on top of the world

by namgismiles

Summary

The moment when he appeared on that rooftop, the wind blowing in his hair, the people below him like ants… that was when he became different.

or

a Harry that has ambitions and refuses to settle for anything less than to be the best (cue Pokemon theme music).

Notes

Disclaimer: I do not, unfortunately, own the Harry Potter franchise in any form, nor am I J.K. Rowling. Therefore, I give credit where its due and continue to toil towards a future where I
can also claim the fame and glory that comes from being a successful author in my own right. This future seems far off though (sigh).
Perhaps when he first noticed that he was different was when he was still innocent to what different meant.

He was always told he was a freak, that was simply a fact to him. Yet, the moment when he appeared on that rooftop, the wind blowing in his hair, the people below him like ants… that was when he became different.

He went down to the ground, in the arms of a fireman, and he went back to the child in the cupboard, but something in him remembered what it was like to be on the top for once.

That rush… he never forgot that.

***

The Wizarding World, when he discovered it, that he was always a part of it… it reminded him of that rush. He wasn’t like his relatives, no, he was a wizard.

He was something more.

Yet he kept these thoughts to himself as he followed the half-giant. There was no need for anyone to be alerted to his thoughts, not when he was new, not when he wasn’t sure how he fit into all this.

There would come a time when he could make himself known, but that moment wasn’t then.

Perhaps there never would be a moment.

That memory of the rush, though, he kept it close to him, and it kept him going.
The first moment where he lost his faith in the Light providing that access to the _rush_ was after the whole Philosopher’s Stone Incident. The way those blue eyes twinkled at him while spinning sugary lies, the way his gut tightened and bitterness was felt... no, that was the first moment when the Wizarding World failed to give him what he expected, what he had wanted.

That was perhaps the first moment when he let himself wonder at Voldemort’s offer... and then promptly discarded it.

In the graveyard, the wind was once again whipping wildly, and the corpse of Cedric lay not too far away. Cedric’s eyes were wide open and were vacantly staring in his direction. He shuddered and forced his eyes back towards the figure rising out of a black cauldron, back towards the mind-numbing pain resonating from his scar.

As the figure, as Voldemort, approached him, his voice sibilant and hypnotic, the rush, the rush he had almost forgotten, came upon him and he gasped.

The pain in his forehead was forgotten as the _rush_ was felt the closer Voldemort came. Unconsciously, he began to pant and writhe, nothing in his mind except to get closer and never forget that feeling again.

Voldemort paused in his steps and hissed out harshly, “What are you doing, boy?”

It took a while for him to gain the ability to speak again, to push past the fog in his head, to push past the _pleasure_rush_adrenaline and answer, “M-my Lord, is your offer still open?”

Voldemort’s hand whipped out and wrapped around his throat, but he still didn’t care because now the rush was _everywhere_ and _Merlin, but this was all he had ever wanted._

“What are you saying, you foolish boy?”
He licked his cracked lips and croaked out, “I-I never formally stated what s-side I was on. I never said I was Dumbledore’s, everyone just assumed it. If you still wish it, then perhaps we can consider my joining your side.”

Voldemort’s eyes narrowed and he went silent, the only noise in the graveyard was Wormtail’s whimpering and the wind howling.

Then Voldemort’s eyes became piercing and the rush became deafening in his ears.

Voldemort’s lips lifted in a parody of a smile and Harry’s heart thudded.

All he had ever wanted was that rush... perhaps this way he could keep it.

Chapter End Notes

This is JUST a prologue! There will, of course, be more. I just wanted to set the scene for why Harry would join Voldemort.... and it's because this Harry is ambitious. He wants 'the rush' :) If that wasn't obvious lolol.

I started writing this because I love stories where Harry joins Voldemort, but good ones are SO few and most of them are incomplete/abandoned... :( I felt the need to write what I wanted to read and also to take my favorite themes of other fics I've read and loved.

Also, this is my very first HP fanfiction :) :D I wanted to contribute to the fandom :)

Please, please, please lemme know what you think, where you would want to see this go or what you think is going to happen! I'm excited cause I've been wanting to write a HP fic for SO LONG and this is the first idea that pleased me enough to get inspiration for!! :D
Chapter Summary

the aftermath of the Third Task

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

As he returned with Cedric’s body, at the edges of the maze and in the middle of the crowd of worried and panicked voices, he settled his face into one of panic and worry.

He spotted Dumbledore making his way towards him, but he acted as if he hadn’t and instead turned towards the body and placed it carefully on the ground beside him. He closed Cedric’s eyes and then stepped away, panting hard and wildly gazing about, as if not taking in the faces around him.

His vision tunneled, the edges turning black, and he knew he was hyperventilating and on the brink of unconsciousness, the lack of oxygen and the slowing of the adrenaline getting to him. Suddenly a firm hand grasped his shoulder and steadied him, a voice saying urgently, “My boy, what happened?”

He forced his eyes to focus on those twinkling eyes, nothing in his mind except Cedric’s dead eyes, and simply murmured, “I finished the task, sir.”

Then he closed his eyes and slipped into the dark.

***

When he awoke again, he was in the infirmary. Within the glaring whiteness of the room, he simply stared at the ceiling, collecting his thoughts.

Not too long after, he heard the door open and the rustling of a robe as someone walked towards him. He wasn’t surprised when Dumbledore came to stand by his side, his face concerned and brows slightly furrowed in worry.
“My dear boy, it is good to see you are awake. Madame Pompfrey is with the other champions since they are in a more critical state. It seems the adrenaline and panic of seeing Cedric’s, ah, condition had caused you to lose consciousness. Other than a few cuts and slight exhaustion, you are perfectly well.” Dumbledore conjured a comfy chair with a flick of his wand and seated himself, the twinkling eyes intent upon him, “Now, if you wouldn’t mind, please tell me what happened.”

Harry slowly sat up on the bed and leaned against the railing at the head of the bed. He let out a deep breath then connected his eyes with Dumbledore, thinking only of the Task and Cedric’s vacant eyes, “Professor, I, well… I went through the Task. It wasn’t too difficult, but on the way I saw Krum, he was under the Imperious and attacking Fleur. I sent up the red sparks after knocking the both of them out, then continued on my way. After fighting off an Acromantula, I hurried towards the Cup, and Cedric was on the other side, hurrying as well. But, just as he was about to touch the Cup, he collapsed. I-I didn’t think he was dead, Professor, I just thought he got knocked out. I went to touch the Cup, after planning on sending up sparks… but something made me check on him and then, and then… he wasn’t breathing, Professor! He just dropped dead right in front of me, right before becoming the Champion!”

Dumbledore stared at him in concern and then raised his hand to touch Harry’s shoulder, “My boy, it is not your fault. As you say, he just collapsed. It was to no fault of yours. Don’t blame yourself. Gathering unneeded guilt for things that are beyond our control only burdens the mind unnecessarily. It is better for one to control what one can, after all. So nothing else unusual happened? Other than Krum under the Imperious?”

Harry shook his head, brows furrowed and mind still firmly thinking of Cedric’s vacant eyes, his cold body, “N-no, Professor… that was all that happened.”

The room went silent and then Dumbledore seemed to age before Harry’s eyes, for just a moment, before he deeply exhaled and stood up, vanishing the chair he had conjured, “I fear that difficult times are ahead, my boy. As your Defense professor says, constant vigilance will only do you well.”

Harry nodded and offered a tremulous smile towards the Headmaster, “Thank you, Professor. I-I’ll keep that in mind.”

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled at him and he pulled out a tin and asked, “Lemon drop?”

Harry simply shook his head and laid back down on the bed, “No thank you, Professor. Please… tell Cedric’s parents that I’m sorry.”

“Of course, my boy. You are filled with such love, just like your mother.”
Harry closed his eyes, keeping that smile on his face, and he kept it on until he heard the infirmary door close behind the Headmaster.

The smile dropped immediately and he turned in the bed then burrowed himself into his pillow.

So it goes.

***

When next he awoke, it was to voices beside his bed.

“Ron, shush! Harry is resting!”

“Oh, come on, Hermione! He’s gotta wake up soon, right? He’s been in the infirmary for a whole day!”

“Honestly, Ron. He just went through the Triwizard Tournament where a person actually died. I think he’s allowed twenty fours of rest without you pestering him.”

Harry smiled and opened his eyes, “Well, allowed or not, I’m not sure anyone can sleep through you two arguing like that.”

Hermione turned towards him with an exuberant smile on her face and she immediately threw herself at him, hugging him tightly towards her. Just as quickly, she let go with a gasp, “Oh! I’m so sorry! Did I hurt you?”

He chuckled and shook his head, sharing a commiserating look with Ron, “No, Hermione, I’m fine. I was just exhausted, that’s all.”

As Ron went to open his mouth for a response, Madame Pompfrey opened the curtains around his bed and hurried towards him, running diagnostic spells, “Hm, everything looks good, Mr. Potter. I suggest you go to the Great Hall, eat dinner, then go to bed immediately! You are doing much
better, but that does not mean you should go and play Quidditch right now! You need to recover from the Tournament, which takes time. So rest, and I hope to not see you for a long while, Mr. Potter!”

Harry smiled at Pomphrey, who smiled back then walked out towards her other patients.

He looked towards Ron and asked, “So, dinner?”

Ron grinned and replied, “Yes, I’m starving!”

Hermione rolled her eyes, “When aren’t you, Ron?”

Harry laughed again and just shook his head as he got out of the bed, “That’s our Ron, all stomach and a bit of heart.”

Ron made an indignant sound and replied, “If you weren’t just coming out of the infirmary, mate, I’d make you regret that!”

“Well, it’s good that I’m a recovering invalid then, huh? I’ll be sure to make the most of it while I can.”

Hermione and Harry both laughed at Ron’s red face as they walked out and towards the Great Hall.

The normalcy was nice, but it also felt off. He felt as though he was playing a role that no longer suited him. That didn’t stop him from doing his best to play his part though. He knew to be patient and keep his cards close to his heart.

His Lord was depending on him to do his best, after all, and he would not disappoint Him.

Chapter End Notes

I got really excited and wrote the next chapter :D
What do you think so far? What's going on? What do you think of Harry? Did I lay enough hints? Am I being too obvious?

Let me know what you think! I'm a needy person and I need your comments to validate my existence... ;) :D :3

Thank you <3 :)

The return to Privet Drive was expected, but the reactions of his… relatives… was not.

He stepped into the house and leaned against the wall by the cupboard, staring straight at them. Petunia stiffened and looked back in disgust, her face resembling a prune in that moment. Vernon’s face went red and he began to sputter in outrage at his audacity. Dudley simply looked at him, his mouth slightly open, eagerly awaiting whatever showdown was about to happen, knowing it would end in something unpleasant for Harry.

Harry’s mouth quirked up and he softly said, “Did you know I have a godfather who escaped from prison? I’m sure I mentioned it last summer. He said that I was looking a bit skinny and that if he saw me to continue looking like this when he next sees me, he’d just have to pay me a visit and investigate what’s happening here.”

Petunia’s face went white, Vernon’s face went puce, Dudley’s mouth began to gape.

“Not only do I have a convict for a godfather, I now have a mentor who is very… invested… in my welfare. I’m sure you’ve heard of him at least, Aunt Petunia. A Lord Voldemort?”

Petunia gasped and she gripped the doorframe behind her to keep standing, “W-what? How could you h-have Him as your m-mentor? He killed your parents!”

He shrugged, “What is it to you, Aunt Petunia? We’re all freaks after all. What matters if I placed my bet with the man who murdered my mother… your sister? What does it matter?”

“Boy! Watch the way you speak! Pet, dear, what nonsense is he spitting out now?”
“Vernon… I think it would be best if we just left the boy alone from now on. Remember the man I told you about? The one who could come after us? It’d be best if we just ignored the boy, if only to keep the neighbors from finding out anything.”

Vernon simply glared at the boy before nodding hesitantly. Dudley looked confused, wondering why his cousin wasn’t getting beat up and thrown into his room by now.

Harry smirked, “I’m glad you understand, Aunt Petunia. Leave me alone this summer and from now on and until I say otherwise, and you’ll live. I’ll come and eat whenever I want and do whatever I need to do. For your survival, and for your precious Duddykins’ sake, it’d be best if he understood just why it’d be better for him to follow what I say.”

Petunia mutely nodded in agreement and the three of them watched as the boy pulled his trunk up the stairs and to the smallest bedroom in the house.

He felt slightly disappointed that they had agreed so easily. It would have been so much more fun if they had put up a bit of a fight. Oh well, surely they’d slip up eventually, and then he’d strike, just as his Lord had instructed him.

The protégé of the Dark Lord should never be subjugated by a bunch of filthy muggles, after all.

***

The summer went by lazily.

Harry was able to eat three meals, making sure to create healthy and balanced meals that filled the house with pleasant smells, smells that would bring Dudley running to the kitchen, only to watch, his mouth watering, as Harry ate it all, not even leaving a scrap to scrape off of the plates.

Even better, the house elf the Dark Lord sent once every week would bring books and lessons that he would have to learn. His Lord had assigned him a strict schedule, filled with learning and exercising, so that he could properly train himself up for what was ahead.

It was amazing just how much he didn’t know, how much of the world he was a part of that he was ignorant to.
Who knew that wizards had their own holidays, holidays that had become neglected over the past so many decades. Who knew that there were traditions, manners, and unspoken lessons that wizards and witches practiced and all magical-born knew from birth. He had been thrust into a world and not even handed a pamphlet, and he had walked about acting as though he knew the language… but he didn’t.

It had to be remedied before he could even begin to contemplate offering anything of worth to Him, before he could even begin to set the ball rolling for His plans.

More than all this knowledge he had never been made aware of, knowledge he had never even thought to search for, there were theories that he had to read up on and form his own opinion on.

That was perhaps what was most surprising of this whole endeavor. Even if he had thrown his lot in with the man who had murdered his parents and caused him to suffer under a family of muggles, he hadn’t really expected to come to like, to respect, to admire this man. He had still seen him as a monster with a snake-face and the only appeal to the man was the rush, that was it.

Yet this man had only offered him knowledge. He hadn’t pushed his own ideals and opinions on Harry. He gave him books, theories, guidelines, and then left the rest up to Harry. It was up to Harry what he did with what he now had. If that meant his opinion would line up with the Dark Lord, good. If it didn’t, well then. Or, at least, it seemed that way.

Harry was grateful for it.

Never before had he had the opportunity to just decide for himself. He hadn’t ever had someone just lay the cards out and give him the opportunity to decide what to make of it.

It was new, it was baffling, it was strange… it was intoxicating.

Harry did not once speak to His Lord that summer, not personally, beyond the instructions He would send with a house elf. The Dark Lord never responded to the letters Harry would send back beyond to give Harry more books with answers to the questions he had asked.

Yet, even without communicating, the Dark Lord was beginning to win Harry’s loyalty, slowly and surely.
A few days before his birthday, Harry was walking towards the park near Privet Drive. He had been following a strict exercise regimen, but he had neglected the fresh air outside to instead exercise within his room. He was remedying that now to breathe in the fresh air and let himself soak in the knowledge he had just read.

The idea of the power of intent behind magic guiding the magic was novel. To think that a simple Incendio could light a fire to a log and equally to a person if Harry willed it was incredibly.

Magic was amazing. Harry had let himself forget that in the hustle and bustle of daily classes and mind-numbing essays. It was amazing to realize again the potential of magic, to remember the incredible things he could do with it, to dwell on the idea of defying all rules of nature with a simple phrase and a bit of intent.

He wondered, idly, if one could use an Incendio and light separate parts of the body… perhaps just the heart. Would it simply cause a case of ‘heart burn’ or would the body begin to burn from the inside out? Wouldn’t it be fascinating to discover? His lips quirked up and his eyes lighted with wonder. Magic was wonderful.

“Hey! Freak!”

He turned and saw Dudley approaching with his motley group of friends and he rolled his eyes. Ah, but he had been anticipating this happening, he had just thought it would happen sooner.

Once Dudley was a few paces from him, he drew himself up and burst out, “I dunno what you said to Mum and Dad and get them to leave you alone, but you can’t scare me into forgetting just what a freak you are. Don’t you remember the way you would be locked up in the cupboard for days, the way you just wouldn’t die, even after not eating for weeks?”

Harry rolled his eyes again and scoffed, “Ah, Big D, how nice of you to join me on my walk. Even better for you to decide to let us walk down memory lane.”

Dudley’s face wrinkled in confusion for a moment before he said, “Sh-shut up, you twat! Remember Harry Hunting? I suggest you start running, freak.”
He chuckled in response, idly sizing Dudley and his two other friends, “Do you really want to do this, Duddykins? Don’t you remember what freaks like me can do? Do you so miss that pig tail you had?”

Dudley’s eyes widened in horror before narrowing in anger, “Start running, freak.”

“Ah, but why would I run when you need to? I don’t want you to die of a heart attack before your time, Dudley dearest.”

Harry’s lips curled and he stepped closer to Dudley. Dudley stepped back immediately in fear, taking in the way his cousin seemed to emanate a presence, the way his eyes seemed to glow.

“Now, don’t go away, Dudley. You wanted this, remember?”

“S-stop! I’ll tell Mum and Dad you’re being a freak again! You’re not allowed to do that, remember! You’ll be expelled!”

Harry chuckled, “I don’t need to use my wand for this, Duddykins. Never for this.”

He extended his right hand and Dudley’s and his friend’s bodies immediately stiffened upright. Harry’s hand tightened into a fist and their bodies collapsed in on themselves and they began to whimper in pain. Harry grinned as he lifted his hands, their bodies mirroring his movement. He continued to lift them until they were some fair feet from the ground. With no warning, he dropped his hand and they fell down.

Immediately, they groaned and began to crawl away from the boy with the glowing eyes and the maniacal grin.

Harry’s hand shot out and he stilled their movements. He stepped closer and pulled Dudley up with his other hand, close enough so that he could see the individual freckles on Dudley’s face, “Don’t test me again, Dudley dearest. This is but a taste of what I could do with you and your friends. Squeal to anyone about this and you’ll never be able to open your mouth again, not even to eat. Now run off, little pig.”
He dropped Dudley and watched gleefully as the three of them ran away as though hellhounds were after them.

Harry then shrugged and put his hands in his pockets, turning away to continue his walk.

He went back to wondering what all he could do with magic to utilize it fully and still be considered *light*.

**Chapter End Notes**

I should be able to keep up the speedy updates until either classes start up again OR I get to a point where the plot thickens enough to where I need to take my time.

Thank you for all the comments! I'm so excited that people like this! I wasn't sure about it since, as I said, this is my first HP fanfic, but I'm glad to see it's interesting enough to get people to read it :)

What do you think so far? Am I rushing too much, leaving things too vague or not explaining enough? Anything I should make sure to do or not do?

Hope you liked it! Please comment and let me know what you think! :) :D <3
At midnight, he whispered to himself, “Happy birthday, Harry.”

Five minutes past midnight, a house elf popped into his room and squeaked out, “M-master Harry Potter sir, His Dark Lord-ness offers you this on this day for the union between the two of yous. I-I hope you are pleased, Master Harry Potter sir.”

Harry’s face was beaming as he eagerly reached for the box. He knew it was customary for a mentor to provide for their protégé, to show that they are capable of providing for their apprentice in all manners, but it was his birthday and it’s not like Voldemort was unaware of when that was considering he died due to this day fourteen years ago.

He smiled in gratitude towards the elf who squeaked again and popped away, overwhelmed by the kindness in those eyes. It was unused to being looked at that way.

Harry carefully unwrapped the box and opened it to see a leather-bound book and a wand, with a letter on top. He took out the letter and read,

Harry,

This gift marks the official beginning of the mentorship between you and I. The book is meant to be a journal for your thoughts. I have always considered that those with higher thought processes write their words down, to ponder on and to make them unforgettable. You will begin this process and, hopefully, some intelligence will be gleaned out of it for you. The journal is warded, of course, for only you to see what you write. And I, which goes without saying. There should be no secrets between us, now should there, Harry? Place a drop of blood on the cover and it will be warded only for our eyes.
The wand is a blackthorn and phoenix core wand. It goes without saying that the wand does not have the Trace on it, but since I am unsure if you are able to read between the lines I have stated it plainly for you. Keep it on the holster I provided for you at all times and keep it hidden. See if it works for you, if not I will send you another.

Soon I will send you instructions for what I require of you this coming year.

Sincerely,

Lord Voldemort.

He placed the letter beside him on the bed and promptly pulled out the wand and gave it a flick. Immediately, he felt a rush go through him, more powerful than the one his current wand had given him and he grinned as rightness filled him and the wand gave off green sparks.

It was strange that this wand fit him so well, but he shrugged off the strangeness and pulled out the journal to drop his blood on it and make his first entry.

He had just gotten his first gift from the Dark Lord and this was surely a moment that he would not want to forget.

***

When they came to fetch him, he didn’t have time to even alert Voldemort to his change in location and he privately fretted about it, even as he smiled at Remus, Tonks, and Moody and followed them out of Number Four and pulled out his Firebolt for the journey.

Soon enough, he had read the scrap of paper and his mind was bursting with questions about what the Order of the Phoenix was, but he didn’t get a chance to ask them as he entered Number Twelve.

He took in the dark and gloomy interior and allowed his face to grimace, even as his insides tingled at the hint of the rush was felt. It was like the house was emanating it! A house! Who could’ve guessed that a house could be this way? Harry felt like he was coming home, but he had a feeling the others would not take it well if he actually showed that he liked the place, so he said nothing and simply followed Tonks to the kitchen.
He was only able to take in the Weasleys and that a few others were in the kitchen before he was being smothered by Molly. He heard her make exclamations about how skinny he was and how she’d feed him and how it was so good to see him and he barely got a chance to put a word in protest.

Then the others all faded away as he saw his godfather leaning against the wall. He still looked a little too on the gaunt side and there were dark shadows under his eyes, but it didn’t matter because Harry simply rushed forward and hugged him for all he was worth. That, too, felt like coming home.

He was soon sent upstairs, as the adults had some meeting to attend, and there he was bombarded by Hermione and Ron. He hugged Hermione back, but he felt that anger that had been simmering all summer rise up in him.

“I see that you haven’t forgotten that I am your friend as well.”

Hermione looked at him with wide eyes, begging for understanding, and Ron’s face was red and he couldn’t meet his eyes, “Harry! We didn’t forget you! Dumbledore just thought it wasn’t safe for us to send letters with Voldemort back! What if some Death Eater had intercepted it and the owl lead them straight to you! Be reasonable, Harry!”

Ron cleared his throat, “Sorry, mate, Dumbledore had us promise that we would keep our letters few and not let any important information slip… but I swear we don’t know any more than you! We’ve just been cleaning this place all summer, that’s all.”

Harry glared at them mercilessly, “I see. So if Dumbledore told you to jump off a bridge, would you? Was Dumbledore the reason our friendship started? I’m sorry, I thought that defeating a troll together meant that we’d be with one another through thick and thin, forget what adults have to say about that. I mean, I had seen a classmate die right in front of me just this past year! It’s not like I needed anyone to keep me from slipping into depression while I was stuck with relatives you know I hate!”

They looked back at him, horror-struck. He internally smirked, reveling in the opportunity to make the most of their wrongdoings. Sure, he’d forgive them. It’s not like this summer was as bad as any other, and he had promptly forgotten Cedric after leaving the infirmary. That didn’t mean he couldn’t milk it for all he was worth though, and sure he could use their guilt somehow. This had potential.
“H-harry… we’re sorry! I forgot that you saw Cedric die…”

“Mate… we didn’t mean to hurt you, promise!”

He shook his head and looked away from them, crossing his arms across his chest, “Of course you forgot, Hermione. You didn’t see the dead body. You didn’t have to hold the cold body and bring it back. You didn’t have to live with the guilt, wondering if you could have saved him somehow. You didn’t have nothing to do but stare at a wall and wallow in the guilt and fear all summer long. It makes sense you forgot.”

They averted their eyes from him, ashamed and guilty.

He nodded and said softly, “You’re my best friends, so I forgive you… but, right now, I don’t think I can forget how you abandoned me so easily on the words of Dumbledore. I need to be alone right now and I need you to think on whether you two are actually my friends or not. What does our friendship mean to you? You know I wouldn’t have let Dumbledore keep me from talking to you this summer. I would’ve found a way to not be intercepted and would have still communicated with you. I wouldn’t have abandoned you. I would have put in the effort for you two. But perhaps you just don’t value me as much. Think about it.”

He walked away and back downstairs, deciding to wait for his godfather. Plus, he needed some time alone to figure out if the house elf would still be able to find him if he was in a place under the Fidelius charm… how would he communicate with Voldemort otherwise?

***

He need not have worried. Perhaps he had forgotten that Voldemort was once Tom Riddle, and is still Tom Riddle, even if he denies it. Tom Riddle was a genius, so it only makes sense that Voldemort would be more of a genius, with more life experience and magical knowledge on him.

At midnight, with Ron’s snoring filling the air, Kreacher creeped towards him and said, “I is being called to the House Elf realm and was given this letter to give to you.” Under his breath, “Filthy half-blood son to blood-traitor master… oh, how mistress would cry!”

Harry nodded politely and said calmly, “Thank you, Kreacher. Will you mind taking the response back the same way?”
“I is living to serve the House of Black.”

“… That’s a yes?”

“You is having some Black blood in you, Master Harry.”

“I had no idea, but thank you. Please wait for my response.”

He sat down on his bed and opened the letter,

_Troublesome Brat,_

_This agreement between the two of us will be the turning tide of the war, so be grateful that your continued existence has some worth to me. You are more trouble than you are worth, otherwise. In any case, send your response with the house elf who gave this to you. You should be thankful that I knew that house elves can communicate with one another through their realm, otherwise all my plans would have fallen and you would have not liked the consequences._

_Send your situation details promptly. I must make plans accordingly._

_Sincerely,_

_Lord Voldemort._

Harry grinned whimsically and shook his head, immediately pulling out parchment and a quill to write back.

_He was_ grateful that Voldemort was such a genius though.

He had started to take for granted being ignored at his relatives’ house. It was strange and incredibly stifling now to be surrounded by so many people. His godfather’s eyes were vacant but always on him when in the same room, Hermione and Ron were repentant and followed him whenever they could, and the other Weasleys were _everywhere_. There was not a single moment where he could
read what Voldemort had assigned or a time where he could sit idly and go over his studies. Not only that, ‘cleaning’ Grimmauld Place was a travesty and he knew Kreacher’s mildness towards him was due to him helping Kreacher hide dark artifacts and heirlooms from the others.

He couldn’t believe that he was actually missing staying with the Dursley’s.

However, he knew that he couldn’t ask to go back, not when they all knew how much he hated it there, and not when there was a chance that he could collect information for the Dark Lord staying where he was. It would be suspicious if he wanted to leave his friends and Sirius, and it would be a wasted opportunity that Voldemort would surely punish him for.

So he wrote back and included the little information he had gathered, then he gave the letter to Kreacher, who sneered in response and popped away. He smiled softly to himself and laid back down on the bed.

This year was definitely going to be interesting, to say the least.

Chapter End Notes

We’re entering into OOtP and I want to apologize ahead of time if I forget/embellish certain information. Remember, it’s AU now AND it has been a while since I read the books lol. I’ve read a lot of HP fanfiction though, so I sort of forget what’s canon and what’s fanon...

Anyways, I hope the letters from Voldemort weren’t too OOC or anything lol. His tone is hard to write :3

IMPORTANT: I want to let you all know that the way the story is going to go is that you, as the reader, are going to have to read between the lines a lot. As the tags state, Harry is being influenced by his Horcrux. Voldemort is sane (I'm going to go with the theory that when a Horcrux is destroyed, it returns back to the main body... so he has over 50% of his soul). I'm not going to explicitly state it in the story, because that's not the style of writing I'm doing. Harry's a vague narrator in here and a lot of it has to be read into. I like that kind of writing, so I hope you don't mind it too much! If you have questions, I will, of course, be happy to answer them! :) <3

I hope you don't mind that the story hasn't been incredibly dialogue heavy... I'll only include dialogue when there's interesting things to say :) For instance, Remus, Moody, and Tonks picking up Harry isn't all that interesting, so I left it out. If that bothers you, let me know and I'll see if I can add more dialogue or something.

In any case, I'm incredibly flattered by the comments and the attention this story is receiving! I had no idea people would like it and I'm so happy you do! :) :D I fully plan
on making quick updates for as long as I can and I DEFINITELY will finish this <3

Thank you and love y'all! :) <3
Chapter Summary

the return to Hogwarts and the beginning of a following... a.k.a. Harry is a mini-Dark-Lord-in-the-making ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He might have switched sides and became Voldemort’s apprentice, but he still cared about his friends and Sirius, his almost-family.

Yet, looking at them now, he felt a bit disconnected.

He had forgiven Hermione and Ron by having them share all the information they knew about the Order and letting them know that he wouldn’t forget this betrayal, especially after Ron’s behavior the previous year. He didn’t want fair weather friends, he wanted friends who would slay a troll by his side and lie straight to a professor’s face. Hopefully they understood that now… if not, well, he had warned them.

Sirius was different though. He was, and perhaps still is, Harry’s hope for a family. Sirius may at times look at Harry and see James, and perhaps Sirius wasn’t exactly the best parental figure – his parents knew what they were doing when they made him the godfather instead, since Sirius was good for having fun with, not so much for disciplining and the other duties – but Sirius was the one person whose efforts were only for Harry’s benefit.

However, by joining Voldemort… Harry was battling on the other side of the war, which sort of meant that he was betraying all these people who cared so much about him and his welfare. Thinking of his changed status as betrayal of course made him feel guilty… but not guilty enough to open up about it or to even want to switch back.

The rush beckoned him and that was more tempting than these people who were almost-best friends, almost-family, almost-something to him. They had all came too late and Harry had already made up his mind.

So, in an effort to make up for the pain he knew they would face, he made sure to smile and spend as much time with Sirius as he could, and he made efforts to mend bridges with Hermione and Ron,
even if it was with a guarded heart.

He could live in the now for them. After all, they wouldn’t find out about his betrayal for a long while yet. Who knows, they might even be convinced to switch sides with him… what an interesting development that would be!

***

He stared out the window of the empty compartment he sat in and let his mind wander.

Ron and Hermione were attending their Prefects meeting, and Harry was taking advantage of the peace and quiet. He liked them, sure, but sometimes a person just wants to be alone with their thoughts. He just felt that need a lot more around them.

Absentmindedly he wondered why he found it so hard to tolerate their friendship now… ah, well, the perils of growing up, or something. That must be it.

The compartment door slid open and Harry looked up to see his blond nemesis, Malfoy. Malfoy already had a sneer on his lips and his goons, Crabbe and Goyle, were at his back guarding him, as usual.

Even though he knew Malfoy was there to pick a fight and he clearly recalled how much he hated the boy, at the moment he felt… nothing, apathetic at most, towards him.

As Malfoy went to open his mouth and say some insult towards him, Harry cut him off and asked, “Malfoy, how do you celebrate Samhain while at Hogwarts?”

Malfoy’s mouth snapped shut and he looked back at him surprised, eyes wide. Quickly, he regained his composure and he entered fully into the compartment, gesturing for Goyle to close the door behind him. Harry smiled slightly and nodded for them to take a seat.

“Why do you want to know, Potter?”

He shrugged, “I never knew the Wizarding World had its own holidays and traditions. I learned
about it this summer and I’d very much like to take part of my heritage and not just be a spectator.”

Malfoy looked at him, scrutinizing him to see if it was the truth or not. He took in Potter’s guileless eyes and his open body posture, knowing the boy was genuine in his desire to be a true wizard. He nodded and said, “The other purebloods usually gather in an empty classroom after the Feast and do the ritual, though we make sure we don’t do any of the blood-drawing or anything like that, in case Dumbledore found out.” He paused and looked at Potter intently before firmly continuing on, “I can invite you for the ritual. The others might want to meet you beforehand to ensure you’re… honest in your desire and not just doing this to rat us out. I can see your sincerity though, so they should take my word.”

Harry smiled at Malfoy, “Thank you, Malfoy. I appreciate it… what do you want in return for the information and the invite?”

The blond smirked and nodded slowly in acknowledgment, “You’ve gotten smarter, Potter. I’d like a magical oath that this information I gave you will not be told to anyone unless you have my permission… and I’d like a favor I’ll collect in the future.”

Now Harry was staring at Malfoy intently, taking in the truth and seriousness in his eyes, before he nodded, “I’ll give my oath, but the favor will have restrictions. It cannot cause any one of my friends harm, it cannot cause me harm or humiliation, and it cannot have serious ramifications towards me or others.”

Malfoy nodded after briefly thinking over it, “Very well.”

Harry gave the oath and Malfoy accepted it, feeling the magic binding Potter to keep it secret.

Then Harry held out his hand towards Malfoy and said softly, “You held out your hand to me first year and I rejected it. Like I said, I just learned about our traditions this summer… I didn’t know that by rejecting your hand I was implying you were lesser to me. I honestly just rejected your hand because you were being mean to my first friend.” Harry stood up and bowed low at the waist and said clearly, “I, Harry James Potter, do formally apologize for unknowingly insulting the Draco Lucius Malfoy and the House of Malfoy four years ago.” He straightened and looked into Malfoy’s eyes, “I hope that offer of friendship can be reconsidered. Or, if not friends, allies at the least.”

Malfoy’s eyes were wide before a pleased smile filled his face, “I, Draco Lucius Malfoy, do hereby formally forgive you and your unknowingly given insult, Harry James Potter.” He grasped Harry’s hand and gave it a firm shake, “Allies sounds like a good beginning, Potter.”
“Call me Harry.”

“Then you are welcome to call me Draco in return.”

They both grinned at each other before Draco stood up and said, “I had better head back before the others wonder where I’ve gotten to. I will contact you later about Samhain then, Pot-Harry.”

“That sounds good, Malf-Draco.”

Draco and his goons promptly left the compartment, though both Crabbe and Goyle nodded at him in acknowledgement before following the blond’s wake. Harry sat back on his seat, pleased.

That was one ally, future friend hopefully, that he had gained on the Dark side. He would have to play his cards carefully to ensure the others’ loyalty and friendliness, but it was necessary that he gain his own… followers.

***

Harry looked about the Great Hall, taking in the eager voices around him and the nervous first years being Sorted one by one.

He tuned back in to hear Hermione say to Ron, “You didn’t finish your essay for Potions?! Ron! I told you a million times during the summer to finish all your homework! You never learn! I’m not going to let you copy off mine! You’ll never learn otherwise! You deserve a T for forgetting when you had all summer! Honestly, Ron!!”

Ron groaned and looked at Harry piteously, “Mate, can I see your essay?”

Harry shook his head with a grin, “Nah, mate, Hermione’s right. How will you ever learn?”

Ron groaned louder and buried his head in his arms atop the table, muttering, “Don’t wake me up, maybe I’ll smother myself to death before Potions.”
Harry chuckled and smacked Ron’s shoulder loudly, “Want me to help you along by summoning a pillow for you?”

He didn’t hear Ron’s response as the Sorting had just finished and Dumbledore was now standing up for the welcoming speech.

He had felt Dumbledore’s curious eyes on him, but he had firmly kept them away. Voldemort had sent him books on Occlumency, stressing how important it was since Dumbledore was a Legilimens, but the art of Occlumency seemed to be difficult for him. How was he supposed to clear his mind? He was still stuck on getting his mind into a meditative state. So, until he could manage that, he’d just have to avoid Dumbledore and his twinkling blue eyes.

He surveyed the teachers at the table and had to keep a grimace from his face as he took in a lady in pink who looked like the cat who had swallowed the canary, much too pleased with herself. Dumbledore had introduced her as Professor Umbridge, their new Defense professor, and the lady had actually had the audacity to interrupt Dumbledore and give her own speech!

Like he had thought earlier, the year was definitely going to be interesting, what with the Ministry involving themselves at Hogwarts. Harry wasn’t even sure why Fudge had felt the need for a pair of eyes here in the first place. It’s not like anyone knew Voldemort was back, so why?

Harry shrugged to himself as he followed the other fifth years up to the Gryffindor dormitory. Perhaps he’d ask Voldemort about Umbridge and how he was supposed to act around her. Was she an ally of Voldemort’s? Would he be expected to convert her to Voldemort’s side? Or should he keep his head down and avoid suspicion from the Ministry?

Time would tell what would happen and what was in store.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, still very minimal dialogue... that's not how I normally write! I dunno why, but it's hard for me to write conversations for this story lol. Harry's mind is weird ;) He just ignores a lot of conversations, I guess :3 That's my excuse and what I'm gonna go with XD

I'd love to hear feedback on what you think is going to happen! Do you think Harry will still teach the DA? What do you think of Harry and his follower-building? Is that Voldemort's plans for Harry or is Harry just working on his own? Do you think Snape
is someone that will end up Voldemort's side now that Lily's son is/will be Dark? Do you think Umbridge will die? Do you think Dumbledore will choke on one of his lemon drops? WHAT DO YOU THINK? THIS WRITER WOULD LIKE TO KNOW! ;) :D

Btw, I just wanted to say that a lot of the theories about magic and dark magic in general is influenced by Harry Potter and the Descent of Darkness by Athy! I really loved that story and wish the series hadn't been abandoned 😞 If you haven't read it, you totally should!

I love you all for the comments, kudos, and subscriptions! I'm honestly blown away by how many people like this story! :D ^^ <3
fate's stress ball

Chapter Summary

Harry learns how to charm toads as well as snakes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Harry was used to having people try to murder him, especially when they were his Defense professors.

Really, it was a fact of life.

The sky is blue, humans breathe oxygen, Harry Potter’s professors are out to kill him.

Therefore, he was unsurprised when he entered into the pink domain that was the DADA classroom and found Umbridge looking at him with gleeful and malicious eyes.

Harry let out an inaudible sigh as he seated himself in the furthest corner at the back of the room and resigned himself for another hellish year with near-death experiences galore. Even with Voldemort not out to get him, it seems that Harry Potter could never catch a break. Another way to show Fate was fucking with him, clearly. Maybe Harry Potter was Fate’s stress ball? That would at least provide some sense to the whole situation… this train of thought would bear thinking about, when he wasn’t in definite hostile territory, that is.

He noticed that Hermione had chosen to sit next to Neville, but Ron sat next to him and still looked glum since Hermione was continuing to refuse any help on the Potions essay that would be due next block, when they went for double Potions. In any case, Harry didn’t expect for Ron to survive the day, and Ron knew it too.

“Hem, hem, hello class.”

The class muttered back and the smile on Umbridge’s face tightened, “Since the professors for the Defense position have been… less than satisfactory, and perhaps the other professors have not upheld a certain standard, I will excuse you, just this once. When I greet the class, I expect you to
answer, ‘Hello, Professor Umbridge.’ I’m not asking too much, now am I?” She chuckled at her own joke while everyone else starred blankly at her. The diminutive toad-woman nodded slightly and continued, “Now, once again, hello class.”

Louder, and in unison, the class responded, “Hello, Professor Umbridge.”

“That wasn’t too hard, now was it? Hem, hem, now pull out your assigned book for the class and turn to chapter one. If you have any questions, feel welcome to raise your hand and I will call on you accordingly. The class guidelines are on the board for your perusal, though it shouldn’t be too hard for your minds to grasp, I hope so, in any case!” She chuckled again and the class just stared at her.

Harry had to stifle a chuckle of his own, Wow, this is pitiful. At least we all seem to agree on our opinion of her… or it seems that way.

There was shuffling of items as they pulled out their books and writing utensils, then silence as they all read through the chapter.

Harry glanced through it, but he had already read it before class – Voldemort had impressed upon him the value of excellent grades and the consequences if he fell below standards… Harry fully planned on turning into a cooler version of Hermione this year and going forward – and his opinion of the year ahead was below zero. It seems that the best professors he had had would remain Professor Lupin and Professor Moody. It was a real shame that the supposed curse on the position prevented the two from continuing for more than one year…

He absentmindedly glanced up and zeroed in on Hermione fairly squirming in her seat, hand raised in the air and face slightly pink from embarrassment at being ignored. The rest of the class had also noticed her predicament, but Umbridge either remained oblivious or was willfully ignoring the brunette. Harry’s right eyebrow raised and he shared a look with Ron, who looked confused and annoyed on Hermione’s behalf. Harry simply shook his head and forced himself to look back to the book; no way was he getting dragged into this. Every man for himself, right? Something like that.

“Mr. Potter, is there any reason why you have been staring at the same page for the past five minutes?”

He glanced up and saw that Umbridge was right by his desk, her back to Hermione, and staring at him with eyes that were gleeful at possibly catching him acting up. He had to restrain himself from responding, ‘I apologize, Professor, but I’m a slow reader,’ and instead smiled at her politely and said calmly, “I apologize, Professor Umbridge, I have already read through the first five chapters before
class and was waiting for the other students to finish their reading so we can move onto what you have planned next.”

On Umbridge’s face was a gleeful smile, “Ah, so you have already read through some of the material, Mr. Potter? And what is your opinion on the curriculum?”

He forced himself to thoughtfully pause and glance at the so-called guidelines on the board before he replied, “Well, Professor Umbridge, I believe that we can all look forward to a year that will be different from all the other years we have had. With your curriculum and your knowledge, I fully believe that we will be prepared for the OWLs this year, according to Ministry standards most assuredly. I have every faith that you, Professor Umbridge, only have our best in mind and that you will ensure that we are prepared to work for the Ministry after graduation.”

Her eyes widened slightly before an unflattering pink splashed her cheeks and she tittered, “Oh, Mr. Potter! You are surely a flatterer! That is entirely different from what I’ve heard of you, Mr. Potter.”

He smiled charmingly, “Ah, but Professor Umbridge, surely you don’t fall into the sheep mindset and allow others’ opinions to color your own?”

She chortled then smiled at him, the maliciousness in her eyes fading into appreciation. He had to suppress the urge to shudder, but he maintained the smile on his face. “You are entirely correct, Mr. Potter. I do not think like others. I think I will enjoy having you in class, Mr. Potter. I look forward to seeing how wrong others were about you.”

He flashed a bright smile, all teeth, at her and nodded, “Yes, I look forward to learning your own ideas and opinions, Professor Umbridge.” He paused then said softly, “Professor Umbridge, it seems that one of your students has raised her hand and has been waiting patiently for you.”

“Oh?” She turned and her smile turned into a slight sneer, “Ah, yes, Ms…. Graves, was it?”

“Hermione Granger, ma’am. I had a question –”

“Did you finish the reading then, Ms. Granger?”

Hermione shook her head, hair flying, before saying, “Like Harry, I finished the reading before class. I simply had a question about the guidelines, Professor.”
Umbridge’s eyebrows raised and she tilted her head down, just enough so that it was clear she was looking down her nose at Hermione, “Yes, Ms. Granger? What was unclear about the guidelines that you failed to understand?”

“I just wanted to clarify whether we will have any practical experience of the spells we learn, since you made no mention of it. Will this class be theoretical only?”

Umbridge straightened and she looked around the room before replying, “Hem, hem, yes, Ms. Granger, this class will be theory only. There is no need for any practical demonstrations when theory is perfectly fine for the OWLs.”

Hermione burst out, not even raising her hand, “But, Professor Umbridge, we’ll be expected to demonstrate spells during the OWLs! How will we know how to do them correctly if we never get any in-class practice?”

Umbridge cleared her throat, “Well, if you are as exceptional as people claim, Ms. Granger, surely you can take what you read and be able to produce results adequately when examination time comes. You do not need to know the spells outside of the exams, in any case.”

Ron bristled and exclaimed, “What do you mean we don’t need to know the spells outside of the exams? What about in the real world?”

Umbridge glared at Ron and said, annoyed, “Mr. Weasley, I do not listen to hooligans who fail to raise their hands and wait to be called upon.” She waited for Ron to raise his hand and repeat the question before responding, “Well, Mr. Weasley, there is no need for real world application. The spells you learn are used for the exams and then you never need them again. That is what Aurors are for.”

Parvati raised her hand and waited for her to call on her, “My name is Parvati Patil, Professor Umbridge. What about those students who want to be Aurors? How will they learn if they aren’t allowed to use spells unless for an exam?”

Umbridge’s face was turning a slight puce and her eyebrow was twitching in annoyance, “Well, Ms. Patil, that is what the Auror Academy is for. They will learn the necessary there. As Hogwarts students, you have no need for them unless during your OWLs and NEWTs, and once you graduate you have the Aurors to call upon, if necessary. Now, that is enough. Get back to reading. Once you are done with chapter one, go ahead to chapter two. We still have another hour left in class. No
talking, unless you raise your hand.”

Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes and shared a sympathetic look with Hermione. This year was most definitely going to be hell.

***

“But Harry! How can she just say we’ll never need to know spells! What kind of hole is she living in that she doesn’t know about, about, Voldemort?”

Ron looked annoyed at Hermione for saying His name, but nodded, “Yeah, Mione’s right. So she just doesn’t want any of us to know how to actually, you know, defend ourselves? Mate, anyways, what was that in class? You were acting like Malfoy, saying all those pretty words and sweet talking to her!”

Hermione nodded and turned to look straight at Harry, blocking him from continuing on and moving him to the side of the hallway, “What was that, Harry? You’ve never acted like that before.”

Harry shrugged, “I dunno. It just didn’t seem like a good idea to get on her bad side, what with her in the Ministry and all. Dumbledore told me to keep my head down, especially after, you know, last year.”

Hermione’s eyes widened and she nodded understandingly, “Oh, well, Professor Dumbledore’s right. It is good for you to keep out of the Ministry’s light, especially with the news talking smack about the Headmaster’s competency and all… It’s rather nice of Professor Dumbledore to not want you to be targeted by the media! Especially after last year and Skeeter…”

Harry ruefully smiled, “Yes, it is rather nice of him, huh?”

Hermione smiled back and grabbed Ron’s arm, “Alright, we’re going to be late if we don’t hurry! We’re prefects, Ron! We can’t be setting a bad example by being late!”

Ron moaned, “Please, just leave me here to die. Anything will be better than having my insides used as potions ingredients! Plus, don’t prefects get a pass for being late, if we’re helping the firsties and stuff?”
Hermione snorted and shook her head and Harry burst out laughing, “Mate, you really wanna tell Snape that he shouldn’t take off points for being late cause you’re a *Gryffindor* Prefect?”

Ron’s face flushed red and he muttered, “Greasy git’s gonna murder me anyways, might as well get in a few words before I die.”

Harry laughed again as they started speed walking down to the dungeons, “So, what do you want your tombstone to say? ‘Here Lies a Brave Soul: He Faced His Second Greatest Fear and Died for His Efforts’? Or should it say, ‘Here Lies Ron Weasley: He Had Fun This Summer and Died Because of It’?”

Ron shoved him and Harry laughed louder. Hermione grinned at Ron and said, “What should we say at his funeral, Harry? Should we mention how he died as a true Gryffindor, brave and foolish, but at least he’s still useful, though dead, as potions ingredients?”

Ron buried his head in his hands and moaned again, “You two are horrible! Why am I even friends with you?”

Harry grinned and shared a look with Hermione before they both said as one, “Because we’re the best there is, that’s why.”

They laughed and continued bantering on their way to the dungeons, cheerfully forgetting their disastrous DADA lesson and ignoring the doom ahead in Potions.

**Chapter End Notes**

I considered adding the Potions portion of their day (btw, I have no idea how their schedule actually was fifth year... is it okay if I just make it up as I go??), but I'm not emotionally ready to write Snape JUST yet :P Plus, I thought the chapter ended nicely, so I didn't want to ruin it or something :3

This chapter is actually pretty long... I'm happy haha :D

What did you think of Umbridge? What did you think of Harry's actions in DADA? Was it what you were expecting, or were you disappointed or pleasantly surprised with what I wrote? Umbridge was actually fun to write haha :D I did not expect that! Also, want to comfort those who asked: YES, Umbridge will MOST DEFINITELY get what's coming to her ;) Whether that's death or torture.... that will be seen ;)
I'm not really a fan of sports, so I don't really want to write any Quidditch games. Is that okay? I'll of course mention Harry being a part of the team, well, up until Umbridge finds a way to cancel it of course... or something. We'll see. How important is it that you want to see that?

Is there anything in particular you guys want to see happen at Hogwarts? We'll need to have Voldemort appear soon since we haven't seen him in the actual story, besides the prologue! :D Let's get some Harrymort action, huh? ;)

THANK YOU FOR THE COMMENTS, KUDOS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, EVERYTHING. Y'all are amazing and the attention is keeping me motivated <3 I've never written DAILY for a story before, but I've been managing it for this story and it makes me even more motivated to keep it going lol :D <3
reaching for nirvana

Chapter Summary

Harry spends a productive day in the least expected place (for him, at least)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Harry had never really appreciated the quiet and peace that the library offered him. Since, most often, he simply tagged along with Hermione when she got something she wanted to research or was dragged into the library when exams came near, Harry never really had the chance to take in the library for what it was: a haven of knowledge, an opportunity to rise above his station, a nirvana for those who want to pursue higher thought processes.

Oh, and a place to avoid people, of course.

After all, who expects Harry Potter to hide out in a library? Not even Hermione and Ron would think to look for him here.

He smiled softly to himself as he read through the glamoured book on Occlumency. He had been slacking in his private studies and knew he had to remedy that before the weekly house elf showed up. Harry really didn’t want to test Voldemort and find out what a punishment from him would be, not when he vividly remembered his relatives’ views on punishment and still experienced Snape’s definition of punishment—er, detention.

Harry looked up and turned his head toward the window to the side of his table and let his mind wander over the past few weeks and the happenings.

Voldemort had, of course, managed to send a house elf to him weekly, as usual. His letters still had study material in addition to his Hogwarts studies. Voldemort wanted him to hurry through, especially through Occlumency, so that his main plans could start. After all, what is the use of having Harry in Hogwarts if he was of no use?

Quidditch had started, which of course ate up his time, and it wasn’t like Harry Potter, youngest Seeker in a century, could just quit without having everyone asking questions or, worse, growing suspicious. That would most definitely incur Voldemort’s wrath.
So, between Voldemort’s studies, OWLs preparations in all his courses, and Quidditch, Harry felt stretched thin. His friends were even feeling a bit neglected, but what could he do? There was only one of him! Which, of course, brought his thoughts back to procuring a Time Turner. He had wanted to mention it to Voldemort, but it just seemed so… it seemed like he was just asking for too much. Voldemort cannot, in any sense, be described as benevolent, and after Voldemort mentioning how he had been Head Boy and still managed to a following and perfect scores on top of it, he highly doubted Voldemort would have any pity and give him a Time Turner. Why would Voldemort want to make his life easier?

It was wishful thinking, but Harry still wanted one. Also, the forbidden nature of using a Time Turner also made owning one incredibly tempting. If only he knew how to procure one… perhaps Knockturn Alley? But then how would he manage to get to Diagon Alley without anyone the wiser?

“Well, Potter, rather surprising to find the Golden Boy here in the library. Weren’t you planning on using your fame to buy your OWL scores?”

Harry blinked and looked up to find Malfoy seating himself at his table. His eyebrows raised in surprise and he inclined his head before waving a privacy charm into place, “Hello, Draco. What can I do for you?”

Draco smirked, “I figured it was time I made well on our deal and brought you to those friends I mentioned, Harry.”

Harry’s eyes widened for a moment before he looked remorseful, “I can’t, Draco. I really have to finish this reading tonight.”

“What? Will you be punished otherwise, Harry? Grow a pair and come on, Potter.”

“No, I’m serious, I really can’t. Seriously, I’ll be free tomorrow, but I have to have this done tonight.”

Draco looked at him in consternation, “It’s Saturday, Harry. The work isn’t due until Monday, surely.”

Harry huffed out an amused chuckle, “Yes, I’m aware of what day it is. This is sort of…”
Without another word, he let the glamour on the book fall and angled it for Draco to see. He read the title and his eyes widened in surprise, “Merlin, you’re reading that book here? In Hogwarts? You have some nerve! What if someone caught you, worse, what if Dumbledore caught you! I can see why you were Sorted into Gryffindor… foolishly brave, indeed.”

Harry laughed outright and shook his head, “Thus the glamour, Draco, honestly. I’m not an idiot.”

“Still, what if it failed or someone noticed it and Finite’d it?”

“Then I guess I’d be well and truly screwed, I suppose… are you worried about me, Draco?”

He rolled his eyes, “Please, Harry, I could care less… though, with our tentative friendship in the air, I suppose I should say that I care, at least a little. I just wouldn’t want anyone to discover your reading material while I’m in the vicinity. They’d assume it’s my book!”

Harry grinned, “I figured that’s why, you Slytherin.”

Draco smirked and mocked a bow towards Harry, “At your service.”

They quietly lapsed into silence, Harry going back to his reading after glamouring the book and Draco working on his other homework.

It was pleasant, surprisingly.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the more of a filler chapter! I wanted to show some development on the Draco/Harry front, but I didn't want to introduce the other Slytherins JUST yet! And Voldemort seemed to not want to come into the story just yet... hopefully I can persuade him for the next chapter ;)

I was asked how Dumbledore knew Voldemort came back, so I wanted to be sure that others were aware. Like I said, a lot of the background info is between the lines, but I'm
more than happy to explain it, if necessary! :) :D

Explanation: So, I'm going off of my impression of Dumbledore and my own head canons on what went down 4th year. There is no way Dumbledore didn't suspect that something was going to happen, and considering he also knew about the vision Harry had had during the summer, he most likely knew Voldemort would be coming back soon, and it was confirmed when Harry was entered into the Tournament and something went down during the Third Task that resulted in Cedric's death. Most likely, since Harry lied, Dumbledore believes Harry was obliviated and doesn't know Voldie's back, but Dumbledore is smart enough to think that it's better to be safe than sorry. So he is preparing for Voldemort's true return, which is why he started up the Order and started mentioning it to the Ministry, which of course caused Fudge to get his back up like in the original OOtP.... though the negative attention is more mild towards Harry since Harry didn't personally announce it himself, Dumbledore simply mentioned how Harry had to have seen something and forgotten it, which caused Fudge to mention to Umbridge to keep an eye on Harry. Dumbledore is smart, even if I hate him, and he would be able to connect the dots, no matter how well Harry tried to cover it up.

Hope the chapter was still good and I'll have the next update as soon as I can! It might take me a little longer cause, like I said, I'm really excited for Voldemort show up, but I'm also really nervous about it... I want it to be just right, so it might take some time!

Love y'all and thank you so much for all the comments, etc.!
restless in the tedium

Chapter Summary

Harry meets and greets new friends who break the boredom

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day came soon enough, and then another week passed by in the monotony of classes, homework, and extracurricular activities.

Honestly, Harry felt… restless.

Sure, Umbridge was proving to be a pain in the ass and Hermione was hounding him to start some sort of defense association for some odd reason – does he look like teacher material? And what about keeping his head down doesn’t she get? – but the year was still progressing rather normally, especially in comparison to previous years where he was in a tournament that could end in his death, when he had a convict after him who had been accused of murdering a lot of people, when he was accused of murdering muggleborns somehow because he was a parslemouth, and when he first came to Hogwarts and was still in a wow-magic-is-real daze.

One would think that joining Voldemort would lead to an exciting year, but apparently not.

Beyond his studies, which now focused on the theories of Dark magic since he had finally – finally – mastered Occlumency, Voldemort hadn’t really entrusted him with much of his plans. He kept hinting that Harry would have an integral part to play, one that depended strongly on his maintaining his Golden Boy persona for Dumbledore, but he couldn’t be entrusted with anything until he had been suitably prepared for the role that Harry had agreed to. Harry had a feeling he wouldn’t really get anything out of Voldemort until he was Marked… which he wasn’t sure how he felt about. How could he remain as the Boy-Who-Lived with the Dark Mark on his left forearm? Wouldn’t it be suspicious if he suddenly only wore long sleeves and kept his left arm covered at all times?

Maybe Voldemort was still an insane bastard. Or just paranoid. Who knew, it’s not like the bastard talked to Harry or anything!

Harry let out a huff of annoyance and snapped out of his thoughts, coming back to Great Hall and Hermione and Ron’s bickering beside him. He rolled his eyes and lifted a dinner roll to his mouth,
glancing up at the Head Table and noting Dumbledore’s absence, Umbridge’s smug smile, Snape’s sneer, and McGonagall’s pursed lips. Hagrid had been missing for a month now and Harry and his friends were concerned where their large friend could possibly be, though Harry had a feeling that Hagrid was on some errand from Dumbledore.

He flickered his eyes over the other tables – briefly making eye contact with Cho Chang at the Ravenclaw table, which caused her to flush prettily and send him a flirtatious smile that made him look away quickly – and finally let his eyes rest on the Slytherin table, almost immediately connecting with Draco’s eyes. Draco smirked at him and made a derogatory hand gesture to him as he lifted his goblet of pumpkin juice to his lips. Harry suppressed a chuckle and lifted a hand to ruffle his hair, sending the double-fingered salute in response.

Harry looked back at his plate and let out an inaudible sigh.

Surely something had to happen soon, right?

***

Once again he was in the library that Saturday afternoon, deeply buried in books that would cause Dumbledore to suspect another Tom Riddle was rising up and cause his Golden Boy persona to become thoroughly shattered. He enjoyed the thrill of learning all this knowledge right under the realm of those blue, twinkling eyes.

He was disturbed from his reading flow by the soft thudding of books being placed on his table and chairs being pushed to sit down in. Looking up, he found that Draco and three other faintly familiar Slytherins had joined him. Politely, he closed his book and smiled at the other three and raised an inquisitive brow at Draco.

Draco smirked and rolled his eyes, “Honestly, Harry, I’m not sure if I should be flattered or annoyed that I’m the only Slytherin you know.”

Harry felt an annoying blush fill his cheeks and he briefly ducked his head before forcing himself to keep it up, “Yes, well, I suppose it means that you outshine all the others… or you stole the spotlight from the others so I’d never realize that you weren’t the only Slytherin in the whole world.”

Draco just rolled his eyes again and then said, “This is Pansy Parkinson,” he gestured to the only female Slytherin. He recognized her name and noticed that her pug-face was not as unattractive as it
once was… which made him wonder if he had simply had a prejudiced view of all Slytherins. That made him feel uncomfortable so he shied away from that thought, taking in her sleek brown hair, large brown eyes, and the smirk that danced on her attractively pink lips. He smiled at her and said politely, “Nice to officially meet you, Parkinson.”

She smiled and held out a hand towards him, “Oh, perhaps we can be on a first-name basis, Harry, now that you want to associate with us lowly Slytherins and all.”

He just shook her hand bemused and looked at the next person who inclined his head and said softly, “Theodore Nott.”

Harry nodded back and said, “Pleasure to meet you, Nott.”

Theodore simply nodded and buried his nose in the book in his hands, an Arithmancy book by the looks of it, seemingly ignoring the rest of the proceedings.

The last of his intruders extended a hand and grinned at him rakishly, “Blaise Zabini, you may call me Blaise, Harry. What an utter pleasure to meet the famed Savior of the Wizarding World. Why, I’m all a-quiver.”

Harry chuckled and grinned back, “Perhaps some of my fame will rub off on you, eh, Blaise?”

Blaise laughed softly and sat back, his posture one of lazy elegance, “It might just well, Harry, but I’m not one to need the limelight to be seen… not like someone we all know.”

Draco sneered at Blaise and glared at Harry for laughing. Blaise immediately asked, “Wait, let me guess, you’re going to tell your father on me?”

Draco’s cheeks went slightly pink and he looked away when the others all burst out laughing, “That was a phase, Zabini.” He turned back and glared fiercely at Blaise’s unrepentant grin, “I can very well fight my own battles now, Zabini, so I suggest you watch it.”

“Rather un-Slytherin of you to issue a warning, Draco dear,” Pansy inserted with a laugh.
Harry grinned at the four before him and said warmly, “You are… definitely not what I thought. I look forward to this… friendship.”

They three of them looked at him intently, scrutinizing, before smiling back.

Nott looked up from his book, exasperated, and said, “Are we not here for a purpose? I have an essay to write, so let’s hurry it up.”

Draco rolled his eyes before waving a privacy charm in place and leaning forward, “So, Samhain with us, Harry?”

Blaise nodded and leaned forward as well, a serious look on his face, “What made you decide to celebrate it? Especially after going the past four years without showing any interest in Wizarding holidays?” Blaise met his eyes and asked softly, “What made you change your mind?”

Harry straightened in his seat and said calmly, meeting each of their eyes, even Nott’s who had lowered his book to watch him carefully, “I was Muggle-raised, I never even knew there were Wizarding holidays… which is rather ignorant of me, I know, but I wasn’t really raised in the best environment.” He looked at them intently before saying softly, “My relatives are rather close-minded. They did their best to stamp the magic out of me and I honestly just came into the Wizarding World and took in what they told me. Hogwarts never mentioned these holidays, and I never considered to look into it on my own, not until this summer. I’ve learned and I want to do my best to be the Wizard my dad would have raised me to be. I’m making amends and I’d like it if you could help me by allowing me to participate. I do this out of genuine desire, not to raise alarms to Dumbledore that some pureblood rituals are being held under his nose.”

The four of them looked at him intently before Draco smirked and said, “I told you, didn’t I? Who better to read honesty in Potter than his rival?”

Harry chuckled and shook his head, “Honestly, Draco, how do you even walk through doorways with that big head of yours?”

They all looked at him puzzled before Blaise laughed, “Big head, huh? You been peeking in the locker room, Harry dear?”

Harry’s face went bright red and he spluttered as the others all laughed loudly, even Nott cracked a smile.
Perhaps becoming friends with Slytherins wasn’t the best idea, after all… but he hadn’t had fun like this in a long time… maybe not even ever. He went to bed with his cheeks aching and a soft smile still on his face, a warmth in his heart from the wordplays and the jokes they had shared.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter had a lot of dialogue and was a lot longer! I’m rather happy with that haha :D

What do you think of my characterizations of the three Slytherins? My basis of them came, largely, from fanfics, since I hardly remember them from the books... :3 Which is sad, I know... I really should reread the series, huh?

I hope the dialogue wasn’t awkward or anything! It was hard to remember to give them all a voice lol. Poor Theo is an observer, imo, so he hardly spoke! D: But I hope his and each of their personalities still came through!

Also, Harry revealing his 'abuse', even just hinting at it, might seem OOC for him, since canon!Harry never did, besides to Hermione and Ron, and that was just barely. However, consider that this Harry is making use of his Slytherin qualities. How more Slytherin can you get, than to win trust by making yourself seem vulnerable? Of course, some can argue that that is not Slytherin, but.... Deceptions within deceptions, masks behind masks, that is the unofficial Slytherin motto :3

Sorry, Voldemort is too busy right now planning doom and gloom to meet us plebeians. Maybe next chapter ;)

Love y'all! :D <3 You're amazing! Individually, you are each amazing and I hope you all have a wonderful night/day (depending on when you read this lol)! :D <3
“Mr. Potter, what do you think you are doing with those barely sliced pieces of flobberworm?”

Harry paused in the action of adding the flobberworm to his cauldron and had to resist the urge to exhale loudly through his nose, “Sir, I am adding it to the simmering concoction before I add in the boomslang skin.”

Snape sneered, looking down his abnormally large nose at him, and said, “It figures that our own Triwizard champion couldn’t be bothered to closely read the instructions on the board.” With a flick of Snape’s wand Harry’s cauldron and its contents were Vanished. “Perhaps consider reading your book and preparing before class at least once before your OWLs, Mr. Potter. One wouldn’t want to find themselves before the examiners and have nothing to show for their five years of magical education.” His sneer became more pronounced, “It would give Hogwarts a bad name, after all.”

Harry grit his teeth as he watched Snape’s form walk away in a billow of robes. Oh, that greasy git would get his comeuppance soon. Harry would make sure of it.

***

The smell of pumpkins and the sound of excited voices filled the Great Hall, but Harry was simply forcing himself to appear as though he was eating and laughing like the others. He was incredibly tempted to turn around and make eye contact with one of his Slytherin friends, but that would raise suspicion and that was definitely not what Harry needed right now. So here he was, pretending like he wasn’t about to participate in his first ritual ever in a few hours.

“Harry, you okay?”

He looked up into concerned brown eyes and he smiled at Hermione, “Yeah, I suppose, Hermione.”
He sighed audibly and glanced down, before mumbling, “It’s just, sometimes it hits me, you know? This is the day that… you know…”

Ron turned to him, mouth still full, and mumbled out, “What? What are you talking about, mate?”

He stifled the bit of irritation that welled up and instead replied softly, “This is the day that my parents were killed, the day I became the Boy-Who-Lived, and something bad always happens on this day. It’s just hard to celebrate like everyone else…”

Hermione gasped and he looked up to see her horrified face and Ron’s stricken one. Ron awkwardly patted him on the back with his free hand and Hermione whispered, “I’m sorry, Harry, that was insensitive of us… This is such a monumental day for you and I guess we forget just what it means for you. I’m sorry, Harry.”

He smiled at Hermione and Ron, “It’s alright, you guys. I can’t expect you to pander to every one of my issues. You’re just my friends, not the psychiatrist I probably need.”

Hermione chuckled slightly and Ron just looked confused, “Psychia-whatist?”

Harry rolled his eyes, “Sort of like a Mind Healer, Ron. It’s the Muggle equivalent, anyways.”

Ron nodded and swallowed before saying, “Well, how about we play a game of chess to take your mind off it, after the Feast and all, if you don’t particularly feel like celebrating?”

Hermione beamed with pride and Harry’s eyes widened, “Wow, that was rather sensitive of you, mate. You feeling alright there?”

Ron spluttered in indignation and Hermione giggled, “What do you mean by that! I’m your best friend, I think I know how to read your mood after five years of being in the same dorm and listening to you snore!”

Harry laughed, “Pretty sure you’re mixing up stories there, Ronald. If anyone has deafening snores in our dorm, it’s you.”
Ron’s ears went red and he muttered angrily to himself as he grabbed another dinner roll and savagely bit into it, “Great bunch of friends I’ve got… can’t do a nice thing without being criticized. At least food never betrays me…”

Harry shared a look with Hermione and they laughed together, enjoying the moment of camaraderie, even as Harry inwardly counted down the minutes until he could join them and do what he’s been waiting for forever for.

Soon, it’d come soon enough.

***

Harry muttered excuses after one game of chess with Ron – he lost, no surprise – and said he was going for a walk. Hermione looked at him concerned and said she’d join him, but he simply smiled and said that he’d rather be alone for this and that he’d take the Cloak with him. Once he had grabbed his Cloak, he snuck out of the Common Room, and kept an eye on the Map as he walked to the designated classroom. Soon enough, he found himself in front of the door. He took a deep breath and opened the door softly, then stepped in.

The room was dimly lit, the only light provided by the circle of candles in the center of the room. The four Slytherins were already dressed for the occasion, having abandoned their school robes for pure white robes that appeared nearly translucent. They gazed at him expectantly and he quickly transfigured his robe into the same white robe as theirs, dropping the Map and Cloak in the corner of the room, where they had left their items.

Without another word, Harry joined them, standing next to Draco and Blaise, forming another circle around the candles, with their hands clasped and heads bowed.

Draco asked in a quiet whisper, “Shall I lead?”

They all murmured affirmatives and Draco nodded slightly as he shut his eyes and began the ritual that he had celebrated since he was three, but only lead twice before.

“In vocamus spirituum carorum. Dies istos honoramus.” (We call upon the spirits of loved ones. We honor them this day.) The room began to slightly hum as the words began the ancient ritual.
The others responded in unison, “*Memores sumus in vitam. Munera offerimus mortem.*” (We remember them in life. We offer tribute in death.) The flames of the candles began to burn brighter, dancing hypnotically to some dance unseen, and the participants began to slightly sway, unknowingly.

Draco lifted his head and conjured a knife with his wand, the magic causing beads of sweat to appear on his forehead, then lifted up the traditional goblet and pierced his left ring finger and let five drops of blood fall into the mulled Elderwine. As the blood dropped into the goblet, the wine changed from its deep plum color to a golden color and it swirled on its own.

Softly, he murmured, “*Hunc sanguinem sacrificii veneratur.*” (I offer this blood in sacrifice and in reverence.) The humming of the room rose in pitch and they each started to feel a soft vibration within them.

He passed the goblet silently to his right, to Harry, and Harry repeated his actions and words, passing the cup onto Blaise until each of them had had their turn and the goblet returned to Draco. The goblet now withheld an amber liquid that had stilled after Theodore had uttered the phrase and passed it back.

Draco then leaned forward and placed the goblet within the circle of candles and uttered, “*Invocamus et spiritibus carorum tui expectatur.*” (We call upon spirits of loved ones and now await your presence.)

The goblet began to glow and a silvery mist rose up from it and filled the circle, surrounding each of them, and the scent of lilies and chrysanthemums filled the room.

They were, once more, clasping hands and swaying softly, each lost in thoughts of their loved ones.

Harry though, was, for the first time, remembering his parents as people who had not died, but had lived. He was not plagued by Lily’s screams for Voldemort to spare him, or even James’ voice telling Lily to take Harry and run. No, he was remembering his mother humming to him and whispering how much she loved him, the way his father’s chest vibrated when he laughed and the way his voice sounded as he told Harry stories that Lily wouldn’t approve of. He smiled softly to himself as he remembered the love his parents had for him, and still have, even after death.

Perhaps it was imagination, but, just as the silver mist began to dissipate, he thought he heard a, “We’re proud of you, Harry.” He chose to believe he really did hear it, if only because of everything else that had happened.
Once the mist and the glow had gone, Draco uttered in finality, “Nos gratias ago tibi, et tibi gloriam. Mittimus ad hoc honoratur spiritibus diximus. Ita sit.” (We thank you and we honor you. We send back the spirits we called and honored this day. So be it.)

He leaned forward and blew out each of the seven candles and pulled out his wand and called out a *Lumos* instead.

***

There was still a solemn air in the room, each struck by what they had experienced, until Blaise said, “Well, I don’t know what it is about a ritual, but I’m always hungry afterwards.”

Harry burst out laughing even as Pansy smacked Blaise on the back of his head, Draco scoffed, and Theodore rolled his eyes.

Harry grinned and asked, “Do you want me to call a house elf and get them to bring us something?”

Blaise leaned forward eagerly, eyes shining, and asked, “Oh, would you, Harry dear? You’ll be my most favorite person ever.”

“Well, who can resist that offer?” Harry laughed once more before calling out, “House elf!”

Some house elf Harry had never seen before popped up and asked, “What cans Dipsy do for yous, young Masters?”

Harry said, “Could you bring us something to eat and drink? Thank you.”

He didn’t notice the others glancing at one another in surprise and simply smiled to himself then said to Draco, “Thank you for inviting me. I’ve never… I’ve never experienced anything like that before.”

Draco smirked, “You’re rather welcome, Harry. *That* is what we *true* wizards and witches want to
uphold and continue to pass down. That is magic in its purest form and it would be a travesty to be forced to forget it.”

Harry nodded, but before he could respond, the elf popped back with plates of sandwiches and cups of pumpkin juice. They all eagerly grabbed enough for themselves and ate, not speaking until Pansy asked, “How did you manage to get to the dungeons without getting a detention, Harry?”

He looked up, after swallowing his mouthful, and said with a smirk, “Oh, I have my ways. You didn’t just think I got out of trouble with just my fame, did you?”

Blaise laughed, “I suppose not. You have your own Slytherin traits, don’t you, Harry?”

Harry grinned, “I was supposed to be in Slytherin, you know. I had to talk the Hat into placing me into Gryffindor. That’s how Slytherin I am, I talked a magical artifact into doing what I want and fooled everyone into never suspecting that I was anything but a Gryffindor.”

He laughed at their shocked faces and drank his pumpkin juice with relish. Yes, he so enjoyed shocking people and breaking their expectations of him.

Chapter End Notes

I sincerely apologize for stopping my daily updates, but I got busy and then once I got out of the habit of daily updates... *shrug* But, don't worry, this story won't be abandoned :) It will be finished, I promise! *good guy pose* :D

I hope I made up for not updating for a while by this long chapter! As you can see, you got some Snape/Harry interaction ;) I want this relationship to eventually be maybe indifferent, friendly even, but that won't be possible until Harry gets more involved in Voldemort's plans, so that'll be a while yet.

Otherwise, what did you think of the the Samhain ritual? Also, I apologize if I butchered the Latin, but I never took Latin classes (sadly...) and we all know how Google Translate is. I'd love to hear what you think of the ritual and just everything :) I hope it lived up to your expectations and more!

By the way, I would love you all VERY much if you could check out a two-shot I recently posted! Well, only one part is posted right now, but it's over 11k on its own, and the next part will DEFINITELY be more than that! It features a Muggle!Lily, Muggleborn!Harry, Drarry, pining!Draco, oblivious!Harry (when isn't he), Slytherin!Harry, Sev/Lily friendship, Jily, and it's SO FLUFFY I COULD DIE. Seriously, I was grinning while writing the whole thing. It's very much my baby since it's an AU I haven't seen before and I'd love it if I could get kudos and comments on
what you think :) <3 *shamelessly self-promoting and slightly begging*
The next day, Harry was pensive and very thankful that none of his classes that day were with the Slytherins. He didn’t want him to think that he regretted participating in the ritual – because he definitely didn’t! Never before had he felt magic thrum through his very being like that before! It was addicting, really – so at least he could avoid sending the wrong signals, and Hermione and Ron left him, for the large part, alone since they still believed it was his parents’ deaths that had made him… depressed, for the lack of a better word.

And, perhaps, it wasn’t really a lie today.

He had actually remembered his parents yesterday and he chose to believe that he had heard them speak directly to him.

Yesterday, when the veil between the two worlds was at its thinnest and he had performed the Samhain ritual for the first time, he had truly experienced something… spiritual. Which, really, wasn’t as farfetched for him to believe in, what with him being a wizard and all. It’d be rather hypocritical to not believe that he had experienced something truly beyond his wildest imaginations.

In any case, hearing and remembering his parents, he was now in a conundrum.

Due to his, perhaps rash, decision in the graveyard, he was now allied with the very person who had murdered his parents and left him an orphan. He was fighting against the ideals, the beliefs, the very reason his parents had died on that Samhain night fourteen years ago.

Yet, even if he wanted to join Dumbledore again – which, sadly, he still didn’t want to… should that be concerning? – he couldn’t exactly walk up to the Voldemort – or, worse yet, send a letter – saying that he changed his mind and would very much like a refund now, please. That’s a wonderful way to get an Avada Kedavra to the face, free of charge.
So what could he do?

Really, if his parents had actually contacted him last night… hadn’t they told him they were proud of him? Did they mean in a general ‘Harry, my boy, good job on surviving fifteen years of your life, that was well done of you,’ or in a ‘Harry, my precious son, it was rather smart of you to join your parents’ murderer and we’re rather proud of you for choosing your own path’ way?

They should have been more clear and not caused all these misunderstandings! Parents… were they all so cryptic or was it just his?

As Harry paused in the middle of the hallway on the way to Care of Magical Creatures, he decided that all he could do was continue on his path, which was more appealing to him, and face what consequences arise from that later. The worst that could happen was his parents saying they were disappointed next Samhain, which, other than hurting him emotionally, wasn’t that terrible. They were dead, after all, and he was alive. What bearing does the souls of the departed have in the mortal realm, beyond contacting or floating around in the halls of Hogwarts?

Harry truly did believe in the ideals and goals of Voldemort, what he had so far gleaned anyways, and it was simply cowardly to back out now. No matter what, Harry James Potter, son of James and Lily Potter, was not a coward. His parents had faced their murderer dead on and died with courage, so he would simply carry that legacy onwards and live courageously and stand by his path, come what may.

After all, he had never been raised by his parents, so their ideals… what bearing did they have on him, other than as a curiosity? Nature versus nurture and all that, right?

Right.

***

November passed rather quickly, and Harry continued to skim on the outside of everyone’s notice, especially that of Umbridge, Snape, and Dumbledore, and he studied hard and simply stayed out of the way. The less noticeable he was, the less alarming it would be when he truly began to work His plans.

Before he knew it, winter exams were upon them, and it surprised Harry just how… easy it was for him. After Voldemort’s exams that, if he didn’t pass to His exacting expectation, he could expect
some ‘gift’ with a nasty hex or curse as a reward, Harry had quickly come to study to Voldemort’s high standards. In comparison, Hogwarts truly was easy since the worst he could get was a T and maybe a detention if he failed.

Hermione, of course, was shocked by Harry not asking for any help in studying and the way he was so calm and relaxed for every exam. She was, at first, concerned, even if throughout the whole term he had been doing well, she couldn’t understand why he was that way, so she still nagged him and Ron, much to Harry’s annoyance. She was coming from a good place, but he wasn’t his mother, she was his friend, nothing more, nothing less. It took everything in him not to bite her head off when her nagging only grew worse as each exam passed, instead of easing, so Harry, in an effort to keep the peace, escaped to the library and began to hang out with the Slytherins more and more.

He didn’t regret growing that friendship, though he regretted how uneasy he felt around his first friends and how he simply… didn’t care that he was growing away. It was strange, but Harry just couldn’t muster up enough worry to investigate this change in him. Perhaps they were simply growing apart, it happened after all.

Harry had signed up to leave Hogwarts for the first time since Sirius had invited him to Grimmauld Place, so he was expecting to have fun and spend time with friends and family for once.

Also, Harry had a letter from Voldemort with Portkey for the day before he left Hogwarts… it would be the first meeting he would have with Him after the graveyard, and Harry was feeling excited and nervous all at once. This was his mentor, this man had given him knowledge and fed him all the answers he had and had never thought to have. This was also the very man who had once wanted to murder him, so he was a bit wary about that, but the excitement kept him from worrying too much about it. Death wasn’t really a reality that he could drum up enough fear for, maybe that made him naïve or courageous, but that was just how it was for Harry.

In any case, after exams, and while his dormmates were packing, Harry stealthily gathered his Cloak and Map and began the descent to the statue of the one-eyed witch, Portkey in his pocket.

It was time to meet his Mentor.

Chapter End Notes

Lots of internal dialogue in this chapter, but I felt it was necessary to build up Harry a little more. It wouldn’t make sense for him to just continue with his actions and leave the audience wondering what the hell was going on with him, huh? :3 I mean, I COULD have... but y’all would’ve hated me XD Aren’t I a nice writer? Don’t I deserve kudos and
Did you notice all the changes in Harry? Like he says, Harry grew up differently from canon!Harry. He, of course, had the same things happen and he reacted the same as canon!Harry up until the graveyard... but that ONE change in his childhood thought process is what stemmed this Harry's actions. He, of course, like canon!Harry loves his parents, but this Harry has a lot more detachment (see tags, y'all) and is more removed from living up to his heroic parents' hopes and dreams.

What can you do? It's the old nature vs. nurture argument. That's what makes things interesting in fiction and in life ;)

Please leave comments because they're INCREDIBLY motivating and I also just love to hear what you think :) I like to know if my readers catch the nuances of what I write and if they're struck by it too. So, please, won't you? ;D <3

And, yes, you read that right! NEXT CHAPTER IS THE ONE WITH VOLDEMORT. Or I could be super evil and make it something else... you won't know until next time! XD
crackling fire

Chapter Summary

what you've all been waiting for: Harry dies and meets his parents.

jk jk yes, you see Voldemort! Don't come after me with pitchforks!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Once Harry was halfway on the pathway to Honeyduke’s, he felt the tingle that He had told him to look for, signaling the edge of Hogwarts’ wards. He took a few more steps forward before pulling out the Muggle mechanical pencil and whispering, “Fuga mortis.” (Flight from death.) With a whoosh, he felt the sensation of a hook grabbing his naval and pulling him forward. It took everything in him not to stumble as he forced himself to stay steady through the pulling and abrupt landing. He closed his eyes and took three deep breaths before he opened them once more.

He found himself in the hallway of some Manor, he assumed. A chandelier of red stones and candles directly above him and the dark wood beneath his feet gave him the impression of restrained opulence, but he could feel the miasma of some otherness, reminiscent of the rush, but darker, heavier.

It caused him to freeze in place as the heaviness seemed to press down, urging him to his knees, but he stayed upright, even as beads of sweat formed on his forehead. He began to gasp for air as the heaviness pressed harder, forcing obedience, and his vision began to swim as all the oxygen seemed to be disappearing as it pressed harder.

Suddenly the heaviness disappeared and it left him gasping for air, bending forwards and leaning on his knees as he tried to regain composure.

“Interesting. I wondered if you were immune, but perhaps not completely.”

Shocked, Harry looked up to meet blood-red eyes from underneath a black hood, “Wh-what was that?”

A cold chuckle came from the hood and the eyes pierced him where he stood, “It is the aura of True Dark.” The figure came closer, until they were close enough for Harry to feel a crackling energy
from Him, and extended a pale hand towards him, palming his cheek in a surprisingly gentle way, “Perhaps you too will be able to utilize True Darkness, but few have the skill.” The hand on his cheek suddenly grabbed his chin and roughly pulled him forward, his other hand pulling the hood down and revealing the serpentine face of Voldemort, “Harry Potter, my… protégé. Well met, indeed.”

He pushed Harry hard enough to cause him to stumble and grasp behind him for something to hold onto. Sneering, he said, “Pathetic. After these months of my tutelage, one would think you would at least exude something more than the complete… lightness. You’re a disgrace, Potter, and clearly unworthy of anymore of my time.” Voldemort turned away and began to walk away, “Get out of my sight.”

For a moment, Harry stood there, stock-still, shocked and incredibly confused at the turn of events. However, watching the figure stride away, Harry quickly stepped towards it and called, “Wait! What do you mean I’m a disgrace? I don’t even know what you want from me!”

Voldemort turned, just before reaching the doorframe at the end of the hall, and sneered, “You reek of Dumbledore. There is nothing in you to say that you are mine, my protégé, my follower, my student, mine. I can do nothing if you are unwilling to truly follow the Path, Potter. Clearly you have not done all that you could have.”

Angrily, Harry took a few steps forward and burst out, “I learned Occlumency in a month, I learned all about Wizarding customs and rituals, I participated in Samhain for the first time ever, and I have been learning from the books you gave about Dark magic! I have taken what you’ve given and done what you asked.”

The sneer became more pronounced, “Exactly, Potter. You put no further effort into learning than what I guided you to. You followed everything I said like a mindless crup. You are not worthy of my teachings when I have to spoon feed everything for you. Why should I waste my time?” Voldemort came closer, his magic crackling and the air filling with the odor of ozone, “My protégé will not be a follower. I have my choice of many who are wiser, stronger, and more knowledgeable if that is what I desire.” He was now close enough for the crackling magic to cause Harry’s hair to stand on-end, “Tell me, Harry Potter, what worth are you if you are like any other follower, but require more energy and effort from me?” He sneered, “You should have been killed in that graveyard, at least then you’d no longer be a nuisance.”

Harry rose up, his eyes glowing in anger, stepped close enough to be nose-to-snake-like-nose with Voldemort, and said, “Tell me, Tom Marvolo Riddle, why you do put up with me then, if I am so much trouble? Why is it that you have built plans that hinge upon my participation?” Harry sneered a sneer worthy of Severus Snape and hissed in Parseltongue, “You are my mentor and I your protégé because you know that I am powerful, valuable, and that my participation is the turning tide for the war you are preparing for.” Harry smirked and spoke again in English, “You do these things
because my cooperation is necessary. I am not your follower. I joined your side, thinking I could be like the others, but you and I knew, even then, that I was more. I am worth your victory, Lord Voldemort.”

He expected the flash of red as Voldemort bit out, “Crucio,” so he pulled out his wand as he jumped away, calling out a, “Expelliarmus,” in retaliation.

He felt the disparity in knowledge as he threw out Stupefy’s, Petrificus Totalus’, and other spells that he had learned in Hogwarts, since he didn’t trust his ability to attempt Dark spells for the first time against Voldemort.

Voldemort cackled as he threw another Crucio and cried out, “Pathetic, Harry! Show me your worth then! How badly do you want what only I can give you?”

Harry grit his teeth as he ducked behind a side table and wracked his brain for something, anything that he could use that would prove him and get Voldemort to stop whatever he was doing. With determination and a sudden remembrance of the summer, he jumped up from the desk and threw another Stupefy, even as he began to gather up all his anger, frustration, and confusion towards Voldemort within him. He dodged and threw spells, while simultaneously gathering his magic within him instinctively, knowing this move would be the only way to show Voldemort that he was worthy of being taught and he was more than just a follower!

He ducked as a curse went over his head, not expecting another curse to hit him on the side, immediately drawing blood and causing him to stumble, pausing in his gathering of magic as he cried out in pain.

He heard Voldemort laugh cruelly and say mockingly, “Nothing more than a crup, are you, Potter? Or would that be… rat? Even Pettigrew, with all his sniveling, was more useful than you!”

Harry’s eyes blazed and his magic surged as he straightened, his wand gripped in his hand tight, and, without a thought, his left hand lifted from his side in a fist as he cried out, “Sanguis crepitus.” (Blood explosion – made up spell.)

Gleefully, he noticed Voldemort’s eyes widen as a sickly purple spell flew towards him and Voldemort lunged to the side immediately, but the spell grazed his robe, leaving it singed and crumbling into ashes in his wake.
They both stilled, staring at each other as their magic crackled in the air and the odor of burning cloth and spilled blood filled the room. Slowly, Voldemort straightened from his half-sprawl and he dusted his robes, eyes still intent on Harry’s glowing ones, before slowly saying, “Well done, Harry.”

Surprised, Harry’s magic, which he had begun to gather once more, faltered and fell as Harry stuttered out, “Wh-what?”

Voldemort smirked, “You are worthy, just as I thought.” He turned on his heel and began to walk out, pausing on the threshold of the doorway to say, “Come, Harry.”

Bemused, Harry absentmindedly looked at his side, where the cut from the earlier curse had begun to slow its bleeding, then took a deep breath before following his mentor’s wake.

***

Harry found his mentor in a study, seated in front of a fireplace and calmly pouring two cups of tea. He was gestured into sitting in the seat across from Voldemort, so he followed the instruction and cautiously took the cup when he was handed it.

He took a careful sip after examining the contents then looked once more at Voldemort, who was now watching the fire crackle in the fireplace.

They descended into a tense silence and Harry slowly drank his tea, unsure of what else he was supposed to do.

Finally, Voldemort said, “What is your opinion on our side’s stances, Harry?”

Harry placed the half-filled cup on the coffee table to give him time to formulate his response before saying, “I consider your idea that Muggles should remain ignorant of the Wizarding World to be one I agree with. However, I do not think that Muggleborns should be killed for the danger they pose to our way of life or secrecy, but they should be rehabilitated to our World, forced to choose ours or the Muggle world, not both, and should be collected before the age of eleven to prevent accidental magic incidents that increase chances of exposure.”

He nodded and asked placidly, “What are your thoughts on Dark magic, Harry?”
“Well, I think it’s fascinating how intent guides the magic. In the five years I’ve been at Hogwarts, I’ve never had someone tell me that my own mind, what my will wants, what I picture the spell doing, can influence the effect of the spell, just as much as the way I wave my wand and the words I say.”

Voldemort nodded, “You have done well in hiding your new affiliation and have managed your deceptions better than I had imagined you could. You can soon know my plans and the task I have for you… once you have proved that you can think for yourself, Harry.”

He nodded and said, “Of course, my Lord.”

“We have just established you are not my follower. You may call me… Marvolo, Harry.”

Harry’s eyes widened, but a pleasant warmth filled his stomach as he nodded, “Very well… Marvolo.”

“You are dismissed. I expect you to find a way to come and visit me once more before the end of your break.”

“Of course, Marvolo.” Harry stood up to leave, already palming the Portkey, but he paused in turning away and looked back, “Marvolo… what is True Dark magic?”

Voldemort smirked and his garnet eyes connected with his, “I am the Dark Lord for a reason, Harry. I wield True Dark magic… maybe, you might just manage it as well. We’ll see. Now leave, I tire of your presence.”

Voldemort waved him away as he turned back towards the fire, obviously resuming some train of thought. Harry stood for a moment watching the Dark Lord watch the fire before snapping out of his stupor and hurriedly walking away, filled with a strange yearning for something.

Chapter End Notes

Not as long as I would’ve wanted, sadly, but Voldemort clearly had better things to do and could only grace us with his presence for so long. He said something about taking
over the world and kicking kittens as he threw a crucio at me.... :3 Who knows what goes on in the minds of Dark Lords!

So..... did this meeting live up to your expectations? :D How was Harry and Voldemort's in-person interaction? Clearly, Harry has a lot of growing to do before he can even be eye-to-eye with Voldemort. Luckily, we're not talking physically, hm? XD

Let me know what you think please! :D

Next chapter should be some much-needed family fluff. Right? ;) Idk this story doesn't strike me as fluffy, but I guess we'll see how the Muse goes!
As Harry stumbled on the pathway in between Honeyduke’s and Hogwarts, he winced as he was once more reminded of the cut from Voldemort’s curse. He hastily shrouded himself in his cloak and withdrew his Map, noticing that none of the professors, not even Snape, were walking the hallways at, he waved a quick Tempus, four in the morning. He smiled grimly as he soundlessly walked through the hallways of Hogwarts once more, holding his side and hoping that it wasn’t too late to use Murtlap essence, or maybe he’d have to use Episky, though he was unsure at how successfully he’d pull off a healing spell he had never used before.

Sighing, after managing to heal his cut and Evanesco his bloodied and ripped clothes, take a quick shower, and change into his pajamas, he crawled into bed and drew his curtains. He closed his eyes and took in a deep breath before slowly breathing out, trying to process the night’s events and clear his mind.

What exactly did Voldemort expect from him? To take his own initiative and show his promise? But… how would he manage that?

He turned to his side and burrowed himself into his pillow, pulling up his blanket and firmly clearing his mind of any further questions.

He’d figure out a way, just not at that very moment. Plus, he was heading to Grimmauld Place and he was sure to find some way to further his path to the Dark side.

***

Harry grinned as his godfather gathered him into his arms and hugged him hard, “Sirius, you’re going to crush me to death if you keep this up. Believe it or not, I’m still human and still need lungs to breathe.”
Sirius laughed and backed off, his blue eyes laughing merrily at him, the dark shadows under his eyes barely visible now, “Ah, Harry, you’ve grown taller! Look at you, are those muscles I felt hiding under your clothes?”

Harry laughed and shook his head, amused, “Well, Sirius, how else do you expect me to bring home someone if the package isn’t enticing enough?”

Sirius cocked his head in confusion for a moment at Harry’s vocabulary, but chose to ignore the strangeness and just grinned widely, “That’s my boy! Planning to break a lot of hearts, are you?”

Harry grinned and stood steady under Sirius’ heavy pat on the back, following him dutifully further into Grimmauld Place and into the kitchen. Before he knew it, he was enveloped in Molly Weasley’s arms and bosom, and he fought the urge to push her away from him, uncomfortable with being touched without notice or permission, even if it was with good intentions.

Finally, he was released and he grinned sheepishly at the exuberant face of the Weasley matriarch, “Oh, Sirius is right! You have put on a few pounds, not enough of course, but a lot more than you have the past five years! You’ve also grown taller! And you look so healthy!” With a grin, she quickly pinched his cheek and cooed at him before turning around to hustle and bustle around the kitchen.

Shocked, Harry touched his now slightly burning cheek and looked at Sirius in confusion, only to roll his eyes as he took in Sirius’ laughing eyes and barely-restrained silent laughter. He looked back to see Ron and Hermione also laughing at him and so he simply shoved them a little as he grabbed his trunk and walked up the stairs and into his and Ron’s room, beginning the process of unpacking and gathering his thoughts in his much-needed solitude.

He had felt the welcoming presence of Grimmauld Place and he absently wondered if he could celebrate Yule on his own here. He straightened from grabbing his clothes from the trunk and snapped his fingers, calling out, “Kreacher!”

Kreacher popped into the room with a sneer and a half-bow, “Master is calls for Kreacher?” He muttered under his breath, “Oh, how Mistress would cry at having the blood-traitors and half-blood scum in the esteemed House of Black agains!”

Harry rolled his eyes but calmly asked, “Kreacher, is there a ritual room I can use in Grimmauld Place?”
The house elf straightened in surprise then cocked its head before gaining a calculating look in its eye, “What would Master Harry have needs a ritual room for? The room has no use for years and years now.”

The green-eyed boy nodded solemnly before saying softly, “I wish to celebrate Yule in the way of Old, Kreacher. Will you help me ring in Yule and fill Grimmauld Place with the spirit of Yule and the Old Magics once more?”

The house elf nodded eagerly and looked as though he was about to bounce in glee, “Oh, yes, yes! Master Harry proves he is House of Black true! Kreacher is helping Master Harry, oh yes he will!”

Harry smiled, pleased, “Good, Kreacher. At night, when the others have gone to sleep, come back to this room and take me to the ritual room. Also, where did you hide the artifacts and treasures from the summer? Will you help me become a true Wizard by learning all about Dark magic and the Old ways?”

Kreacher began to jump up and down with his exuberant nodding and cried out, “Yes, yes, Kreacher is helping Master Harry! Kreacher knows all the ways and all things true Wizards be doing! Kreacher knows and is happy to be of use again!”

Harry smiled at the house elf, taking in the happy gleam in its eye and the way the house elf actually seemed to de-age right before his eyes, “I’m glad to hear that, Kreacher. Now, go, before the others come up and see you. Don’t let anyone know what we talked about, swear on the House of Black now, Kreacher.”

“I is not sharing Master Harry’s secrets to anyones, I swears on the House of Black.” The house elf bowed deeply before disappearing with a soundless pop, just as Harry heard Ron’s and Hermione’s voices nearing his room.

He quickly went back to unpacking, even as his mind raced with all the opportunities that Kreacher’s help opened to him.

***

He sat up in his bed at midnight as a thought struck him – he knew how he could prove his loyalty to the cause!
Of course, it would involve a lot of deception on his part, especially towards Sirius, and it would have to be done immediately, before Yule, but it could be done and then he’d be able to easily also find a way to visit Voldemort before returning to the Castle once more. Really, the difficult part would be pulling this idea off when he was in a place that was under the Fidelius charm…

Quietly, he got out of bed and glanced at the still-snoring Ron before soundlessly walking out of the room, his bare feet padding on the cold, wooden floor. Once he was in an area of the house that he knew no one was currently in, he snapped his fingers and whispered, “Kreacher!”

Kreacher soundlessly popped before Harry and bowed deeply, before quietly asking, “What is Master Harry be wanting from Kreacher?”

“Can you take us to a room where no one can overhear us?”

The house elf nodded and grabbed Harry’s pajama pants, snapping his fingers with the other hand. They appeared once more in a room that Harry had never seen before and Harry asked, “Where are we?”

“The House of Black is having many secrets, Master Harry. This house is bigger than it seems, and Master Sirius is not having claimed Lordship, so he cans not enter the rest of the house.”

Harry’s eyebrows raised in surprise at hearing this, and he looked around finally, taking in the candlelit clean, but bare, room and the way the air seemed to be saturated with darkness. The boy grinned down at the house elf, his eyes faintly glowing, and said, “You have done well, Kreacher, to uphold the House of Black as you should.”

Kreacher’s eyes widened in surprise before he preened at the praise, straightening and standing at attention before Harry. Harry smiled as he noticed, from the light from the candles in the room, how Kreacher’s wrinkles lightened and how he now looked even younger than Dobby, clearly strengthening from being treated well and having a purpose once more.

“No, I called you at this hour to ask if you can take me out of the house without anyone knowing. I know house elf magic is different from wizard magic… can you do this for me?”

The house elf’s brows furrowed in thought before he nodded, “Yes, Master Harry, I is being able to take you, it might hurts little for you though.”
“That’s alright, I can take a bit of pain. Will anyone find out if I disappear?”

Kreacher shook his head, “The magic around the house is strong, yes, but Kreacher is House of Black elf and this is being House of Black and you is being Black blood, Master Harry. If you wants it, then Kreacher can do what Master Harry be asking with no ones knowing.”

Harry grinned, his eyes glowing brighter, “That’s what I wanted to hear, Kreacher. Okay, can you go to my room and grab my wand and a black robe? Oh, and my bag of galleons from my trunk.”

Kreacher just nodded, bowed deeply, then disappeared with a pop.

As he waited, Harry looked around the room and decided to look around this part of the house, since it was certain that no one was here. He noticed, as he explored, more empty but clean rooms, a room that was warded and was most likely the ritual room, and a more expansive library than the one he had seen before. As he perused the shelves, he grinned, realizing that the books were all incredibly Dark and even more rare.

He was about to leave the library and continue his exploration when a book with a blood-red spine caught his attention. He eagerly reached for it and pulled it out, noticing that the cover was filled with a strange gold script. Even though he had no idea what it said, he continued to look at it, trying to make sense of what language it was, when the script seemed to waver and shiver before his very eyes before turning into English! He gasped in surprise before reading, *Dark Treasures of the Serpent-Minds: Parselmagic and Its Intricacies*. His eyes widened, wondering at what Parselmagic was, but he was immediately intrigued and knew he would be taking the book with him.

Finally, Kreacher popped back into the room and handed him his wand, with which he promptly shrunk the book and shoved it into his pockets. He shrugged on his robes and placed his shoes and socks on, which Kreacher had gotten without Harry asking, before looking at the house elf and saying, “Can you place a glamour over me? I have a feeling your magic glamours would hold better than mine, plus, I’m not really sure if mine will fool anyone.”

The house elf just nodded and snapped his fingers and Harry shivered as he felt the sensation of a jelly-like substance settling over his hair, face, and the rest of his body. Kreacher, without being asked, conjured up a mirror and held it out for Harry. Harry looked into the mirror and saw a girl with dark brown hair, almond-shaped blue eyes, and thin lips staring back at him. He grimaced at the realization that his body was that of a girl’s now – not once had he ever wanted to know what it was like to be without his manhood and instead have breasts – but he was amazed at how realistic the glamour was! He had never heard of a glamour that could so successfully change one’s sex, at least not without a potion’s aid. It was amazing what house elf magic could do.
He grinned at Kreacher, “Thank you, Kreacher. Now, can you take me to Knockturn Alley? Or even just Diagon Alley? I want you to shadow my steps, make sure to stay out of sight, and pop me away if I’m in any danger immediately.”

“Yes, Master Harry, Kreacher is doing what Master Harry be wanting.”

Once more, Kreacher grasped his leg, popping them out of Grimmauld Place and landing them on the sidewalk right in front of the pathway to Knockturn Alley. Harry took a deep breath and nodded for Kreacher to disappear, which he did immediately. He took in another deep breath, gathering his courage and wondering at his Gryffindor-ness to want to enter into the Alley in the dead of night. Truly, his Gryffindor tendencies would appear at the most inconvenient of times… but it was definitely useful right now.

He transfigured his robe into a heavy, black cloak with a hood, drew his hood, and then stepped into the dark recesses of the Alley. He kept to the shadows, even knowing that the others would only see a hooded figure. If one of them got close enough, they might take advantage of him, what with him being in a female form at the moment, and he truly did not want to fight off rapists, even if Kreacher would pop him away immediately. He had to do what he came for and that wouldn’t happen if he had to leave because of some idiots.

Glancing up circumspectly, he noticed the hags cackling in the alleyways, other hooded figures walking purposefully, and occasional curious eyes on him before looking away at the others. Finally, he passed by a store called *Inventiones Et Impar Rerum* (Odd Findings and Things) and figured this was a good a place as any to start to investigate for what he came for.

He pushed the door open, the bell ringing his presence, and glanced about the surprisingly well-lit store. There was no one behind the counter, so Harry simply shrugged and turned towards the shelves of items, noticing it was alphabetized. Happily, Harry perused the shelves for the T’s and, once he found the shelf, began to look for something similar to what he remembered from Third Year.

As he glimpsed an hourglass figure, a voice behind him said, “Can I help you, ma’am?”

Harry forced himself not to jump and instead turned around with a smile on his face, lowering his hood concurrently, and looked at the diminutive man, the presumed shop owner, with his oily black hair combed back neatly, his mustache trimmed and kept nicely, and his dark eyes gleaming at the sight of the plain girl before him. Harry widened his smile, even as he stifled the urge to knee the man for his *appreciative* gaze upon his person, and said calmly, “Yes, I was wondering if you had any Time Turners.”
The man smiled in a smarmy manner and replied, “Yes, ma’am, I believe you were looking in the correct area.” Harry made room for the man to reach the shelves behind him. The man stepped closer, which caused Harry to back away from the close proximity, and looked through the bins decorating the shelf. The man muttered under his breath as he looked, then he cried out, “Aha! Here it is! Worried I had sold it for a moment!” The man grabbed the hourglass on a chain and held it up triumphantly to Harry, “Here you go. That’ll be fifty galleons.”

Harry sneered and gestured for the man to walk ahead and towards the counter. Once they reached the counter and the man had gone and stood behind the cash register, Harry said, “Fifty galleons? For this piece of rubbish in a bin? It’s hardly worth my spit. I’ll pay no more than ten galleons, and you’ll take it gratefully.”

The man’s eyes hardened, but his smarmy smile stayed stubbornly on his face, “Ma’am, that is a genuine Time Turner that does not have any Ministry Trace on it. Its value is at least a hundred and fifty galleons, and I’m only asking for fifty. I’ll go no lower than forty-five galleons.”

Harry leant forward, eyes glowing even with the glamour, and murmured, “Without a Trace, huh? What is my guarantee that you won’t inform the Ministry of selling the product and to whom? Twenty galleons, no higher.”

“I would never betray a customer, my good lady. Thirty galleons and my silence.”

“Twenty galleons, your silence, and your continued existence.”

The man paled and quavered behind the counter, “Ex-excuse me?”

Harry smirked, “Do you want to test me? Take the money and forget my face. You wouldn’t want to incur my wrath.”

The man paled further, but nodded shakily and accepted the galleons. Harry’s smirk deepened and he said, “Pleasure doing business with you. I might just visit once more.”

Still pale, the man attempted a smile and stuttered out, “Y-yes, pleasure doing business with you, ma’am.”

Harry snorted and rolled his eyes, “Honestly, you run a shop in Knockturn Alley and you can’t
handle a simple death threat? I didn’t even have to shed any blood. Grow some balls.”

The man stuttered out excuses and apologies, but Harry just walked out of the shop, once he had pocketed the Time Turner, and began to walk back towards the entrance of the Alley. When he thought he was in a fairly uncrowded and noticed area of Knockturn Alley, he snapped his fingers. Almost immediately, he felt fingers grabbing his leg and then the familiar sensation of popping.

He opened his eyes and found himself back in the hallway he had called Kreacher to earlier. He grinned down at Kreacher and said, “Thank you for your assistance, Kreacher. I’ll call you when it is time for the Yule celebration. Good night, Kreacher.”

Kreacher bowed low and murmured, “I is doing my best to help, Master Harry. It is Kreacher’s pleasure.”

***

A couple days later, on the eve of the twenty-first of December, Harry once again snuck out of his bed. He snapped his fingers for Kreacher, once he was sure he was in the clear, and patiently waited as Kreacher popped in then popped out with Harry into the room he had come to a fair amount of times now.

He transfigured his pajamas into the white ritual robes and followed Kreacher towards where he knew the ritual room was. He lifted his hand and placed it on the door, waiting for the wards to recognize his right as Black blood to enter, and then opened the doors once the wards approved of him. He quickly lit the candles and then gestured for Kreacher to step out of the room, not wanting any of the house elf magic to interfere with the ritual. He then took a deep breath and called to the forefront of his mind the ritual proceedings he had read through before getting into bed and waiting for the occupants of the house to sleep.

He nodded and then began the ritual, intoning the beginning incantation, “In hac initii solstitium, ego veniam. Et ego invocabo Magia conspectu eius invocat.” (On this eve of solstice, I come. I call upon Magic and invoke her presence.) The candles in the room brightened and straightened, stilling in its flickering. Harry shivered as he felt a slight chilly breeze fill the room.

Continuing, he murmured the next phrase as he conjured a ritual blade with his wand, “Et sanguis meus, ut Magia se veneraretur.” (With my blood, I offer homage to Magic herself.) He pricked his fingers and let seven drops of his blood land in the ritual bowl before him. He then waved his wand and used his magic to stir the blood in the bowl. Once he had stirred the blood three times, he took out the sage leaves and dropped seven of them into his blood. He then whispered, “De hoc
solstitium cura omnem infirmitatem in me domine Magia.” (On this solstice, heal any infirmities within me, O Magic.)

The flames of the candles began to dance, and the breeze turned into a strong wind, chilling his face. The blood in the bowl deepened to an almost-black color, even as the sage leaves began to glow golden.

Harry breathed in the scent of the sage and then started to sway, closing his eyes he said, “Tantum pertinent, ut Magia et ego eam ferramento eicere. Quam operatur in me erit.” (I only belong to Magic and I am her instrument. Work in me as you will.)

The room began to hum and Harry smiled as he felt a sudden peace fill him, even as the scent of sage seemed to seep into his very soul now. Harry then dropped to his knees and bowed his head, “De hoc solstitium hodie iniquitatem meam ego cognosco status. Magia est significans et ego faciam opera eius.” (On this solstice day, I acknowledge my status. I am Magic's instrument and will do her works.)

Harry stayed on his knees as he felt the humming turn into a thrumming, and he could feel ice forming beneath his knees and around him, even as the flames burned bright enough to be seen behind his closed lids. Once he felt the thrumming steady, he opened his eyes and uttered in finality, “Ego Magia instrumentum. Ita sit.” (I am Magic's instrument. So be it.)

Harry smiled as the flames burned brilliantly then flickered down to normal, and the ice around him slowly cooled until it vanished as though it never was. Even as the ritual room returned to normal, with the closing of the ritual, Harry stayed on his knees and relished in the peace, in the renewed purpose, he felt.

It was a far cry from the boy in the cupboard below the stairs who had wondered if he had any meaning beyond being a freak.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was pleasantly long and got a lot of plot moving! :D I have the next so many events planned out, which is why this chapter came so quickly! I got a bit of inspiration and knew how I was going to carry this story out!

Along with the inspiration and plans, I also realized that this story is going to be a LOT longer than I expected... I don't want to do sequels or anything like that, I'm just not a fan of them and know that making it a series would psych me out of finishing. I want to keep it all in one story, even if it becomes REALLY long. So hope y'all are ready for a
long ride! :D

In any case, what do you think of Kreacher's characterization? What about Harry's daring escapade? What do you think he'll use the Time Turner for? What about the Yule ritual? (Remember, I'm making up all rituals on the spot, not basing it on fact or anything else!) I was going to write more and include Christmas presents, etc., but that seemed sort of redundant... best to stop on a good note, rather than to go ahead and ruin the chapter :3

Hope y'all liked the chapter! Please do leave comments :) They're a writer's manna and I truly cannot survive without them! Plus, the more comments, the more inspiration <3

*HINT HINT* XD
intoxication in cruelty

Chapter Summary

Harry gets some action and is left hard-pressed to follow his new orders

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The rest of the break passes quickly and wonderfully all at once.

Harry, during the night, is often taken by Kreacher to the library where he has been reading as many of the Dark books as he could, though his mind would often wander back to the book he had taken and placed in his trunk. Reading it gave him a headache, since the text would take a while before it became English, but it was also amazing. Who knew that being a Parselmouth could give one a completely different branch of magic to work through? So, while also reading Dark books and selecting the most innocuous ones to take with him back to Hogwarts, he was also searching for more books on Parselmagic.

During the day, he would spend his time with Sirius and the others, ‘cleaning’ Grimmauld Place and listening to Sirius’ glory days as a Marauder and a few of them about his days as an Auror. Ron was, of course, astounded when he could hear about being an Auror from Sirius, which made him annoyed since Sirius’ stories were Harry’s to listen to, but he did his best to crush that irritation down, if only for now. Hermione, of course, spent her time in the visible Black library, though most of the books were temperamental at best and didn’t allow her to read them unless Harry was with her, much to his and Kreacher’s shared amusement. The twins were still planning on opening their shop, with Harry’s helpful contribution in hand, so they were often in their rooms experimenting and trying to cajole one of the other occupants into testing their products.

In any case, before he knew it, it was the last three days before their return to Hogwarts, which meant that he had to go and visit Voldemort as soon as possible.

Admittedly, Harry was nervous about meeting Voldemort once more.

It could be because Voldemort had displayed some sort of personality defect at their first official meeting as mentor/protégé. It could be because Voldemort could still kick his ass with his eyes closed, wand holstered, and half-asleep. It could be because he wasn’t sure if Voldemort would think his attempt to prove that Harry could and would think for himself paltry and not enough. It could be any of those, but Harry couldn’t quite pin which one.
He knew, for certain, that he was worried that Voldemort would renege on their deal and Harry would either find himself with a face full of Avada Kedavra or Voldemort would just toss him aside and consider him not even worthy of his attention, as though Harry was not a threat now.

Harry was not okay with being tossed aside by Voldemort, so he supposed that he would just have to make it clear that Voldemort could find no one better than Harry Potter and that he was worth all the trouble.

Plus, surely he’d be impressed by the Time Turner, if not then the Parselmagic?

***

Harry lay in his bed, covers pulled up and curled up on his side, with burgeoning agitation as the occupants of the house slowly went to sleep.

With Grimmauld Place being the Headquarters of the Order, the house was never actually still, which is why it was so convenient that Kreacher could take Harry to an undiscovered area of the house. It was also convenient that Ron slept like the dead and snored like a chainsaw, it kept anyone from checking on them or anything during the night.

In any case, near midnight, the house was as quiet as it would ever be and Harry felt it was safe enough to slowly ease out of the bed. He quickly gathered trousers, a somewhat clean shirt – he could only see so well in the dim light in the room – and his wand before walking out to his usual place to call Kreacher. With a snap of his fingers and whispered, “Kreacher,” Harry found himself in the library with the now-healthy house elf eagerly waiting for his instruction.

He smiled and asked, “You’re looking good, Kreacher, I’m glad. Anyways, will you be able to take me just outside, to somewhere I can portkey out? Will I still be able to call you when I need you?”

Kreacher nodded, “Yes, Master Harry, I be able to do what Master Harry be wanting and Kreacher can wait for Master Harry’s call anytime and anywhere. Master Harry is being so good to Kreacher.”

Harry smiled and ignored the slight heat he could feel on his face and said, “Let’s go then, Kreacher. I don’t have time to waste, unfortunately.” Forlornly, he looked at the shelves of books whose spines seemed to be glowing in the candlelight, beckoning him, and forced himself to change out of
his pajamas and into the clothes he had brought with him. He cursed under his breath as he had, once more, forgotten to grab his trainers and a pair of socks. Looking up, he opened his mouth to have Kreacher go grab him some, only to pause in surprise as Kreacher silently handed it to him. He smiled in gratitude and quickly slipped them on. Finally, he nodded to himself and turned to the house elf, “Take me now then come back. I will call for you when I need you.”

“Yes, Master Harry,” Kreacher grabbed his leg and they popped out into some alleyway near Grimmauld, he assumed. Harry nodded towards the house elf who immediately popped away once he had bowed to his adopted Master. He looked around to make sure he was alone before pulling out the portkey, grabbing it tightly, then whispering, “Fuga mortis.” The odd pulling sensation was felt and he stumbled as he landed in the same hallway as before. He took a few moments to breathe away the queasiness from the portkey travel before looking around the hallway, unsure as to whether he should wait for Voldemort to appear or if he should search him out.

Luckily, before Harry even took a step, the familiar cloaked figure appeared in the doorway and said, “Ah, perhaps you are capable of higher thought processes after all.”

Harry suppressed the urge to glare, though he was unsure how successfully he managed that, since Voldemort stood in the shadows and stared at him for who knew how long until Harry gritted out, “Hello, Marvolo. As you can see, I was able to come and visit you, as you asked.”

Voldemort continued his staring and Harry tried his best not to fidget, forcing himself to stand straight, head held high, and trying to exude an unbothered aura.

“I can taste the hints of darkness in you. This place you have been at… it exudes darkness, does it not?” Voldemort stepped out of the doorway and came closer to Harry, the garnet eyes gleaming at Harry from underneath the hood of the cloak, “It’s delicious, the darkness that clings to your skin.” Voldemort now stood just breaths away from him and, without another word, Voldemort lifted his hand and brushed it over Harry’s cheek, causing Harry to inhale sharply in surprise at the strange feeling that invoked.

Voldemort leaned forward, his snake-like nose now brushing Harry’s cheekbone, and Harry felt the deep inhalation Voldemort took… he was sniffing Harry. Harry shuddered, but stood still under the strange perusal. Voldemort’s hand now cradled Harry’s face and his nose was firmly against Harry’s cheek, still inhaling deeply. Voldemort then hissed out, “Yes, you are intoxicating.”

Harry shuddered and his knees went weak at that statement, and it took everything in him to not fall or, worse, grab Voldemort to keep himself upright.
Finally – or shortly afterwards, who knew, Harry had lost all sense of time once he had felt Voldemort’s touch… for some odd reason – Voldemort pulled away, leaving Harry suddenly cold and shaky in the sudden absence. Voldemort stared at him for a few more moments before turning abruptly and calling out, “Come.”

Harry imagined that he followed Voldemort stoically and poised, but he felt like an eager puppy trailing after him as he followed towards the study he had been to last time. Voldemort gestured for Harry to seat himself in the same seat as before, and Harry did as he was bid without a word. Voldemort, though, pulled down his hood as he went to one of the many bookshelves and pulled out a thin notebook before seating himself across from Harry.

The serpentine man snapped his fingers and immediately a house elf popped into place, already bowing, “Master Lord Voldemort be calling Krewl?”

“Fetch us tea immediately.”

“Yes, Master Lord Voldemort, Krewl be doing that now.”

The house elf popped away, leaving Harry and Voldemort to stare at one another, the fire in the fireplace the only sound in the study. Krewl appears soon after with a tea set and silently pour the tea for them, leaving them to add sugar or cream as needed, before bowing deeply, nose near to the ground, then popping away once more.

Harry reached for his cup, adding in two sugars and a bit of cream, then sitting back to sip idly at the tea, if only to have something to do under that intense red gaze. The steam from Voldemort’s cup slightly captivated Harry, him imagining he could see the steam forming snakes, and he had to stifle the sudden urge to laugh at the absurdity of the whole situation.

He was in the Dark Lord’s study, drinking tea, after the very same Dark Lord who had murdered his parents had touched and sniffed him. It was insane and if it weren’t for the other crazy situations he had been in since coming to the Wizarding World, Harry would be convinced he was hallucinating it all.

Alas, Harry was reminded that this was all reality when Voldemort smoothly said, “What else have you done besides become saturated with darkness?”

Harry shifted in his seat and placed his cup back on the table before looking back into those garnet
eyes, “I have been reading as many Dark books from the Black library that I could. I have also,”
Harry paused, suddenly not wanting to mention his discovery of Parselmagic and thanking Merlin
for his Occlumency skills, before continuing, “I have also procured a… Time Turner.”

Voldemort’s hairless eyebrow lifted in mild surprise as he went about preparing his cup of tea – three
squirts of lemon and a teaspoon of honey, Harry noticed absentmindedly – and he murmured, “A
Time Turner, hm? That could prove useful, provided you use it adequately. What are your plans on
using it?”

Harry sheepishly shrugged and looked down at his lap before forcing himself to look back at
Voldemort, “I, ah, have not exactly decided yet, but I will ensure I use it the way is meant to be
used.”

Voldemort’s eyes pierced his for a few moments before he nodded, “Very well. What news of the
Order?”

“How interesting. Dumbledore believes he can predict my actions? The old fool won’t ever see you coming, my Harry.” Voldemort nodded and his eyes increased in its intensity on Harry, “You are ready for your mission.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he immediately sat up and forward, his hands coming to rest on his knees,
“I will do my very best, Marvolo.”

Voldemort smirked, “Of course you will. It requires you to use cunning. As we have established, I
will not spoon feed you how to go about the mission. Figure out what to do and how you will
continue to maintain your existing state of affairs among the Light.”

The emerald-eyed boy nodded eagerly and he replied, “Yes, Marvolo, I will prove myself to you.”

The man’s smirk deepened and his garnet eyes appraised Harry’s form before continuing, “I know
you will prove yourself. You wouldn’t wish to seek my disapproval, would you, my Harry?”
He shook his head frantically, “No, no, I wouldn’t want to disappoint you ever, Marvolo.”

Harry’s head was swimming at the sudden onslaught of the rush at the premise of this mission being entrusted to him. He could hardly keep himself from moaning from how much he had missed it. In any case, his hands on his knees tightened its grip as his trousers suddenly became slightly uncomfortable in its constraint.

“What is it I can get for you, Marvolo?”

“It’s a simple thing, really. I just need you to go to the Department of Mysteries and retrieve one of the Prophecy orbs for me.”

Harry’s eyes widened as his mind raced to recall all that he knew of the Department of Mysteries which, admittedly, wasn’t much at all. “Is this what the Order and Dumbledore are guarding from you?”

Voldemort’s eyes flashed and he curtly nodded, “Yes. Will you accept your mission or not, Harry?”

“Of course I accept, Marvolo. Is there a time limit or a time I need to get it by?”

Voldemort suddenly chuckled, causing Harry’s insides to warm slightly in response, “You have time at your disposal now, what do you need a limit for? In any case, I would prefer it by the end of the year. There really are no guidelines, I’m leaving it all to you. If you have questions, don’t hesitate to ask. However, with your agreement in place between us now, I fully expect you to carry out the mission or you had best not return to me. I would have no need for you if you… disappoint me.”

Harry nodded in understanding, “Yes, Marvolo, I will finish this mission for you.”

“I expected nothing less, my protégé.”

Chapter End Notes
Yes, that's right, there was some Harrymort action (as seen by the suggestive summary lolol) :D Lol blink and you might've missed it haha. Though it was pretty intense to write.... please, let me know if I got the tone right!

How was the interaction between the two? The 'action'? Harry's mission? The tone of the chapter? I'd love to know every thought that went through your head on this chapter lolol :D

I really love writing Kreacher/Harry bonding <3 Lol and the OC house elf's name took me some time to come up with, but... Knockturn Alley, Kreacher... sometimes you gotta be Krewl to be kind hehe :3

How do you guys feel about Voldemort getting his looks back? I'm not confirming/denying that this is going to happen in the story, I just want to know what your opinion is! :) :3
Chapter Summary

and thus the snake begins to weave a web of lies and deceptions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I honestly have no clue why the stupid house elf looks so… different now,” Sirius said with a disgusted look on his face.

Harry shrugged nonchalantly, even as he felt indignation rising on Kreacher’s behalf within him. He was supposed to be saying goodbye to his beloved godfather, not giving him a piece of his mind, but oh, how he wanted to rip Sirius a new one! Especially as, just as Harry had emerged from his shared room with Ron, he had seen Sirius shove Kreacher into the wall with a sneer and a malevolent look in his eye. It was like seeing something unrecognizable in the place of his usually joking and caring godfather. How could this man who Harry saw as almost-family treat a helpless creature that way? How could Sirius take out his anger at his godson’s departure and his confinement on Kreacher? Kreacher, who now hardly muttered insults under his breath, who now had started the upkeep of the rest of the house, who now was the model house elf, which had been noticed by the pleasantly surprised Weasley matriarch and Hermione, who had started up on talking about freeing Kreacher from his ‘unwanted slavery.’

Harry so badly wanted to take Kreacher with him and keep him safe from harm, but he knew that he couldn’t. The house elf may have broken his bond with Sirius and erected a full-bond with Harry in its place, but Sirius remained unaware of it, and Harry needed Kreacher to continue to spy on the Order. Also, this way, Harry could call upon the house elf and have him bring any books he wanted, and, perhaps, one day this house would be his own and he definitely did not want to move into a poorly cared-for one.

Thus, he stemmed all his anger and turned away, even as he mentally grasped the bond of master-and-house-elf and sent strength through it. He sent a smile towards his godfather and hugged him tightly, murmuring, “I’ll miss you, Sirius. Make sure you keep eating and try to sleep in eight-hour increments. I know you can’t see a Healer and Madame Pomphrey can only do so much for you, but try to take care of yourself. You were in Azkaban for twelve years, you can’t just bounce back from that without taking care of the repercussions. You have to be healthy so you can gain custody of me as soon as possible, after all.”

Sirius’ arms tightened around him, “I don’t think you get that I’m the adult here, kiddo. I should be the one telling you to eat your veggies and go to bed on time! Should I be insulted?”
Harry chuckled and shook his head into his godfather’s still-bony chest, “Didn’t you know, as people age they start to regress mentally? I’m just looking out for you.”

Sirius burst out laughing and Harry looked up to see his eyes gleaming down at him with unrestrained glee, “You utter scamp, why I ought to take up my godfather role and make you regret that… and I will, don’t think you won’t get your payback for that, Prongslet.”

Harry rolled his eyes, still grinning, as he backed away, “Hardly smart of you to warn me, Padfoot. You really must be losing your edge if you’re letting me know you’re declaring a prank war.”

Sirius went to respond, but then Molly came bustling in and glared at the both of them, “We’ll miss the train if we don’t leave now! Come on, it’s not like you won’t see each other again, honestly! Now, where are the others? Ron! Are you still not packed!”

Harry and Sirius shared amused glances and both shook their heads as they followed the red-haired woman out to the front hall. They hugged each other once more before Harry left, and, as Harry turned to the hallway, he saw Kreacher pop up to bow deeply towards him and smile, sending awe and gratitude towards him through the bond. Harry was still smiling as he left Grimmauld Place to head back to Hogwarts and all that that return entailed.

***

It was three days after the break ended and classes had resumed that Harry had had the opportunity to enact what he had planned.

See, the plan was rather cunning, in Harry’s esteemed opinion, but it depended on the reactions of people to be enacted perfectly. Not only that, if all went perfectly, he would even gain an ally for the Dark Lord’s cause. Well, ally, slave, it was all the same in the end, really.

Smirking, Harry quickly pulled out his Parselmagic book onto his bed one more time to read over the instructions before transfiguring a quill into a basic blade after erecting the strongest silencing and privacy charms he could over his curtained bed.

He pricked his left hand then, with his right forefinger, began to draw runic circles on a piece of parchment with his blood. Once there were seven concentric circles drawn and drying, he quickly muttered an *Episkey* and healed the small cut. He transfigured the blade back into a quill and set it
aside, turning once more to the book and reading over the next instructions. Taking a deep breath, he grabbed the parchment and placed it face down on his left forearm, making sure to press the runes so it would make an impression on his skin. He repeated the action to his right forearm, over his forehead, then on his right and left calves. Then, once he had done that, he burned the parchment with his blood and closed his eyes, clearly picturing what he wanted to happen.

Once he had a clear picture in mind, he hissed out, “Mutare forma. E novo fiant. Forma fieri. Tantum breviter.” (Change form. Become anew. Become form. Only briefly.) He felt his body begin to tingle uncomfortably, before his skin began to burn, particularly under his eyes. His grit his teeth and sat through the pain, knowing he could not move position until his skin had settled. After what felt like an hour or more, his body finally settled into a slight tingling sensation. He opened his eyes, grinning to himself. Quickly, he muttered a Lumos and transfigured the quill into a handheld mirror, similar in shape to the one Sirius had given him, and looked upon his new form. The changes weren’t obvious, not now, but it would be. That was exactly what Harry wanted after all, a subtle and gradual change.

Perfect.

***

It took two weeks before the effects of the Parselmagic was perceived by anyone other than Harry. Unsurprisingly, it was Hermione who first noticed the deep shadows under Harry’s eyes and his gaunt appearance and asked, “Harry, have you not been sleeping well lately?”

Harry looked up from his Transfigurations essay and shrugged, “It’s been alright.”

“Is it… nightmares?”

“Sort of… I see Cedric sometimes, but mostly I’ve been seeing this strange room with all these glass orbs… When I wake up, my scar is hurting and sort of inflamed too.”

Ron gasped and Hermione’s eyes widened, “Is it… is it like the summer before fourth year, when you saw V-Voldemort?”

Harry grimaced, “It makes my scar hurt like that vision, yeah, but I didn’t see him or anything.”
“Well, maybe you can go to Madame Pomphrey and get a Dreamless Sleep potion or something, Harry. It’s not healthy for you to not be sleeping, see, you’re basically snoozing away working on your essay! Maybe you should tell Professor Dumbledore too…”

Ron nodded from his place across from Harry and said, “Mate, I have been hearing you during the night, whimpering and moaning and stuff, but I didn’t know it was anything bad… I just thought it was, you know… normal.”

Harry halfheartedly grinned as Hermione turned on Ron, “Honestly, Ronald Bilius Weasley! How can anyone moaning at night in their bed while they’re supposed to be sleeping be considered normal!”

Ron’s face went red as he muttered, “You might want to think over what you said and remind yourself that we’re fifteen, Hermione.”

Hermione stared at him puzzled before going as red as Ron’s hair, “O-oh… well… it’s not that, so we should inform someone, Harry! It’s not good to go on this way for you, definitely not healthy!”

Harry chuckled before shrugging, “If you think that’s best, Hermione, I’ll go see Dumbledore.”

“Professor Dumbledore, Harry!”

“Yeah, yeah, so what exactly did Professor McGonagall mean when she wanted us to–”

***

Harry was slowly walking to the Headmaster’s office, occluding and preparing himself for the task ahead. Soon enough, he found himself eye to stony eye with the gargoyle in front of the office’s staircase. He cleared his throat then said, “Choco-loco.” The gargoyle moved aside to reveal the staircase and he calmly walked up and inside, taking in the Headmaster seated regally at his desk, already twinkling and smiling at him.

“Harry, my boy, what a pleasure to see you this evening so unexpectedly! Sit down, sit down, what brings you here? Ah, would a lemon drop interest you, my boy? Perhaps some tea?”
Harry smiled and shook his head, seating himself on the comfy chair in front of the massive desk, “No thank you, Professor, I’m still rather full from dinner. How are you doing, Professor? I’ve been reading the articles and they are rather… harsh. Professor, may I ask, how do you know that Voldemort is back?”

The twinkle momentarily dimmed before Dumbledore straightened in his seat and primly placed his hands on his desk, idly twirling a quill in his right hand, “Well, Harry, I am doing rather well, considering the circumstances. It’s alright, the public has always been fickle, something I’m sure you can attest to. In any case, since your first year, I have been worrying that Voldemort has been biding his time and with young Cedric Diggory’s death and your own participation in the Tournament, I can only presume that he has made his return and will soon make it known to the Wizarding World, hm? They didn’t just make me Headmaster and Chief Warlock for nothing, my dear boy!”

Harry chuckled and nodded, “You are rather brilliant, Professor, to come up with Voldemort’s return just by those facts. Truly, no wonder Voldemort fears you.”

Dumbledore laughed and his eyes twinkled madly, “Thank you, Harry, you are rather kind to say so. Now, not to say that your presence has not brought me joy, surely you must have come for a reason other than to make idle chit-chat with me?”

He nodded and sat up straight in his chair, “Yes, Professor… You see, Hermione insisted I come and see you.”

Dumbledore leaned forward, his brows furrowing in concern, “What is wrong, Harry?”

Harry took a deep breath and looked up into those concerned blue eyes, “Professor, I’ve been having trouble sleeping lately. At first, I thought it was just the normal nightmares, but I wake up and my scar hurts and bleeds sometimes. I’ve been dreaming of this room with shelves of glass orbs lately… do you know what that could mean, Professor?”

Dumbledore sat back in his seat and nodded, calmly grabbing a lemon drop from his bowl and popping it into his mouth, “I see, Harry… You say your scar hurts and bleeds? Is this like the vision you had last summer, the one you told Sirius about?”

Harry shrugged, “Yes, it hurts just like that.”

Gravely, the Headmaster nodded and said, “I’m afraid that you are seeing into Voldemort’s mind,
my boy. We cannot have Voldemort become aware and purposely use whatever connection the two of you share to see your secrets. The best way to ensure the visions stop interfering with your sleep and to protect us all is by having you learn a certain branch of magic... Tell me, Harry, have you heard of mind magics, specifically Occlumency?"

He shook his head, “No, sir.”

The older man nodded and one of his hands absentmindedly stroked his beard, “I see. Well, unfortunately, I will not be able to teach you this myself, Harry. I cannot risk Voldemort learning anything from my mind and of our association. I will have someone I trust contact you shortly to begin your lessons. I want you to remember that these lessons are necessary, even if you don’t like who teaches you. You must be serious, Harry, as I can see you have been more serious in your studies. This is as, if not, more important than your studies. You must do your best, my boy.”

“Of course, Professor, I’ll do what you say.”

“That is all I wanted to hear. It was good of you to come to me with this and you must commend Hermione on her brilliance in telling you to inform me. How about ten points to Gryffindor for seeking help with maturity?”

Harry grinned as he stood up, “That sounds perfect, Professor.”

“Very well, my boy. It was good seeing you.”

“It was good seeing you as well, Professor, have a good evening.”

“You too, my boy, you too.”

Harry walked out of the office, down the stairs, and back towards the Gryffindor Tower, his insides squirming with excitement at how easily everything fell into place.

Ron may be brilliant at Wizarding Chess, but Harry’s skills apparently lie with more human pieces.

Chapter End Notes
Wow, fast update, I know :D I just got really excited about the next part and had time to write so yep :3

Can you guess Harry's plan? I'm sure it's pretty obvious, but I'd like to hear what you think is going to happen :D Also, how is my characterization of Dumbledore? I felt like he was too forthcoming with his information, but I needed him to say those things *sigh*

I'm sure you guys, seeing the title, thought Umbridge would appear in this chapter XD Hehe nope, I just like to break expectations :3
like ink on the soul

Chapter Summary

and the snake just keeps spinning his web

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A nondescript brown owl landed before him at breakfast the morning after his meeting with Dumbledore. Hermione was watching him with blatant curiosity, as was Ron, as he smiled at the owl and fed him an owl treat before taking the small package from him. He looked up with a raised eyebrow at the two and asked, “Is there something you two want?”

Hermione flushed but still asked, “Who’s it from?”

Harry just shrugged, stuffing the package into the pocket of his robe, and said, “Maybe it’s an admirer, ‘Mione. We are fifteen, it’s not inconceivable that someone would want to be the Chosen One’s chosen one.”

Ron chortled as he reached for another helping of scrambled eggs and Hermione rolled her eyes, turning back to her breakfast with an annoyed huff.

Harry smiled wryly before looking down at his half-empty plate, forcing himself to calmly eat and finish, not wanting to come off as too eager, even if he was burning with curiosity at what Voldemort could have possibly sent him with an owl instead of the usual house elf.

Once he had swallowed his last bite of toast and drank his milk, he slid out of his seat, nodded towards Hermione with her curious eyes and Ron’s stuffed face, then calmly walked out of the Hall. He could still feel their eyes on him until he had walked out the doors and towards the library. Glancing around, noticing no one, he quickly slid into one of the nooks and closed the curtain, concealing him, and threw up a privacy and silencing charms. Once he was sure that he was as alone as he could be, he pulled out the packaged, unshrunk it, then opened it carefully after checking for hexes and curses – one could never be too careful with the Dark Lord’s ‘presents,’ after all.

Inside the box was a thin notebook, the same one he had seen Voldemort retrieving when he had seen him last. Surprised, Harry looked back into the box to see if there was a letter or anything. Seeing nothing, he opened the notebook and saw a note on the first page.
My Protégé,

This is my second official mentor/protégé gift to you. I’m sure you’re curious and I shall endeavor to sate it. Be grateful, brat.

As you may have noticed, this notebook is blank.

Here, Harry quickly paged through the book, noticing its blankness, before turning back to the note.

This notebook is not like the journal I had you start. What I want from you is to figure out the significance of this notebook. Your only hints are these: your essence and your mortality.

I am hoping I am not pinning too many expectations on you. I was able to attain what I want from you by the age of sixteen. Considering you have my tutelage, I expect you to manage this before sixteen.

Do not displease me.

Sincerely,

Marvolo.

Harry looked up at the wall before him with wide eyes, the notebook falling to the floor in his shock.

Did… Did Voldemort want him to recreate Tom Riddle’s Diary? The one that opened the Chamber of Secrets? Does Voldemort want him to kill all the Muggleborns in the school by sending the very basilisk Harry had killed on them? And what was this about his essence and mortality? What did that even mean?

He had to figure out what Voldemort wanted from him before July… Merlin’s balls, but this was just asking too much!
Maybe the Chamber might have some answers…? If only he still had the diary…

He straightened and grabbed the book from the floor and snapped his fingers, “Dobby!”

Immediately, Dobby popped up before him and exclaimed, “Harry Potter is calling for Dobby! What cans Dobby be doing for the great Harry Potter!” The house elf jumped up and down in place, eyes large and pleading, and clothed in mismatched scarves, socks, and was that a poncho?

Harry shook his head in bemusement then smiled at the exuberant elf, “Calm down, Dobby! Yes, I do have something to ask of you. Do you remember when I freed you? Remember that book you got with the sock in it from Malfoy? Do you still have it?”

The elf cocked his head to the side, pondering, before nodding enthusiastically, “Yes! Dobby be having it still! Is Harry Potter be wanting it now?”

“Yes, Dobby. Please go and bring it to me. Thank you, Dobby!”

The elf teared up and smiled at Harry, “Oh, Harry Potter is so kind to all house elves and Dobby! It is being a mighty pleasure to help Harry Potter in any way Dobby can be doing!”

Harry grinned and the elf popped away, only to reappear shortly with the diary, the hole from the basilisk tooth still clearly visible. Gingerly, he took the book from the Dobby and absently nodded his thanks and farewell.

For some odd reason, he felt a strange sense of loss at the sight of the book that had contained Tom Riddle. It felt like the largest travesty that Harry could no longer write in the damaged book and have that elegant handwriting respond.

He sighed and pocketed the damaged diary along with his new notebook. Waving a Tempus, he swore and took off running, knowing he had only two minutes to go all the way down to the dungeons for Potions.

***
“Mr. Potter, if you could grace me with your presence after class.”

Harry nodded and hung back, waving Ron and Hermione to go on ahead, as he silently began to occlude, knowing he could not afford to lose his temper before Snape.

Once everyone had left and the door had been waved shut, he turned and raised his head, meeting the malevolent, black eyes of Severus Snape, “Yes, sir?”

Snape sneered and said, “As I am sure the Headmaster has informed you, you will be learning Occlumency lessons from me. If any of your friends ask, you can tell them you are in Remedial Potions, which would not be such a stretch to believe since you continue to display such abhorrent skills in Potions. Come to my office tomorrow after dinner. Do not come late, and I hope to Merlin you will not waste my valuable time attempting to teach you the intricate art of Occlumency.”

Harry gritted his teeth, wanting to curse Snape into the spiteful vermin he was, but nodded, “Yes, sir, I’ll be sure to come on time.”

Snape’s sneer became more pronounced before he nodded curtly, “Very well, I will choose to believe your words and try to spin the fantasy of you being an admirable, studious student rather than the disgraceful, slovenly one you are. Just like your father. Go on then, I do not need to see you any longer than I have to.”

As Harry quickly turned to go, Snape added, his voice maliciously gleeful, “I hope you are as fast on your legs as on a broom, Mr. Potter. You have a minute before you are late to Herbology, I believe, and I am most assuredly not providing a pass for you.”

Harry looked back and sent a scathing glare at the dour, smirking man before taking off in a sprint, cursing under his breath.

***

That night, after his long and exhausting day spent alternately running to classes to avoid being tardy or changing the subject when Hermione asked him about his mysterious package from breakfast, Harry laid on his side in bed as he waited for the symphony of his sleeping roommates to fill the room.
Once Ron’s monstrous snoring was joined by Neville’s sleepy mumbles, Dean’s soft snoring, and Seamus’ wheezy breathing, Harry quietly slipped out from his bed, grabbing his invisibility cloak and map. He quickly donned the cloak and examined the map, noting that Snape was patrolling around the Astronomy Tower that night and that the prefects had already completed their nightly patrolling. He nodded and muttered to himself, “Right, best get going then.”

He walked through the silent Common Room and out of the Gryffindor dormitory and towards the first floor. Soon enough, he found the abandoned girls’ lavatory. With his cloak on, he knew Moaning Myrtle wouldn’t be a bother, but he still cautiously looked around for her, only to see her sobbing in a closed stall. With a shrug, he went to the sinks and found the opening, then hissed, “Open.”

As soon as the opening was made, Harry stepped through, not wanting Myrtle to notice over her caterwauling. He slid down the grimy slide with a grimace, landing soon after into a pile of bones. He quickly stood up and dusted himself off, sending a cleaning charm towards himself, then sweeping the bones away from his intended path. He folded his cloak and map and placed them in his pocket before walking through the same way he had gone three years ago. Occasionally, he’d stop and look around with nostalgia, particularly at the place where Lockhart lost his memories. Ah, good times, good times.

Before he knew it, he was face to face with the basilisk that he had slew as a twelve-year-old. He grimaced then bowed his head, immediately murmuring in Parseltongue, “I apologize for taking your life without heed. Know that you are honored in death, O Great One.”

He straightened then went deeper into the Chamber, looking around and reminiscing. He found his bloodstains on the concrete and scowled, then found the accompanying ink-stain nearby.

Sitting down near the ink-stain, he pulled out the diary and placed it before him on the ground. He closed his eyes and started meditating, clearing his mind of all his distracting thoughts, before guiding himself back to that day in the Chamber.

He sat there, for hours, recalling every detail, taking in the way Tom Riddle spoke, the way he began to manifest as he took Ginny’s life-force, the way Tom Riddle truly seemed to come alive before Harry killed him by stabbing the diary with a basilisk tooth.

His eyes opened and he murmured to himself, “So Voldemort wants me to place myself within these pages… but how?”
He went back to bed, at around four am, mind buzzing with wondering where he could look to get the knowledge necessary to complete the task… and just why Voldemort required this of him.

***

The next day, Hermione had forgotten about the package, thank Merlin, and Harry was able to make it to all his classes without employing his newly acquired leg muscles. Too soon for his liking, dinner was over with and Harry had to part with his friends to head towards the dungeons.

With a put-upon sigh, Harry briskly knocked on Snape’s office door.

The door opened after making him stand and wait for a good five minutes, and Harry hurried in. Snape was nowhere in the room and Harry simply sighed to himself as he seated himself in the chair in front of Snape’s imposing desk. He glanced around, curious despite himself since he had never had occasion to come to see the dwelling place of the bane of his existence. The room did not feature ghastly potions ingredients like his classroom, but it did have a somber air and dark furniture. There were five bookshelves along the wall, each completely filled. It took everything in him to not investigate just what the dungeon bat’s reading tastes were, since he knew it would be harmful to his endeavor if the man came to find him snooping through his books and things. Instead, he sat on his hands, looked around, sated his curiosity, then stared into his lap and started to occlude away memories he definitely didn’t want his hated professor seeing… not just yet, in any case.

“Perhaps you have learned the value of patience with age. Or, rather, you were simply falling asleep, were you not, Mr. Potter?”

Snape swept into the room, already sneering, and looked down at Harry with clear disdain.

Harry let out an inaudible sigh and stood, “Professor Snape, shall we begin our lessons then?”

The sneer became more pronounced and Snape simply observed him for a bit before turning towards his desk and retrieving some paper. Snape looked at the paper for a few minutes before placing it back and turning towards Harry once more, “Mr. Potter, I will attempt to breach your mind with a spell and you will fight it off. Try your best to clear your mind of all your dunderheaded musings, in the meantime.”

Harry resisted the urge to curse Snape on the spot for not even starting with the basics of Occlumency and instead closed his eyes, forcing Snape to wait on him to open his eyes to launch the
attack. Really, this was the professor Dumbledore entrusted his mind to? This was the man who would teach him how to, supposedly, keep the Dark Lord out of his mind? Pathetic. Sickening. Disgraceful.

His eyes opened, blazing with power, and pierced Snape where he stood. Snape’s breath caught at the power behind those ridiculous glasses and he had to force himself to stay upright, as he was chillingly reminded of the Dark Lord’s own gaze. Snape forced himself to take a deep breath for fortification before saying, “Legimens!”

Harry’s lips curled into a cruel smirk as he felt Snape’s mind breach his mind through the flimsy wall he had erected. He let Snape look through his mind, finding his memories of Grimmauld Place with Sirius, his first Christmas with Ron, and the encounter with Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest his First Year, before he seized Snape’s mind and twisted.

Snape screamed in pain, losing control of the spell and firmly handing the metaphorical reins to Harry. Harry made sure to cause as much pain as he could as he chucked Snape out of his mind and followed Snape into his mind, immediately knocking through the barriers as he whispered in Parseltongue, “Legimens.”

He found Snape’s earliest memories, his years at Hogwarts, his consequent years as a baby Death Eater, his discovery of the Prophecy, his betrayal of Voldemort, his Vow to Dumbledore, and all of his darkest secrets.

Finally, he exited Snape’s mind and casually leaned against Snape’s desk as he waited for the writhing man on the floor to collect himself.

Snape, still panting, finally straightened from his sprawl on the cold floor and looked up with half-lidded eyes at Harry, “Wh-what did you do, you-you stupid child!”

Harry laughed, “I suggest you stop speaking and start listening, Severus Tobias Snape. Now, repeat after me: ‘I, Severus Tobias Snape, hereby do honor my Vow to protect Harry James Potter by becoming his follower in all ways. I do hereby Vow to heed his words, follow him, and to honor his wishes and obey them to the best of my ability, even at the cost of my life. So mote it be.’”

Snape, face pale and covered in cold sweat, forced himself to his feet and spat out, “Never! Who do you think you are, boy! What makes you think I would ever agree to such a thing!”
Harry’s lips curled into a smirk and he idly glanced at his nails, “Ah, but, Severus, I thought you were a Slytherin. Do you not possess a need for self-preservation? Do you not wish to live beyond this brewing war, perhaps leave your teaching position and open your own apothecary? Do not lie, I have already seen your desires, Severus.”

Snape attempted to sneer, even as his eyes widened in alarm, and he bit out, “Do not call me in such a familiar way. I will not pledge myself to you, even if I have already Vowed to the barmy old man to protect your life. I will not Vow to become all but your slave!”

Harry straightened and whipped out his wand, immediately calling out an Incarcerous as he walked towards the discomposed professor. Once the professor was bound and once more on the floor, Harry leaned down and whispered, “It is in your best interest, Severus. This way, you will live. Otherwise, your life will be forfeit once I leave this classroom. I highly doubt you will make it past midnight tonight. The Dark Lord does not suffer traitors to His cause. Take my offer and live. Don’t and die. What do I care? I only offer this because of your friendship with my mother and your own attempts to keep me alive so far.”

Snape shuddered as he took in the truth in the boy’s words, but then he remembered what he had said and asked, “The Dark Lord? You call V-Him the Dark Lord?”

He chuckled and smirked, “The Hat had wanted to place me into your House, Severus. I have enough snake behind my lion exterior to want to survive, just as I am sure you do. I threw my lot in with the Dark Lord and I am the better for it. Now, enough dallying. What is your answer?”

Snape observed him, taking in Harry’s glowing green eyes, the cruel smirk dancing on his lips, and the darkness that oozed from the boy. Snape hung his head and whispered bitterly, “I will do it.”

Harry laughed and nodded, “As I knew you would. Only a dunderhead would deny my beyond generous offer, hm, Severus?”

Severus did not respond, choosing instead to firmly resolve himself to this new path that had opened before him. It seemed as though he was now not only pledged to two Masters, but now he served a third one, and this one was a wild card that Severus had never planned for.

“Very well. Repeat the Vow for me now, Severus. I will unbind you and I am trusting you to your word to stay and take the Vow.”
Severus nodded and straightened from his slouched position as the invisible bonds let up. He looked up into Harry’s emerald eyes and stood, taking out his wand and lifting it, uttering emotionlessly, “I, Severus Tobias Snape, hereby do honor my Vow to protect Harry James Potter by becoming his follower in all ways. I do hereby Vow to heed his words, follow him, and to honor his wishes and obey them to the best of my ability, even at the cost of my life. So mote it be.” His wand glowed and he felt his magic tingle as the Vow came into place, binding his life and, essentially, his servitude to the boy he had made a point to belittle and demean for the past five years. Severus internally sighed in resignation. He had no expectations that the rest of his life would be long, nor would it bring anything but pain.

Harry smiled contentedly, even as his eyes glowed with maliciousness, “I am glad you chose this path, Severus. My instructions for you now are this: continue what you were doing. I will inform the Dark Lord of your current affiliation, but I will need you to continue to play the spy for Dumbledore. We will continue this farce of Occlumency lessons, of course, but I will simply expect to do my homework during the allotted time, or something similar. When I have new instructions for you, I will inform you.” He turned to go, then paused and added, “Continue to act the way you do towards me, Severus, as it is necessary for this act. However, I suggest you remember just who holds your life in their hands.”

Harry walked out of the room with a small smile and feeling as though all was just going along swimmingly. Severus stared at the door of his office with rising trepidation at what the future would hold.

Chapter End Notes

I have to admit, I think this is my favorite chapter so far :D

So much going on, huh? XD

What do you think? Why does Voldemort seem to want Harry to create a... Horcrux, is it? :3 What did you think of Snape and Harry's interactions? Of Snape's forced Vow? What is going to happen next?

Btw, please note, I AM a Snape fan and this is NOT a bashing fic.

This is all rather exciting, isn't it? I look forward to reading your reactions! :D <3
As it seems all their meetings go, Draco found him in the library that following Saturday.

“If you’re not careful, you’re bound to turn into a Ravenclaw at this rate, Harry. If not, you might just cause your father to rise up from the grave just to display his utter disappointment in you not following his Gryffindor footsteps.”

Rolling his eyes, Harry looked up with a grin and said, “Hello to you too, Draco.” Cocking his head, Harry smirked, adding, “If I caused my father to rise from the dead, would that make me an inadvertent necromancer?”

Draco just looked at him in utter exasperation, “You’re an utter pillock, Harry. Why I grace you with my presence and charming wit is truly beyond me.”

Harry grinned and widened his eyes, in an attempt at innocence, and said sweetly, “Oh, but Draco, you told me just last night how you love –”

Draco shoved him hard enough that Harry fell out of his seat, laughing.

Unsurprisingly, Madame Pince appeared, out of the many bookshelves, with a pinched look on her face and clearly showing the results of taking lessons from Snape on how to swoop down like a bat. “This is a library. If you cannot be quiet, I suggest you leave,” she hissed out, her eyes piercing them like Basilisk eyes.
They both glanced at one another and shrugged. Harry stood up and gathered his books before following Draco out, figuring he could read up more on Parselmagic later. Plus, it was giving him a slight headache, not as bad as it had been at first, of course, but still bad enough that a break would not go unappreciated.

Harry was lightly chuckling as he walked beside Draco and towards the dungeons, he assumed. “Draco, mate, if I had known as an eleven-year-old that being friends with you would get me kicked out of the library, I wouldn’t have hesitated to take your hand! It’s been on my bucket list to get kicked out! What a helpful little fella, you are!”

Draco glared at him before looking puzzled, “Bucket list? Why would your bucket need to make a list?”

He started snorting, pausing in his descent to the dungeons and leant against the cold wall, “Oh! That was priceless. Truly, this is the kind of stuff you had to have been there for, you know? No one would believe me if I said that you had asked that, but if they had witnessed it... comedy gold, I’m telling you!”

Draco watched him laughing hysterically against the wall before asking seriously, “Have you been sniffing asphodel lately? You’ve gone madder than normal, Harry, and that is truly saying something.” He sniffed haughtily before adding, “It would not look good if I watched as you walked down the path to madness. People would claim I was responsible for it and since I’m not responsible, it would not be a favorable situation for me.”

Harry chuckled and straightened off the wall and shook his head, “Don’t worry, Draco, you can just blame it on my heritage. Isn’t there a touch of madness in the Black blood? Maybe it’s just manifesting in me now.”

Draco cocked his head to the side, considering, before nodding, “Ah, yes, I forgot that Dorea Black married into the Potter family. It all makes sense now then. Come along, the others will be wondering where you are.”

“Don’t tell me you intentionally got us kicked out of the library so I’d follow you along for whatever scheme you want me involved in?”

The blond boy shrugged elegantly in response, “Perhaps, Harry. I plead ignorance and there’s no evidence for you to suggest otherwise.”
“Slytherins. Why did I decide to become friends with you all again?”

Draco chuckled, “Because we Slytherins are irresistible, of course.”

“Ah, yes, the moment you looked at me with those dreamy grey eyes, I just knew that my heart was stolen. Won’t you turn your pointy face towards me and bat your pale eyelashes at me again, Draco sweetheart? I’ll probably walk right off a cliff if you do.”

Rolling his eyes, he muttered under his breath, “You’d do us all a favor if you did…”

“Don’t be silly, I wouldn’t let you be deprived of my presence, Draco dearest! You’ll never be rid of me!” Harry looked at Draco with a maniacal grin, unknowingly letting his eyes glow in the dim light of the dungeon halls.

Draco shuddered and, horrified, cried out, “Salazar, no, I never agreed to that!”

Harry cackled the rest of the way to the Slytherin Common Room.

Soon enough, Harry found himself in the Common Room he had once infiltrated with Ron. At the time, he supposed, he had found the room to be cold and dank, utterly fitting for a slimy snake like Malfoy. Now though, looking at it with unbiased eyes, he found it elegant and comfy at the same time. It was, of course, decorated in stately greens and silvers, but the furniture was black and the fireplace was larger than the Gryffindor one. The couches were all set around the fireplace and there were tables around the edges of the room, showing the more studious nature of some Slytherins. There was no staircase like for the Gryffindors, instead there was a nondescript opening that seemed to lead to a hallway, that was probably magically enlarged to accommodate all seven years and separate them in genders. All in all, Harry liked the Common Room this time around.

Of course, with his entrance, every Slytherin’s eyes were on him, with suspicion, anger, wariness, and curiosity. Nonchalantly, Harry stretched, half-smile on his face, and easily walked over to the couch where Pansy, Blaise, and Theo were seated at.

Dramatically, Harry bowed and straightened with a grin, “No need to fret, lady and gentlemen, your pièce de résistance has arrived.”
Draco, who had followed with a put-upon air and also determinedly ignoring the many eyes of his Housemates, drawled, “Clearly he has lost every last bit of the brain cells he had and has gone bonkers without us to curb him.”

Blaise chuckled and slid over to make room for Harry on the large couch, “Can you blame him, Draco, for going into withdrawal without me?”

Theo looked up and said softly, “I highly doubt it can be healthy for any of you to walk around with such cocky airs all the time. How long does it take for you to humble yourself to lay down on your bed like the rest of us plebeians?”

They went silent, taking in Theo’s comment, before bursting out laughing.

Theo cracked a half-smile before burying his nose in one of his many books.

Harry glanced around the Common Room, getting annoyed with the looks, and called out, “Oi, does anyone have a problem with my being here? If so, speak up or forever hold your peace.”

They all stared at him, equally confused and shocked at his brass. Harry grinned and said, “I may have snake-like characteristics, but I’m genetically Gryffindor enough to call you out on your blatant staring.”

Some snooty fourth-year stood up and called out, “What are you doing here on Slytherin territory, you filthy half-blood!”

Harry’s grin widened, turning maniacal, and he idly pulled out his wand, nonverbally casting a horn-growing hex at the impertinent boy, causing the boy’s eyes to widen in fear as his tongue became a large bull horn, too large for him to even close his mouth. Some of the Slytherins gasped, the rest turned calculating eyes on him, taking in the way the emerald-eyed boy had so easily hexed him without batting an eyelash. Perhaps the Golden Boy was not as golden as they had thought. This situation called for deliberation and caution.

“Anyone else have any other bull to spit out of their mouth? Come on, I’m game.”

No one said a word, quietly going back to what they were doing before Harry had arrived.
He nodded to himself and turned back to his friends who looked at him appreciatively. Pansy leaned forward and whispered, “You continue to pleasantly surprise us, Harry dear.”

Harry threw his head back and laughed, “Did I pass your test then?”

Blaise smirked, “We never had any doubts you would.”

***

“Mr. Potter, how are you doing this evening?”

Harry paused on his way to the Great Hall and slowly turned around, smile already on his face, to reply to the pink toad that was his Defense professor, “Professor Umbridge! I’m doing rather well today, especially after hearing about Minister Fudge employing you as High Inquisitor. Does the promotion come with a raise?” He leaned forward and whispered, “You deserve to buy all the pearls and jewels, Delores.”

Umbridge tittered, her face becoming a blotchy red, “Oh, such a charmer you are! Ah, but yes, as Minister Fudge has seen to appoint me High Inquisitor once he heard about the utterly ghastly state of Hogwarts these days. Really! When I was a student myself, not too long ago, of course, Hogwarts had a bit of a standard, what with being the best magical school in all of Europe! It’s all gone rather down-hill and I cannot let that travesty stand!”

Harry nodded, mock seriously, and replied with gravity, “You are a true godsend, Professor Umbridge. Truly, you must have been a serial killer in a past life for you to be so angelic in this one, hm? Karma, and all that.”

Umbridge looked at him puzzled but, taking in his pleasant tone, smiled, pleased, “You possess such a silver tongue, Mr. Potter, I have no idea why you do not already have a girlfriend or two! If only I were a few years younger, hm?”

Harry smiled back, keeping quiet and internally gagging.

She straightened and said, “Yes, well, I stopped you to ask you an important question. As I said,
Hogwarts is in a terrible state. There’s so much to fix, from the professors, to the classes, to the students themselves! I truly cannot do it all by myself, so the Minister has allowed me to start a sort of student-led group to assist me in ensuring my edicts are carried out. It’ll be called the Inquisitorial Squad. Would you be interested in joining, Mr. Potter?”

He forced a disappointed face, complete with drooping shoulders and gaping mouth, “Oh, but Professor Umbridge, I would utterly love to, but I’ve been swept up in studying for OWLs, Quidditch, and extracurricular reading pursuits. I simply do not have the time! I sincerely apologize, since you know how much I’d love to follow your orders and make sure they’re being carried out, but I just cannot. Won’t you forgive me, Delores?”

Umbridge sniffed haughtily, but she flushed, and replied, “Oh, it’s alright, Harry. I completely understand. You, of course, have a bright future ahead of you and it is your OWL year! Well, if you can, let me know if you can assist. I would sincerely appreciate it.” She leaned forward with a predatory smile and murmured, “I’d have to show you my gratitude then, hm?”

She walked away with a chortle and Harry stood frozen in place until some group of Hufflepuffs passed him, eyes wide and whispering at the Boy-Who-Lived standing in the middle of the hall staring at nothing.

Did… did that toad just imply she’d… He shuddered and gagged. No, no way. That thought did not need to be completed, ever! This whole situation never even happened! Nope. Never. He shook his head and contemplated the probabilities of slight brain damage resulting in him losing the last hour of his memory on the way to the Hall for a quick dinner before it ended.

***

Since it had been a week since he had gained his first follower and time for his next Occlumency lesson, he figured he should follow-up, see how well the ruse is going, check on his well-being and all that. Never let it be said that Harry Potter does not take care of all that is his.

He knocked on Snape’s office door and waited for the door to let him in. Before he had even started counting to ten, the door opened for him and he stepped in. Immediately, Snape walked into the room and regarded him silently, standing a fair distance away from Harry and making no move to get closer.

Exasperated, Harry said, “Merlin, I’m not about to Crucio you, Severus! Sit down and call for tea. I’m parched.”
He could actually see Snape force himself to remain impassive and polite as he sat down in his chair behind the desk and snap his fingers for a house elf to bring a pot of tea.

Harry joined him and sat down in the seat before the desk, smiling at the house elf that popped up with the tea. He didn’t speak as they each prepared their tea the way they preferred it, only looking up at Snape once he had sat back with his cup.

“How have you been doing this past week, Severus?”

The Potion Master’s eyes widened minutely before he forced his face back into its emotionless state and replied softly, “This week has been like any other in that I continue to be plagued by dunderheaded students, an employer who eats lemon drops like it is the cure to old age, and yet another master who is not even half my age yet holds my life in his hands.”

Harry chuckled and replied, “Glad to hear you are in good health then, Severus.” He straightened and leaned forward, asking, “Has Dumbledore asked you about our Occlumency lessons? What have you been telling him about the Dark Lord’s return, since I know he has yet to summon you?”

The man placed his cup of tea on his desk and calmly folded his hands in his laps before replying, “Dumbledore has been told that you are deplorable in your Occlumency skills and that you fail to practice in any way to remedy it. Even though the Dark Lord has not called me, the Mark has darkened completely and I occasionally feel a fission of His power through it. Dumbledore has been having me chasing down former… members, yet no one has been called so we are all rather in the dark.”

The emerald-eyed boy nodded and said, “You are doing well. I will be filling Him in on your newfound loyalty and He will perhaps call you soon. As for the other Death Eaters… I don’t think He has any plans to call them until the end of the year. He’s been preparing something grand, though he hasn’t quite confided in me, I got that feeling.”

Snape simply nodded, observing the boy in a new light for the very first time. He took in the way the boy sat with an aura of easy confidence that implied he was comfortable with himself, perhaps for the first time. The boy also had a tinge of power that was… alluring in that it was similar to the Dark Lord, yet still rather innocent. It was intriguing. Sitting there, Snape had to admit to himself that this boy was no clone of James Potter, and perhaps not even the her son… No, this was a boy on the brink of manhood, making his own path, relentless in his determination for something. This boy was his master, for all intents and purposes, and Snape felt equally humbled and afraid.
Near the end of January, Harry decided it was a good time as any to sneak out of Hogwarts to meet with Voldemort and give him updates on his progress.

The weekly letters the house elves would bring had lessened to every other week, what with Voldemort becoming busier with his plans and Harry now able to decide what his independent study would focus on.

Therefore, Voldemort had yet to be informed of Harry’s attempts at follower building, Snape’s new loyalties, and his theories on what he was supposed to do with the notebook he was given.

Once his roommates had fallen asleep, he donned his cloak and grabbed his Map as he began the descent to the passageway to Honeyduke’s. After he passed the wards, Harry quickly grabbed the portkey and whispered the passcode, bracing himself for the pulling sensation and the landing.

Upon his landing, Harry closed his eyes, trying to suppress the slight nausea that always accompanied portkey travel for him.

It was no surprise then that he was unprepared for the curse that flew towards him.

Chapter End Notes

Do you think that the way Harry acted with the Slytherins is his insanity showing, his attempt to throw them off his true self, or his actual self he’s been hiding and feels safe enough showing the snakes? :3

Writing Harry/Draco scenes are my favorite thing <3 They just flow really well :D Or I'm just biased hehe ;) Yep, Umbridge appeared and made us all cringe along with Harry (or I hope so lol).

Yes, at the end, that was my attempt at a cliff-hanger. Not sure if it actually caused suspense but... :D
Harry was thrown by the vibrant teal spell that flew towards him, immediately screaming as he was wracked by pain, his skin on fire and his hands started clawing at his skin and clothes, anything to escape the burning.

“I don’t know what you’re doing here, Potter, but I’m not about to have you attack my Dark Lord!”

He could only scream in reply as his vision blacked out, his skin burning and fingers drawing blood as he kept scratching, searching for relief from the pain...pain...burning...pain.

“He screams, Harry faintly realized, but then the burning disappeared and the sudden coolness had him sobbing in relief.

Someone was holding him, murmuring soothing words and he felt a tingle on his skin as the familiar diagnostic spell washed over him. He whimpered, reaching for more of the touch of this person who was holding him so delicately, so carefully, as though he were someone who deserved a touch such as this.
The person pried his mouth open, Harry whining in protest, only to have a potion poured down his throat. He gurgled slightly before swallowing reflexively, almost immediately feeling his consciousness beginning to give way to the black of beckoning unconsciousness, but he didn’t want to leave these arms just yet. He whimpered and grasped at the robes of the person holding him, gibberish falling out of his mouth as he begged for the person not to leave him alone, not now, not ever.

“Shh, sleep now, Harry, I will watch over you. Be a good boy now and obey me.”

Harry whined slightly in protest, but he felt his lips curl up at the thought of pleasing this person, this person who called him a good boy, him who had never been anyone but a freak, a forced hero, a troublesome brat, an unwanted child.

He succumbed to the call of Morpheus, falling asleep in the arms of this person whose touch soothed him, who he wanted to please, who he wanted.

***

The light hurt his eyes, as he stirred awake, even with his eyes still closed. He groaned and turned over, burrowing his face into his pillow and pulling up the covers even higher. He inhaled deeply, taking in the clean scent of freshly washed sheets and a sort of minty smell on top of it. It smelled nothing like his usual bedsheets, which were always freshly washed but scentless. Strange. Were the Hogwarts house elves trying some new laundry detergent? He shrugged sleepily and nuzzled his pillow, feeling like he was a cloud floating away into nothingness, surrounded by pillows and chocolate… Mm…

“Do you plan on sleeping the whole day away? I do believe you came to visit me for a reason.”

Harry’s eyes bolted open and he sat up, staring at the Dark Lord in utter shock, “Wh-what are you doing in my dorm room?”

The Dark Lord’s eyebrow raised and he asked, “Your dorm room? What do you remember last?”

Harry shrugged as he rubbed his eye, “Dunno, I think I went to bed after eating breakfast and was there a niffler involved somewhere? Yeah, there was a niffler and he kept trying to steal my locket.”
Voldemort exhaled loudly in exasperation and shook his head, “I’m asking about what happened in actuality, not in your dreams.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he grabbed the covers, trying to cover himself, feeling vulnerable, and he asked, “How do you know what I dream? Are you peeking in on me?! I thought you said Occlumency keeps people like you out of my head! I thought Peeping Toms were just a turn of phrase!”

Voldemort glared at him and backed out of the room, “Go back to sleep before I’m tempted to Crucio what sense you have left out of you.”

Harry watched as the Dark Lord swept out of his room, the door slamming shut behind him. He shrugged and curled back into bed, already falling asleep among the mints and fluffy pillows.

***

The next time he awoke, the light wasn’t as bright but his stomach was growling in protest at its prolonged empty state. He groaned and sleepily sat up, rubbing his eyes with one hand and grasping for his glasses on the nightstand with the other. When his hands finally found his glasses, he shoved them on and moved to get out of bed, only to freeze as he took in the room that was not his dorm room, his ‘room’ at the Dursley’s, the room he shared with Ron at Grimmauld Place, or even the room he’d shared at the Burrow. Just where was he?

He looked around, taking in the huge room, decorated in shades of varying gold and off-white. It was more opulent than anything Harry had even laid eyes on and it made him uncomfortable that he had just drooled all over the pillows and whatnot in his sleep. Whose bright idea was it to place him here?

A house elf popped into the room, shocking Harry into letting out a cry – not a squeal, thank you very much, men don’t squeal ever – in surprise.

“Oh, Krewl be very sad to be upsetting Master Harry Potter but Master Dark Lord Sir be wanting you to joining him in tea now.”

The raven-haired boy nodded and replied, “That’s okay, Krewl. Will you wait for me to wash up and guide me to the room?”
The house elf nodded eagerly, “Oh yes, Master Harry Potter! Krewl be knowing to be patient-like, oh yes. He be waiting here for Master Harry Potter!”

“Thank you, Krewl.”

Krewl’s eyes widened in surprise before he lowered into a deep bow, “It be very much Krewl’s pleasure, yes it be, Master Harry Potter.”

Harry smiled and rose from the bed, walking quickly to the washroom to take care of business and wash his face of its lingering sleepiness.

The events leading up to him being in a bed in the Manor home of Lord Voldemort had come back to him… as well as the strange dream he had that involved a niffler, some locket, and peeping Toms… and did Voldemort pop in to threaten to Crucio him? What a weird dream.

He quietly followed the eager house elf down the dimly lit hallways and towards the study that he was now familiar with. He entered to find Voldemort seated in his usual seat and perusing some book with intense concentration.

Feeling slightly awkward, Harry fidgeted in the doorway, torn between entering since he had asked for Harry’s presence and pretending like he hadn’t arrived just yet to avoid Voldemort’s wrath at being interrupted.

“Be seated, Harry.”

The raven startled before murmuring a greeting and quickly seating himself, feeling all of his fifteen years in comparison to however old Voldemort was.

A tea set appeared, along with various biscuits, and Harry prepared his tea, just for something to do in the silence.

Finally, Voldemort set the book aside and looked up at Harry. Harry stifled the urge to jump as suddenly he remembered the person who had called him a good boy. He blushed and ducked his head at the reminder that he had wanted that person, in a way he had never wanted anyone.
“Well? I assume you came here for a reason other than to be cursed by a Death Eater and to sleep the day away in one of my guest rooms.”

Harry nodded, immediately falling on his normal persona before Voldemort, pushing aside his thoughts of other things. “Yes, I wanted to give you personal updates on what I have done so far. I also had some questions.”

Voldemort nodded and leaned back in his seat. Even though he appeared laidback, Harry was still given the impression that he was a predator that was waiting patiently for its prey to let down its guard rather than a man relaxing in his study before his protégé. “Very well, I am waiting.”

“Well, if I might, who was it that cursed me?”

The Dark Lord’s ophidian nostrils flared in annoyance, “One of my more favored of my Death Eaters who assisted in my return. He has been accordingly punished for attacking you and corrected of his view. You need not fear being attacked when you enter this Manor ever again. Other Death Eaters are not allowed here, Barty and Pettigrew being the exception because they cannot go elsewhere.”

Harry sneered, “Pettigrew is here? Why have I yet to see him?”

Voldemort chuckled darkly, “He snivels and hides himself from me in fear, only appearing when I call for him, like the coward he is. Once he has outlived his use, I assure you that you may do whatever you wish with him. Perhaps he will be my third gift for you.”

Harry grinned, his eyes glowing, “That sounds perfectly agreeable to me, Marvolo. Anyways, I wanted to inform you that I have now gained my first official follower and assured you of your spy’s loyalty.”

The serpentine man nodded, unsurprised, “You have gained Severus’ compliance then? Well done, Harry. You are growing into yourself remarkably well. I hardly see the quivering eleven-year-old you were now. How you’ve grown.”

Harry blushed, “Thank you… Marvolo. I drew out a Vow from him, though you’ll be surprised to know Dumbledore had Severus on his side due to a Vow made to protect me. It seems Dumbledore never suspected I could join my parents’ murderer.”
He chuckled, “The old coot considers himself omniscient. Let him continue to delude himself, it only works in our favor.”

“I also wanted to ask you about your second gift… What I understand so far is that you want me to make something similar to Tom Riddle’s Diary? Do you want me to reopen the Chamber of Secrets and kill the Muggleborns in Hogwarts then?”

Voldemort stilled, “… How do you know of my… Diary?”

Harry tilted his head in confusion, “Because I spoke to the memory of yourself sixteen-year-old self in my Second Year. Didn’t you ask Lucius to give it and have it set upon the school?”

The Dark Lord stood up in a burst of motion, moving to pace in front of the fireplace in agitation, his robes billowing around his lean form, “Lucius gave what I entrusted to him?” He hissed and drew out his wand, firing spells at the wall opposite him, letting out his anger.

Harry sat still, surprised at the anger he could taste emanating from the man. It was almost glorious the way his anger transformed him from his mentor to someone powerful. So powerful that he was creating a hole in the wall simply by firing spells. It was incredible to be in the presence of such power and not have it turn on you.

Voldemort turned on him then, eyes burning vermillion and piercing Harry where he sat. He hissed out, “Who did Lucius give the Diary to? What happened to the Diary? Where is it now?”

Harry shakily drew the Diary out from his pocket and handed it to the furious Lord, edging off the chair and to the floor, onto his knees, head bowed in repentance and supplication, “I-I’m sorry. I was still Dumbledore’s puppet then… I didn’t know what it meant to you, all I knew was I didn’t want the school to close and me to have to return permanently to my relatives!” He looked up, eyes glowing viridian, and cried out, “Lucius gave it to Ginny Weasley! She was my best friend’s sister; I couldn’t help but save her! You must understand where I’m coming from, right?”

The room descended into tense silence, Harry still on his knees before the furious man, and the Dark Lord looming over the boy with eyes that both begged for forgiveness and burned with righteousness.

“Sit down, boy, I already know who will be punished. As you said, you were a foolish twelve-year-old and while this is not a favorable situation, I will work to remedy it. Lucius, on the other hand,
will rue the day he was born.”

Harry stood up and sat down in his seat, exhaling softly in relief. Once he was sure the Dark Lord was not angry at him, he eagerly asked, “Can I help you punish him, Marvolo?”

Those garnet eyes turned on him and observed him, taking in the eagerness and the clear desire to please him, and nodded slowly, “We shall see. You have yet to practice any of the Dark spells, have you? Practice and let us see how you handle Dark magic. Then we’ll see if you can have a live subject to test.”

Harry beamed at the chance to show his mentor his skills, “That sounds good to me!”

“Is that all then?”

Harry nodded after wracking his brain for anything he had left out.

“Very well. I suggest you hurry and portkey back. You are lucky it was a weekend you came on, though if you do not return, I’m sure one of your nosy dormmates will wonder at your absence. Continue what you are doing and find a way to practice Dark magic. I cannot have an incompetent student of mine showing a lack of skill in my forte, after all.”

Harry nodded again, standing up to go, “I will not displease you, Marvolo, I swear.”

“See that you don’t. Now, be gone.”

The raven-haired boy walked out of the study and towards his normal departure area, mind rolling with all that had happened and wondering just where he could practice Dark magic in Hogwarts. Perhaps the Chamber of Secrets…? He’ll have to see. Marvolo was right, he didn’t want to appear incompetent in front of anyone who would know he was Marvolo’s student. Marvolo deserved better than for Harry to disrespect him in such a way.

Plus, it was sort of nice when Marvolo called him a good boy.
Is that... Is that further Harrymort development I see? XD It's a slow-going process, y'all, but don't worry. It's happening. Of course, Harry is in the stages of puppy love and Voldemort will only be amused by this :3

I think that first scene is my favorite in this whole chapter, just because it was hard to describe what was happening while Harry was in pain and with him being our narrator.... *shrugs* It was fun to write and I hope you were as confused about what was happening as Harry was! :D

Yes, I had to add in some humor, which is why Harry was so very out of it :D XD Hehe peeping Tom lol I couldn't resist!

Did you notice the pronoun change in Harry's mind?

Also, does Harry possibly have a... praise kink? :3 XD

Please do let me know what you think of everything so far! I love hearing your opinions and thoughts! :) <3
It was a determined Harry that returned to Hogwarts, to his friends’ concerned and pointed questions and gazes, to the monotony of a life that no longer suited him.

These people, no matter how well-meaning, did not know Harry, not truly. Ron saw him as his best friend, his best mate, and he was Harry’s first friend. He had seen Harry first as a scrawny boy with broken glasses in an empty compartment, eager for companionship, and their friendship was forged with the first shared candy from the trolley. Yet, that friendship sometimes seemed hinged upon Harry’s popularity, and Ron’s jealousy was always lurking at the edges, unspoken of, but Harry knew and had to confront it when Ron had abandoned him last year. In contrast, Hermione was a friendship that was gained through the shared experience of going against a mountain troll and surviving, winning even, and she was a dear and always loyal, and sometimes Harry fancied that she stayed with Ron and Harry because she, too, knew the desperation in keeping the friends you have, because she had had so few before due to her bookish and know-it-all attitude. Hermione and Ron and Harry, the Golden Trio, the Three Musketeers, friends until the end.

Why then did Harry no longer speak to them as freely as he did, no longer feel connected, seeing them as a way to keep suspicion off of him rather than as valued companionship? He felt distant from them and their concern irritated him to such a degree that he began to avoid them, feeling suffocated by them.

In contrast, the Slytherins’ were cool and their words were painted in deceptions and half-truths, and Harry knew to never take them at face-value, just as they did him, yet he felt like he was coming
home every time he joined them. Why did he find it more valuable to work and convince them that Harry was a worthy person to have in their favor, to befriend?

Perhaps it was Harry’s self-preservation rising up, because he doubted that Hermione and Ron would ever join Voldemort’s side, no matter if he had convinced them. Hermione was a Muggleborn and she would never agree with Voldemort’s policies in choosing the Muggle world or the Wizarding World, compromised by her Muggle heritage. Ron, on the other hand, would vehemently oppose anything “dark” and would abandon Harry again, easily, because Harry was a slimy Death Eater, a Slytherin. So perhaps the distance was simply Harry protecting himself from being hurt. Or something.

But, Harry supposed, he owed it to them to give them a chance to choose. So he considered ways to go about it, even if he already figured they would reject it, reject him.

***

With the desire thrumming in him to please Marvolo, he wanted to be his normal impetuous self and rush down to the Chamber and begin practicing Dark magic, but he couldn’t, not when his persona as the Golden Boy was so pivotal. It could not be compromised.

Therefore, as it had become common to this year, Harry went down to the library. He first browsed the normal stacks, wondering if the normal spells and potions books could give him answers. When none was forthcoming enough, Harry snuck down at night with his cloak and perused the Restricted section, finding very books that told him whether or not it would be apparent to others when he began to practice Dark magic.

With a sigh, he went to confront Snape, who, though he raised his brows and seemed to observe Harry even more closely, gave him a book on the effects of Dark magic and begrudgingly agreed to brew the necessary potion for him that would allow him to continue his farce.

It took another week and the procuring of dubious ingredients through owl order before Snape was able to brew the potion, and another two weeks before the potion was ready for consumption. It was a silvery color with a tint of red and it tasted like what troll snot looked like. Harry gagged, much to Snape’s poorly concealed amusement, but swallowed it down. Almost immediately, he felt an odd tingling over his hands then his temples. He let out a shaky breath and closed his eyes, letting the potion’s effects settle over him before nodding to Snape to say the spell, Magicae Revelare. Harry felt the spell hit him and waited for his aura to reveal himself, but nothing happened. Satisfied, he nodded and thanked Snape then headed out, his head buzzing with the thoughts of what came next.
He had to wait until a Saturday, when Hermione and Ron were used to him disappearing and the Slytherins were used to him doing things on his own, before he could make it down to the Chamber, cloak donned and his journal in hand.

Once he was face to face with the perfectly preserved corpse of the basilisk, he allowed himself to smile in glee, his body thrumming with excitement at finally doing what he’s wanted for months! He almost wants to throw caution to the wind and cast the spells on the basilisk – won’t it be utterly interesting to see how long it takes before the spells penetrate the magically imperious scales? Is it even possible? – but the idea fills him with wrongness and stems his eagerness, so he sighs as he looks about, forlorn now that he has nothing to cast the spells on. After all, what’s the point of conjuring or transfiguring some dummy to cast spells on when the effects on the dummy won’t be as obvious?

He’s staring without seeing when he sees a rat scuttle into view. The rat is nosing around for food, eventually nosing along the basilisk and getting brave enough to try to bite the large snake, only to hiss as its teeth barely makes a dent. The sight of the sniveling vermin fills him with disgust, reminding him clearly of another rat, the rat that had condemned his parents and his life, but then the most brilliant idea comes to him and he smiles, summoning the rat to his hand.

The rat is squealing in the transfigured cage, Harry notes idly, as he pages through his journal, looking for the spells he had marked as interesting, spells he had wanted to try and the thought that this rat that reminds him so much of another vermin is here waiting for his spells… well, it’s all rather fitting, isn’t it?

He hums and then chuckles to himself as he finds the perfect spell to try out first. His eyes are glowing in the dim light of the Chamber as he turns to the squealing and scuttling rat. He worries for a moment that the rat might not last through all the spells he wants to try, but then it’s not as though there aren’t plenty of rats in a drafty castle in Scotland, right?

He has all the time in the world and all the test subjects he needs.

He transfigures the cage into a small leash and ties the rat down, keeping him in place, then he pulls out his wand and enunciates the spell clearly, “Cogitatio Posuit,” picturing the thoughts he wanted the rat to have now. The rat stiffens as the spells hits, then it rolls over and begins to gnaw on its own arm, a strange squelching sound filling the air, unable to resist the thought that its arm looks
rather tasty and smells rather divine.

Cancelling the spell once the arm is hardly recognizable anymore, he casts another one, “Cortices Retro,” and watches clinically as the rat’s fur peels back, revealing the musculature of the rat, the vermin screaming and trying to gnaw out of its ties, anything to escape the pain.

Harry vanishes the peeled fur and steps closer, observing the bleeding and shaking rat before pulling out his journal to take notes, noting how the spells had come easily to him, like he had simply needed to coax that first bit of dark out and show how much he wanted it for his magic to do his bidding, so unlike all the neutral spells the school teaches.

Yet, even as the spells come easy to him, he can already feel his magic below his skin bubbling in a strange way, trembling almost, and he feels the tinges of dark magic influenced euphoria rising up in him.

He chuckles as he places the journal and quill aside and turns back to watch the shuddering rat, still trying to gnaw the ties holding it captive. “Tsk, tsk, can’t have you escape now, can we? Not when the fun has only begun.”

He reinforces the ties with magic and says the next spell he had been looking forward to using, “Crucio.”

The screaming and the way the rat’s body spasms… the way the longer he holds the spell, the stronger the euphoria becomes until Harry can’t get enough of this feeling and it all makes perfect sense now that Marvolo’s favorite spell is this, doesn’t it?

He laughs as the rat screams itself into unconsciousness, then Harry mutters a Rennervate and the rat is wide awake, twitching and squealing, as Harry throws another spell its way, “Imperio,” commanding the rat to bash its head against the cold stone floor. He watches, giggling, as the rat falls prey to Harry’s commands and bashes its head into a bloody mess.

He revives the rat again, the rat barely twitching now, and Harry throws the burning spell he had had cast on him, and the rat has enough energy to scream once more. Eventually, Harry decides that’s enough and cancels the spell.

Gearing himself up, he readies his wand and says loudly and clearly, “Avada Kedavra,” and then he’s laughing loudly as the green spell flies out of his wand and towards the barely alive rat. Oh, but
No wonder Dark wizards are all mad and eager for dark spells. It’s addicting, and Harry has to force himself to holster his wand after he vanishes the rat corpse. Legs trembling, he collapses onto the stone floor and tries to steady his breathing, trying to calm himself from that glorious high that still lingers in him.

Eventually, he gets up and gathers his things to leave the Chamber, promising himself to return soon. He has to practice and control himself, he can’t get carried away in front of Marvolo after all.

If the idea of returning for more fills him with anticipation, well, it can’t be helped.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is heavy and was rather difficult to write, just because it was so important to Harry's development, but only starred Harry... so no dialogue, besides internal. It was also rather difficult to carry it out well and a lot of my inspiration came from Athy's 'Darkness' series, but I didn't want to plagiarize her in any way, so I did make critical changes.

This chapter is also why I made sure the last one was more humorous, if only to prepare my readers for this! Don't ever say I don't take care of my readers ;) <3

I'm hoping I get better at torture scenes... sorry if this chapter isn't my best. I was trying and it was important this happened, but I didn't enjoy writing it so I'm afraid it didn't turn out as well....

At this point, I must ask, when do you think it'll become clear to others that Harry is not the Golden Boy anymore? Who will first confront him? More importantly, do you think anyone will join Harry on the dark side? Is Harry truly loyal to the dark side now? What is your opinion?

I'd truly like the answers to these questions, it'd help me write future chapters better :)
Thank you <3

Btw, you can follow and reach me on tumblr at: http://emalynnstone.tumblr.com/ :D :)
blurring and stirring the truth and the lies

Chapter Summary

and the web is torn asunder

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Going Under" by Evanescence. Gotta admit, using song lyrics as titles is probably my favorite thing :3 Anyways, totally disclaim any right to the phrase!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He continues for a month, going once a week, every Saturday, to the Chamber to Accio a rat to him and practice his spells, forcing himself to only practice for an hour so as to reign himself in from submitting to the addiction of the dark magic.

Yet, perhaps it was this preoccupation that made him selectively blind to his friends, and made him forget all his careful machinations to keep up his pretenses. It was his addiction, then, that led him to his folly, his downfall.

On the fifth Saturday since he had begun, he took out his cloak and map, barely eyeing the map to notice who was along the path before donning the cloak and walking quickly toward the Chamber, his body quivering with anticipation at the thought of trying out the os incendii eius (bone burning) curse he had just read in one of the dark magic books Marvolo had given to him recently.

The thought of burning the rat’s bones from the inside and watching it turn into a puddle of pain filled him with such glee that he paused in his descent, briefly wondering just who he had become before mentally shrugging and continuing. It didn’t matter, not really, not when he was the apprentice of the Dark Lord. Was it any wonder that Harry Potter, Golden Boy, future warrior for the Light, would cow at the thought of having joy at the thought of giving others pain? Yet, the budding Harry Potter, Dark Lord’s protégé, possible heir for the Dark, rejoiced in finally having control, of having endless possibilities before that the little boy in the cupboard could never have even dreamed of. That Harry Potter could hardly care less if his morals became loose in the light of the freedom that he had chosen. The other Harry Potter could go and die in a ditch, maggots eating his rotting corpse, for all he cared.

With thoughts of his new self and the upcoming dark magic usage preoccupying him, he was oblivious to the footsteps that dogged his steps, the other’s breath caught in shock at the look in
Harry’s eyes as he shoved the cloak into his pocket before hissing in the slightly flooded girls’ lavatory. Moaning Myrtle’s sobs drowned out the other’s gasp as they quickly ran to the closing entrance, just barely entering before the sink slid shut over the entrance once more.

Harry and the other slid down and then quickly walked to Harry’s usual place. As Harry pulled out his wand to summon a rat towards him, he felt someone tackle him to the cold, stone floor. He gasped as they began to grapple for his wand. With a shout, Harry shoved the other way, only to realize the other stood with his wand across from him.

“H-Hermione? What are you doing?”

Hermione looked at him with wide and disappointed eyes, “The real question is, what are you doing, Harry?”

“You just took my wand! Give it back, ‘Mione. Come on, whatever you think I’m doing, we can surely just talk it out?”

She shook her head, her eyes wide and incredibly sad as she stood panting before him, her knuckles turning white as she gripped the blackthorn-and-phoenix wand tight, “I’ve been watching you, Harry. I’m not known as the brightest witch for no reason, not that I mean to brag or anything.” She let out a sobbing breath as she accused, “You think I can’t see the effects of dark magic on you? I’m just proving my theory right now.”

Harry threw himself at her, mind filled with the need to protect his secrets, to get her away from what was his, what Marvolo had given him, had entrusted him with, “You’re spitting nonsense, ‘Mione. Now quit playing games and give me my wand back, you wouldn’t leave me defenseless when Voldemort’s mind could connect to mine at any time, would you?”

Hermione stepped back quickly, wand still kept tight in her hand, keeping herself away from a Harry that was poised to jump and grab the wand once more, “I believe you have nightmares and visions he gives you, but I don’t think me checking your wand quickly will leave you vulnerable, Harry. I just need to be sure.”

Her back collided with the stone wall and she gasped, “Keep away, Harry, just let me check and I’ll give it right back.” Glancing down, she burst out, “Is this even your wand? Harry, did… did you steal this?”
He scoffed, carefully stepping closer, eyes locked on the wand even as he nonchalantly answered, “Oh, but you hurt me, ‘Mione. Just what do you think of me?”

“I don’t know who you’ve been lately, Harry, but you’re still my friend and I’m only looking out for you.”

He sneered and glared at her, finally looking at her rapidly paling face, her bushy hair frizzy and strands sticking to her sweaty forehead. “What lies, is that how you sleep at night? Telling yourself that sticking your nose into other people’s business, namely mine, is okay because it’s for, what, the greater good, for my own good?” He snarled and stepped closer, just breaths away from her, “Give it back before I do something we’ll both regret, Hermione.”

She was pressed against the wall, eyes frantically searching for a way out of the corner he had backed her into, literally, but she still bit out, “What will you do, Harry? What will you do to me, Harry, your best friend?” Her brown eyes met his, piercing him where he stood, “Who are you right now, Harry James Potter?”

He laughed bitterly, even as he swiftly leaned in to grab for his wand, but she kicked him on his shin, quickly angling herself away from his grasping hands as he bent forward in pain and running out from the corner. She ran as far from him as she could get and then quickly pulled out her wand, aiming it at the blackthorn wand, and said clearly, her voice reverberating in the large chamber, “Prior Incantato.”

Harry surged forward and grabbed the wand from her just as her grip slackened in shock, reading as the words, Lumos, Incendio, and Avada Kedavra floated above the wand now in Harry’s hand.

She choked out, her left hand coming up to cover her mouth in shock, “Harry, what did you do.”

He sneered, even as his mind raced with how to fix the situation in his favor, in Marvolo’s favor, “Did you expect me to come up to the Dark Lord and what, disarm him? He’d kill me and laugh at my corpse, Hermione! You don’t know what I see at night, the visions! I’ve seen him torture Muggleborn girls in front of their families, laughing as their parents cry, as the children cry in pain! How can I ever face him and not die without knowing a spell that will guarantee his end?”

Shaking her head in staunch refusal, she cried out, “So you’d stoop to his level to put him out? Then you’d be no better than him! And who said it had to be you, Harry?”
“It’s always me, Hermione! Don’t pretend like you didn’t expect me face him when it all comes down and kill once and for all! Even Dumbledore expects me to, the greatest wizard of our time wants me, an average schoolboy, to face Voldemort!”

“Then we’ll figure out a way so you don’t have to do this, Harry! You’re tainting your magic! How long have you been doing this? Harry, please, let Ron and I help!”

He shook his head and looked away, his hair falling into his eyes, “No one can help, it’s only me and Voldemort in the end, after all.”

“It doesn’t have to be that way, Harry! We’re with you and we’ll figure something out so you don’t have to ruin yourself to ruin him!”

Scoffing, he holstered his wand and crossed his arms over his chest, “Don’t be naïve, Hermione, it doesn’t become you. Dumbledore himself couldn’t think of anything but me facing him. Perhaps that’s why I keep dreaming of the Department of Mystery and those orbs… maybe there’s a prophecy and it’s about Voldemort and me. Maybe we’re supposed to kill each other, who knows. It’s going to be him and I in the end, not him and us, Hermione, as much as we want otherwise.”

“Oh, Harry.” She surged forward and hugged him tight, sobbing into his shoulder, “Harry, how long have you been thinking these thoughts? Is this why you’ve been acting this way? I mean, I can see that you practicing that spell has been tainting you, but… if you’ve been thinking this… then… oh, Harry, I’m so sorry I didn’t notice earlier!”

He moved his arms out from between their bodies and hesitantly rubbed her back, feeling incredibly awkward as she continued to cry on him. Murmuring, he replied, “It’s alright, Hermione. I’m willing to make this sacrifice if it means you, Ron, the Weasleys, and Sirius get to live. I’m just one person, after all. Let me do this, ‘Mione. I’m coming to accept it.”

She only sobbed louder in response, her body shaking in his arms, and he absentmindedly continued to pat her back as his mind raced to figure out if he could truly convince Hermione to keep her mouth shut about his habit. He forced himself not to think on what Marvolo would think of this development.

Unbidden, the thought of the numerous Crucios in his future caused him to shudder in the Chamber that resounded with Hermione’s sobs.
Seems like we were all waiting for Harry to screw things up. I mean, my Harry is ambitious, but he's still based off of canon! Harry ;) We all love him, but he's a dork and makes stupid mistakes :3

You guys all expected someone to figure it out, some of you even guessing it'd be Hermione, so I'm sure y'all feel vindicated! But now Harry has to play the game even better and not make anymore mistakes... not to mention what Marvolo will do when he finds out! :3

The next chapter will deal with the fallout of this chapter and we're getting the ball rolling on the end of the year!! :D Exciting things are ahead!
clinging to a little bit of spine

Chapter Summary

Harry grows a bit of a spine and makes some changes... whether that's for the worse or better is to be seen.

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Hold Me Down" by Halsey! :D Disclaim any rights to the phrase since I am not the rightful owner.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When Hermione’s sobs quieted and she was simply shaking in his arms, he carefully pulled away from her until he was looking into her red-rimmed brown eyes, framed by that bushy hair that now resembled a lion’s mane more than ever. He smiled softly and said, “You always struck me as more of a Ravenclaw, then you do things like this and I’m reminded why you’re a Gryffindor in the end.”

Hermione’s eyebrows drew down in puzzlement and she opened her mouth to ask something, but before she could even voice her question he had his wand turned on her and firmly said, “Obliviate.”

He carefully extracted the memories of Hermione’s growing suspicion, her deciding to follow Harry, and the entire confrontation and revelations in the Chamber and placed the memories in a transfigured vial from one of the fragments of stone around them. Once the memories were in the vial, he looked back into Hermione’s now dazed eyes and muttered Obliviate once more as he added memories of thinking how Harry was more serious and studious now, how handsome Ron looked and how with Harry’s distance maybe Ron and her could grow closer, and made her most recent memory being coming upon an amorous couple while coming back from the Library and getting distracted. He then cast Imperio and said, “You will go back to the Gryffindor Common Room and think about that couple you saw and wonder if Ron and you can be like that. You will not worry about Harry anymore and only be thankful he’s giving you the chance to grow closer to Ron. Now go.”

She nodded absentmindedly and then turned, already heading back to the entrance to the Chamber.

Harry let out a deep sigh of relief and then relaxed his shoulders, just then realizing how tense he had
been the entire time Hermione had been there.

Just as quick as he had relaxed, he straightened in terror as he realized that he would have to tell Marvolo about what had just happened.

*Oh Merlin, he was screwed.*

***

_Dear Marvolo,_

_I have made a grave mistake, but I swear I fixed things! Do not fear, I will not foil your plans!_

-  

_Dearest Marvolo,_

_Have I ever told you that great leaders are known for their mercy? If not, I believe this is a practice you should definitely consider implementing. On an entirely irrelevant note, I may have, quite by accident, nearly compromised our plans, but I assure you that I have duly taken measures to correct my error! Never fear, Marvolo, I would never forgive myself if I had ruined your plans! I would sooner turn my own wand on myself and Avada Kedavra myself!_

-  

_Marvolo,_

_I am doing well and have been practicing in the arts and I consider myself to have become rather proficient. As is typical of those new to the arts, I rather lost myself in fervor of this new pursuit and perhaps revealed more than I should have. Fear not, I have Remedied the situation promptly and we are not in any way compromised. I have finally figured a way in which to go about increasing your follower base and will implement those plans very soon. As always, all details will be given more in depth in person._

_Faithfully yours,_

_HP
Harry was thrumming with anticipation as he watched Hedwig fly off with the letter. Since he was not sending the letter through the normal house elf method, he already had a feeling Marvolo would know Hedwig did not come bearing good news. Hopefully, Marvolo would refrain from taking it out on the snowy owl… but, of course, that meant all the anger would be saved for Harry alone. *Joy.* There was no winning and, sadly, Harry deserved whatever Marvolo would dish out.

He had gotten too cocky and caught up in the dark magic addiction. He knew that *now* and it was only his notorious luck that had allowed him to prevent everything from unraveling. He deserved the punishment and would accept it, because he *was* in the wrong. It didn’t make the thought of it hanging over his head any easier, but what could he do? The domino pieces had fallen and now he had to pick it all up and hope no one noticed.

The green-eyed boy sighed inaudibly and flickered a smile at a Ron that was exuberantly talking about what an utter bitch Umbridge was for banning all group activities, even *Quidditch.* He nodded when appropriate, but he had more important things in his mind that school activities and rivalries.

After all, Harry had a Dark Lord to appease and a world to upend before the end of this year.

No pressure or anything.

---

Harry waited in the hallway where Dobby had informed the Come and Go Room was located. He paced back and forth three times, chanting *Give me a room where I can talk to them* all the while.

He smiled as the door appeared, but instead of entering he decided to wait by the door, leaning against the wall. It wouldn’t do for him to leave his acquaintances doubtful of his intentions by going ahead and leaving them to discover the room on their own.

He idly hummed as he waited for them to appear, smiling as Draco, Blaise, Pansy, and Theo came up to him with warm greetings, even if slightly wary.
They followed him inside and they came to see a room with a fireplace on the right wall, three beige couches arranged in a semicircle around it. There was a coffee table with a plate of cookies and goblets of pumpkin juice for each of them as well. Harry’s eyebrows raised in surprise and he grinned as he went to sit down on one of the comfy looking couches.

The others followed his example and seated themselves, Draco sitting on the other end of the same couch as him, Pansy and Blaise sharing a couch, and Theo on the lone other couch.

Draco drawled out, “Well, Harry, you do know how to set the mood. How did you find this room?”

Harry smirked, “I believe I’m entitled to my secrets, just as you are.” He chuckled then gestured to the food and drinks, “Help yourself. You might as well get comfy… what I’m about to say will take a while and might very well shock you. We’ll be here for a while.”

They raised their eyebrows at his announcement but easily grabbed cookies and goblets, making themselves comfortable as they settled into listen to whatever Harry had called them for.

The messy-haired boy inhaled deeply, let it out slowly, then looked each of them in the eye and said, “I know you’ve accepted that I’ve wanted to embrace my wizard self more, and I had already told you that I had been largely ignorant of anything related to the Wizarding World that is not explicitly taught at Hogwarts. However, I did leave out some details when I told you how that came about exactly…”

Draco cocked his head and said, “Well, spit it out, Harry. You’re acting as though you’re about to face off against a Dementor, for Merlin’s sake!”

Pansy nodded, “I agree, Harry. Whatever it is, we have accepted you and you are our friend now. You are not a Slytherin, so you might not know that once a Slytherin makes a friend, until one betrays another or dies, it’s for life. You’ve made your connections with us and we have tested and accepted you.”

Theo rolled his eyes, “Let him speak so he can say what he needs to then. Honestly, you two…”
Pansy and Draco indignantly glared at Theo who just shrugged and looked back at Harry, waiting patiently. Blaise shook his head and chuckled lightly before focusing intently on Harry once more.

Harry smiled warmly at them and said, “Thank you for that. It’s not that I think you’ll stop being my friends… not exactly, anyways. I just know that this is definitely not what you’re expecting and it’ll redefine who you think I am.”

He took a deep breath and straightened as he said, “I lied to Dumbledore about what happened during the third round of the Triwizard Tournament.”

As expected, the four Slytherins all looked surprised. Blaise asked, “When you say you lied…”

Harry grinned, “I looked straight in his eyes and bullshitted like it was my daytime job.” He chuckled then shook his head, getting serious once more, “Cedric and I had both grabbed the trophy at the same time, and it turned out to be portkey. It transported the two of us to some graveyard, where a man I know as Wormtail and you may recognize as Peter Pettigrew appeared and killed Cedric with an Avada Kedavra.” He paused, taking in the wide eyes of the Slytherins, then continued, “I was tied to a tombstone and Wormtail brought out a cauldron with a potion brewing in it. I was dizzy with blood loss, adrenaline, and pain, but I believe he began a ritual that involved him sacrificing his hand, the bones of Tom Riddle Sr., and then my blood. Then, out of the cauldron, rose Voldemort.”

They all gasped, their faces stricken. Draco’s hands were clenched into his thighs, so tight it turned his knuckles whiter than his normal pale skin color. Blaise had paled, which was surprisingly obvious considering his skin tone, and his mouth gaped for a moment before he forcibly closed it shut. Pansy had gasped loudly and now covered her mouth, even as her wide eyes remained on Harry. Theo, for once, lost his composure and now had a red face and clenched fists in his lap, his eyes wide and intent on Harry, waiting for the rest of the story.

Harry chuckled then said, “I was as shocked as you all are. I’m sure you’re wondering how I am possibly alive before you if I had truly met Voldemort that day.” He leaned forward in his seat, his eyes unknowingly glowing vibrant green and with the beginnings of a maniacal grin appearing on his face, “Well, it’s obvious: I joined Voldemort.”

He burst out laughing as they all gasped and jumped in their seats, Blaise managing to fall off.

“Fucking Merlin, Potter! That’s not funny at all!” Draco exclaimed as he glared at Harry, indignantly straightening and regaining his composure. The others nodded as they straightened and glared at him, annoyed at Harry’s attempt at a joke.
Still chuckling, he shook his head vehemently, “N-no, I’m not joking! I’m not a Death Eater, but I’ve joined ranks with Voldemort. He’s now my Mentor and I am his protégé, learning Dark Arts and how to be a proper wizard. That’s why I approached you and have been distancing myself from Hermione and Ron. I’ve had to keep up pretenses, of course, as Marvolo doesn’t want Dumbledore to be aware of just how badly he’s already lost.”

They stared at him with dawning realization, mouths slightly open in shock.

He stopped chuckling abruptly and glared at them each, “I’m entrusting you a lot by imparting this to you. Marvolo hasn’t been told and he definitely hasn’t called his Death Eaters and announced his revival. If anyone, even your family, were to find out…” He trailed off threateningly then grinned, eyes glowing even more brightly in the firelight, “Let’s just say you all will get a first-hand experience of what I’ve been learning under the Dark Lord’s mentorship.”

They paled and nodded, Draco speaking for them all as he said, “Of course we wouldn’t betray your trust, Harry!”

“Good. Vow it to me now. Repeat after me, I, your name, will not betray Harry James Potter and his confidences. I will keep the secrets he imparts to me unless he instructs otherwise, this I do so swear. So mote it be.”

They repeated after him, holding out their wands, and Harry watched as the tips of their wands glowed as the Vow settled. He nodded in satisfaction, “Very well. I’m glad that I was not wrong to trust you. Now, as I’m sure you’re wondering, I did not tell you this now for shits and giggles. So, this is what I need from you…”

***

Harry walked through the Gryffindor Common Room entrance and stopped in surprise as he found Ron and Hermione clearly waiting for him on the couches. He resisted the urge to rub his temples as he smiled at them and went to sit on the couches by them.

Hermione looked at him worried as she unconsciously grabbed Ron’s hand and clench ed it in hers. Ron winced and attempted a smile towards him in greeting, but it came out more like a grimace, “Harry, mate, where have you been?”
Harry obviously looked at their joined hands and Hermione looked confused before blushing and dropping his hand like a hot flabbergasted leech. He chuckled and replied, “I’ve just been in an empty classroom, studying. Were you two looking for me?”

Hermione puffed her cheeks out in annoyance and burst out, “Harry! It’s nearly curfew and neither Ron nor I have seen you all weekend! What have you been up to? You know it’s not safe for you to wander around the school, especially by yourself! You know you should be more careful, Harry! What were you thinking, Harry James Potter!”

Harry stared at Hermione, who was growing increasingly angrier as she continued, and raised his eyebrows, waiting out her blustering before replying, “I thought it was obvious what I was doing.” When Ron and Hermione simply looked at him waiting for his excuse, he shrugged, “I don’t fancy being a third wheel and it’s clear you two have been growing closer. I thought I would do what any good friend would do and give you the space you needed to… develop this new aspect of your relationship.”

He internally smirked as Hermione and Ron blushed as red as an in-heat Erumpent horn and spluttered vehement denials.

Ah, but it was good to be a Slytherin in Gryffindor robes.

Chapter End Notes

I apologize for the hiatus there!

It's currently Lent and I gave up recreational reading (yes, that includes fanfiction) and that made it a little hard to write on my story without being tempted, which is why it took so long to write the chapter. I have no intentions of giving up on this story though, so don't think if I have hiatuses that I plan on abandoning the story. That won't happen! Promise! *good guy pose* I've also been working on an original work of mine, so now I'll have to figure out how to update all my WIPs AND my story! Ah... but I can't say I'm upset about it ;)

I had a lot of fun writing Harry's letters haha XD What do you think otherwise? I wanted to write out a lengthy chapter to make up for the hiatus and get the plot moving! So I'd love to hear all your reactions! I'm so very pleased by the attention this story is getting! I had no idea it would be so popular when I posted it! *blush* ^^

We're coming up to the end of Harry's 5th year soon, so start getting ready for Harry's next adventure ;) Just so you know, the story itself is NOWHERE close to done! This story will most likely progress outside of Harry's Hogwarts years... :) Maybe. We'll see.

If I don't update before... Happy Easter to one and all (for those who celebrate)! :D <3 :)
It was already almost May and Harry might just, possibly, be in the midst of a panic attack… or a rage-driven rampage through Hogwarts, he wasn’t quite sure. In any case, it wouldn’t bode well to ruin his persona and turn Marvolo’s wrath on him more, which was the only reason why he was sitting forcibly still at the table in the library, chewing on the feather of his quill and attempting to studying for the OWLs that were sooner than he had wanted to consider.

Hermione looked up from her frantic writing and snapped at him, “Harry! If you’re just going to stare off into space and distract us, go and do it somewhere else!”

Ron looked up with obvious desperation and said, “Come on, ’Mione, Harry’s just a bit bored, don’t kick him out!” He pleaded with Harry, “You wouldn’t leave me alone now, would you, mate?”

Harry rolled his eyes and slammed his book shut, gathering his supplies and walking out without another word, barely able to muster up a civil response for the two, not when his stomach was roiling with utter panic. He vaguely heard Ron cry out, “What’s wrong with Harry?” but he ignored it as he stalked off.

It was near the deadline and he still had no idea what he was going to do to infiltrate the Department of Mysteries. Well, that’s a lie, he had an idea, but he needed someone to take the fall, but who? Then, of course, there was the Diary that Marvolo wanted him to recreate. He had perused through all the books in the Restricted section and he couldn’t find a single book that had resembled what he had encountered in his second year, so how had young Tom Riddle managed it?

Maybe in the Chamber…? But where in the Chamber?! Harry stopped mid-step and threw his
books into his bag, glaring at the passing first-year Ravenclaws who scattered with frightened squeals.

He rolled his eyes and huffed, leaning against the cold, stone wall and closed his eyes in exasperation. *Merlin, but Marvolo was asking too much…* But he couldn’t afford not to exceed the expectations set before him! Not when he was already in hot water…

Straightening, he began to walk to the first floor, intent on making it to the Chamber and solving the mystery of the Diary tonight, or as soon as he possibly could, only to stop as he heard a “Mr. Potter!” in that voice that made him grind his teeth, even as he turned towards the approaching figure with a polite smile.

Umbridge appeared before him, cheeks flushed unattractively and bosom heaving from the exertion of walking fast down the hallway after him, “Oh, Mr. Potter, so glad I could catch you this evening! How *are* you doing, Mr. Potter?” She tittered and waved her hand towards her bosom in a way that he assumed was meant for him to look where she directed, “We’ve hardly had a chance to talk at all outside of class! OWLs are almost upon us, so I’m sure you’re busy studying.” She smiled at him a manner meant to be coy, “Surely you aren’t languishing away due to your studies?”

He smiled and inclined his head, “Ah, Delores, this evening is made markedly better by your appearance, quite certainly.”

She giggled in that high-pitched annoying way, and lightly slapped his shoulder, “Oh, you utter charmer you! Have you been reading our more classical texts to talk in this way?”

He simply smiled, not bothering to respond, and giving off an air of mystery.

“Anyways, I called you because I wanted to ask if you’ve reconsidered joining the Inquisitorial Squad, once OWLs are over, of course. As of now, I may very well continue my position as Defense professor and High Inquisitor, so you are more than welcome to join!”

He smiled politely and opened his mouth to reply with a firm *no* when an idea formed in his head. He had to resist the urge to grin maniacally as he replied, “How about I come and see you tomorrow night? Give me some time to think about it, won’t you, *Delores*?”

She giggled once more and her face became a blotchy red as she replied, “Of course, of course, Mr. Potter! I’ll see you tomorrow night, then!”
“I look forward to it.”

As she walked away, he let himself grin malevolently as he let the plan begin to unfold in his mind.

After all, no one would question her disappearance, not when there was a supposed curse on the position…

***

The night found Harry in the Chamber, eagerly pouring over the books he had found in the Salazar Slytherin’s study, where the basilisk had emerged that fateful day in his second year. It was ridiculous that he hadn’t realized that Tom Riddle wouldn’t have spent all his time here and found the books here, at the seat of Slytherin.

Of course, never let it be said that Harry does not have his stupid moments, plenty of them.

He let go of that train of thought as he found a book titled *Ye Olde Wizard's Guide to Magics That Do Irreparable Harm*. With raised eyebrows, he pulled it off the dusty bookshelf and blew the dust away before going to open the book, only for a face to appear on the book and say in a snooty manner, "And who are you to think you can just open me without even a ‘How do you do?’"

Harry lightly blushed in embarrassment before politely smiling and saying, “I apologize, good sir, I confess that I was rather eager to read the no doubt beautiful words your pages contain and got ahead of myself.”

The face went silent before smiling and saying, “You are worthy so I will deign to allow you to gain the knowledge that only I contain! Just wait until *Ye Olde Witch’s Guide to Magics That Do Irreversible Harm* hears this!”

He flipped through the book and found lots of curses that he was thrumming with excitement to try out soon, if only he didn’t have pressing deadlines keeping him from trying now… Sighing, he set the book back on the shelf and went back to searching.

What felt like an hour later, he came upon a packet of papers titled *Secrets of the Darkest Art*, written
in the familiar handwriting of Tom Marvolo Riddle. The papers contained his handwriting and was obviously copied from perhaps the original book. He read the first page and came upon a paragraph saying, “A Horcrux is the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul... Well, you split your soul, you see, and hide part of it in an object outside the body. Then, even if one's body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged.”

Surprised, Harry kept reading and read the details of the process of making a Horcrux, as well as possible ramifications, though the details there were vague.

Eyes wide, Harry set the pages down and whispered to himself, “Marvolo wants me to make a Horcrux.”

He let that sink in, heart pounding, then glanced once more at the process and slowly grinned.

***

“Professor Umbridge, are you free to talk right now?”

She turned from the pages she was ordering on her desk with a smarmy smile, “Mr. Potter! Of course, I always have time for you.”

He forced himself to keep the smile on his face as he obviously pulled out his wand to say a privacy charm before stepping closer to her, his skin crawling, “I was wondering if I could meet you, say, after-hours… I could you my answer then.” He smiled slyly at her, “I wouldn’t want anyone to overhear what I want to say to you, Delores.”

She flushed and whispered, “Of course, Harry. Where shall I meet you?”

“You know the abandoned girls’ restroom on the first floor? I’ll meet you there after curfew.”

Giggling, she nodded and he smiled at her once more before stepping out of the classroom and towards the Great Hall for lunch.
Harry walked into the abandoned restroom with a spring in his step, excitement thrumming through his veins, and Myrtle’s wailing the perfect accompanying soundtrack to the night ahead.

Umbridge appeared before him, frozen smile on her face as she looked around the flooded restroom in distaste, her body stiff with discomfort, even as she smiled at his appearance, “Harry, what an… interesting place you’ve chosen for our rendezvous.”

The emerald-eyed boy on the brink of manhood smirked at her and said, “Don’t you worry your pretty little heart, Delores, I wouldn’t dare sully you by taking our, dare I say it, relationship further without the candles and flowers you deserve, and most definitely not without a pink duvet upon which to lay you on.”

She tittered and flushed, as expected, and followed him towards the sinks, confused but pleased enough with what she hoped would be coming to not question his actions. As he hissed Open, she opened her mouth to voice her concern, only for him to wordlessly pull out his wand and cast a Petrificus Totalus and a levitation spell to carry her body down the slide, not desiring to alert anyone with her no doubt loud protests.

Once they were in the Chamber, he released the spell to hear her start to yell protests at his treatment in her screechy voice, but he ignored her as he began to arrange the candles he had brought down earlier in a circle around them. He lit the candles and then transfigured a piece of rock on the ground to a bowl and a quill in his robe pocket to a knife. He sliced a small cut on his thumb and squeezed out five drops into the bowl. Turning towards her, he grabbed her hand, ignoring her demands to know what he was doing, and cut her hand and squeezed out five drops of blood as well. He healed the cut on his and her hand then set the bowl on the ground before her.

He smiled at Umbridge and said, “Did I not promise you candles and flowers?” He pulled out a sprig of preserved amaranth and plucked the petals into the bowl of their combined blood.

She had gone silent, stupefied into silence, and simply watched him go about the proceedings.

Finally, once all the petals of the flower were in the bowl and the candles were burning brilliantly around them, he said to her, “No hard feelings, dearest Delores, but you are much more useful to me in this way. I would like to say I’m sorry for leading you on, but you do realize you’re a professor who was blatantly propositioning me? Be thankful I’m not reporting you and instead dealing with it myself. I can just imagine the headlines, High Inquisitor Propositions Chosen One: Claims to Be the Chosen One’s Only One, or something like that, I don’t claim to be a sensationalist.”
She let out a screech of indignation, pulling out her wand, but he easily disarmed her and said, “None of that now,” and cast an *Imperio*.

“Listen closely, this is what I want you to do now: continue about what you’ve been doing as the Defense professor and High Inquisitor, but start talking in the teachers’ lounge and during meetings with the teachers and Fudge about how much you think Fudge is being ridiculous in his fear of the Dark Lord, and how much you admire the Boy-Who-Lived. Talk about how you really want to tour all of Europe and that the pressure of being a Ministry worker is getting to you. Then, after the OWLs, come to this room and wait for me.”

Her blank eyes stared through him and she nodded mechanically.

“Good, now go and do what you’ve been commanded to do. Be careful of the candles.”

She nodded mechanically once more then turned to begin her walk out of the Chamber.

He let out a sigh of relief then smiled, looking down at the bowl. “Shite… Umbridge, come back!”

She stopped mid-step, right before breaking the circle of candles, then turned back to him, staring blankly at him.

“Come back into the center of the circle and stand here.”

She did as he commanded and he picked up the bowl and began the ritual, “*Et quod sanguis et flos immortalitatis ligate Diabolum hunc! Mulier mihi est anima eius usque ad tempus, ut dici.*” (Let this blood and the flower of immortality bind this woman to me, until the time to claim her life comes.)

He picked up the bowl and dipped his index finger into it then painted a runic circle onto Umbridge’s skin, dipping his finger back into the bowl as needed, on her forehead, her forearms, her ankles, and the back of her hands.

He Vanished the remnants of blood on his finger and then said the final words, “*Oblatum est vita eius in magicis sacra animo atque vita eius est ex hoc detrimentum faciat animae. Sic fiat semper.*” (Her life is offered for the ritual of soul magics and her life is forfeit from now on. So mote it be.)
Vanished the blood in the bowl and blew out each of the candles before saying to her, “Go now, and forget what happened this night until the time for you to return comes.”

Nodding, she walked out, her eyes blank still, but losing its blankness as she forgot just what had happened that night, beyond the instructions that controlled her actions subconsciously.

He let out a sigh of relief and grinned to himself as her footsteps faded out of hearing range.

Yes, things were progressing rather nicely and soon enough Marvolo may just deign him with a 'good boy.'

He grinned at the thought and ignored how his cheeks heated.

Chapter End Notes

***Information on Horcruxes is taken directly from Harry Potter Wiki, and I did add extra information for my own twist, though I disclaim any right to the original idea, that goes to JKR.

**If not obvious, a preserved amaranth flower means "immortality" :) :D

My Harry is rather mad for coming up with the craziest plans, hm? XD Though I'm sure the madness isn't QUITE clear just yet ;)

My Umbridge isn't as detestable as in canon (beyond her sexual desires towards Harry.... *shudders*), but.... :3 It's necessary, I promise, what I plan to do with her!

Has anyone figured out how Harry is going to carry out the mission? And, I'm pretty sure it's obvious, but... just why did Harry do that ritual with Umbridge?

Yes, the end of 5th year is upon us! VERY near! The next chapter will probably be the end of the mission and then it'll be summer soon!

SO! I came up with this really cool idea and I'm soooo excited to write it for this fic! BUT, sadly, it'll take AGES before Harry even gets close to being awesome enough to pulling it off :( That's the saddest thing about having Harry develop so slowly.... it's so SLOW! Honestly, Harry, can't you mature faster..... :P Seriously, don't you want to be BAMF and get into Voldemort's pants?! (off-screen Harry flushes red and pulls out wand to throw Crucios at the author) Sheesh, no need to get violent.... XD

Till next time, my lovely readers! Happy Easter (to those celebrate)! :D <3
Harry’s eyes are wide and his lips parted when the bedroom door closes behind them.

Marvolo stands by the door, his hand loosely clasped on the doorknob, and Harry aches.

The look in Marvolo’s eyes makes it hard for him to remain standing and maybe they should open up a window because, wow, since when has it been so hard to breathe?

When Marvolo’s lips lift in a smirk, Harry is gone.

Before he knows it, Marvolo is centimeters from him and they’re sharing the same limited air.

Cold fingers clasp his jaw and a thumb idly traces his bottom lip as the voice that would make angels weep murmurs, “You’ve been waiting for this, haven’t you?”

Maybe he whimpers then, maybe he’s silent, all he’s really sure of is that cold, soft – oh, so soft – lips are on his and his fingers are in silky hair and breathing is completely overrated.

Why breathe when you can be kissing Adonis?

They part because maybe Marvolo still considers air a necessity, but then Harry definitely lets out a whimper and now teeth are scraping his neck and that earns his personal god a moan.

Marvolo chuckles as he leans back and he whispers, “If all I had ever needed to have you at my mercy was this… well, there never would have been a need for those unnecessarily long training
sessions when we could have been doing this.”

Harry is gone, gone, gone, and he’s perfectly fine with that because those heavenly lips are back on his and those cold hands are cupping the back of his head and neck as though he were something delicate, treasured even.

In that moment, he can truly believe Marvolo finds him precious for being him and not what he can do and that lovely delusion is enough for him to lose himself in soft gasps, grasping hands, and lips that part and come back together again and again as though they were two raindrops that had collided and now found that their matter had become fused.

Maybe hours later, they’re lying in bed, face-to-face, and Marvolo’s hands are still on him – his head, his neck, his back, his ribs, his thighs, everywhere – and Harry’s gasping softly and writhing in the waning light from the window. He lets out a loud moan and feels his face redden, but he’s too caught up in pleasure to stop himself from being embarrassing. Plus, he’s rather preoccupied with Marvolo’s mouth and the way the golden light of the setting sun makes him appear as though he were some sculpture come to life.

Harry imagines that every stroke of Marvolo’s tongue is a brushstroke and he’s being painted to life.

Has he ever lived before this moment? What was living, breathing, speaking before when every sound, every touch, every look could have been this instead?

When he finally collapses into the bed as a puddle of loose limbs and a sleepy smile, he can’t stop the smile on his face if he were being threatened with an Avada Kedavra – not when Marvolo is curled around him like some kitten that had found the perfect spot of sun to nap in. Not when Marvolo’s mouth is puffing little breaths against his neck and Harry’s heart is fit to burst.

Not when he’s sure that the love the Muggle poets had spoken of was the person laying on his chest with a disgruntled expression as he shifted in his sleep and burgundy hair that tickled Harry’s nose.

Chapter End Notes

This is NOT canon and really is just self-indulgent! I mean... I'm hoping for their relationship to be like this one day, and maybe there's hints of canon elements, but... we'll just have to see, won't we? Funny thing is, I was trying my hand at writing smut and this happened? So maybe I'm just incapable of smut.... D:
Lolol it's my 21st birthday and I'm sick in bed so... at least Harry gets some action for me XD I had also wanted the actual chapter to be done by now, but I don't have it complete so... :'( 

In any case, my finals will be over after May 6 so expect an ACTUAL update very soon! :) <3 Love y'all!
~don't hate me pls

Chapter Summary

hi. I'm alive. hello.

Hi. So um. This is not the update you wanted, I know, I'm SORRY.

I just wanted to explain because I know there are a lot of people waiting on me to update this story, and I have NOT abandoned this story at ALL, not in the LEAST.

I'm just a serious perfectionist when it comes to my writing... and I haven't been in the mood to write quality content, and I don't want to deliver half-assed work to you, not when you guys actually like my words and seem to like my story (for some odd reason).

I've been having a few personal issues and haven't been on top of my game for the past few months... I think I'm better now, it's definitely a process, and I know I have a lot of WIPs and a lot of readers.

I just wanted to assure you that I am alive, I'm here, and I'm working on the next updateS. Don't worry, I'll make it up to you! Like I said, the next update WILL be long, and I'll make sure to have the next updates come up faster!

I'm on summer vacation right now, and I'll be out of the country in July (with no Wi-Fi lolololol T_T). My hope was to have updates before I leave, but it doesn't look like it'll happen rn. But don't worry, I'll still see if I can update before I go. If not, expect the updates in August.

I know you guys probably hate me for writing this note with no actual update.... I just wanted to explain, because I felt like you guys were owed that.... please don't hate me....

Um. As a sneak peak....

I have the next chapter title ready, which I'm super excited for! The person who can figure out where it's from (EXCEPT ONE PERSON. YOU CAN'T SAY WHERE IT'S FROM BECAUSE I TOLD YOU. SO SHUSHHH YOU'RE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS :P) gets a shoutout in the next chapter!
The chapter title: fly above your face that became a corpse

Also, I think one of my readers mentioned how they would love to see Voldemort's POV from previous chapters... all I'm gonna say is ;))

Don't hate me, I love you all. Thank you for liking my words and reading this far, if you did <3 :)')

Btw, this update will be deleted when I post the real update. So the lucky few who read this and this far.... y'all are the real MVPs.

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