slipped into bed. Even clothes managed to remind him of Harry. He stared at the ceiling for hours before nightmare riddled sleep claimed him. Once more he woke too early but stayed long in bed. In fact he only dressed in his old black robes near lunch and had another can of a random tasteless soup before descending down to the lab. Another failed potion later he decided to work on the wards… at least that activity might remove his restless energy. He took a shower and examined the wards. He tweaked them to reject any who dared to enter but could not make himself remove Harry from their memory. He activated the anti-travel wards, noting Harry was already keyed in. He didn't bother removing Harry and only removed random signatures of people who must have visited to help finish the house on time. He wasn't sure if it was wise to leave Harry’s signature in the wards but Severus could not yet bear to cut the younger man out of his life… not yet, maybe never.

He spent the evening staring at the fireplace listlessly and tried his best not to think of Harry. How had that evil spawn of James Potter managed to worm his way into every aspect of his life? So much so that it was proving impossible to forget him. He threw a vase at the wall, satisfied when it made a loud noise as it broke.
Irresistible

Chapter Summary

Harry POV after ch 35!

Don't forget to read chapter 35!

It had been the hardest thing he had ever done; leaving Severus at Spinner’s end had been worse than walking to his own death. However, it had to be done. Harry hoped and prayed that Severus would return to him when night falls, before that if at all possible. He spent hours pacing in the living room, then went out and worked off his nervous energy in the garden before slumping into his favorite chair, sure Severus was not going to return.

“Harry? What’s wrong? Why didn’t you and Sev come for dinner?” Draco asked softly from the doorway.

“Have you eaten, sweetie?” Harry asked tiredly.

“Yeah. What’s wrong, Harry?” He asked again, sitting next to him on the sofa.

“I… I don’t think Severus will ever come home.” Harry said blandly.

“Why?” Draco frowned. “Did you have a fight?”

“No.” Harry shook his head. “He’s free now… he doesn’t have to come back.”

“Harry… where is Severus?”

“At… at his house.” Harry sniffled a little.

“You mean at Spinner’s end?” He asked carefully.

“Yes. I… renovated the place for him and took him there today. Today, he’s free… and I wanted to do something for him… I expected him to come home, Draco, but he isn’t here yet. He left… for good.”

“That can’t be right, Harry.” Draco said softly.

“How can you know?”

“I just do.” The blond said firmly. “He was happy here and I don’t think he would leave for good.” He frowned. “You did tell him to come home?”

“No… it’s his choice… I don’t want to take anymore choices from him.” Harry said miserably.

“It’ll be alright. If he doesn’t come home tomorrow, you can go to him and ask him why he didn’t come home… maybe he just lost track of time and decided to stay or something.” He suggested.

“Maybe… I…” Harry shook his head.
“You miss him.” Draco said knowingly.

“It’s ridiculous! I saw him just this afternoon and I… I miss him so much.” Harry threw a pillow to the corner.

“He probably feels the same…” Draco murmured as he hugged the distraught man. “Why don’t you eat something and go to bed for tonight?”

“I’m not hungry.” Harry claimed tiredly.

“Alright, go to bed then.” Draco pulled him up and led him to the bedroom.

“Thanks Draco.” Harry muttered before he disappeared into his room. He didn’t realize Draco was still standing there thinking about the situation.

The next day Hermione was there early in search of Severus.

“Harry! Severus! I need a bit of help… potions.” She hollered from the door. Harry stumbled to the door and stared at his best friend.

“Severus is not here, Mione.” He told her sadly.

“What? Where is he? Did you fight?”

“No we did not fight… he’s free.”

“Gosh! I forgot!” She slapped her forehead. “But where is he?”

“At his house.” He said tiredly. “Maybe Draco can help you out, if it’s about potions.” He suggested hoping she would just go away but half an hour later she had returned.

“Harry… talk to me.” She pleaded.

“What am I to say? He isn’t coming back! He… he forced himself to be with me after all.” His voice broke a little. “I won’t force him, Mione… but I do miss him… I need him here…” He whispered.

“I’m sure Severus will return Harry.”

“How would…”

“Listen!” She cut him off. “He loves this place and he likes being here with you. I saw him being genuinely happy here… He is probably a bit confused right now, give him time, alright?”

“Okay.” Harry nodded.

“Now go shower and eat something then go out for a bit. Get some fresh air. Things will work out.” she said gently hugging him.

“I hope so…” He murmured and did as she asked. However, his mind was unable to block thoughts of Severus and he had to restrain himself several times from apparating to him. He finally settled in a random pub and got drunk. He barely ate anything so bought the snacks the place was incidentally selling- he did not want to end up sick so he ate. He returned home late into the night and wandered the house remembering Severus’ little quirks. He smiled softly at each memory even as his heart broke a little each time. He eventually fetched Severus’ Christmas sweater and slept hugging it.

He did not wake the next morning at his usual time, instead choosing to remain in bed stubbornly.
Hermione came to check on him for a few moments but Harry didn’t bother to even greet her. He finally got up after noon and noting Draco was fast asleep, he ate a few slices of dry bread. He then apparated himself to a little known pub he had visited a few times and proceeded to drown himself in booze.

He would have succeeded in restraining himself that evening if only he didn’t see couples everywhere. Being a small, relatively decent pub, it was apparently a hotspot for date nights. As Harry finally decided he was drunk enough, he realized his was surrounded by giggling happy lovebirds and it made him miss his lover terribly. Without thinking much on it, he stumbled to the bathroom and apparated directly to Severus’ house.

He had paused a few moments at the threshold, unsure if he should even be here but the thought of seeing Severus even for a moment was overwhelming and he stumbled around looking for his love. He didn’t find him in the kitchen and he headed to the living room, barely surviving stumbling over the chair. He found him just as he was to enter the room.

He stared at the beloved face for what seemed like hours and almost cried in relief at seeing him well. He hadn’t even realized he was worried for Severus until then. He couldn’t help but touch him softly, wanting to remove that fear from him lovely eyes. He tried his best to soothe him but Severus kept stepping back.

He trapped Severus in his arms and kissed him softly, trying to convey that he wouldn’t harm him… even if he probably looked like a dangerous drunk. Severus kissed back after a moment and Harry barely stopped himself from grinning. Severus had his wand now, he could have blasted him away or at least stunned him but he had not. He frowned a little and asked an all important question.

“Do you hate me?” He asked softly.

“No.” Severus answered, his hand unconsciously gripping Harry tightly.

Harry stared a moment more before deciding that was good enough. He had missed his Severus and he needed him badly. He was barely aware of anything else as he fervently, urgently kissed and caressed his lover. He only stopped his ministrations when he remembered he needed a lubricant but came fully to attention when his Severus stiffened in pain.

He should have known that little bit of oil was insufficient! Now he had gone and hurt his sweet love again! He belatedly realized that he had actually learned a charm just for the purpose and had idiotically forgotten… how embarrassing. He held Severus close hushing him and gently rocking him until the pain subsided. “I’m fine.” He almost laughed when Severus tried to get him to move early- he could tell Severus was still hurting and adamantly hung on a little longer.

“Nonsense.” Harry snorted then laughed, unable to hold in his mirth for Severus was being silly. “I can wait a bit.” He assured his lover softly and kissed him all over until he was truly ready. He knew when the stiffness had left his body and his breathing calmed and he knew just how to pleasure his beautiful Severus. He lost himself in the highly pleasurable job he had set for himself and enjoyed each little sound Severus made under him. He was just glad to be back here in these set of arms, where he belonged. As he laid there entwined with the love of his life, he knew he’d be happy no matter what if only Severus was with him.
Drunken Divulgence

Chapter Summary

Sev's POV from previous chapter with a little more....

Chapter Notes

I didn't realize I hadn't posted for so long! So sorry to anyone following this story! I'll be more on schedule... -gives everyone a sheepish grin-

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Unfortunately, the breaking vase also served to mask another sound and Severus didn’t realize until his nose picked up the unfortunate smell of whiskey. He thought for a moment that he was dreaming. Being in this house alone was bound to cause certain memories to resurface. Even if it was remodeled, it wasn’t easy to forget. He ignored the smell, thinking it a fabrication of his mind until he heard a sound as if someone had stumbled and fell. He stiffened and cautiously went to the door only to come face to face with Harry… sloshed Harry… angry Harry…. not in his mind Harry.

He shook his head in disbelief. Harry had more or less quit drinking… then why was he here drunk? Why was he staring at him like that? Why was there sudden fear in his heart? This was Harry! Harry would never hurt him, right? Not like Tobias… nothing like Tobias. His kind Harry didn’t want to hurt him. However, he couldn't help but take a step back as he caught another whiff of that awful smell.

“Wha… What are you doing here?” Severus managed to ask, forcing his voice to not waver.

“Didn’t come… Why?” Harry asked, softly, his gaze intensifying. Severus saw anger and deep pain in those beloved eyes but he was scared to even move.

“Severus…. my beautiful…” Harry murmured, his hand caressing Severus’ face, gently. Severus relaxed a little at the familiar touch and stared wide-eyed as Harry stepped closer and closer. Harry stopped him from moving further back by trapping him against the sofa but didn’t let him fall into it. Instead Harry held him by the waist, tightly, and stared into his eyes as if searching for something.

Then suddenly chapped lips claimed his own, whiskey breath mingling with every breath Severus took. Severus shuddered and tentatively kissed back causing the hand on his hip and in his hair to tighten painfully until he fully opened his mouth to let Harry ravish his mouth. He suppressed a cry when Harry bit down on his lip and drew blood then licked it leisurely.

“Do you hate me, Severus?” Harry asked, unnaturally calm given that he was obviously drunk.

“No.” Severus whispered. He didn’t hate Harry… he could never hate his Harry.

“Good.” Harry nodded and soon rough hands had ripped his clothes off and hungry eyes raked over his naked body.
“Ha… Harry…?” He called softly. Harry grabbed his hand and kissed the fingertips.

“So beautiful.” He murmured. “Missed you…” He said before kissing him roughly.

Severus had missed him too. His hands automatically went around Harry to hold him close as he felt thick fingers stretching him. He was barely aware of anything as Harry kissed and nibbled his way all over his body.

“Har…ry?” He asked with wide blown, lust filled eyes as the said man pulled away. Severus smiled softly as he saw Harry discarding his sweater and shirt before pulling himself out.

“Lube?” He tilted his head. Severus knew he hadn’t any and stayed quiet, wondering what was going to happen next.

A moment later Harry had summoned some cooking oil and had rubbed some on himself. Severus raised his brow in disbelief, wondering whatever happened to lubrication charms, as Harry nudged his legs apart. Severus blushed as once again his body was scrutinized and caressed softly.

“Beautiful.” Harry repeated as he pushed himself in. Severus realized in that moment that cooking oil was not a good replacement for good quality lubricant and that he had not been prepared completely to receive Harry. He could not help but scream as Harry seated himself within him.

“Sh…” Harry kissed him softly. He wiped away the tears with his thumb and held Severus close to him.

“I’m fine…” Severus sniffed.

“Nonsense.” Harry snorted then laughed. “I can wait a bit.” And he did, until Severus was ready to continue. Severus mildly wondered how Harry was being even remotely sane when his body was literally expelling alcohol fumes. All thought flew from his mind as once again he lost himself in pleasure.

“Severus…” Harry called softly as they lay entwined on the sofa together.

“Hmmm?” Severus murmured tiredly, though he was not sleepy.

“Why didn’t you come home?” Harry asked, pain laced through his voice. Severus was momentarily distracted by the tone and it took a while for the words to sink in.

“Home?” Severus asked, honestly confused.

“Yeah… I was waiting…” He admitted, burying his face in Severus’ hair.

“I thought…” Severus shook his head. “Is that why you’re here?”

“I missed you.”

“And so you barge into my house, utterly drunk.” Severus noted amused.

“Sorry… you should have reset your wards.” Harry mumbled unhappily.

“I did.” Severus said softly. Harry popped himself on his elbow and looked down at him.

“Then why was I able to apparate into your kitchen?” He asked curiously.

“Because, you dunderhead, you’re tied into the wards.” Severus scowled.
“But why…”

“Because I don’t want to keep you out.” Severus whispered more to himself than Harry.

“Oh…” Harry said and laid back down, his hand trailing over Severus’ tender hip. “I’ve hurt you again.” Harry said sadly.

“What?”

“I keep hurting you… and you don’t even use bruise paste to heal them… I suppose you want a reminder…” He trailed off.

Severus had the strangest feeling that Harry was crying and twisted to see his beloved’s face. Seeing hot tears pouring out of closed eyes, he frowned, searching for the reason. Suddenly a memory surfaced ‘I would never hurt you knowingly, Severus… Don’t let anyone hurt you in any way…. I don’t like it when you’re hurt…’ He stared disbelievingly at Harry. Was he feeling guilty about hurting him? This little bruise that he kept around to remember Harry wanted him? Was that why he had been conflicted so often? This bruise?

“Harry… no, no, no… No, Harry, listen to me…” Severus was almost panicking as pain filled green eyes looked at him remorsefully. “I don’t mind the bruises Harry, really… they… they do not hurt much.” He assured the younger man. He had almost said he liked them but he didn’t want to sound like a masochist.

“Why… why do you never heal them?” Harry asked.

“Because…” Severus sighed. “Because they remind me…”

“That I am a bastard.” Harry snarled with self-loathing.

“No, you foolish brat! Let me finish!” Severus climbed over Harry and pinned him to the sofa. “They remind me that you want me.” He said blushing. “At first, it was so unbelievable that anyone would want me much less someone as alluring as you… It reminded me that it had happened… that you had in fact held me… I started treasuring every mark you gave me… I’m sorry if it hurt you… I didn’t mean…” He felt a few tears escape him.

“Oh honey…” Harry tugged him down for a slow kiss. “You need never doubt I want you, honey.” Harry told him feelingly.

“Why would you want me, Harry? I’m older, less attractive… you have the world at your feet… It has to end sometime…” Now Severus knew he was openly sobbing but somehow it didn’t matter. This was Harry- the same one who wouldn’t intentionally hurt him even drunk… though he did seem to forget his own strength when inebriated.

“If it was up to me… it would never end!” Harry crushed Severus to himself. “You’re beautiful, caring, sarcastic but sweet, intelligent and humble… you’re the man who turned my dreary house into a home… I…I… would always want you.”

“But you can have anyone… marry and have children someday…”

“Severus, honey, there is no one else I’d rather have. I… I love you, Severus… so much…”

“Wha…t?” Severus stuttered. “Then… why did you… leave me here?” Severus asked choking on his words. He wanted to stop himself from further exposing his feelings and his heart but the words simply came tumbling along with his repressed feelings over the past two days. “Why did you do
“Is that what you thought?” Harry asked horrified.

“I’ll tell you what I thought! I thought you were done with me and were hinting at me to leave! That it was all over…” Severus’ voice became high-pitched. “I thought you… you… abandoned me.” He ended in a whisper, suddenly too embarrassed to be angry. He tried to get away but Harry held him close.

“Honey, no… I never meant that… I just… I wanted you to choose to come home, my love… I wanted you to have the choice and hoped that you would choose me… I didn’t… I could never abandon you… I want you by my side forever! Merlin, Severus! I have been dreaming of growing old with you surrounded by our kids… I even researched if we could get pregnant! I love you, so much, honey… I don’t want you to leave… I want you to come home and stay with me always… I’m so sorry… I messed up badly… please forgive me…”

“I… I…” Severus sobbed out all his pent up feelings. “You don't want to be rid of me?”

“Never, beautiful.”

“You just say that… you don’t mean it.” Severus accused.


“Yes.” Severus hissed angrily, tears still flowing.

“You are beautiful, honey.”

“You were disappointed with the nose.”

“Yes… because you endangered yourself!” Harry protested. “I loved you back then, Severus, I loved you because you were you, not because of your appearance. I loved you with the wrinkles and crooked nose and was hurt that you’d think… that you'd think I was that shallow.”

“You didn’t mind the potions.” He pointed out.

“True because they were harmless. The nose thing though was dangerous even with a wand! I was upset that you’d go so far to look good… as if it’d make me love you more or something…”

“Did it work?” Severus asked softly.

“My beautiful love, I love you more each single day. You don’t have to do anything to change yourself. You’re perfect Severus Snape and I love you. Get it through that thick skull of yours.” He scowled, exasperated by Severus’ doubt in his honest feelings.

“I love you too.” Severus said softly. He grinned through his tears, now happy tears, when he noticed Harry was stunned speechless. He kissed him tenderly before sitting up on Harry’s thighs. “I have for a while now… I tried not to but it was inevitable… I thought I’d end up alone again while you move on to someone more suitable…”

“You’re perfect!” Harry interrupted.

“So I’m told….” Severus smiled wryly. “But I didn’t know what you thought… I tried to hide the
feelings, deny them but they were always there… I love you and I’d like nothing better than to be next to you forever… in our home.” He declared.

“Then… you’ll come home?” Harry asked excitedly.

“In the morning, we shall go together.” Severus nodded. “You… you… really love … me?” He asked hesitantly.

“I’ll say it as many times as you need, my beautiful Severus, I love you with all my heart. I will love you forever.” Harry pulled the man down on top of him, realizing he needed the reassurance badly. “I’ll love you when your hair turns white and the wrinkles re-appear. I’ll love you because you are you.” Harry kissed him then with all the emotions he felt for his love.

“I love you too… more than life… and potions.” He grinned mischievously. “You’re my home, Harry.” He told him seriously.

“Then… welcome home, my love.” Harry whispered against soft lips.

“Thank you.” Severus whispered back and their lips met, this time sure in their feelings for each other. Severus reached between them and guided Harry back into himself and made love to the man he loved beyond reason. After that round, Harry carried his lover to the recently renovated bedroom to continue their activities all night long.

Chapter End Notes

Somehow this companion chapter to Chapter 36 got left behind. I hope it served as a recap chapter at least.
Harry smiled to himself as he ran his hand through the long raven hair. He thought back to their conversation earlier and frowned. He had only realized today that they had many misunderstandings between them. If only he had bravely asked about why Severus had not used the bruise salve instead of making up a reason in his head. If only he had done something like ask Severus if he would be home in time for dinner, then maybe he would have happily come home to him that same day.

It was all spilt milk however. He now understood Severus loved him as much as he loved Severus. He was ecstatic. He now wondered why he had hesitated in telling Severus how he felt- oh right the bond but that didn’t matter anymore. Now that he understood some things, he realized the thing to do with his lover was to talk honestly and freely. They were both able to talk things out. Next time he had a doubt or some insecurity, he would talk to his Severus instead of floundering by himself.

He suddenly recalled that Hermione’s first advice was just that and chuckled lightly. To think all this time he could avoided all the heart-ache if he had listened and employed some courage. However, he understood her advice better now. Severus and he were a team and how would they function if they did not communicate? It made perfect sense that talking with each other about things helps. Now that Severus knew he loved him, Harry hoped the man would also share more.

“Why are you laughing?” Severus asked sleepily.

“Oh just something I recalled.” Harry said softly kissing the man.

“Oh?”

“Yeah, in the beginning when I was very worried about the bruises and was going a bit crazy, Hermione told me to talk to you about it… in fact she pretty much guessed the reasons correctly. I was being a coward and didn’t…. how much we could have avoided.” He shook his head chuckling again.

“Next time you know to listen to her.” Severus said dryly.

“Of course but I often forget why she is the smart one.” Harry admitted.

“You’re smart too, Harry.” Severus murmured snuggling into his side.

“Thank you, love.” For a moment nothing was said then Severus propped himself up and kissed him. “What?” Harry asked bemused.

“I like it when you call me that…”

“I’ll do it more often then, love.” Harry stroked his cheek lovingly. Severus smiled at him and laid back down on his shoulder. “Is something the matter? You seem to be thinking hard.”

“Hm… just… why do you… drink so much?” Severus asked hesitantly.
“Well, just because I can, I suppose. I admit I might have overdone it a bit the past two days… mostly to keep myself from popping in and ravishing a certain someone… not that it worked, mind you.” He snorted at himself.

“I don’t like it.” Severus said quietly.

“When I drink?” Harry asked, putting his amusement aside for the moment.

“Yes.”

“Why?” Harry asked, recalling the fear in Severus’ eyes the previous night. Was it the alcohol?

“I… my… father… Tobias was a drunkard. We didn’t have the best of relationships.”

“That’s why you were afraid… because I reminded you of Tobias?” Harry asked feeling sick.

“A little. I seem to freeze up…” Severus frowned and sighed. “He was violent with both my mum and I… I suppose I am wary of the habit.”

“I’m sorry… I didn’t realize I was bringing up bad memories.” Harry said softly. “For the record however… my mind is more or less clear even when drunk… I rarely even slur my words… I’m not going to be like him.”

“I know but… it reminds me…”

“Severus? Do you by any chance have flashbacks?” Harry asked concerned.

“Sometimes…” He admitted softly.

“Oh honey…” Harry gathered him close and kissed his forehead. “I’m sorry, I’ll control myself better and I promise to quit drinking, okay?”

“I don’t need you to quit drinking…” Severus said softly. “Just not like… last night…”

“Alright, I’ll tone it down then.” Harry agreed.

“Thank you.” He sighed in obvious relief. Harry wondered if Severus thought he’d react badly to his request and felt bad for making him uncomfortable.

“Anything for you, my love.” Harry murmured and claimed Severus in a passionate kiss.

After that they more or less stayed in bed until their stomachs protested. A quick lunch made by Harry, and reluctant admission that neither had been able to eat much when they were apart, they cleaned up and went home. Draco was waiting for them looking distraught.

“WHERE WERE YOU?!” The blond screamed as he barreled into Harry.

“I… uh… went to get Severus.” Harry told him sheepishly and patted the boys’ back soothingly.

“Should I be worried you are clinging thusly to my lover, Dragon?” Severus drawled, softening his words by using the loving nickname.

“Sev?” Draco lifted his head from Harry’s shoulder and blinked. A moment later Harry was pushed aside and Severus had an excitable young man in his arms. “You’re home! Merlin, please don’t ever fight again… that one is a pain without you around.” He pointed over his shoulder. “Can you believe he did nothing but mope and drink for the past two days?!” Draco dramatized.
“Is that so.” Severus smirked at a scowling Harry.

“You aren’t allowed to stay out after dark anymore, godfather.”

“I don’t have a wish to blow up any more cauldrons either, dragon.” He said dryly.

The two young men froze and looked at Severus as if he had grown an extra head. Severus stared back evenly until Draco and Harry opened and closed their mouths like fish… which of course resulted in a huge laughing fit.

“You blew up cauldrons? Were you experimenting?” Harry asked, concerned.

“Just some boring medium level potions.” Severus replied making them all a pot of tea.

“Medium… you BLEW up your cauldrons?” Draco demanded faintly. “But… but… you never…”

“I was upset.” Severus said softly, wondering why he was even talking about this. He knew why when a set of arms enveloped him.

“Because you thought I abandoned you.” Harry stated, tightening his arms around him.

“I was unable to occlude.” He admitted.

“You’re home now.” Harry kissed his neck.

“I am.”

“Next time you two decide it’s a great idea to separate… I am going to stick you two in an empty room together until you come to your senses.” Draco decided. “Oh! I need to let Mione know… she was worried.” He rushed out to the floo while Severus took the opportunity to turn around in Harry’s arms and indulge in a slow kiss.

“Next time you think I did something stupid… please stay, rant and knock some sense into me, okay?” Harry spoke into Severus’ ear.

“It would me my pleasure, brat.” Severus chuckled. Draco rolled his eyes at them, having finished his call and decided to leave the mushy love-birds alone… he was in danger of being irrationally jealous of their closeness.

A few minutes later, however, Harry had to force himself away from Severus. Hermione Granger had arrived and had shouted for them as soon as she did. She found them in the kitchen still, preparing themselves for a lecture but what she did was go straight to Severus and hugged him.

“Please don’t do that again… I was so worried…” She sniffled. “Next time you go away, tell that worrywart when you’ll be back or better yet take him along.” She told the potions master, pointing at a bemused Harry.

“Harry… it seems you drove your friends to neurosis.” Severus drawled but hugged his former student back.

“It’s not my fault.” Harry grumbled.

“Don’t worry, Hermione… I believe we are stronger for it.” He met Harry’s green eyes and they smiled at each other.

“Good. Because you two are perfect together.” Hermione declared. “Now, where is Draco?” She
asked, pulling herself together.

“He escaped having to watch us snog.” Harry told her, making Severus glare at him. Hermione giggled, kissed both their cheeks and went in search of the dragon. Severus shook his head at the girl who he had inexplicably gotten close to; he supposed it was all part of his second chance at life. He leaned back into Harry with a smile, content to simply enjoy their closeness.
Things settled down some more and Severus looked into starting an owl order business. Given the size of the lab he would be able to take about ten orders per day, assuming the potions ordered were relatively effortless and did not include anything complicated like wolfsbane. There was also the issue of his experimenting to consider, so he decided to go with five orders, plus a few generic potions to be sold en masse to the apothecary, in addition to his research.

Things were helped by the fact that Harry wished to invest in the research at the least and Severus accepted such help as long as Harry would accept the dividends any breakthroughs would bring. The next thing he had to do was contact his friends in various apothecaries. The one in Daigon alley, though a good friend, was likely not in need of a supplier. That left the two in Hogsmeade that catered to different clientele and a few scattered in mixed wizard-muggle villages. He could probably talk at least three places into accepting his services.

There weren’t many potions masters in the world as it was an exacting art and most who supplied potions were journeymen at best. That meant that Severus’ services were much sought after, especially considering the superior quality of his potions and the wider range he was capable of. His prospects were far from bleak. If all else failed, he could always supply potions to St. Mungo’s and Hogwarts.

Interestingly, Severus already had three orders pending… even before he started on this venture. This was thanks in part to Madam Malkin who absolutely loved her special hair products. Severus had been embarrassed at her praise and had assured her she could order refills (he already had calculated a fair price for them, including a fair bit of profit as it was his unique creation). Incidentally, or maybe not so much, the woman had talked and subsequently, Severus had three more women as customers. He had created appropriate formulas for them and had standing orders from all four for refills every month. Severus wasn’t too sure about this line of business as he never had felt these type of potions were worth his time; he had changed his mind a little however when he realized how different he felt using them… but only a little. Harry assured him that there was money in it and in view of good business there was no harm brewing cosmetic potions. Severus decided he would not advertise it but let word of mouth do the job for him- he still felt a bit silly making them and didn’t want to do more than he absolutely had to.

Harry took care of the advertisements in The Daily Prophet while Severus went to meet various
apothecary owners to offer his services. Within one week, he had trial orders from the Apothecary in Hogsmeade and one in Godric’s Hollow as well as a query from Hogwarts. Of course this was followed by a personal visit by the Headmistress and the mediwitch. This was just one week after Harry’s birthday party which had gone off with a resounding success… and more; Severus was still a bit giddy over their intimate moments since that night and greeted his guests with never before seen cheer.

“Minerva, Poppy.” Severus greeted. “What may I do for you?” He asked with a congenial smile as Kreacher brought a tea service over and served them all. Poppy gasped while Minerva, who already had her ‘gasp moment’ at Yuletide, smiled back warmly.

“Well Severus, Hogwarts is in a bit of dilemma as we do not have a potions master on roll.” Minerva dived straight in.

“We do have a potions professor, she is decent enough but is unable to take on all the needs of the infirmary…” Poppy explained. “We saw the add for ‘Calla Potions’ and decided to see if you’d be willing to supply most if not all potions.”

“I assume the requirements have not changed much?” He asked with a smirk.

“Not really.” Poppy agreed. “I believe Professor Ferguson can handle pepper-ups as needed, as well as mild pain relievers and stomach soothers and the like. The more advanced potions like high grade pain relievers, skele-gro, concussion potions and the rest should be made by you.”

“Why… do you find it necessary to find me?” He asked curiously.

“To be frank, we had not realized how much work you did in the castle.” Minerva admitted. “Despite that you have always delivered on time and with impeccable quality. Your skill is just superior. Ferguson tried and may have blown up her lab a few times.” She admitted. “I’d feel better if the poor woman can just concentrate on teaching.”

Severus stared at the far wall, a little resentful of their request. When he had been the potions professor, he had been forced to supply potions all year round while teaching full-time in addition to his patrolling and head of house duties. In hindsight, it was no wonder that he was so tetchy in classes and it was certainly a wonder he had not collapsed under the pressure… especially added to his spy duties. It was unfair that these people he considered friends had never once been concerned about his workload but were seeking to reduce this unknown woman’s.

“Severus, there are not enough words to express how horrible I feel for not realizing how tremendous your workload was… We would be trying something similar had you continued to teach.” Minerva told him gently, squeezing his knee comfortingly.

“I never complained either.” Severus sighed; logically, he knew if he had let someone know he was saddled with too much, he would have seen some changes but a part of him still doubted anyone would want to help him. “Very well. However, I would like to be informed two weeks in advance of any potions requirements. I do have other orders to fill.” He told them. “Send me a list I’d likely be asked for so we can further discuss pricing and such.”

“Thank you, Severus!” Poppy beamed and promptly got out a piece of parchment. “This is a list of all the potions I’ll need from you along with the market prices.”

“We hope to get a discount, if at all possible…”

“It can be done, however, it will be dependent on the raw cost of the ingredients. I will look this over
and get back to you in a few days.” He nodded, scanning the list.

“Very well.” Minerva nodded. “For now, however, we would like to place an order at market prices… we are severely short and Poppy can’t brew and take care of her patients at the same time.”

“That bad?” Severus asked surprised.

“Worse.” The women sighed.

“I will get right on it then.” Severus promised.

“Now that is over, how are you, Severus?” Poppy asked softly, searching his face for her answers.

“I am well, Poppy, as you can no doubt see.” He commented lightly.

“I can.” Poppy agreed. “However…” Severus tried not to fidget. “How exactly did you fix your nose?” She asked curiously.

“I am surprised not more people have asked.” He commented, trying very hard not to answer that; he wasn’t entirely sure Poppy would not hex him.

“All of us were warned against doing so.” Minerva smirked. “Though I must say you look dashing, Severus.”

“Thank you, Minerva.” Severus said with a straight face but was unable to stop his light blush.

“What method was used? Who performed it? Was muggle technology used in fixed the shape of the nose?” Poppy demanded. Severus groaned as he realized this was about medical knowledge but he still dreaded the woman’s reaction.

“I’d like to know as well.” Draco drawled. “Good afternoon, professor McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey.” He greeted politely.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Malfoy. You look well.” Minerva greeted the boy.

“Thank you ma’am.” He smiled. Minerva was one of the few people who knew Draco’s circumstances.

“Good to see you healthy, Mr. Malfoy. I am surprised to find you here, however.” Poppy noted.

“Things change.” Draco shrugged. “About that nose?”

“Must I be interrogated so?” He groused.

“Yes.” Draco deadpanned sitting beside Severus. “Or I’ll bug you until you tell me.” He stated happily.

“Sometimes I hate you, godson.”

“I do not believe that for one moment.” Draco said pointedly staring at Severus.

“If you must know, the bone and cartilage were vanished and skele-gro was used to regrow a proper, straighter nose.” Severus said as vaguely as possible.

“That was dangerous.” Poppy whispered harshly. “Who performed this foolish procedure?” She demanded.
“And how did Harry approve?” Draco added. Minerva stayed quiet as Harry had told her the story in not so many words.

“Persistent lot.” Severus grumbled. “Harry did not know… he was on a trip.” Severus admitted.

“And who had access to the house…” Draco’s eyes widened. “You… you did it yourself? When Harry wasn’t even here to help you?!”

“It was not my brightest moment.” Severus blushed heavily.

“Why?” Draco demanded, visibly getting upset.

“I was convinced… that that particular feature was what was in the way of my relationship…”

“No way… Harry would never…”

“Allow me to summarize.” Poppy said dangerously low. “You decided that your nose somehow made you unattractive and decided to fix it all by yourself, without a wand, I might add. Did you not think of the potential of your own death?” She asked.

“I was… It does not matter, it is done, and I am well. It worked.” He shrugged.

“Next time you get such foolish…”

“I won’t. I understand Harry was dealing with his own demons and his affection has nothing, or rather little, to do with my appearance. I’ve had to endure disappointed glares for months… please drop this…” He pleaded softly. After an annoyed huff, Poppy launched into questioning him about the procedure itself and started a debate on it’s uses elsewhere… like knees. It was a while before tea was finished that day.

When Harry returned that day from his meetings, Severus was waiting with his latest news of Calla Potions. Harry was ecstatic for his love and bodily lifted him and spun around twice before kissing him hard in congratulations. They then decided to go out to celebrate what was obviously a big order, one that would stabilize the business. Harry hurried Draco along to get dressed in his new dress robes (recently gotten in a shopping spree) and called Hermione over. Hermione had vested interest in the business as an up and coming healer and Severus was considering a partnership with her for research purposes. It would also double as a double-date which was something Harry could not pass up. Thankfully Ron, who Severus was still not fully comfortable with, was away on a visit to his girlfriend’s parents and would not be able to pout later.

They went to one of the best wizarding restaurants, by Draco’s exacting standards, and enjoyed a wonderful night together. Severus was worried about the cost at first until both younger men had firmly told him they were going to celebrate each of his successes and to get used to it. Hermione had simply nodded her agreement, long having lamented how under appreciated her favorite professor was (though she’d never mention that little fact to McGonagall). Severus still had trouble accepting it, not used to anyone spending so much on him for any reason but decided he would not spoil his family’s fun. He enjoyed some oysters with Draco, much to Harry’s disgust, and allowed himself to imbibe on good aged wine.

When they finally returned home, after a small portion of the night dancing, Hermione was with them and was sequestered into Draco’s room. As involved in each other as Severus and Harry were, they did not fail to notice the heated kiss before the door closed; it just made them even more happier and their activities that much more passionate.
Happy Holidays to you and yours! I will be posting the remaining chapters today!
Enjoy!
Birthday

Chapter Summary

While Severus is assured of Harry's affections, Harry is still unsure of Sev's affections. Secure in the knowledge of Harry's love, Sev sets about proving his devotion through his actions.

Draco and Hermione had been strangely observant of Severus and Harry; only Severus did not seem to notice. Harry mused that it was to stall any repeats of their two-day misunderstanding. He was part annoyed at the duo but part thankful that they cared. He, of course, had no intention of repeating his mistakes- he would talk things out with his lover and would never ever leave him alone (now that he knew his feelings were returned, he didn’t feel as if he was forcing himself on Severus).

Knowing he could do nothing for his worried friends, Harry concentrated on Severus. It was a bit of a honeymoon phase for them and he was always itching to hold Severus close. He was mindful of Severus’ work as well as his own but he soon found himself seeking out his lover at least a few times each day for a simple hug or a few kisses. Severus didn’t seem to mind, instead seemed to be happy to see him and never failed to take a break from his planning. It was like walking on clouds… these sweet loving days.

While Harry was daydreaming of Severus dressed in white and future dark-eyed children, Severus was hard at work to get his plans for the potions business realized. The name chosen was ‘Calla Potions’ in honor of Lily Potter nee Evans who apparently loved Calla lilies. Harry had secretly worried about Severus’ feelings towards his mother but the ever perceptive Severus had needled his thoughts out of him.

“You are worried I may love your mother more.” Severus stated after a long silence as Harry fidgeted under his penetrating ‘classroom’ glare; he hadn’t meant to reveal that bit.

“It’s stupid…” Harry mumbled.

“It is not.” Severus said firmly. “I do love your mother, there is no doubt…” Harry drooped a little. “However …it is different with you. Lily was… my best friend, my rock in many ways and someone I depended on and trusted since I was young… She was my family. If I had to designate a post to her… it would be a sister.” He spoke haltingly, as if thinking about his words carefully to get across his message.

“Sister?” Harry repeated disbelievingly.

“Yes. I hated that Potter, my enemy, stole my beloved sister, the only good thing in my life back then. I suppose I can’t hate the dunderhead much, since he did sire the man I love.” He scowled at the hearth at the thought of being thankful to James Potter.

“Oh…” Harry blinked confused.

“While I loved your mother, it was platonic, agape love only. Please understand you’re the only one I want.” Severus slid into Harry’s lap before the younger realized it.
“I know… I was just a bit worried, I guess. I mean you gave up so much for mum.”

“I would give up much more for you.” Severus said quietly. “Half of all I did was because of you… I am not ashamed to admit that somewhere along the way, my dedication to my tasks in the war, ceased to be because of Lily. They were all because I genuinely wanted to help you survive and live past the war.”

“I love you.” Harry said quietly after a moment. Severus hummed softly and kissed Harry’s forehead.

“And I you.”

“I’m not sure I’ll survive if I lost you.” Harry told him, chuckling.

“Then I better prepare myself to endure you for a long time.”

“Good idea.” Harry agreed and kissed Severus sweetly, conveying his love and devotion to the man in his arms. Severus responded in kind, reassuring Harry much more than words could.

Severus went further to prove his words by actually organizing a party on July thirty-first. For a wizard so uncomfortable amongst people, especially Gryffindors, it was telling. Severus had invited practically all the Gryffindors in Harry’s year and the few friends he had made with those in other houses. In addition, all the teachers who had survived the final battle were also there as were the other Weasleys and Andromeda (with little Teddy, Harry’s godson).

Apparently, Severus had coordinated with Molly and Hermione since Harry had a huge cake and muggle pizza to engorge himself on. Only Hermione and Ron knew he loved pizza, so it wasn’t hard to figure out. In addition, there were his other favorites, most noted being the treacle tart. There was a good selection of drinks, some muggle and some wizard including coke and mountain dew (Harry’s personal favorite out of all soft drinks) and butterbeer. There was even music that Harry thought was brilliant.

The surprise was a mighty success and Harry, though overwhelmed, enjoyed himself immensely. He made a mental note to do something special for his beautiful lover on his birthday and started half planning what he might do. He was most surprised however by the inclusion of his godson Teddy. As far as he knew, Severus did not know of Teddy nor of his visits to his godson. He figured either Hermione or Ron must have filled him in or even suggested it.

The best part of the evening was however when Harry saw Severus playing with little Teddy. It was as adorable as it was unexpected. Many eyes were on the potions master but he was busy trying to get Teddy Lupin to build something complicated. Severus quite enjoyed spending time with the little tyke, especially when he kept his hair looking like Harry’s messy mop and kept his eyes the same shade of green as himself; he looked like a mini Harry, thereby touching the older one inexplicably. Harry watched with a soft smile as Severus gently patted the boy’s head as he accomplished some task to satisfaction. His mind imagined Severus surrounded by other tiny tots and he couldn’t help but go join the two on the floor.

“Perfect.” Harry whispered to Severus and kissed his cheek affectionately before playing with Teddy. Severus smiled at him, glowing at the pronouncement. He watched Harry play for a few moments before rejoining the little one in building what now resembled a castle.

To those watching, they looked like a loving family and Harry wouldn’t want it any other way. By the time it was time for Teddy to go, the little boy clung to his godfather and his unofficial other godfather until he fell asleep. Andromeda left only after exacting a promise of visit from both of them.
in the next week.

“You’re very good with him.” Severus noted mildly.

“So are you.” Harry smiled.

“I… well.. we were just building…” He mumbled.

“And you did a great job. You’ll make a wonderful papa.” Harry said wistfully.

“Papa?” Severus asked eyes wide.

“Only if you want to.” Harry assured him; he really was being too chatty with Severus lately. It was just so easy to voice his thoughts to him that he sometimes forgot to assess how well Severus might receive such things.

“What…?” Severus looked confused.

“He is referring to having kids with you one day.” Draco supplied delicately, leading Hermione to another room to chat some more before she had to go.

“What?! Severus looked a bit hysterical.

“I did say if you want to.” Harry mumbled.

“No… I mean… I didn’t… you want me…?” Severus stuttered helplessly.

“We could adopt…” Harry suggested, only a bit disappointed that Severus would not like to carry their children himself.

“No! I mean… I would not… mind…” He said softly, a small smile blooming in his face. “…one day.” He added just to be sure.

“Really?” Harry asked taking the man into his arms.

“I… yes… yes, I think so…” Severus frowned. “The idea of little green eyed imps… is pleasing.”

“Good… because I have been dreaming of those particular imps for a while now.” Harry grinned.

“Oh? How long?” Severus asked curiously.

“Months… They’d have your straight hair, hopefully, and those artistic cheeks…” He said wistfully stroking Severus’ cheek. He didn’t much like his round face, though Hermione insisted he looked handsome.

“One day.” Severus promised softly, causing Harry to kiss him longingly. Severus gently herded them up the stairs into his old room.

“Why are we…?” Harry frowned as he was stood in front of Severus’ old door.

“Just go in.” Severus huffed. Harry shrugged and opened the door.

“Woah… what…” Harry blinked as the whole room was lit up in candles. There was a light scent of sandalwood and flowers in the room. The bed had been removed in favor of a pile of some very soft looking fur blankets in front of the fireplace.
“I hope it is acceptable…” Severus mumbled uncertainly.

“It’s comfy…” Harry nodded. “Why…? I like it but it’s not something I’d imagine you thinking up, love.”

“I may have asked Hermione for advice.” He blushed. “She gave me a book which had plenty pf ideas for romantic settings… though I fail to see the practicality of flowers… the furs would at least keep us warm.” Harry chuckled.

“I see. So we sleep in furs tonight.” He commented. Severus came up behind him and kissed his neck.

“We can sleep later, my love.” He whispered huskily.

“And what else shall we do?” Harry asked turning around.

“I could think of several things.” Severus drawled walking them backwards until Harry fell into the soft pile of fur blankets. He stayed there as Severus helped him out of his clothes slowly, peppering kisses all over him. Once he was quite devoid of clothes, Severus stared. Harry blushed softly as this was the first time Severus had taken the time to simply look at him with his heated gaze.

“Delightful.” The older man whispered and swooped in for a kiss.

“It would be more so if you weren’t overdressed.”

“All in due time, Harry.” Severus smirked and proceeded to put on a riveting and rousing show for his lover who was trapped between the furs and Severus. Severus told Harry ‘no touching’ and the poor birthday boy was beyond restless when his lover kissed him thoroughly.

“Merlin… so sexy… honey…I want you badly…” Harry gasped.

“Soon.” Severus promised and summoned the lube.

He took his own sweet time to prepare himself, keeping Harry’s eyes glued to his every movement before finally allowing entrance to Harry’s very impatient member. Severus kept up a slow pace driving his lover mad but he himself gave it up soon enough, wanting more. They shared many passionate kisses before they both collapsed tired, Severus on top of Harry, being held tightly. A small wandless spell later, the two bodies were covered with one of the soft blankets and they slept, still connected in the most intimate of ways.
Chapter Summary

Harry gets busy and Draco walks in on something he rather he didn't...

Severus was quite amused by Harry’s ranting over the past week. He had been going on about all the intricate details he was now subjected to and bemoaned his stupidity in involving himself in this mess. Regardless of all the moaning, Severus was not bothered. He had scarcely seen Harry so animated and felt it was good for him. It was something he could do using his ‘out of the box thinking’ and something he could do without his fame interfering too much.

He had the strangest feeling that Harry was actually enjoying the work and was just complaining because he could. He observed his lover daily as he came up with new ideas to help teach the former junior death-eaters the value of hard work and ideas to help them change their ways for the better. There were also a few thoughts on how to help them through whatever hell they had been through. Severus briefly wondered if Harry could control the rowdy bunch he was all too familiar with but then recalled his piercing green gaze… well it tended to rile him up quite differently but others would be frozen stiff in fear (or so he assumed).

So far Hermione was on board as the official mediwitch (until she got her full healer license and became the official healer). Severus had signed a contract to supply the usual potions to the place like he had done with Hogwarts’ orders. Draco and Harry had a list of things the ‘prisoners’ needed. They also had a list of chores and punishments (not harsh but discipline had to be had!) to keep the troops in line. Hermione had contributed her idea of helping them get initial jobs when they were ready to leave and to set up a way for them to do their OWLS or NEWTS right after they were to be released- it was somewhat long-term but nonetheless something to be looked into.

Severus himself was very proud of the three who he had once been a professor to. He was further overjoyed that his snakes (the ones that went dark) would have a second chance with Harry in-charge. He couldn’t help but marvel how even Weasley had pitched in without showing an ounce of bias against those he once would have cheerfully cursed. The Weasley-Malfoy friendship was still strange to him so he found himself wondering if having Ronald at the center was a good thing or not. He trusted Harry’s judgement and his capabilities as a leader, so left the issue alone.

Most of Harry’s year-mates were involved sooner or later. Even some of his Slytherins that maintained neutrality or fought with the light in the end came to help. Some helped with mere planning as they had full-time jobs. Some volunteered to help out a few hours a week, without pay since they were not able to dedicate solid timings. Some, who had still to decide on their careers were willing to give the program a shot. Some of the retired folks from the disbanded order soon heard about all the fuss and decided to come give a hand. Harry politely refused those who were likely to hate the inmates on sight and tentatively listed the others as volunteers (wary of making permanent arrangements with people he did not know).

All in all, Harry’s program was coming together quickly. The legwork he and Hermione had done, before Draco’s unfortunate circumstances pushed the whole thing forward, had them quickly identifying and removing abused children- they were children to Severus’ eyes, ones who never got a chance to truly grow or live.
Soon, the Rookwood manor had been transformed to Center for Juvenile Rehabilitation. The name itself outlined what Harry hoped to achieve and gained public approval. There were codes drawn up, curtesy of Hermione Granger, to outline what the employees were to achieve and what they were absolutely banned from doing—like harming the denizens. They were also not calling the juvenile criminals prisoners or inmates as the Azkaban residents were called; they were to be simply referred to as Denizens. To fail to follow the simple yet strict code of conduct was to get yourself kicked out without pay (if you were being paid).

The whole thing had Harry running around all day. He was so embroiled in the work that he often mumbled bits and pieces of it while sleeping. Severus found this amusing but did not care for the decreased amount of time he and Harry spent together. Their Honeymoon phase seemed to be officially over and he was lucky if he gained Harry’s undivided attention one night out of ten. Being stuck at home most of the time did not help, even if he had his potions to keep him busy. He knew, rationally, that Harry would settle down soon and things would become much more tolerable but he had gotten accustomed to a much more intimate relationship—he simply missed Harry too much. At least they still shared a bed and slept in each others’ arms.

It wasn’t to say they never spent time together at all, for they did. Harry, noticing the issue, started taking at least one day off each week to relax and stay home. Once Severus realized this, he began clearing that particular day, typically a Saturday, of all his self-assigned tasks. They sat together in the evening, typically snuggled in front of the fire in their living room, and talked about their week. Harry always ranted about his difficulties while Severus only had his orders and the bit of research he had taken up to talk of.

Their talks were often accompanied by copious amounts of touching which inevitably led to things digressing. Severus treasured these moments highly because they reminded him, despite their busy lives, that Harry wanted him and truly desired him. It might be cynical of him but he still had trouble believing in Harry even with the daily absent-minded kisses and barely there touches. When Harry lost himself in him was about the only time all his doubts flew out of the window. He was getting better at trusting his second chance but it took time to overcome years of disappointment. To his immense gratitude, Harry understood and never pushed him on the matter.

They had been so used to being all alone in the house that they often forgot propriety. They often found themselves naked on the couch in intimate embraces and didn’t care one bit. However, there was another resident in the house who was often forgotten. Draco had the habit of sticking to his rooms and so the duo completely forgot about him when they were mesmerized with each other. Poor Draco had to find out the hard way to keep away from the living room on Harry’s days off.

The pitiable blond, much like a horrified child finding his parents in a compromising position, had screamed at the top of his lungs and fainted dead away when he found his Godfather and his guardian entwined on the couch, zealously engaging in amorous activities. It had taken a few minutes for the shock to wear off. While Severus had decided to hide out in their room, Harry donned a summoned robe and plucked Draco from the floor. After securing their little voyeur in his own room, Harry had found his highly embarrassed lover hiding amidst the covers.

“Severus, come on, love… it wasn’t that bad.” Harry soothed.

“It wasn’t your godson!” Severus protested.

“True but it’s alright…” Harry grinned. “We can just pretend he was dreaming all along.” Harry suggested.

“Won’t work.”
“Just pretend it never happened.”

“Not easy.”

“I hardly think Draco is ever going to bring it up.”

“He is a devious little brat who will take any opportunity to embarrass others.” Severus tone, even muffled, was biting in its intensity.

“True…” Harry snorted.

“It’s blackmail material and highly undignified.”

“Love, it can’t possibly blackmail material since everyone in our circle knows we are together.” Harry reasoned.

“But they do not know yet our positions…” Severus whined, almost.

“Severus, my sweet love…” Harry chuckled. “It hardly matters.” He murmured and burrowed his way into the blankets. “If he dares anything we can sic Hermione on the brat.” He found Severus’ torso and wiggled up to find his lips.

“That could work…” Severus agreed finally, allowing Harry to gather him into his arms.

“Good….now can we finish the interrupted activities?” He asked huskily. Severus wholeheartedly agreed and put Draco out of his mind promptly. Needless to say that Draco Malfoy was forevermore cautious of approaching the home’s living room, regardless of the circumstances.
Rookwood Manor

Chapter Summary

Harry discusses things and has a game-plan. Draco shows signs of recovering nicely.

Before they knew it Halloween had come and with it the the Wizengamot finally passed an amendment to the sentences passed out to the young death-eaters. Though three years had passed for a fair few, the way it was worded held precedent for future where similar measures may be taken. As was now almost normal for Harry, his life was impacted in this particular day; he was chosen as the figure-head of the new Wizarding Juvenile Prison.

A fairly large manor, that once belonged to the Rookwood family and was confiscated after the last living member had been found to be a death-eater, was approved as an adequate site and the keys were officially handed over to him. He was also given a formal appointment letter and permission to hire up to five people. All the monies paid to private citizens so far for the care of the juniors was to be put in a separate vault with only Harry able to access it to finance anything needed.

“I did not want to be responsible for the project!” He whined when he got home just in time for a late dinner.

“I was under the impression that you would welcome the opportunity.” Severus commented; he recalled being convinced it was a good idea.

“I wanted to work with whoever was in-charge, not be the one in-charge myself.” He scowled unhappily. “Now I have to find people to help.” He groused.

“I am sure you will be fine.” Severus soothed. “Are you to collect all of them?”

“No, only the ones being abused for now. The ones who are being treated well can complete the two plus years where they are. I may offer a choice to those who are… more or less existing, being ignored and such.” He mused.

“You already have a plan.” Draco commented amused.

“Well, we had a lot of chats over it. I and Hermione have a basic idea but I am not sure who to enlist.” He sighed.

“There are a fair few retired aurors and housewives who may be available.” Severus suggested.

“I am worried about their attitudes. Most aurors tend to be biased towards anyone dark, especially those on the other side of the war. The housewives may defeat the purpose since they need discipline.”

“They also need acceptance which someone like Molly can provide.” Severus noted.

“Molly?” Harry frowned thoughtfully. “I suppose, I should sound her out. First I will have the Rookwood houselves clean out the manor and prepare it to military standards… can’t have them too comfortable. I think a bit of sharing will go a long way…” As he mentally made his plans, he did not notice Draco’s frown deepening.
“What is the matter, dragon?” Severus asked gently.

“I… will I be one of them? I mean…”

“No.” Harry said softly. “You will remain at home with us. The remaining two and a half years of your sentence, you will remain here… and you may remain with us after that period as well.” He added, recalling Severus’ misunderstanding. “You’re my friend and Severus’ godson, so it is natural.”

“But is that not fair…?”

“It is fair. You’re family Draco and that’s why I readily took over from Diggory, the other kids, the ones I will be working with, are those who have no one that will take them and treat them well. I’m not removing anyone who is fine where they are.” He stated giving Draco a reassuring hug.

“Okay.” Draco sniffled a little as he buried his face in Harry’s chest. He was still oddly childish at times and needed Harry’s reassurances- something Severus was a bit jealous because that used to be his job as far as his godson was concerned. It wasn’t that Draco’s relationship with his godfather changed much but he often needed positive physical contact which Severus had always been spare with… that seeming void was filled by Harry even if Severus was a bit more comfortable with hugs and the like now. Severus contended himself seeing Draco relax when his hand carded through his silky hair.

“Is Hermione a part of it?”

“She will be the official healer.” Harry replied easily. “She is not allowed to abandon me at this point.”

“I see.” Severus nodded.

“Can I help?” Draco asked, his voice muffled.

“What?” Harry blinked.

“Help. There must be something I could do… maybe as a reassurance to my fellows… I know what it must have been like for most of them…” Draco mused slowly, as if testing out the idea. “I could help.” He said firmly.

“Indeed. We will discuss with Hermione later.” Harry smiled beatifically. Severus knew his love had been worried about Draco’s apathy lately, given that he used to be someone who couldn’t sit still for ten seconds.

“Okay. You should ask Lovegood and Abbott.” He suggested shyly.

“Why do you say so?” Harry asked, returning to his seat now that Draco was fine.

“Lovegood is… gentle, strange but definitely a calming presence. Abbott is sensible and a hard worker which is something you could use.” He explained.

“I am unsure if Hannah is free to take this up…” Harry frowned. “Luna has her paper but since it is a weekly paper, she may agree to helping part-time.”

“According to Longbottom, who is dating Abbott, she is looking for something worthwhile to do. This could be it.” He added.
“Well, it is worth a shot.” Harry nodded. “Do you two want to come along to check out the place?” He asked.

“Sure. It should be interesting.” Draco nodded.

“Might as well, if only to keep you two out of trouble.” Severus drawled, earning him twin glares.

The mansion was huge with well over hundred rooms. Seeing as there were at most only eight potential inmates, Harry was quick to decide to use only the top two floors. A short trip into the dungeons convinced all three men to seal it off until the house-elves got to thoroughly clean it of the blood and gore still on the walls and floor. The ground floor had a large ballroom, a large dining room and several small parlors for entertaining purposes. The dining room could easily be converted into something that could be found at Hogwarts while the ballroom could be used as a training room of sorts. Harry planned on making them all exercise daily in addition to chores to be done for a set period of time. Cleaning the upper floors would be one such chore as would tending the expansive gardens… he’d think of more if needed.

He also played with the idea of having them learn what most were missing out at the moment so that they could take their OWLS and NEWTS when they finished- it might end up being something of a self-study thing with mentoring. There was already a large library which he had leave to do with as he pleased. The Elves would separate the dark books from the good ones and he would use some gold to buy updated school books as well as muggle literature. He hoped that the prison would be more of a rehabilitation center for the people who erred mainly due to the bad examples and pressures from their families.

The elves the ministry provided were happy to have work again and that too under the famous Harry Potter sir. They were even more overjoyed when they were told to clean up the first two floors and get the kitchen running. They were also told to transform the fairly large rooms into shared rooms for up to six people- these were all formerly lavish guest rooms on the first floor. The elves were disappointed to not have more work but Harry assured them they would have more after they were done.

A ministry ward specialist came over while they were talking and helped Harry attune the wards to himself. The blood wards and the nasty wards were removed entirely, making the place safer. With input from Severus and Draco, wards to prevent passage, both entry and exit, to those not keyed in were added; these wards would stun those who tried on contact and would raise an alarm to Harry directly.

Meanwhile, Draco thought of a new problem: SPEW. While the three wizards understood house-elf needs and accepted their need to work, Hermione viewed it as slavery. Harry questioned the ten elves he had acquired and they vehemently refused any sort of pay and were highly offended.

“As the house-elves in-charge of this place, do you accept living arrangements and food?” Severus asked the elves who were wringing their ears worriedly.

“We dos but it being normal since we being belonging here to the family…” An older elf answered him.

“And of course, you will wear a uniform if the master tells you to?”

“Clothes?” They gasped.

“No, uniform. Something dignified to represent your master.” Severus smoothly indicated Harry who was scowling at him.
“Uniforms can being…”

“Well then, we can tell Hermione they work for food, board and … er… robes.” Draco decided catching onto Severus idea.

“In addition, you will all take two days off each month to relax.” Harry held up a hand to stall protests. “It is unhealthy to work all the time. I want you all to be healthy. You can take different days off and perhaps play something or do something you like… a hobby like painting or knitting or something else.”

“You means like fun?”

“Yes.”

“But wes like work for fun.” One elf protested.

“There must be something other than work that you like.” Harry posited.

“Is like knitting.” One elf said shyly.

“Splendid.” Harry smiled. “So it is settled. No monetary compensation. You lot will have two sets of uniforms, plenty food, living space and two days off per month. You will come to me for any of your needs. I am unsure if there are pre-existing quarters for you but feel free to use either the attic or the dungeon… I warn you there are unpleasant things in both, so be careful when cleaning them out.”

“Yous great master, sir.” One elf, Gemmy, nodded vigorously. “Wes be very good elvsies.” His proclamation had the other nine nodding too.

“The best.” Harry agreed patting her head.

That settled, the three men went about instructing the elves on how to change the rooms into shared rooms for six. They left four rooms, two near the stairs and one on each end, as single rooms to allow the caretakers to stay overnight to keep order. Once satisfied the elves knew what they wanted, they spent some time in the library looking over the books. Luckily, the books had been arranged according to order. The advanced books, which were often controversial, were removed to an expanded trunk Harry had thought to bring along. The dark books also were packed this way, though they were first checked for nasty spells by the two wizards who had access to their wands. They looked around for secret compartments on Draco’s suggestions and found a safe as well as a secret room full of outrightly banned books. Severus seemed interested in them, and once Harry read some of them he saw the potential they may have in good avenues. These too were packed away.

The safe had a sizable stash of galleons and deeds to other Rookwood properties. After a quick debate, which the Slytherins won, Harry decided to keep the contents. The properties were unplottable and not known to the ministry and the deeds were accompanied with the master keys. The rationale was simple- the ministry had given a blanket permission to do as he liked with the contents of the whole manor and thus the deeds, keys and gold fell under his jurisdiction lawfully. Draco, in particular, advocated that Harry could potentially use these places for other noble purposes. Severus was of the opinion that more assets meant more stability, something that obviously attracted the older man.

Finally, Harry gave in, deciding the ministry would not do a whole lot better than he could or would. Besides, he liked the idea of using these old properties, lost to time, for something good like an orphanage or perhaps another hospital or a primary school for magical children or any number of things their world lacked. There could even be a center for research if he could get Severus and
Hermione on board. He didn’t like how his mind was coming up with so many ideas that would throw him more fully into the political arena but he fully intended to force the blond menace to help him for life… the silver tongued git.
Parties and Godsons

Chapter Summary

Harry and Sev go on a short date and as the title says, everyone gathers for a party! Enter Teddy Lupin!

It wasn’t until December that things settled enough to let Harry have a break. Severus was secretly delighted though he did not show it. He wasn’t aware, however, that Harry had noticed his discontent and had correctly guessed the reasons… not until he was taken on a romantic date to make up for it. A boat ride along Thames may seem a bit mundane to many but to the simple men both Harry and Severus were, it was perfect.

“Am I forgiven?” Harry asked looping his hands around his waist.

“For what?” Severus asked softly.

“For not being around enough.” Harry mumbled into his neck. “I missed you.”

“That makes two of us.” Severus smiled softly, gazing at the reflected city lights.

“Hm… I see my choice of location pleases you, love.”

“It does… I have never been on a boat ride, apart from the Hogwarts one in my first year and seventh.”

“Seventh?”

“We used to leave the same way we arrived. The tradition continued until your sixth year when it was decided to be too dangerous.”

“I see.”

“Must we stay long?”

“Why? I thought you were enjoying yourself.” Harry sounded surprised. Severus turned around in the embrace and kissed him lightly.

“I am but I rather be enjoying you.” Harry grinned knowingly and a moment later a loud pop sounded in the stillness as the two disappeared from the inky night.

This Christmas they had not hosted a party however both were invited to The Burrow for a special Christmas dinner along with Draco (and of course Hermione, Neville and all the usual suspects). It was just as well for Severus as he didn’t enjoy preparing for parties as much as redecorating or making potions. Besides, Molly’s cooking was lovely.

He was however getting more comfortable among company. He enjoyed bantering with Minerva and Flitwick about Hogwarts. He got along with the remaining Weasley twin as well as Neville and
he had always liked Charlie and Bill; he even enjoyed deciphering Luna Lovegood’s strange code these days. He had quite a bit of fun explaining muggle things to Arthur. He relished in teasing his former students about their love-lives or something equally mundane. He most especially adored spending time with Teddy- the kid had grown on him quite unexpectedly, considering he was Lupin’s son and the son of one of the most annoying Hufflepuffs he had taught. He decided it was how well the child imitated Harry that got him.

Speaking of Teddy, ever since Harry mentioned the possibility (rather eventuality as Harry would put it) of them having kids of their own, Severus found himself wondering about it. He was not averse to raising his own little ones… at one time it had been his simple but modest dream, a hope he had given up long ago when he had gotten the dark mark. However, now was his second chance, and all his hopes and dreams could come alive. At first he was rather worried about carrying his own children (he had no doubt he’d end up being the carrier since he had yet to even wish to top). Once he did some research and got used to the idea, it had grown on him.

He recalled Molly and Arthur and their glowing countenance as they gazed at their wonderful children- except for Ginny all of them were now well settled and even Ginny was only floundering for her own path rather then being completely incompetent. Most of all though, it was seeing Harry play with Teddy that made him long to give his lover his deepest wish- a family.

He had his doubts, however. He was sure he would love Harry for all time but he wasn’t so sure about Harry’s feelings. He was after all only twenty-two years old and could easily change his mind in favor of someone more beautiful or less snarky than he. In the heart of his heart, Severus knew Harry was as steady as a rock and there was nothing to worry about, however years of disappointment and loss tended to make one cautious in believing in good things.

He abruptly stopped his line of thinking as he knew it was fruitless. What would happen will and it was out of his control. He concentrated on enjoying himself and watching those thrice damned mistletoes.

“Boo.” A soft voice said into his ear. Severus turned to glare only to come face to face with that blasted contraption from the previous year. He felt the magic take hold and sighed dramatically.

“Potter…” He hissed.

“You called love?” Harry grinned at him and kissed him soundly, tongue and all as the enchanted gizmo demanded. Whistles and cat-calls came from around the Weasleys’ garden but Harry did not let him go for a whole minute. By the end of it Severus was quite dazed and flushed. His blush deepened as he noticed everyone staring at him with large eyes and open grins. He groaned and glared at his lover only to be captured in another involved kiss. Severus scowled at Harry outwardly but somewhere deep inside he was glad Harry wasn’t ashamed of him… though he could do without so much intimacy in front of others.

“Love you.” Harry whispered. “Stop thinking so much.” Severus blinked at that; had he been that obvious?

“Love you too, but you’re getting punished for this humiliation when we get home.” Severus hissed into his ear so only Harry could hear.

“I look forward to it, my love.” Harry kissed him chastely and skipped away. From Arthur’s choked laugh, Severus belatedly realized they had been heard. He groaned and sank a few inches into the couch.
Happy Times

Chapter Summary

A little more about the future.... Mostly Harry's inner monologue about what's going on and what he wants to happen. A little more romance for our favorite couple.

Chapter Notes

Elpida means "Hope" in Greek, which about sums up what the whole venture is about- give hope to children and youth who were found on the wrong side of law.

Harry grinned at his successful task of distracting Severus from his no doubt morose thoughts. He understood where Severus was coming from as he himself had been in that position at one time. At first depending on his friends had not been easy. However, they had stuck to him even through his rather eventful life- they weren’t always there during the worst moments but they were always there to help put him back together.

There were times he had questioned their loyalty, especially when Dumbledore had ordered them, and they had agreed, to not write him over summer… they had redeemed themselves by gleaning any and all information and updating him as soon as they saw him (after his temper tantrum). The two times Ron had walked away from him had hurt but Ron had come back and he had stood beside him in battle, and supported him in life. Hermione’s mind as well as her compassion had also served to save him- she might have been annoying as a little girl but she had always been a staunch supporter of both her best-friends. He had learned to trust slowly and eventually had surrounded himself with people who now were his family.

However, Severus had not a chance to do the same. His life for the past twenty odd years was that of a spy, of masks, of not trusting anyone and hiding every scrap of feeling he had in his heart. Harry understood it would take time and a lot of work, some fights and arguments before Severus trusted him beyond a doubt- in fact the older man already did but he had occasional doubts which Harry would slowly stomp out of his beloved. He smiled as Severus controlled his flush and started a conversation on some other muggle device with Arthur.

He watched amused as Teddy toddled to Draco and dragged him to his and Victoire’s (Bill and Fleur’s daughter) play area. Draco was surprisingly getting along with the little one, seemingly awed by his ability to casually look like a Malfoy. Harry would have never guessed Draco made a good baby-sitter if he did not see him with Teddy. The older wizard was completely into playing with the toddler with magical blocks and was unashamedly making strange noises to amuse the child. Harry wondered whether Lucius had once played with Draco like that but he soon scrapped that idea when he realized Draco was just as awed as Teddy to be playing. That was a look he himself had when his friends had got him monopoly and a rubik’s cube back in seventh year.

Harry was very satisfied in that moment. His family was all gathered together and were safe and happy. It was all he ever wanted for them all and silently wished them all many more such joyous
occasions. When he, Severus, Draco and Hermione had finally left, Harry was slightly drunk and very sleepy.

Hermione had been convinced to move in with them earlier that year when Harry casually noted she hardly, if ever, used her flat. The reason of course was Draco but Harry insisted she was welcome to stay with them for as long as she needed, terminating her rent agreement and saving her hard earned money- he needed a resident healer to keep an eye on Draco after all. She had expertly dodged all pointed remarks and announced her decision a few days later. Much to Draco’s delight and Severus’ amusement the girl moved into the blond’s room as if it was normal. Harry was a bit surprised as he had come to expect a certain level of propriety from his best friend and was shocked she hadn’t insisted on a separate room, even if for show. He smiled knowing he and Ron had probably whittled away her sense of rule-abiding over the years.

“What are you smiling about?” Severus asked curiously.

“Just Mione and Draco. They’re really sweet together.” Harry smiled wider.

“You can’t afford to think of others at the moment, Mr. Potter.” Severus said dangerously, stalking towards his lover with a deadly smirk.

“Oh?” Harry raised a brow.

“You are forgetting a certain punishment.” He said softly as he stood nose to nose with Harry.

“And what might that be?” Harry asked almost growling.

In answer he was kissed roughly and walked back towards the bed. Harry allowed himself to fall and chuckled when Severus hopped on to hover over him. His wrists were held captive by Severus as the older man kissed him everywhere. Before Harry knew it though his poor wrists were tied to the headboard. He raised a brow and pondered if he should wandlessly break the bonds but decided to see what Severus had in mind.

He soon found out his Severus was a master of sensual torture when he wanted to be. He refused to go any faster than a snail and even stopped moving entirely when Harry was desperate. For once it was the green-eyed man begging for release as the older took his time about it. As Severus slumped over him, having spent himself entirely, he mused it had been an incredible hour with Severus in-charge. He removed his bindings and slowly held Severus closer to his chest and wandlessly cleaned and tucked them in.

“You’re amazing, my love.” Harry commented, his earlier drowsiness returning.

“Hmmm….” Severus mumbled and burrowed into the warm body underneath him. Harry turned the lights off with a chuckle and succumbed to sleep himself.

The season passed much like the last in gaiety and general feeling of wellbeing. Harry was all set to celebrate Severus’ birthday with pomp but the older man expressed a wish to spend it quietly alone with Harry. They had spent the day and the following weekend in the amazon forest, in a warded treehouse, mostly making love and enjoying each other. It was just what they needed after the hectic year they had and served to reaffirm their love, given the amount of time they were forced to spend apart.

When they got back, Draco and Hermione had a small celebration. Severus could not decide if he should be flattered or annoyed but Harry knew he enjoyed the gathering very much. Harry was glad
to see his love being so carefree and able to mingle well with others; only a year or two ago, Severus would have been scowling at them all instead of smiling softly. Severus was not the only one who seemed to have changed for the better. Draco was often seen laughing brightly with people he once would have snubbed - to see Neville and Ron hanging out with Draco was quite refreshing to Harry. Hermione too had gained a lot of confidence and a mature calm over the past few years; Draco often compared his girlfriend to his own beloved mother who had perished not a few months after the final battle due to battle wounds. Her mastery was nearing its completion as well and her plans were coming along rather smoothly. The others in his circle were also well. As far as Harry was concerned, he was fine if everyone was relatively happy in their lives.

Over the next month, Harry worked closely with Hannah who had spoken to their circle about war orphans. Pomona Sprout, the Herbology mistress and head of Hufflepuff, was Hogwarts’ representative in their efforts to build an establishment for children with no one else to take care of them. Draco donated a medium sized manor which could house up to hundred children (if they shared each bedroom available between five kids) and came with a stable, greenhouse and plenty of space. Neville insisted on providing the start-up gold; between donations from Harry, Severus, Susan, Luna, and Neville, they had enough money to start and run the orphanage. Draco often accepted the role of the steward of the new ‘Elpida Children’s Home’. They had a board which consisted of all the six initial donors and the steward. Susan was the one who came up with guidelines they all agreed upon. The Malfoy elves that worked in the property continued to work there, much happier to have more work. Once done, they worked with Sprout and the current minister, Kingsley Shacklebolt, to find all the destitute children and managed to open the home on Valentine’s day. It was a record of some sort getting something started in under two months.

The newspapers’ acclaim was well appreciated though it didn’t help them with the staffing issues. While they all lent a hand when they could, juggling between the Juvenile center and the Home, it soon proved difficult to manage the new place even with the elves’ help. It was then that Ron got roped into helping full-time and subsequently found his life’s calling- working with kids. Ron had just the right temperament and the right amount of cheer to take care of kids- he had grown up from the irresponsible brat he once was. A chance meeting with his squib uncle convinced Ron that they should involve squibs who currently took up menial jobs- an idea which was not as readily accepted as he had hoped but still was grudgingly accepted when no one came forward for the jobs at either of their projects.

By the end of March, Elpida Home was running smoothly and employed three young squibs with a love for children. Hannah opted to take over the administrative side of things, including budgeting and such while Ron easily fell into the role of the ‘papa’; something his muggleborn girlfriend, Shelly, adored him for. Hermione was rather surprised at how patient Ron was and enjoyed regaling her healer partner (Shelly) of her boyfriend’s childhood.

Over the next few months, wizard orphans all over England, Scotland and Ireland were identified and relocated to the now very comfortable Home. They were taught about magic early and treated like children should be treated- with love. Tragedy did not escape these children however. Some had memories of their parents and could not understand why they were abandoned, unable to comprehend the concept of death. Some, like Harry and Severus, had been abused and were at the tender age where a change of location confused them. Some felt abandoned by their previous guardians- especially those muggleborn who were taken out of bad situations early (the Wizengamot was quick to pass a law once Harry pointed out where Tom Riddle grew up). Eventually, even Ron had to concede the requirement of a psychologist. Unsurprisingly, Shelly rose to the challenge unofficially, while she worked to attain her mind-healer certification.

Harry was thankful for their devotion. He couldn’t help but feel good knowing there would be no more Tom Riddles or Harry Potters out there. The next step, of course, was to ensure better Child
services was well equipped to interfere in cases like Severus’ where a parent was neglectful and abusive even if they understood about magic- there were after all regular cases in muggle world as well. This was easily achieved by passing appropriate laws. The Wizard Children Services (WCS) was empowered and also tasked with bringing any problem children to the Elpida Home. Eventually, the Home would need to be expanded to accommodate every child who needed them.

There were other things Harry wanted to do as well. Of prime importance was a primary education among the wizard children. This, however, was a huge undertaking and he did not quite know how to start. He also intended to destroy prejudices one by one, especially against different races. It was a frustratingly slow work but it was doable. It helped that he had his own faction with Lord Neville Longbottom, Lady Luna Lovegood, Lord Blaise Zabini, Lady Susan Bones, Lord Damian Abbott (Hannah’s older brother), Lord Cyrus Greengrass (Daphne’s father) and Lord Terrance Boot. Draco was set to join the faction as Lord Malfoy in a few months and Severus intended to do the same; meanwhile their vote were suspended. He was’t sure how he came to lead them but that was how it was. It also helped that his allies thought similarly to himself and rarely needed much convincing. With the cooperation of the light, dark and neutral, Harry found he faced very little opposition… then again, the same mixture ensured equal say in each of the traditional views.
Dragons Fly

Chapter Summary

Things take off well at the center. Draco's birthday is celebrated.

The new year brought with it many changes. Calla potions became well known and Severus was more often than not swamped with orders. While at one time he would have locked himself in the lab indefinitely, Severus determined to take weekends off. This was, of course, so he could spend time with Harry and Draco. Harry even managed to convince him to not work after ten (though he had argued for an earlier time). The end result was that Severus brewed Monday to Friday from eight in the morning to ten in the night, taking breaks as needed, especially for food.

Harry, on the other hand, was swamped with the duties at the center. In addition to the six expected denizens, ten more had opted to join them. Also, the Wizengamot had passed a law that anyone below the age of twenty-one (the age at which a person became a full adult and could sit an office) belonged in the center. As a result, every month they had two or more new members who were to serve anywhere between six months to years in the facility. So far, Hermione was handling the medical needs but Harry was looking for a mediwitch who could stay there during nights. It didn’t help that most of the denizens had anger issues and got into many brawls.

Harry was also frantically searching for affordable mind healers who’d be willing to help them. While no professional was in sight, Draco filled in the role for the center. He was fast becoming a big brother-like persona and he was successful in supporting them. His former classmates had all been wary of Harry but with the help of Draco, they were able to overcome their past enmity- Harry was only to glad to put it all behind him and sit with the heirs and heiresses under his care to discuss their concerns; it may have started with financial issues but he hoped he could help them otherwise.

A quick word with Minerva had resolved the issue of NEWTS. The Hogwarts professors were not able to teach in two different places but the core subjects could be taught once a week. Flitwick was happy to spend a few hours as a volunteer for this purpose. Minerva volunteered for Transfiguration. Severus was already teaching potions and defense. Most of it was theoretical as they weren’t allowed wands as yet; this was solved by George who invented a wand that would not allow spells to be cast but would display the correctness of the motions by glowing an array of colors. Harry had meetings with the Wizarding Examinations Council to iron out the details of OWLS and NEWTS. He was only at a loss as to how he could help the majority of them get meaningful jobs.

By using the protean charm, Hermione effectively put herself on call. The healer under whom she was completing her training gave her permission to go to the center as long as he was informed; this she did by giving the surprised older man his own protean charmed pendant. She was determined to finish the training that year so she could concentrate on the center. Besides, she still wanted to become a muggle physician, just to give her more perspective.

Ron had his job of an Auror and was more interested in catching the trouble-makers. He, however, had mellowed towards Slytherins and offered to help with defense. Severus grudgingly accepted and found he didn’t mind the Weasley boy as much when he was serious and not in potions class. Harry was exceptionally happy at the development.

The others who had offered their aid were distributed into two groups. Hannah and Lavender were
full time employees. They made sure one of them was there at all times and were responsible for the
schedule. While some expressed doubts having two females with a bunch of ‘hooligans’, Harry felt
the two were formidable in their own right - he was proven right a few months later when they
successfully diffused a situation by themselves. Besides, Draco, Severus and Harry were often in the
facility to help if needed. The other group consisted of Luna, Susan and others who had careers to
focus on but determinedly volunteered a few hours each week. Mrs. Weasley was still grieving and
felt she would not do right by those she might view as being responsible for her loss… but Harry
was determined to bring her on board eventually.

Before they knew it, it was June and Harry had a pressing issue on his mind.

“Severus?” Harry peeked into the living room, hoping his love was there since he wasn’t in his lab.

“What is it?” Severus asked from the sofa.

“You seemed to have finished early?” Harry asked with a smile, walking over to sit next to the older
man.

“I have filled the majority of orders. The next order isn’t due until Monday. I have something
brewing, however.”

“I see.”

“You wished to speak about something?” He asked, bringing them back to the original topic. He was
finding he was much more accepting of asinine chatter since he allowed Harry into his heart.

“Yes. Well… Draco’s birthday. I didn’t know when it was earlier but he is turning twenty-two this
year and I thought we’d celebrate it.”

“How did you find out?” Severus asked curiously. It wasn’t something he’d expect Harry to know.

“Some of the Malfoy associates from abroad sent messages last year but they reached a bit late.”
Harry grinned. “Wished him a belated birthday if you remember.”

“Ah… and now you want to… what?” He knew but it was interesting to watch Harry’s expressive
face when he talked about something that was so obviously important to him.

“A Party. I know most of his friends are at the center so I thought we could arrange for them to have
a party there. We could invite others like Blaise and Daphne to join us.”

“That would be acceptable.” Severus nodded.

“Great. I’ll leave the decorations and such to you. Hermione can send out the invitations and I’ll
arrange for the cake and stuff.”

“I get the hardest job.” Severus grumbled.

“I’ll be saddled with distracting your godson while you prepare, love.” Harry pointed out with a
laugh. He chastely kissed Severus.

“Right now, you are distracting me, Potter.” Severus sneered lightly. Oddly enough, this action now
brought a smile to his love’s lips.

“Is that a bad thing?” Harry grinned.
“Not as such.” Severus smirked.

After a half hour of ‘making out’ as Harry would no doubt put it, Hermione had flooed in. It was rather telling that the woman did not even blink an eye when she saw her best friend and former professor in a lip-lock. Severus too felt he was getting too used to this as his embarrassment only warranted a soft blush; just a year or two ago he’d have been absolutely mortified.

“Where’s Draco?” Hermione asked softly.

“Upstairs. He is studying.” Harry replied. Draco was going to regain his full freedom in less than a year and he was determined to clear as many NEWTS as he could before that since he wished to pursue higher studies. Severus wished his godson would tell him what exactly he wanted to do but he was being secretive.

“Good.” Hermione nodded, swiftly casting wards to alert them if Draco came down the stairs and a silencing ward to ensure the boy heard nothing. “I have a list.” She announced and passed said item to Severus.

“A rather long list.” Severus commented as he looked through it. He frowned as he saw some conflicting names on the list. “Hermione, is it a good idea to invite so many Weasleys and people form dark families?” He asked.

“Why should that matter?” She asked blinking.

“While Draco and I are friendly with both sets, the kids at the center are not. There may be… tensions to consider.” He explained patiently. Severus had found that Gryffindors often missed finer details when planning.

“Hm… That’s true. I can not imagine Nott or Parkinson getting along with the entire Weasley clan. They barely accepted Ron and that too because Severus was more often than not present with them.” Harry mused.

“Precisely.”

“But it would be sad without all of Draco’s friends.” Hermione whined.

“How about two parties?” Severus suggested after a while.

“Two?”

“While at the center, we can use the lunch hour and the preceding hour or two for a luncheon of sorts, only informal. This will be with all the denizens and the people they already know, like Ronald, Molly, Luna, Daphne and others they’d at the least accept the presence of.” Severus explained. “Then we can gather most if not all the non-denizens for an after party which can conclude in a second event, a dinner in this case, with everyone else on the list.”

“It’ll give him a whole day to celebrate.” Harry grinned happily.

“It’ll also be a pain to pull off.” Hermione muttered.

“The Luncheon demands can be undertaken by the elves.” Severus pointed out. “They would love to do something other than the ordinary…” He added quickly before Hermione could start on elf rights.

“And they love Draco, so they’d probably be glad to be given the responsibility.” Harry added. “Besides, I planned on asking Minerva for help. She can spare a few elves for a day.”
“Harry…” Hermione glared.

“We’ll pay them.” Harry countered.

“Fine.” She huffed and the men shared an amused look. Severus mused they were getting rather good at circumventing Hermione’s views on elves, though he hoped to find some literature to either prove or disprove the young woman’s theories on house elves.

“There’s another reason I insist on elves…” Harry smirked. “Draco has very particular tastes in food and I don’t think any of us can actually satisfy the prince of Slytherin.” For a moment, not a sound was heard than all three burst out laughing as their mind supplied the image of a pouting Draco because his cake wasn’t the correct degree of moist.

The plan went off without a hitch. The gathering at the center was a bit tense owing to the presence of people from both sides of the last war. Daphne and Tracey were very helpful in integrating them all, having been neutral for the most part and only helping in the final battle. Soon, Harry could spot people like Vincent Crabbe and Josiah Rowle chatting somewhat comfortably with Susan Bones and Ginny Weasley. Long years of brainwashing weren’t easy to overcome but Harry felt they were making good progress. Two of the older teens refused to mingle and had to be given permission to retreat to their respective rooms- Harry was disappointed but had no qualms respecting their decision as long as they didn’t disrupt the others.

The dinner was by far the more boisterous affair. The group, even if it was now rather large, were almost family and had no qualms to enjoy themselves to the fullest. Draco was perpetually laughing, whether it was at George’s jokes or roughhousing with the Weasley men; it was a sight Harry, Severus and Hermione took great pleasure in seeing.

“Thank you.” Draco had firmly held both men in his embrace once everyone had left.

“For what, Sweetie?” Harry chuckled softly and returned the hug. Severus kissed his godson’s forehead fondly.

“Every celebration of my birth… was a lesson in politics. It was all about an opportunity to make a good impression on those father deemed appropriate. Aside from the mountain of gifts…” Harry snorted. “… I hated my birthday… I… I never thought… so many people… who see me… care… it’s all so…” He sniffled.

“Dragon…” Severus murmured in sympathy. He supposed Draco would have felt oppressed, being the sensitive child he had been, but he hadn’t realized how unhappy his godson had been. He regretted his own decision to keep distance… perhaps a little true affection from him would have helped? “We are grateful for your birth, little one.” He said softly instead. “We will mark this day with something special every year.” He promised.

“There is no reason to thank us… it was our pleasure.” Harry added.

“Nonetheless… thank you.” Draco composed himself and stepped back. He bowed deeply to the men who he respected and loved above most.

“Go on, you prat. Hermione is waiting with your gift.” The blond grinned and took off.

“I’m glad.” Severus commented, slipping easily into his lover’s arms.

“Hm?”
“He has more or less recovered. He no longer shies from touch and he is… happier, brighter… The last time I saw him like this… it was on his fifth birthday… until Lucius decided a lesson was in order.” Severus sighed. Lucius had made the poor child watch him kill a small bird that had amused the boy- the subsequent tears had only earned the then five year old a few swats and harsh words about ‘being a man’.

“Love?”

“Just morose thoughts from the past.” Harry nodded, apparently deciding not to pry.

They too retired to their room soon after, ignoring the giggling coming from Draco and Hermione’s room. Severus couldn’t help but think things were looking up for all of them.
Something Beautiful

Chapter Summary

Harry and Sev have a romantic moment as do Draco and Hermione.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Amidst all this change, came the day Severus regained his full freedom, two years to the day when they had their ‘big misunderstanding’ (as their friends called it). It didn’t feel like a different day but it did change a few things politically and if Harry had it his way, personally. Severus himself was rather oblivious to it, probably because he didn’t feel constrained at all. In fact, he had taken to leaving Harry to most of the Prince Family business dealings, trusting him and only requesting certain investments from time to time; Harry honestly didn’t mind, since he found he liked doing business.

On the final day of Severus’ sentence, Harry arranged for a dinner at one of the high end restaurants that Severus enjoyed. It had taken a while to get the older man used to going out and enjoying luxury but once assured of his own place in society, Severus soon became a connoisseur of sorts. His favorite seemed to be the Sapphire Spire and was their destination that night.

“Why exactly are we here?” Severus asked, allowing Harry to lead him.

“Can’t you guess?”

“There is no birthday or any occasion to celebrate, Harry.” The older said dryly.

“Really?” Harry grinned making Severus narrow his eyes.

“Potter…”

“It’s the last day.” Harry offered.

“Excuse me?”

“Of your sentence, love.”

“Oh… I had… forgotten.” Severus admitted with a small blush.

Harry smiled and lightly kissed his cheek. At one time neither man would have dared do such a thing but over the past year their involvement with each other had become public and widely accepted. It helped that Severus was known to be part of the group who were making many positive changes in their world- from laws to new establishments. His renown as a potions master -his voluntary aid to St. Mungo’s in the form of reduced prices and the several cures he had already registered- served to earn him quite a few fans. The expected hype against them had never come, instead the handful of howlers were overshadowed by the incredible amount of well-wishers.

“Come on… we have our usual spot booked.” Harry murmured.

The champagne was pre-ordered and they raised their glasses to toast the new chapter in their lives.
A bit of small talk, serious discussions about the various projects they both were involved in and a healthy dose of flirting accompanied their meal. It wasn’t until dessert that Harry felt the beginnings of nervousness.

“Are you well?” Severus, always rather attuned to Harry’s moods, asked worriedly.

“Fine…” Harry forced a grin. “Want to dance?”

“And get stepped on?” Severus raised a brow incredulously.

“Come on, I have been practicing!” Harry pouted. He had been forced by his female friends since he was supposed to be able to do something as simple as dancing as a Lord twice over- he did not have to like it even if he agreed with the general idea.

“Very well… I suppose I can allow for a demonstration.” Harry grinned more openly and offered his hand to his lover.

It was better than the Yule Ball in fourth year, at any rate. Harry took the time to stare at Severus and think about his words throughout the first half of the number.

“You are too quiet.” Severus murmured curiously.

“Just… enjoying myself.” Harry replied.

“Indeed.” The raised eyebrow had returned.

“… And thinking.” Harry added.

“About?”

“You.” Harry smirked but sobered immediately. “I was thinking how far we came. Once we’d have happily cursed each other and now…” He chuckled. “Now, I can’t imagine life without you.”

“Me either, Harry.” Severus said softly, settling himself comfortably on Harry’s shoulder.

“I want to always have you in my arms. I want to always wake up next to you, to see you smile sleepily at me… You’ve made my house, a home worth living in. Your presence transformed my life into something better. I don’t know if you realized…” Harry paused a moment. “…I was angry… ready to blow up things at the slightest provocation. Hermione said she feared me being suicidal.”

“Harry…”

“She was right. I did think about it but then I had to help you. I’m not sure how but you being there helped, my love. Your presence calmed me. Coming home to find a warm meal. Watching you make the best of everything. Along the way falling for you… I began to live. For the very first time, I felt alive.”

“I did nothing. It is the other way around. You gave me respect and acceptance… your forgiveness meant everything. I had a place to belong, a home with you, where there were no expectations, no pain… if anything you did far more for me Harry.”

“Perhaps we were just meant to be then, Severus.” Harry mused, chastely kissing him. “Which is why I will not take no for an answer. Will you marry me, my love?” Harry asked as he dropped to his knee and held Severus’ left hand gently. With his other hand, he produced a ring box.

Severus stared shocked for several seconds and eventually managed a small smile and a nod. Harry
grinned and placed the ring in its rightful place and kissed the slender hand. He rose and gathered Severus into an embrace.

“Yes. I would have it no other way.” Severus finally whispered into his ear and proceeded to kiss the daylights out of him, unheedful of those watching them in interest.

“Home?” Harry asked breathlessly.

“Home.” Severus said firmly, already marching his fiancee to the floo.

Draco, whose sentence had ended two months ago had decided to take Hermione out that day, guessing just what Harry and Severus would be up to. Thus, there was no one to see Severus ripping off both their clothes before they even reached the stairs. Only the few remaining Black Family portraits watched in a daze as the latest Lord Black was carried quite naked up the stairs by an equally naked Lord Prince. Harry himself was busy kissing Severus to notice much of anything, though Severus may have taken a moment to smirk at the old men and women on the walls.

While Harry was enjoying being ravished, Draco and Hermione were off paying a late-night visit to his family Manor which had been unsealed only a few weeks ago. While Draco had wanted to show off the place he grew up immediately, the place held dark memories for both of them. It was the place where both had been tortured. It was where Voldemort had set up his base for over a year before he was defeated. It took some time to come to terms with their memories, especially Hermione as she had no good memories to offset her bad ones, before they made the move to visit.

“The elves have maintained it well.” Draco commented.

“You are paying them?” Hermione asked, not as sharply as she might have once.

“Not in gold.” Draco grinned. “I did insist on uniforms like we have at the center. They’re mostly free since no one is here and I told them to simply seal most of the house to reduce work. They didn’t like that.”

“I don’t understand their fascination with work.”

“I suppose it’s like any other fascination… Quidditch, books, pranks…” Draco chuckled as he recalled George’s latest prank product.

“As long as they are happy.” The witch conceded grudgingly- she finally concluded that she shouldn’t begrudge the creatures their happiness, no matter how insensible it seems to her.

“They are.” Draco assured. “I had them open up the living room, dining rooms, the few parlors and the family wing.” He explained as they entered the living room with its large fireplace. Hermione froze a moment and stared at a spot, shivering slightly.

“Hermione…” Draco held her securely around the waist.

“I’m fine… just…”

“I know.” Draco cut her off softly, staring at the same spot where his love was once tortured. “I want to change this room so that it will no longer hold those memories for either of us.”

“You don’t have to…”
“I need to.” Draco answered. “And I hoped you’d help me.”

“But it’s your home.” She protested weakly. Draco turned her around.

“One which I intend to share with you.” He said quietly. “I don’t deserve you at all but I still hope that one day… one day when I finally manage to ask, you’d say yes.”

“Draco…” She gasped. A tear escaped her as she smiled at him. “I’ll help.” She grinned.

“Good.” Draco smiled and wiped away the solitary tear. “Come see the rest of the place.”

They traipsed across to the ballroom, then the dining room when Voldemort used to hold his meetings (another one for complete renovation). Hermione liked one of the sitting rooms and Draco instantly marked it as her private one when she moved in- making the healer blush heavily. The most interesting room, for Hermione, was the library from which Draco had to carry her away to avoid losing her to the books.

“This is your room?” Hermione grinned at the numerous posters of Falmouth Falcons and the Slytherin themed decorations.

“Since I was out of the nursery.” Draco smiled and picked up a figurine from the fireplace mantle.

“It looks rather… green.” Hermione commented.

“Well, I was very proud of my house.”

“Now?”

“Not so much. I do know there are more important things in life.”

“Like?”

“You.” The wizard smirked and kissed her.

“I think you’re up to something.” Hermione declared.

“Of course.” Draco agreed easily. “Let’s see the main suite.” He suggested.

“Okay…” Hermione said distractedly. Draco rolled his eyes as he identified the cause as more books and dragged her to the hallway.

The main suite was one decorated in blues and greens- colors Narcissa Malfoy was rather fond of with silver decorations where possible. It was the traditional suite for Lord and Lady Malfoy and was lavishly decorated as such.

“What do you think?”

“It’s nice.”

“Just nice?” Draco laughed.

“Alright, it is very nice. Just looks cold.” She commented under her breath.

“I suppose you would prefer red?”

“Not red but maybe burgundy with a bit of cream…”
“Is that how you decorated your room at home?” He asked amused. Hermione smiled sadly.

“No. I had it all in pink and white.”

“Seriously?” Draco gaped.

“As a little girl… I liked pink…” She mumbled with a blush. Draco chuckled and kissed her temple.

“Burgundy and cream, huh?” Draco mused. “I’ll let the designer know… we can always change out the furniture if we don’t like it. There is a vault full of antiques you can choose from.”

“Wait… wait…” Hermione put up her hands, wide-eyed. “You’re speaking as if this will be… mine…?”

“Ours.” Draco corrected.

“But…”

“Hermione.” Draco sighed. “I thought you understood what I meant?”

“But…”

“If I ask you now, will you say no?”

“No… I mean… yes?”

“And once you are my fiancee?”

“What about it?” She asked defiantly.

“You’d have other obligations.” He explained, realizing she probably didn’t know. “Once we make our intentions clear, my side of the family will expect certain things…”

“Like what?”

“An introduction ball for one. Certain traditions to be followed, relatives to visit and such.”

“Oh.”

“I know you are ambitious and I support your career.”

“You’re going to wait until I’m done studying?” She asked surprised.

“As long as you need me to.” Draco smiled. “Meanwhile, we can decorate our future home to our tastes… unless you want to live elsewhere?”

“No!” She gasped. “No, this place is important to you, a connection to your family… I wouldn’t want you to part with it.”

“It can remain without us living here, love.” Draco rolled his eyes. “If you want to, I don’t mind using another property. Or build something you’d like.”

“But… you… I don’t…”

“Sh… you’re the most important thing… I love you.”

“I love you, too.” Hermione gave him a watery smile and kissed him chastely. “Can you imagine our
eleven year old selves seeing us now?” She asked chuckling.

“I’d have had a heart attack.”

“Probably wild accidental magic.” She grinned.

“Gryffindors.”

“Slytherins.” Draco proceeded to tickle her and Hermione dodged him. She would later wonder what possessed her to escape to Draco’s old room but that is where she went, on the other side of the bed which they circled.

“Stop it!” Hermione squealed as she got caught once more.

“I will for a kiss.” Draco offered.

“No fair.” She looped her arms around his neck, stood on tiptoes to reach his lips and sweetly kissed him. Draco quickly took control and walked them back to fall on the bed.

“All is fair in love, my darling.” Draco smirked as he kissed her face lovingly.

“Too true… enough talking.”

“Yes ma’am.” Nothing more was said as they reaffirmed their love.

Chapter End Notes

It was a very long journey but they final made it!
Harry stretched his neck and back after a long day at the Wizengamot, glad to finally be home. He hung up his cloak and set out to find his husband of five years.

“Love?” He called as he peeked into the living room.

“Harry! You’re finally home.” Severus exclaimed in relief and slowly got off the sofa.

“You look tired.” Harry commented, hurrying to support the older wizard who looked like he’d fall over any moment. He hugged him and delivered his customary kiss, careful of the rounded belly.

“Between your daughter and this brat…” Severus grumbled unhappily.

“You still love them more than anything.” Harry chuckled as he gently stroked the belly housing his and Severus’ second child. Both children had been conceived without the help of potions- something nearly unheard of in the medical circles. Hermione was convinced it had to do with their compatibility and maybe even the out of fashion traditional bonding they had undergone. She was researching in her spare time to prove her theory.

“Sometimes I wonder if I’m insane to do so.” Harry laughed merrily and guided his heavily pregnant spouse to a comfortable seat.

“Not insane, just the best person in the world for loving us.” He grinned. “Where is Heather?” They had named their daughter Heather Eileen Potter after the Evans Family tradition of naming girls after flowers and their princess shared one of her beloved grandmothers’ names.

“Thankfully asleep. She should be up in a little while.”

“Good.” Harry murmured. He rarely got any time with his love between his work and interfering daughter. He settled beside Severus and pulled the older man to lean against him.

“How was Wizengamot?”
“Usual. The old fools still hang on to the most ridiculous things. I mean, how does it make sense to deny werewolves working opportunities and then complaining when they turn to less reputable pursuits to survive? It took a lot of talking. I brought up Remus, they brought up Fenrir. Thankfully, Susan was ready with Fenrir’s backstory.”

“A brilliant runes master before he was bitten and turned bitter.” Severus muttered.

“Yes. Like the need for orphanages it went through fast after that.” He sighed. “Just wish they’d not fight against change so hard.”

“It is hard to change, Harry. You must be patient.”

“I know.” Harry smiled. “Hopefully, the rights for other races will follow through. Enough about politics… what did you do all day?”

“As I am unable to brew… I spent most of the morning playing with Heather. She inherited Lily’s thirst for knowledge.” He said wryly.

“WizzQuiz?”

“Yes.” Severus smirked. Their daughter was rather smart for a two and half year old and spoke clearly and intelligently. She had quite a bit of general knowledge and enjoyed playing games where she could learn. Her godmother and papa encouraged her in her endeavors to learn.

“I truly hope, boy or girl, the next one is a Quidditch fan! I’m outnumbered.” Harry pouted.

“Perhaps.” Severus smiled softly. “The child moves around a lot, so I would not be surprised.” He commented.

“A lot? Does it hurt?” Harry asked concerned.

“Not a lot.”

“As much as I love our kids… I rather you don’t experience any discomfort.” Harry sighed as he automatically rubbed Severus’ back to relieve any soreness.

“It is worth it.” Severus kissed him softly. “If it bothers you so much… perhaps you should carry the next one.” The older man grinned.

“That’s entirely up to you, my love.” Harry grinned. Severus flushed; he did top a few times but he preferred to let Harry take care of him. “I love you so much.” Harry murmured.

“And I you.” Severus whispered, accepting a deeper kiss from his husband.

“DADDY!” A high pitched screech made Harry groan but he turned to the sound with a smile.

“Hello Princess.” He opened his arms and the little girl with bouncing pigtails shot into his arms.

“How was your day?” He asked. As the little girl regaled her parents on her day, the two men shared a loving look, knowing they’d be kept busy until dinner with the child’s chatter.

A few months after Rowan James Potter was born, Hermione and Draco got married. After six years of their relationship, Hermione had achieved her goals and now was a respected healer and a certified family doctor (some of healer training was magically forwarded into her muggle education, cutting down the time required to achieve this). Draco had reinvented the Malfoy holdings, dong
away with the shady aspects while he joined Harry and Neville in changing their world. He did face a bit of opposition due to his name alone but when it got out that he was courting Hermione, people didn’t know what to think.

Soon enough, they were expecting a little one in eight and a half months. Interestingly, it would put the child and Rowan in the same year at Hogwarts along with Luna and Blaise’s eldest Tiberus Zabini. Neville and Hannah’s daughter Willow was nearer to Heather in age and the two were regular playmates. Ron and Shelly held off on having their own kids until the Orphanage intake lessened some- they didn’t think they could handle infants and troubled kids at the same time.

Susan and Ginny were a pair of working women. In addition to her duties as Lady Bones, Susan was a rising auror, following in her deceased aunt’s footsteps. Ginny followed her life-long dream of playing for Holyhead Harpies. It would be years later that either women considered settling down. Ginny would restart her relationship with Dean Thomas and eventually find a good life with him. Susan would belatedly realize her perfect match had been Charlie Weasley all along- though it took her a decade and half, plus reaching a plateau in her career as the Head Auror, to reach the conclusion. The dragon tamer was just the kind of guy to keep up with her temper.

George eventually managed a minute of seriousness to propose to Angelina and they would add little Weasleys to the latest generation of troublemakers. Percy and Audrey remained engaged for six years before marrying and having exactly two children, perfectly spaced (according to their father) and just as smart as their father; though they did inherit their mother’s mild and fun-loving manner (thankfully). Bill and Fleur had Victoire and twins named Fabian and Gideon after Molly’s martyred brothers.

From the center, most teens had turned from their earlier paths. Some like Pucey did not take to any lessons and soon found themselves in the newly constructed Azkaban, much to the team’s regret. Most, however, were smart enough to take opportunities given them. Theodore Nott, from Harry’s year, took the option of completing his NEWTS and was duly attached to a Master of Charms when he achieved outstanding marks in the subject; he would later marry Daphne Greengrass after much time spent courting. Gregory Goyle had looked to his leader, Draco, for advice and Draco took the boy under his wing once more- they worked hard to have Gregory master Care of Magical Creatures (something the boy was actually good at) and Draco offered him a job in one of his properties which had a magical forest and required tending to various creatures therein. Others had similar success stories.

Of the denizens of the center, those with Lordships like Nott tended to join Harry’s block, though a few decided to join their traditional blocks. Harry and co. block was large enough to tip the scales in any decision and they took advantage of it to make many more changes over the years. If Dumbledore were alive, he would have been amazed at what the bunch of kids (to him) managed to do in such a short time.

The prejudices against many sets of people were decreasing. Squibs had ready jobs, mostly in Harry’s, Severus’, Neville’s or Draco’s businesses; they worked as gardeners, aides in potions, nannies, caretakers at any of their enterprises and even teachers for non-magical subjects. Hunting most magical creatures was banned in a bid to protect several dying species. New laws binding various magical species took into consideration their nature and needs; Harry usually met with each group before proposing any changes to make sure there would be compliance from most of them. The fair treatment eventually attracted the species that had withdrawn from Britain to return home. Werewolf communities were set up and they were able to get jobs anywhere; days off every full-moon was mandated by law and a warded forest was freely provided for anyone not having an appropriate place to transform.
Severus’ business boomed as more werewolves were able to buy wolvesbane. He had improved said potion three times, much to everyone’s amazement; he was currently working on a cure. Improvements on other potions were also made. He had to eventually find a large enough building for his business and hire potion makers. He even took on promising students for potions mastery grudgingly; his exacting standards produced a handful of rare and talented potions masters (who ended up working for their master since the salary was good). Calla Potions was synonymous with quality in Europe. Heather would one day take over for her papa as the leading potions mistress with the support of her Herbologist husband Antonius Longbottom.

Rowan, much to Harry’s distress, was a serious child, though he did reasonably enjoy flying; he would later take over as Lord Potter and marry Isabelle Zabini. Their third child, Jasper Brian, was the one Harry got up to mischief with and the one who’d inherit the Prince Lordship and married his best friend Aldrich Weasley, George’s second child out of five. The next two children were carried by Harry- in a strange twist of fate, he was blessed with twins. Zachary Felix Potter-Black, the future Lord Black, was as mischievous as Sirius once was and made his mark as a Charms master; he (much) later married a muggleborn witch named Fiona. Aster Lily Potter, though equally mischievous as her twin, became a curse-breaker but somehow managed to fall for the completely gentlemanly Scropius Malfoy- they were an interesting pair. Their household’s eldest child though was Teddy who was formally adopted by Harry when Andromeda passed away due to a magical illness- he went on to marry a beautiful werewolf named Star and worked at the liaison office, eventually becoming head.

Swamped with the numerous children around them, Harry and Severus resorted to muggle means of contraception- condoms. Despite that their last child was born in the same year as their third grandchild and they named her Iris Minerva Potter; it was a rather interesting time for their grown children and their contemporaries who had older children than their baby sister.

Harry’s career was also a success despite his frequent griping. He controlled both his own and Severus’ votes as his husband had no taste nor patience for politics. Along with the changed laws, he was instrumental in the changed education system. When people realized that the best students and future masters came from Elpida home, there was mass confusion until it was revealed that basic studies were taught to the children there. The Potter, Longbottom, Zabini, Malfoy and Weasley children had all been sent there to avail of classes with others their age. Things snowballed and Ron found himself being the first principal of the Magical elementary School which catered to all children from magical families- witches, wizards, those with creature blood and even squibs- the irony of that was not lost on anyone. It then led to Hogwarts changing slowly as it was apparent that when children knew latin, it took less time to teach them spells; the courses could be more application based and soon offered challenging subjects alongside the regular. Eventually, muggleborn were also reached out to and joined the elementary school at five. Corresponding muggle records allowed any of the children to seek muggle education for self-betterment.

In addition, Harry’s initiatives made the ministry more efficient. He introduced placement tests to test the knowledge and temperament of the applicants. Recommendations no longer got you the job- you had to be good enough as well. He also introduced, with Susan’s help, laws to curb corruption. It wasn’t completely gone but it was better than when Fudge reigned. He and his block found and abolished many biased laws and shot down anything that remotely reintroduced prejudice to the society. Some laws were left in place to allow the old families to continue their power, though by the time Harry was hundred, there were equal number of seats for elected members as currently active hereditary seats to create a balance- previously only the Order of Merlin holders had non-hereditary seats. Even House elf rights were addressed during his lifetime- something Hermione was deliriously happy about.
At hundred and ninety, Harry James Potter-Black, defeater of Voldemort, Man-who-Conquered, Chief Warlock, loving husband, adored father, grandfather and great-grandfather, consummate politician, philanthropist, founder of Elpida, occasional enchanter, died of heartache, losing his life partner Severus Snape Prince Potter-Black, war hero, spy, beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Master Potioneer, researcher, teacher and businessman, just a day prior to old age. Both lived long, happy and fulfilling lives as they spearheaded positive changes in magical Britain. They were survived by ten children, four adopted, including Theodore (Teddy) Lupin-Potter, Thirty-four grandchildren, Twenty-five great-grandchildren, and numerous other beloved friends.

Chapter End Notes

To all those who wanted Sev Pregnant: I didn't want to focus on it but yes he carries all but two of their children.

I hope the warm togetherness I was aiming for came through!

Did anyone else find Ron taking over as a principal amusing? I did! (even if I wrote it...)

Once again thank you all! Have a wonderful Christmas!

End Notes

This is my first work on AO3 and it is unbeta'ed. Please share constructive criticism! Flames make my muse run and hide.

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