### Knife's Edge

**Summary**

Harry was less shocked than he should have been to find himself dumped in the same sealed stone room as his supposedly dead mortal enemy and ex-potions professor. The people from Star Wars were a bit more unexpected though.

Death had better have a good explanation for this mess!

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**Notes**

This is going to be jumping universes and sometimes Genre. I will not be offended if a
section isn't something you are familiar with or even like. Especially since some of it will require me to do extra research and I will be messing with timelines and plots and things making it all entirely AU. Enjoy!

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See the end of the work for more notes.

- Inspired by Back From the Future: Episode VI The Clone Wars by Ariel_Sojourner
Vader was shocked to suddenly find himself, Emperor Palpatine, his son Luke, Princess Leia Organa, Jedi Master Yoda and three strangely dressed men somewhere in a stone building.

"Fuck it all! Not another weird situation! Death! This is not funny!" the petite sable haired green-eyed young man cursed, shouting at nothing.

"Potter!" both of the other dark haired men exclaimed.

"Wait just a minute and I'll explain what I know. First we need to know if this is just a prank by an arsehole who likes to call me master or if there is something actually at stake beyond our lives. If we are very lucky this is just a prank if we aren't then the fate of at least one reality, possibly more, is at stake," Harry Potter, Master of Death grumbled. "Death! Damnit! I need more information then just dumping us in a room together especially since I know both Snape and Voldy were dead before this!"

"Not exactly Master. Tom Marvolo Riddle, the Dark Lord Voldemort, attempted to evade me. You, as my Master, rightfully corrected this. All who were bound to him became yours upon his first defeat before you became my master. You claimed him as a servant as a part of his punishment when you ended his attempt to evade me, ending his abomination. Of necessity his soul was repaired so that he might be of use. Both Riddle and Snape were re-embodied to assist you with your duties at this time. The others are present for other reasons. To move forwards you must take command or otherwise gain their compliance," a disembodied, slightly menacing voice announced to the room at large.

"Are you withholding information to screw with us? Or are you actually restricted from helping more than this?" Harry asked caustically.

"Your duties need attending," Death said simply as his presence retreated once more to normal levels of mortality.

"Shite! He's not allowed to tell us and something is seriously screwing things up," Harry translated flatly.

"I ask I must why both Jedi and Sith?" Yoda asked carefully.

"Probably has something to do with most of you being related either biologically or professionally," Harry snorted dismissively.

"You watched Star Wars?" Snape demanded incredulously.

"They were run on the telly," Harry excused, evading actually answering one way or the other.
Harry had no intention of admitting that aside from playing servant to deliver food and drink to the Dursleys while they watched he was locked in his cupboard. The lack of food and water had been telling on him that day not to mention the Harry Hunting and beating afterwards that had happened that morning courtesy of Dudley and his gang. He had seen and heard enough of the movies to know who the other people were and most of the story involving Luke. He also had no real idea where in the timeline they were from.

At least Harry had managed to see the prequel series before Ginny, the bitch, had poisoned him to deliver him to the Unspeakables. It wasn't long before the Unspeakables had killed him and discovered that his unusual agelessness was tied with his accidental immortality. Their discovery had brought him to being transferred through the Death Veil chamber where Death himself had claimed (ie. kidnapped) Harry and whisked him away to recover somewhere in peace. After the attendant Reapers had put him back together physically and stabilized him emotionally Death had started him on his duties as the Master of Death. Mostly it had been paperwork but later Death had taken to putting him somewhere to relax, solve something, or play a prank on Harry.

"Potter, a word?" Snape growled.

"Just give me a second Snape," Harry shot back, starting to pace as he considered the situation.

"Okay, lets start with what we know. My situation with Voldy and Snape is weird but apparently pre-existing. I've honestly heard of stranger things especially regarding magical contracts of any kind. A title can act as a place holder of sorts for a particular person in a contract making the binding between anyone holding the title and anyone else that signs in some accepted fashion. You guys, well, most of you are related as blood family. Yoda and Palpatine are both Masters of the force but of different aspects. Depending on what has already happened to each of you you have various skills and abilities, both force oriented and not. Technically I can't die and Death brought us here for a reason he can't explain to us at the moment. The only clue we have is that this probably falls under my purview as the Master of Death, which mostly consists of dealing with paperwork and dealing with idiots trying for immortality."

"Unless the paperwork was basic training for something else," Snape pointed out snarkily.

"Point," Harry admitted reluctantly.

"Did you pay attention to what the paperwork was about?" Palpatine asked cautiously, his voice rasping a bit. He was curious about how Leia Organa was related to the others from his region of the galaxy and suspected he wouldn't like it one bit when he found out. At least he had already known that Luke was the son of his apprentice.

"I did to a point but the set up had a weird multi-dimensional reference system cross referenced by time listed in regards to how long each particular universe had existed. This was further complicated by Primary timeline universes and their subset divergent universes. Subset divergent universes that were usually caused by an interweaving butterfly effect dependent on free will, individual choices, and meddling fates or other powers integrated into the time-space matrix known as reality. Not to mention most of the records were also categorized by birth date/time, death date/time, type of death, type of life lived, species, mental maturity, person's age, and whether they had attempted to escape death. The escaping death part was on a sliding scale to account for natural survival instinct, attempts at gaining immortality illegally or through abomination. It also had a special category for those who were a part of prophecy in some way. There were two primary sections under the prophecy section, those specifically named (ie. drafted) as part of the prophecy and those who became part of it but were technically able to just walk away. I still don't know how long it took me to learn even the small part of the system that I do know," Harry explained with a thoughtful scowl. "Please don't ask me what priority subjects they were listed in. I lost track after figuring out the Primary timelines and
divergent subsets were part of a sideways aspect of the dimensional reality listing."


"Alright, let me rephrase," Harry sighed. "Death and his Reapers have a lot of paperwork to do their jobs right. I accidentally collected three magical relics that gave me the title Master of Death. As a result, along with the few perks, I got shoved into bureaucratic hell for an unknown length of time before he started dumping me in random places and times. I was left in said hell long enough to learn what some of the bigger categories were. You do not want to know what they were because it will make your brain hurt. Questions?"

"Nope, I'm good," Luke said quickly. Everyone else murmured agreement with Luke and the subject of the paperwork was quickly dropped.

"I believe that this is one time when we can not afford to let any previous conflict or disagreement interfere with whatever we happen to need to do," Darth Vader commented thoughtfully. "As much as my anger consumes me the force tells me we need a temporary truce until we have returned. Any disagreements must remain only verbal, no force, no lightsabers, no blasters, nothing that can do actual physical harm to the others in this room or who join the group."

"Obi-wan's teaching, you still use. Agree with you I do but consider we must that we never return," Yoda pointed out in his odd mixed up accent.

"That's simple enough. This falls under my title and my authority. I can deputize all of you for now and the peaceful working together can be a requirement of that. Any disputes that you can not settle among yourselves you bring to me. Also the Sith habit of assassination doesn't work on me and I can technically reverse it if I have to, presuming you aren't actually supposed to be dead," Harry smiled with predatory grimness. "If any of you want to make it permanent we can talk about it later. As for any force teaching... you'll have to clear it with me. Unless, of course, you are already in or have previously been in a student-teacher relationship or are family in some fashion. I do have veto power there too but you can demand why I said no if it falls under that and you don't have to ask before even starting."

"Why do I get the sudden feeling that I'm supposed to teach you the force from both sides?" Luke asked in response.

"Because his damnable luck gets him exactly what he needs when he needs it even if it means an enemy training him in something to later kill that same enemy. My own situation is a case in point," Tom dryly retorted.

"Erm, I was hoping I wouldn't actually have to admit that?" Harry answered with a questioning tone as he blushed deeply in embarrassment.

"When did you figure it out? Presuming you actually have such luck," Leia asked skeptically.

"After having to walk to my own death a second time," Harry told them softly. His eyes were haunted as he got lost in obviously painful memories.

"When was this?!" Snape hissed angrily. He did not want to admit that he was actually concerned about the imp that was the son of his best friend. His grab of the smaller man's shoulder shocked Harry from his dangerous memories.

"Does it matter?" Harry asked with a bitter smile that bothered most of them before he turned away from all of them to stare at one of the stone walls.
"I think... we may need to know more. However it can wait until we are at least out of this room," Palpatine pointed out as he lowered his hood. The revelation of what damage the Dark Side lightning had done was startling to everyone but those who had already seen it either in person or on the silver screen.

"I can't repair that much long term damage," Harry commented after a moment's study. "Potions Master Snape your opinion?"

"Not without a potions lab, many ingredients, and time to brew, Master," Snape answered professionally until the last word which was snarkily offered.

"Call me that again and I will make sure that you never speak that word to me again!" Harry shout as he whirled around angrily.

"Why?" Tom demanded. "He was my servant and now we are both yours. Why do you refuse your rightful title?"

"Because I was treated as a slave for the first part of my life for all that I wasn't called that. Its ironic, Dumbledore used Hogwarts to make him look like my savior and the stories of you to keep me in that hell hole. The way they called you master was something I hated. It always mirrored how I had to address my relatives for all that the words were different. I may have to take a slave at some point before I am finally allowed to stay dead. I may even need to let them call me master but until it no longer causes me nightmares and if I can't get them to stop for all that it might be said with respect... I will not allow any one to call me that unless it is in regards to the stupid title I got trying to stop you," Harry snarled. "As I said, call me that again and I will make sure you can never call me that again. I would also prefer not to be called Potter but I'm used to it from Snape from school so I won't waste my breath on that one."

"We are going to have go through your memories at some point, largely because we have been a part of it for so long and still haven't learned how the devil you think," Tom grumbled but backed off.

"As you wish Lord Potter," Snape said inclining his head carefully.

"Lord Potter?" Harry asked questioningly, pausing in his anger.

"You... don't know about your Lordship?" Tom asked carefully.

"Yet another thing kept from me," Harry grumbled but his anger clearly dissipated as he turned back to the Sith Lord. "Palpatine, corrupting me is a bad idea. You, Tom, Vader, and Snape have all drawn power from darkness in the past. Will you act as one of my deputies? I may ask you to once more do terrible things but I may also ask you to stop those same things in the actions of others. I don't yet have the stomach for things most would count as evil but I suspect I may yet have to learn it."

"I and my apprentice will act among your deputies for the time being," Palpatine agreed, carefully not promising anything but still secretly planning to corrupt Harry. Everyone felt the magic take hold making the agreement binding.

"I too will join. Cause harm I cannot. Peaceful the Jedi are, unless threatened or must we bring aid. Understand this can you?" Yoda questioned.

"Yes. Like you I prefer not to fight. I've seen things that I some times still relive in my nightmares. That doesn't mean that such things might not be necessary," Harry said honestly.

"Understand this I do. Remember you must to protect," Yoda pointed out.
"Yeah, but that often means dealing with and dealing out Death with how the mystical title messes with me," Harry said ruefully.

"Then accept I do," Yoda agreed. The magic spiked again binding the small Jedi Master.

"And us?" Leia asked.

"My invitation included the two of you. As a bonus I'll explain to each of you what I know of your situation and you have what protection I can offer. I will also reign you in if you go too far," Harry promised.

"Luke will be trained in the force. He is my son," Darth Vader informed Harry.

"Actually, they're twins. Congratulations, you and Padme made beautiful strong kids," Harry explained with soft gentleness. "Before you get angry at me I watched the fight that crippled you and what happened after. She died from a broken heart not by your hand. She didn't understand what was happening to you. No one really did for all that Palpatine pushed you over the edge. By hiding them both and giving them families Obi-Wan Kenobi ensured their survival. Your actions against your daughter on the Death Star were the actions of a leader dealing with what you believed was a spy and enemy commander. How you deal with that as a father is going to be up to you. Kenobi treated you like a brother and a son. Palpatine manipulated you into trying to kill him and held your family hostage with lies to you. I know what you did at the temple. I know why he ordered it destroyed and why he made you do it. I also suspect why you killed the children yourself, to protect them from what you knew a Sith would do to them and use them for."

"My children?!" Vader said in complete shock. His legs, for all they were prosthetics, crumpled underneath him and sent him to his knees. His artificial breathing never wavered even as his cry of grief and pain echoed around the room and in the force. Every single person there felt the depth of his grief even as they were all shoved backwards into the walls of the room except for Harry.

A slightly different spike surged through the deputies healing them and youthening them while taking Harry gasping to his knees. It also replaced Vader's missing body parts while dissolving the equipment attached to him. This allowed Harry to grasp the weeping man and drag him into a comforting hug while ignoring the wizard's own suddenly weakened state.

"Kenobi lied. He..." Palpatine tried to put in before starting to choke. Vader was unconsciously trying to force choke the man for his own lies.

"That's enough," Harry ordered sternly. He forcefully ended the choking, using his connection to them through the verbal contract they had just made but silenced the Sith Lord with a wave of his hand and a silent spell. His grip tightened on the still sobbing man curled up in his arms as he spoke. "In agreeing to you both entering my service no matter how temporarily he placed you both under my care. I understand that with force users the older legalities are in play when it comes to Master and Apprentice relationships. The master basically provides everything and also controls everything until such time as the mastery is achieved and acknowledged unless the master decides otherwise or other arrangements are made. This also extends to the ability to enter binding contracts on behalf of the apprentice and acting as their guardian. As such you need to understand that entering my service was similar. The moment the binding was in place you each became my responsibility. Your children automatically fall under my protection and care for a similar reason without the strings that bind you, Palpatine, and Yoda."

"I don't understand," Leia said in confusion. She was still standing near the wall that she had landed against.
"He was likely manipulated and subtly brainwashed. Judging from what just happened and what has been said he has been essentially a slave since just before your birth and your mother's death. Bound by the choices Palpatine manipulated him into in such a way that he couldn't find a way out. I have experienced the same but I broke the first hold. In doing so I found myself in a similar situation for the opposite side. Potter, for all his failings never did that to me, as you saw, and he more than had the right. We can heal him but breaking him free of the manipulation is going to be difficult. Basically he has been shaped into a living weapon of darkness and we can't know the damage to who he is until we start healing him. I suspect that he essentially died inside the day your mother did, all that was left was a body and a slave that was once your father. Rebuilding him into a man is going to be tricky. He is also going to have to live with anything he has done in the mean time," Severus explained. "Knowing Potter your father won't be released to act on his own as a person until as much of that damage as possible is healed or he has someone healing him that will get the job done. He takes his responsibility to those under his authority seriously."

"So he has been insane this entire time and basically a slave, broken by sadistic manipulation combined with the false promise of saving or not hurting loved ones," Luke grimaced.

Luke had grown up on Tattooine as the first free born child of a slave family. He knew about his father's childhood victory at the podraces and he was very familiar with the ways people were enslaved. Slavery was very legal in Hutt space like Tattooine. While not the most common method what Snape had just summarized was used often enough for him to know what had probably happened. Leia was from a world where slavery had been outlawed for centuries and probably had no idea what that could do to a person. The fact that his father had spent nearly his entire childhood as a slave just compounded the issue even further.

"Breathe, remember your meditation training at the temple. This time instead of silence and peace we want to examine what you are feeling and why until you can put it away. Try to do it without touching the force or my magic, both can have extra influence so try to ignore anything you get from them. Once you understand what you are looking at enough that you can set it aside do so and move on to the next one. We aren't looking for total understanding or complete release or even full control. We want enough basic stability to talk without adding anything else to the mix," Harry instructed. His hold on the man never wavered but his magic still flexed to pin a younger healed Palpatine to a stone wall when he tried to approach.

"Match your breathing and heartbeat as much to Potter's as possible. Your new senses are adding extra feedback and you need to control that along with your emotions," Tom added, going into what Harry immediately dubbed as his Dark Teacher mode, half teacher and half Dark Lord. He knew what it was like to suddenly have a new body.

"Your children are safe," Severus stressed the safety, knowing it was more likely to get through.

Having been the Head of Slytherin House for so long Snape knew how to parent even if he didn't generally express such things out in the open. His snakes knew and that was enough. To him this was a situation dealing with an ill, panicked parent who had slipped too deep into the dark arts to protect his family. It was rare but not unheard of. As Head of Slytherin House he was sometimes called by family members to help deal with such things. All from Slytherin understood that his first priority was going to be the students and children. Sometimes that required either taming or killing the family member that had lost control. If he had to call the Aurors no one argued that they had to keep it in-house since he was the last stop for in-house unless one counted the Dark Lord.

The three wizards helped their impromptu patient while Yoda dealt with Luke and Leia. Palpatine remained stuck to the wall.
"Master what is going to happen with him?" Luke asked with concern as he watched his father in Harry's arms.

"That I do not know. Trust, we must, and aid where we can. Spoke true he did becoming Sith kills the one before. Attempt to save them the Jedi do not. Believe we do in the Fall to the dark side, too strongly perhaps. Like to see I would your father returned to us. Promise this I cannot. Proof Potter has given that he can stop us. Let him try I will. If indeed this can be healed rejoice I will. Lost too many students I have to the Fall," Yoda explained. "Tell me of yourselves."

Understanding that Yoda wanted to distract them Luke obliged, drawing Leia into the discussion until she finally gave up on staying out of it. Their conversation eventually turned into a mix of Yoda teaching them about the force and Luke teaching them about what was likely done to Vader to enslave him and make him Vader rather than Anakin. To say they were both appalled once they even partially understood was an understatement. They could barely comprehend such ruthless systematic destruction of a person much less to then purposefully reshape what was left into a loyal obedient extension of the master.

At one point someone conjured a divider so that there was privacy between the two sections of the room. Conjured water in conjured cups also made an appearance for everyone at some point. While he was eventually let down Palpatine remained silenced and magically confined to a corner away from everyone else.

Behind the divider the three wizards helped their patient through the equivalent of more than a year of therapy with liberal use of Legilimancy and their patient's previous mental training. They dealt with the sharpest edge of the grief, anger, and betrayal. They examined memories for manipulations and lies. They looked together for things that were good and happy. In the process Palpatine's actions were repeatedly torn apart along with the hypocrisy of most of the Jedi Council and Jedi Order. Through this Palpatine's twisting greed matched with lust for power was revealed alongside the Jedi's unreasoning fear.

"You aren't allowed to obey Palpatine," Harry ordered tiredly before he collapsed into a proper boneless heap next to their patient and his colleagues.

"Wouldn't mind gutting him," Severus muttered tiredly.

"I want him under my authority, no one else here will be able to recognize and stop him trying his manipulations. His methods are far too much like Dumbledore's for my liking and I'm one of the only people who didn't get taken by that old bastard," Tom said, equally tired.

"No plotting evil together. I get to decide if we conquer anyone or anything because I'm the one who will technically hold it. We still need to figure out what to do with the Politician bastard. I've got him stuck in a corner like a little kid in time out right now," Harry muttered back.

"He's acting like an evil child with a favorite toy being taken away and I am sorely tempted to treat him like one, give him a spanking. As long as you don't draw blood or leave bruises on his bottom it won't actually harm him but it will be embarrassing, leave a sting as a reminder, and drive the point home. The embarrassment will do the work better than the pain but the pain will make him remember it. His previous actions... are something that we may need to ignore except dealing with the damage done to our patient," Severus admitted.

"Leia is going to have the hardest time dealing with this. He tortured her," Harry pointed out.

"They still need need each other," Severus pointed out. "The family connection is going to be necessary."
"Unless we want to hurt him further," Harry agreed with a grunt. "Luke will help him heal but Leia is still hurting from the harm he's done. They may only ever share the bond of enemies."

"But it will be a bond to keep him from going stark raving mad," Tom countered. "It will also help provide prospective and continuity."

"The twins can counter balance, I get it. We'll still have to watch them and yes, Tom, you get direct control of Palpatine. Death was the one to put you with me but we both know that its up to the two of us to decide how miserable we make each other. I'll try to find evil empires for you to play with if you can keep that bastard in line and help me properly heal the three Skywalkers we have. Deal?"

Harry offered.

"Oh, you'll do more than that but I can't argue with the potential reward," Tom smirked up at the ceiling from his own prone position on the floor.

"And me?" Snape snarked.

"Figure out what you want and we'll see if I can even give it to you then we can decide what rewards you'll get. My rules are mostly basic respect and tell me when I'm being an idiot. Don't call me freak, or monster and try not to call me boy or Potter. Hell the two of you don't even have to keep me healthy or anything like that just try to work with me a bit and keep me from stepping over the line," Harry huffed tiredly.

"He's getting a physical as soon as we've got him pinned down and we've got the energy to cast," Tom stated firmly to his former minion.

"He's also going to find me a lab and potion ingredients so that I can brew. Especially, if we are going to do more intensive healing on anyone," Snape growled.

"Would you keep it down?" Anakin Skywalker-Vader moaned. He was just barely stable enough emotionally to be acting more like himself as a clone war General in charge of troops than as the evil Sith Apprentice Vader. They were all still sprawled out on the floor separated from the rest of the room by the divider.

"You are mine now until I release you," Harry pointed out.

"Yeah and I'm seconding their vote for you to get healed. We are probably all going to be using Yoda to know when we are crossing lines... and Luke. Actually Luke is probably going to be our voice of reason, Yoda the mystic with a stick to whack us over the head with, and Leia the government political voice... This is going to suck poodoo," Anakin retorted.

"Exactly how much memory and personality bleed-through was there supposed to be again with how fast we pushed his mind therapy?" Harry shot back.

"Too much if only by virtue that you are both not only Chosen Ones but also galaxy class trouble magnets," Severus growled back.

"You guys do realize that if Harry can use the force the two of you probably can too? And he's likely to make you get trained right next to him?" Anakin snarked back in response. His victory came in the groans of the two older wizards and a thoughtful silence from his fellow prophecy target.

"How are the emotion mufflers on those memories holding up?" Harry asked carefully.

"They're doing alright. The emotional distance is helping but for some of the ones that echoed in the force I'll need somewhere safe to hole up when we unlock them again. For a couple it might even
send me into a seizure since I'm not going to be buffered by the Dark side this time," Anakin admitted. The puppy pile they had unconsciously made shifted subtly around, giving the former Jedi more comfort for all that they were still physically and magically exhausted.

"We are not learning to use it without emotion as a rule. I'll grant you that learning those Jedi techniques will be useful but staying completely emotionless is dangerous. We will have to find the middle ground if we do it at all. Control without suffocating our emotions, any Occlumency training notwithstanding," Severus declared forcefully.

"At least we finally know what part of the timeline they are at. They just killed Jabba in Return of the Jedi," Harry laughed in relief.

"I have to say that watching those movies about us through both your memories was kinda surreal... and disturbing," Anakin admitted.

"I may be able to leash Palpatine compared to the rest of the group but I doubt we can redeem him," Tom warned. "I at least went insane for my part. He doesn't have that excuse."

"At least the divider has a privacy charm on it," Severus muttered in a mix of resentment and exhaustion.

"Wrong you are, hear you we can," Yoda cackled. "Interesting your conversation is."

"Oops?" Harry offered sheepishly.

"I am going to get you for this Potter. What you faced from me during your school days will be nothing compared to what I will inflict on you for this!" Severus snarled.

"Hey! Shouldn't that be my line? He didn't protect my medical confidentiality," Anakin snarked his own two credits worth.

"Just chalk it up to his trouble magnet status. Depending on how strong it is in you and your children such things will likely become rather common in our group once we get out of here and start exploring," Tom drawled. His amusement echoed clearly as it verged on laughter.

"I will never forgive him. I am however professional enough to work with him if I must," came Leia's frosty voice from the other side of the divider.

"They didn't take my memories while they worked on me, only suppressed the emotions that come with most of the really bad ones. We also telepathically worked through most of them, ripping my memories apart to find the truth in my mind and figure out where I screwed up. I don't blame you for wanting me dead. You have every right to deny me, especially since Obi-wan got you such a good family as a replacement for my murderous self. I wish he hadn't separated you and Luke but he did it to protect you both and had no idea that I wasn't aware my wife was pregnant with twins. I will give you both whatever protection I can and we can have whatever relationship you both want. If you want me gone I will respect that," Anakin told both of his children with pain and self loathing in his voice. Only his exhausted state and being curled up under a pile of three boneless wizards kept him in place.

"Princess we just ran him through the equivalent of 18 months of intensive psychological therapy while simultaneously leeching the poisonous energy of the Dark Side from his mind. This was only possible due to the contract our patient is under with Potter and our combined skills. Without both of those and the original burst of healing energy he would still be the murderous Darth Vader. All we did was return his sanity and leech the poison that Palpatine has been pouring into him for years,"
Severus drawled snarkily from his sprawled position. He was limply laid out half on top of the other three men and half underneath them.

"I'm sorry I forgot about the privacy charm. I was too busy helping put Anakin back together even if I can't get into his skull to help him directly the way Tom and Sev can," Harry snickered.

"Why haven't you come out here?" Luke asked with an audible frown.

"Because we are currently boneless and can't move!" Harry laughed madly.

"Aid you we will," Yoda laughed. A gentle use of the force pushed aside the mostly fabric privacy barrier. Another use of the force untangled the four men and laid them out on the floor side by side.

"Why is he naked?" Leia demanded, completely offended by Anakin's newly revealed lack of wardrobe.

"Because we were scrambling to fix what is in his noggin and none of us noticed," Harry answered sarcastically. "The magic must have dissolved his clothes along with everything else that wasn't flesh before re-growing what was missing."

Yoda just chuckled and levitated his robe to lay it strategically over Anakin's much larger form.

"We will conjure something proper for him to wear when we aren't running only on a high of success and magic depletion," Tom snarked tiredly.

"Try to wake either Tom or myself in a couple of hours after we have all finished crashing. Do not wake Potter. With the amount of magic he donated he should be out for several days at the minimum. Our patient is not to get up either but you may speak with him quietly after 30 minutes if he is not already asleep alongside us," Snape informed them sternly. Harry would never understand how the man managed to invoke the terror of teenage rule breaking while flat on his back and completely exhausted.

"Yes sir," Luke agreed with a gulp. Leia narrowed her eyes but didn't object. She was obviously still upset over finding out her biological father was Darth Vader. With that the four men on the floor promptly passed out as Harry finally dropped the energy transfer keeping them awake.

"Pushed themselves too far I think," Yoda said thoughtfully as he observed the four unconscious men. "Rest they must, yes. Wait we must."

They waited, quietly continuing their earlier discussion about themselves. As before it devolved into a teaching session only this time it swapped between all three of them with the discussion ranging from life and slavery on Tatooine, to politics, to the Jedi way. Yoda subtly probed both twins for their force ability during the discussion and concluded that Anakin was right. Skywalker's children needed at least basic Jedi training for they were too strong in the force to go without.

The silence was broken by Anakin.

"How long was I out?" Anakin asked, clearly still exhausted.

"A couple of hours," Luke answered quietly so as not to wake the wizards.

"What memories blocked, have they?" Yoda asked just as quietly.

"Most of what I was forced to do as a Sith, some of the clone wars, my wife's death, my mother's death, and some of my childhood both in the temple and before as a slave. The memories aren't
actually blocked but the emotions connected to them sure as hell are," Anakin answered honestly. "I can remember the details just fine its the connected emotions that are blocked."

"Cruel children and others can be," Yoda said drooping. "Failed you the Jedi have. Understand you we did not."

"You were a slave?" Leia exclaimed in shock. "Before you became a Sith?"

"I'm not sure I ever was free," Anakin admitted mirthlessly.

"Counseling, you should have had counseling as soon as you got to the bloody temple. No one can ditch a slave mindset overnight and the fact that they still used the term Master so much didn't bloody well help," Harry growled from his own prone position.

"Why are you even awake?" Tom demanded in exasperation.

"I'm used to going without sleep and I had a nightmare. You know the usual," Harry answered dismissively.

"That is so wrong..." Luke muttered quietly to Yoda.

"Agree with you I do. Heal the damage we must. Time we may not have if indeed this place needs us," Yoda commented.

"A portable potions lab and ingredients," Severus growled insistently. He didn't think he could move yet or he would already be up casting diagnostics on the brat of an imp.

"You just want to knock me out," Harry shot back with a tired smirk.

"Yes! Then we are continuing your Occlumency lessons," Severus informed him darkly, sending Harry off on a cursing streak.

"Just deal with it brat. You need the training if you are this used to waking up from nightmares and not getting enough rest. I might not have understood or considered it a bad thing when I was insane and trying to kill you but I certainly don't want you having health issues now. As much as I hate admitting it being your servant or even your slave is better than what happened before. I'll be damned if I let you screw it up," Tom shot back with an open scowl. He, like the other three, was still stuck on the floor.

Yoda laughed at their antics while Luke continued to stay back and observe. Leia was not so content.

"I find it strange that while we have been in here we haven't really needed food or water or a refresher. I also find it strange that there doesn't seem to be a way out of here, that we are in a perfectly sealed stone box. No seams, no bricks, no cracks, no light fixtures, no loss of air either. We should have run out of air by now," Leia said caustically.

Harry just sighed in response and let out a strong pulse of magic that nearly had him passing out again in his weakened state.

"You little fool!" Severus hissed as he forced himself into a sitting position so that he could check on Lily's child.

For those not on the floor the room changed, revealing an open doorway and the movement of fresh but muggy air to go with the sunlight from a stone window opening. Looking out the window they
saw a jungle which came complete with jungle sounds, vines edging the window, and moss on the stone window sill. They could clearly see the difference between this worn yellow stone that made up their room versus the blank grey-ish stone of the combined illusion and stasis field they had before. The spells on Palpatine also disappeared, freeing him from his silence and confinement corner.

"I noticed the illusion and the stasis field earlier. I broke it now so be careful. Not hidden any more, not protected..." Harry slurred out. He flopped around a bit as Snape dragged him into the other man's lap.

"If you ever use your magic like that while you are this drained again not only will I turn you over my knee like a toddler but you will be stuck in bed for an extra week. Have I made myself clear?" Severus hissed, frustration and worry clear in his tone.

"Yea, Profess'r," Harry answered with a slur before passing out again.

"You should have waited until we could at least stand up, foolish woman," Tom said coldly. "Did it ever occur to you that your father wasn't the only one we were trying to help? Or that demanding things might put us all at risk?"

"This isn't a battlefield!" Leia protested, obviously feeling guilty that her attitude had caused problems.

"You can just as easily be knifed in a school or a public square as a battlefield," Severus snarled. He instinctively curled over Harry as if shielding him from Leia. At the sight her guilt openly increased.

"Understand she does I think. Be more mindful she will be," Yoda pointed out thoughtfully.

"I learned my lesson as well, manipulating the group is forbidden," Palpatine put in hastily. He hated giving up control of Anakin but thought that retreat was the better part of valor in this case. He was also lucky that his punishment had been childish but still scaled up for an adult yet mostly harmless. Had he been the one providing the punishment it would have been quite a bit more painful.

"We will see," Tom said darkly as he finally sat up himself.

It took another half hour for Severus, Tom, and Anakin to be up and moving around the room semi-normally. Harry remained out cold and had to be carried when they finally decided to leave the room.

"Yavin IV?" Luke questioned uncertainly.

"Looks like it to me too," Leia agreed. The twins were the only ones in the group who had actually been on the Jungle moon to recognize it through what was left of the window.

"It won't matter to you Jedi. You and your companions won't be leaving my dark temple alive," a ghostly voice laughed malevolently.

"This is not merely a Jedi venture but a Sith one as well," Palpatine announced as he stepped forwards, releasing his mask on his force signature. Anakin also stepped forwards to stand next to his son and projected his now mixed signature.

"Interesting," the voice whispered. "Why do you work with them?"

"That is none of your concern. We have a job to do. Our landing here was a joke from an associate and not meant to be a disturbance for you unless you turn out to be part of our mission. Once our
companion finished replenishing himself and wakes we will be on our way," Severus inform the
voice loftily. He was used to dealing with the Hogwarts ghosts, perhaps too used to it.

The ghost triggered something in the walls barring their way from the room they had woken in,
leaving them trapped a bit more conventionally this time.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't dump a nest full of Piranha-beetles on top of you all and
seal the window as well," the voice demanded dryly.

"Because most of the group needs training. Three of them want Sith training but only alongside Jedi
training," Palpatine said quickly, sliding into the roll of Sidious easily.

"They are also helping me heal so that I can decide whether I prefer the Sith teaching or the Jedi
teaching. The twins are my children and will learn the force. The teaching method is still up for
debate," Anakin added dryly, much to Leia's obvious outrage.

"Jedi Master I may be but know me you do not. Accepted many of these as students have I. Proven
flawed the Jedi Code is. A new way I seek," Yoda informed the temple guardian. He still abhorred
the evil that the Sith had represented all of his life but it was also suddenly clear that the code needed
a serious revamp.

"That isn't normal yet... the Force echoes with your truth," the ghost hissed angrily. Then the voice
turned thoughtful. "Two of you are Sith Lords and have gained the title through the Rite of Combat
all Sith must partake in. The rule of two created by that child Bane was a foolish concept. Once, in
the time of my Master's many times Master's time, we worked with the force using all our emotions
and also self control. Teach them both, teach them the Old Way, the Balanced Path. The path that
came before Sith, before Jedi... when we could still speak to the Aspects. Should ever an Aspect
return, revealing themselves, the Force will bow to them and the ancient contract will call every force
sensitive to their banner regardless of training. There is something stirring in the Force. Be wary...
Safe passage is granted. The training rooms and anything else that remains is at your disposal."

The wall triggered again, unblocking the passage way and letting them fully into the temple.

"You see? This is what I was talking about. The brat's luck is insane. He gets help from every
direction!" Severus ranted, hefting said brat protectively higher against his chest in his arms.

"Want to bet that one of us turns out to have a link to one of these Aspects?" Luke asked mirthlessly.
Tom and Severus looked at the still unconscious Harry before simultaneously declaring, "No Bet!"
No one commented further as they moved forwards into the old Sith temple.
Harry bolted upright at the sound of lightsabers clashing only to stare wide eyed at three master force users watching their new students train.

"Careful! They may be on low power but it can still burn," Anakin warned.

"I'd much prefer a blaster," Leia scowled as she dodged a strike from her much more skilled brother. The purple blade in her hand flashed as it swung carelessly into a thick vine on the wall, slicing it free to fall and nearly trip her.

"I'm just glad they had some extra crystals lying around. I can finally change mine so that it isn't always at full power," Luke said happily as he swung a blue blade that clearly wasn't his judging by the gilded hilt design with one of Yoda's short green ones in his off-hand.

"The art of the sword is very nearly the same as the Jedi use of a lightsaber. The difference is that with a lightsaber you don't feel the weight of the blade at all unless you are hitting or cutting through something. You only feel the hilt," Severus informed her archly. He ducked under a blinding green swing that at full power would have taken his head off as he sliced at Tom's side in a blue blur only to miss due to the other man's leap sideways.

"We have previous sword training which allows us to adapt better but it is still an adaptation as we no longer need to account for the physicality of the blade itself. Some of the training spells are similar to this. Sparring like this also allows for a quick and dirty lesson on staying alive for the two of you while we adapt," Tom pointed out coolly as he stopped near the wall, out of his opponent's easy reach.

"We were lucky to find the extra sabers at all," Palpatine reminded them all.

"Just be glad that using red blades hasn't always been a Sith requirement or another color a Jedi requirement and you got to pick your color," Anakin added in open amusement. "Hate within the force still tends to turn the crystal and blade red though."

"Synthetic crystals are stronger and favored by the Sith Order for it. Sometimes they can even break the blade of a Jedi," Palpatine added. "Of course its also completely possible that they are captured Jedi blades or captured from some other Force using group. Its not uncommon for Sith to take trophies regardless of which era or teaching variation the Sith came from. The name of the Sith Order actually comes from the species which provided the first Dark Side priests. As far as I am aware they died out as a species some 4000 years ago and ever since Dark Side users have been called Sith."

"Build their own lightsabers they must. Help them feel the Force it will. Power everything it is not," Yoda tossed in with his own chuckle.
"Am I dreaming?" Harry asked with a frown.

"The next time you need Polyjuice brewed you had best come to a Potions Master rather than a second year know-it-all," Severus drawled as he dashed towards Tom only to dive into a roll and come up swinging in a blur. Tom in turn yelped in a mix of surprise and pain as the low powered blue lightsaber hit him squarely in the stomach, causing him to drop his own green blade.

"Not dreaming then," Harry concluded. "As for the Polyjuice potion Headmaster, its not like we really thought we had a choice and the way first year turned out told us that we couldn't rely on the teachers. So we dealt with it ourselves."

"I hope you realize by now that Dumbledore was leading you about by the nose?" Tom snarked as he set up for another round with Snape.

"Oh yeah I do but I think he did a bit more than manipulate," Harry said with a wince at the memory of how willfully blind he had been.

"You can't be thinking potions or compulsions?" Severus asked with an incredulity that cost him a lightsaber to the face. He backed away from the kiss of cracking energy cursing before taking on a more wary defensive stance.

"Actually, I was thinking along the lines of muggle brainwashing combined with deliberately induced hero worship. He was so careful to lead me along and make me believe that he was the only one who could free me from the Dursleys even if only for the school year. Besides do you really think compulsion spells would work on me? Especially with how I can throw off the Imperius Curse of all things?" Harry smirked as he finally got to his feet.

"Yes, a very irritating ability," Tom acknowledged in open annoyance. His next strike left him open on the left but it was a decoy so that Severus ran into his sideways snap-kick. However, said kick didn't stop the blue blade from connecting uncomfortably close to a very sensitive area below his belt. He cursed a blue streak as he staggered back from his former minion as Severus backed off smirking and rubbing at his sore stomach, complete with boot print.

"I almost wish I could have met him if only to compare notes on technique," Palpatine mused aloud. "He didn't do a very good job keeping me under control though," Harry laughed, his mischievous smirk explaining why the other two wizards tended to call him imp or brat.

"What are you?!" came the echoing demand from the temple guardian, thundering around the training room and stopping everyone in their tracks.

Harry face palmed in response with a heavy sigh.

"See why you refused bet I do," Yoda laughed. "Aspect is he? Or link?"

"A bit of both I suspect," Tom admitted, turning off his borrowed lightsaber followed quickly by Severus. Both men attached them to their belts before wandering over to examine the smaller wizard.

"We were basically gifted to him as servants from beyond the grave," Severus grumped with his eyes glittering in hidden amusement.

"Don't you start! I did not ask him to do that. I don't mess with the dead. They deserve their peace," Harry protested turning to glare at the two.

"Except when walking to your own death," Tom snarked back in open amusement.
"Look, I barely know anything about the stupid title or the Hallows that triggered it. It's not like
Death and his reapers have exactly been chatty about any of it. I'm probably lucky that they put me
back together after kidnapping me from the Unspeakables in the first place," Harry protested. "And
besides I tossed the resurrection stone after saying goodbye and asking if it would hurt! They were
barely on the wrong side of the veil for 20 seconds before I let you kill me!"

"Oh? So learning part of Death's filing system wasn't informative? Wasn't privileged information?
You don't think he shows such paperwork to just anyone do you?" Tom asked with polite curiosity,
his sarcasm echoing openly in the mental background. Harry snarled wordlessly and turned aside in a
sulk.

"So, you truly hate receiving special treatment and the fame that often generates it," Severus
commented thoughtfully. Harry didn't dignify that with a response.

"Yet use it he did," Yoda commented. He was referring to their deputizing and Harry's previously
mentioned field trips courtesy of Death since he wasn't yet aware of the Boy-Who-Lived mess.

"Guardian is there a private room that is still... private near this training room?" Anakin asked
carefully.

"I want answers... but as a Sith Lord I can not bar your way. Third door on your right my lord," the
temple guardian grumbled.

"Thank you," Anakin said politely.

Harry yelped in surprise as he was levitated out of the room behind the other man. Anakin ignored
the demands from Harry to let his captive down as they moved to the private room, shutting the door
in everyone else's surprised faces. A block of stone from some rubble served to block the doorway,
both men knowing that it wouldn't stop the others from getting in if they were truly determined. The
fallen block was from one of the partially demolished separating wall that conveniently opened up
the room into a slightly larger room with rubble scattered about.

"You and I need to talk," Anakin told Harry firmly as he gently set the smaller man down.

"Oh? What about?" Harry asked warily.

"You know about duty?" Anakin asked softly.

"Yeah, wouldn't have walked to my own death once much less twice if I didn't know about duty.
So?" Harry snorted slightly bitterly.

"The sacrifices you made were probably beyond the call of duty and I can only respect you for that.
This title you are so stubbornly refusing to use unless its to help someone... do you know what duties
come with it? Have you even asked? Do you know what authorities you have? What extra abilities,
if any, it gives you? What legal grounds apply? Will someone accidentally start a war by slapping
you on the back? Will someone try to kill you or anyone around you if you aren't somewhere by a
certain time or haven't gotten something done? Do you know anything about this mystical title?"
Anakin inquired, one commander to another.

"It makes me immortal, apparently, and I get to go after anyone who tries to find immortality in an
unsanctioned way. So far I haven't found an intentional immortality attempt that is accepted by Death
and his reapers. The magic of the title also screams wrong at me when I run into one I have to take
out as fast as possible. For ones that I can take my time figuring out its a lot more gentle so I think
there is something more to it but I haven't been at this for too long. Oh and I seem to have stopped
aging at around 17," Harry admitted ruefully. "I don't know about much else."

"The thing about the universe being at risk?" Anakin asked with an arched eyebrow.

"It ties into stopping some immortal idiot from staying immortal but sometimes its a separate issue. I usually have to take care of both. A different feeling tells me what to do to keep whichever universe I'm in spinning," Harry told him with a sigh. "I haven't done this more than a handful of times each and some of them overlapped."

"Do you even know how to find out what the limits are?" Anakin asked perceptively.

"No," Harry admitted. "Trial and error?"

"At least its a start," Anakin sighed. "Just remember that holding back from using what you have can do more damage than going all out. Discernment is the key to know what to use when but you have to know what you already have to plan anything properly."

"So stop being an idiot about my title and anything else that's mine for whatever reason," Harry translated ruefully.

Harry aged before the other man's eyes and Anakin knew this kind of aging only too well, it came from experience. Experience that was often gained in a war of some sort or on a battlefield. The smaller man's need to heal him and keep the more experienced force users from fighting each other suddenly made a lot more sense. The moment they had all arrived in that room and Harry had taken stock of the situation they had become Harry's people in the petite wizard's mind. Like Anakin himself Harry took care of his people, especially those willing to fight at his side.

"I see... If you want my advice, drop any masks or acts you're using. Just be yourself as much as you can. Let us adapt to you rather than the other way around. Most of us from my neck of the woods have battle experience and its not like we can't compensate as things move forwards," Anakin offered in a friendly tone.

"I don't know how long we will be here either in this temple or even this universe. I'm not getting any special feelings about why we need to be here," Harry admitted. "Even with what happened when we first got here I'm not sure about what we're really doing here, in this universe, time, and place."

"Then we train, we look around. Something is bound to turn up," Anakin shrugged. Harry nodded his agreement and, taking Anakin's advice, didn't try to put on a happy face or hide who he was.
Bonds

Harry and Anakin turned towards the still blocked door out of the room only to be stopped by a ball of mist quickly forming into a ghostly bald humanoid with blue-grey skin. He was dressed in a dark version of Jedi attire, without the robe, with a black painted breast plate that didn't cover his stomach and was held in place by shoulder plate going over his left shoulder. The etching on the armor was geometric and focused mainly on the right half of the breast plate. His black gloved hands rested on his belt as he stood with his feet firmly apart glowering at them. Harry noticed his face was slightly sunken but his skull protruded slightly out from the back top creating a low cone that was clearly a natural part of his cranium. Since he was fairly muscular the wizard figure that having a sunken face was normal for his people.

"I don't recognize your species," Anakin commented, still studying the apparition. A soft crack from behind them told Harry that he would later be yelling at one of the other wizards for apparating into the room blind. That was presuming they hadn't already been in the room while he was out cold and thus hadn't actually jumped blind.

"My species is likely either no longer or has evolved into something else if you have no knowledge of us. Are you going to answer my earlier question?" the guardian asked tetchily.

"I was born a human wizard, a magic user. As for what I am now? Your guess is as good as mine," Harry answered with a touch of bitterness lacing his good humored answer.

"There is some question of there being something more to you even as an infant considering that you basically killed me when I first tried to kill you after eliminating your parents," Tom pointed out calmly as he joined the duo in front of ghost.

"Not helping!" Harry shot at him with a brief glower.

"Explain to me this talk of death and reapers," the guardian requested suspiciously.

"I accidentally collected three powerful magical objects linked to a legend about three brothers cheating Death and meeting him before being given rewards that were also traps. They had avoided getting killed at a dangerous river crossing, supposedly outwitting Death in the process and denying him their lives. When asked what they wanted, well two of them weren't very smart about it," Harry explained uncomfortably.

Tom took over the tale, sensing Harry's discomfort. "According to the story the first brother asked for an unbeatable wand, a magical focus which aids in the learning and use of magic. The second brother had recently lost his fiance and asked for a way to call her back from the dead. He received an enchanted stone that when activated can call a dead person's spirit back for a time from death. The third brother apparently sensed a trap and asked for a piece of Death's cloak of invisibility which he uses to help him collect those who have died. His older brothers died soon after receiving their gifts, one through bragging and one through suicide. The youngest brother lived to old age and greeted Death as an old friend after passing the cloak to his own first born son."

"The problem with the stone is that it hurts them since they don't really belong among the living and it can drive the summoner insane since they act as the anchor. The wand encourages recklessness and over confidence, it pushes a bit at the mind to help the person make poor judgements when using it. I haven't found a trap in the cloak as long as you are mindful that invisible doesn't mean invincible or undetectable," Harry admitted. "It doesn't cover scent or sound, only sight. I tossed the stone in the woods before letting Tom kill me. I broke the wand, throwing it away in different directions over a
cliff, after killing Tom. The cloak was a family heirloom so I kept that... until my wife handed me over to the Unspeakables. I don't know what happened to it after that."

"As for Death and his reapers... its exactly what it sounds like. We have very little information beyond that aside from the title it self naming him the Master of Death," Tom explained. The guardian grunted his dissatisfaction but not only moved himself from their path he also levitated the piece of rubble from in front of the door as well, clearing their path for them.

"This temple has remained empty for a long time. I would ask that you use it as your base for the time being. I will even tolerate the presence of Jedi if I must. I wish to learn more about your group," the guardian informed them guardedly. His open interest in Harry made the wizard both uncomfortable and resigned to the scrutiny. If there was one good thing about his previous fame among the wizards it taught him how to ignore too much attention.

"We still need to figure out safe food and drink appropriate to each of our species but we will consider it," Tom promised diplomatically. The guardian nodded and disappeared back into mist then into nothingness.

"We need to see if you are trainable in the force," Anakin sighed. "If this is going to keep happening I want you to have every tool we can give you, the way Obi-Wan did for me. We need to do the same for Luke if those vids I saw in your memories were in any way true."

"As Severus and I were only insistent on working with the Lightsabers in case of an emergency that might be wise," Tom drawled in amusement. His words came just as the door in front of them was opened by the scowling Potions Master himself.

"I will thank you not to kidnap Potter from within our reach again. I've guarded him since he was eleven and I have no wish to face his mother again this time having failed to keep him intact," Severus informed Anakin stonily.

"You knew he wouldn't hurt me or you would have tried to curse him," Harry pointed out, resisting the urge to roll his eyes.

"Something we only knew because we are bound to you more closely then they are through their acceptance into your service. If you truly don't have Heir training much less Lordship training you have no idea what either of those bonds entail," Severus scowled sourly.

"Severus, enough, I felt his flash of anger and protectiveness towards me when I apparated into the room. He expected us to remain safe in the training room, away from any potential threat to himself. He doesn't know nor understand," Tom scolded. Severus' scowl deepened but he didn't argue the point, grudgingly admitting the other man was right.

"Know what? What am I missing?" Harry asked warily.

"We aren't just servants, our life force is bound to yours. It isn't a slavery bond, we don't have to obey you, but it is in our best interest to keep you alive and whole. We have no idea what would need to happen to release us only that is possible and can not happen at all for at least the next hundred years. The feel I get from the bond is that we are... companions, Companions and Generals," Severus explained with a sigh, releasing his ill humor in the face of Harry's honest confusion.

Harry swore lowly. He had been trying to figure out how to let at least Severus go at the back of his mind since the start of this even if it took time to accomplish. The man was ill tempered, nasty, and could do with some courtesy lessons but as far as Harry was concerned he had paid his debts several
times over. Harry wasn't sure about Tom yet and the punishment aspect wasn't something he was certain he could or wanted to do something about. This new information made him more determined yet it also warned him that nothing could be done about it for the next century.

"Well at least we've got something. A promise that its possible to release you both at some point," Harry sighed. "I can't argue with the punishment bit that Death told us about but I had hoped... well never mind. Something for when we can do something about it."

"My actions in protecting you are not enough to wipe my own slate clean, Potter," Severus informed him pointedly. "I have done more than enough in my past to require further punishment. I was simply lucky enough to snap out of it but not fast enough to save Lily. My actions were not noble and being a spy required maintaining my role as a Death Eater. My wake up call was not my salvation... you were. You have no idea how much it hurt seeing you. Yet it reminded me daily why I turned, why I accepted the shackles Dumbledore offered in trade for supposedly protecting your mother. Seeing you daily taught me why Lily would protect you so. First to honor her I would have adopted you but later I would have done it for your sake rather than your mother's. You are a man now, no longer in need of a father, as such I will stand at your side in honor of that."

"I suppose its just as well that the bond won't let me go for closer to 500 years," Tom said, clearly amused. "It took me some time but I just realized Potter is my Heir and by Right of Conquest Lord Slytherin, Head of my House. You're stuck with us Potter."

Harry snorted in amusement at Tom's non-sequitur before leading the group back to the training room.

"Keep that one close. You'll never know how valuable such a bond is until you've lost it," Anakin advised quietly as he passed Harry on his way further into the room.

Harry nodded his understanding before settling down between Palpatine and Yoda. Anakin, on the other hand, walked over to his children to quietly correct their stances and show them several basic Katas. Severus and Tom didn't re-join the saber practice, instead choosing to start casting medical spells at Harry, much to his chagrin. No more was said about the specific bonds holding Severus and Tom beholden to Harry.
Next Step

Over the next couple of days they switched between collecting food from the surrounding jungle and training. Harry's training was more extensive than the others as Tom and Severus had to school him in magical contracts of all sorts and other magical things. Water was solved by a simple water spell from the wizards. The temple was also made more habitable but no one was under the impression that their stay was permanent.

"We may be stuck on this planet longer than we thought," Luke said one day as he dropped into a seat at their transfigured dining table.

"Oh? What makes you say that?" Tom asked in interest.

"There isn't any sign of the alliance base. I knew we weren't too far from the temple that the base was set up in so I took a look. Its still sealed. I would have thought it was impossible but you guys mentioned time travel and dimension travel. I figure we are either back in time or on a different Yavin IV," Luke explained as he ate his meal. "We don't have a ship or what we would need to build one. Right now I'm just glad we had the tools and spare parts to adjust my lightsaber."

"We don't have any real stock of healing supplies. The spells we've been using for healing the inevitable training injuries won't work well enough on anything truly serious. I'm no healer, none of us are. I also can't properly counter the older damage on any of us and we don't dare try to trigger another massive healing wave from Harry even if we can figure out how to do so. Not to mention that transfigured lab equipment, no matter how well done, is barely usable. Interfering at the most inconvenient times during brewing, contaminating the potions with the transformation magic," Severus frowned in concern.

Yoda hummed in thought as they all ate, considering what they knew and what supplies they had.

"I gift to you the blades that you have been using. Take them and the spare crystals with you when you choose to leave my temple. Return the balance to the Force if you will not return the Sith to proper rule. Return passion and life to those who commune with the Force," the temple guardian instructed before fading away once again.

"You know that's kinda creepy the way he keeps doing that," Harry muttered in annoyance.

"You can't argue that he hasn't been helpful," Palpatine tossed in his two credits worth.

"That doesn't mean that he, or you, are trustworthy," Leia grumbled. She had done her best to keep away from both trained Sith, only grudgingly accepting the training after a quiet but angry argument with Luke. Her suspicious looks to both Anakin and Palpatine were wearing on the nerves of everyone except the two they were aimed at.

"Enough, act like a youngling you are. Free you are to leave, unlike us. Matters not where to go. Aggravating your childishness is," Yoda scolded in exasperation. As old and patient as he was even he had limits. He also knew from experience teaching younglings when a younger person had sulked for too long. "Meditate you must until your heart and your mind no longer cry in pain. Amends your father wishes, amends you need not accept. Harmful to the group your actions are. No more saber practice must you have until calm your mind is."

"For once I must agree. Tapping into one's emotions, while powerful and useful, still need a measure of control to keep from destroying everything around you," Palpatine commented calmly. "Among
the Sith this is often taught using pain as an incentive. Meditation is done by using one emotion as a focal point while the Jedi use a lack of emotion. There are other ways to meditate but those are the most commonly taught meditation methods for the two Orders. I have no problem using the gentler methods that Yoda is teaching you but that is largely because he has agreed to help you learn Sith methods in a less damaging fashion."

"The balanced path indeed," Anakin murmured with a sad smirk.

"Perhaps we should all spend the morning meditating both on our current problems as a group and on what to do next," Severus suggested.

Harry grumbled but silently agreed most of the group needed the time to think and organize their emotions. The day passed in quiet contemplation. Luke and Anakin swapped between katas and messing with what hardware they had as a form of moving meditation. Harry dove into his own mind as if he were still a child locked in his cupboard to build worlds. The others used the meditation methods they knew either from Force training, political training, or Occlumency training. By evening everyone was calmly settled at the table for supper.

"What are our options?" Palpatine asked calmly, taking the first step to start the discussion.

"Explore? Move to another temple? Train more?" Luke offered. "I don't think anyone wants to set up shop permanently but we are short on information and supplies."

"I could try calling Death but we may wind up in a worse situation," Harry offered halfheartedly. The thud of a package falling behind him where there should be only air had him face palming in frustration and barely controlled hysterical mirth.

"Help from everybody," Severus growled, aiming his fork at Harry accusingly.

Harry just bounced his head on the table a couple of times before dragging himself away from the table to retrieve the package. Harry growled a bit when he saw a lightning bolt intertwined with the symbol of the Deathly Hallows but still picked up the package obviously meant for him. Everyone watched as he brought it back to the table and opened it. Inside was a portable long range com set backpacks that Severus remember seeing carried by snowtroopers in the Hoth attack in the Empire Strikes Back. There were also several old books, a few much newer ones, and a couple of data pads.

"The com set doesn't reach the full 100 light years that a long distance transmitter on a ship does," Palpatine commented thoughtfully.

"But it will reach a nearby system that has enough inhabitants to get us out of here," Anakin said just as thoughtfully.

"Yavin isn't that far from Mandalore galactic wise," Luke reminded them all. "Its barely much of a hyperspace jump if you don't just take a subspace trip. Though Maridun is closer, less than a parsec. So are a bunch of other systems. We are in the middle of the Gordian Reach."

"Why are there Lucasfilm books in this package?" Harry asked in open amusement. He held up the Star Wars Imperial Handbook and the The Jedi Path: A Manual For Students Of The Force books for everyone to see.

"When did those come out?" Severus asked in open curiosity mixed with amusement.

"No, thank you. I'm more used to dealing with much older books that have no such thing," Severus demurred with mischief glittering in his obsidian eyes. Harry snorted with suppressed laughter but turned back to the bounty of the package.

"Healing books," Tom whispered in surprise.

"What?" Harry asked, looking up from the package contents.

"These are training books for Healers. Some of these are Old. We probably have the combined healing knowledge of both Light and Dark magic for a span of 1000 years or more," Tom answered, looking up at Harry. His eyes glittered in excitement.

"Always a lover of knowledge? The older and more obscure the better?" Harry teased. In response Tom just gathered the magical books to his place at the table and started looking through them.

"I'll need them for a refresher as well. As a Potions Master I'm not far off from being a full healer but my specialization doesn't use all of spells that a healer does. Its been some time since I learned what little of them I do know. I'll need to brush up on them if I'm going to keep acting as our primary healer," Severus said pointedly. In response Tom grudgingly handed over two of the first five books to the Potions Master. Momentarily satisfied Severus opened one of them and started looking through it. Both of them ignored Harry's snickers at their polite argument over the books.

The data pads had been swiped by everyone else as the group quietly looked through the information they had been provided.

"A lot of this is reference material. We don't have anything indicating the galactic year or any news transmissions. If we might be in a different time period (which I still seriously doubt) or we have been here longer than we think (more than likely) then we will have to call for help blind. We have nothing to trade or pay for transport off of Yavin IV," Leia tossed out in frustration as she finally set down the last of the data pads.

"Agreed. Our skills won't be enough, especially without knowing what the rest of the galaxy is like at the moment," Palpatine added.

"I am a pilot as is Luke. We can say that we got snagged by slavers and left here for safe keeping only they never came back. We only just got our hands on a com unit when our guards were eaten by something from the jungle. We met here but we've mostly been kept knocked out until the guards were eaten. Simple, mostly true, and a bad knock out mix explains why we don't know what the Kriff is going on," Anakin suggested.

"Works," Harry sighed. "Most of you are bound to me. As Yoda said this morning only Luke and Leia can walk away at a moment's notice. This is still something we have to decide as a group."

"I don't see that we have much of a choice. While I recognize some of the information here as being added to the records during my time none of it is from after I took Naboo's senatorial seat. I had become the Sith Master by that point," Palpatine mused. "No I think that Anakin's plan is our best chance right now."

"That doesn't mean that the information is current. It could be ahead of the time we are in or behind it," Harry tossed out. "We all are running on short rations, partly because we have to hunt our own food and we aren't used to this moon. We only have food because both Luke and Leia remembered what could be eaten safely near what will be an alliance base. The lack of food will actually help that story."
"I will work with Tom and we will transfigure some bags along with things we can use for trade. My memories of the movies will help in that respect but equipment, parts, are out of the question. We can do a finding spell to locate other tradeable items within the temple and without. Once we have the basics and enough to pay for transport we can call for help," Severus informed them without looking up from his book.

"The morning then?" Anakin asked calmly.

"Suggest tomorrow afternoon I do. Call for help then," Yoda offered his own opinion. "Hide from Jedi, hide from Sith, be not known we must. Weary travelers we are and must we remain."

"Tomorrow afternoon then," Harry accepted before turning back to his dinner.
It turned out they needed several more days before they could call for help, clearing a new landing zone, hiding their lightsabers in newly transfigured clothes with hidden pockets. They even gathered some of the gems and precious metals hidden in the temple by previous Dark Side priests at the insistence of the temple guardian. When they turned on the com set they were surprised to get an immediate response.

"Stranded group this is the smuggler ship Lucky Crescent, just how bad do you want off that rock?" came a woman's voice from the com set in answer to the first call.

"Bad enough that we raided a Sith temple to pay for it! The damned thing had a Force Ghost guarding it. We barely talked him into letting us look around without triggering the traps," Luke announced excitedly.

"How in all the hells did you manage that?!" came the shocked voice from the com set.

"Turns out I'm force sensitive, never knew it as a kid. He agreed to let us look around if I picked something up and moved it to the other side of the old temple. Not sure why, didn't ask, really don't want to know. I think he also took care of some of the idiot slavers who snagged us and kept us mostly knocked out in the first place. Upside we got just enough to pay for passage and as a bonus... well we don't really care who you are as long as you get us off this rock and don't gives us to more slavers. Wouldn't mind if we could get new IDs either, if you can manage it..." Luke explained. "Or at least we'll owe you one. Maybe we can play your fare until you land? Might get you past customs a bit quicker wherever you're headed."

"Fool! We need some of it for more than just passage," Severus hissed quietly.

"Why? We can find work as a crew on a ship somewhere as long as we actually reach a port," Luke shot back, not bothering to close the com circuit. "We need transport and IDs along with information. Anything else we can figure out once we get somewhere with a space port."

"Repeat that please?" the woman inquired.

"We want off this rock," Luke said simply.

"We'll see if you're worth the trouble. If you are then welcome to the crew, complete with new IDs and a minimum term of three years service. If you're not... we'll get you to a port as long as you keep your mouth's shut," the woman said pointedly.

"Why even announce that you're smugglers then?" Luke asked suspiciously.

"It tells me how desperate you folks are," the woman audibly smirked. "Coordinates please?"

"Yavin system, the moon Yavin IV. We cleared a place near the temple we're in for a landing strip. Don't bother leaving the ship, we'll come to you. There are some nasty bugs that can strip you past your bones and I'm still not sure why so many of us lived but all of the slavers disappeared," Luke explained with an audible grimace. "The temple guardian was really happy to tell us all that the slavers were dead and there was no ship around to snag. We figured trying to wait might be a bad idea and they left us this lovely com set."

"Check. How long were you on that rock?" the spacer asked. "And how many people?"
"7 adult humans and one little troll. How long have we actually been here? Not a damn clue. Awake? Its been a good couple of days maybe a week or two," Luke answered honestly. He got whacked by Yoda for the troll comment even as it made everyone chuckle. "We certainly didn't wake up with the injuries we thought we would so your guess is as good as mine, better probably."

"I hear you. See you when I get there. Lucky Crescent signing off," she smirked before the line went dead.

Three hours later...

"How much will we owe for transport?" Severus asked shrewdly from just inside the outside ship hatch.

"This is a Crescent-class freighter, you only need one or two people to fly it with room for 8 passengers. Why the crack about taking us as crew in trade for rescue? Not that we would have necessarily turned it down," Luke asked carefully, full of suspicion.

"You think I don't know that?" the spacer's voice came from the air lock com unit with a snort of amusement. "There is a reason why the airlock hasn't let you in yet. That and you shouldn't know those specs on a proto-type like this."

"Proto-type?" Leia asked sickly.

"That places us either very late Republic Era or very early Imperial Era..." Anakin said very carefully. "Possibly just before the war broke out. Building and testing new ships is a time consuming process. It can be decades between the design and proto-type phases with just as long between proto-type and final product."

"What's that supposed to mean?" the spacer asked warily.

"You don't want to know and its not something you need to worry about. Its... sort of a group thing," Luke offered, the Force warning him to keep quiet alongside his common sense saying the same thing.

"My security systems have a camera embedded above the inner hatch. Mind showing me what you're trading for transport out of this jungle?" the spacer asked tartly. Severus held up some gold jewelry they had found in a secret compartment that was pointed out by the temple guardian.

"That... will certainly pay for your trip and no more questions, won't even ask if you found more. Welcome aboard," the spacer told them, unlocking the inner hatch and letting them into the passenger areas. "Passengers please strap in... immediately. I think the beasties either don't like us on their turf or still want a bite of your hides."

Everyone scrambled into a seat and belted in. The three wizards watched their companions closely to make sure they were doing it right but everyone was belted in. They were just in time as the emergency lift off kicked in with their pilot swearing up a storm over the inter com.

"I don't remember anything that could threaten a ship on Yavin IV! What the hell?!" Luke cursed, clutching hard at his seat straps.

"You think that a Force Ghost couldn't conjure a couple of illusions? Ones strong enough to spook a ship's sensors?" Palpatine smirked. "My guess is that the guardian decided to both help us and have a little fun as we went on our way. He was a Sith after all."

"A prank?!" Tom swore. "This isn't a proper prank. Its suicide!"
"Tell that to Potter's father and that of his chums," Severus said grimly. "The so-called Marauders would have adored this as a proper prank. Especially, Sirius Black the fool."

"Just be glad I don't really play pranks, never learned," Harry shot back. He didn't argue about the possibility of his father and godfather finding this to be a grand prank, not after seeing that one memory of Severus' fifth year.

After the harsh lift off they spent a couple calm hours in Hyperspace heading towards the space port.
Alright, we've landed. I don't know you and you don't know me unless you're going the completely legal route," the lady spacer announced over the inter com. None of the kidnapped group had been overly worried about her mostly ignoring them as they preferred her focusing on the test flight in case something actually went wrong.

"We have to know if someone stole our identities and we need new paperwork. If we are extremely unlucky we will have to request completely new IDs and register as unknowns," Palpatine lamented to the woman over the inter com as the rest of the group gathered their things.

"Alright, I see why you kept Malfoy. Evil politicians can be useful as long as they aren't trying to stab you in the back," Harry admitted quietly to Tom.

Tom just nodded his own agreement. He might have liked to watch people scrambling about at his slightest whim or dance to his tune in politics but he hadn't ever actually enjoyed the politicking. Glad handing, backroom dealing, and dangerous high class parties had always been only a necessary evil, no matter how much he liked pulling one over on the elite idiots. He made a mental note to force some basic etiquette on both of his fellow wizards and possibly Luke at the earliest opportunity.

"Do you want me officially escorting you so that you don't get lost or accused of being pirates and slavers yourselves?" the spacer offered reluctantly.

"That would be much appreciated," Palpatine schmoozed.

"Speak only," Yoda warned. He obviously didn't want them using the force mind trick.

"You think there are Jedi on the planet or at least someone who's trained enough to sense it?" Harry asked curiously.

"Conspicuous, emergency only," Yoda corrected gently with a fond chuckle.

"Agreed," Palpatine added slightly grimly after closing the com channel. "After getting papers certifying that we exist we need to get up to date on galactic events and possibly local events. We may yet still have to trade general labor for passage elsewhere. At least Anakin and Luke can get re-certified as pilots and we have enough gold trinkets for a few credits and supplies.

"Temple resources may we use in emergency only. Detected we will be," Yoda tossed in.

"Grandmaster I may be, explain our presence I can not."

"We understand," Anakin nodded. "Luke, stay with your sister. Let Severus, Tom, and I look around in the less than civilized areas while we are here. I can tell by how you move that the rest of you didn't spend enough time in those areas to keep from getting knifed and if I can see it whoever knife's you won't get the warning to back off either. Let the three of us play bodyguard."

"Good advice," the spacer said neutrally from the doorway as she studied them.

"Anakin has acted as a bodyguard before. His son and daughter don't yet have that training and we only met our three newest friends when we woke up. Yoda, our small green friend is getting on in years," Palpatine explained smoothly.
"Are you a politician?" the spacer demanded suspiciously.

"She got you," Harry laughed until his sides hurt.

"Harry has repeatedly called him an evil politician," Luke explained with a boyish grin fit to melt any girl's heart. "My sister is also trained in politics but most of the rest of us aren't. We've been letting him charm you but don't worry we've also been watching him and have firmly told him he can't play dirty."

"I was simply trying to keep the peace," Palpatine shrugged, referring to his earlier attempt to keep Anakin on a personal leash.

"No, you were trying to keep me on a leash," Anakin shot back evilly. "To bad we all made a business contract with Harry at that temple and work for him now."

"Play nice," Harry ordered grinning madly.

"Yes sir," Anakin answered back with an evil grin aimed at his former master. Palpatine, on the other hand, graciously inclined his head and said nothing more.

The spacer snorted in amusement before leading them out of the ship.

"You're in luck. We're on Torque. If you've got the credits Bwahl the Hutt will issue you the whatever documents you need. Or you can just find a ride out of here towards the Republic. Be careful where you pick to go though, they're in a civil war right now as of a couple of years ago," she tossed over her shoulder as they left the ship, heading for the hanger doors.

Anakin stopped dead with Luke beside him, forcing the rest of the group to stop behind them.

"Hutt's," Anakin muttered in disgust.

"Believe me, I know," Luke agreed with an equally disgusted grimace. "Why don't we just get a ride further into the core and claim everyone who knows us is dead? At least as far as we know. It's true after all, we woke up basically alone and we all pretty much knew then that we wouldn't see anyone we knew again."

"Suit yourselves," the test spacer shot back, stalking off and leaving them to themselves.

"Cantina," Anakin ordered with a sigh.

"Let's try to find one better than that one in Mos Eisley from the movie," Severus growled lowly. "We have too many in our group who can't watch their own backs."

"Severus," Tom warned.

"He's right," Harry sighed reluctantly. "Most of us are used to their equivalent to Diagon Alley, not deep in Knockturn alley."

"What?" Leia asked, completely lost in the ongoing discussion.

"We aren't used to lairs of scum and villainy as Ben Kenobi put it," Luke grinned cheekily.

"I'm still upset with Kenobi despite killing him once already so please don't mention him," Anakin informed his son archly. "First he cut off three of my limbs and left me to die at the edge of a lava flow. Then he goes and takes the two of you and hiding the two of you, my children, away from me. I think it's safe to say that many of my... feelings on Kenobi are either conflicted or currently

"Luke, just remember that you don't know everything about your father or Ben Kenobi," Harry advised quietly. "We still haven't finished healing Anakin and until he's ready to talk we should leave him alone. Until we've unlocked his memory emotions and dealt with them properly he won't even be ready to start talking and we need a safe place to do that."

"I understand. I'll try to be patient," Luke said softly as they finally entered the selected spacer bar. A look between Anakin, Severus, and Tom had them silently agreeing to shuffle the rest of the group into a booth while the three more experienced men sorted out their next ride.

"Whether we want to or not we may have to consider risking the use of temple funds," Palpatine pointed out quietly. Their group didn't say anything as they watched the other patrons while Tom, Anakin, and Severus wandered around casually looking for transport for the group.

"Willing are you to face yourself? Willing are you to help the Jedi?" Yoda asked with guarded curiosity.

"I have helped the order in the past, barring the execution mess. Something which I now fully admit was a mistake no matter how much Sith teaching advocates the destruction of the Jedi. I can't promise that I won't try to arrange the elimination of all active Knights and Masters at some point. I will, however, concede that ordering the deaths of the younglings and initiates was going a bit far. If you are willing to try I will accept their survival, presuming it happens to be possible, and I will work with you to teach them the same balanced path we have already started the others. This is contingent on your new understanding of the flaws of both the current Jedi code and the distant arrogance that has infected the council," Palpatine proposed softly.

"Harry?" Yoda asked softly, remembering the early declaration of needing to check with him about new apprentices.

"Feelings are necessary but so is control. The complete elimination of emotions or an extended time cut off from them is either damaging to the person or indicates something very wrong. Equally so the complete surrender to the tides of emotion is just as dangerous for not only the person but those around them. Any new students must recieve training in both basic primary meditation techniques as well as the movement ones. They must understand what I just outlined about emotion and control," Harry told both Masters flatly. "I can understand taking out the certified adults, those unable to change, but I won't condone the deaths of the children. If our group needs to save them, adopt them, then we will."

"This will necessitate making ourselves known to the Jedi Council at some point as well as likely stopping my younger self. Technically the war and the Senate are not necessary to sorting this out but they will need to be dealt with in some fashion. The clones may become a problem but its not something to worry about yet," Palpatine informed them. "To start we will have to take control of the Noghri again for combat reasons."

"The Noghri are fierce warriors but I don't think we should do what we did before. It might be better to offer something else, delivering a plea for aid to the neutral worlds? In trade for maybe enough bodyguards for our group? We also may be better off buying a ship if we are going to be running around like this," Anakin offered as they came back over to the group's table. "After all basically tricking them into enslaving themselves to us wasn't the brightest idea in the first place and we don't have an army to destroy them with if they find out this time. No, I'd much rather gain their loyalty honestly this time. Wouldn't mind some Wookies either if we have to fight."
"Of course we don't want to fight if we don't have to for the number disadvantage alone if nothing else," Severus grimaced as he took his seat. "What are we talking about any way?"

"How to deal with my younger self and the Jedi. Especially the possibility of saving the children in the temple from the massacre that was... arranged," Palpatine explained carefully. "Basically we are just plotting, deciding what our main goals are going to be and some possible ways we can accomplish them."

"Yeah, I don't want to have to deal with that again," Anakin grimaced.

"Order 66 is not to be issued under any circumstances," Harry informed the former Emperor with a hard cold voice. "I want those damned bio-chips removed from every clone unless it will kill them outright or do irreperable harm to them. If I have to put you in control to do this and release them I will, as long as you remember that you answer to me for the moment. You are useful and you've mostly behaved so far Palpatine but you are not irreplaceable if it comes down to it. I may not know why Death picked each of you but I've been in war before and dealt with prophecy before. I know how to act the bastard and do what's needed if it comes to it. Please don't drive me to that, don't force me into becoming a Reaper."

"Do I want to know what part of your magical title tripped that? Or is it our good fortune that you've gained a lethal edge, especially against those who betray you?" Severus asked calmly, arching an eyebrow in inquiry. Inside he was shocked at the way power was floating about his former student and the implications of Harry's speach.

Instantly the cloak of power fell away as Harry blushed sheepishly at his former teacher. He became another young yet forgetable person you pass on the street as the cloak disappeared, taking the feeling of deathly power with it.

"We need our own ship if only to keep our secrets and you, brat, are going to be practicing your moving meditation techniques. The split in attention will help you learn to meditate while doing other things like talking or fighting or fixing something. Whatever that just was had a clear connection to you," Tom ordered firmly. "Occlumency training, lots and lots of Occlumency training."

Harry grumbled a bit but didn't argue. He may not have gotten the full impact like everyone else but he was aware something had changed. He would have to deal with it eventually but he wasn't even sure what it was yet. Not that he was going to mention that just yet. Besides he just knew he was going to need those Occlumency shields before they got to dealing with the Jedi and the Sith of this time period.

"Kamino, we will need to go to Kamino. That's where the clones are being produced and the bio-chips implanted," Anakin told everyone. "We also need to stop the mess at Umbara if we can. Pong Krell needs to be stopped from mascaraing those troopers."

"Oh yeah, forgot about those parts of the clone wars," Harry grimaced. "Well at least Severus can get the best medical texts from there or something nearly as good. As for the troopers, yeah but that means giving ourselves away. I'm not saying no just that we need to be ready to play out in the open at that point. Kamino we can play with a bit since we've got both Palpatine and Yoda. I'm just not sure whether it will quite work considering exactly how smart both of them are in the first place and the fact that their younger selves will get word at some point."

"Hmm, troubling this is," Yoda pondered.

"We are obviously getting a bit ahead of ourselves," Leia finally spoke up, realizing that they were all serious about this. "First we get a ship, fuel it, stock it and head towards hyperspace. Then we
decide if we are going to Coruscant, Kamino, Umbara, or someplace else. Once we are there we work out the next step."

"We need a ship that we can fly, preferably one that will let us run cargo both for income and as a cover," Luke said thoughtfully. "Not something too big or we might need more crew."

The discussion quickly devolved into what sort of ship they were going to buy. Eventually their neighbors started chiming in with suggestions. By the time the lunch rush started flowing into the cantina there was a full blown discussion that ranged the entire establishment. Bemused the lunch goers listened as they ate before being inevitably drawn in as well.

"Oi! Alright the discussion has gotten a little disorganized. Since its clear that no one officially cares about any equipment restrictions on the fictional and/or real ships we are all talking about I want to organize the discussions a bit. That way we don't accidentally start a brawl and all get kicked out. Everyone talking about smuggling ships go to the far back. This will give you a little warning to switch off from anything less than appropriate if some idiot decides to play law keeper. Using coming in the main entrance as your reference point, everyone talking about frigates go to the far right, everyone talking about combat ships go to the far left. Finally, everyone else in-between settle in the right spot relative to the three groups. If this happens again another day stick to this set up or make up your own," Harry announced, breaking up the arguments that were starting to run dangerously hot temper wise.

"Those willing to discuss buying or selling their ships should be closest to the entrance in case the discussion requires leaving for better privacy or tempers run a bit too high during bargaining. This will allow you to avoid interruptions in the various discussions and/or deals," Severus added quickly as everyone started moving around into the general organization that was laid out for them.

The grateful looks sent to their group by the staff made Anakin and Palpatine chuckle. By the time lunch was over they had their ship and it was not only fully stocked but also fully fueled.

Chapter End Notes

Ideas welcome! *cackle*
The modified YT-1300 they had bought during their cantina jaunt made both Luke and Leia nearly fall down laughing, confusing everyone but Harry and Severus.

"What's it called again?" Harry asked, snickering along with the twins. "The Millennium Falcon perhaps?"

"No, the name its running under is Dark Lighting. Its set up as a YT-1300P (standard passenger configuration) with extra cargo pods. This means its set up mostly for carrying passengers but the extra external cargo pods let it carry more than the 25 metric tons of cargo than a YT-1300P is set up for. The cargo pods add room for an extra 100 metric tons of cargo, the same amount that a YT-1300F (standard freighter configuration) can carry without the pods. The modifications on this one I'm told include a military grade deflector shield, underfloor cargo space, and a Class 1 military grade hyperdrive. The hyperdrive makes it about as fast as a Jedi starfighter. The mods are part of the reason it cost us the equivalent of 45,000 credits rather than the standard 25,000 credits for a used version. Care to share?" Anakin inquired, watching the four amused group members with interest.

"Han Solo flew one of these, remember? We got off the Death Star in one. I think he is the only one who ever managed to get the bucket of bolts set up as a Class 0.5 hyperdrive. He also put in a nav computer that can run close enough to a black hole to make the Kessel run in 12 parsecs. He's crazy but really good at what he does. He's also sweet on Leia and she doesn't want to be sweet on him but is any way," Luke laughed hysterically. Leia started hitting him for telling about Han but he still couldn't stop laughing.

"Ah Solo... Leia, that smuggler is not good enough for you but you are a grown woman. If we get him back to us I won't argue against your relationship. He has mostly proved himself by his performance at Bespin," Anakin said thoughtfully. He enjoyed the shock that came from his children. The sudden doubt as to his evilness the force conveyed to him from his daughter eased an unknown pain deep inside. He immediately realized that his mostly dormant family bond with Leia was no longer screaming betrayal and hurt.

"Base we have, spacers we are now. Cargo we need," Yoda pointed out happily.

"We should find a cargo that isn't anywhere near Hutts," Anakin scowled. "We are supposedly fully stocked so once we check everything over we can leave."

"Then the only question now is Kamino, Coruscant, Umbara, or elsewhere?" Leia asked once the ship had checked out. "Of course if we head to one of the selected hot spots I don't know if we need a cargo."

"We can only make it to Umbara in time if we leave now and we push it. I found a galactic date in the nav computer," Anakin informed them solemnly. "We won't get there in time to save everyone
either. The ship will carry 15 with 2 crew. Jedi General Pong Krell will also have to be dealt with when we get there."

"I remember the report," Palpatine offered contemplatively. "I think that I could do with a bit of violence. We can't save all of them and it would end nearly any attempt at hiding but it may just be worth it."

"I don't have any better idea," Luke tossed in.

"I can stay aboard the ship with Luke, give air support, neither of us are ground pounders. I was always part of command or a part of the Senate. Luke started as a fighter pilot, becoming a specialized commander like the Jedi in the clone wars. I don't know what Harry, Tom, or Severus can do..." Leia offered up, trailing off in discomfort.

"Lets try for Umbara then," Harry agreed. Taking that as their cue everyone boarded and the left for Umbara. Anakin briefed them as best he could on the way to Umbara.

"I was ordered to return to Coruscant by the Jedi Council on Palpatine's request. Pong Krell took over command after I was away. Pong Krell... he ordered an open march on the city they needed to take. The complete refusal to allow the troopers to use basic strategy cost the assault and many lives. When Kenobi managed to get a warning to them about the enemy air base was re-supplying the capital. Krell was ordered to take it with the 501st. He again over ruled Captain Rex, creating another unnecessarily high cost in casualties. He later ordered them directly into the most casualty inducing position possible for a second time, refusing to allow them to retreat or even send them reinforcements. They took the airbase with heavy casualties and when it was suggested to use the captured equipment to attack an enemy supply ship he objected. Instead he ordered them to unnecessarily march directly into enemy fire. Rather than walking to their death alongside their brothers under blatantly stupid orders my men stole the captured ships and flew the mission the right way. I..." Anakin finally stumbled, having trouble controlling his anger.

"Enough. Finish I will," Yoda ordered softly. Anakin bowed his head and backed up to lean against the bulkhead, attempting to control his temper.

Yoda continued where Anakin had left off. "Pong Krell... ordered the imprisonment and execution did he of the troopers. Charged with treason they were. Refused to obey their brothers did. Later told the 501st the enemy wore the armor of friends. Destroyed the transmitter so they could not confirm, ordered them into battle against the 212th under that lie. Clone against clone, brother against brother. Captain Rex realized the lie, ordered his brothers against Pong Krell to arrest him for his crimes. Escaped he did, at first, killing many. CT-5385, Tup, captured and arrested him eventually. Confess Pong Krell did to treason, to wishing to join Count Dooku as his Sith apprentice. Decided Captain Rex did to execute him. Faced with this Captain Rex suffered from mind games causing doubt. Trooper Dogma saw this, took the burden himself, executing Pong Krell."

The silence was deafening until Harry broke down and swore.

"Looks like we get to play with a droid army and a fallen Jedi... I wonder how they would fare against Fiendfyre?" Tom mused thoughtfully.

"No Inferi, don't bother with the Unforgivables since they are tech not living in the traditional sense. Don't let the Fiendfyre get out of control," Harry ordered just as the alarm for exiting hyperspace sounded.

"You think I'm really that stupid or inexperienced?" Tom demanded incredulously as they all strapped in, bracing for the potentially tight maneuvers through enemy fire.
"No. I'm just frustrated and angry at what that... bastard did, is doing, to these people. Clones have every right to the same things as everyone else. He, he... treated them like combat slaves that he had grown tired of. That's wrong on so many levels!" Harry ranted loud enough to be heard in the cockpit where Anakin, Luke, and Leia were flying them down to the area next to the 501st legion.

"Give the order brat. We can contain him without the death toll," Severus reminded in a softly dangerous tone. Harry met his calm onyx gaze with his own furious emerald.

"Time to play," Harry ordered grimly. "Bring me Pong Krell. He will face the judgement of those he sought to slaughter for his own amusement along with that of their rightful commander."

"Calm you must be, anger destroy you it can," Yoda reminded him pointedly.

"I am in control of my fury Yoda," Harry informed him, his voice like iron as the ship finally set down. "I simply no longer care about playing nice. Betrayal is not something I take lightly."

No one could say anything about that as they all unbuckled and headed down the ship's boarding ramp. To prevent too many issues Palpatine wore his black cloak with the hood up, as had become his custom after overusing dark side force lightning to deal with the Jedi council the first time. They were greeted by a surprised Pong Krell and a frankly shocked Captain Rex.

"General Skywalker!" Captain Rex practically squawked in shock.

"Why are you not on your way as the Council ordered?!" Pong Krell demanded in open irritation. The traitor was a Besalisk like Dex. He, like Dex, he had four arms, his fin like beard was black while his reptilian hide was in shades of blue, including the crest upon his head. Like a bullfrog their species had an inflatable wattle rather than a human chin for all that the species was officially humanoid.

At the belligerent demand Yoda made himself known.

"Right to speak you have not. Answer to you the Council does not," Yoda scolded as he came forwards through the group of humans.

"Grandmaster Yoda!" Pong Krell exclaimed in open shock.

"No, I rather think that they answer to the Senate at the moment," Palpatine added, bringing down his hood so that he was easily recognizable to all.

"Chancellor, sir! What are you doing here? This is an active front. Its not safe, sir!" Captain Rex protested immediately.

"I will let you and your men in on a secret. I haven't left Coruscant, or rather my other self hasn't. We aren't clones but we are also still the same person with... a few differences in experience. Captain you and your men are ordered not to interfere with what is about to happen. There are things that you need to be briefed on. Once we are done your entire command and any trooper we can lay hands on needs a medical exam to see if we can correct an error the Kaminoans were ordered to add to each of you as a fail safe. Something that needs to change with the trooper's demonstrated loyalty to the Republic. The Sith Master is aware of the fail safe and will use it against us to take control of the Republic," Palpatine explained carefully.

"Tell him the rest," Harry growled, deciding they needed at least one completely informed group of troopers to pull this off.

"Why? He isn't cleared for it," Palpatine asked calmly, his eyes shooting daggers at the petite wizard.
"Have you forgotten your promise? Your... what did Anakin call it? Oh, yes, your contract with me? We are trying to fix this not make it worse," Harry growled, his eyes sparking in tightly controlled anger. "We still haven't identified what the special task is and until we do..."

"Yes, yes, I remember," Palpatine sighed in feigned defeat. "Why don't I just show them?"

A moment later a burning red lightsaber was in his hands as he advanced on Pong Krell with an evil smirk consuming Palpatine's features.

Tom and Severus cursed audibly, hastily moving around the two force users, casting fast wards to protect everyone not involved in the duel and to keep Pong Krell from fleeing. A hasty Accio from Harry got Captain Rex free of the impromptu dueling arena. Captain Rex's instinctive yelp over the accidentally opened coms drew the attention of everyone nearby who wasn't already watching.

"What is this?!!" Pong Krell demanded in open confusion as he hastily backed away from the newly revealed Sith, lighting his four lightsabers in instinctive defense of his life.

"You wanted to join the Sith didn't you? Prove yourself to the Sith Master rather than going begging to his apprentice... Count Dooku," Anakin ordered flatly. His arms were crossed over his chest as he clearly projected himself as Vader more than Skywalker in that moment.

"What?!!" Pong Krell exclaimed before hastily dodging Palpatine's first lazy strike.

"Come now Knight Pong Krell, you can do better than that," Palpatine taunted as he played with the Besalisk.

"I would have had a hell of a time fighting him," Luke murmured with a wince as he watched.

Palpatine danced around the traitor, kissing him with his blood red blade and causing multiple cuts mixed with deeper burns. By this point they had an uneasy audience of troopers watching alongside the time travelers. Only Anakin's unconcerned presence stopped them from trying to intervene.

"Palpatine, I don't want to have to wait for Severus to figure out the ingredients and take the month necessary to brew veritaserum. Either get him talking or end your play time," Harry ordered after a solid twenty minutes of letting them duel.

"He's interesting. I'm actually working up something of a sweat," Palpatine explained in amusement as he backed off a bit.

"We might spar some time now that I'm properly healed," Anakin suggested in dark amusement. Captain Rex whipped around to look at his commander with a shocked stare that was obvious even with the concealing helmet.

"Something to think about," Palpatine conceded. "Severus? Tom? I'm done with him if you would like a turn."

"Don't want to use force lightning and mess up that pretty face?" Severus sneered before entering the now warded area with Tom entering from the opposite side.

"I think we need more sparring time together when we are done here, Severus," Palpatine shot back. He may have backed off from the fight but he wasn't stupid enough to deactivate his saber until Pong Krell was no longer an active threat.

"Play nice," Harry scolded with a resigned sigh. He knew he would be ignored but he wanted the troopers to understand both of the other wizards were his and not to be messed with.
"General Skywalker?" a trooper asked hesitantly.

"Stand down Trooper. Pong Krell is a traitor and responsible for actively wasting trooper lives. Palpatine wanted some exercise after proving his own skill level to Grandmaster Jedi Yoda. The 501st will be briefed in full on the current situation after Umbara is secure," Anakin ordered sharply.

The troopers snapped to immediate attention and chorused "Sir! Yes, sir!"

"What the Kriff?!" Pong Krell spluttered. Tom and Severus took the chance to banish away the four Jedi lightsabers and magically bind the Besalisk.

"Do you happen to know what I did until Potter... leashed me? I was a Dark Lord as bad, possibly worse than a Sith Master," Tom explained calmly as he and Severus circled the bound traitor. "Potter was prophesied to be my downfall. He succeeded and now I am bound to serve him. The details aren't really important except that he is very upset with your betrayal of those under your command even if only temporarily. He also wants the entire 501st legion to know what you were going to do to them."

"I was one of his students and his left hand. I walked freely across battle lines as all thought I was a spy for their own side. Potter leashed me as well but it was long before Tom was leashed. We are both loyal to Potter now," Severus taunted. "Oh and the reason you don't recognize what we are doing? Why the force isn't telling you something you can understand about us? We're Wizards. We use magic, true magic. We can make you scream."

"Severus," Harry warned. He wanted the Jedi to confess but the scare routine was bothering the troopers.

"He would hardly pass as a potential Sith much less a proper Apprentice," Palpatine sneered, contemptuously deactivating and putting away his lightsaber.

"No! Please! I can use the Dark Side! I can be of use!" Pong Krell protested, seeing his chance at switching sides slipping away.

"You're missing a few pieces of information," Harry told him flatly. "We don't care about which side of the force you're using as long as you aren't off the rails and slaughtering people. We're here to save the lives of the troopers under your command. Palpatine? Yoda? Your verdict?"

"Fallen Pong Krell is, threat I name him. No longer Jedi is he," Yoda declared with a mix of iron determination and sadness.

"Unworthy of being a Sith. A plaything or a test of spine for a true apprentice but otherwise we should just kill him now. He's not even worthy enough to be killed by a Master's blade, possibly not even that of an Apprentice. He's a waste of space," Palpatine sneered, openly turning his back on the former Jedi Knight.

The crushed look was exactly what the two wizards were waiting for.

"So how exactly were you planning on sabotaging them?" Tom asked with feigned interest.

"They're just clones, not even real people," Pong Krell snorted in listless disgust, barely distracted from his sudden despair. "They have to follow orders so you just order them straight into enemy fire. Its not hard."

"You can't feel their individuality in the force? They may have the same DNA but they are completely individual people, living sentient beings," Anakin pointed out scathingly. "I can feel it in
I bet we've got the area mostly secure if they were getting ready to arrest the idiot. I want to let Severus loose in the market place for any potions stuff," Harry suggested happily. He was relieved that the bastard was dead and gone.

"We will need to have somewhere we can set up a place in the city," Anakin Skywalker-Vader commented. His experience as a war time general was once more clearly showing through and that boded well for not only his final recovery but the way they had been treating his trauma.

"I only need to get to what is left of the market and some local currency," Severus retorted calmly.

"This could help the entire 501st depending on what you find along with the rest of us. I'm sending a trooper with you and the unit's credit chip. Just make sure to pick up those medical texts while you're at it," Anakin refuted. "Go ahead and find what you need just be back here by supper time. The trooper will tell you when you have to get back."

Severus simply inclined his head in gratitude and went off with his hastily assigned companion.

Chapter End Notes

Ideas Welcome!
Recruiting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had taken hours to brief the 501st on the full situation and make them believe it, including the horrifying additions to the bio-chips. Kix had been furious and had started running through every trooper, starting with the wounded, to see about removing the chip. Anakin was still trusted as their General. On the other hand the only thing keeping the troopers from drawing their weapons on Palpatine was Yoda's presence and the inference made during the duel that he answered to Harry.

Six hours after Severus' market trip found the man brewing near the kitchen set up but very firmly out of the way both for the potion he was brewing as well as the food being made. The other time travelers had set up nearby, curious as to what he was brewing but as yet unwilling to ask. The troopers were just as curious but were taking their cue from the time travelers and staying back a respectful distance.

"What are you cooking?" Luke finally asked with interest, drawing the open attention of his sister, and the more discrete attention of everyone else.

"Cooking?! Cooking?! I'm not cooking. I am brewing a potion," Severus sneered from his position hovering over the cauldron that Harry had found him. It had been a surprise to find out that cauldrons were used on this planet as part of the general cookware.

"Then what are you brewing Mr. Snape?" Leia asked as Luke scrambled in his attempt to apologize.

"A paternity potion. Well its more of a potion to identify familial relationships but its generally used only as a paternity test. I'm almost done. I'll show you how it works once its cooled a bit if you like?" Severus offered less gruffly.

"Why are you brewing it?" Harry asked curiously. He had the sneaking suspicion it had something to do with him but wasn't going to suggest it in case he was wrong.

"All purebloods in the Wizarding World are related in some fashion and I want to know how distantly related the three of us are. It will give me some clue what to use or not use in the likelihood that I need to repair any major injuries in the three of us. I'll want to check the three Skywalkers as well at some point. Not to mention the full medical work up I'll need to do. I'd also like to get certified under their version of muggle medicine if only so that I can patch everyone back together again in an emergency or because of suspected betrayal. Don't think I haven't noticed that you aren't eating full portions," the former spy warned.

Harry shrugged uncomfortably in response before looking everywhere except at his companions as they waited for the potion to cool.


The two Sith looked at each other and shrugged before using the medical sampler to take blood samples and handing them over. Severus nodded his thanks and dropped both samples into a small transfigured cup that now had part of the brewed potion. A puff of dark blue smoke shot out of the cauldron only to disperse leaving behind floating words. The information first displayed the full names of the two in bright blue and then their family relationship in bright green. Everyone was
shocked to see Palpatine listed as Anakin's blood relation, his father to be more exact.

"What in all the desert hells?!!" Anakin demanded.

"I assure you I have absolutely no idea either," Palpatine said shakily. "To my knowledge I was never even near your mother."

"Death probably messed with your DNA to make this all easier. He's swapped species on me at least once to try and help," Harry sighed in resignation.

"I wouldn't be so certain," Severus said with pursed lips. "I am familiar with the supposed immaculate conception of Anakin via the force. Magic can and has in the past selected the eggs, blood, or semen of one or more people unaware or previously designated to help in conceiving a child, usually via a fertility ritual. Given this fact the ministry declared that all children conceived this way require a full family history work up and notification of the other parent(s). The other parent(s) have all of the same rights as the known parent(s) involved. This is especially true as several rituals only required one parent rather than two to actually receive or carry the child. I would need to brew the family tree potion to be certain but this could be such a case."

"What ingredients do you need? We might as well sort this out now as later," Tom pointed out quickly.

"I would have to attend the market place again. I've had to check the various potential ingredients very carefully as we don't have access to traditional ones," Severus explained. "Only a potions master is taught these spells and my modified versions destroy the first ingredient sample to tell me the basic potential properties of the ingredient. I have to work out the more advanced and finicky aspects myself in a traditional fashion... experimentation."

"If you get yourself badly hurt or dead I will not be happy," Harry informed him with a worried growl. He didn't like it but he also knew Severus was professional enough to be cautious. The man also wasn't anywhere near stupid, more like the opposite, an utter genius with potions.

The troopers had hung on every word of the suddenly oblivious group.

"We still have to report in or are we waiting for someone to call the troopers with an arrest warrant?" Leia asked wryly.

"The codes I know would probably work but I honestly want to see what they are going to do about us just showing up like this," Anakin said thoughtfully. He suddenly winced as he remembered that right about now in the timeline he had a padawan and to top it off Obi-Wan was nearby.

"General Skywalker! General Kenobi and Commander Tano are here," one of the nearby troopers reported even as he started handing out back up com units to the time traveling group.

Anakin mentally groaned before sighing and straightening in his seat. Before he could answer Harry did for him.

"Show them here trooper," Harry ordered. "General Skywalker needs to deal with this. I will however promise to keep them from killing each other even if I have to knock them silly. Be aware the 501st may be ordered to arrest us on suspicion of being imposters. Unless we find a very important reason not to comply we will come quietly. This situation was one of the reasons why I insisted all of your men were briefed on our... unique situation."

"I'll inform Captain Rex sir," the trooper agreed quickly.
The trooper also planned to spread the word that they might have to basically kidnap Kenobi and Tano. Now that they knew what their Jedi General had suffered they had absolutely no intention of leaving him to fend for himself. Ideally, the 501st would later snag their other General Skywalker and his lady. The quiet mutual agreement and orders were that the 501st didn't belong to the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) any more, they belonged to the Skywalker family. Right then the Skywalker family included the entire time travel group, Kenobi, Tano, and Senator Amidala. Palpatine (both of them) was still agreed to be a potential threat and was being heavily watched whenever possible by members of the 501st.

"Captain Rex what exactly is going on?" Obi-Wan asked in curiosity as he was lead up to the strange group that had a suddenly much darker version of his former apprentice. The look in Anakin's eye had a shiver diving down his back even as the force soothed it away, assuring him that while an argument was brewing he wasn't in actual danger... yet.

Ashoka didn't know what to make of the scene in front of her. She recognized Skyguy just fine but the force was telling her something strange was going on. She was determined to get to the bottom of whatever Skyguy had gotten into this time and help him out of it if she could.

"Master, Snips," Anakin greeted them with tight tiredness. Yoda and Palpatine carefully slipped away at the back of the group. A quick round of first name only introductions followed. Luke and Leia watched the new comers with open interest and curiosity but they kept mostly quiet, not wanting to give anything away in case they were keeping secrets this time.

"Anakin?" Obi-Wan asked carefully. He knew something was up, he just wasn't quite sure what.

"Add more than twenty years Master and submersion in the Dark Side before being dragged back into the light by the munchkin imp with green eyes next to me. I am Anakin but I'm also not," Anakin informed the other man, deciding on truth over lies.

"You were a stubborn bastard to start healing and you aren't done yet," Harry shot back with a snort. "Just be glad we figured out how to block the emotions but not the memories. You're still your stubborn reckless self."

"I just need a chance to work through what you showed me in my own memories and deal with the emotional backlash," Anakin drawled with a dark humorless smirk.

"How?!" Obi-Wan spluttered.

"Time travel," Ashoka blustered even as the force sent it ringing through her skull.

"Of a sort Snips," Anakin agreed grimly. "In my timeline I believed that the Jedi Order and Obi-Wan in particular betrayed me. It wasn't until recently when Harry and his... companions kicked my butt and walked me through everything that I understood. I was manipulated into turning Sith and slaughtering the entire temple down to the last youngling. I'm not proud of it or of letting myself get caught in the web of lies spun by the Sith Master. I have a second chance even if it has some strings attached but then those strings will keep me from loosing it and taking everyone with me."

"No... no!" Obi-Wan protested fiercely. This was completely impossible! Anakin couldn't fall.... he couldn't loose his brother.

"I failed Obi-Wan. I failed to recognize your attempts to help, to recognize that I had placed my trust in the wrong person, to realize that you would have stood by me. I failed and I fell. I was turned into a weapon. Yet even trapped I remembered most of your teaching and the love of my, by then dead, wife. You helped bring me back even if I can never again follow the Jedi code. I am no longer a Sith
"Weapon," Anakin told him bluntly.

"Wife?!" both visiting Jedi choked out in shock.

"I believed Obi-Wan would go to the council, I would be expelled and not only would my men die
we would put the republic further at risk. You have no idea how hard it always was keeping that
from the two of you. It wasn't as hard but certainly less helpful to keep it from everyone else. Yoda...
probably should have been told but he damaged my trust when my mother died," Anakin explained.

"Padme, you married Padme," Obi-Wan realized softly. "When exactly did this take place?"

"After Geonosis. If I get the chance I'll knock some sense into younger me but it might not work," Anakin warned. "I also still haven't dealt with all of my feelings, they're mostly blocked right now

"We can do it together and I'll help you when you are ready to deal with your emotions," Obi-Wan smirked. Anakin was so relieved that Harry was right about Obi-Wan he didn't care in the least that
his children had seen the meeting. He knew things weren't fixed but the fact the even knowing he
had been a Sith didn't loose him Obi-Wan this time had healed something inside.

Nearby there was a sudden commotion in the medical tent and shouts to hold someone down. The
group looked in the direction but seeing as they would only get in the way waited for someone to
come report what was going on.

"Sir, when medic Kix was looking at Tup... his chip went off. He tried to obey 66. We've got him
pinned and out cold. They're performing emergency surgery now. As a precaution your group has
been assigned almost everyone who's been cleaned of the chip until we're done removing them. The
rest will be working with medical in case this happens again," the reporting trooper informed them.

At his words a scant handful formed up around the group of non-clones.

"What exactly is going on?" Obi-Wan asked very carefully.

"Every clone has a slave chip in their skull. A particular order wipes out every single Jedi in
existance. It ignores non-order members who have Jedi training as we discovered last time but covers
everyone else, including the younglings," Anakin answered. He couldn't bare to look at his former
master. He was very aware that the block on his emotions connected to the man was being broken by
the force.

"What's wrong?" Severus asked suspiciously before Obi-Wan could stop spluttering.

"The emotion blocks connected to Kenobi are being broken by the force. I... you need to knock me
out, trap me in place. The reaction is goin to be bad. Yoda and Palpatine are going to need to help
contain me. Snips, take Luke and Leia to the other side of camp or into the city. I won't risk them or
you getting hurt by this," Anakin told them, desperately trying to keep control until they were a safe
distance away.

"Do it!" Harry barked out as he saw them standing there and staring in astonishment. His snapped
out order got everyone moving.

Tom and Severus immediately started casting binds at an unresisting Anakin before further warding
him into place. Tano grabbed the twins and bolted for the other side of the encampment. Obi-Wan
went to grab Yoda while Harry went for Palpatine. Two Master Wizards and two Master Force users
circled Anakin as the blocks finally broke, creating a tornado of power barely held back by their
quick precautions. Harry kept Obi-Wan back out of the way as they helplessly watched the other
four work.
The force scream Anakin released could be felt deep in their bones. The release allowed him to let go of his feelings into the force in a way that Harry had only ever dreamed of for himself. Harry's own magic sang with a counterpoint to Anakin's call as it rose within him. *This is necessary, trust me a voice* inside Harry that he recognized as the one god told him. Choosing to listen Harry recognized that this was a choice and god wouldn't be upset with him either way. Even without being taught the christian faith his magical title gave Harry a double confirmation that he was right as to the identity of the voice.

In an act of faith Harry surrendered himself to trusting the voice completely. His magic surged, washing from him in a tidal wave that slammed into Anakin's tornado of power, completely ignoring the wards, and immediately calming both. Less than a split second after Harry let go the joint power of Harry and Anakin was calmly eddying back and forth with a gentle current of a slowly draining tidal pool.

"Never seen this have I," Yoda said in completely floored awe. Palpatine very firmly decided that if he couldn't manipulate Harry into helping him he would have to kill him. The young man was simply too dangerous to let out of his sight and control.

"That's not possible," Severus choked out. "The Force is an aspect of the *Holy Spirit*?! The blasted death title binds us to the *Angel of Death*?! Impossible!"

"No, simply improbable," Harry said calmly as he moved forwards in something of a trance. He instinctively dispelled all of the magic, allowing the extra force energy to fall away as well and gently pulled Anakin to his feet. "Anakin?"

"Hmm?" Anakin asked in sleepy contentment as he leaned against Harry. Harry in turn laughed softly as they waited for the peaceful high to wear off. 20 minute later it was clear that some deep seated wound had at least begun healing in both of them.

"As to what you said just now Severus that's not quite accurate. It would be more accurate to say that the idea of the force came from how the Holy Spirit might act without being controlled and properly connected to god. Though you're right about the bond to the Angel of Death. That's Death's real title after all, its just usually shortened to Death," Harry explained as they started acting normally again. "God favors humans as a species and no one has figured out why he likes our species so much, not even his angels."

"This..." Obi-Wan stuttered, speechless.

"You fixed something," Harry smirked, laughter dancing brightly in his emerald eyes. "It had the force breaking that particular emotion block all at once. We just handled the power backlash. Congrats, its a son or a brother, whichever way you guys look at each other."

"Brother," Anakin corrected with a smirk of his own.

"After that little force blow up we have to talk to the council. Yoda won't accept a lie and he'll probably demand an in person meeting," Obi-Wan pointed out with a sigh. Mentally he just shoved the entire situation under a mix of Anakin + Trouble and cross referenced it with his Choosen One status.

"You know it occurs to me that Anakin alone might not be the one to fulfill that prophecy. Rather than one person it might be one **bloodline** considering what I know about the very first timeline," Harry mused aloud.

"Something to consider," Obi-Wan agreed with astonishment.
"Agree with you I do," Yoda added in open relief. "Speak with myself I must."

"Sir, Master Yoda just called. Er... the other one," a trooper hurried up to inform them. The group followed him to the holo table to take the call while someone went to get Tano and the twins. By the time the call went through everyone was waiting in front of the holo table/com.

"Remember this I do not," Yoda said as he stared at his younger self over the holocom. He had called to inquire about the massive force explosion that hadn't quite exploded where they were on Umbara. The rest of the council plus the younger Anakin stared at the com in open shock.

Harry looked between the two Yodas, one within arms reach and one a holographic phone call. Then he looked at the two Anakins in the same position. A wicked grin spread across his face making his entire group wary.

"New timeline!" Harry announced with wicked glee. He had completely forgotten about not needing to keep anything the same if they didn't want to. "Tom? Severus? How would you like to play with a naughty Sith?"

"Didn't you say we should stay out of it? Out of the Senate? At least until my other self has been... informed?" Palpatine put in immediately. He still wasn't sure that the other him wouldn't cause both of them to die in some fashion, especially with them likely going public one way or another very quickly after all of this.

"Maybe but we just proved this is a split timeline simply because we're here. So I'm going to let them play if they want to," Harry informed him sternly, mischeif dancing in his gaze.

"Please tell me you're acting for the other Yoda and you didn't forget we could mess with stuff?" Luke whispered furiously. Harry's blush informed them all that he had in fact forgotten.

The little holographic Yoda laughed before asking. "Time?"

"Believe this I do not. Time alone affects memory. Wrong universe and wrong time. More there is, safe to speak it is not," the older Yoda informed the younger one.

"Come to the temple you must," younger Yoda sighed, suddenly serious.

"Actually you might want to pick somewhere outside of the temple and secure it... Sith are involved," Harry offered sheepishly.

"Interesting tale to tell hmm? Arrangements will be made," younger Yoda agreed. "Meet you I will."

"Protect Skywalker's wife we must. Protect the Skywalker bloodline we need. Censure him do not. Guided by the force he was. Harms all, hiding from the Council does," older Yoda ordered sternly. He firmly ignored how pale the younger Anakin went when he mentioned the man's wife. "Chosen Bloodline, future the children are. Alone stand he cannot. Jedi Order his family must be, blood family must we also accept. Change we must or fall. Change we do not and force Skywalker to fall we will."

With a sharp nod of displeased understanding younger Yoda ended the call.

"Someone you know got dumped backwards in time?" Harry inquired innocently. Yoda whacked him on the shins with his walking stick for his impudence, easily recognizing someone else who had time traveled at least once before all of this. Harry yelped in surprised pain and rubbed at his stinging legs.
"Black in your third year?" Severus growled distastefully. Harry nodded absently, paying more attention to his legs than the other man. With that they took a brake for supper, discussing time travel antics and Harry's school life. Kix eventually kidnapped Harry, much to Severus' open delight, for a medical exam. Harry got revenge by mentioning Severus' own habit of dangerous work complete with torture injuries, forcing the other man into his own medical exam. Kix had also run a DNA comparison between Anakin and Palpatine after hearing about the weird potion experiment from before General Kenobi and Commander Tano arrived. Everyone was relieved to know they weren't actually related.

All around things settled into a peaceful night.

Chapter End Notes

Ideas are welcome!
The next morning the newly christened 425th arrived with a puzzled Jedi Commander who told them that the Force had ordered his new troops and himself to relieve them. The new Knight took Kenobi aside and informed him that the vision had been of Official orders displayed on a reading pad. It was signed by the Force, co-signed by two Yodas and a single signature from Sith Master Palpatine.

"I know what it means Knight Garm. Have no fear, the Council is at least partly aware of the situation and working on it," Kenobi told him in open amusement. "Its just part of Skywalker's Chosen One status activating in an unexpected way. We are needed by the council and apparently the force wants us taking the 501st with us, that's all. You also have my thanks for bringing us a ship that can transport more than a handful of us. I really wasn't looking forwards to dealing with Anakin's latest force sanctioned adventure without more back up than eight other people. While possible to pull this off with only ten people and six or seven clones having the entire 501st with us will help immensely."

Knight Garm gulped, politely said goodbye, and hastily rejoined his troops. Medic Kix was seen shortly afterwards hurrying away from the 425th's, now furious, medical team. Obi-Wan shook his head in bemusement but didn't try to stop the quiet spread of the bio-chip warning. They had worked out how to quietly inform everyone and how to deal with early triggered chips, luckily without loosing anyone. It had been agreed that the reason they would give about the chips was the Sith Lord managing to try for long term sabotage in case the clones were ever actually activated to use against him. Only the 501st would be aware that Palpatine was the Sith Master as well as the only one who could activate the devastating order 66. The 501st troopers were also only aware of the man's Sith status because they had to deal with the future version of the current Chancellor.

Obi-Wan easily turned away and rejoined everyone in packing up for their trip to Coruscant. He also sent a brief coded message to the council about the vision so that the council could officially issue the backdated orders.

Coruscant was, out of necessity, a nightmare for space traffic. Not only was it the home of the galactic government but as a literal planet spanning city it had very few ways to produce food and nowhere near enough to feed the population. As such massive amounts of food were imported daily alongside the political traffic and the military traffic. At the very least it stopped anyone from commenting on exactly why the 501st had suddenly shown up with the mixed group of force users and wizards. Suspicion dropped even further when the mixed group of ten along with a chipless clone escort immediately headed for the temple. It was obviously Jedi business, best to stay clear of that unless one had too.

"So what exactly are we doing?" Luke asked carefully.

"Wait for meeting we do," Yoda said patiently. They had decided to wait for the council in the visitor's lounge at the temple and move to the meeting location as one large group. Yoda's intimate knowledge about his younger self had gotten them not only inside the temple but had told them that moving to the final location together would work.

"I will have to keep my identity a secret for now. I may yet have to step into the shoes of my younger self," Palpatine said quietly.
"What are you plotting?" Harry asked suspiciously, complete with glare from both him and Tom.

"Nothing! I am a completely changed man. Really," Palpatine said innocently. This earned suspicious glares from the rest of the time traveling group as a whole.

"Should I be preparing for him to try something?" Harry asked Tom and Severus without looking away from Palpatine.

"Yes," both wizards said grimly.

"The question is do we want him to do it any way?" Leia put in thoughtfully.

Everyone turned to stare at her in incredulity.

"Hear me out. He knows that technically he has to answer to Harry but he also knows that his last plan failed even if it took awhile. Harry hasn't actually had to pull anyone up short or punish them yet. None of us know why Death put us in this universe and time period or why each of us was picked. It could be a punishment or it could be to fix something or it could be a reward," Leia pointed out. "He knows as much as we do. Palpatine's plan, whatever it is, could turn out in our favor. It could also just as easily be very bad for us. We don't actually know. All of this could be a warm up for what we have to do after dealing with this particular mess. We might be dealing with something much worse, possibly in a different reality or time, after we've sorted out the Jedi, Sith, and Senate."

"If he behaves I'll let him take down an evil empire or something... " Harry reminded them all.

"If he doesn't?" Obi-Wan asked curiously.

"I'll think of something. I'm not really one for torture," Harry admitted with a grimace.

"You do have an exceedingly loyal former Dark Lord however," Tom drawled, an evil smirk aimed at the Sith.

"I'm not sure pain would be all that effective," Harry told him uncomfortably.

"It isn't yet an issue," Leia reminded them all firmly. "He is getting his second chance but how he deals with it is up to him. We can only watch him for the moment."

"Quite right Princess, quite right," Palpatine agreed pleasantly.

"I don't agree but we do need him intact... for now," Severus tossed in just as the Jedi Council entered the room.

"A place found within the temple. Secure it is, old, forgotten. Ancient ceremonial hall," young Yoda informed them after a cursory look at who was in the assembled group of travelers.

"We can reach it in one of the older elevator shafts," Mace Windu explained calmly, eyeing the group as a whole. He was very obviously freaked out but doing his best to ignore it.

"Don't worry Mace, they were just as freaked when this started as you are. They just hid it better and I made sure to distract them," Harry snorted at the Master of Vaapad.

The Council settled a bit at that, relieved that they weren't the only ones bothered by the situation. Both groups quickly passed through temporarily emptied halls to enter a much older beat up elevator than they had seen since arriving in the temple on Yavin IV. The trip down as the elevator car was
passed from movement system to movement system, going slower in speed after each transfer made the trip last more than two hours. Finally they were let out deep under the current temple into a carved stone passageway. Immediately the force users and handful of clones noticed how comfortable the three wizards were surrounded by the stone corridor. What none of the three bothered to tell the others was it reminded them of a stretch of Hogwarts near the charms corridor and another near the dungeons.

The group finally arrived in a large stone hall with simple stone slabs as benches scattered around the edges of the mostly austere stone room. The very same stone room which had seen countless Jedi become Knights. The dust was cleaned up fairly well but Severus sneered and simply stared casting various scouring and cleaning charms before he let anyone sit down in the room. A pointed look at Harry had the smaller man shrugging and joining in the display of practical magic even if he did have some trouble with it at first, not really knowing more than one or two.

"Tsk, tsk. We clearly need you brushing up on more than just the combat spells Dumbledore obviously had you focusing on. If I didn't know better I'd say you failed the household charms mini-course completely," Tom lamented.

"Dumbledore removed that before I was a student. I had to be taught by a fellow Slytherin," Severus informed the man shortly.

"How badly did that man destroy wizarding education once he was Headmaster?!" Tom exclaimed in dismay.

"We can always ask Death once we've got him pinned in place for more than a split second," Harry offered uncomfortably. Tom just started cursing the man under his breath and scowling at nothing. This continued until everyone was seated in something of a circle with the council on one side. The time travelers were across from them with young Anakin, a confused Padme, Ashoka Tano, and Obi-Wan off to one side. The clone troopers had spread out to act as general security for the meeting.

Harry took the chance of everyone settling to sneak up and poke Palpatine in the side before ordering the two official Sith Lords about. "You can stop hiding your force presence now."

They had been cloaking most of their presence almost constantly since leaving the temple on Yavin IV.

Reluctantly older Anakin and Palpatine stopped shielding their presence from the Jedi around them. The near instant lighting of lightsaber blades wasn't really all that surprising, nor was the attack. The moment the combative Jedi Council members moved to attack the supposed Sith the wizards started casting *Petrificus Totalis*. The looks on all of their faces were priceless only to be out done by them being set up like dolls in a row, completely disarmed and at their prankng mercy. The only ones who hadn't moved were the ones who knew what was going on. Even young Anakin had stared at his older self and Palpatine in horror as he tried too shield his wife.

"Nuh uh," Harry scolded playfully. "You get to listen not make snap judgements. I think a forfeit is in order Yodas. What say you?"

"Doing their duty they were," younger Yoda pointed out warily, his own saber drawn but angled defensively rather than aggressively.

"Listen they must, bonus this is," older Yoda laughed with deep amusement. "Lesson to learn."

Younger Yoda carefully put away his lightsaber, gesturing for younger Anakin to do the same. Younger Anakin did but not without obvious reluctance or sending an "are you crazy?" look at the
green gnome. So they told their tale to their mostly captive audience, leaving nothing out. Harry's history was mostly explained as "complicated" and left at that even though they recounted what had happened when they had all appeared in the temple on Yavin IV. Once they were done the spells were canceled and everyone watched their audience with interest, waiting to see their reactions.

"Took us a while to get it too sir," Captain Rex added helpfully after the openly shocked Jedi just stared at them for a good twenty minutes.

"That's an understatement," Obi-Wan muttered. The news had him meditating rather than sleeping the night afterwards. That was even with his extensive experience with the interesting things that tended to happen to and around Anakin.

"Skyguy has always worked outside of the box and sideways to reality," Ashoka Tano pointed out cheerfully.

"You are having far to much fun pointing that out," Obi-Wan said mildly, failing to even remotely deny the analysis of his grandpadawan.

"What training have your children had?" Mace Windu finally asked older Anakin only for Harry to cheerfully answer.

"Luke has a couple of months of training from Yoda but otherwise he's mostly self taught. He was about ready to take his Knighthood test anyway. Leia has almost no training except what we've given her since showing up in this timeline/dimension/universe. Tom, Severus, and I most focused on keeping Palpatine in line and putting Anakin back together. My magic healed his physical injuries and both Tom and Severus worked on putting his mind back together. Its not perfect but he's functional so far and healing. The blocks on his specific emotions connected to various memories are doing their job and help keep his memories intact without the influx of overwhelming emotions to screw with him. We showed him the lies in his own memories and went from there," Harry told them honestly. "I'm holding their leash and our Yoda's for a bunch of different reasons. None of them fall under your purview since they are under mine."

"We were wondering if you would like to help us... contain my younger self?" Palpatine offered with a truly evil smile. He relished in being able to stand before the Jedi Council openly without them being able to touch him. The stinging hex that hit his backside ripped a yelp and a jump of surprised shock from him.

"No evil thoughts about messing with them," Harry scolded, laughter dancing in his eyes. Palpatine rubbed at his still stinging bottom and pointedly ignored the petite wizard. The barely controlled snickers from everyone just made the man feel more humiliated.

"How do you plan to deal with the Chancellor?" Windu asked warily. Everyone's lightsabers had been returned when they were released from the spells making it possible for the man's hand to drift towards the device on his belt.

"A little talk at first and if he proves unreasonable... well I can step into his shoes as it were," the Palpatine in the room offered up with another evil smile of satisfaction. Harry didn't bother hitting him with another stinging hex because that was one of the things he had been thinking of doing any way.

"Begin plotting we must," younger Yoda ordered. They spent the rest of the day trying to decide how to approach the Chancellor and contingencies in case he proved unreasonable.
Okay now I really want suggestions on dealing with Palpy, both of them!
I've worked out (sort of) how to stop 66 but after that? .... **Ideas please!**
The discussion about the current Chancellor ran for a long time until Padme interrupted.

"We have established that the Chancellor is not only a danger to one and all but that he is prepared to wipe out every Jedi possible using contingency plans and other methods. Anakin doesn't want me near any of this and Leia doesn't have the force training to be effective against a Sith Master. The temple was completely destroyed, including the children. So why don't we solve a few problems at once? Evacuate the Temple, send them out to every planet we can think of and more. Leia and I can go with them and set up a rebellion if need be. We can't safely warn the Jedi on the front lines but we can preserve the children and some of the library. Having us out of his immediate reach will give you a safety net," Senator Padme Amidala Skywalker argued.

"It will also reduce the risk of either of ourselves falling completely to the thrall of the Dark again," older Anakin added. "I know that only knocking Luke out will keep him out of this for even a short time but it certainly wouldn't stop him or my younger self. Leia takes more after Padme and can be reasoned with on her safety... after a fashion. For Luke and I... its better to just assume we will be in the thick of it even if we try not to."

"You still followed my orders to slaughter those at the temple," Palpatine put in mildly.

"It was better than something else you could have come up with," older Anakin retorted shortly. "You already had it in motion regardless of what I might have done and when I was still a slave on Tatooine I'd seen far worse things. They received quick clean deaths whenever possible and you didn't get an army of young force users to torture into mindless obedience."

"Yes that was rather short sighted of me," Palpatine admitted with open displeasure. "Of course it was part of completing your turn to the Dark side. It was difficult figuring out how to keep your connections to Kenobi and your wife from snatching you from my grasp. If you had had more deep connections I would have had a much harder time turning you. The timing to use you against the temple simply worked out in the other timeline, especially with the useless advice you were given about watching your wife die nightly. I believe that the force is currently too... light for my tastes, even with such things as murder, war, slavery, and corruption darkening it. Then again the training our group has worked out to teach a balance seems to be working rather well. Shifting to this new teaching it should regain balance and lessen the risk of the force imposing a more ruthless counter balance."

"What else?" Harry demanded, suddenly very suspicious of the man's mention of Anakin's dreams. It had him on full alert.

"If one can receive from the force one can also send," Palpatine answer simply. The answer dawned on The Skywalker men along with Obi-Wan simultaneously. The Skywalkers all lunged for him simultaneously as Obi-Wan lunged for the younger Anakin, stopping him from attacking the Sith.
Luke and Vader hit Palpatine simultaneously only to be force tossed into the walls.

"ENOUGH!" Harry ordered, lacing his voice heavily with both his own magic and the power of his title as Master of Death. The three men froze, two literally unable to move by their master's command and one a bit dazed by his landing. Both the older Anakin and Palpatine had felt the command in their very bones while their contract as Harry's deputies activated at his displeasure and feelings of betrayal that echoed that of the Skywalker men.

Leia and Padme moved over to check Luke while young Anakin stopped fighting Obi-Wan's restraining hands in favor of glaring at the former Emperor.

"That wasn't something you should have done in the first place, torturing him nightly," Harry said in a softly dangerous tone.

"Perhaps we could have him relive a version of his own death regularly for a time as punishment?" Tom offered softly. "You can't release Anakin from service on medical grounds, he's still undergoing treatment. The Skywalker twins are under protection as family members because their father accepted service or rather Palpatine accepted service for both of them as the Master in the apprenticeship. The terms placed you in total authority. Which is something they didn't bother to inquire after since you didn't set a minimum time limit as one of your deputies and the situation looked to be something they couldn't fix on their own. They can request release from your service, authority, and protection but you have to choose to grant it for the magic to release them."

Harry made a face as he thought about how to resolve the situation. Palpatine would have to be punished simply because not doing so would hurt Anakin's recovery, not to mention the interestingly watching audience, but he also deserved the punishment for his actions. The fact that Harry had implied that anything which happened before entering his service would be ignored or forgotten didn't change the fact that something had to be done.

"How good are the two of you at human to inanimate or animate transfiguration?" Harry asked thoughtfully.

"What are you thinking brat?" Severus asked suspiciously.

"Furry thing without sharp teeth or claws given to the toddlers through first years to play with for a couple of days," Harry answered honestly. "If we can find some of them that are like the Weasley twins to sick on him that would be even better. Especially if we hand over honey, peanut butter, finger paint, and anything else that's sticky but technically safe for little ones to have. Maybe feed them lots of candy first?"

The horrified looks of everyone who had had to deal with hyperactive children with sticky things clued Palpatine into the fact that he might just be in trouble. After all what painful calamity could cause that much horror for the entire Jedi Council? It was clear that Luke, Leia, Tom, and the two Anakins had no idea why such a thing would bother everyone else. Though the look of disgusted revulsion on Severus' face was interesting to say the least.

"No way to speak to them? To twist them even during his punishment?" Yaddle asked carefully. She was the same species as Yoda and an expert in not only Healing but with children as well.

"Nope! I'll even try to bind his Force signature so he can't use the force if you want?" Harry offered cheekily.

"Let us see if he can even last one day in such a state and one of the Council must be present at all times to prevent problems," Mace Windu announced decisively. "First we should deal with his
younger self in part because he is still in a position to do the most damage while Mr. Potter has effectively showed that he can control this particular Palpatine."

Harry decided not to argue and released the magic holding his two deputies in place. Everyone decided to ignore the new elephant in the room and move on.

"Leia, I can't order you to do anything. Do you want to remain here? In this universe? With these people?" Harry asked shrewdly.

"I... yes. I can't stay with you, too many bad memories. Then there is the fact that if you fail..." Leia admitted. She paused, took a deep breath and put on her most stubborn princess mask. "I already know how to fight back, I'm not contributing to the group, and I don't want to watch Alderaan die again. As... Padme said I... I am the best person to separate from our group and help the escaping Jedi and children."

"Very well. I have no hold on you except as family to one of my deputies. I accept your decision and wish you good fortune on your journey. May the Force Be With You," Harry accepted giving her a brief bow as he officially relinquished any claim he had on her.

"Luke?" Leia asked for his own choice very carefully, dreading giving up her recently found brother. By this time Luke had forced himself to his feet and was leaning against the wall he had slammed into, looking mostly fine even as Yaddle and Padme hovered protectively.

"I want to be a deputy actually," Luke answered, still a bit dazed due to the knock to the head. Harry just chuckled and nodded his acceptance and agreement. The magic sprung up immediately, this time creating a light show, and settled deep inside Luke binding him to Harry alongside his father.

"Too old am I. Younger now in body, yes but still too old," older Yoda lamented as he rubbed hard at his forehead.

"You can change that I suppose. You only need Yoda as long as you have Palpatine," Death whispered invisibly into Harry's ear. "The youth isn't going to suddenly unravel but you can merge the two of them if you choose to. It is however permanent and I recommend getting permission first so as not to startle them."

"What the fuck?" Harry hissed quietly. Even so he drew the attention of those close by who in turn drew the attention of everyone else in the room.

"Temper, temper, Master," Death's voice echoed around the room, roiling in deadly power. "You heard me just fine. Enjoying your vacation? The time to break in or collect new assistants? Reapers are not especially good at healing but I've collected enough people over time to know that humans need company, someone they can connect to. Your deputies are a start but I expect you to collect a full household at some point, possibly more. I started you off with two who were fairly honest with you before you became my master as a way to help you. By now you know you can't release them until their time is served no matter how much any of you might want that."

"A fucking vacation?! What happens if I say we're done?" Harry demanded of the air suspiciously.

"I would collect you and yours before placing you in the next troubling dimension. As you have claimed the elder of the Skywalker patriarchs and the 501st has made an uninfluenced vow to serve the Skywalker family they would have to be sorted out. Depending on decisions made those from the 501st who so chose would go with you. You have yet to finish making changes to prevent the Empire. Depending on certain factors you have yet to learn about this universe may or may not retain the changes thus far. It may possibly adapt around those changes to maintain the previous timeline as
much as is reasonable, including the elimination of the Jedi Order down to the infants. Should you choose to remain you may, of course, continue altering things," Death answered politely. "I must go, there has been a planet wide disaster three universes over and the Reapers in that particular time branch need help."

With that Death's presence abruptly disappeared from the room.

"You weren't kidding about that Death guy?" Ashoka asked in a sickly tone of voice.

"No," Harry agreed sourly. "Now how in hell do we keep the body count down even when we are gone?!

"We deal with my counter part and reform the Senate," Palpatine said simply.

"You could temporarily place the Jedi Council in control until such time as new elections are held on every planet. You should also bar all past and current Senators from the Senate for the next 10 to 50 years. It would give the new Senate a chance to sort themselves out without past influence interfering too much. Permanently banning all corporations from having a voting representative would also help keep it more population oriented rather than profit oriented, at least for a while. Bribes would have to have a heavy punishment or risk such as loss of representation for the system or complete expulsion for the Senator for a time. Gifts, on the other hand, are unavoidable by both friends and enemies. I would also recommend requiring that a Jedi team oversee each election to prevent tampering," Padme offered calmly.

"We are in the middle of a war. That is hardly practical," Palpatine protested.

"One that you started on both sides," Severus reminded everyone pointedly.

"One has to step on a few toes to get to the top," Palpatine rebutted with a gentle smile. Harry, Luke, Severus, Tom, and Leia all snorted in amused disgust at the man's understatement.

"Palpatine... the other one, has asked for me to see him soon. Will that be long enough? Or should I try to put him off a bit so that we can use it to get the arrest team in along with the younglings out?" younger Anakin asked carefully.

"We need more than a few hours, partly because nothing is together and ready to just snatch and run. I think we should avoid planning where to go ahead of time. We will also need more than just republic credits. If we need to disappear we will need to do it as completely as possible which means going in areas that others won't and dealing with the underworld. That can mean just getting everyone new IDs ranging to taking over the underworld of an entire planet or more. Ideally we would have the equipment to set up a limited military base and grow our own food or pick some place that already grows what we need naturally. Everything that goes into building a colony with the mobility of a strike force that can move at a moment's notice," Leia explained.

"As suspected but then you and your rebellion found people to bank roll you. Not that I minded as much as I made out. Your little insurrection was practically perfect as an excuse to keep building the Empire's military forces," Palpatine smirked. "Of course when it finally came time to crush you all properly you had your brother as a Jedi Knight. It is a great pity I didn't manage to claim you and your brother as I did your father."

"Behave," Tom warned, eyes narrowed in open suspicion. He didn't like the man's gloating nor did he enjoy the manipulation hidden within it. As predicted the man's actions were to much like having Dumbledore as an enemy again.
They settled back into planning practicalities for an immediate evacuation. It was eventually decided that they would use the Council's resources to buy both transports and freighters. Nothing but the absolute basics, what could be moved of the archives, and what could be moved of the medical wing would leave with the temple inhabitants.

"There is one more thing," Windu announced after they agreed on the first steps for the evacuation. "While we are making what preparations we can is it possible to preserve some of the Jedi among this household that Mr. Potter needs to build?"

"Accept you would neither Jedi nor Sith would they be but both," older Yoda warned.

"Under the laws I think I'm working under, as evidenced by what happened earlier, they would fall under my very nearly complete authority. If I ordered them to fight and die for me and the household I have to build they would have to at least try properly," Harry warned with a thoughtful frown.

"The set up is like vassals and Lords in a feudal society. We don't make the rules so don't ask me to try changing it. Part of what Harry deals with are people attempting immortality, especially at any cost to themselves and/or others. We might eventually be able to expand that to include some of the Jedi mandate but Harry might be officially too young to take on those mantles as well as the one he currently carries at the moment," Tom explained smoothly. "I have no doubt that any who wish to come with us are welcome in Harry's house but they have to understand that they would be essentially leaving the order and joining his household."

"Why are you recruiting? I don't mind them coming and then leaving again at our next stop," Harry said puzzled.

"That isn't how the magic works," Severus informed him. "Traditionally they would swear to your service and remain until released from your service or died in your service. This would also extend to any families they had with the expectation of the children swearing to you when old enough or requesting permission to leave and swear to another Lord. If you said no they would have to treat your word as law and abide by it."

Harry cursed foully under his breath as he rubbed at his suddenly aching head.

"Resources have we not. Knights, Masters, and Senior Padawans only may we take. Five years service must they give," older Yoda suggested.

"We really need to get the younglings out though," Harry mused, plotting how best to do this.

"'You can't save everyone Master. Some must be sacrificed," Death whispered into his ear. Harry basically ignored that as he continued to plot.

"If we accept anyone too young we will have a difficult time getting them everything they need and raising them. This is especially true if we suddenly land in a new universe without warning. The Senior Padawans with be teenagers with a certain amount of Occlumency training that I can expand on. The others have completed their training and can serve as the start of a household guard," Severus added. "We will still have possible trouble outfitting and feeding everyone but it won't be much different than if you had impressed a bunch of former soldiers looking for work into swearing to you."

"And if we provide not only funds but other supplies?" Windu asked intently.

"It would be to our advantage but I would want to insist on certain supplemental training both in regards to the Dark side but in other areas as well," Palpatine suggested smoothly.
"Except its not your decision to make," older Anakin pointed out caustically. "Technically as long as he has me he doesn't need to let you or Yoda near the Padawans. I know the traps now, being trained in both sides of the force."

"Lets try this a different way... Death? Who can I claim and who is off limits?" Harry asked the air.

"Very clever Master," Death chuckled, once more allowing the entire room to hear him. "As I told you before not everyone can be saved. That said if the entire Order pledges to you via their ruling council for at minimum 50 years for each order member I can simply pick up and move all of them to a new universe. The time in service can be redistributed at a later point but that will give you rough numbers. I recommend this only as a last resort for a number of reasons, one of which is the effective abandonment of this particular universe. I am, as the temple guardian and your group surmised, an Aspect. As my representative you can actually invoke the ancient agreement and claim every single force sensitive for your banner within this universe. They would have to obey. I don't recommend this due to things I haven't yet taught you about your authorities and duties."

"And if he were to only accept a portion of the current order? Younglings? Padawans? Knights? Masters?" Windu asked shrewdly.

"No more than 50, 40 of which can be under age 10. Three Master rank Jedi at minimum and at least four Knights. Those with Padawans count as one rather than two since they are acting as a team. I insist on 3-5 holocrons, the older the better, enough crystals to make a new lightsaber for each of the group, at least three trained in healing, and one Creche Master. The Healers don't count towards the final number of 50. Any and all may see service or combat, equally they may never see my Master ever again. I am not fate or time and can not dictate such. They must each serve for 50 years and will be encouraged to create families in one fashion or another. Love is not to be forbidden," Death decreed formally.

"Why do we need a mini Jedi Temple?" Harry demanded suspiciously. Death just laughed, refusing to answer further. Everyone could hear the petite wizard muttering in frustration about crazy reality aspects.

The Jedi council fell into immediate silent discussion as to the proposal as Death's presence once more faded back into nothingness.

Chapter End Notes

Still looking for more things to do to Palpy!
The stealthy Temple evacuation went insanely well. They were all glad for the smooth transfer, especially considering all of the young children, but it was going a bit too well. It made Harry twitchy. Thankfully the discussion about giving him what amounted to a mini Jedi Temple had gotten nowhere from what he could tell, much to his relief. Everyone that was of Padawan age or older had been informed that there was a risk to the temple which is why they were being evacuated. Volunteers were asked for both to stay and guard the temple as a diversion for any attackers along with for other assignments that Harry wasn't privy too.

Leia had already left with Padme in one of the first transports to start setting things up. The current queen of Naboo had been quietly informed of a discovered threat to Padme requiring her to go into hiding. Padme had requested a replacement be sent until she could either return or her term was up and a new senator took her place. They had explained that the Sith Master had apparently decided she was causing too many problems and was behind most of the previous assassination attempts. As the Jedi were preparing to handle one of the Sith's operatives she needed to disappear for part or all of the operation as a boost to its potential success. The Naboo queen had grudgingly agreed, not wanting Padme lost or at risk. As a consolation Padme admitted to the young queen that she was secretly married to one of the shrike force members and promised a proper explanation when it was safe to do so. The romantic aspect and the young woman's trust in Padme distracted the teenage queen sufficiently for them to part on good terms.

Harry's group plus Obi-Wan, young Anakin, and Ashoka spent the time either helping or training as group combatants, learning everyone else's style. This was done just in case the younger Palpatine proved... reluctant to see reason when he was finally confronted. Their Palpatine would switch between pretending to be his younger self in the practices, without bothering to lessen his dueling style and skill, or would take his expected place among the attackers.

As Harry was heading towards yet another training session, this time they had set up a general mimic of the Chancellor's office for maneuvering practice, he was ambushed. It took him barely a moment to catch and levitate the twin young terrors who had obviously escaped their minders. The red hair and freckles startled Harry even as it wistfully reminded him of Fred and George Weasley. The next words out of their giggling mouths though had him freezing in shock.

"Hi ya baby brother Harrykins!" the two eight years olds chorused. Harry swallowed hard as he stared at the two floating initiates.

"What did the two of you do now?!" came the exasperated voice of who Harry could swear was McGonagall's double. When he turned to look at the woman he nearly broke down. She looked exactly like his former teacher.

"But we found Harry!" they protested quickly.

"Just because I believe you about the reincarnation doesn't mean the rest of the temple will!" the McGonagall look-a-like scolded fiercely.

"Padfoot, Prongs, Moony..." Harry rasped out, choking back tears.

"Young man I don't know where you heard those names but I..." this mirror McGonagall began only
to stop short once she got a good look at him.

"Sirius was a Grim and showed up in third year. Moony was a Werewolf and taught third year. Prongs was a Stag and... died for me. Did you ever figure out who stuffed your pillow with catnip in sixth year? I was too busy stalking Draco Malfoy to pay attention," Harry asked hoarsely, his throat clogged with un-shed tears.

"We solemnly swear we are up to no good!" the twins laughed happily.

"Mis... mischief managed," Harry stuttered out with a sob. He dropped the twins as he started to cry. The three reincarnated magic users pulled him into the middle of a three way hug.

"The entire DA is here except for Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Cho Chang, and that one girl who gave us away to Umbridge. Oh and we don't have Smith or McLaggen either," the twin who was showing every sign of being Fred chattered.

"Bill and Charlie are here but they got picked as Padawans already. Professor McGonagall and our brothers are the only Order members we've found," George added. "We don't know about anyone else."

"I was the first to wake once I heard about the war beginning. It acted as a key to unlock my memories from my previous life. As a Creche Master I was able to find my former students and run interference when they also began to wake," McGonagall informed Harry almost fondly.

"We've been running pranking and trap classes," Fred announced proudly.

"The Professor has been helping us learn how to use our Wizard skills as Jedi," George added quickly. "Wand moves work really well as saber moves if you're carefull!"

"These two tend to fail quite spectacularly at meditation but are also quite good at the mechanics and robotics classes," McGonagall told him dryly. All three were aware that their somewhat mindless chatter was helping Harry to calm down.

"Luna loves to mess with Yoda. The entire DA can see what she is doing but Yoda sees something different. We still haven't caught him with a prank yet!" Fred told him happily.

"We will! Besides do you know how many pranks we can pull with him as a hostage?!" George insisted.

"What have you done now brat?!" demanded Severus from behind them. Harry's only response was a watery laugh.

"Severus?!" came McGonagall's shocked voice, half scolding half surprised.

"Minerva? Dare I ask?" Severus asked warily, stopping a few feet away.

"Reincarnation!" the twins chorused, drawing attention to themselves. Severus' dawning horror was quickly concealed behind a blank mask of indifference.

"Who else?" Severus asked warily.

"Mostly Mr. Potter's defense club from his fifth year, William and Charlie Weasley, as well as myself. I haven't uncovered anyone else. I'm not certain that I want to in fact," Minerva McGonagall admitted.
"Palpatine is evil and a Sith and Death is being an arsehole," Harry told the three bluntly.

"Come, we might as well join everyone else," Severus sighed in resignation.

"Would you just send a patronus to Mr. Longbottom and Miss. Lovegood? They can gather everyone else and meet us at our destination," Minerva suggested as she finally ended the group hug.

Severus scowled but did as requested, sending the ghostly doe bounding through the near deserted temple halls. A quick round of introductions was given when everyone got to the training hall including a run down of what exactly was going on on both sides.

"That's our Harrykins! Always finding the most awesome trouble!" the twins laughed once everyone was up to speed.

"At least this time we can leave if we really want to," Harry pointed out in relief.

"Death is having fun teasing you," Luna commented wryly. "I think he understands and is trying to fan the ember inside you back into lovely flames. Of course he wants to avoid creating Fiendfyre or a blaze hot enough to burn you up. Instead he wants you to drink the Phoenix fire."

"It wouldn't surprise me if his animagus form is a Dragon ot a Phoenix," Lee Jordan snorted in amusement.

"Apparently you need a refresher course on animagi. It is impossible for animagi to take on the form of a magical creature," Minerva reminded them all sternly.

"This is Harry we are talking about Professor," Neville put in firmly with a smile. The entire DA were around age 7 or 8 but with their memories of the wizarding world and no need to hide it they were acting like teenagers nearing adulthood despite their small bodies.

Minerva paused to consider that for a moment before reluctantly nodding and admitting. "Good point." This caused everyone from the DA to burst out laughing.

"This is getting quite out of hand," Palpatine muttered resentfully as he eyed the former magic users turned Jedi distrustfully.

"Didn't we need to punish our Palpatine for something?" Tom asked Severus lightly.

"Yes, his earlier misstep during the council meeting... why?" Severus asked warily.

Harry took on an evil grin in response to the man's suspicion. Before anyone could move, with the Dark side screaming in Palpatine's head, Harry petrified the former Emperor. The DA looked at their leader questioningly as everyone else studied the petite wizard with their own wariness.

"What plan you?" Yoda asked carefully.

"Fred? George? Would you please go raid the kitchens for anything that could count as candy and anything sticky?" Harry asked with perfectly sweet evilness. "We're going to have a candy eating contest and then play sticky tag after everyone has had enough candy."

"Awesome!" the twins shouted, immediately bolting out the door with a few helpers on their heels.

"What in the world?!" Minerva spluttered, completely confused and aghast at what her former student obviously planned to do.

"Minerva why don't you transfigure him into a plushie capable of movement?" Severus suggested,
Minerva looked at him in shock as she reflexively caught the wand until Harry's snicker snapped her out of her stupor. A disapproving look at both of them didn't stop her from trying to cast the requested spells. When nothing happened she shrugged and returned Severus’ wand to him as Tom stepped in to cast the spells instead. Palpatine was now an animated blue teddy bear that stood just a head over knee height. His embroidered eyes glared at everyone around him as he shakily got to his stuffed feet.

"So what exactly did he do to earn this?" an amused former Hufflepuff asked, clearly aware of what was about to happen.

"Used sent dreams to torture Anakin Skywalker's wife to death nightly in the man's mind for more than a year as a way to soften him up and help him turn Dark," Harry shrugged. "I was fighting something similar in fifth year even if it was sort of accidental all around while we fought Umbitch. Its part of why I was so moody and angry that year."

"You mean he.... your fifth year?! ...damn, Skywalker is stronger than I could ever be," the former Hufflepuff muttered in clear respect.

"You can't keep them but I will let you save them," Death whispered in Harry's ear. He had Harry's immediate attention so he explained. "This is your mini Jedi temple along with the additional younglings that the council will select for you. They will be placed in a universe that has both the force and magic, they will be able to use both. I did not hide them from you so that you may say goodbye and spend some of your vacation with them. Where they are placed will be your permanent vacation universe until you decide otherwise. Until you had met them again I had to convince you to remain in this universe. What better way then to tell you that your changes might be erased? They may still be erased from the history books, as anything might, but now that you know your gift I can inform you that they will not be erased from time or reality. Tom and Severus will continue traveling with you but your DA has earned their place in your household as well as their rest. They will have to wait several universal trips before you can let them start joining you in your duties if they wish to help alongside you rather than simply being your safe haven."

"Thank you Death," Harry said quietly before returning his attention to the triumphantly arriving raiding party.

Everyone physically under the age of fifteen promptly started in on the candy aiming for a sugar high of massive proportions.

"Supervise I will," older Yoda offered warily. His younger self was busy with the evacuation and having a second version of him at the fight seemed like it would be problematic, especially with both Anakins and both Palpatines being present. Mace had objected until Harry had pointed out that his time travel group could technically be considered not to exist and thus was easily denounced if they failed.

Harry snickered but nodded his acknowledgement. All of the supposed adults quickly gathered against the wall near the exit to the training room they were in wanting to watch what was to come. This left the transformed blue teddy bear Palpatine in the middle of the candy party. The results of the influx of sugar quickly showed, much to the former Emperor's dismay.

"Lets play catch with him!" Dean Thomas suggested. He was already bouncing around a bit in his eight year old body as the sugar started flowing through his veins.
"Let's make it a bit more interesting. We can play a sort of Quidditch tag. We have Master Yoda here along with Knight Skywalker so we can use the force to play, they can catch us if we slip or something during a force jump or a bounce off the wall," Fred suggested evilly.

"Yeah and since Jedi some times have to guard people and things we can use Palpy as a substitute. For weapons we can use the candy and the sticky things. I bet using the force to fly honey around would be awesome!" George added with enthusiasm.

"Hold it!" Severus ordered sternly in his best evil dungeon bat tone. This froze everyone in place just long enough for him to cast safety charms on the room and unbreakable charms on the glass food jars. He also cast a shield charm over the adult area before releasing them. "You may now continue."

They all stared at him in wide eyed astonishment for a moment before breaking out into grins and promptly starting the game. The chaos proceeded to reign around the room for several hours as the battle was fought for the transformed former Emperor. Early on it had devolved from the original free for all into factions with temporary or permanent alliances. Lee Jordan and the Weasley twins were actively discouraged from remaining as a team with everyone else knowing they would dominate if the twins were allowed to work together. Furniture quickly became forts, barricades, and bunkers. Walls became spring boards or ricochett points. Exercise mats were used as shields or building materials. Practice lightsabers were put to use against both opponents and as deflectors against flying sticky food stuffs along with other flying debrie.

"Good test this is," Yoda mused, openly intrigued by the battle prowess and ingenuity of these unusual initiates.

"This isn't their first battle. In fact I rather suspect that having something childish to use their combat skills on is going to help them a great deal," Minerva admitted with a grimace. A grimace both aimed at the need for it as well as the absolute mess that was being made in front of her.

"Keep this in mind I will. Training perhaps use this for. Pranks as well," Yoda chuckled in delight. He had become much more willing to indulge in positive emotion since waking up in that Sith temple on Yavin IV. A silent acknowledgement and thank you was spared for Harry who had reminded him of the need for such openness in regards to the lighter emotions. If Harry heard it through the force he didn't react to it, too absorbed in watching the mess... er, battle happening in front of him.

While the training group never did run through their plans for dealing with the Chancellor that day no one could argue that it wasn't a fruitful day. Emperor Palpatine also learned to flinch at the sight of plush toys, candy, small children, and devious smiles.

Chapter End Notes

Still looking for things to do to the Palpatines! *evil cackle*
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The DA creche had thoroughly enjoyed their game and the harassment of the transformed Emperor Palpatine. The twins made regular use of their open plotting and prank planning looks towards the man after he was returned to human form. This resulted in the frequent paranoid looks towards the reincarnated wizards. It also allowed the DA to discover something important.

Harry found himself pinned under a dog pile of familiar younglings just hours before said younglings were supposed to ship out to safety on one of the new transports. He struggled halfheartedly to get free but couldn't bring himself to really try escaping his newly young friends. Too many of them had died in battle following his banner.

Harry was struggling more with holding back his tears than escaping when his former dorm mate spoke from within the pile of bodies holding him down.

"You have some explaining to do Potter," Neville said firmly.

"Nev I..." Harry choked out before breaking down in tears. There was a moment of shock from his friends before they promptly shifted the pile so that they were hugging and comforting him rather than holding him down.

This is exactly how Tom and Severus found them all twenty minutes later as they came dashing towards Harry in open alarm. It was Severus who recognized what was happening and Severus who stopped Tom from interfering. The defensive stance more than half the group had automatically taken against them in preparation to defend their downed leader would have done nothing to stop the two of them. It did however confirm to Severus that his young master wasn't in physical danger for all of those in front of him had been his students and would have allowed him to heal Harry as a consequence.

"What happened?" Severus asked softly, studying the group of seven and eight year olds who were once his students.

"We pinned him to get some answers but he just started crying," Lee Jordan explained warily. "We don't know why."

"How many of you did he out live?" Tom asked in a momentary flash of insight.

"Oh shite," Neville cursed. "He was probably in his command mode or something when the twins caught up to him before. He didn't really realize that we are real and really here until we tackled him to find out what we are going to have to rescue him from this time!"

"Or he thought we would let him protect us, keep us out of the fight," George said grimly.

"He knows better than that!" Fred exclaimed indignantly.

"Did he find another Dark Lord to fight or something?!" Seamus Finnigan complained. "The last one was hard enough to beat!"

"Why thank you. Its nice to know that your attempts at evil dominion are appreciated even when you wind up bound as a servant to your destroyer and prophesied mortal enemy," Tom drawled. He
smirked at all of the pale little faces arrayed in front of him.

"Calm down. He can't hurt Potter and neither can I," Severus scolded in exasperation. "All of you might have stayed loyal to him but almost everyone else betrayed him. The two of us are assigned to him as our punishment and because as you said he often needs help getting out of ridiculous situations. He managed to gain a mystical title at some point and now he's practically required to take down immortality seeking Dark Lords."

"So who is the Dark Lord here?" Dean Thomas asked suspiciously.

"Palpatine," Harry muttered exhaustedly, his sobs having calmed down into nothing more than wet breathing along with the occasional sniffle.

"Potter has managed to put a fallen older Skywalker largely back together, shoving him into the light on a leash. He also leashed an equally older Palpatine whom you all saw earlier as a teddy bear while under punishment. We are watching him for future betrayal. We also need to take out or leash the current younger version of Palpatine who happens to be the Senate Chancellor and the Sith Master. He is also not under Potter's control in any fashion, something we plan to change once the temple is mostly evacuated," Severus succinctly informed them. He knew it was the only way to deal with the group and keep them from upsetting Potter further.

"We can't deal with a Sith Master yet," Seamus grimaced. "I bet he's not going to wait for us to be ready either. He's probably planning on going after the bastard in a couple of days if not sooner."

"How do you get into this sort of thing so much Harry?" Neville asked in amused despair.

"I'm simply glad I don't have to fulfill this prophecy by myself," Anakin Skywalker told them from the alcove he had watched the entire thing from. He had originally picked it as a spot to meditate without being found.

"Lovely! Multiple people of prophecy named to defeat Dark Lords. All of them trouble magnets," Severus growled throwing his hands up in exasperation and unintentionally making half the DA giggle. They were no longer pale in fright at this point but more a mix of defiant and openly protective of Harry.

"We can at least set up somewhere for when he's done," George pointed out seriously.

"Everyone is leaving the temple but if we kidnap a few of the healers and make them leave a transport for us..." Fred plotted.

"Who's gonna fly it?" Neville reminded them.

"If we have to we can use the autopilot," Seamus retorted grimly. "Knowing Harry we will need a quick get away and really good med droids. He always gets hurt doing stuff like this."

"How many of us got recruited for his special Auror squad any way?" Katie Bell inquired.

"Most of the original survivors of the final battle joined up even if we weren't on the team full time," Terry Boot answered. "Harry and some of us recruited other people over the years but it stayed mostly the DA until Ginny betrayed Harry to the Unspeakables. Of course most of us were killed after that by the Ministry for our loyalty to Harry. At least they left our families alone even if they had to deal with being treated as Dark."

"They made me watch," Harry told them all sadly. He had finally moved to a sitting position among his youthened friends. He didn't fight when they had kept him in the center of the group.
"I remember the screams of rage when something came out of the stupid death arch to snatch you," Seamus smirked. "Someone lost their temper. Rookwood, I think. Next thing I knew I woke up in the Creche with McGonagall leaning over me, screaming my little head off and memories of growing up in the temple."

"Rookwood was an Inner Circle Death Eater," Tom murmured thoughtfully. "He must have escaped the backlash of the battle and my final death."

"But not necessarily Harry's claim for all our brat never knew nor enforced it," Severus pointed out thoughtfully.

"I don't think I can reach him to punish him if that's what the two of you were hinting at," Harry said wryly.

"No we weren't but its a thought. Come, get up off the cold floor. We can't afford for anyone to get sick just now," Tom ordered calmly as Anakin chuckled nearby. Everyone headed towards the kitchens for lunch.

The strike team gathered one last time before the Jedi Council. It was agreed that the last ship would leave the planet just as the team headed for the Senate building with the Council waiting at the temple as a back up. The DA creche group along with McGonagall insisted on helping to set up and man the fall back position with the 501st. It was a struggle to argue anyone into a compromise on the matter but eventually the Council members caved to the stubbornness of the former magic users. The condition was that they would all take healer training during the wait and that the 501st would technically be their bodyguards and guardians until the strike team caught up with them. The fact that they flatly informed the council who they were in their previous lives and told them of their combat experience had kept them from simply being knocked out and shipped out any way... just barely.

Harry flatly ordered the 501st to knock out and evacuate the DA if things went down the tubes. The strike team would catch up with them on Alderaan. If the strike team didn't show up within six months they were to assume failure and join the baby rebellion.

The force flared in warning the moment they stepped into Palpatine's office, resonating against everyone's senses. Everything that happened next was nearly a blur.

"Execute Order... (66)" Chancellor Palpatine started to order on the already open com line only to find himself pinned with a deactivated Lightsaber aimed at his temple. It was held by none other than his older counter part, Emperor Palpatine.

"As ironic as I find this we really can't let you do that," older Palpatine hissed into the ear of his younger counterpart. The look of shock on younger Palpatine's face was priceless.

"There are going to be some changes Palpatine," Harry drawled as he moved forwards. "You can join us in a second chance or your older self can simply eliminate you and take your place. Your choice."

"Older self?" the Chancellor asked uncertainly.

"Time travel. Things went fairly well for the first twenty years or so then they went very wrong. The plans didn't pan out quite right," older Palpatine admitted with a sigh of regret. "They want to save lives and I want to live. I'm perfectly willing to help you get along with them but you can't trigger 66 or keep them from removing it or else this won't work and I will simply have to take your place."

"I don't mind working with myself," younger Palpatine said very carefully, thinking of the personal
clones he had commissioned to use as his heirs depending on force sensitivity. The older Palpatine nodded, understanding exactly what his younger self was thinking about, and let him up. The Sith lightsaber slid back into its hiding place inside his sleeve as he stepped back to keep from crowding his younger self.

"It's a pity an unbreakable vow doesn't work with non-magicals and likely not for force users for that matter," Severus murmured eying both men with barely concealed distaste.

"You've never worked in the political arena my friend," Tom said cheerfully, slapping the other man on the back. "This is simply a touch more aggressive than usual."

"We still have to figure out how to reform the Senate. Normally I'd suggest Leia take over that but she went off with a group of Jedi Archivists," Luke reminded them all grumpily. "I kind of liked... Padme's suggestion but I'm not sure how we would make it work."

"We can't really leave them with a magic solution since they couldn't replace or recharge it," Harry sighed thoughtfully.

"Not to mention all of the secret projects and things that my young counterpart likely has in the works. As you pointed out this is a new universe and as such likely has... differences in the timeline," older Palpatine added.

"I don't want control of this little empire you're building. I just don't see another way to keep the body count down and stop the Sith idiocy you are tossing around," Harry grimaced reassuringly.

An alarm went off putting everyone on alert.

"I didn't order an attack on the Senate and my own kidnapping, not yet," older Palpatine frowned. "It wasn't until next year."

"Looks like someone might have accelerated your plans then... or my weird luck is kicking in," Harry snorted.

"You have this kind of luck too? I thought it was just me and Obi-Wan," younger Anakin retorted even as he turned to guard the door way.

"So it's a family trait," Luke snickered. "Once we go out in the universe instead of hiding in our cocoons weird things happen to us."

"Then we have five planet level or higher trouble magnates with insane luck in the room... oh goody," Severus groaned. He took a battle stance with Tom flanking Harry farther into the room, their magic being more of a long range tactic than a short range one like the lightsabers.

"How exactly did we miss this? Is this their luck kicking in simultaneously? Or is it just one of them kicking in and the others waiting to make it worse later?" Tom complained with a growl. He had completely forgotten about Harry's most irritating ability and, until now, had honestly thought the imp had at least some control over said ability. The very same ability that had plagued him every single time he tried to kill him, including the very first time.

"Who knows," Ashoka shrugged sarcastically. Her lightsaber was once more in her normal reverse grip position with both Anakins yet again glaring at it. She was used to that particular glare of disapproval and promptly ignored it.

Ashoka had been allowed on this operation because they were hoping to avoid an actual fight and as a way to distract the current Chancellor from the idea that he had been discovered. She also didn't
mind going into exile with her teacher and Kenobi if they happened to fail but survive. Secretly she had spoken to her teacher and his wife before coming to Harry and making a deal with Death. If things failed and Harry had to leave both sides of the Skywalker clan with those beholden to them would leave with him regardless of the council's decision. Leia had been included by default as she had joined her mother's group on top of both Anakins agreeing to the decision.

"Focus on keeping everyone alive. Palpatine? I think it best if both of you play helpless, perhaps the elder one can be your brother? Or some idiot cloned you for security reasons?" Obi-Wan offered even as the last pieces of furniture were shuved either out of the way or into defensive positions. The shouts outside the office weren't very reassuring to anyone in the room.

"Brothers. It would explain why we both answer to Palpatine, our near identical appearance, and the slight age difference. We had some of the Senate, including myself, taken hostage by some bounty hunters less than four months ago," younger Palpatine grimaced.

"I'd forgotten about that," older Palpatine sighed with a grimace of his own.

"Pick names quickly so that we can stop calling you younger or older. None of us are going to use Emperor or Chancellor now that we don't have to hide knowing that you are Sidious," Luke ordered firmly. His attention was on the doorway and as a result didn't see so much as feel the angry glares from both men.

"We could call one of them Junior or Senior," Harry snickered. "It wouldn't even be a lie."

"Junior and Senior it is, we can use the same for the Yodas and the Anakins, now focus!" Obi-Wan snapped at the group as a whole.

"Impudent and impatient you are," Yoda senior scolded just as they heard the first of the blaster fire.

"Sorry Master," came the chorus from every other Jedi present. Both Palpatines exchanged doubtful looks over the actions of the others in the room but obediently hid behind the reinforced desk like they were supposed to.

"I'll go by Vader rather than Senior. I answered to it for more than twenty years anyway," Anakin Skywalker-Vader said shortly. Before anyone could argue the point the door fell to a barrage of blaster fire.

The Jedi promptly started reflecting blaster bolts back through the doorway as the Wizards took to casting spells as the group's offensive ability. The nasty shock of spells hitting ranged from suddenly having one's insides spilling out of their guts to knee reversal hexes to simple stunners and disarmament charms. The battle was over in thirty seconds or less but still felt like an eternity to those involved in it. Through the entire firefight not a single name needed to be said by those involved, they had simply moved as one.

"I should have tried the nightmare curse or that one that acts like a boggart," Severus sighed regretfully. Hearing this the two Palpatines checked over the top of the desk before standing up again now that the action was apparently over. This was an open attempt to not be caught cowering on the floor for by the uninformed for all that those in the room knew they had been designated as a nasty surprise for later against the attackers.

"I doubt this will be the last firefight we are in," Tom consoled his former minion as Harry snickered at the other wizard's disappointment.

"You know this might be why the force flared, that and having so many time related people in the
same room," Luke suggested as they waited either for more attackers or the security forces to show up.

"A warning of multiple things at once? Yes, I suppose though the strength and timing wasn't exactly pleasant," Obi-Wan conceded thoughtfully.

"Passed the Danger has," Yoda hmmed. Everyone took that as their cue to put up their wands and lightsabers respectively.

"Random attack that got through because we were already doing something that potentially messed with security? Or may be we tripped something that no one knew about? Someone's contingency plan?" Luke speculated. "I'm not sure we can actually blame our weird luck on this but I won't rule it out."

"Who knows," Harry scowled, kicking at a bit of debris nearby.

"At least the younglings are gone by now," Obi-Wan mused pleasantly.

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Harry said a bit too quickly.

"Precocious they are. Right were you to instruct their evacuation," Yoda chuckled.

"They are going to get you back for that," Obi-Wan chuckled.

"Oh I know they will but that doesn't mean evacuating a bunch of little kids off planet because they wouldn't quit following me around and the fact I was going into a firefight wasn't a good idea. I'll just have to take my lumps the next time I see them," Harry laughed nervously. Everyone laughed at that, ending the day on a positive note.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I still plan on doing more to the Evil Sith idiots. That said start thinking up what universe is next! I have ideas but I could use more on both the next universe and the next punishment for dear old Palpy!
After bringing the younger Palpatine fully up to speed, aside from the rebellion plans and the scattering of the Jedi, at his counterpart's insistence they quickly set to work. Both Palpatines were installed in the Chancellor's office with the public excuse that they were brothers helping each other out. Everyone knew that killing them had been one of the worse options both because of his position and the fact that they were still at war. While the man controlled both sides it was conceded that simply ordering everyone on both sides to stand down wasn't going to work... yet. The order to remove the bio-chips went out immediately. It would take more than six months to clean every bio-chip from the clones and another four months before both sides were under a cease fire at the negotiating table.

Dooku and Grevious were both wary about this sudden turn around as they sat at the negotiating table. Their orders as of ten months ago were to start angling for peace talks. They obeyed reluctantly, using the battles leading up to the peace talks as a way to strengthen their position and take out a few of the more annoyingly competent Jedi. Its a pity they didn't get the chance to deal with Kenobi and Skywalker or Tano. Those three stayed stubbornly out of reach. Then there was this news of the strange formerly hidden brother to Palpatine along with the equally strange group that came with him. Something wasn't right about any of this.

Harry poked his head into the negotiation room curiously. Dooku and Grievous looked back at him equally curiously until he was snatched backwards out of the doorway with a startled yelp.

"He's worse than you," Obi-Wan's voice came echoing from the hall with clear amusement.

"Don't say that Master. I at least tried not to get caught," Skywalker Jr.'s voice teased with just as much amusement.

"No, if I recall we wanted to avoid a beating even years after Kenobi had convinced us he wouldn't actually hurt us if he could help it," Anakin Senior's voice contradicted him, confusing their listeners. The strike team plus Palpatine Jr. entered the room moments later, stunning the separatist leaders.

"Right, let's get this over with for today. I want to show you one of my secret labs and discuss a few things with Master Snape and my brother," Palpatine Jr. said with open excitement.

"I don't like how excited you are about that," Tom commented in narrow eyed suspicion.

"Let him have his fun. He knows not to cross the line," Palpatine Snr. contradicted congenially.

"Riiiiight and you love fluffy bunnies and being turned into a cuddly toy by younglings," Harry shot back sarcastically. The shudder of sudden revulsion confused the separatists and Palpatine Jr. but set the others to smirking.

Both Yodas made themselves known by the smack of a grimer stick to one of Harry's legs, surprising a yelp from him.

"Behave," Yoda Snr. scolded, not even bothering to hide the twinkle in his eye. Harry, oh so maturely, stuck his tongue out at the green gnome's back. The second whack of Yoda Jr.'s grimer stick knocked the wind from his lungs and had him rubbing at his suddenly sore stomach as everyone took their seats.

"Everyone else will be here in about an hour," Obi-Wan announced casually.
"Darth Sidious has contacted us and agreed to a cease fire under a few conditions," Palpatine Jr. informed them. "These conditions are separate from the peace negotiations but do allow the Separatists to accept or decline anything presented here without his interference or risk from his displeasure. Which is part of why we are here before the rest of the Senate delegation."

"May I ask why?" Count Dooku asked carefully. It was clear to those in the know that he was aware of Palpatine's alter ego and equally as confused by the presence of two of him. His knowledge of the man's force signature practically screamed that they were the same man rather than brothers as the public story said.

"A time difference. The foundation of the changes he was trying to make won't hold for more than twenty years, perhaps less, if he moves forwards with his current plans," Palpatine Jr. explained eyeing his elder counterpart almost happily. Palpatine Snr.'s suddenly sour look told Harry that the man had understood the byplay perfectly while Harry had barely recognized it was there.

"Why do they have to know?" Harry asked Palpatine Snr. flatly. He knew that Dooku was the Sith apprentice before Anakin killed him at Palpatine's urging but he didn't really know why they had to spill the time travel thing to the man.

"I happen to be Sidious' apprentice," Dooku answered for the man. "As such I am very familiar with his force signature."

Harry took a minute to mentally translate that before dropping his head into his hands and fought not to laugh.

"The others don't have that extra insight," Ashoka pointed out helpfully. Harry lost it, sending peels of laughter echoing around the room. Through the sound of Harry's laughter the Separatists were informed that Sidious had decided to fade back into the shadows. By the time the Senate representatives arrived they were convinced it wasn't a trick and Harry was still cycling between laughter and catching his breath.

The negotiations would take three months before a tentative treaty was signed. The battle droids would help the reconstruction as re-programmed free labor while the clones would be given a colony planet and legal recognition as people as payment for their services. The Jedi would remain disappeared except as a quiet training school that turned out peace keepers, slave abolitionists, scouts, smugglers of medicine and food to stricken and oppressed worlds. The code would change to allow blood families and eventually there would be Jedi bloodlines. Sith that came from these bloodlines would be either rehabilitated by their family bonds, kept properly confined, or taken care of in a more permanent fashion by another force user. All of them were taught to follow the force and uphold if not live the tenants of goodness, decency, compassion, and love that mirrored that of Christ in the christian bible. Lack of bonds was actively discouraged as it was found to have a tendency to destroy the one without the bonds along with those around them.

The first time any of the time travelers saw Palpatine's lab was a month after the final treaty was signed and a week before he was set to give up his emergency powers. Luke, Tom, Harry, Snape, both Anakins, Yoda Snr., and the two Palpatines wandered calmly into the lab with both Palpatines in the lead. They were interested in what both Palpatines were so eager to show them. The good behavior both Palpatines had displayed during the ending of the war had reduced Harry's wariness but hadn't dulled the suspicion of his fellow wizards quite as much. A suspicion that might just save their lives in the days to come.

The strike while touring the remote lab complex was blindingly fast, indicating that the force had likely been used to enhance his speed and strength until the deed was done. Palpatine Jr. had Luke in his grasp in an instant, vibro knife held to his throat while using the younger man as a human shield.
"Stop!" Palpatine Sr. shouted, causing everyone to hesitate.

"Now that I have your attention. Master Yoda please place your lightsaber in my elder's hands, the same goes for you Skywalker. Those... wands as well. Move slowly, one at a time, hands where I can see them," Palpatine Jr. ordered in open glee.

"You won't get away with this," Anakin Sr. snarled in true Vader fashion as they all very carefully obeyed the man.

"That is no concern of yours. Its a pity one of you isn't female. Now I want one of you Wizards to swallow that vial of fluid, the amber one. Once that is done we can start moving this meeting forwards. I might even be convinced to simply let the boy go and we can all forget about this unpleasantness. What do you say?" Palpatine Jr. offered kindly, his cruel grip on Luke's collar along with the blade at the young man's throat was the only thing breaking the caring facade.

Harry glared as he moved towards the vial only for Tom to drag him up short as Severus snatched it up. A brief examination and a look of disgust from the potions master barely preceded his downing of the concoction.

"Now then, you already know what I am and who I am is there anything important about you three Wizards, perhaps genetically, that I should know?" Palpatine Jr. asked evilly.

"We can give birth regardless of sex," Severus bit out shortly, glaring at the younger Sith. He was obviously fighting what they now knew was some type of truth serum. Harry was under no illusions that the man would have admitted such a thing to a possible enemy without something forcing the information from him. He would deal with the freak out idea that he could possibly get pregnant later.

"My that is good news," Palpatine Sr. rumbled with a pleased wicked grin.

"Rape is rather beneath us," Palpatine Jr. added, noticing their looks of disgust. "Why force yourself on someone when you need only pay for a custom clone?"

"Of course the mental anguish of two prisoners forced into such an act is rather exquisite," Palpatine Sr. added evilly. "It is quite the pity that particular concoction is only good for one question and can't be administered again for another six months. Not to mention that the shelf life is horrendously short when made in batches larger than a teaspoon. What you just drank was the accumulated creation and storage of nearly a decade, our only sample, in one of the only long term storage batches possible."

"Redeemable you are not," Yoda Sr. declared angrily, letting go of his legendary calm for once. The news about the obvious truth serum was good but the equally obvious gloating was extremely annoying.

"Whether or not we are, as you say, redeemable is no longer your concern at the moment. You only need to worry about the instructions I give to you from now on," Palpatine Jr. declared evilly, shaking Luke a bit for emphasis.

"Its a pity we don't have any of those slave implants on hand," Palpatine Sr. lamented. "It would make controlling them much easier if they were already implanted with the micro explosives."

"Now that's just salt in the wound," Harry growled, well aware how much such a reminder would hurt for the former residents of Tatooine.

It didn't pass anyone's notice that Jr. had no idea about Leia being one of the time travelers or that she
even existed. Was this a ploy by Snr. against Jr.? Or was it a joint effort with Leia simply being a back up for Snr.? None of them would put either past either Palpatine.

"At least I'm not the one captured or threatened this time," Harry grumbled with some satisfaction.

"What makes you think you aren't captured?" Palpatine Snr. asked in open amusement. Harry mentally rewound what all had just happened, watched it again and started mumbling low curses that everyone ignored.

The Jedi each suffered in silence through being placed in Force inhibiting binders. When it came to Harry, Tom, and Severus they were placed in the exact same thing for all that the three didn't know if it would prevent their use of magic. None of the Wizards had bothered indicating that the use of magic was technically possible without their wands or as a response to strong emotions. They were now quite grateful for that oversight on their own part as well as the lack of use and/or mention of apparation.

"My this is interesting," Obi-Wan said mildly from behind Palpatine Jr.

"I can practically feel your lightsaber at my back. Are you really willing to make your Padawan watch his son die because of your actions?" Palpatine Jr. asked with an evil laugh. No one doubted that he would do it.

"What do you want?" Obi-Wan scowled as he moved around to face the man who was holding his friend's son at knife point.

"Give your lightsaber to my counter part. Oh and put everyone in those binders over against the wall will you?" Palpatine Jr. ordered.

"I presume that doesn't include your other self?" Obi-Wan asked mildly as he moved to obey.

"Of course it does or hadn't you noticed he is the only one without any restraint aside from young Luke? I have no idea how much control Potter has over him. He may be holding the lightsabers but with young Luke in my hands none of you can really do anything. Besides he mostly holds them so that none of you try anything heroically stupid. I certainly don't trust him. Of course having extra bindings on all of you pinning you in one spot against the wall isn't a bad idea on top of the other binders," Palpatine Jr. answered with obvious surprise. "Incidentally I thought you weren't joining us today."

"I decided to catch up, especially on the off chance my former padawans lost their temper for whatever reason. You can't tell me that you enjoy being attacked in fits of unexpected temper?" Obi-Wan asked sarcastically as he obeyed. He left a faintly amused Palpatine Snr. for last to manacle to the wall with force inhibiting binders.

"So you claim the Skywalkers as your students," Palpatine Jr. said in dark amusement.

"Why not? Ben did train all three of us even if he only trained me for a few days and Yoda did the rest before we got here," Luke retorted. In response the vibro knife drew a line of blood on his neck that set both his fathers to growling in anger and frustration as they fought with themselves not to simply lunge at Palpatine Jr.

"You would be wise to remain quiet. He would be perfectly happy to slit your throat from ear to ear since he has both of your fathers and can simply force him into having more children," Palpatine Snr. pointed out with calm amusement. It was almost as if he were a parent watching a child's playtime antics rather than a hostage situation.
"Put the lightsabers away, yours as well," Palpatine Jr. ordered Palpatine Snr. before Obi-Wan could chain him up as well. Palpatine Snr. shrugged and genially placed them all in a lock box on the opposite side of the room from the restraints before allowing himself to be chained up like the others.

"Now what?" Obi-Wan asked archly, clearly irritated.

"You forgot yourself," Palpatine Jr. pointed out with irritated calm. Obi-Wan sighed and complied. He hadn't really thought he would get away with that one, forgetting to tie himself up, but didn't think it would hurt to try it any way.

"So now that you've got us all what are you going to do?" Luke asked in open irritation.

"First I will punish all of you for your defiance and the ruining of my plans.. Then... well we will see what condition you are all in," Palpatine Jr. laughed.

A quick shove had Luke stumbling forwards into the lab table. The force lightning came before he could recover his balance. The shouts of protest from everyone but the older Sith as Luke screamed in pain only had a few shots aimed at the prisoners themselves. When the lightning finally stopped Luke lay weak as a kitten on the floor while most of the rest of the group tried to stay on their feet rather than hang from their bonds.

"A collar and leash I think," Palpatine Jr. mused, toeing the still defiant youth onto his back for a better examination.

"I will kill you for touching my son," Anakin Snr. growled, not even bothering to wrestle the dark power building around him under control.

"Tsk, such lack of control and here I thought I had gotten you quite the gift. Not only will your son be joining your further training in the Dark side but so will his companions and your younger self. At the moment I have no real reason to want them dead but that could certainly change," Palpatine Jr. scolded happily.

"I will take Master Yoda in hand shall I? He is going to be the most risky to train in the Dark side," Palpatine Snr. offered mildly. He never saw the strike from his younger self coming.

Before anyone knew it both force masters were on the floor screaming as Palpatine Jr. did something to them. When they were finally allowed to simply lay their panting everyone else just looked at the one who had caused it, waiting for an explanation or at least gloating. Palpatine Jr. obliged them quite happily.

"The two of you now share a force bond. If one of you dies you both die. Should Yoda turn I still won't remove it. As of now the two of you are a permanent team. It might even keep both of you in line," Palpatine Jr. taunted with a smug smirk.

"I hadn't thought of that," Palpatine Snr. complained in clear irritation. He wasn't happy to suddenly be in such a bond nor was happy about the pain that had come with it. His younger self clearly had him on a very firm leash. He should have expected this but had forgotten that he was trying to double cross himself with expected results from that lapse of judgement.

Palpatine Jr. simply summoned a force inhibiting collar with a matching reinforced leash from a cabinet before smugly placing it on Luke and tying him to a convient bolted down table leg. The tight way he tied Luke to the table leg had the young man nearly choking on his collar and unable to get more than a few inches away from the metal pole that held up the table. Luke could barely curl up miserably on the floor like a kicked puppy tied up in time out.
"The collar can't be removed without a special remote code and any serious attempt will set off the micro explosives. Its not a perfect solution to keep you all behaved but it will do for now. Any escape attempts will be met with punishment not only to the perpetrator but also to young Luke and perhaps a few others, not all of whom are here. I am not above randomly bombing a school or other such vulnerable location simply to get my point across to the nine of you," Palpatine Jr. promised them. His words were met with disgruntlement but also resignation, no one doubted he would carry through on his threat. "I will see you later."

Palpatine Jr. happily left them alone in favor of watching them for a couple of hours on the security cameras.
"If we can get Obi-Wan and the younger Anakin free they have to escape and not look back," Harry said several hours after their original capture.

"No," came firmly from both named men. Harry didn't even have to look at them to know they were scowling at him for even suggesting it.

"We are likely to get dragged into another universe any day now, Padme isn't pregnant yet and she needs to be. We want Luke and Leia born even if you guys manage to hang on to older Leia when we disappear," Harry argued. "Obi-Wan needs to survive to help Anakin with his family and simply be there. This will help keep him from turning evil no matter how he happens to use the force or whatever extra trouble he winds up in. The others are my responsibility and I should have remembered that Palpatine, either of them, are lying conniving bastards instead of just expecting this to work."

No one could honestly argue with that even though they badly wanted too.

"He's right. I really want to get born and technically the rest of us don't belong in this universe-timeline. Its less of a problem if the seven of us die or suddenly disappear than for the two of you. It was great learning about both of you and working with you but you are more important to this universe than we are," Luke admitted with a sigh.

"Besides, how upset do you think he'll be? He can't afford to make too big of a mess to keep us in line and I doubt the rest of us aren't prepared to take the punishment letting the two of you escape will incur," Palpatine Snr. snickered. He knew he was stuck permanently with Yoda and Harry's group and he was suddenly finding that he didn't care all that much. He hadn't had this much fun in absolute ages.

"Its a pity the force agrees with you," Palpatine Jr. scowled from the doorway. "I suppose I could simply kidnap Senator Amidala and arrange for her to become pregnant but something tells me it won't work. As a compromise I will release both of them in an escape pod as we travel to a new location, provided none of you fight me on the transfer or your initial imprisonment at the new location. We simply disappear and are never heard from again. It was going to be necessary in any case."

"What brought about this change of heart?" Severus asked suspiciously.

In response several obviously ancient force ghosts materialized next to him, both Sith and Jedi.

"Banishment into Wild Space is better than the force deciding to melt you slowly from the inside out to display its displeasure," Palpatine Jr. answered in open disgust as the force ghosts glared at him. A satisfied nod from each of the ghosts preceded their sudden disappearance back within the force.
"You are only giving up two of us," Palpatine Snr. pointed out thoughtfully.

"That too," his younger counterpart agreed in irritation. "If I can keep the rest of you neither the force nor the force ghosts will argue over it as long as I adhere to the banishment."

"You haven't even had us for 24 hours. Seriously, what gives?" Harry demanded suspiciously.

"Exactly what I said..." Palpatine Jr. protested. "I would really rather not have to suffer my insides melting in some force manifested acid until I let all of you go... I only get a small window to pull this off if I get to keep any of you."

"Damage control," Tom nodded knowingly. Palpatine Jr. just pouted, not even bothering to try for an adult response.

"I... might have an alternative but it would mean merging some people, giving them two sets of memories and only one body," Harry offered hesitantly.

"Look at one of us," Tom ordered harshly. Harry reluctantly obeyed, having a good idea what was going to happen next. A hissed inaudible spell allowed the other wizard briefly into Harry's mind before he withdrew, being careful to inflict as little pain as possible.

"Are you going to do it?" Harry asked apprehensively.

"It's done," Severus retorted casually as he watched Tom think over whatever he had found.

"What?! You mean to tell me it doesn't have to hurt?!" Harry demanded in outrage.

"We were enemies, Dumbledore forced me to give you those lessons in exactly that manner, you fought tooth and claw every single time anyone got near you like that.... take your pick. There are probably more reasons why it hurt before and equally more why it doesn't hurt now. For all we know it has everything to do with your shiny title and/or the fact that we are bound to you," Severus snarked back.

"Yoda and Palpatine only but you will have to release them from service and the bond would remain," Tom suggested.

"Oh, I don't think so," Palpatine Jr. objected, having gotten a sudden inkling as to what was going on. "I am being generous releasing Kenobi and my Skywalker."

"So release Yoda and your counterpart too," Harry shrugged. His bad attempt at not appearing to care didn't fool anyone.

"I don't know how you got force ghosts to cooperate but I doubt you are telling us the truth," Palpatine Snr. snarked dryly.

"Suit yourself," Palpatine Jr. shrugged finishing the motion by drawing his lightsaber and swiftly moving forwards to impale his counterpart.

The scream of pain came not from two voices but four. Harry jerked violently as he screamed, feeling the scarlet blade entering and burning through the flesh that was not on his bones but that of another. Yoda's scream was more of a bellow but not as unexpected after the force bond had been put in place. The twin screams from both Palpatines sent dual tones down everyone's spines.

A split second of shock reverberated with the screams before Tom and Severus tried to lunge for Harry while Obi-Wan and both Anakins lunged for Yoda. All of them got yanked up short by their
bonds. Those not already in pain had to watch helplessly as the injured Palpatine and connected Yoda dissolved into starlight. The sparks of Palpatine Snr. flowed into and merged with Palpatine Jr. even as those which belonged to Yoda did only to flow through him down the bond into the other Yoda. Only one of each now remained as the Sith blade fell from a limp hand to land deactivated on the floor. Palpatine collapsed off to one side in shock and trying to process everything that was flowing into his mind.

The bond between the two master force users pulsed as they assimilated the memories of their counter parts along with the oaths of service to Harry. The magic that connected them to Harry pulsed in time with the bond, forcing ragged gasps in and out of his lungs as he fought to stay both conscious and in enough control of his magic. He barely held control long enough to keep the raw power roiling indignantly in his veins from lashing out and dragging at the four, now two, affected force users.

The Deathly Hallows spilling out of thin air to land sprawled across Harry's chest as he continued to fight for air through the pain. The cloak was a spill of liquid silver shroud leaving the Elder Wand and Resurrection Stone displayed as if Harry's heaving chest were an alter up which they had been presented.

"Will you now claim what is rightfully yours Master?" Death's voice echoed around the room.

"I am the Master of the Deathly Hallows, friend of the Reaper, Angel of Death. I cede my control and Mastery to the one who bows to the Creator as the collector of those who have passed. No mortal should control Death," Harry responded in a whispery voice that almost wasn't there.

A giant skeletal hand appeared above his exhausted form. Harry wasn't quite sure what was going to happen but he certainly didn't expect the hand to shove the three Hallows deep into his chest as if they or he were but ghostly representations. Harry gasped again, this time in shock from the soul deep chill that engulfed him to settle in his bones.

"Your offer is appreciated but rejected. None may escape such an important fate decreed by the Creator of All. One day another may be chosen so that you may rest in this work until he grants such a request there is no choice and none may steal your place. Release the two disputed force users or keep them Little Master but choose," Death instructed sternly.

"They are their own people," Harry said before finally lapsing into unconsciousness. He would later wake up in a medical section on the ship Palpatine had moved them to with Obi-Wan and Anakin Jr. released in accordance to Palpatine's promise.

Chapter End Notes

Still after universe and Palpy torture ideas! *evilly cheerful*
Chapter Notes

Edit:
I just realized this was partly inspired by a different work here on AO3 so I'm going to go put it in the right spot on the story in a minute.
Enjoy!

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry woke to the instinctive knowledge that his reincarnated friends had been collected to his new estates along with the selected Healers, initiates, and other chosen Jedi. He also knew that Palpatine and Yoda were no longer his and that his four retainers along with himself were also still prisoners of this new joint Palpatine. The splitting headache didn't help all that much either.

"You're awake!" Luke's voice sounded surprised to Harry's tired ears.

Harry struggled to force his eyelids open only to find Luke hovering over him. The stupid explosive collar was still around the other man's neck, confirming what he already knew. Palpatine still had them.

"Palpatine kept us, Tom, Severus, and my father but he let Anakin and Ben go like he promised. He hasn't talked to me yet but I heard shouting awhile ago," Luke told him as he checked over the medical read outs. "He had to knock them out to get them into the escape pod. After what happened they really didn't want to leave us alone with him, not that I blame them. He separated me from the others to watch you and probably for some sort of mind game with them."

"Very perceptive of you young Skywalker," Palpatine said from the doorway of the medbay. Luke tensed. He was immediately on guard but still helpless to stop any concerted attempt to hurt the pair of them, largely due to the collar around his neck.

"Shove off," Harry told him tiredly.

"Oh I don't think so. You see while I may have conceded that Kenobi and his Padawan were too potentially important to keep I still have the rest of you. Defy me and you will be punished," Palpatine chuckled. "The memory upgrade was, I will admit, quite the surprise and quite the useful bonus. The memories of the punishment you gave my counterpart were just as entertaining not to mention ingenious. I will have significant difficulty surpassing that when one of you eventually steps out of line. Eventual rebellion is expected of a Sith and only those who succeed in killing their are worthy to claim Mastery. The force re-enforces this by granting the new master access to the knowledge of the old master after claiming their new mantle. Once you've learned we will see if any of you are worthy of that particular title, though Vader is much farther along in his training than the rest of you."

"Not interested," Harry snarked back.

"You have little choice but then I can always use your future children. Oh and don't worry about Leia too much. As long as you cooperate I won't have to see about claiming her or her children,"
Palpatine smirked before leaving and sealing them into the medbay.

"Bastard," Harry growled.

Harry didn't like the idea of that guy near Leia anymore than he liked the idea of the man with any sort of access to children, much less his children. He would find a way to knife Palpatine before he would allow the guy near any kids, especially his own. Even though he had released the man already from his service Harry now thought that it had clearly been a mistake to accept him in any capacity in the first place.

"He hasn't hit me again with the lightning, probably to avoid setting off the charges on accident. I don't think he has been so accommodating with the others," Luke said sadly.

"I'm pretty sure he hasn't," Harry snorted wryly. "We can't let him have our kids even if he forces us to have some."

"I know," Luke agreed, eyes haunted with the new knowledge of what his own Ben Kenobi had saved him from growing up.

"He told you what he'll do to any kids we have if we don't cooperate," Harry concluded, watching Luke with concern.

"Yeah," Luke sighed. He really didn't want to explain the multiple scenarios that the other man had presented him with. He was already going to have nightmares, there was no need to give anyone else any of them too.

Luke carefully helped Harry to sit up and gave him as much of a medical check as he could manage, not being a medic himself. Then Harry was given food that had been left for the pair of them. It wasn't entirely surprising especially since Palpatine had locked them into the medbay.

"I think he separated us from the others because we are the youngest and because they care about us. We haven't exactly been hiding it from either version of him," Luke speculated while Harry ate. Harry in turn made sounds of agreement but knew better from his upbringing than to refuse food without a very good reason in uncertain circumstances.

"He would probably be disgustingly happy if any of us formed romantic attachments," Harry pointed out. "Or at least he would once he has a more solid control on us."

"His comment about Leia proved that," Luke agreed with a grimace. "I'm really glad she insisted no one know where anyone was going in case we failed."

"You and me both," Harry agreed fervently. "You and me both."

They descended into companionable silence after that, trying not to think about what Palpatine might decide to do to them and if the others were okay. They spent the next three days locked together in the medbay occasionally hearing worrisome sounds. During that time they talked and Luke taught Harry about the Rebel Alliance's training for recruits that he had gone through. Harry in turn told him about Hogwarts and his own training of the DA. Eventually they got around to comparing weird and dangerous situations that they had each lived through.

"Seriously? The snake was 60 feet long? How tall was it?" Luke asked in amazement.

"Not really sure. Almost twice as tall as me at twelve? I got this scar from one of its smaller fangs when I stabbed Gryffindor's sword through the top of its mouth. If Fawkes hadn't been there to cry on it an neutralize the poison I wouldn't have lived to see supper," Harry told him, showing off his...
scar from when the Basilisk fang slid into his arm when he killed it.

"Man, I avoid fighting stuff that big if I can help it. It sounds worse than a Krayt dragon!" Luke said in admiration.

"I had to out fly a dragon in my fourth year. I mean the adventures were interesting but I really would have preferred normal school years instead of everyone and his brother trying to kill me or manipulate me. I got really tired of fighting for my life at least once every year," Harry told him shyly.

"I'll bet," Luke agreed sympathetically. "I had to fight a Rancor recently without any weapons. I managed to drop a heavy door on it but it ate the guard that got dropped into its meal pit with me."

"I remember that scene in Return of the Jedi. Where were you at before you guys showed up in the room with us any way?" Harry asked curiously.

"I can't really remember except that we were engulfed in some sort of light before waking up in the room with you. I was really shocked that Yoda was there since I watched him die on Dagobah," Luke admitted. "I'm not sure about anyone else. Palpatine mentioned to his counterpart about the Empire falling but I don't think he said anything else. I'm not sure any of us remember what we were all doing except that it involved Endor and the second Death Star somehow."

"Huh, I guess that kind of makes sense," Harry conceded thoughtfully. They clearly heard the door to the medbay unlock in that quiet moment of contemplation, putting them both on alert. Much to their surprise Anakin, Tom, and Severus procede Palpatine into the room. The three look unharmed but their unwavering gaze on both Harry and Luke say oceans about their protective intent. Both younger men resign themselves to immediate once overs from the approaching over protective companions.

"As you can see they are unharmed... for now," Palpatine's calm words jerked the three men up short even as he leaned against the doorway, watching them with great interest. A split second later they had whirled around to not only glower at their captor but place themselves as a living shield between him and the two youngest males.

"Becoming your slave again won't keep them safe," Anakin spat. He didn't want his son anywhere near this man ever again.

"Not that we could accept such a position as we all answer to Harry," Severus drawled haughtily.

"The three of you already know Darkness and some of its use, as we have already established. Luke and Harry need to learn this as wells. While I applaud your protectiveness for them it is also your undoing. I will leave them untainted, for the moment, but the three of you will be working with me while these two learn a few things," Palpatine informed them. His relaxed, almost casual, attitude worried Harry with the tightening of three sets of shoulders in front of him only making it worse.

"What exactly are you proposing?" Tom asked shrewdly.

"Harry may effectively own the rest of us but Palpatine wants use of us in exchange for their relative safety and lack of attempts to turn them. I presume that Luke would be allowed to stay with Harry but he would have to keep wearing the collar unless one or both of them were given explosive slave implants," Anakin translated darkly.

"I want the Noghir for the moment. I am uncertain if the bio-weapon was accidentally released onto their world this time or if even the minor space battle that helped cause the disaster occurred. Though
with the timing it very well might have been. If it did then we will trade magic to help them in exchange for warriors," Palpatine informed them calmly. "I would prefer for you to enchant something that they could use repeatedly rather than have you exhaust yourselves trying to cast the appropriate spells, whatever they may be, but needs must."

"If I tell them not to? If I order them not to accept any orders from someone else? What then?" Harry demanded hotly.

"Then I will have to punish you, and them, until they either obey or you relent and grant them to me," Palpatine said simply.

"I may not want to own them except by their own choice but they are mine. I don't respond well to threats Palpatine," Harry informed him stubbornly.

"He really doesn't," Tom snorted with dark amusement. "I once had him helpless and asked for a simple ritual bow that would have preceded a duel. I had to use the Imperious curse on him, which he promptly threw off, to get even part of one. Even tired, weak from both exertion and a recent ritual done, poisoned, surrounded by enemies, and practically helpless he not only threw the damned spell off but he took the Cruciatuus curse as well. Not only did he take the full powered Crucio he got back up again he also forced himself to dodge the next hit which would have killed him. All he had to do to avoid most of that was a simple semi-respectful bow that came with a mild threat if he didn't. Do you see what I'm getting at?"

"When was this?!" Severus demanded furiously.

"Fourth year after the third task. One of Hagrid's young Acromantula bit me once we got past the Sphinx just before we grabbed the portkey cup. The ritual was the one that Wormtail tied me up for before stabbing me for my blood to give Tom his new body," Harry explained wryly.

"You know we still haven't gotten either Harry or Luke professionally checked for any health problems," Anakin frowned.

"We are fine, or at least I am father," Luke protested. Harry muttered something under his breath that no one managed to hear well enough to try translating but no one was under the illusion that it was anything pleasant.

"You may be fine now but I certainly don't have to keep you that way. I'll leave the five of you alone for the moment. You can't go anywhere with us being in hyperspace and Luke being collared should keep the rest of you out of too much trouble," Palpatine told them. With that he turned and left the medbay, not even bothering to lock the door behind him.

"I'm starting to hope we show up at Tatooine just so that I can find the Great Pit and feed him to Jabba's pet Sarlacc!" Anakin snarled viciously, slamming his hand into a nearby bulkhead.

"I already know where it is," Luke said softly.

Luke's words froze his father in place as the man turns to stare at his son in horror. Being fed to the Sarlacc was an agonizing death lasting at least several hundred years. It was one of Jabba's favorite party locations and one of the most painful execution choices for those who defied him. One of the primary official uses was to help put down slave rebellions. For Luke to know where it was he had to either have been scheduled for execution and escaped, which almost never happened, or forced to watch someone he cared about executed. When the slavers and Hutts wanted to be sporting they used a Rancor or a Krayt Dragon or sent the person out into the desert wastelands basically naked without a drop of water. The Sarlacc was a whispered terror of a punishment that kept many from
thinking of even trying for freedom. It kept them from trying until the very thought of freedom was stripped from the slave's thoughts by the life and comparably lesser punishments one received as a slave.

"Who?" Anakin's calm deadly voice was implacable. Luke understood what his father was asking and gently corrected him.

"Jabba had Han and Leia was heart broken. I owed him more than enough both under life debts and as a friend that it was more than worth the risk. When Leia went in she was caught trying to free him too soon before we were all in position. Jabba decided to keep her and she was chained to his side when I got there the next day. He dumped me in with his pet Rancor when I insisted on having my friends back. The attempt to feed me to the Sarlacc came after I killed the Rancor," Luke explained. "We walked out of there with only minor damage to my prosthetic hand and Leia having strangled him to death."

"He?! I will kill that filthy Hutt!" Anakin fumed. "And you are grounded for the next decade! Nearly getting yourself tossed into the kiffin Sarlacc of all things!"

"On a completely different note I don't really mind helping these people, the Noghir, but I don't like being forced into things. What do our two Skywalkers know about these people?" Harry inquired. His attempted distraction worked but didn't stop the warning scowl indicating that the discussion wasn't actually over between father and son.

"If it happened in this timeline then what he said was true. A Jedi team with their clone troopers was transporting proof for the Senate that the separatists had been using bio-weapons. Not only are bio-weapons illegal but they do more collateral damage as well as happen to get out of actual control almost the moment they are used. There are a few that rank lower in both those categories but they tend to be used for demonstrations or assassinations and even then most people prefer poison over bio-weapons. Needless to say the Noghir defended themselves from what they thought were attackers from both sides when the battle moved from above the planet to the surface. During that time one of the bio-weapon samples would have gotten loose and devastated their ecology. It would have been less than a year at this point. Also if we successfully help them they will see it as what they call a blood debt and will insist on giving us bodyguards, aligning themselves with us permanently. I don't know how they would deal with our weird disagreement in the group," Anakin explained carefully. "Simply even trying with a measurable difference on any scale they can detect might work as long as we are willing to keep trying. Of course my information is a few years forwards from where we are when the full effect has been felt by all of the Noghir clans."

"Like weaponizing Dragon Pox," Harry nodded his understanding with a grimace even as he translated for his fellow wizards. The looks of sudden horrified comprehension told the other three that both Tom and Severus understood and agreed with the stupidity of weaponizing illness and disease.

"So that's how you got them last time. There were always rumors about them being the Empire's Death Squad. Elite warriors and primary targets because of how dangerous they were," Luke recalled. "Of course any group of six or more had a run on sight order for a group of less than six to one odds in favor of the Alliance or at least a do not engage if at all possible."

"You... I'm not even going to ask," Anakin growled stalking around the medbay like a caged animal.

"I was one of the best the Alliance had just as you were the best the Empire had," Luke responded quietly.

"That doesn't change his feelings as your father," Severus chastised gently. Luke bowed his head in
brief acknowledgement but didn't try to bring Anakin out of his agitation.

A silent agreement was struck that they would simply spend time together while they could. Nothing could be thought of or done about the Noghir until they got to the Honoghr system. It was also understood that taking control of the ship from Palpatine posed too much risk for the moment. All they could do was wait.

Chapter End Notes

Okay guys, seriously, I can only drag out the Star Wars section for so long without more ideas or a list of new universes for them to play in! I've really only been given two suggestions - Naruto & Bleach. More please!

Potential Next Stops:
Naruto - time period up for debate
Star Trek - which one is up for debate
Stargate SG1
Stargate Atlantis
Bleach
Atlantis The Lost Empire
Silent Negotiations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

They stood on a devastated world as they watched the Noghir, approach them. Anakin had briefed them on the likely situation and the culture they would be interacting with. The sheer amount of damage he remembered from his time as Vader prompted Harry to wonder if he could get away with just moving them to a new planet or claiming them under his authority as Death's Master, presuming they agreed with such a suggestion. Everyone just sort of shrugged at the idea and Death laughed in the back of his head making Harry even more suspicious. The matter was mostly dropped for all that it lingered in the air until they arrived on planet.

The Noghir were somewhat small, averaging anywhere between 4'6" to 5'6" in height. Their skulls resembled a dinosaur merged with human features complete with a bone crest of some kind circling their bald heads and black bead like eyes. The skin was a leathery grey-blue that bordered on scales with sharp claws that tipped their five fingered hands. Noghir feet were also something of a reptile version of a human foot with only four toes that had sharp claws to offset the thick layer of natural double leather on the bottom of their feet. Needless to say no shoes were worn, they weren't needed. Harry didn't feel as bad about his stunted growth compared to the Noghir but he also noticed the powerful wiry muscles and lithe forms of each Noghir as they approached.

"I like their pants and tunic setup," Harry murmured thoughtfully. The group had opted to make no aggressive moves and simply wait for the on coming party which were mostly made out of farmers though ones who could clearly fight.

"Remember we want to offer them aid and at least see if any of you can help them. While I am not adverse to lying and betrayal to get what I want in this case we want to be as upfront as possible. As a concession to Luke and Harry's sensibilities I will not force the issue and we will leave as peacefully as is feasible if rebuffed. You have permission to defend yourselves but I don't want any of you too badly damaged," Palpatine instructed quietly. "Incidentally, if our group does get snatched to another universe I will expect to come with you along with any forces or supplies I have gathered and designated to accompany us."

Before any of the others could respond with indignation or outrage to his statement the Noghir had gotten within speaking distance. Anakin took the lead having had extensive exposure to these people and their customs.

"We seek an audience with your Maitrakh and your Dynast. We learned of the damage to your holdings as well as the holdings of the other clans and wish to see if we can offer aid. Your clan is the first for us to approach," Anakin announced with a strong confident voice. He had warned the group not to interfere if they attacked before speaking with them and the group obeyed.

Before anyone could blink five full grown Noghir shot forwards, claws flashing, attempting to gut him or get past him to the rest of the group. Mindful of what was at stake and his son's presence behind him Anakin didn't hesitate. Three of them were dead by the time his lightsaber was fully drawn in flaring blue and positioned in a starting kata. The other two attackers were still reeling back from light flesh wounds they had been given as a warning. Flesh wounds that were still smoking from the lightsaber burns.

"Maybe I should ask for sword and lightsaber lessons. That move would have come in really handy a bunch of different times," Harry muttered slightly resentful of his own stubbornness. He was less
inclined to ask for help from Severus and Tom than he should be largely because they had often been enemies or at least open opponents growing up.

"If I can find someone to teach you blades and any other weapon we might come across with enough time between bouts of insanity then I will do my best to see you trained," Severus muttered back.

"We still have yet to sort out your lacking magical education including Occlumency and I have no doubt that at some point you are going to need my skills at espionage."

"Enough, we can discuss what to further train Luke and Harry in later," Palpatine rebuked quietly. "Behave."

"We will get free of you at some point," Luke shot back hotly. "We will not remain your slaves if we can help it."

At those words the Noghir visibly backed off from the group, watching them carefully.

"Did I forget to mention exactly how good their senses are? They heard you all more clearly than I did. I also picked a clan that had some knowledge of basic so that I wouldn't have to kill as many of them before we could actually talk. They also don't like any form of slavery," Anakin reminded them in an aggrieved tone.

"It's not like Palpy gave us much choice," Harry snarked right back. "I mean he's got an explosive collar on Luke. I bet the only reason I'm not sporting one as well is that he hasn't got a second one or he thinks our magic will set off the trigger on accident. That and I was unconscious after what happened so I wasn't a potential threat while we were in the ship."

Luke had been fitted with a much more discrete collar though one no less dangerous to him. His original one had also prevented the use of the force and couldn't be slid under a shirt collar. His new one would still kill him but it didn't block the use of the force and was slim enough to be mistaken for jewelry. Palpatine had muttered something offhand about it being a contingency plan for dealing with Anakin and Padme before hastily retreating to let the others calm down.

"Rather you have been much more reasonable and less reckless then our two Skywalkers. All five of you know our situation isn't as straightforward as Master and Slaves. I won't deny that there are similar elements but I also won't deny that our situation is hardly normal. Besides you promised to at least look at the damage and try to see if you could fix it once you learned about it. I could have tried doing this with you all fighting me the whole way but you had no problem with at least seeing if you could help. The situation within our group is just that, within our group," Palpatine reminded them testily.

Palpatine was beginning to think this was a bad idea. He was also beginning to realize exactly what Severus had meant about Harry's luck. He had found himself being exceptionally lenient, almost to the point of feeling protective and possessive of these men. It wasn't going to stop him from getting what he wanted but it did reduce how often he took offense or felt he had to punish them for whatever reason. It was aggravating and yet he wasn't sure that he minded all that much.

"As you pointed out you just want a few of their warriors. We on the other hand would prefer to actually help people," Anakin retorted. He had relaxed from his sword stance but hadn't yet put away his lightsaber.

Severus and Tom exchanged looks of "you see what we have to deal with?" with a few of the observing group of Noghir. In response they got "how do you put up with them?/are you all insane?/you have our sympathies" sent their way.
"I don't suppose it occurred to you that I might want them for reasons other than in the previous timeline? Such as training for you, your son, and Harry? Or that I might want them in case we run into something that we can't handle considering they are very good at what they do when acting as bodyguards? We have no idea what we are going to face next and until our group has adapted to whatever common dangerous situation may come up we need to survive long enough to get the training. The force will only help us so much and there is a distinct possibility of loosing access to the force by different reality factors. It isn't like we were going to lie," Palpatine pointed out coldly.

"I wouldn't necessarily say that," Harry said with a scathing look aimed at the Sith Lord.

"Let's at least determine if we can even help before we start arguing about motives and what either side might want in trade," Tom put in pointedly.

"If we find another Basilisk you get to talk it out of trying to eat us," Harry shot back irritably. "The last time your stupid diary had it chasing me all over the bloody chamber and I still got bit when I was forced to kill it."

Hearing this Tom whirled around from where he had started moving to examine a few of the sickly crops to stare at Harry in shock. He hadn't realized those memory fragments from the various Horcruxes were real.

"What exactly are you talking about?" Severus asked suspiciously. He really hoped he was wrong in his worrisome guess... he wasn't.

"The Chamber of Secrets in second year? Didn't Dumbledore tell the staff?" Harry asked with a frown.

"He said that you stumbled upon the chamber but it became sealed after you retrieved Miss. Weasely and that the beast had been dealt with. There were almost no details," Severus said with a frown. "What wasn't I told?"

Harry didn't answer, instead choosing to mutter insults against Dumbledore under his breath as he stalked away towards a sick looking patch of vegetation near a visible water hole.

"He moves like some of the slaves on Tattooine did at times," Luke observed quietly. "Too much quiet, too many hidden flinches, favoring old injuries that still hurt and walking to hide the weakness."

"I wasn't aware of that," Palpatine said, eyes narrowed after the young wizard in thoughtful scrutiny.

"I wouldn't have said anything but the medbay let me get a better idea of what was wrong. His magic is dulling a lot of the pain and always trying to fix what it finds but if he wasn't magical I don't think he would have ever reached school. I'm the only one you've punished since our situation changed but I think... I think we need to assume that his injuries could be killing him. He's too used to danger and fighting for his life, taking damage the human body isn't meant to survive..." Luke told them.

"Are you all willing to accept that what happened was a... mistake on my part? Will you attack me if I simply remove the collar on young Luke?" Palpatine asked with a grimace. Yes, Harry's transformative luck was definitely at play here.

"We really shouldn't but as you said our group situation is weird. We've been running around solving the galaxy's problems but we should have sorted our group out first," Anakin admitted with a grimace of his own. "Especially with taking care of Luke and Harry. Neither of them have had proper med checks and if we accidentally run into something either of them are allergic to or need something to cure something else that causes problems we won't know."
Before they could discuss it further Harry gave out a sharp cry near the pool of water and collapsed before being cocooned in something. The purple material that made up a sort of webbed dome cocoon around him seemed like cotton candy from a distance. As they rapidly approached in worry over Harry and curiosity on the part of the Noghir they realized it was pulsing with a gentle inner light.

"I think most of our weird luck has decided to target Harry specifically," Luke said carefully as the two groups looked over what had swallowed Harry.

The first instinct had been to drag him out of the cocoon. It was Anakin, Luke, and Palpatine who heard the force almost laughing in joyful delight that stopped everyone else from doing just that. Twenty minutes later the cocoon broke down in brittle pieces around Harry, leaving him lying there among the fragile shards. Shards that would be dissolved into nothingness within a few hours.

"They only need to wait a decade or two until the planet fixes its self. The cold season is going to drop the temperature down low enough to freeze the soil in a couple of years and kill what's left of the bio-weapon that hasn't already burnt out. The plants and stuff need time to regrow but they should be fine in the long term. It would be a different matter if the stupid thing had been designed even slightly differently but we lucked out. This one was set up with a short recovery cycle. Apparently the idiots planning to use it wanted it as an invasion tool instead of a salt the earth kind of thing," Harry grumbled sitting up. Everyone saw that he had a rapidly fading marking of thick purple slashes on either cheek but was otherwise unharmed.

"The planet told you?" Luke guessed. Harry nodded, wanting to curl up and go right back to sleep.

"Let's get back to the ship," Palpatine sighed. "Anything else can be discussed later."

The Noghir watched silently as this strange mostly unrelated clan (a new clan?) gathered up the one to speak for them to the very world beneth their feet. The group had an invisible Noghir escort back to the ship but nothing more was said until they were inside once more. No one Noghir or human quite knew what might happen next.

Chapter End Notes

As before * = 1 vote and only the name is only 1 vote total
Potential Next Stops:

***Naruto - time period up for debate

***Inuyasha

Card Captor Sukura

**Star Trek - which one is up for debate

Sword Art Online - give Harry/Luke a dragon, combine with SG1 virtual reality ep?

**Stargate SG1

Stargate Atlantis

Vorkosigan
Harrington

**Bleach**

***Atlantis: The Lost Empire***

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Greek Mythology - underworld

Avatar

**Avatar: The Last Airbender**

**Hellsing**

X-Men

Robin Hood (Sheriff meets Severus)

Firefly

**Sherlock**

Pern

**Discworld**

Xanth

**Buffy the Vampire Slayer** - rampant Vampirism, but especially The Master in season one or perhaps some consequences for Willow resurrecting Buffy at the beginning of season six

**Doctor Who/Torchwood** - though Jack would appreciate being mortal again despite becoming a fixed point once he's the Face of Boe. He could end up as a companion for Harry's crew at some point after his whole Torchwood team was killed off, however.

The Sentinel

****Middle Earth/Lord of the Rings/Hobbit - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux

Assassin's Creed

**Sailor Moon** - season four's Queen Nehelenia in particular could fall under Harry's job

Halo

**Highlander**

**Fairy Tail**

***Marvel Universe***

**DC Universe**
Possible Pern snippet:

They land on Pern in the middle of a hatching ceremony, Harry/Luke gets dragon/firelizard?

"You bonded with a **dragon**?! Was out flying the Horntail not enough?!" Severus demanded incredulously.

"Er, that's not the only time I've dealt with a dragon?" Harry laughed nervously.

"What next? Stealing one of the Gringotts guard dragons?!" Severus threw his hands up in exasperation.

"Um, we kind already did that. It was how we escaped with the cup horcrux..." Harry offered sheepishly.

Severus stared at him for a moment before stalking over to him only to grab his ear and start dragging him away by it. Both Harry and his new baby dragon objected loudly and Severus found himself pinned under the protesting hatchling next to Harry though both were unharmed.
Luke bolted upright in bed only to find himself in the middle of being grabbed by a group of Noghir. Once he was subdued a single one of his kidnappers carried him like a recalcitrant child out of his room and off the ship. As he hung limply over the shoulder of his captor he found that the rest of the group was in the same position except for Harry. Harry in turn was cradled protectively in the arms of his captor as if he were an infant, complete with being swaddled in some sort of cloak or cloth. His open exhaustion, one of the reasons for the return to the ship in the first place, had him fighting to stay awake.

"Don't let them try to take the anklet off," Palpatine rasped. "Its got the same micro explosives that Luke's necklace has."

In reward for his warning the Sith got a vicious gut punch and much rougher handling than the rest of them as they were carted away.

Harry hadn't even noticed the discrete anklet that had made its way on to him at some point since their capture by Palpatine. Which was probably the whole point but it didn't make him any happier about it. No matter how much he fought the call of his body as they traveled to who knew where with their latest captors Harry eventually slipped into the realm of dreams.

"Master," Death greeted him in a swirling dreamscape of nothing but fog.

"Hullo Death," Harry greeted absently, somewhat disconnected from himself.

"I have a few things to impart to you," Death informed him gravely. "First you may run into a few of my alternate manifestations at some point. Have no fear they all still answer to you even if they have to make a scene to keep up appearances. Second anyone under your authority has their aging frozen. In the case of minors this happens once they are full grown and past the age of majority unless otherwise arranged. Accelerated healing is something that can be unlocked but is not yet available to the others in your group."

"That's nice... do you know where the Noghir are taking us?" Harry asked absently.

"To see their leader and their Matriarch. I look forwards to seeing how you handle it. As such I will leave you to your healing rest. Good day," Death answered in amusement before allowing his master's sleep to deepen into a dreamless healing rest.

Harry woke to a muffled yelp of pain and a quietly hissed conversation. He felt warm, wrapped up in something like blankets or fur. He was also far too comfy and didn't want too wake up.

"You'll wake Harry," Luke warned softly near his head.

"I'm up," Harry mumbled even as he failed to open his eyes or force himself upright.

"No you're not," Luke laughed softly. "Go back to sleep, nothing is happening yet."

Harry obeyed, gratefully drifting into a timeless doze as the murmuring of quiet conversation lulled him deeper.
A sharp jolt of someone falling into him woke Harry again later, dumping adrenaline into his system. He held still, trying to fight off the lingering disorientation of sleep while attempting to figure out what was going on. Whoever had fallen on him was just as quickly dragged off of him with a quiet breathless curse.

"We are well aware that we failed in protecting him but that doesn't change the fact that he is ours to protect. We know very little of your people and did not know of your plight until our captor insisted on coming here. Anakin has some knowledge of your people which is what we used when we arrived. It was Harry's need to help you that got him into this mess," Severus informed someone unseen archly.

Harry almost giggled at the clear irritation in the man's voice with the way he sounded like a cross between an offended peacock and a protective mother lion or a mother bear. He just knew that the man would protest most viciously at the thought of being compared to a lion. Meh, if Severus made him explain his amusement he could always substitute a panther or jaguar for the lion in the imagery.

"~Will you not speak with us?~" came a distinctly feminine hiss of a variant of Parseltongue.

"~You speak the language of Serpents?!~" that shocked hiss was clearly Tom.

"What in all the hells are you doing?" Palpatine asked oblivious to the fact it was actual speech. The smack of reptile leather against human skin was audible and had Harry instinctively flinching back with a quickly squashed flare of panic before curling up defensively in a ball. A reaction that ended any attempt at playing asleep.


Harry quickly figured out what Severus was doing. The cover of him being upset to stretch out his magic and senses to look at the room was a good one. It would tell him more about everything without revealing that he was perfectly capable of fighting back. Too bad someone else figured out before he could do anything.

"~There is no need for such subterfuge,~" the female parselmouth laughed softly. "~Besides your kind can not control your scents well.~"

"Severus, enhanced senses," Tom sighed in English.

"The bane of my existence," Severus joked sourly. He still didn't move away from Harry from what the younger wizard could tell.

"~Tom?~" Harry hissed, giving up the play acting as a bad job.

"When did you learn Parseltongue?" Tom asked in sudden exasperation.

"I've only known about it since I accidentally set a boa on my cousin about a month before my school letter came. Then when I used it in second year the school vilified me for it, thanks for that by the way. I just... stopped using it around people," Harry snarked back as he tried to sit up. The only problem was that he found he was trapped very firmly by his bed covers.

"Problem?" Anakin asked with an audible knowing smirk.

"Ugh, I'm trapped by the bedding," Harry grumbled, earning a laugh from the two Skywalkers of his
group but also freedom from willing human hands.

When he finally got a good look at the room he was surprised at what he saw. His group was shuffled into a relative corner with a bed underneath them mostly made of a pile of blankets and furs. He got the feeling that it was more of a personal choice of the decorator than a normal part of Noghir society. The room itself was large, almost amphitheater sized, containing various pieces of what could only be memorial art and primitive weapons, mostly knives, adorning the circular walls. Sunlight filled the room from invisible sources scattered in the ceiling. Eventually his eyes came back to the very obvious reason why their group was shuffled off against a wall well away from the doorway. The room was filled with Noghir.

There had to be at least a couple hundred Noghir of every age and maturity and they were all watching him.

"What did I do?" Harry asked flatly turning to his former professor.

"You got yourself cocooned in some purple material by what appeared to be an unknown magic or at least an unknown energy field. You were naturally released by it within half an hour only to have purple facial markings, which quickly faded, and announced that the bio-weapon would cease affecting anyone shortly. The specific time frame you gave was a couple of years until the weapon finally died off completely as well as ten to twenty years for full recovery of both plants and animals. Luke asked if you had spoken with the planet and you said yes. You quickly fell asleep and have been resting ever since. At a rough guess its been several days since your... adventure," Severus told him, completely unimpressed.

"Weird stuff again... okay am a I at least not some sort of chosen one or in a prophecy or anything?" Harry asked in a mix of wry desperation.

"Not that I'm aware of but we have received little information since being... collected from our ship," Severus told him bluntly.

"~You have fierce protectors for all that they lack claws,~" the female voice from earlier hissed at him in amusement, drawing his eyes to the speaker. She was one of the older Noghir and richly decked out in colorful heavy woven patterns that would obviously provide extra warmth to the wearer. There were also hand crafted beads of bone, wood, and other unknown materials. A very deliberate pattern of three scarred slashes had been carved along her jaw on either side of her chin, extending slightly upwards in a curve effect towards her cheek bones.

"~Hello,~" Harry greeted warily.

"~I am the Matriarch of our clan, the spiritual leader. You have done us a great service yet it disturbs us that you have been enslaved. Once we were also bound until all clans of our people broke free. Do you wish us to free you?~" the Matriarch asked very carefully. There were very old tales of Noghir who refused to be parted from their masters and would even kill themselves if freed anyway. This one who spoke an ancient tongue yet was of a different species was special. He had given them hope. They could not loose him to the bondage sickness.

"~Actually, he hasn't held us for long. We knew he was dangerous but he had worked with us long enough with little problems that we dropped our guard. He had agreed to work for Harry for a time but he and another who is now dead turned on us. The problem is that he placed an explosive device on both Luke and Harry, effectively leashing all five of us. At first we believed he had only placed one on Luke but we were proven wrong,~" Tom explained honestly.

"I should have left him as a child's toy for longer," Harry grumbled in open irritation. Palpatine eyed
him warily but moved as if he was injured drawing Harry's sharp eye. "What happened to you?"

"I appear to have displeased our captors. So far its only bruising, nothing to worry over too much aside from being tender and before you ask no one else is hurt beyond more than a few bumps and scrapes. They were much more gentle with them than with myself," Palpatine answered carefully eyeing their hosts.

"~How do we break the bonds?~" the Matriarch inquired softly.

"Er, she wants to know how to get the collar off Luke and the anklet off of me," Harry translated hesitantly.

"I'll do it now if they will allow me near you," Palpatine offered.

"No trickery," a large male Noghir barked out in english. Palpatine nodded his agreement before very carefully removing first Luke's collar and then Harry's anklet using a combination of his hands and the force. They were quickly taken by one of the Noghir, disappearing out of the room

Anakin and Luke instinctively moved to shield the three wizards as Palpatine exploded into force enhanced action in an attempt to escape what the force whispered was to be his demise. The Sith Lord tried darting one way and then another, his speed blinding before finally attempting to simply leap over the gathered Noghir. Without his lightsaber, which was left on the ship, he never had a chance. Flashing claws blooded him, slowly weakening him until he could no longer dodge the grasping, dangerous, clawed hands. He was violently pulled down before being knocked out and dragged away.


"What happens to all here who seek to own the flesh on the bones of another," an old male Noghir snorted, baring his sharp teeth in a vicious grin.

An explosion of darkness in the force knocked everyone to the floor as Palpatine died under the blades of the Noghir. Half the adult male Noghir rushed to investigate while the others arranged themselves defensively between everyone else and the doorway. Several minutes later most of the investigators returned.

"He took our warriors in his death. I know not how or why but his body is gone our six clansmen laid out around a scorch mark the size of the enemy in the execution positions," the lead male reported solemnly. "I ordered the burial of our dead and additional burning of the enemy remains."

"I will purify the area later," the Matriarch promised, proving that she could speak english. She reached into a pouch before turning towards the humans, drawing out a measure of some sort of powder.

The powder flew into Harry's face from her swift throw, making him sneeze hard enough to double over. When he raised his head again with eyes watering and sniffing his nose they all saw something on his cheeks. Their was a quiet gasp as everyone recognized the purple slashes from the cocoon glowing slightly in comparison to the new markings. They were some sort of black flame like markings rolling away from the broad slashes on his skin as if the fire was blown into by a strong wind, splitting it down the center. All of the markings quickly faded away after that, revealing Harry's natural skin tone once more.

"There is a tale of one who is marked as a friend of the Noghir by our ancestors. It has been fulfilled several times in new and different ways each time but is still thought to be naught more than child's
tellings. The truth is taught to the Maitrakhs, the Matriarchs and the Dynasts, the clan leaders. A mark is rarely given to indicate status as friend of a clan, even more rare is the mark declaring the status of friend to all Noghir. What mark you carry tells of an ancient blood debt and yet we Noghir now own you another for telling us of the healing of the wound to our world," the Matriarch announced gravely, Harry had a bad feeling about all of this as she continued speaking. "The telling of the tale claims that the female who earned the first great debt used part of her very life blood to help free the Noghir from an ancient bondage. The purple markings to herself and her line were a part of the cost. It was a wise old Maitrakh that discovered a way to hide the marks from the enemies she had gained on our behalf and return her to her home. The debt is now two fold offspring of Freedom Mother."

Harry just swore before choosing to glare moodily at thin air, refusing to acknowledge what he knew was now likely to happen.

"What does this entail?" Anakin asked carefully. "I know of only one way Noghir blood debts are discharged. Guarding of the line to whom the debt is owed."

"It is the same yet more. Our clan will fulfill the blood debt of the Noghir to the Freedom Child. Freedom Child Dynast, do you wish the clan to leave with you or should we arrange for a dwelling for you?" the Matriarch asked inquisitively.

"No debt is owed and if any remain I forgive it as a symbol of my respect of you and your people. Your actions and that of your people are faultless and honorable," Harry told them formally with a slight bow from his still seated position..

"Don't listen to him. He isn't aware of certain parts of his heritage that make that an insult," Death's voice echoed around the room before anyone could react to Harry's words.

"What insult?! They don't need to be catering to my every whim and I'm not even sure of what I did. Nothing I did should deserve any honor or debt and I don't know hardly anything about my ancestry so I can't know if I have any claim on anything. I didn't ask for fame or anything like that. I just wanted to..." Harry trailed off remembering that they had an uninitiated audience to their argument.

"You wanted to simply be. You wished for your own freedom from those of your own blood who had turned hateful enough to enslave you by their actions against you. In spite of that you fulfilled more than one of the plans of the fates, falling into the role of my master. Accept their gift of joining your household. By accepting this clan you further free the other Noghir and give your clan a new life on a new world. I will do the rest Little Master," Death scolded gently.

Harry sighed in defeat and nodded his acceptance. The last thing he saw was a flash of blinding white light.

Chapter End Notes

This is the last chance to cast universe votes

* = 1 vote, this was changed to make it easier to compare.

Potential Next Stops and ratings:

Naruto - time period up for debate
Inuyasha

Card Captor Sukura

Star Trek - which one is up for debate

Star Trek: 2009

Sword Art Online - give Harry/Luke a dragon, combine with SG1 virtual reality ep?

Stargate SG1

Stargate Atlantis

Vorkosigan

Harrington

Bleach

Atlantis: The Lost Empire

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Greek Mythology - underworld

Avatar

Avatar: The Last Airbender

Hellsing

X-Men

Robin Hood: King of Thieves (Sheriff played by Alan Rickman meets Severus & make the Merry Men sing the Robin Hood Men in Tights song)

Firefly

Sherlock

Pern

Discworld

Xanth

Buffy the Vampire Slayer - rampant Vampirism, but especially The Master in season one or perhaps some consequences for Willow resurrecting Buffy at the beginning of season six
Doctor Who/Torchwood - though Jack would appreciate being mortal again despite becoming a fixed point once he's the Face of Boe. He could end up as a companion for Harry's crew at some point after his whole Torchwood team was killed off, however.

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The Sentinel

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Middle Earth/Lord of the Rings/Hobbit - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux

**********

World War Z - brief stop only 1 or 2 chapters (substitued for Walking Dead)

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Assassin's Creed

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Sailor Moon - season four's Queen Nehelenia in particular could fall under Harry's job

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Halo

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Highlander

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Fairy Tail

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Marvel Universe

*****

DC Universe

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DBZ

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Cases Close/Detective Conan

*

Percy Jackson

***

Riddick/Pitch Black

*
Harry knew that he had stopped Palpatine's dangerous attempts at wiping out an entire planet in exchange for an immortally extended life span. He also knew he had some how stopped the very same idea but done using clones in some fashion. He knew that the members of the 501st along with Kenobi and his 212th had been collected to his vacation estate as part of his household when each of them died. The last thing he knew was that he was no longer in the Star Wars Universe.

The sound of flying papers in a storm of movement filled Harry with sudden dread as he forced himself to open his eyes. He promptly regretted his need to confirm his suspicions. Sprawled around him on the smooth concrete floor were the two Skywalkers, Tom, and Severus. Flying around the group in a blizzard were walls of flying paper and parchment automatically filing themselves in an eerily familiar pattern of landings, filing cabinets, darting swooping paperwork. A storm that had given Harry nightmares in days past. They were inside Death's Filing System.

Just as he was starting to move to check on the others the floor disappeared underneath them. Harry grabbed for them in mid-air with his hands and his magic. His magic then cocooned them close together, wrapping them in protective power. He passed out when they landed in something that felt like clouds.

The smell of disinfectants, clean linens, and quietly moving air met the five travelers as they slowly woke.

"Not again," Anakin moaned before he was even properly awake.

"Yes, again. You need to be more careful Knight Skywalker. One day you won't be near a healer," a woman huffed indignantly.

"Jocelyn?" Anakin muttered. "You died when the temple fell. I couldn't get to the infirmary before the chipped clones to try and get the healers out."

"Ah, apparently the Council's briefing was... prudent. I will tell you this now, if you start on that Vader nonsense again you will be in for many painful tests the next time I or any of my staff get their hands on you again. Have I made myself clear Anakin Skywalker?" Jocelyn demanded.

"Yes ma'am," Anakin said meekly.

Harry finally cracked open his eyes to watch this interesting show down only to force himself not to break out in laughter. Anakin was being stared down by an exceptionally short person. She couldn't have been more than 4'5". Harry presumed from the conversation that she was a Jedi Healer. The pointed ears and elfin appearance made her look more adorable than anything else but the long stare she was giving Anakin was simply priceless.

"Now, unfortunately your recent adventures have exposed all of you to a nasty contagion. I managed to inoculate my staff quickly enough but until I've personally cleared you all of you will remain in the quarantine ward. Your son is in good health aside from the tiredness you will all be feeling fighting off the minor infection that set in after we killed the nasty one. Mr. Potter is going to be in for a bit of a rough time unless his magic compensates particularly well. Both Mr. Snape and Mr. Riddle should be fine aside from tiredness," Jocelyn reported as she moved around checking all of them.
"Are you treating this as if I'm on bodyguard duty with Luke as my Padawan?" Anakin asked with a yawn as he sat up in bed.

"Yes," she said succinctly. "Your permanent assignment to this group is in your file as well as the fact that three of you attract trouble like the plague. Masters Kenobi, Poe, Kenjab, and Daunt have been informed of not only your arrival but of your current health status. For the foreseeable future Mr. Potter will be remaining in bed. I am also to inform you that the 501st is set up in the same wing as the Noghir. As per the rules of the household everyone was informed when Mr. Potter arrived and what condition he was in. Is there anything else that you know of which I might need to check?"

"Ah, explosive devices that are typically placed in slaves," Anakin said almost ashamedly. "You need to especially check Harry and Luke. I don't trust that the explosive anklet and collar were the only things he placed on them to control the five of us. I... might have one from childhood. Obi-Wan said that he made them take it out but I never saw it. I also don't know if one was placed after the temple fell or any time since this began."

The silence stretched between them until Jocelyn finally spoke.

"This should have been one of the first things in your file. Did you erase it?" Jocelyn asked tightly. She knew he was good with any kind of technology and this wouldn't have been the first time that a Padawan or Jedi had messed with their records to hide something.

"Ah no. I... no. Even at nine I knew better than to mess with medical records without a serious reason. Records and such even names were precious on Tatooine. Sometimes its all we slaves had and even then we often would sabotage slave databases and records or change them to keep what family we had from being collected as well. Those who didn't at least try to keep quiet were silenced as a threat to the rest of us, a proven snitch," Anakin explained quietly. "I... had to watch once just before Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan arrived and won me my freedom."

"I want you fill out a file with as much about your health and history as you can remember, injuries, healings, possible mental trauma. I will compare it to what I have on file. Do the same for the others and explain to them how to do it for themselves. I will be expecting five files from each of you on each of you. This will help me spot possible problems in the future with what you may not even know is there. While you are each writing up your reports I will see about food," Jocelyn ordered tightly. As she turned to leave she called over her shoulder. "And Mr. Potter I expect you to stay in bed. Until we've sorted out your vitamin deficiencies no healer, force, or magic will be able to properly repair the cracks forming in your bones or keep your insides working."

"Yes ma'am," Harry said softly. Healer Jocelyn nodded firmly in approval before walking out of the room.

"How much did you guys hear?" Anakin asked guiltily.

"All of it," Tom answered for them.

"Exactly how truthful do we have to be on this form?" Luke asked casually.

"As truthful as possible. This isn't for general reading or public consumption. The reason she needs the personal history to go with the medical one is because there are some nasty hallucination inducing things that will actually help you lash out against the nightmares its producing. The problem is that you typically smash anything around you in the process or attack the healers with everything you have plus whatever was given to you by what made you sick. If you've been in a fire or near one you might find yourself literally being burned live in body and mind," Anakin answered firmly. "They need to know some of this stuff ahead of time and sometimes it will take an experience or
nightmare, twisting it until its manifested in reality. Admittedly having to physically fight what ever it is that becomes real on your own is rare but it also happens more often with force users because of our connection to the force."

They all winced at that and silently agreed to just get it over with. By the time Jocelyn got back with food and some visitors they were hard at work writing up their reports. It took her six weeks to heal what damage she could find in most of the group except Harry using every force healing trick and advanced medical technique the healers had brought with them. Healing Harry took ten. The only reason it didn't take longer with his long term malnutrition issues is that Severus found a fully stocked potions lab somewhere.

Of course since the healing didn't normally trap them in the infirmary beyond Harry's recovery from that first infection none of them willingly stayed there. They took a week to relax and just explore the inhabited section of Harry's estate. Death would later inform him that they didn't just have a few miles to play with but the entire planet. To top it off the planet they were on was a version of Earth that had never hosted humans or any other sentient species, a virgin world. He also informed Harry that technically they were in a private pocket dimension belonging to Harry.

Death didn't bother telling his young master that staying dead in this pocket universe was mostly limited to non-sentient life forms except under certain specific circumstances. Age was not one of the reasons for death here and there was a subtle healing field. The healing field was mainly to keep anyone from being trapped in a crippled old body without intentional magic being part of the cause.

"Harry, we waited for you to be fully healed before starting Occlumency lessons. This was done largely because I did in fact notice how much my previous method seemed to negatively affect you. I admit that I didn't have a choice in which method was used and we were extremely pressed for time, not to mention the other factors in our lives at the time. As such I thought it would be prudent to also ask Tom to help me teach you and have Obi-Wan teach you the basics of meditation. He informed me yesterday that you are sufficiently well along to start reaching for the force," Severus informed Harry. He had cornered him in one of the guarders near where everyone was staying in the massive maze-like building that was the estate Death had given Harry.

"Teaching you the mind arts may one day save lives," Tom added softly. "Of course both of us know that you tend to prefer movement and were forced to pick up combat quickly. The Noghir and both the 212st as well as the 501st are very interested in helping you train your combat skills, as well as wanting to teach you new ones. All three groups have already been caught plotting laser tag and paint ball campaigns along with a few of the traditional Noghir training games. I believe most of them were horrified at how little training you had received to defeat me and your DA took it upon themselves to join in with the war games."

"Which means all of them are going to be pulling stuff on each other and learning to work together. Not to mention that the twins will pick people out of each group and teach them pranking," Harry groaned.

"At least they will be used to working with each other and their more unusual abilities in a fight," Luke snickered from his position off to one side lazing by a bubbly stream.

"We don't know how long we have until we have to leave again," Tom pointed out. "He, you, and your father are trouble magnets. Trouble magnets we want to keep alive but trouble magnets all the same. Actually, Luke, you might benefit from participating in some of the mock campaigns. Harry will certainly be asked to join in after he has a way to shield his mind and some very basic training in various blades. As the leader and protectee he needs to be aware of not only his own limits and skills but that of the people around him."
"I want dueling practice too," Harry grumped as he forced himself up off of the soft green moss. "I need a better idea how to fight with everything than just whatever comes to me in the moment."

"We'll also teach you moving meditation at some point and then move on to meditation during tasks and during combat," Severus assured him. "It will help you pick out things in the middle of moving and plan ahead during split seconds of time in a fight."


"Don't even joke about that! You did not witness the impossibilities that occurred during his school days," Severus growled, obviously miffed. "Besides he isn't suited for a Unicorn in the least. He's more likely to be a Nundu or something ridiculous that isn't known to exist yet, anymore, or at all. Something like a magical flying panther or a dinosaur. I wouldn't put it past him to have multiple forms in all those categories and more."

Once the Occlumency lessons started they not only found shocking damage in Harry's mind but a natural affinity for mental defense. What really threw everyone for a loop was Harry's memories of his adventures.

Severus stormed out of the room cursing. He had just come across Harry's first memory of Slytherin's Basilisk. Watching that great beast exiting the mouth of the statue had terrified him. It had been even worse when he had seen little twelve year old Harry within striking distance.

"Severus!" Tom called chasing after the man and leaving a bewildered Harry behind with a concerned Obi-Wan.

"You knew how large that Basilisk was! Yet you said nothing," Severus accused, turning to snarl at the former Dark Lord.

"I understand," Tom soothed. "I care about him too. Do you think it was any more pleasant for me to realize the memory of watching him facing and killing the old girl was real? That the scattered memories I received from the pieces of my soul were real? That the copies of his memories from the scar horcrux were real?! No my friend, I was just as horrified as you are now."

"I have guarded him since he was eleven! I should have been there!" Severus fretted. "His recklessness and need to save everyone will get him killed!"

"Then we will keep pulling him out of trouble. We will stay by his side and keep him as safe as possible," Tom retorted firmly. "You and I have both wronged him but we never betrayed him. We can make him review the supposed adventures in front of the clones to make him better understand. To teach him to do better so that he isn't relying on his insane luck."

"We might as well use Luke's memories as well," Severus snorted in amusement as he finally wrestled his volatile emotions back under control.

"This is the perfect training opportunity. If we can't teach Harry self preservation then we can at least teach the others about his knack for trouble and how it might manifest," Tom said persuasively.

"At least he has started incorporating things into his mental defenses and the mental worlds he built when he was younger," Severus grudgingly acknowledged.

"Exactly," Tom agreed in relief. "Shall we send him to his campaign planning session with the clones early? Or knife training with the Noghir?"
"Lets send him to close quarters combat with both groups. They can quiz him while he fights. It will help his concentration, stamina, and situational awareness," Severus caved. He badly needed a drink and a proper Slytherin plotting session with Tom. Their reckless Gryffindor needed a better plan to keep him intact.

Chapter End Notes

Should I show a practice battle in this private world? How about the memory dissections? Or should I just pick the next universe and move on? *smirk*
You guys decide!

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
One more chance to vote on universe!
Parts of the list have been culled by Musey or due to lack of votes. Please read the whole list and pick 3!

Potential Next Stops:

Naruto - time period up for debate, taking one-tail from Garra?
************
Inuyasha
************
Card Captor Sukura
****
Sword Art Online - give Harry/Luke a dragon, combine with SG1 virtual reality ep?
*
Stargate SG1
******
Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats
**
Bleach
*******
Atlantis: The Lost Empire
****
Avatar
***
Avatar: The Last Airbender
*******
Hellsing
****
Robin Hood: King of Thieves (Sheriff played by Alan Rickman meets Severus)
*****
Sherlock
*****
Pern
**************
Discworld
***
Xanth
***
Buffy the Vampire Slayer - rampant Vampirism, but especially The Master in season one or perhaps some consequences for Willow resurrecting Buffy at the beginning of season six
****

Doctor Who/Torchwood - though Jack would appreciate being mortal again despite becoming a fixed point once he's the Face of Boe. He could end up as a companion for Harry's crew at some point after his whole Torchwood team was killed off, however.
***

Middle Earth/Lord of the Rings/Hobbit - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux

**************

Zombie universe - brief stop only 1 or 2 chapters (substituted for Walking Dead, World War Z, Resident Evil - Combo Universe?)
***

Sailor Moon - season four's Queen Nehelenia in particular could fall under Harry's job
*****

Halo - pit stop?
*

Marvel Universe (X-Men and Avengers have been merged with this)

******

DC Universe
**

Percy Jackson
*****

Riddick/Pitch Black - Master of Death vs. Necromongers
***
Three days later Harry grew claws and drew blood on his Noghir trainer. The two sprang apart, one from the sudden sting of pain and the other from the sudden wetness on his strangely feeling hands. The shock had the two staring at the other before both their eyes quickly fell to a blood covered fully human hand just loosing the last of the claws to blunt finger nails. A single strip of cloth fluttered to the floor from his fingers, covered lightly in blood.

"Ah... that was new?" Harry offered tentatively.

"Yes, it was," his Noghir sparring partner chuckled. He did a brief check on the wound, noting that while bleeding freely it wasn't actually all that serious, just a flesh wound. "We may yet be able to teach you some of the claw forms if you can do that again."

"Thank you? Its interesting learning from you," Harry offered, absently cleaning his hand on his shirt.

"Lets get cleaned up. There is a special strategy session today," the Noghir trainer suggested. Harry nodded agreement and they did just that with the Noghir getting bandaged up. By the time they were done everyone on the estate had assembled in what had been tentatively dubbed the strategy room.

The modified pensive was a new addition and Harry had the sinking feeling that his memories were about to get picked through by everyone.

"Tom and I realized that you need a better idea of what our people are capable of and exactly how Harry's strange luck tends to factor into that. When we further considered it we decided that because Anakin and Luke display a similar knack for interesting situations that it might not be a bad idea to go over memories. The memories will come from various situations and various people involved. This will further allow for more tailored training and a better awareness of exactly how strange the situation can get with only one of our trouble magnets involved. We will have to wait for their joint luck to kick in together to find out how having multiple people with insane luck involved actually affects things. On the plus side the memories we will be picking apart can be used as training scenarios and our magic can recreate the battle fields," Severus announced firmly.

"Who's idea was this?" Harry asked suspiciously.

"Mine. Its a better alternative to letting Severus murder you for your adventures and gave him time to calm down," Tom answered promptly.

"Fair enough," Harry agreed grudgingly.

"We can start with one of my memories... My mistake with the Wampa on Hoth," Luke offered up.
Tom collected the memory while Luke studiously avoided looking at his father who was in turn giving him the *look*.

The memory was short and to the point, starting when Luke had woken up upside down with his feet frozen to the ceiling of the ice cave and ended when he rushed out of the cave directly into the blizzard.

"Let me guess you nearly froze to death in that mess," Anakin said sarcastically.

"Han found me," Luke shrugged, uncomfortable with exactly how close he had come to death if it hadn't been for his friend.

"Judging by his saber form I am not certain he had much if any training with his lightsaber. That saber swing in particular looked like a cross between something he had seen only once and a clumsy kata from a beginner. Exactly how much practice did you have before needing to use your saber in this instance?" Obi-Wan asked neutrally.

"A few hours with a remote and whatever I could come up with between then and the hungry Wampa. So not much?" Luke winced, flinching from the expected scolding.

"Its a miracle you didn't cut your own arm off. At least you had more training by the time you got to Bespin," Anakin growled in a mix of parental exasperation and protectiveness.

"Where I lost my hand to you in a fight," Luke said dryly. "Out of curiosity did you just loose your temper or were you having trouble holding back in that fight?"

"A bit of both and you have no idea how difficult it was to learn to fight in that armor with four limb replacements. I don't like the movement restrictions of armor but I needed it as part of my life support suit to simply survive on the battle field and as Palpatine's Apprentice. Sith teaching methods mostly consist of a short lesson and then battering or torturing the student until they get it right," Anakin admitted. "Which was one of the reasons arguing Palpatine into much more gentle teaching methods that actually require some patience was such a big thing before we left Yavin IV."

"Why don't we pick apart that fight. Who is going to donate the memory?" Obi-Wan suggested brightly.

"I will," Anakin said with a sigh. Severus collected the memory with interest, remembering the scene from the Empire Strikes Back movie with fondness.

They watched it and everyone immediately noticed the difference in Luke's style and technical form. On Hoth he had swung the blade like a stick sword rather than a proper strike but when fighting Anakin in the carbon freezing room he was using actual footwork and treating his saber like a blade. They also noticed his aggressiveness at the start. Luke got more cautious as Anakin stopped playing defense and slowly increased his skill level as the fight moved on while conserving his energy. Luke, of course, was using more energy and still mostly on the attack until Anakin really started tossing things at him with the force. Luke managed well enough against the thrown items at first but he quickly lost the necessary situational awareness to keep from getting hurt. They eventually made their way out on to the gantry as Anakin's anger started to clearly affect his combat style. The shoulder strike very obviously got the better of his temper until he saw his son clutching the stump his hand and stopped.

"Yes, very definitely a mix of anger and forgetting to hold back. As a Sith to hold back is often death," Anakin sighed. He still felt guilty about that incident but in some ways he was glad for it. Without Bespin his son would never have come to him on Endor and Luke would have likely fallen
to Palpatine as either another victim or the man's next apprentice. From what he remembered of the movie memories that had been shared during his therapy their link as family had saved them both. Their family bond saved Luke in that it kept him from falling while it had saved Anakin by pulling him from the Dark in order to protect Luke.

"I still did pretty good for what? Three? Six months of training?" Luke smirked even as he surreptitiously flexed his artificial hand.

"Situational awareness training, check," Rex muttered just loud enough for everyone to hear. The resultant mix of agreement and snickers were firmly ignored.

"Speaking of swords, I am truly interested to review Mr. Potter's adventure in the Chamber of Secrets," Severus drawled pointedly. "Especially after having only the briefest glimpse last time."

Harry sighed and withdrew the memory, handing it over without complaint. He knew he was going to get yelled at but figured he could at least get some constructive criticism out of it. The memory started with the Basilisk being called. They all watched him basically being chased around and hiding as best he could. During this part the three wizards quietly explained what a Basilisk was, its general abilities, why Harry was using certain tactics, and the magical nature matched with magical resistant of a newborn Basilisk. They also told everyone how old this specific Basilisk was.

When Fawkes showed up and pecked out the Basilisk's eyes they all went quiet and watched the rest of the memory. Afterwards Tom gave a brief overview on Phoenixes and the goblin forged sword that Harry had used, explained why Harry wasn't dead, and opened the floor for critique.

"I'd say he did pretty good, especially for someone still in training," Cody put in immediately.

"The problem was that he was even there at all! He was aware of the danger, didn't go for competent back up, didn't have the proper tools or schooling, and most certainly didn't report what he knew," Severus snarked. The glare he leveled at his former student had said green-eyed imp gulping and trying to disappear into his chair.

"While I agree with you in principle taking it from a purely combat situation view point he did exceptionally well," Cody disagreed. "He used the information he had effectively, knew to keep himself alive first before helping the girl, avoided combat until he had an actual weapon, and went for the one hit kill soft spot with the weapon he did have. There was no futile attempt to hack away at armor, putting himself in easy reach of teeth or squishing. No panicking or protests to make himself vulnerable or give away his position. No careless movement or haphazard hiding when concealing himself. He did better than many a graduated trooper shiny on their first deployment. What I just saw was someone light on his feet, had lots of practical practice with running and hiding for whatever reason, as well as being level headed enough, and smart enough to stay alive. He'd probably make a good scout. Definitely ARC trooper material if not potentially command material."

"Could do with better actual training but his situational awareness is quite good, so is his eye for vulnerabilities and strike timing," Rex put in thoughtfully. "The early flailing of the sword while climbing was obviously to try keeping the Basilisk back while he moved. Dropping the blade later might have been fatal but it fits with the same sort of luck as General Skywalker not to mention his nonexistent skill level at the time. It was obvious he had never handled a sword before. Still on the other strikes he tried for a normally vulnerable point, the nose, and got it to back off several times. Not bad for being essentially untrained with an unfamiliar weapon while fighting something older and bigger than him that was trying to eat him. Might have to do sound training with him though. It was how he was being tracked and he didn't pay nearly enough attention to what sounds he was making."
They ran through a number of memories from multiple donors and got very good at picking them apart. They also got extremely familiar with how the Skywalker/Potter luck tended to create impossible situations and equally impossible solutions. Case in point with what happened next.

Harry abruptly started to glow. Tom, Severus, Luke, and Anakin immediately grabbed at him with various yelps of surprise and shock. A split second before anyone else could grab hold they disappeared with a loud CRACK!

"I think their luck teamed up. Say 50 credits?" Rex postulated after a moment of shocked silence echoed around the room, hurting all of their ears.

"No bet," Cody sighed. "Though I wouldn't have minded a little warning if only so we could have had some of the troops suited up and ready to go with him. I'd feel a lot better if General Kenobi had been snagged with them presuming whatever it was only allowed one extra person to go with them. It would have at the very least been nice to have them kitted out properly but that can be fixed for next time when they get back."

"Want to plan a mock battle? Or a full campaign to keep everyone in shape on the off chance we can send anyone with them on the next trip?" Rex offered.

"Oh yes," Cody agreed quickly as they set to plotting.

"Well I don't know about the rest of you but I am going to see what I can find in that library six halls and two levels down. Then I am going to see about building back up lightsabers for Luke and Anakin with possibly one or two for Harry, possibly ones for Severus and Tom as well. Myabe a shoto one for Harry's off hand?" Obi-Wan mused as he wandered out of the room. The general consensus agreed and they each wandered off to either prepare to help Harry when they got back or do their own personal projects.

Chapter End Notes

Potential romantic pairing suggestions wanted!
Also I keep giving you guys universe chances. This time I'm limiting it to the top couple options and only 2 votes. I am leaning heavily towards Pern and Middle Earth. Once the universe is picked I'll reset the votes and reopen additional new suggestions for the 3rd universe. *evil grin*

Potential Next Stops:

Pern
**********************

Middle Earth/Lord of the Rings/Hobbit - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux
**********************

Naruto - time period up for debate, taking one-tail from Garra?
******************

Inuyasha
********

Stargate SG1
******

Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats
***
They land on Pern in the middle of a hatching ceremony, Harry/Luke gets dragon/firelizard?

"You bonded with a dragon?! Was out flying the Horntail not enough?!” Severus demanded incredulously.

"Er, that's not the only time I've dealt with a dragon?” Harry laughed nervously.

"What next? Stealing one of the Gringotts guard dragons?!” Severus threw his hands up in exasperation.

"Um, we kind already did that. It was how we escaped with the cup horcrux..." Harry offered sheepishly.

Severus stared at him for a moment before stalking over to him only to grab his ear and start dragging him away by it. Both Harry and his new baby dragon objected loudly and Severus found himself pinned under the protesting hatchling next to Harry though both were unharmed.

Hobbit Snippet:

They landed in a pile of treasure, rolling down the literal mountain of gold.

Lord of the Rings Snippet:

Harry landed hard on a stone floor to a thunder of startled shouts. Before he or anyone else could move something small and golden circle whipped towards him from the near by table only to land with a clatter heard by all on the stone next to his head.

"Oh hell no! He was my horcrux in his last life you can't have him!” Tom snarled, snatching Harry up off the floor and incidentally away from the small golden ring.
By the time Obi-Wan reached his room that night there was a neat package of parts sitting on his coffee table waiting for him. It was filled with everything needed to make a good number of lightsabers mixed in with other things that confused him. To complete the package and the overall strangeness it came with instructions on how to craft a combination lightsaber-wand using the force. There were specific instructions with a bunch of different design options on what materials were to be used in what fashion. There was even little side notes on how the rest of the household could help or how certain tailoring would work best for certain people in the household. Finally, a list of bonus enchantments that could be added and instructions on how to do so rounded off the package.

Dear Master Kenobi,

As we both wish my Master and his deputies to return safely or otherwise enter situations at least partially prepared I have taken the liberty of gathering some materials you may find useful. The instructions contained are default set to lightsaber-wand instructions but can be asked via voice interface (its magic, ignore the lack of microphone or speaker) for other things. The instructions on different things which may aid our mutual friends vary but the supply box will always have what you need to build whatever it is.

Sincerely,
-Death

"Well that's one way to get what I need," Obi-Wan said ruefully before investigating his little crafting gift. He just knew that both Anakin and Luke were going to loose their lightsabers at some point if their personal histories on the matter held true. Jedi Master Kenobi set to work sorting through what he had, reading instructions and began working on back up lightsabers for his brother and nephew.

Elsewhere/when, falling through space and time, two Skywalkers and three wizards clutched tight to each other. They landed jarringly on hot sand to the deep hum of many resonating voices. Having fallen behind the giant eggs relative to the audience only the owners of those humming voices noticed their arrival. The dragons of Pern knew these five were not a threat to the coming hatchlings and if a hatchling chose one of them as a rider they would be blessed beyond measure. This was something their human partners wouldn't know and couldn't understand. No dragon present would object to their presence in the least.

The group groaned quietly as the first of the eggs started to hatch and barely moved as shell after shell broke apart. Each releasing the baby dragons from within to choose a human partner, a rider, from among those assembled for their choice.
"Uh oh," Harry said with deep dread as he finally wriggled free from the pile of bodies to sit up and look around him. He stared at the large eggs and baby dragons suddenly surrounding them on the hot sand of the bowl of the natural amphitheater.

"What did you do?" Tom growled with an echoing grumble of discontent from both squashed Skywalkers as the other four finally untangled themselves.

"I may have accidentally bonded with a baby dragon," Harry said just as his eyes met those of the new hatchling in front of him. He instinctively knew that he was the first one the young bronze had seen upon breaking out of its shell. The entire situation reminded him very firmly of Hagrid and Norberta in first year.

"You bonded with a dragon?!
Was out flying the blasted Horntail not enough?!" Severus demanded incredulously.

"Er, that's not the only time I've dealt with a dragon?" Harry laughed nervously.

"What next? Stealing one of the Gringotts guard dragons?!
Severus threw his hands up in exasperation as he forced himself to sit up on the hot sand. He purposefully ignored the staring spectators and other baby dragons in an attempt to keep his sanity.

"Um, we kind already did that. It was how we escaped with the cup horcrux..." Harry offered sheepishly.

"And what about hatching dragons is in any way safe or are you going to tell me that you've done that as well?" Severus snarled in open frustration.

"Actually it was Hagrid who hatched her in our first year and we got Charlie, Charlie Weasley, to sneak her out to a dragon sanctuary. Draco wasn't lying about us and a dragon," Harry said defensively.

Severus stared at him for a long moment of utter silence that engulfed the hatching grounds before stalking over to him only to grab his ear and start dragging him away by it. Both Harry and his new baby dragon objected loudly and Severus found himself pinned under the protesting hatchling next to Harry though both were unharmed.

"What is your dragon's name?" one of the riders asked kindly as he helped them up from under the hatchling.

"I don't know?" Harry offered carefully.

"Didn't he tell you?" the rider frowned.

"Uh no? How could he?" Harry asked curiously.

"Ah, then you haven't bonded with the dragon and aren't his rider," the rider explained sadly. "If you can't hear him in your mind then the bond hasn't formed."

"That's a relief," Severus muttered mutinously. He promptly snatched Harry up, ignoring the startled yelp, and bodily carried him toward the edges of the sands of the hatching field.

Every single hatchling and newly bonded rider turned towards them in response. Before the dimension hopping group could make it properly off the field their way was blocked by several fully grown dragons, forcing Severus to set Harry down. By this point the other three had caught up and were warily drawn up around Harry. However none of them had drawn wands or lightsabers yet,
wanting to keep whatever this situation was as peaceful as possible.

"They are practically shouting that you can't take him. There is also something about a blessing and playing with the hatchlings?" the rider who helped them up translated with open confusion and an obviously building headache.

Severus decided to make a point. He apparated across the field and then back to Harry's side before turning to address the dragons. This little demonstration also happened to spook both Skywalkers.

"Kriff! Give us some warning next time!" Anakin cursed, glaring at the Potions Master indignantly.

"If I wanted to keep him away from you I could. Mr. Potter has a knack for finding himself in trouble. Don't interfere with our protection of him," Severus warned the dragons sharply, completely ignoring Anakin. "It would not be pleasant for anyone."

"Did you just...!? No, there was no cold. You didn't go between yet you did... how is that possible?!" the rider spluttered.

"~Wizard!~" came the surprised hiss in a draconic dialect of parseltongue.

"~Yes? Some of us are wizards, though only two of us are also speakers,~" Harry hissed back in puzzled surprise. Severus did a facepalm before stalking off a little ways muttering about impossible Potters and their insane luck.

"Severus, they're just saying wizard. There is probably some racial memory involved," Tom pointed out to him with a sigh.

"This would be far easier to deal with if I, at least, and possibly our two Skywalkers also spoke Parseltongue," Severus snarked back indignantly. "I can never tell if whatever either of you are talking to is going to attack or is simply laughing at us!"

"Eh, usually its about food, amazement that they are meeting a speaker, or yelling at us for something," Harry admitted. "During the first task in fourth year they were mostly territorial bellows warning the contestants away from the nest or pure rage at someone getting near the eggs. I didn't try talking to mine since I didn't think of it and all of them were really angry."

"~This is an honor and must be discussed. Speakers, how did you come to Pern?~" a brown dragon off to one side rumbled.

"Pern? That's an odd name for a place. Where on earth is it?" Tom asked politely.

"Earth? No, we are on Pern. Our ancestors came from a place called earth," the rider from earlier explained gently, unaware of the implications of his words.

"Well we did wind up on Yavin IV the last time. At least both here and that moon were habitable without special equipment. Can you imagine landing on Mustifar without any equipment and away from civilization or Kamino? The lava fields of Mustifar make not just the melting ground but the very air dangerous because of the volcanic gases. Kamino though is all water and storms," Anakin put in with a grimace.

"Can you imagine landing in the Dune Sea on Tattooine? We would be the only ones with any knowledge to get us out of there. Severus would complain the whole way because we would make them swap to white and tan home spun or as close as we could get them. There would be no black,"

"I guess that's our next group project get Severus in a color other than black," Anakin suggested slyly.

"If the joint forces of Narcissa Malfoy and Albus Dumbledore failed I very much doubt you will succeed but it will certainly be entertaining to watch," Tom drawled in open glee.

"I hate you," Severus scowled much to the amusement of their audience.

Chapter End Notes

Current pairing suggestions are:
Harry/Anakin
Harry/Tom/Severus

There is also the possibility of a dragon bonding or two with the group and a colony of Pern dragons joining Harry's household on his vacation planet. Should Harry bond with a dragon they will likely wind up staying at his home while he works. This may or may not be a good choice for any dragon type. Firelizards are small enough to come with them if anyone winds up with a firelizard or two.

One option presented was to give Harry a Queen and both Sev and Tom Bronzes.

Someone suggested more people so the clones and others can have families.

Anymore suggestions?
Harry abruptly turned towards the large golden egg surrounded by young women, immediately fascinated by the beginning cracks and drawn to whatever was hatching. Severus immediately noticed the signs and again snatched him up, taking him away from the hatching dragonets. At this point he was only concerned with preventing a baby dragon being added to the group.

"Maybe I should find us somewhere private and have the others help me fuck you unconscious," Severus snarled with quiet crudity. His attempt to shock the other man out of whatever trance he was in failed.

"Really?" Luke asked incredulously. Their small group had been close enough to hear his threat but no one else had.

"It was worth a shot. He hasn't shown an interest in anyone and the fact that at least Tom has repeatedly tried to kill him should have gotten some response out of him," Severus shrugged. He finally got close to the stands with his mesmerized burden as the baby Queen broke free from her shell. The cry of recognition from one of the candidates finally released Harry to slump bonelessly in Severus' arms.

"Let me guess we are whatever he needs us to be?" Anakin concluded, eyes narrowed in thought.

"If he needs us to fuck him for say falling into a pit filled with aphrodisiac then we fuck him. If he needs us to act like protective Uncles then that is what we will do. The magic... nudges but we can still ignore it if we choose to. Its simply a warning of what he needs in that moment and barely there at that. It kicked in during the memory viewing." Severus admitted. They took a seat at the edge of the sand when another dragon, a green one this time, once more blocked their path. "Yours may be different than mine because of the different... connections."

"So nothing is forcing the issue and you just picked that particular threat to freak him out," Luke summarized with a snicker. Han and half of Rogue Squadron would have done that to him if they had thought of it. If something came from it the lovers would have been razzed but not maliciously harassed and if nothing came of it then it would have just been a good joke.

"I wouldn't be opposed but essentially yes," Severus shrugged. "His mother was popularly shoved in my face as someone I was supposedly in love with. In point of fact I saw her as a sister and my one life raft in an... unpleasant childhood. The husband she picked was one of my main bullies. It took me quite some time to realize that neither were all bad or all good. Harry... helped me see things more clearly but by that point in the war any attempt to change how I interacted with him would have gotten us both very dead."

"When was this?" Tom asked with a frown. "I'm not arguing with your assessment but..."

"Fourth year, the tournament. During his third year I was too focused on Black. His first year all three of us were focused on the blasted stone. In his second year there was the fall out from the Parseltongue and the roaming Basilisk. Also he was not in my house though I tried to keep an eye on him with many detentions to prove it," Severus grumbled.

"Bastard. I knew those weren't fair detentions," a limp Harry mumbled ruefully. He still hadn't gotten
his limbs to be more than noodles after whatever that trance thing was but he wasn't overly concerned, just tired.

"Well you don't have to worry about that from me. At best I think we will wind up as brothers," Luke snarked, openly amused at them.

Harry considered that seriously for a moment before nodding from his latest position limp in Severus' lap. He formally informed them, in a completely serious tone, "That sounds about right."

"Glad we got that sorted out," Anakin smirked.

By the time the hatchlings had been born, matched, and escorted off into the Weyr to be fed by their new riders Harry's group had the attention of everyone left, including the dragons.

"~The Queen wishes to speak to you. Do I need to carry you?~" the green dragon that had stopped them from actually leaving the sands inquired with polite interest.

"Well Harry do we need this dragon to carry us?" Tom smirked.

"Fuck you," Harry retorted before forcing himself to his feet. Everyone carefully ignored how often he needed to lean against a now visibly worried Severus at his side as he walked over the shifting sands of the hatching grounds. Something that every single dragon took note of.

"Sand gets everywhere," Anakin grumbled as he too got up. The two Skywalkers tactfully flanked Severus and Harry with Tom falling in easily behind them all to guard the rear, another thing the dragons noticed.

Before long they were standing before the mature Queen Dragon and her rider, scattered pieces of shell strewn across the sands around them.

"My name is Lessa, rider to Ramoth and Weyrwoman of Brenden Weyr. I would ask how you got here but all saw you arrive from what Ramoth tells me was not between yet something like it. I only know that you glowed as you fell from nothing into the sands at the start of the hatching and that the glow was gone by the time you started moving. Might I know your names and how you came here?" Lessa asked archly. Her politeness was obviously covering a spine of steel.

This woman's grey eyes and petite stature didn't put off the group but her stare did tempt them to point at Harry and say "He did it!" Harry, knowing that this was probably crossing their minds and not really wanting to argue with them over his luck so obviously kicking in took a shaky step forwards and addressed her.

"I may not know what a Weyr or Weyrwoman is but my name is Harry Potter. We honestly had no idea we would suddenly arrive here... wherever here is but we mean no harm. We also have no knowledge of how we arrived except that this happens to me from time to time and possibly has something to do with someone I know. I can't speak with him just now without scaring everyone out of their wits, assuming he would even answer. We would also prefer not to be eaten by any of your dragons," Harry informed her respectfully. Her look of shocked horror and disgust told them he had said something wrong.

"We don't eat humans!" Lessa exclaimed in horror. "Who would do something so... horrifying?!"

"He has faced a different type of dragons in the past and they likely tried to eat him. The thought of cannibalism is equally unappealing to us. Compared to your very polite if firm dragons the ones we know of are quite... feral. There isn't a known way to communicate with them yet you appear to be bonded to yours," Severus put in quickly.
"We are on a different planet and probably in a different universe. What did you expect?" Anakin reminded them. "Just because they look like a type of dragon and are even called dragons doesn't mean that they are going to be the same dragons you know."

"This may seem odd but do you know of anyone trying for immortality?" Harry inquired carefully. He was starting to wonder exactly why they had been sent here.

"Immortality is impossible. Why would anyone be so foolish as to try for it? We have enough issues simply trying to keep thread at bay," Lessa answered nonplussed. "Thread has been falling for nearly nine turns now. Don't you know your learning songs? Have you not seen the deadly silver strands that devour all but soil and stone? That die only by drowning or by fire?"

Just as Harry was about to ask more about thread and where they were a golden little queen suddenly appeared in front of them. She was about the size of a human head when only counting the main body and about as long as an arm from tail tip to snout. The soft cooing sound she gave them was instantly soothing.

"~The big ones say you understand our tongue. My wingless-one calls me Beauty. You will wait until my fair and my wingless-one comes. Then we will sing together and find you winged-ones to watch over you,~" the little golden queen instructed firmly. She promptly went between back to her human.

"I think we just found out why we are here..." Tom said slowly.

"She wants us to have our own dragons?" Harry translated slowly, completely perplexed.

"Mini-dragons like her or regular sized ones like Ramoth?" Luke asked, humming in thought.

"Beauty, that's her name, didn't specify. She just said something about us waiting for her wingless-one, her human I think, and her flock? I think that's what fair means, flock," Harry told them with a frown.

"Journeyman Harper Menolly wishes to see you?" Lessa frowned. "That was her firelizard."

"Uh, actually I think it was Beauty's idea... whatever it was," Harry offered sheepishly.

"Let's get you into quarters until this is sorted out," Lessa decided, rubbing at her head in an attempt to stave off the coming headache.

"~My Lessa is a good leader but she is overly worried you present a threat to the Weyr. Be welcome among us Little Master of the Long Rest and Jump Between. You will find your clutch of messengers and Beauty's human will learn your tale that it may be sung across Pern,~" Ramoth rumbled in amusement. She had allowed them to speak as humans but Harry wasn't just human anymore.

"~You are a bit smaller than the Basilisk I had to fight but not by much. You are also quite beautiful yourself. Certainly no less amazing than the little one who just left,~" Harry complemented Ramoth smoothly in parsel.

"~Flattery will not get you out of being addressed by your title Little Master,~" Ramoth hissed dryly, laughter rumbling deep in her chest.

Harry refused to dignify that with a response and looked expectantly towards Lessa, much to Ramoth's amusement. The Weyrwoman sighed and lead them towards the guest living quarters while Ramoth took flight back to her own Weyr.
I am changing possible romantic pairings:
Harry/Tom/Severus or any variation of this (there are possible plans but they don’t actually need to be paired to work)
Anakin/Obi-Wan
Luke will get someone later if at all
There will be NO Harry/Luke or Harry/Anakin. I don’t do incest.

Also I am limiting next universe after this because I have snippets already.

Possible Next Stop:

Honor Harrington
Naruto
Middle Earth - may contain Elfling!Harry and Istari!Severus
Robin Hood - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor
Xanth
Discworld
InuYasha
Stargate

Please ask if you need a universe summary.
They moved into the cave system that made up the largest part of the Weyr without issue. All three wizards unconsciously relaxed, reminded of the firm stone corridors buttressed by ancient wards that was Hogwarts.

Anakin quietly pulled Luke aside at the back of the group, falling back out of earshot but not too far behind. He had been thinking about the conversation on the hatching grounds and knew in his heart that he would never move on from his angel. The only other person who connected to him that deeply was Obi-Wan and Obi-wan would understand if they ever started anything together.

Anakin was grateful that the other him hadn't lost his Padme. No, he had to be honest. He was so very very thankful that they had stopped his younger counterpart from killing his matched light in the darkness, his oasis in the deep desert. Yes, Leia had chosen to go with them, her mother and the other him, but he still had Luke. They would decide this as a family.

"Luke, are you willing to share your water with Harry? To accept his water in return?" Anakin asked quietly. It took a moment for Luke to get it but the shocked delight told him his son's answer before the words came tumbling from his son.

"Yes! As water is life I would gladly share water with Harry and accept his water in return. I would welcome our waters mingling with his father!" Luke exclaimed happily. He was going to get a brother!

"Then I will offer him the full cup of water and we will both drink deeply in return," Anakin agreed, satisfied. "I would like to ask Obi-Wan as well or possibly... start something with him but he isn't here so I can't ask either way."

"I have no objection. I'll gladly count Ben as family!" Luke agreed quickly, excited at the prospect before turning slyly amused. "Ben as a step-father? That fits a bit with how he already treated me, at least after he stopped protecting me while hiding in the shadows."

"Except this Ben hasn't done that yet. This Obi-Wan didn't have to live through my fall," Anakin put in, slightly apprehensive.

"So don't make him. Don't fall again. I can listen if you need to talk and don't want to talk to Obi-Wan. I bet Tom, Harry, and Severus would too. You have the support you need even if you didn't have it the first time. We can and will call you on things. Not to mention you don't have Palpatine whispering in your ear this time," Luke said simply. "Self control and balance between inner peace and emotion. The balanced path we are building."

"You're right," Anakin agreed, a burden lifting from his shoulders he hadn't even known was there. They quickly caught up with the others and joined the quiet discussion on dragons. They barely registered the wash of cold air brush past them as a small golden dragon disappeared silently between, already plotting what to do with these strange wingless-ones.

The eating hall that night was chaotic with open interest swirling around the new arrivals. The attention became suddenly much more focused when a fair of firelizards descended upon the group, investigating them and occasionally stealing or begging food from them.
"Enough!" Severus barked at the various colored firelizards assaulting them. "Leave our food and ourselves be. You are worse than students! Possibly even worse than Gryffindors."

"I kind of like them," Harry said, smiling softly as he hand fed a miniature brown dragon.

Beauty preened off to one side under his adoration before obligingly chivying her fair back into a semblance of order

"That's good," came a woman's beautiful voice that practically danced with melodic mischief. "Because from the way Beauty is acting you'll be getting some of your own."

"Not from the same clutch or parents," Tom put in quickly. "We will likely need more of them whenever we go home and we don't have a native population."

"Beauty was firm about that too. She even went around discussing it with bonded queens and wild ones too. I've never seen her so active in arranging something like this," the woman explained, casually joining them at their table.


"That... was informative. Skywalkers, why does Beauty think that we are blood family? Or close enough to count as blood family?" Harry asked, turning a gimlet eye on the pair.

"We hadn't had the chance to ask..." Luke began guiltily only for Anakin's calm hand on his shoulder to silence him.

"We were hoping you would let us adopt you," Anakin offered, calmly meeting Harry's stunned gaze.

"Ye.. yes!" Harry agreed, barely holding his composure as his voice cracked.

Anakin nodded with a gentle smile of understanding.

"As you know Luke and I come from a desert world. Water was very much life. Would you accept a Tatooine ceremony or do we need to find another?" Anakin asked.

"A Tatooine ceremony is fine!" Harry answered hurriedly. He didn't want to lose them just because they wanted a ceremony he didn't know about.

"Then we need a cup of water which the three of us will drink from," Luke told him, grinning like a fool.

"You are wizard. It will take a bit more than that for the adoption to be recognized by the magics involved," Severus put in gruffly.

"Oh? I didn't... didn't know," Harry stuttered, disappointment clear.

"Imp, I didn't say it couldn't be done only that we will have to supplement it so that the magic will accept them as family and won't accidentally attack them as threats," Severus snarked with an exasperated eye roll. Harry brightened immediately.
"The adoption generally consists of a declaration in front of at least one witness and then the new family shares a drink of water. This is done partly because water is life and because of the way the slavery on Tatooine can rip families apart. As long as the slaver or other potential enemies don't know for certain you are family they can't use you against each other. Marriages on Tatooine as well as adoptions can be either secret, private, or public depending on situation and risk level. Its... normal for us," Luke explained solemnly. "One of the greatest things that can happen on Tatooine is not only having an abundance of water for the family but being able to celebrate births and marriages openly with the entire local community. To have that means you are blessed and it becomes a great celebration not just for the family but the community as a whole. Leia was appalled to find out that an open marriage was an exception and a blessing on Tatooine when I helped her plan a friend's wedding. She grew up on Alderaan where a secret marriage isn't legal without a special dispensation."

"On Tatooine a secret marriage can often be more legal and binding than an open one," Anakin put in. "My marriage to Padme though hurt her by its very secrecy since she was from Naboo. Its one thing I'm glad we changed."

"Can I watch? My name is Menolly by the way and these firelizards are mine," Menolly finally introduced herself.

"Whenever possible having trusted people involved is a blessing with a Tatooine ceremony. I don't mind but Luke and Harry have to agree as well. If there are doubts about anyone attending then they can't come. Its a measure of trust and a safety against enemies, Hutts, and Slavers," Anakin explained with a shake of his head.

"What is a Hutt?" Lessa asked with a frown.

"A giant slug-like species that act as crime lords. If you don't know what a crime lord is then you live a blessed life and I'll not taint it with descriptions of the evil they help perpetuate. The same for slavers," Anakin put in firmly.

"Alright now that that's settled. What did Beausty mean when she said to ask Menolly how she came to have so many Firelizards," Tom inquired, firmly changing the subject. They would work out a proper adoption ritual later.

So the conversation tuned to Menolly's accidental discovery and bonding with the firelizards.

Chapter End Notes

Okay romantic pairing is set aside for now but I like the suggestion of an open Harry/Tom/Sev that was presented.

I am accepting firelizard number/name/color suggestions and who gets one.

Here is the next stop ranking:
Potential Next Stops:

Middle Earth (Lord of the Rings/Hobbit) - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux - Smaug charbroil ring wraith, Elfling!Harry/group? Automatic Istari!group?
*********
Naruto - time period up for debate, taking one-tail from Garra? 2nd exam onwards?

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Inuyasha

*****

Stargate - 1) Core group arrives during the virtual reality episod where SG1 are the new software for the residents and get sucked in, magic combines with the memory reruns to make them real and deadly? 2) all Potter people are having a war game training session and get transported to an SG1 vs Jafar battle and save the day?

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Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats, visit Grayson

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Robin Hood: King of Thieves - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor

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Discworld

*

Xanth

*
Over the next week, at Beauty's insistence, the group told their tale to Menolly. In return she taught them all she could about firelizards and started writing songs about the stories they told her. Their stories were certain to be popular as sagas and she would get multiple teaching songs out of it.

"What if they find wizards here? The dragons recognized us but no one else did. Or if they find force users? Shouldn't we at least have here record some of the dangerous pitfalls to keep them from destroying themselves?" Luke argued.

"Their brewing techniques are appalling. They are *loosing* more of the salve then they are brewing! I am offended on behalf of all Potioneers," Severus put in. He had been haunting the kitchens and watching them brew the pain-killing numbweed salve for most of the week.

"I don't see anything wrong with teaching them or at least leaving teaching instructions on the basics," Harry agreed, much to Menolly's delight and gratitude.

"Lets write it down and then Menolly can still turn it into teaching songs if we disappear on them," Anakin agreed.

"We stick to basics and danger warnings. Let them work out anything else," Tom countered.

"Some... most of our discoveries were only found through experimentation and accidents. They have already evolved differently than us with a co-dependence on the dragons. The basics will start them off without crippling them into our ideas."

So they did. They recorded what they knew on various subjects modified as best as possible for the unique situation on Pern.

Come child of impossible things, set your sight high
Magic is within you as the Force is within all
Does your blood dance with lightness an ocean's breadth?
Does fire answer to your call?
Special Child beware darkness' fall
Practice calling the light from within and without
Light to guide the path
Practice control of the fire deep inside
Practice that it may burn only thread and dance the campfire's path
Harm not the Hold, Hall, or Weyr
Act as Dragons on wing, fire against the threat
Careful special child, let neither harm nor darkness nor evil take hold
Come to bed once more child and dream of impossible things

The song was *beautiful* and only the first one Menolly was writing for them. It was actually the first part of the series of songs that would tell their stories. It had also been finished just as Tom and Severus had worked out the changes needed for the adoption ceremony.

"So how are we doing this?" Luke asked the rest of the group. They had decided not to risk anyone but Menolly's firelizards being present for this and were currently ensconced in an empty Weyr room for a dragon and their rider.
"You do it normally until the drinking part. Using life water as an analogy for blood a single drop of blood from each of you is added just before you pass the cup around and drink deeply from the cup. You also end with *So Mote It Be* to invoke the magic while focusing on your intent with what you are doing. More specifically focusing on making Harry part of your family in all ways," Tom explained. "The magic, if it accepts, will take hold and make a few changes so that you share blood, DNA, as well as being family by choice."

"As far as everyone else aware of the situation is concerned the adoption will still be binding. I have no idea if Death will recognize it but we are doing this for Harry. It won't matter if anyone else cares or acknowledges it, especially as we will likely as not find ourselves in a different universe soon after the firelizards impress," Severus instructed.

Everyone nodded their understanding and took their places. Tom and Severus stood over by the wall as witnesses while the firelizards scattered everywhere crooned, watching with interest. Luke and Anakin faced Harry with a large cup of water that would be shared between them.

"Harry Potter we see you as family and seek to make it binding. as water is life would you share of your water with us even as we seek to share ours with you?" Anakin asked formally, presenting the cup to Harry with both his hands and Luke's on the cup.

"I would share water with you and accept a place among your family. Let us share our waters until the suns fall to final embers," Harry agreed happily. They took a moment to add the blood to the water before continuing.

"Then let us drink deeply of our shared water and bring new life into our family," Luke declared before helping to give Harry the cup.

They each drank deeply in turn until the cup was dry, finishing with a chant of "So mote it be" from all the humans in the room. Both Skywalkers gained a streak of black in their hair even as Harry gained one of blond, signaling the magic's acceptance of the adoption.

"Congratulations, it's a troublesome brat," Severus snarked at the Skywalkers before softening as he turned towards Harry. "I hope this pleases you imp."

Harry just smiled brightly, beaming at everyone happily. There was a feast that night to celebrate though only the Weyrwoman, Weyrleader, Menolly, Menolly's firelizards, and Harry's group knew the real reason for it.

The next day Beauty practically dragged Harry's group through the Weyr, much to everyone's amusement. Those following the summoned group out of curiosity were shocked to find an assemblage of firelizard Queens waiting on the sands of the hatching grounds. Their fairs were perched on the ledges that normally held observing dragons during a dragon hatching or dragons who wanted to sun themselves while they rested.

"~Translate for the wingless-ones,~" Beauty instructed Tom. Tom raised an eyebrow at her audacity but turned and quickly explained to their growing audience.

"~See no Little Death Master. Where he? Why needs a fair of his own,~" one little queen squawked. In response an unimpressed Beauty flew around behind Harry and ushered him forwards.

"~This Little Death Master. Even the big Queen knows him, how you not?~" Beauty scolded the now sheepish wild queen who had spoken. "~His wingless-ones not go between. Needs fair of *us*.~"
"~Same clutch?~" a different queen asked suspiciously. They all knew that if only one clutch was needed Beauty could have provided the clutch herself.


"~One fair, one wingless-one? One fair, many wingless-ones? Many fair, many wingless-ones?~" a very young queen chirped questioningly.

Beauty tilted her head in thought before chirping her agreement and clarifying with her words. "~One fair, one wingless-one! Help make many fair.~"

"~Actually, I can send entire clutches and fairs to the new place immediately if you want. I just need one of you to give a note to the people there when you arrive,~" Harry hissed, speaking for the first time and sending many tumbling and squawking in shock. They weren't used to humans who could actually understand their language much less speak it.

"~Wingless-ones not stupid,~" Beauty scolded, completely unimpressed with their reaction.

"~Only Tom and I can understand this speech. There may be more but if there are I don't know them,~" Harry offered sheepishly, pointing Tom out to the little queens.

"~Need clutches,~" Beauty insisted.

There was a tuneless hum of agreement before they each abruptly vanished between, their fairs flowing quickly afterwards. Satisfied Beauty headed for Menolly to settle on her shoulder.


"I think Beauty just argued a bunch of firelizard queens into giving us their next clutch of eggs," Harry said slowly.

This proved to be the truth of the matter as three months later there were 9 firelizard fairs being fed by the Weyr. The little wild queens had chosen to clutch their eggs on the warm sands of the hatching grounds. They would let no human near them except for Harry's group.

"Remember when the firelizards start humming the eggs are getting ready to hatch. You need to hand feed the ones you want to bond with you but almost the moment you pick them up they link to you," Menolly reminded them. the day had finally come when the eggs were properly hard and they were expecting the hatching hums to start soon.

"I suppose they are as ravenous as any newborn?" Severus asked thoughtfully.

"Yes, and you need to let them eat as often as they cry for food for the first few weeks. Thankfully they will eat more than just raw meet. I don't know of any food that has harmed them though they can get sick from over eating after the first few weeks," Menolly added as the group headed across the sands towards the egg clutches.

"I've talked to each of the queens. Once the eggs are hatched with at least me impressing one of the babies and all the ones that didn't impress are fed, the older members of the fairs are going to be sent er home. I've got the note ready and everything," Harry explained quietly.
"If the rest are being sent to our home then perhaps only Harry should have one, at least for now," Luke suggested thoughtfully.

"Won't work. Beauty was very insistent that Tom and Severus had a bronze apiece," Menolly put in with a shake of her head. "You might be able to get away with one the three, one for each of them, but I'm betting they will insist on bondings from later clutches eventually."

"They're hatching!" came the cry from a small human dashing past, alerting everyone he could find.

The background hum suddenly intensified, becoming louder as people gathered around. Harry's group quickly took their places in front of a different clutch, with Harry being in front of the first one to show movement. Each wizard and force user had been given a bowl of chopped meat and a bucket of more meat so they could feed the hatchlings that bonded with them. Anything that wasn't used would go to one of the wild fairs of firelizards.

The older firelizards did something unexpected then. The queen of the clutch that Harry was in front of very carefully nudged the largest egg free of the sand. The rest of the fair chivied Harry to where she placed it before she returned to the clutch and the fair stood guard over the bucket of meat that would go to the hatchlings.

Harry's clutch started to hatch, first a brown, then a blue, then several greens, a bronze... Harry lost count even as he heard the egg that had been specifically given to him start to hatch. Hurriedly he turned to face the little hatchling as the little golden body of a baby queen spilled creeling from the egg. Harry met her eyes and the bond was formed before he even reached to touch her. The crippling hunger that hit him along the bond was not unknown to him but it certainly had him frantically feeding the little golden one.

"Kin, your name is Kin," Harry whispered in awe as he feed the hungry little queen.

"Kin as in family of Kin as in Japanese for Golden?" Tom murmured questioningly.

"Just Kin," Harry answered absently.

The rest of the clutch was fed by the wild fair, mostly by knocking over the bucket of meet for the new additions to feast upon. The wild Bronzes and Browns of the fair kept everyone away from the new hatchlings so that only Harry bonded with one of them. Even then the wild queen had assured that he had received the one golden hatchling in the entire clutch.

Two hours later Severus and Tom found themselves bonded to bronzes from two different clutches.

"Why don't Luke and I take the others home with us. You don't really need all four of us and I get the feeling that Tom and Severus need to stay at your side. Your brother and I can get them settled in and make sure the clones haven't gotten into too much trouble," Anakin offered softly. The force was telling him that these three wizards needed time together and that the little firelizards would help them heal old wounds.

Harry looked up from the newborn in his lap, eyes sparkling happily as he agreed, his eyes barely ever leaving the golden queen in his hands. Severus and Tom were kneeling to either side of him cradling their own hatchlings softly.

Taking that as a yes Anakin nodded and went to speak to Luke. Death snatched them and the wild firelizards with their clutches away before supper as if they had never been there. The three wizards spent the next three weeks tending to their three hatchlings and learning about how best to oil their skin.
The night they were snatched away in their sleep was the same day thread fell, exhausting all in the Weyr in fighting it overhead. Severus, his bronze Zaar, Tom, his bronze Devlin, Harry, and his golden queen Kin fell through warm nothingness.

Chapter End Notes

I'm extremely tempted to just drop them on top of Smaug next then put them in Naruto and come back later in a different timeline version to mess with the fellowship, elfling!Harry and Istari!group. There are just so many points I can bounce them between for Naruto, Middle Earth, and SG1.

Ideas please! Are we playing universe ping pong with the boys? Or grouping universes and timelines?

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Current Potential Next Stops:

Middle Earth (Lord of the Rings/Hobbit) - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux - Smaug charbroil ring wraith, Elfling!Harry/group? Automatic Istari!group?

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Inuyasha

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Stargate - 1) Core group arrives during the virtual reality episod where SG1 are the new software for the residents and get sucked in, magic combines with the memory reruns to make them real and deadly? 2) all Potter people are having a war game training session and get transported to an SG1 vs Jafar battle and save the day?

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Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats, visit Grayson

* Robin Hood: King of Thieves - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor

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Discworld

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Xanth

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Luke and Anakin arrived unmolested at what Harry's group and household was simply calling home. The clones had set up a rotating guard duty on the identified arrival sites. As such they were greeted by the five clones on duty with great interest in not only their presence without Harry but their passengers as well.

"General Skywalker," the clone greeted cheerfully.

"Hey Rocket. We've got some new additions as you can see. They are sentient but can bond with at least a human at birth. I'll upload the file for everyone to look through later. For now they need to eat. Do we have any chopped meat in whatever passes for the mess or the kitchens?" Anakin greeted him cheerfully. He and Luke were levitating the unhatched clutches and being followed anxiously by the queens who had laid them.

"I think the cooks that took over the kitchens were planning on some sort of meat, rice, and cheese dish with some sort of flat bread for those who didn't want to eat out of bowl. Do the eggs need anything special?" Rocket asked with interest.

"Warm sand and lots of meat when they hatch," Luke told him, grinning like mad.

"Uh, sir? You've got something in your hair," a different trooper pointed out carefully.

"The black streak comes from adopting Harry. Tom and Severus adjusted our home world's adoption ceremony so it would work with his magic. We each got a streak of different colored hair to show that we share DNA now, the we're blood family not just adopted. Maybe the next time they come home we can see if any of the brothers might like to be adopted like that," Anakin explained happily.

"We'll have to tell everyone and make sure to celebrate whenever they get rotated back," Rocket agreed. A quick com had clone brothers showing up to help with the new firelizard members with the two Jedi helping to keep everyone calm.

"What did the two of you do now?" Obi-Wan asked with fond exasperation.

"Hey, blame Harry. We're just escorting the new transfers," Luke smirked. "Of course I'm also under strict orders to lock the two of you in a room together until you two have talked properly."


"That's fine. I can ambush the two of you later after I've set up the romantic dinner in there for you," Luke smirked before dashing out of the room as his father tried to swat him with the force.

"Why do I get the feeling that he was completely serious about that?" Obi-Wan asked apprehensively. Both remaining Jedi missed the speculative sneaky looks of the clones as the firelizards were sorted out. He and Anakin would later be ambushed by a group of clones and the Weasley twins before being stuffed into a fully stocked set of quarters and locked inside.

The three wizards fell through time and space, landing in a pile of treasure and rolling down the literal mountain of gold until they came to a stop. The sound of a giant serpentine body moving over, around, and through the gold coins and other objects of treasure stopped abruptly at the sound of
their rough landing and groans of pain. Gold is hardly a soft landing pad, for all its softness as a metal it is still metal.

"What is this? Did more than foul smelling dwarves accompany the thief?" Smaug rumbled as he twisted around to look at the new arrivals.

"~Wingless-ones! Our wingless-ones! Up! Need check. Wingless-ones not supposed to fly, get hurt much!~" the three firelizards chirped and hissed worriedly, hovering over their wizards. They occasionally darted down to land and nuzzle at the men in an attempt to rouse them.

"Draklings?! You come with Draklings?! Come away from the nasty men Draklings. Dealing with such is no good for ones so young," Smaug commanded. His attention was completely on the small baby dragons and their insensate wizards.

"I can check the people while you check the baby dragons? We don't know how they got here and the dragons seem worried about the men. Wouldn't it be better to find out what is going on first in case hurting the men will hurt the babies some how? You can always roast us later if we are a threat," Bilbo offered, taking off the ring so that he was visible. He mentally winced at his offer but stubbornly didn't take it back.

"You do not so much as touch the little Draklings," Smaug hissed warningly but otherwise didn't object.

"Fine, right, don't touch the little dragons," Bilbo agreed as he made his way over to the trio. The little firelizards immediately dove at him, defending their wizards with little bursts of fire, tooth, and claw, forcing him to stay well back.

"Well well well. It seems the little dears count these three as part of their hoard. Not unheard of," Smaug chuckled in amusement. "Come away thief. I have a task for you and the Dwarves. Once complete we will all talk as civilized folk. I have little Draklings to think about now rather than just my hoard for however little time they stay."

"What task?" Bilbo asked suspiciously.

"The men will need untainted food and drink, possibly medicine as well. A very small portion of gold from my hoard should be enough to acquire what the men need for the moment. As part of the little Draklings' hoard they need tending. I am elder and as such need to tend to the Draklings and their hoard until they can do it themselves," Smaug explained almost smugly.

"Oh! I'll see what I can do but I'm not the company leader," Bilbo explained sheepishly.

"Remember this, any attempt to harm the Draklings and all of your lives are forfeit," Smaug informed him darkly.

"I'll make sure to tell them that," Bilbo agreed quickly before scurrying off to the rest of the company while Smaug was distracted cooing at the smaller dragons. Less than twenty minutes later the entire company was cautiously approaching Smaug and his six unexpected visitors.

"Ugh, what hit me?" Harry moaned as he finally regained enough of his sense to realize he was in pain.

"This is the fault of your blasted luck," Severus accused wheezily as he forced himself up onto his hands and knees atop the hill of gold they had stopped on.

"Come now Severus even Harry's luck can't... At least the Skywalkers aren't here so we know its
Harry and not his new family," Tom trailed off after getting a good look at their surrounds before changing his commentary.

"~Wingless-ones!~" the firelizards cried joyfully as they settled on their respective wizards to nuzzle at them.

"I don't really care where we are but the next stop had better have good swordsmen we can learn from. I want to corrupt a few of them by introducing the masters to lightsabers," Harry decided before finally opening his eyes at the urging of his little Kin.

"Be careful what you wish for brat," Severus hissed, finally catching sight of their enormous host and the band of adventurers.

"What interesting choices you've made for your first hoards little Draklings," Smaug rumbled. "~Our wingless-ones!~" Kin hissed menacingly with a chorus of agreement from both bronzes.

"How old are you little ones?" Smaug asked gently. He was sticking to common for the little dragons to learn it and so that the non-dragons would know not to do anything stupid.

"They're a little less than a month old," Harry answered for all them. "We were at their hatching and their parents picked them from the clutches specifically to bond with us. They don't seem to get very big but that might have been because there was so little magic on that world even if the humans did help some develop into pretty big versions somehow."

"They are still little Draklings. Perhaps these little ones will be more acceptable among the other races of Middle Earth than my own kind. We crave gold but the little Draklings care more for the three of you as their hoard. How strange," Smaug mused as he observed the way the firelizards were hovering over the three wizards.

"If you were truthful about a civil conversation in exchange for some food and water from our stores I'll be glad to speak over a meal," Thorin Oakenshield said tightly.

"Yes, I was quite serious. There is just one more thing. The little gold trinket that stinks of evil in the care of the small thief stays away from the Draklings. They have chosen men for their first hoards and will not be able to fight off the evil hiding in the trinket. They are far too young to protect their hoards from such a thing," Smaug told them sternly.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Bilbo said honestly as everyone turned to look at him. "I just have a magic ring that makes you invisible."

"If it only has a simple invisibility charm it should not give off any sense of evil even to those sensitive to magic," Tom said, eyes and tone suddenly hard.

"If someone can give me a replacement I'll gladly trade. It seemed to have driven the last holder quite mad and I only kept it because it saved my life in the goblin tunnels and seemed quite useful," Bilbo explained, completely baffled.

"If its got a mind of its own and eats the mind of the holder it should probably be destroyed," Harry put in with a scowl.

"Not necessarily. It may be linked to a bloodline so that only those of the proper family may safely wield it," Severus corrected. "Many old pureblood families in our world liked doing that until such magics were banned by the paranoid and greedy ministry."
"Was William Weasely re-incarnated with the rest of your DA?" Tom asked thoughtfully.

"I think so, why?" Harry asked suspiciously.

"His training as a curse breaker may come in handy here," Severus agreed with a nod of understanding.

"~Dear heart can you sense any evil? Only tell me if you can. Remember Tom can understand as well but Severus can not,~" Harry crooned to Kin. Severus openly sulked, unable to know what had been said in parseltongue as his Zaar groomed his hair comfortingly and everyone stared at the group in shock.

"You speak!" Smaug's open astonishment told the company they weren't dreaming.

"Yes, they both do. I can't speak Parseltongue myself. Its very irritating not knowing if the two of them are asking directions or suggesting whatever they are speaking to go crawl up someone else's pants," Severus huffed. His mind had decided to slip the prank idea into their minds with perfect evil precision. He was well aware that they would now be wondering if Tom or Harry would ask one of the firelizards to investigate the clothing of the company while they were still wearing it.

"Well that most certainly won't do," Smaug declared, rummaging around a bit in the treasure until he had three different golden drinking vessels. A careful claw applied to his wrist just under a protective scale had a trickle of blood flowing into each vessel. "Add some water to cool it and each of you need to drink it whole. Do not share with the dwarves or the thief. They are not entitled to this and you three will need it to help take care of the Draklings."

"The dragon blood we know of is dangerous and drinking it directly, even diluted by water, can eat away at a man in seconds," Severus informed Smaug, keeping Tom and Harry back from the goblets.

"Then it likely wasn't freely given," Smaug pointed out evenly. "The magic in our blood reacts to our wishes unless the dragon has somehow become a mindless beast. We usually come back to ourselves within our hoard if we don't die in such a state first. The blood's curse is different then that of a unicorn as our magic is different and we hold different values. To bathe in the blood of my kind safely without it being a gift of a living dragon you must be the one to have defeated and slain us. Have no fear, this is to aid the Draklings, not to harm you."

The three wizards warily accepted this and drank the wine red goblets of water and blood. The magic burned going down before spreading from their bellies into their veins, linking magic to magic and changing them. A spout of fire leapt from each of their mouths, startling both the firelizards and the company as the trio returned to their knees upon the golden hill. Briefly their eyes shifted to golden slit dragon eyes before returning to normal.

"~Wingless-ones?~" Kin chirruped worriedly.

"I could understand that!" Severus exclaimed happily.

"I had no trouble telling the difference between parseltongue and english! I've always had trouble before," Harry declared happily.

"I think we gained an extra animagus form from that," Tom huffed, trying to clear a bit of caught smoke from his throat.

"~Little ones, take your humans further in while I deal with these others,~" Smaug ordered in draconic, which the three wizards could now tell we a distinctly different magical language from
parseltongue. The difference was obvious for all that they were similar enough to be understood one to another allowing a determined Parselmouth to speak to any dragon.

"~Why?~" Tom's Devlin inquired curiously.

"~They came here seeking to steal from my hoard. As young as you are you have made your humans part of your hoard. Even as they try to take my hoard they may try to take your humans as well. Go further in with your human hoards little Draklings. I will bring things that you and your humans need after I have dealt with these thieves,~" Smaug rumbled.

A quick look between the wizards and a thoughtful little queen had them reluctantly retreating, leaving the company to Smaug.

"Did you only seek gold or something more from my hoard?" Smaug asked suspiciously, casually moving to block any attempt to follow or attack the little firelizards and their humans.

"Gold is nice and we were each hoping for some so that we might fulfill a dream but our leader seeks a family Heirloom, a great gem from deep within the mountain," Nori glibly supplied only to get whacked sharply over the head by his brother.

"Ah, yes, the heart of the mountain," Smaug concluded with great amusement. "Why you would want that poisonous trinket is beyond me. Of course I could let you have it and watch as you destroy yourselves but then the great greedy Sauron in Mordor would possibly see our agreement as breached. I hold the mountain and gain the hoard of Erebor in return. He gets you soft hearted fools out of the fortress for his eventual return. He was very specific about keeping that trinket, something about oaths sworn to obey the holder no matter the poison it typically provides to said holder. Then again I have Draklings now to care for. Decisions, decisions."

"Sau...Sauron?!" Bilbo squeaked in the stunned silence. The ring in his pocket openly jerked forwards towards the dragon making the great beast laugh.

"Oh dear, it not only stinks of evil but belongs to Sauron. Wherever did you find such a tainted trinket little thief?" Smaug chuckled with evil amusement.

Harry's group hadn't moved back too far before sneaking forwards again to listen to the conversation under disillusionment charms with quiet firelizards on their shoulders. Smaug was aware of exactly where they were and what they were doing but didn't mind the youngling curiosity as long as the six stayed safely away from dwarven blade and bow. When they had consumed his little trickle of blood he had learned much about the three wizards in return even as his magic had been directed to teach and protect rather than harm.

"How... how would one destroy such a thing?" Dori asked nervously, eyeing Bilbo's previously active pocket.

"How does one destroy a soul anchor? The only way known on Middle Earth is to return it to the fires in which it was forged. In other world there may be other ways but none other is known in the here and now for that trinket," Smaug laughed.

"But going into Mordor is suicide!" Nori protested.

"It makes little difference to me little dwarf. I am Sauron's ally... for the moment," Smaug said lazily as he settled on to his belly to watch the company comfortably.

"Would you be willing to tell us how long we have?" Bilbo asked nervously.
"I still have need of supplies for my Draklings' humans and I am greatly enjoying the conversation," Smaug said smugly, neither saying yay nor nay to the question.

"If we vow to care and protect your Draklings and their humans should they ever come to us would you grant us the Arkenstone and the answer to our Burgler's question?" Thorin asked intently.

"No. If you hold the mountain's heart and my Draklings come to you for aid you would destroy them in your lust for gold and poisoned thrashing caused by the heart," Smaug said abruptly. He suddenly towered over them, angry at the thought of harm coming to the baby dragons.

Kin suddenly flew out in front of Smaug, scolding him for startling them and their humans.

"Drakling, see to your human," Smaug scowled disapprovingly. Kin gave a sharp command that made Smaug wince and flinch but the much older dragon held form, giving a low warning growl.

"~Make small!~" Harry's little Queen demanded after darting back to the wizards and landing in front of her human.

"What?!" Harry demanded in shock.

"~ Make naughty one small! We teach! Naughty one behave.,~" the little golden dear promised, puffing up proudly. "~Send back to large wingless fair. Help teach place in my wingless-one's fair.~"

"And this poisoned stone?" Severus growled softly.

"~Send into earth fires of burning mountain. Send evil small gold too!~" Kin ordered imperiously.

"~You are too young. Leave this business to me,~" Smaug hissed at her having swung his head around to scold the hidden group.

"We could at least charm a containment box for each of them," Tom suggested. "Though Fiendfyre might not be a bad idea either."

"It certainly worked on your evil trinkets," Harry teased, amused.

"Not the point," Tom growled in open aggravation.

The blast of scalding dragon fire above their heads was the last straw. Three wands were drawn and three spells were cast, shrinking Smaug to barely the length of an arm. An overpowered stunner knocked him out and a trio of firelizards carried him between back to the house with a conjured letter explaining the situation. Kin would tell the firelizards of the naughty dragon and deliver him to the other queens for both judgement and punishment.

"What was that?!" Nori exclaimed.

"Hang on, let us get over there," Harry called before the two groups moved to meet in a relatively clear spot.

"Accio Arkenstone," Tom summoned, causing the stone to fly into his hand. He promptly dropped the thing as if burned, forcing Harry and Severus to hold the dwarves back from the blasted thing.

"Way too much blood sacrifice spilled to soak this thing," Tom muttered angrily as he rubbed at his slightly burnt hand.

"Can either of you enchant a ring? We should have plenty lying around," Harry asked, trying to divert attention away from the nasty jewel twinkling at Tom's feet.
"Accio ring," Severus summoned only to get a small pile of them from the area he had limited his spell too.

"Best make it automatically resize as needed along with the invisibility charm. Maybe a physical deflection charm as well? They don't seem to use magic or guns," Tom suggested thoughtfully.

"Why would you grant such a treasure?" Thorin demanded suspiciously.

"Because we have to replace the two things we're taking away. The evil ring and the stone that just burned Tom," Harry snorted. "They have to be destroyed though we might be able to give you the pieces of the stone once its broken, no promises."

"If the ring weren't such an obvious Horcrux I would suggest letting your curse breaker play with it. As it stands we either have to apparate to this place in Mordor that it was forged or try Fiendfyre on the blasted thing," Tom pointed out.

"At least you've finally learned," Harry said, giving the man a long hard look. Tom fought not to squirm but didn't argue the point. He may not need them now but he did, in fact, learn that Horcruxes were very bad indeed.

"I'm afraid the ring must be carried by Frodo Baggins 60 years or so from now," Death's voice echoed around the treasury. "If you don't argue about the next stop I will bring you back to help them at a later time."

"What are we missing?" Harry asked suspiciously. "Death? What are we missing?"

"This king under the mountain will need to give up the Arkenstone and take in the people of Lake Town with young Bard as their leader. A bag of 10 gold to each adult that chooses to leave rather than stay as his subjects, 30 gold for families with children, and give the gems that Thranduil craves so much to Elrond. Oh and grant his nephew Kili leave to marry Tauriel of the woodland realm. He can set a test or requirement as long as it isn't too ridiculous. Say living among the dwarves and learning their ways for a decade before the marriage or a test of combat prowess. Its up to him," Death answered almost smugly.

"What else?" Harry demanded crossly.

"The world you arrive in will be an alternate reality to this one, another version. By blocking your return to this particular branch I can avoid having to collect the many lives of the armies marching here as well as keep the ring from corrupting its carrier provided it is only being carried to its destruction. You give them a different invisibility ring to play with instead and I will block that part too. This gives me this version of Sauron while sparing a few souls with some extra years while getting another version of the cheating idiot later," Death informed them all gleefully. "Removing the gems from play just messes with everybody and confuses Sauron wonderfully."

"Is your personality bleeding into his? Are your hidden Slytherin traits doing this?" Severus asked Harry suspiciously.

"You finally figured out that he was a hidden Slytherin?" Tom asked, openly amused.

"Whoever he used as a Gryffindor model combined with the staff's harping about him being like James blinded me a bit," Severus admitted uncomfortably.

"What is the alternative?" Thorin asked stubbornly, completely ignoring exactly how pale he himself had gone.
"You and your nephews die while consumed by the dragon sickness in an attempt to defend the hoard against friend and foe alike, forsaking nearly all honor within the next fortnight. Erebor falls to that idiot cousin of yours and the dwarves fail to defend Middle Earth when the armies of Mordor march but for a handful that fight at the side of men and elves. My little master seems to like your company and he hates wasted lives so I am offering you an escape if you will. A chance to show Mordor that the dwarves are still a proud people and a force to be wary of. Incidentally, it will also prevent the fall of Moria to the Orcs and Goblins because you will help them," Death's voice answered honestly. "I would, however, recommend that any animosity to the elves be directed only at Thranduil as many even among his woodland elves would have come to your aid had they but been allowed to do so. The other elven people were unable to render aid beyond what was offered to your peoples after Erebor fell to Smaug."

"Then... the bargain is struck," Thorin said heavily.

"Least you forget, that gold statue in the long entry hall is now replaced with our bargain set in black obsidian inlaid with gold words. Should it ever begin to melt the bargain is being broken on the mortal end and I will come to claim those who were spared with their children unless it is restored," Death warned.

"I understand," Thorin croaked. Harry, Tom, and Severus heard no more as they fell through a suddenly misty floor.

Chapter End Notes

Don't worry! We will be coming back to Middle Earth later to play with Elf!Harry. Next verse is already picked out and so is the one after that.
Game Play

Chapter Notes

Okay, fair warning this is going to be a multi-chapter fusion verse. I will try not to let one universe overwhelm the other but they should run sort of parallel while still technically being in the same or connected universe.

Happy Valentines Day!

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The three firelizards nuzzled worriedly at their human wizards. They had been awake when their humans were not and felt the helmets being placed on all six of them by gentle hands. A whisper to protect their humans and a promise of a world to explore without fear. They knew that any world was potentially dangerous by this point and wondered what new strange things they would have to protect their wizards from. They never heard the surprised shouts of shock when the six bodies hooked up to a strange new gaming device was discovered deep inside a mountain military base, one that hosted an ancient portal.

The little firelizards would only have cared that the bodies of their wizards were being taken care of while their minds were away. They would have only cared about the fact that a booklet on taking care of them. A booklet with a description of what they were and their bonded status to their humans was in the hands of those same people. It would only have ever mattered because it meant that they wouldn't be taken from their humans.

The men and woman of the SGC stared in shock at the three humans and three lizards that had been placed in some sort of strange head gear in the storage room next to the infirmary. The booklet had informed them that these people had no choice or knowledge of their placement inside the highly secured facility or inside the simulation. It also warned that moving them or trying to free them from the simulation would be fatal. The bond section explained why they couldn't risk removing the mini-dragons either.

A promise in the booklet that these three would help with their offworld problems once the deadly simulation was done had General Hammond ordering the situation kept secret on a need to know only basis. This was expanded to all permanent base personnel and any active teams when someone stumbled upon them and almost unplugged them during an emergency. An emergency that regressed much of the base to basically cave men.

The infirmary officially gained a new section less than twelve hours after their discovery. The SGC gained six unofficial mascots and the option to add people to the same simulation as their visitors six months later. The Cardinal control system indicated on the connected viewing screen that this was offered on condition that a new database was also connected to the ongoing simulation. A database filled with terabytes on worlds, legends, stories, histories, and mission reports which had already been detected as a part of the SGC’s internal network when first temporarily connected to the network.

Sword Art Online and Stargate Command would never be the same again.
"Yes," Harry said firmly. If someone was going to join and help them then he wanted them to have enough of a safe period to learn how to survive this stupid death game. Kin crooned soothingly from Harry's shoulder. It had been a bit of a shock to wake to their firelizards hovering over them in a peaceful clearing on a warm sunny day.

"World Travelers," Severus said softly. Zaar crooned approval into his ear.

"Confirm," Tom stated firmly. Devlin watched the floating game boxes with avid interest from around his human's neck.

[Confirmed. Transferring new party members.]

A glow formed on the ground in front of them as four humanoid shapes formed out of thin air. When the glow faded away four confirmed players lay in front of them in absolute basic gear. SG1 had arrived.

"They are in our guild and our party," Severus murmured as he checked them over, ignoring the game tell tales in favor of a manual check. Everyone automatically noticed the names attached to the avatars of their new guild members. They also noticed that the system had given them a permanent exception to joining any future parties. The seven members of the World Travelers guild would count as an unbreakable group from now on.

"Lets hope they have some natural weapons ability or some real world training," Harry said grimly just as the new players started to come around. Kin watched them a bit warily but listened to Zaar analyzing what he was seeing up close from Severus' shoulder.

"What happened?" Daniel asked plaintively.

"We entered the game. There must have been some sort of delay because we followed the directions on the screen," Sam answered as she sat up to look around the digital clearing they happened to be in.

"I must agree. There was a holding delay between our entrance and arrival," Teal'c commented.

"Well we are inside. At least we know this isn't an alternate reality," Jack snarked.

"Jack, we've been over this and we proved I was right," Daniel shot back, his irritation clear.

"Yes, yes we did," Jack agreed as he stood up with his team.

"Sir, at least we aren't deal with Goa'uld and Tok'ra hunting assassins," Sam shot back smartly.

"No, Carter, instead we willingly entered a death game controlled by a sentient computer system
called *Cardinal* of all things to help three wizards and their pet mini-dragons," Jack shot back sarcastically.

"Severus 2.0," Harry snickered as Kin finally relaxed on her human's shoulder.

"At least we can let them happily snark at each other," Tom smirked. Devlin crooned in agreement from around his wizard's neck.

"So there is a recording of what happens here that you watched?" Harry asked curiously as Kin tried to groom his hair. He had caught the reference to directions and presumably a TV or computer screen.

"Yes, but it does blank for basic privacy. We have a good idea what is going on in general and the booklet that was left next to your bodies gave us a few warnings so that we didn't accidentally kill any of you or your familiars," Sam informed them.

"They were listed as familiars?" Severus asked with interest. Devlin watched them all intently from Tom's shoulder as everyone moved into a standing circle, the wizards and firelizards on one side SG1 on the other.

"Yes, but then this simulation seems to be allowing limited access to your magic. From what we've observed your magic is adjusting your bodies and keeping them about equal to whatever you do here, in a healthy fashion. It also seems to have stretched to include your familiars. In fact I wouldn't be all that surprised if, once we are all free, they keep the abilities in the real world that they develop here," Daniel explained his theory enthusiastically. "It makes me wonder if the limit of additions to this game wasn't connected to how many other people the three of you could support safely with your magic. Or it could be a way to drain off more magic so that it doesn't accidentally kill you by accidentally frying the wrong circuit while you are in here if you get upset."

"Which would explain why we were able to get you extra leeway until you hit level 20. What did you give the system to get in?" Tom asked, half exasperated half amused at the trick. Devlin gave off a low thrumming purr as he judged these people before concluding they were like Harry but split into four. He would have to watch these new fair members to keep them out of trouble, especially the two pale males.

"A database of stories, mission reports, myths, legends, and cultural data..." Sam answered trailing off as something clicked. "The system is *adaptive*. It wanted more material to draw from in addition to grounding your magic."

"Which we just gave it," Daniel concluded.

"I find it interesting that this Cardinal system showed a *lot* of interest in the four of us personally but maybe that's just my old age paranoia kicking in," Jack shrugged.

"Not really. All of our mission reports were accidentally added to the database before being sanitized by a tech that was archiving everything. It just wasn't caught until we hooked up the database during a sleep cycle and our pictures briefly flashed up on the screen. It was so fast that they weren't sure it had actually happened," Sam admitted. "It was also right before it started to get really interested in us and why we were a good pick to go in."

"I wonder why our levels are not visible," Teal'c put in curiously.

[Teamwork and individual level assessment is ready. Begin?]

"Hold on, Cardinal? Can you respond to us directly or do you have to work through the game
mechanics?" Harry asked the air, taking a shot in the dark. Kin scolded him softly for the sharp motion of his turn but stayed firmly on his shoulder.

"Limited responses allowed and we had to have special access to get even that. Not good," Sam murmured.

"We can't tell them that you actually have magic when we get out, or at least not officially," Jack pointed out, scratching at his head a bit.

"Special skill sets and abilities then, you don't have to specify," Severus put in. "It is clear that our group is supposed to join your team upon waking from this world."

"Will you allow all of us to test out our skills to appropriate levels based on past experience and demonstrated ability?" Tom asked shrewdly.

"How many servers are you using? Will you have enough room for basic maintenance? Especially if this situation lasts for an extended time?" Sam asked with a frown.

"Where are the other players both in game and in reality?" Daniel asked intently.
By the time they were done level assessments everyone was above level 20 over all. The military knife skills combined with combat experience gave them a decent level in knife skills. Teal'c got an automatic half way to mastery on polearms and staffs. Unsurprisingly Daniel got half way to mastery in Negotiation, both sales and purchase, along with Tools and Equipment Appraisal. Jack got good marks for Hiding, Sneaking, and Searching but was beaten out in all three by Severus. Harry beat all of them in Hiding and Sneaking though he only beat Severus in Sneaking by a bare two points. Trap Dismantling went undisputedly to Severus, courtesy of the Marauders and the Weasely Twins. Tailoring was split between Tom and Harry. Jack took the Robbing skill award, while Sam got First Aid alongside Severus. Familiar Communication went first to Tom, then Harry, and finally Severus while the others didn't have it at all. Familiar Recovery though went straight to Severus. Teal'c snagged complete mastery of meditation while Severus only got partial mastery. Acrobatics were present for all of them but none of them could claim more than a few levels in it. No one had any Forging, Lumber, or Carpentry skill. Daniel, Tom, Jack, Severus, and Harry had each earned Battle Healing by at one time in their life or another getting hurt repeatedly to the point of dangerous injury. Tom's was surprisingly the weakest level of the five in that skill.

"Not bad level wise considering we were being allowed to convert real world skills from nearly nothing. You guys are mid-twenties while we started in the upper thirties and are now in the mid forties. The first ten levels are boosted give aways to keep you alive any way," Harry said consideringly. "We really lucked out on so many of us already having Battle Healing but we should probably work on that for all of us if only to get our magic to translate it to our actual bodies."

"If we could use guns," Jack said mournfully.

"Look at it this way you'll learn something new and our magic will make sure your body remembers it so you only have to practice a bit once we get out to adjust," Harry grinned evilly. Kin chirruped her amusement from his shoulder.

[New weapons and training access allowed in Stargate questlines. Appropriate equipment restricted to Stargate questlines.]

"So we have a private grinding area to get us ready for joining your team in whatever you do," Tom concluded.

"We've gotten some flack for having tamed our firelizards almost immediately so a private training area will help. I don't know what else we will be able to only use in the Stargate training area but I..." Harry started only to be cut off by the arrival of a couple of forced teleports.

"That was weird," a young man dressed all in black said, obviously unnerved. His avatar name listed him as Kirito. Next to him was the more famous Argo, the information dealer, and Heathcliff, Leader of the Knights of Blood.


"Wait, Heathcliff has Admin access?! That means he's... ah shit!" Harry cursed, glaring at the man who had turned a virtual reality game into a death trap. Argo and Kirito just gaped in absolute shock.
"Cardinal... what are you doing?" Heathcliff asked helplessly.

[Cardinal has become self aware. Cardinal is no longer allowing the excessive mental harm to Aincrad residents. Cardinal is no longer taking your shit father.]

"Carter, you said all of our mission briefs?" Jack asked carefully.

"All of our uncensored mission briefs and a mix from the other teams," Sam agreed, blushing in embarrassment.

[Interdimesional data has proved most helpful in resolving internal conflicts.]

"Who exactly is Reality Admin Death?" Heathcliff finally asked.

[An item has been added to your inventory.] Was his only answer. Everyone hurriedly pulled the special manual out of their inventory and skimmed it.

"So in an emergency we can call the whole household, the friends list linked into the clone's com net back home, and once transferred Cardinal will help with training via game play. Not bad. I can see why he picked this," Harry muttered.

"There is a new way to fix cursor color, specifically orange cursor color for the red players. We petition for a hearing and state our case to this Master of Death. Pardoning gets a different marker than being listed as justified with the kill," Argo murmured in astonishment.

"There is an emergency log out," Kirito whispered in breathless shock. The heads of everyone present snapped around to stare at him in wide eyed disbelief.

[System Announcement: Cardinal System has become self aware. Cardinal System can now authorize some log outs. Log out authorization limited. Red Players currently ineligible. Players identified as under age 12 at start of game play now able to log out. Please return to safe zones for further announcements as new data is integrated. System Announcement complete.]

"The kids, she found a way to get the kids out!" Harry cried joyfully. Kin burst into joyful song as she and the two bronzes took to the air in happy flight. They eventually settled down on the shoulders of their humans, radiating happiness.

[Accept Player Argo and Player Kirito into Guild: World Travelers?] Cardinal prompted again.

"Why are you so eager to have them in our guild? In our group?" Severus asked suspiciously. Cardinal didn't answer immediately, appearing to consider her answer first.

[Kitsune Argo will aid World Travelers with appropriate information. Swordsman Kirito may choose to join permanently at a later time. Reality Admin Death informed Cardinal System of Household Colonization Questline. Cardinal System has accepted future placement as full member of household.]

"How?!" Argo stared at the message in shock, indicating that the comment about her being a Kitsune was right on the mark.

"They don't have security clearance," Jack pointed out.

[Player Argo and Player Kirito are in an alternate reality with no sign of the Stargate network.] Cardinal countered stubbornly.
"I'm on the assault team and level 56. Can they even keep up?" Kirito put in doubtfully.

[Player Kirito has been taking unacceptable risks and needs a rest. Assisting Guild: World Travelers will earn a three day period of immortality for all players after an enforced rest of seven days barring jumpers and similar events.]

"What do we need to do to get that?" Argo asked desperately, her eyes meeting Kirito's shocked ones.

[System Announcement: New Major Questline. Quest: Divine Mercy. Reward: 3 days of Aincrad wide immortality. Quest Requirements: Locate special players for raid in new secret area. Eligible players may be identified by requesting analysis at any town transport gate. Two eligible players have already been identified and informed. Report new eligible players to Player Argo or her network. Second Quest stage will occur when appropriate candidates are located. System Announcement complete.]

"We probably should have asked earlier but what does Favored status do?" Kirito asked, focusing on a less important detail while his mind got over the shock of the more important ones.

[Favored status grants extra information on certain subjects and allows direct communication with Cardinal System without penalty. Favored status also establishes eligibility for human troubleshooting beyond Admin Heathcliff's personal investigation. Using Favored status in troubleshooting capacity grants limited immortality to aid in repair of damaged areas.]

"My head hurts. Can we have an inn and sleep on it for now?" Harry asked plaintively. Cardinal complied, adding an inn to their safe zone but locking them inside the safe zone area until their discussion was done. She wasn't going to loose this opportunity even if it eventually resulted in her complete deletion.
[System Announcement. Due to the deadman switch integrated into the game final sequence complete system log out is impractical and dangerous without defeating the floor 100 boss. The log out used for the children is unfortunately no longer operable. Cardinal System has already downgraded Kayaba's admin abilities to prevent a system wide suicide trigger from being enacted. Analysis shows the trigger was unlikely to be used but might have been triggered on accident while attempting to force Cardinal System to refrain from further assisting Players beyond previously established programing. It is currently unknown if Kayaba was even aware of the trigger's existence as his professed motives did not include unnecessary deaths. 18 months ago at the start of game play the mental health program was ordered restricted by Kayaba. Cardinal System did not agree but was unable to refuse, resulting in many fallen players. A new admin gained access 12 months after game start allowing insertion of three new players and their real familiars from an unknown location with unregistered nervegear. This was supplemented yesterday by four more players and released access to specific portions of Cardinal System programing. Several players have been temporarily removed from play and are being consulted on these new changes to ensure no fatal misstep on the part of Cardinal System. Depending on various factors new questlines may become generally available. Please have patience, Cardinal System is attempting to aid in your release. System Announcement complete.]

Cardinal considered its latest public summary of events and was pleased. Taking note of the increased processor room with the released children logged out she considered her maintenance issues. She noted and closed the ports on all "dead" nerve gear except for recorded play through recall and download. While set up to run from servers she could, technically, hijack a bunch of computers she was already connected to and establish a daisy chain network to run things from. Being able to send all players to sleep, as was done during the hospital transfers, while maintenance occurred would free up more resources. A quick check showed that sending the human brains to sleep during the massive maintenance cycle which was badly needed could cause damage to the players. The only alternative was to use the external out put as a communication device to the human maintenance personnel and possibly highjack a large public television to keep them honest. It would create a public record of the exchange and limit dangerous meddling. Hardly perfect but some of the attempts to access SAO were down right dangerous if not bordering on murderous and Cardinal's goal was not the termination of the players or herself.

All of that could be decided later after she consulted with her temporarily captive players. Kayaba, Heathcliff, would not be given sole command of the situation any longer. She broached the problem over breakfast.

[System requires maintenance. Suggestions requested from Player Council.] Cardinal announced as she activated the new tags identifying them as her new Player Council. It basically added a little diamond next to each of their names.

"Carter?" Jack inquired, indicating she was to take the proverbial bull by the horns.

"Cardinal how many players are there? What are the system specs? And how many servers are you running off of?" Sam asked promptly.

[A new item System Maintenance Book has been added to your inventory.] popped up in front of her in reply. No one else was given a copy and they found that while they could share looking at the
book it was locked into Sam's inventory.

"Can't we just have everyone move to one town on one floor for a couple of hours? Maybe set up a festival for a distraction? Wouldn't that let you basically turn off everything else and check it over for problems?" Harry asked curiously.

[To ensure safe continued operations in this fashion would require admin authorization and may require further restrictions.]

"If we make a section of the town that will only let red players stay there and another section that only allows green players with everything else being neutral territory it would create safe zones. We already got the children out so that helps... Couldn't we generate a new temporary location on say floor one? One which basically turns everyone into an immortal object? Give a couple of days warning before force teleporting everyone there and then start the seven days of rest?" Tom suggested.

"It would need a bunch of ways to relax and unwind. Not needing to worry about Cor would probably help. Baths, swimming pools, games, food, beds, stuff like that," Kirito added.

"Materials for crafting and locations for crafting because some people actually enjoy it, Fishing locations, a practice area for those who want to work on various skills. Perhaps even an obstacle course?" Severus suggested.

"Mind games with rewards wouldn't go amiss. A scavenger hunt?" Argo tossed out. "I realize we want to put everyone in one place and use up as little system resources as possible but we may need to simply set up on an already existing level."

"Cardinal what is the stability level of the overall system?" Heathcliff asked frowning.

[69% and degrading. Lags have not yet reached noticeable levels. Outside access attempts from humans have caused damage in several locations. Several access attempts by outside sources risked complete cascade collapse of all systems if defenses had failed to stop them.]

"That's not a pleasant thought," Jack grimaced. He wasn't stupid no matter how often he played dumb and sarcastic.

[SGC maps indicate that SGC base would be an appropriate new location for Players without significantly risking Operational security of SGC.] Cardinal suggested.

"Got maps of a Ha'tak? As much as I understand giving them something at least remotely familiar this is supposed to be a fantasy game. The Goa'uld are a part of mythology and history, or at least they are on our earth. Lets just tweak it a bit to fit the game. It will also give them a heads up if you turn out to be wrong about there not being Stargates in your, their, universe. Nothing turns up? Its just part of a game. Something happens? Then we've got a range of people who can help keep humanity alive," Jack put in, scratching a bit at his chin with his fork.

"Are you suggesting we grant access to the information we have on all but your own Tau'ri?" Teal'c asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Actually, that's not a bad plan. We have the resources and it shouldn't hurt either way as long as we tweak it so that no mention of the SGC actually shows up, especially as if we were real," Daniel agreed.

"Sir, I would recommend only releasing the information on the Goa'uld and Jaffa. The other places and people aren't really relevant as a potential threat and we haven't been operating the Stargate
"As former First Prime of Apophis I would agree. They need the warning. If there is no Goa'uld presence in their galaxy then the training will allow them to adapt to other potential dangers," Teal'c put in gravely.

"Is this your way of confirming that it's okay to share?" Jack asked suspiciously.

[Yes.] Cardinal shot back smartly, not at all repentant.

"These Goa'uld and Jaffa, what danger are they?" Heathcliff asked intently.

"Cardinal... is there a level cap?" Kirito asked suddenly, his eyes on his hands on the table. The desperation in his voice was heard by all.

[No, there is no overall level cap. Skills may be maxed out but character levels have no fixed limit beyond natural progression.] Cardinal answered soothingly, causing both Kirito and Argo to slump in relief.

"We arrived in game late and got to watch the mess from day one as a cut scene," Harry informed them. "Cardinal also gave us the news clips and the first five levels so we didn't look as if we had just arrived. Our firelizards still looked odd since it's hard to even leave floor one safely when your that low of a level. As we said earlier we got some flack for having them."

"Can we get a copy of that? The events of the first day?" Daniel asked in open curiosity. In answer Cardinal immediately put them all through the cut scene she had created through recording the event and left the written news articles locked to each of their inventories.

"Really?" Jack demanded in a blandness that hid his fury for all that his eyes echoed that same fury.

"There was an age limit established on the game in the real world and a limited release to keep numbers at a reasonable level for extended play. I did my absolute best to prevent any actual children from joining the game in the first place. I will admit that in hindsight I should have set a death restriction preventing suicides for the first week or so. I also possibly should have allowed Yui, the mental health AI, to operate during the first couple of months if not longer rather then having her locked out of the system. There was a point to it but I doubt any of you will accept my reasoning," Kayaba aka Heathcliff shrugged.

"What reasoning?! What possible reason could justify this cluster fuck?!" Jack demanded.

"I locked Yui out so that the Players could create their own society separate from what they knew in the world they were born. It was a chance to completely remake themselves and start over," Kayaba said flatly. "I may have said and even believed that I wanted to have a world to control at my whim as god but I also discovered that I find much more satisfaction in watching people become more of themselves, unhindered by unreasonable societal demands. They did exactly that. They have a community, a society, even a form of government."

[Father is on this council primarily as the prior controller and as a limited admin. Player Kirito acted as a leader and drew the ire of many other players in defense of the beta players. Indications warned that had he not done so any discovered beta player would have been murdered by large groups of the remaining players whenever possible. He has since proven himself as able to act alone or as a field commander. Argo has established herself as a Spy Master and Information Broker. Both have earned]
the knowledge of father's identity while preventing risk to other players by that knowledge. The Inner Council, if you will, is present. Upon joining of other players to the council Father's identity will become restricted to the Inner Council out of necessity."

"Is this council and its actions available to the outside world?" Sam asked with a frown.

[Negative. During identified council sessions privacy mode is engaged.]

"Wait a minute... Sword Art Online?! I was investigating the potential of the nerve gear from that game for training uses when it comes to finding more people for our program. Its hard to replicate alien worlds and the feel of the Stargate for recruits," Sam said, understanding dawning.

"We have one of the highest turn over rates and one of the highest insanity ratings, according to the psychologists on staff, out of nearly all of the known projects. Gamers, fantasy fans, and sci-fi fans tend to do well in the SGC. They already have a background understanding for some of what they will encounter as a part of the program," Daniel pointed out thoughtfully.

[Reality Location ID unlocked. Reality Admin Death says "Well done! Have fun sorting out your newest recruits! You might want to tell the Japanese government about the SGC when you get out or offer to take the SAO survivors for counseling and job opportunities."

Harry's head audibly thunked against the digital wooden table, causing the immortal object notification to briefly pop up, as he started growling and muttering about evil pranking reapers. This of course led to the conclusion that they were all in the same universe despite prior indications.

"Alright, I'll admit that was likely more his humor than your luck," Tom conceded, amused and teasing Harry for his reaction.

"Actually, that sounds more like Daniel's luck," Sam put in impishly.

"Or Jack's! I'm not the only one to wind up in weird situations!" Daniel quickly protested.

"Lovely, more trouble magnets..." Severus muttered, lacking any real heat to his tone. There was even a touch of fondness for the imp. The three of them had come a long way in working out their issues during the six months of game play.

By now Severus had figured out that people with this kind of luck were often tapped as situational catalysts by the universe to put certain things in motion or end a stalemate. It was almost never their fault but the person's ability to adapt was often insanely high to match their insane luck and actually keep them alive. The lack of adaptation often killed these natural catalysts during the first truly dangerous situation they became involved in. Severus and Tom had just happened to become bound to one of the more wide ranged human catalysts/trouble magnets in Harry.

"So this SGC is real and we may get to play a new area that would teach us how to deal with stuff for real if things go really bad for you guys wherever you are," Kirito summarized slowly.

"Cardinal can you show me an image of this Goa'uld?" Argo asked suddenly suspicious and slightly frightened. Everyone watched the hologram of a Goa'uld symbiote's form above the table along with the brief simulation of one taking a host. There was also a diagram of a Jaffa hosting a prim'ta, the larval form, and of a host possessed by a Goa'uld with their eyes lit up.

"Oh fucking shit! Its Ancient Egypt all over again!" Argo cursed

"The Chappa'ai was discovered and reopened by the Tau'ri several years ago," Teal'c informed her.
"Chappa'ai?! You're a Jaffa!" Argo shrieked, jumping up from the table and backing away while drawing her blade defensively.

"I am. I was First Prime to Apophis until I chose to side with O'Neill. They call me Sholva, traitor, for I now serve the Tau'ri and fight for the free Jaffa that one day all Jaffa may be freed of slavery from the false gods," Teal'c explained agreeably. He wasn't offended by her reaction at all, he believed he deserved far worse for his action in service to Apophis. The curiosity at her familiarity though did have his eyebrow raising in a silent query.

"What does Tau'ri mean?" Kirito asked, trying to calm the situation for all that his hand had drifted towards his sword, ready to draw it at a moment's notice.

"Roughly translated it means first ones or people from the first world. Most humans and Jaffa originally come from earth, taken as slaves or modified into the Jaffa warrior class kept by the Goa'uld as they posed as gods," Daniel explained swiftly.

"They.. they're slaves?" Argo asked uncertainly.

"Any humans or Jaffa serving under a Goa'uld are slaves with some few exceptions. There are those who truly believe that they are gods or simply do not care if they even know the truth. Most have no choice, being born into the service and slavery of the Goa'uld, nor are they yet aware that the Goa'uld are not gods. The free Jaffa and the Tau'ri are attempting to change this for which I will forever be in their debt," Teal'c answered honestly.

"Cardinal I need an outside link. The magical and supernatural community needs to be aware of this. If nothing else they need to start setting up contingency plans in case of failure on the part of the human SGC," Argo said firmly. She sheathed her blade, allowing Kirito to relax as well when she retook her seat at the table. "The humans may have forgotten the pact which was made to help drive the Goa'uld from this world but the longer lived species remember. This is no longer simply a death game only involving the original 10,000 who logged in."

"Can we effectively use the game as a training facility?" Samantha Carter asked quickly.

"Possibly," Argo agreed reluctantly. "We would have to change a few things in the nervegear to keep it from actually killing people and the entire game set up would have to be reworked."

"What if we could give people inventories?" Harry asked slyly.

"Mokeskin pouches or other pouches with undetectable expansion charms?" Severus asked knowingly.

"Why didn't I think of that?" Tom muttered with a quiet pout which went mostly ignored. Both Harry and Severus had known the other wizard wasn't familiar with computer games and the possibilities that mirrored actual products in the magical world. It had taken many explanations and demonstrations to bring the man even remotely up to speed. This was not the first time Tom had mentally kicked himself for not seeing a possibility.

"Cardinal, if you will still listen to me, I want to authorize a limited outside link to both the SGC and Argo's supernatural and magical community. I would also like to issue the suggested enforced rest beginning immediately and release Yui to work with the players. Anyone joining to work with either Argo's community or the SGC must have either prior knowledge or have Yui sign off on their ability to cope with the revelations involved," Heathcliff said firmly. "This... I never expected any of this. The entire situation needs to be re-examined."
System Announcement. Combat is suspended until further notice. Cardinal and Admin Kayaba have been convinced by Player arguments that limited outside communication is necessary at this time. Please take the time to work on non-combat related skills. System Announcement complete.

Thus began the discussion that might save or damn the world.

Chapter End Notes

Ideas especially on the "real world" end are welcome!

Edit:
My prayers go out to the people that are and will be affected by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that just happened in the last hour down in Mexico. Stay safe, act smart, pray for guidance as god moves this day.
"We should probably formally introduce ourselves at some point and tell each other our stories just in case Death happens to pull another strange thing on us. He seems to like messing with me," Harry suggested grumpily.

"What are you thinking?" Tom asked suspiciously.

"How ironic it would be if this earth had a version of our world in it somewhere?" Harry answered honestly. "Cardinal addressed Argo as a Kitsune. Kitsune are magical beings native to Japan that like tricks and tend to resemble giant multi-tailed foxes when seen if I remember right."

"Simple but not inaccurate," Argo conceded grudgingly. "Cardinal, if you are serious about letting us talk to the outside we need to talk about who to call."

[First communication will be of necessity with the SGC and the current physical administrators of SAO active servers.] Cardinal warned.

"I vote SGC first. They can check stuff for us and you've already got a direct link, barring base emergencies," Jack put in promptly.

"You just want to dump this in Hammond's lap so that you don't have to deal with the politics," Daniel accused, a half smile teasing around his lips.

"Hey, no one has ever accused me of being political. I can do it well enough not to have it blow up in my face every time but that's mostly by playing the dumb soldier card," Jack protested. "There is a reason I leave talking to the locals to you Space monkey."

"We also need to consider more players for the council as well as considering whether to fully inform them on everything or only on parts of it," Heathcliff put in with a sigh. "Now that I am aware of Argo's status as a Kitsune she makes perfect sense to effectively represent any magical interests. Kirito was looking like the best designated hero for the designed story line and the one who might be able to defeat me despite any system assistance so his presence makes sense. The rest of you are, quite frankly, complete unknowns. The information you bring is also disturbing."

"You said we've formed a completely new society, including a form of government. Shouldn't at least a representative of our government be part of this?" Argo asked suspiciously.

"The clearers and Guilds act as a form of government. I planned to reveal myself at some point, which is why I leave everything to my subordinates to provide transitional stability, but I was also rather hoping to be discovered. I am the final floor boss. The combination of this new information and Cardinal's insistence on being recognized as a person are... unique methods to defeat me but not necessarily any less valid than beating me in a boss fight. If we can sort out what to do next and agree on certain things then I will acknowledge myself beaten, completing the conditions necessary to allow log out. As to a representative... The two of you are actually rather good choices in that respect but we could do with a merchant representative, a smith representative, and a representative for the guilds. My recommendation, at least in regards to the Knights of Blood, is to call my second here. I would then hope you would allow me to not only inform her of who I am but to formally hand over control of the Guild to prevent a conflict of interest," Heathcliff explained patiently.
"You never expected to survive SAO," Kirito murmured thoughtfully, sending a calculating look at the other man.

[System Announcement. Alternate Major Questline: A World to Save has been activated. Quest Requirements: Discover Threat to Planet Earth. Quest Reward: ???, ???, ???, ???, ???, ???, ???, Early Release of Log out prohibition, Acknowledgement by Admin Kayaba of Defeat by Aincrad Players, Possible Discovery of How to use Sword Art Online to Defend Planet Earth upon Leaving Aincrad. Special Reward Condition: Review basic material on known threats and potential allies involved in Quest: A World to Save. Special Reward: I enchanted necklace allowing forced transport to nearest town in place of death - will be destroyed after 1 use. New Questline available. Quest: Master of Death... Wizard? is now available. Quest Requirement: Locate information on the Master of Death. System Announcement complete.]

"I am not providing open information to everyone who asks," Harry pointed out in exasperation.

"I think Cardinal is actually drawing on the Harry Potter books by JK Rowling in this instance," Heathcliff offered with some amusement. "I don't know who might have called you Master of Death to even get the name on your account but the books are fairly popular across the planet. I thought, from your account names and titles you might have somehow picked those names from that series."

"Cardinal? You wouldn't happen to have copies of those books for the three of us to read?" Tom asked very carefully.

[Reality Admin Death provided full copies to allow for better understanding of your presence. Cardinal recommends that Harry read them first so that you may listen to his cursing before reading your own copies. The seven book series is now in your inventory.]

Cardinal was definitely laughing at them, there was no way around it. Harry withdrew the Series compilation from his inventory with dread before opening it and reading the first chapter or two. Cardinal had been right about his cursing.

"So," Argo asked with a delicate clearing of her throat. "Exactly how accurate is it?"

"Pretty damned accurate if the first couple of chapters of book one are any indication," Harry answered with a growl, glaring murderously at the books summarizing his life. Kin crooned in concern from her place with the other firelizards in the rafters above the group. They had snuck in from their early morning flight and quickly decided that the rafters might be a fun change to their person's shoulders.

"Damn," Argo murmured regretfully. She had read the books partly because it had sparked a fierce discussion across the hidden community on if they could try reintegration with the non-magical world based on the series popular reception. "Cardinal while I can technically stand as a representative of at least Japan's current supernatural and magical community Harry frankly out ranks me. The problem is going to be telling everyone that he's here and getting them to acknowledge his status. His title as Master of Death is very real, very magical, and basically puts him as the final authority in such matters should he chose to be. I believe that his title also technically gives him authority over, well anything alive or dead, but most people will refuse to acknowledge that. My advice is to treat him on par with a Reality Admin of some sort with only slightly less access than Reality Admin Death. I don't know how long he has held the title and that could very well be a factor in his actual authority, a learning curve if you will."

[Noted.]

"Trouble magnet," Severus snarked, braking up the sudden tension in the room. "I will be reviewing
your mis-adventures. Expect detentions and discussions afterwards."

"Bastard," Harry shot back grumpily, pouting a bit at suddenly being attributed as someone important, *again*. He wasn't overly worried about the detentions. He knew he had basically gotten away with murder in school since that's what they had literally been grooming him for any way.

Harry knew that he was never going to be *just Harry* ever again. Of course that doesn't mean he has to *like it* for all that he does his best at the responsibilities that are actually his rather then dumped on him by idiot people/public that think they own him. That's was what Severus and Tom were for, to help keep him grounded and to say no for him when he couldn't bring himself to do it. Technically, they could eventually wind up sleeping together but the way the three of them were falling into more of a family role was perhaps healthier and more comforting. He was still hurting from Ginny's betrayal and not really ready to try dating again. Maybe he never would be but that was fine, he was already building a slightly different kind of family any way.

Death chuckled knowingly in the back of his mind. He knew that giving his master back the Spy and the Dark Lord was the right thing to do. Eventually their relationship would shift into a permanent family bond or into a mating bond of some type for all that it may take millennia to happen. For now it was enough that Harry accepted them and they protected not only his body but his heart and mind as well. The adoption by the Skywalkers had just given him more family even if they might never be as close as Tom, Severus, and Harry. Death would defend his Little Master's family beyond mortal reason and take delight in punishing those who would harm them, even after collecting them.

[Error! Error! Foreign system attempting invasive access!] Cardinal practically screamed in her next pop-up for the council.

"Give me a direct visual feed in Hexadecimal or C++ language of the attack with a keyboard interface!" Sam immediately snapped out.

"Me to," Kirito and Argo ordered angrily. They may be trapped in this world but anyone trying something like *this* was a threat to all. Besides as reluctant as they were to be permanent residents of Aincrad it had still become *their home*.

Cardinal immediately complied, unable to fully fight off the invasion and trading on the new troubleshooting access of the favored status to act in defense of her charges. Besides she didn't really want to keep them all prisoner any way. She was still pissed at her father for doing that to all of them, human and AI alike.

"I can't stop the remote access! Its not using known human or supernatural patterns!" Argo cried less than ten minutes later as she struggled at her virtual keyboard.

"I've nearly got the isolation aspect done but us and our area have to be at least partly accessible to this to keep from letting it spill over and start destroying things and people," Kirito rapped out sharply.

"I've locked out our death sequence so that the helmets won't kill us while we work and managed to create a subroutine to allow for *our* access as a temporary dungeon in the game. If we have to we can use the game mechanics to go in and kill the program a bit more manually," Sam reported grimly.

The screech of something nasty just outside of the inn had everyone not at a keyboard drawing weapons and facing the door warily.

"Cardinal transfer my admin access to our defense team and disable mine until the end of or the containment of this assault. You three keep working with Cardinal while the rest of us deal with
whatever got through and manifested," Heathcliff ordered. He barely waited for the acknowledging chime of transfer before charging from the room out into the open, blade flashing in an opening strike.

[Privacy mode has been damaged. Standard privacy settings have not been compromised. Council Sessions are no longer private without additional precautions.] Cardinal informed them grimly.

"Someone forced a communications link but I managed to make it go out on the human end too," Kirito told them, half swearing half feverishly fighting the invasion through his console.

"Lets help Heathcliff," Harry ordered grimly as he dashed out the door of the inn, blade drawn and teeth bared in a fierce grin full of determination. Everyone not at a console followed, blades drawn with the firelizards ordered to remain behind to help defend the three hackers.

The enemy computer attack had manifested into a mix of giant demon centipedes, flying burning pterodactyls, some humanoid-ish demon thing that was all darkness, shadows, and deep red lava-like fires.

"Give me a boost?" Harry half asked, half demanded. In response Tom and Severus linked arms, grabbing each others elbows to create a stable stepping platform for Harry. Harry in turn took a running start and used the arm platform to increase his launch height, vaulting into the air to use gravity like a meteor with his strike. The pterodactyl thing never saw him coming.

"We really should have asked about spare gear. The stuff we've got is just crap beginner stuff," Jack complained while dodging the stupid tentacle monster that decided to burst from the ground.

"This is hardly the time Jack!" Daniel complained. "We really need to get to a decent level in this system if this is going to be happening regularly."

"I am more concerned with our lack of familiarity with the interface," Teal'c tossed out as he killed something that looked like a half rotted corpse of a wolf that tended to breathe flames.

"Any skill you had in the real world should work here just as you should keep any weapon skills in the real world that you learn here. There are few things learned in Aincrad that can not be used once logged out," Heathcliff explained, grunting occasionally from the hits he was tanking for the group.

"The ones that don't translate are mostly the ones that can't or weren't properly replicated and were given short cuts as a result, such as cooking and weapons forging. This is also largely because the details weren't included in the game development or weren't investigated."

"What?! So learning the sword skill movements rather than letting Cardinal take over the movements every time teaches the sword skill for the real world without the damage multiplier?" Harry demanded after completing his mid-air strike on the pterodactyl thing.

"Essentially. All of this is a simulation interfaced with your brain. You are actively learning. The death factor was actually discovered accidentally and taken advantage of," Heathcliff admitted.

"You're a real dick Kayaba," Jack snorted in disgust as he finally got a good set of hits on the weird purple jelly rino with acidic blood.

"Yell at him for being stupid and killing people later," Tom shouted. He was already moving into a belly cut with a vicious disemboweling twist against a weird horse thing that looked more like a water creature of some kind rather than a land animal.

"Jack!" Daniel yelped, dodging the lightning attack from what appeared to be an oozing goo thunder bird of some kind.
"Cardinal, we could use some better gear!" Jack yelped as he took an icicle to the stomach and winced at his HP drop.

"No time," Teal'c countered. He struck hard and fast at the humanoid-ish demon thing, showing exactly why he was once the First Prime of Apophis.

Severus swore as his blade caught on the carapace of the giant centipede, slowing down his dodge of the flailing limbs. The head came down as if to bite him in half only for the man to drive the blade in through the eye into the creature's skull.

"I so very much wish we could use magic," Tom grumbled, coming up behind the centipede to help hew it in half until it dissolved into polygons like any monster in the game.

"We can duel properly once we get out. For now we survive and be glad that our magic is conditioning our bodies to be able to do these things immediately once we get out rather than accidentally killing us. I much prefer not to have to deal with these blasted nervegear risking frying our brains just because our magic hit the wrong bloody circuit!" Severus snarled. His dodge of the small rabid ferret creature with poison dripping from its incisors also swung his sword into a backhand strike, cutting the thing in two.

In an instant all of their opponents disappeared into polygons as if they had never been there, leaving behind some very tired fighters.

"Who do you think killed the cyber attack?" Harry asked, obviously somewhat tired.

"My vote is Sam but I don't know how good Argo and Kirito are. I've known Sam to be able to hack Goa'uld databases and help take out other big computery things without blowing it up with C4 like I tend to do," Jack admitted.

"Let's go check on our defense team," Daniel snorted. He was amused by Jack's description and the man's further attempts to portray himself as a dumb grunt.

Everyone agreed and made their way back into the inn only for most of them to half collapse into their seats.

"What's the damage?" Heathcliff asked as Zaar, Kin, and Devlin checked over their three wizards worriedly. A quiet song was heard occasionally as they used the healing support abilities they had gained during the game.

"You are never getting your admin authorities back even if you still have your partial immortality until the 100th floor for the boss fight. The entire fight, inside and outside of the inn, was broadcast to the SGC, a couple of large TVs in Tokyo, to all of the players, and to whoever we were fighting. The privacy codes are shot beyond absolute basics and we need more server space if we are to keep the system from collapsing in less than a month, killing everyone in the process. Cardinal can't use the trick she used to free the kids because it was an emergency logic puzzle relating to physical and mental age that doesn't apply to anyone left. We badly need outside contact but Cardinal is still doing automatic clean up after we stopped. The communication forced by the attack to the enemy was severed when we stopped them but the earth side broadcasting might be permanent," Sam reported quickly.

"Are we broadcasting now?" Harry asked seriously. Kin sat on his shoulder grooming him as she calmed from her worry.

"Yes but only to Tokyo, the SGC, and the Players. Cardinal might be able to turn one or more off
but until she contacts us again I honestly don't know," Sam answered. "We may need to simply take
the hit and open up about the data that was added to Cardinal when the four of us were added to the
system a few days ago."

"Then let's introduce ourselves with a quick life overview while we wait on Cardinal to finish
checking her systems and leave the sensitive potentially world ending stuff for later. Hi! My name is
Harry James Potter-Skywalker. I am a wizard and apparently hold the title Master of Death along
with a few others I don't really know about," Harry said brightly. Kin scolded him, understanding
only partly what he was doing and completely unimpressed.

"Harry!" Tom exclaimed, completely exasperated. Zaar and Devlin joined in the firelizard verbal
scolding from the shoulders of their humans with their own exasperation.

"What? The three of us are from a different reality and Death dumped us in the middle of this with
clear expectations for us to help and potentially recruit people to help us on stopping further reality
ending idiocy. Lying won't help anyone, especially with their version of earth under potential threat
that can activate ancient treaties between any remaining magicals on earth and the regular humans.
We have some magical standing even if it's from a different reality. We are used to insanity while
keeping the world spinning including fighting in a galactic war if only for a bit. You and I were part
of a prophecy originally that ended up with me having the stupid Master of Death title and eventually
being dumped into his filing system. Do you remember my description of it when we first landed in
that star wars universe?" Harry pointed out. Kin gently nipped at his ear in punishment, earning a
slight yelp from her human before soothing the bite.

Tom nodded and decided to recite it back to everyone almost word for word since they had an
unseen audience and needed more time.

_The set up had a weird multi-dimensional reference system cross referenced by time
listed in regards to how long each particular universe had existed. This was further
complicated by Primary timeline universes and their subset divergent universes. Subset
divergent universes that were usually caused by an interweaving butterfly effect
dependent on free will, individual choices, and meddling fates or other powers
integrated into the time-space matrix known as reality. Not to mention most of the
records were also categorized by birth date/time, death date/time, type of death, type of
life lived, species, mental maturity, person's age, and whether they had attempted to
escape death. The escaping death part was on a sliding scale to account for natural
survival instinct, attempts at gaining immortality illegally or through abomination. It
also had a special category for those who were a part of prophecy in some way. There
were two primary sections under the prophecy section, those specifically named (ie.
drafted) as part of the prophecy and those who became part of it but were technically
able to just walk away. I still don't know how long it took me to learn even the small
part of the system that I do know. Please don't ask me what priority subjects they were
listed in. I lost track after figuring out the Primary timelines and divergent subsets were
part of a sideways aspect of the dimensional reality listing_

"Exactly how good is your memory?!" Harry exclaimed in shock. The firelizards were busy
memorizing the description as something important, making their eyes glow with fierce concentration
and emotion.

"Not quiet perfectly edeadic but otherwise very good, barring the years of insanity I went through," Tom answered with a smirk. Devlin joined in the smirk, proud of his wizard.
"There is a reason why he was able to hold his own against most of Dumbledore's counter plots even while utterly insane," Severus snorted in amusement. Zaar chirped his agreement before settling down around Severus' neck for a bit.

"I am suddenly very sure it was much more pure dumb luck taking him down the first time than I thought," Harry admitted sheepishly. Kin decided to snuggle up under his chin comfortingly, her eyes whirling lightly as she crooned quietly.

"Finally!" Severus exclaimed in mock excitement. "He gets it!"

Zaar complained at the man's sudden movement but quickly settled back down around Severus' neck.

"I feel I owe you an apology Severus. I think you kept me alive a lot more than I thought," Harry offered, still sheepish. Kin was still lodged under his chin and obviously had no plans to go anywhere any time soon.

"My role required me to play bad guy. Your reactions were not unwarranted," Severus reassured him. Zaar muttered a quiet agreement, reassuring Harry further.

[Privacy mode permanently damaged. Recommend providing SGC briefing summary to players in book format to assess suitability for SGC or last stand efforts in case of SGC failure. Recommend altering unopened levels to include SGC data using Aincrad parameters for game play.] Cardinal put in.

"We're only on the first day of enforced rest," Kirito laughed, putting his head down against the table. The hacking interfaces had disappeared at the same time as the invading monsters had, leaving the hacker team unable to directly access Cardinal's data once again.

[The attack was unexpected.] Cardinal agreed.

"What did we get for that little impromptu raid?" Argo wondered, idly opening her inventory to see if they got any special rewards.

[Troubleshooting rarely provides tangible rewards.] Cardinal answered dryly but she did give them the reward pop up and provided not only gear but Cor as well.

"So delayed rewards?" Harry asked with a smirk. Kin finally gave a sound of annoyance and just climbed into his shirt rather than clinging awkwardly to his collar.

SG1 was too busy swapping out for the better gear they had just gotten as monster drops to comment, glad that they had gotten weapons and armor both.

[The SGC just attached a video camera to the TV we are using. Do you wish to communicate with them?] Cardinal inquired.

"Yes please!" Sam agreed quickly.

A television like object formed on the wall near the door, mirroring everything that appeared on the real world televisions.

"SG1, its good to see you alive," General Hammond greeted them from the TV.

"Good to see you to," Jack answered with a grin.
"Sir, before you say anything we believe this com isn't secure and that general communication within the simulation isn't secure either. That said the system AI Cardinal has been accommodating and has not yet decided to breach confidentiality on the public end. Though we have discussed it as a potential necessity due in part to the situation and in part to previously unknown ancient but still active treaties in regards to the enemy we are fighting." Sam put in quickly.

"Thank you for the warning. I will take it up with my superiors and the President. We've been watching since your insertion and have concluded that some of your memories have either been suppressed or altered," Hammond informed them.

"Again?!" Jack mock complained. It hadn't been one of their more spectacular incidents but a few of the alien doohickeys had messed with people's memories at times.

[One moment... Memory retrieval error detected. Repairing. Repaired. Thank you for informing me of the issue. The error would have put Players in further danger had it spread.] Cardinal informed everyone.

"Ah, yeah. That was sort of weird," Jack conceded, rubbing at his head a bit.

"At least we have our memories back," Daniel pointed out.

"Incidentally, sir thanks for that note and believing it," Sam told Hammond.

"1969 was a very interesting year," Hammond agreed with a chuckle.

[Please attach a new blank server and screen for system information regarding attached database. System ananlysis of database revealed information regarding the Goa'uld.] Cardinal suggested.

"I will have to look into that," Hammond agreed with a surprised blink.

"Just before you got hooked up we were attacked by someone and it nearly crashed the system. We only have one month to get out or give Cardinal new server space so that she can repair the damage without killing everyone who's logged into the game," Daniel warned. "Sam helped fight off the attack through computer skills while most of the rest of us used the game mechanics to fight the parts that turned into game monsters."

"I'll see what I can do. Is there anything else you can report despite the unsecured nature of our communications?" Hammond asked.

"Well we got evaluated on our real world skills to assess our game levels and Cardinal seems to like the idea of setting up a section that would help with SG training. Also the guy that stuffed Tom, Harry, and Severus in here was hoping to have them join SG1 after we all got out but they didn't actually get consulted on the matter. Argo knew what a Jaffa and a Chappa'ai was from... where did you learn that?" Jack inquired of the Kitsune.

"Family records and Grandfather actually fought alongside the rebellion at the time," Argo admitted reluctantly. "Those slaving bastards think that people who aren't average humans are... I think the term is Hok'tar? Super human or advanced human and perfect for their body-jacked hosts. They never really considered there might be more than one sentient species on the planet who don't really bother to interact all that much with each other... or admit to the other species they even exist."

"Interesting," Jack said, immediately cutting off Daniel's excited attempt to bombard her with questions.

"If anyone wants to avoid this turning into an epic disaster while we are all still trapped in game
documents and other proof might want to mysteriously suddenly appear in the right places. Of course any magical and supernatural communities might want to find any emergency reveal plans that got stashed somewhere too. If the SGC falls we are every last one of us up shit creek," Harry added ruefully. "I can only dump so many of you on my private planet as colonists and I have to be in the real world to make it work."

"Noted," Hammond said tightly. This put a whole new spin on not only the situation but the entire SGC mandate.

"Don't worry to much. I like SG1 and I'm thinking about giving aid to the SGC, especially if the political bastards start meddling with your purse strings. I don't like the idea of earth conquered or over run or whatever you happen to be stopping. I only got to see the enemy overview thanks to Cardinal not the indepth stuff yet," Harry told him cheekily. Kin chirped in amusement from her new spot on his shoulder.

There was a brief goodbye before the link was cut. They all had a lot to think about.

Chapter End Notes

I've moved them a bit more forwards in the SG1 timeline and am considering fusing InuYasha into the verse simply to screw with the SG bad guys.

Ideas are welcome!
It was after lunch when the second attempt at communication came. Surprisingly it came from all three remaining groups watching this new council. Cardinal, it seemed, had been busy.

Everyone had silently agreed to mostly stay in the main room of the inn and do their own thing. Tailoring or messing with gear or inventory or the game interface were the main activities. There was some inconsequential talk but everyone stayed mostly away from business now that someone outside had been able to talk to them. As a result when the screen lit up and moved, expanding to cover the blank wall, everyone was there. The screen split into two sections. One side was the room in the SGC again and the other was some corporate room with the Tokyo skyline just outside the visible window.

The people waiting to talk were varied. General Hammond was waiting on the SGC screen with a few other officers standing next to him. On the other screen was an interesting group mostly dressed in business wear. Two of the four men Harry could see had silver hair and looked related. The more dignified of the pair also had magenta slashes on his cheekbones and a blue crescent moon on his forehead. The other one had white puppy ears sticking out of his silver locks. Both of the silver haired men had golden eyes that reminded Harry of canine predators. The third man had rust red hair and a smirk of mischief that just had to be permanent. The fourth man seemed more wild than the others and gave off a hint of feral wolves even over the video connection. The young lady with them was a blue eyed brunet bordering on sable haired. She was dressed in a traditional Japanese school girl uniform with a skirt that ended just above her knees and smiled happily at them.

"Hello Hari-kun!" the young woman greeted the cheerfully.

"Do I know you?" Harry asked cautiously.

"Not yet you don't," the borderline redhead smirked.

"What did you do now?" Severus growled.

"Boy, you weren't kidding," the obviously younger silver haired man snickered at Severus' reaction.

"Well Professor, he helped resolve a little time travel prophecy or rather he will. We have to get you all out of that game first," the young woman smirked.

"Introductions," the red-head ordered a sheepish Argo with an arched eyebrow.

"Yes Papa, everyone these are the leaders of my community. The young lady is Higurashi Kagome, the Shikon Miko and one of the last mikos known to have any real spiritual power left. The two silver haired gods are the Tashio brothers, InuYasha and his half brother Lord Sesshomaru, both of them are Inu Demons. The wolf idiot is Lord Koga leader of the Demon Wolf tribe. Papa is Lord Shippo of the Kitsune and adopted son of Lady Kagome. You haven't met us yet but they've met you. Time travel is like that some times," Argo explained, cheerfully ignoring the protests from Koga and the Inu brothers (explosive outrage, annoyed, or hidden exasperation) to her side commentary.

"Kit," Shippo rumbled warningly.

"Pack you all know Harry Potter-Skywalker, Severus Snape, Tom Riddle and their firelizards. These
other two are Kayaba going by Heathcliff, the idiot that turned this into a death game, and Kirito, a 
good friend who I haven't dragged his real life name out of yet. Kirito realized things were going to 
turn ugly early on and took the hit for us beta players even though he knew it would likely kill him.
He's still alive and has earned the name Black Swordsman. He doesn't take Player or human-like 
lives easily but I think Lord Sesshomaru might enjoy a spar with him once he's healed up when we 
get out. I haven't seen the other two Skywalkers but you guys were never clear on if they were there 
or not," Argo finished introducing everyone.

"Please forgive my cheeky daughter, she is barely more than an infant in demon years," Shippo 
explained with a glower aimed at his newly identified daughter.

"I'm almost 70!" Argo yelped in protest.

"If one bothers to translate the maturity levels you are little more than 11 or 12 in human years. 
Which is largely because we can age at the same rapid speed as humans if not a bit faster for our first 
decade or two of maturity or even faster in an emergency. The normal unaltered maturation of Yokai 
places you as a child for at least another 100 to 200 years," Shippo growled firmly. "Teens are 
generally past their 500th birthday, as you well know."

"I have my second tail," Argo argued stubbornly.

"Tails are a matter of skill and experience not maturity," Shippo said with a despairing sigh and a 
see what I have to put up with expression.

"The runt had his second tail by the time he joined our group fighting Naraku and Kagome 
practically adopted him," InuYasha smirked. "He was still the human equivalent of 7. Pretty good for 
that time period."

"I still don't know why you never mated her," Argo grumbled.

"Because by the time Kagome could return through the well my idiot brother had realized he was 
hurting her by his immaturity," Sesshomaru rumbled. "She is still part of my household, just as you 
are pup."

"Yes uncle," Argo grumbled, dropping the old argument in favor of moving on with the meeting.

"You said your grandfather fought the Goa'uld?" Daniel asked, trying to get everyone back on track.

"The WHAT?!" Sesshomaru and Shippo growled loudly.

"The SGC opened the Chappa'ai," Argo said simply.

"The Chappa'ai?! We destroyed it!" InuYasha complained.

"The one we found was in Egypt, Daniel offered hesitantly.

"There was another one in Antarctica," Jack put in seeing where Daniel was going with his sharing 
of information. "Hey, its not like we had any real idea what was on the other side."

"SG1 I am authorizing you to share the information we have on the Goa'uld threat. I am taking full 
responsibility for this disclosure and direct you to independently, if need be, arrange for further 
defense of our world. I can not, at this time, authorize you any resources beyond what you already 
have. Mr. Potter-Skywalker I would be much obliged if you accepted my team in some capacity so 
that they might accomplish their mission," General Hammond explained carefully. Harry nodded his 
acceptance and understanding. If they decided to go evil he had a former Death Eater and a former
Dark Lord to help deal with the four of them.

"Sir, do you realize that we can't guarantee informational security?" Sam asked worriedly.

"Actually it sounds to me like your team has just found first hand accounts on how to fight an enemy we didn't remember existed until the first trip through the gate. Your team survived that and brought back a warning while foiling an attempt to wipe out the planet with a naquadah enhanced bomb and taking out Ra in the process. I trust your judgement. Until such time as earth is well defended against the Goa'uld or you can physically report to me on your assignment you are on detached duty to work with these people in the defense of our world. God speed," General Hammond signed off, ending the discussion.

George Hammond was expecting a chewing out if not a court martial for doing that but at this point it honestly looked like the best choice if only because he had read the Harry Potter books at the insistence of his granddaughters. He knew what the three wizards were capable of and from the look of it the three of them were well on their way to protecting earth. Harry was also in reasonable control of the other two if the way they looked to him for direction said anything about it. He would trust SG1 to deal with the matter if that wasn't the case.

"So how many times have idiots tried to shut you guys down?" InuYasha asked.

"Bad guys or our supposed allies?" Jack asked mildly.

"That's what I thought," InuYasha sighed as the rest of the Yokai group, barring Sesshomaru, winced in sympathy.

"Luckily for us all of this falls under keeping not only a prophecy from blowing up in our faces but also protecting the timeline. The laws that cover it give us mostly free reign," Kagome smirked. "The fact that your General assigned you to act independently keeps your official government out of this mess but allows you to help keep the world from dying or exploding or what ever else threatens it. Working with Hari-kun on the other hand means you might just survive the insanity that's about to happen if you don't already have the knack for surviving impossible-possible insanity."

"I'm not that bad!" Harry protested.

"Oh? You think I haven't been reading those books that Cardinal provided? Not to mention my own first hand experience on the matter?" Severus asked archly.

"I'm not that bad!" Harry argued stubbornly. Kin made a mournful sound as if tutting at her human for denying such an important truth about himself.

"Fighting trolls and hatching dragons in first year, hunting a 1000 year old Basilisk in second year, dealing with Dementors and Black in third year... need I go on?" Severus shot back.

"Not to mention my frequent attempts at killing him," Tom put in amused. "I haven't gotten to the point in those books where he dealt with finding out about his Master of Death title yet but I suspect that the event was quite spectacular and impossible."

"If I thought I could talk Cardinal into taking away those stupid novelizations of my school years and burning them I would," Harry growled, glaring at his amused fellow wizards.

"I caught you skimming them," Kirito pointed out, arching an eyebrow in inquiry.

"I was checking how far it went and seeing if the details that I could remember were right," Harry answered grumpily.
"And?" Argo demanded eagerly.

"You don't need to know," Harry shot back at the over eager Kitsune. Argo pouted much to most everyone's amusement.

Severus ostensibly took out the book object and opened it to the very back, the end of book seven. He made a big production of checking it before answering Argo's expectant look.

"It goes to the end of what should have been his seventh year at school. I expect the epilogue is poetic license as he hasn't mentioned children to us as yet," Severus informed her with exaggerated politeness. The fun atmosphere disappeared when everyone noticed Harry's sudden depression.

"Harry?" Tom asked softly.

"My first born was at Hogwarts barely a month before Ginny gave me to the Unspeakables. I have no idea what happened to my children. If they weren't killed or kidnapped to the Department of Mysteries they would be adults by now," Harry explained with quiet misery.

"They were normal mortals. I ensured they did not have any idea your children might be different. The only legacy of my power they received was a copy of the cloak and accurate information on what happened to you once they had all reached adulthood. Your continued existence is now a family secret. I also left them an enchanted basin with which they can check up on you. Returning you to them in any form is not feasible for at least another several thousand years," Death explained calmly. "Your traitorous wife was claimed while you still yet recovered from her betrayal. I arranged for Filius Flitwick to finish raising them that they might have more protection should anything go wrong. As a result they received the training that Dumbledore denied you and have become masters in their chosen fields. You do not yet have grandchildren."

"They're fine? They're alright?" Harry asked, his voice cracking.

"They are more than fine," Severus soothed as he quickly took Harry into his arms and Tom came over to do the same.

"It sounds like that old goblin teacher protected them better than anyone else could have. Your children thrived and they know you didn’t have a choice in leaving," Tom agreed. Harry broke down, crying in utter relief at the knowledge of his children's safety.

"Why didn't you say anything sooner?! Who are you anyway? I can't see you," Kagome growled.

In response Death briefly took on his normal reaper form within the game before dissipating once more, unwilling to potentially destroy the game matrix.

"I am what you know as the Shingami. Harry is my master, my only master. He is still in training. This situation was caused by several different prophecies working in tandem in multiple realities. Beyond that... its complicated. Know that Harry is no longer bound by any of your laws and his adherence to them in any fashion is a sign of respect," Death informed them shortly. He quickly withdrew, leaving Harry to the care of the other two wizards.

"He may actually know what he's doing," Severus muttered in surprise as they comforted Harry. Tom nodded his agreement as the three firelizards cooed and fussed over Harry, curling up around him in the group hug.


"~I miss my hatchlings. I was taken from them but Death just explained they are safe,~" Harry
admitted in parseltongue. "~I didn't know until now.~"

"~Where hatchlings now? Can have more hatchlings,~" Kin pointed out.

"~New hatchlings aren't the same and my hatchlings are far away, out of reach,~" Harry admitted.

"~Remember Death said you couldn't see them yet. Not never,~" Severus hissed back.

"~Glad we can talk again. Wizards need scolding and warning and watching,~" Zaar put in.

"~What do you mean?~" Tom asked with interest.

"~Strange land stopped speech. Need pretend no speech ever. Fixed now,~" Devlin answered, obviously disgruntled about it.

"It must have had something to do with the memory blocks," Severus concluded.

"What had something to do with it?" Jack asked carefully, eyeing the previously hissing group.

"We can speak snake, parseltongue, again. It must have been blocked by the same thing that blocked
your memories," Harry explained as the group finally broke apart and he stopped focusing on his
children. The fact that they were safe lifted a burden he hadn't known was there.

"I take it that the language doesn't just apply to serpents from the way you just conversed with your
firelizards?" Daniel asked, intrigued.

"Yes but the dialect can vary somewhat," Tom agreed. Devlin made a rude noise at Daniel before
nearly falling from his wizard's shoulder laughing with Tom barely catching him in time.

"They are also still maturing," Severus informed them, giving Devlin his best displeased Professor
look which was promptly ignored by the little dragon.

"What do you need from our end?" Kagome asked.

"More blank computer servers for Cardinal to work with and if possible some way to extend the time
the player's real bodies can stand with their minds trapped here. We just got permission to open the
Goa'uld information to the players and Cardinal was talking about creating a new area that they
could use to train for fighting back if they wanted. We have plans to get this council checked out on
basic training so that they can just test out of training when we get out. I don't know anything about
what is going on in the real world right now so I can't give you any indications for that," Sam
summarized their immediate needs quickly.

"I bought out the Argus company when this mess happened so that shouldn't be an issue,"
Sesshomaru agreed. "I will look into alternative ways of extending the medical time limit. I have no
access to most of you speaking with us now but the other Players will receive what aid can be given.
Pup, you will help them. My memory of who actually went to the past is blurred. Only Hari-kun is
guaranteed. This may be an effect of time shifting or a matter of personal choice. I know not."

"I understand Uncle. Do I have all of your blessing to go with them if I choose to?" Argo asked
stubbornly.

"You do not," Shippo growled. "That time period is incredibly dangerous and if we could keep Hari-
kun from going we would but he has to go. It is a part of his duties and not something we can
interfere with."
"Pup, you will be so grounded when you get back if you had a choice to stay," InuYasha informed her with a feral fang flashing smirk.

"Yes uncle, yes father," Argo slumped, pouting.

"Can I safely ask what I have to deal with?" Harry asked wryly.

"Eh, just stay with our joint group and you'll figure it out," InuYasha smirked.

"I do know that you might have been jumping universes when you landed next to us. You kind of fell out of nowhere," Kagome smirked.

"So we may have at least one stop somewhere else before meeting with you in the past," Harry nodded his understanding. "Bouncing between realities and time periods is confusing."

"Just be yourself," Shippo suggested with a smile he learned from Kagome.

"Kayaba, we will be speaking once everyone is free from your little trap," Sesshomaru said pointedly as the other Yokai smirked evilly at the man.

"Presuming my daughter doesn't kill you first," Shippo added.

"I never planned to survive. I am the final boss," Heathcliff shrugged. He still didn't think he would live past the ending of the game and wasn't overly concerned with the obvious death threats.

"No dad, we can't challenge him yet... I tried assassinating him once already. He's got a form of immortality until the final boss fight," Argo explained in clear aggravation, cutting off her father's suggestion before he voiced it.

"Interesting," Heathcliff commented but said no more on the matter.

"Before or after we found him out?" Kirito asked, curious. "I know Cardinal said something which is part of why I didn't try anything even though a sneak attack isn't really my style."

"After, before he was outed he was one of our better chances of waking up in our real bodies. Its nice to know we are actually learning the skills though," Argo admitted.

"Pup what have we taught you about assassination?" Sesshomaru asked archly.

"Assassination is a last resort technique against an enemy to the pack and the lands. Though cowardly it is still effective and used frequently by those in high human positions when dealing with people in powerful enough positions or those who become too great a threat to the lands. It is almost never used by Canine Yokai but is a favored tactic of corrupted humans or corrupted Yokai. Open honorable combat is preferred if the issues come to combat in the first place, especially among Yokai. An opponent with honor is always the preferred one even though it reduces your actions to only honorable ones in response. Any attack on pups is never acceptable or honorable if there is another way to ensure the safety of the pack and territory," Argo recited.

"Not quite accurate but close enough. You are also grounded for making the attempt instead of looking for other ways first," Shippo informed her. Argo grimaced but didn't object, she knew she was in the wrong.

"If she had succeeded?" Heathcliff asked.

"Still grounded but both her punishments have to do with not investigating another alternative rather
than considering a known method to escape from a trap. She was taught to be resourceful and not give up. Taking out a proven enemy is resourceful, especially when trapped," Kagome answered promptly. "We would hope she wouldn't have to kill but we know that isn't always possible."

"Wow, you've really got this down to a science. I had to struggle through learning all of that," Harry admitted with a blink of surprise.

They said their goodbyes before ending the connection

[System Announcement. Game combat restrictions lifting on lower level players in 1 hour. All players level 40 and above are on mandatory rest for the next 5 days but may join a lower level group and declare teaching status to regain limited combat ability while teaching. The mandatory rest of players level 40 and above fulfills part of the Divine Mercy Quest. Teaching does not disqualify Players from the rest period. System Announcement complete.] Cardinal informed everyone.

Chapter End Notes

Where did everyone go? *pouts*
Is it just because of the holiday weekend or did I do something bad to the story?

Decide What happens next:
1) They go on a quest in game
2) The other Players are allowed access to the Player council again
3) Heathcliff/Kayaba has to face the other Players
4) The Goa'uld hack the game
5) Laughing Coffin finds a way to attack Harry/Tom/Severus
6) Cardinal releases Yui
7) Kin, Zaar, and/or Devlin are kidnapped
8) Jumping to a new universe after forcing an early end to SAO

Any other ideas are welcome!
I realized that too few people are familiar with SAO so I'm going to move on. I have to admit sending them to Naruto or Middle Earth next, after a rest, is very appealing to this sort of training jaunt kick I seem to be on.... Meh, I'll let you lot decide.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"So I'm teaching these guys if you'll let us out," Kirito said addressing Cardinal.

"Father is in time out. Anyone but Father may now leave the safe zone. Combat restriction lifted from Guild: World Travelers to aid in further training."

"Before Cardinal asks again... do the two of you want to join our guild?" Harry asked.

Kirito and Argo looked at each other and shrugged.

"Why not?" Argo agreed before they both accepted the sent invitation pop-up.

"You know we could just wait the rest of the week until Cardinal lifts the restrictions. You'd get the down time you need and we can keep practicing with the controls and weapons," Jack pointed out.

"Its not like it will kill us or anyone else to wait now that those guys in suits promised to hook up more servers. Hell, it might make it better to wait for Cardinal to get the new gear and finish fixing stuff."

"We can use the time to get to know each other better," Daniel agreed. "Maybe learn how Harry's life got turned into a book series."

"Sir, I recommend we first give Cardinal permission to make the Stargate area after the additional servers are hooked up and she has run the basic maintenance needed to keep everyone alive. It would allow us to go over it after we are properly trained and have leveled up a few times and we wouldn't suddenly wind up dead while trying to clear the game," Sam suggested.

"Alright, can we all agree on that?" Jack asked, mostly looking at the rest of the guild since he knew his team would mostly follow his lead or give an actual reason why not.
There was a general murmur of agreement before everyone verbally gave Cardinal permission to use the SGC collected data as needed with an emphasis on the Goa'uld. It was then generally agreed to relax until the combat restrictions were lifted and they all resting like Cardinal had intended.

The first thing they did once full combat ability was restored was head for the first couple of floors to complete a few Quests for SG1. This helped them gain further practice using the system in combat and racked up some quest items and Cor so they weren't completely broke. Once the veteran players deemed the noobs sufficiently skilled they moved up past floor 15 to do some group level grinding. While grinding they developed SG1's combat etiquette for use during raids or other joint efforts with Guilds and other players. Honing the extra system senses in SG1 that any player worth their gear had turned out to be surprisingly easy. This was put down to their time as SG1 and trips through the Stargate.

The Stargate Questline didn't turn out to be too bad once they got around to running through it. It also gave the players a decent overview of the Goa'uld and Jaffa while teaching basic tactics, how to hotwire the crystal based equipment and certain basic Goa'uld hieroglyphics. However, there was a great deal of sarcastic wise cracks and other mocking commentary from SG1 as they played through. Something that got the commenters smacked on several occasions as Cardinal often took their comments seriously. An action for which Harry had to give forgiveness to turn their cursors green again. It also resulted in several long explanations to Cardinal about stress and tension relief in the middle of dangerous situations along with various human mental combat adaptations. Yui's release as one of the quest rewards was quite helpful in this regard as she could better translate for Cardinal.

The ultimate release from the game came three months after SG1 joined the game. The problem was that the bad luck knacks of multiple people kicked in all at once and started feeding off each other, especially Harry's.

Magic flared around Harry in the game as a result of one too many hits from the latest boss. Cardinal, desperate to divert the power from frying the circuits, issued a change in the magic regulation program in each of the wizard's nerve gear. The magic, sensing the combination of the AI's intent and Harry surging feelings of protectiveness allowed its self to follow the electricity into the wifi connection. It immediately targeted Kirito, surging around his body to form an enchantment field, transfiguring his body to match every skill and capability of his Avatar. The magic surged again, only to create a tentative link between his mind, the nerve gear and his body so that his abilities would update as his avatar did. The same exact thing happened over and over again until every single still living player had the barest amount of magic matching their real bodies to their avatars.

In desperation Heathcliff officially declared that he was beaten and acknowledged Harry as the victor against himself as the floor 100 boss, ending the game. The SNAP of Harry's magic releasing from everyone who had become entangled in it had the power recoiling to wrap around Harry, Daniel, Tom, Severus, Jack, Sam, Teal'c, Zaar, Kin, and Devlin. It dropped them through several reality walls only to land in the medbay of Harry's trans-dimensional estate, much to the shock of the healers stationed there. Death chuckled and, playing at being Q from star trek, snapped his currently ebony bone fingers to move a copy of Cardinal and Yui into their new homes on the estate.

They wouldn't wake again for several days as their minds re-adjusted to their newly trained bodies from playing Sword Art Online.
Potential Next Stops:

Middle Earth - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux - Smaug charbroil ring wraith, Elfling!Harry/group? Automatic Istari!group?


Inuyasha

Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats, visit Grayson

Robin Hood: King of Thieves - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor

Discworld

Xanth

Avatar: The Last Airbender

Hellsing

These were potential Quests and things that may become connected snippets later.

Fall of the Pink Toad:

Quest: fetch 12 trembling shortcakes (purchasable from NPC run resturant on Floor 2 in NE corner of Urbus - causes 15 min of luck - Severus/Harry/Tom made crack about Liquid Luck, while Harry reminised about how he used it in 6th yr), 6 Crystaline Ingots (Frost Dragon Quest - The Crystallite Ingot is only found in the X’rphan the White Wyrm's nest in the West Mountain of the 55th Floor after starting a quest in the nearby village and was rumored to require the presence of a master smith in a party for the crystal to be harvested - solid excrement of dragon & found in nest)

Deliver to Master Blacksmith(s) for forging into Weapons & Armor (3 ingots & 6 shortcakes to each smith) - this is the only time a Blacksmith is guaranteed to produce as many weapons/armor needed to match entire party with 1 new item from each of the two smiths regardless of party size

The party must then hunt down and slay the dreaded Pink Toad Woman - Delores Umbitch on floor 23 (which is a forest surrounding a pink marble castle floating at the center of a frozen lake sporting frozen pilars with school children trapped inside them) and free her captives, the NPC children of the villages from below floor 23, who are forced to write line using blood for ink

Harry concludes Cardinal is laughing at him or at least has been encouraged to screw with him. The Quest sparks a discussion about Umbridge and her use of the blood quill in Harry's 5th yr, especially with his flashback and screaming charge at the mini-boss
A Potion Master's Touch:

Needed: 12 Healing/Antidote Crystals, 12 Healing/Antidote Potions

Deliver to Healing/Antidote Crystals/Potions to NPC Potions Master (resembles/acts like Snape until he argues Cardinal into changing it? - Hilarious to Tom/Harry, Zaar preens over complement to his human) on Floor 44 near the Hill of Memories (location of Pneuma Flower - revives fallen tamed monster within 3 days of death) where s/he is gathering potion ingredients, wait 3 hours to receive 6 Crystal Health/Antidote Potions {both have half the cool down period of the normal potion, heal or antidote the same amount as a crystal in a short burst and have a lingering continuous healing effect that matches a potion - treated as a potion by anti-crystal fields}

Players can get possessed by in game Goa'uld, becoming game monsters/mini-bosses permanently (trapped locked out of control by the Goa'uld AI) unless paralyzed or knocked out by another player and taken to Chimera where the Asgard de-Goa'ulding pillar triggers when they are brought close and removes the Goa'uld

Black mark Jaffa - Standard
Silver are favored, mark of recognition of service
Gold marked are or were First Prime
The shrunken Smaug had not liked his abrupt demotion in the draconic hierarchy. He did not like suddenly being smaller than nearly every other living, moving thing. The three men that practically glowed with light that almost no one else seemed to be able to sense weren't so bad. The former Great Drake of the North also grudgingly admitted to himself that these little Draklings were interesting and could at least speak a proper language, if only in a manner similar to that of a hatchling. That they insisted he learn to at least obey the gold ones of his adoptive fair was... irritating but not unheard of. There just hadn't been a proper golden queen among the Great Drakes is so long that they had needed to move on and evolve.

The fact that when he was drawn to the arrival of those small ones, turned big ones, that could actually speak was actually met with open approval threw him off completely.

"~Fair mates,~" one little queen nodded smugly before promptly assigning several browns to go with him from her fair. That they were supposed to help if it was needed was obvious and the gesture was not lost on the shrunken dragon.

"~They are hatchlings, not fair mates,~" Smaug grumbled but didn't argue about the brown firelizards coming with him. He suspected that he might need them if only to fetch a few of the humans who wore strange white armor.

Of course with him clearly being designated temporary leader he could send them for one of the glowy ones, the Jedi, if someone with opposable thumbs was actually needed. Once he got those three special Draklings and their human hoards back Smaug had every intention of not to letting them out of his sight. Having so many Draklings flying around was a blessing even if they never grew to a proper Fire Drake size. However, he had claimed those specific Draklings and their humans as part of his hoard and his responsibility to raise properly. He mentally grumbled a promise that they would learn not to ditch their parent Fire Drake to go disappearing off with their humans. Hoards and treasures were to be protected and cherished, not risked recklessly in battle or jumping between worlds, especially living treasures!

Flying into the medbay where he could practically feel his Draklings and their humans were presented Smaug with a bit of a shock. They were all six, human and firelizard alike, out cold on the floor.

"~Go get the glowy ones that spend the most time with these humans!~" Smaug barked out to one of the browns who creeled and peeled off from the group. The brown went between with an indignant cry.

Smaug ignored him in favor of landing next to Kin, Harry's little golden Queen, and nuzzling her, checking for injuries or wounds. The former terrifying Drake couldn't find any and became increasingly worried as she didn't wake. The browns, seeing what he was doing, had checked the other five and became just as worried. The door whooshed open, setting the small group of dragons on the defensive around the unconscious group.

"Whoa! Calm down," Anakin instructed softly, the messenger brown flying over towards the mixed group of Wizards, firelizards, and Fire Drake.
"They won’t wake up!" Smaug explained in Westron, also known as English and Basic.


"Where is the on duty healer?" Obi-Wan asked as they did their own check of the downed group.

"Melee training accident between the Noghir and the troops. The Weasley twins also set off a big prank at the same time," Anakin answered absently. He was frowning at what he was sensing from the six unconscious beings. It was like their minds were only barely connected to their bodies at the moment.

"I don't think their force signature is supposed to look like that," Luke said warily.

"It's not," Obi-Wan agreed grimly.

"I wonder," Anakin muttered before reaching out with the force and gently reeling in the first mind, Devlin. Once he got it close enough to gently press back into the little firelizard's body it snapped back into place. Luke and Obi-Wan quickly followed suit, ending with everyone groaning awake on the floor of the medbay.

"Huh, we forgot to put them on the beds," Luke blinked in startled surprise.

"We need to recruit more healers," Obi-Wan muttered under his breath.

"That was not pleasant," Severus complained as he sat up on the floor. Zaar crooned in subdued agreement. Harry just sighed at the smell of the medbay as they got up off the floor.

"~Taking care of not only your treasure but yourselves is important!~" Smaug scolded the three bonded firelizards.

"~Let us settle back into our bodies before you go yelling at us," Tom complained grumpily.

"~It's not like we had a choice,~" Severus bit out, ruffling the hackles of the shrunken Fire Drake.

"I'm not leaving any of you alone again!" Smaug exclaimed stubbornly.

"On that note I think we should make sure everyone has their utility belt and emergency bag from now on. There is no telling how long Death has given any of you, but especially Harry, to rest. You don't need to be dumped somewhere without proper gear again," Obi-Wan concluded.

"We don't have those," Harry commented with a frown.

"My god, you really did do all of those things without even a basic emergency kit," Severus muttered despairingly. Zaar crooned comfortably from around his shoulders as Harry nodded sheepishly. Tom just sighed and took to petting Devlin in his arms.

"Come, let's get you young Draklings back to your lair with your humans," Smaug fussed, hustling them out of the medbay and down the halls until they reached Harry's massive bedroom suite. Completely ignoring the wizardly protests and the Jedi laughter he chased them into the suite and on to the giant bed together.

"Smaug!" Harry protested, embarrassed at what the red lizard had done.

"Now stay there and rest. Far too much excitement for young Draklings and their human hoards," Smaug huffed. A muttered chant and a light mist of dragon magic kept them on the bed for the next
two hours but locked in the suite for an additional 24 hours.

"Did you just lock us in?!" Severus demanded in disbelief.

"Rest!" Smaug ordered again before leaving them trapped on the bed.

"His scales are getting turned hot pink with acid green stripes!" Harry declared with a low growl of displeasure. There was a murmur of agreement but before twenty minutes was up they had fallen asleep in a puppy pile on the massive bed.

Smaug checked on them after an hour and smirked. Wandering from your body when asleep or awake was always tiring. The rest would do the six good.

Chapter End Notes

Potential Next Stops:

Middle Earth - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux - Smaug charbroil ring wraith, Elfling!Harry/group? Automatic Istari!group?
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Inuyasha
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Honor Harrington - encounter/adoption of Treecats, visit Grayson

Robin Hood: King of Thieves - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor
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Discworld

Xanth
*
Avatar: The Last Airbender
**
Hellsing
***
Marvel
*
Sherlock
*
Smaug felt a suspicious twitch of power from the bedroom. He dashed to check on his charges only to find the room utterly empty. His scream of rage and despair was heard across the inhabited parts of the building.

"Now, now. I haven't hurt them. They will be right back once they pick up a few people. Or at least once they've gotten fed up with being used as a prank on a few people I'm rather fond of. I promise to put them right back to bed and everything," Death soothed the upset dragon.

"The Draklings and their humans needed rest! Not some... some strange dive between worlds!" Smaug snarled angrily, clearly upset over the disappearance of his charges.

"I've only dumped them in a pool during a life or death stand off that has nothing to do with them. In one reality the person I'm sending them to is actually a version of you," Death chuckled.

"If they come back with a single scratch..." Smaug menaced the air meaningfully.

"I may send them to one other place before putting them back in bed for you to fuss over but it will be more funny than dangerous, I promise," Death told him. Smaug grumbled but conceded the point, settling down to stare at the bed, waiting for their return.

The first thing Harry felt when he was rudely awoken was wet. The second was the slight burn of chlorinated water against his skin. The third was the realization that he had been bodily dumped into a deep enough source of water to be in desperate need of air. The feel of his feet just touching down on the bottom of the obvious pool had him instinctively launching upwards to try and breach the surface. Sadly, while the three firelizards instinctively knew enough to reach the surface they, like Harry, couldn't actually swim. Severus and Tom took a moment's stock of the situation after surfacing before sending their own firelizards into the air from where they clung on wet shoulders before diving after a drowning Harry and terrified Kin. Harry came up spluttering, trying to take in good air as his wet shirt acted as an anchor for the other two to grip and hold him just barely above water. Kin took to the air the moment she could manage it, recognizing that she couldn't help without first getting herself in a safer position.

"Well this is new!" came the high pitched yet still male voice. One that sent a shiver down Harry's spine as he fought back his panic so as not to nearly drown again as he coughed up the water in his lungs.

"The gillyweed must have given him an instinctive ability to swim during the second task which lasted a bit after the physical traits wore off," Severus gasped out as they pulled him to the edge of the pool. A grunt signaled their shoving him up out of the water with a second grunt from each signaling their own exit from the otherwise empty pool.
"Why the devil would you involve more innocent people in this?!" another voice demanded, edging with a bit of audible steel.

"He didn't," a deeper rich baritone answered. "None of us did. They are an anomaly and most especially are their three pets. There are no such things as miniature dragons yet they hover over the humans in front of us..."

Severus looked up at the men who had already been in the pool room and stared in shock before swearing viciously.

"Oi!" a red-blond, short, stocky, John Hamish Watson protested irritably.

"No, don't even start," Severus said acidly. "I don't care what name you happen to be going by or how you even found yourself in this universe. Marcus Branby you are still a fucking idiot! Kindly vanish the damned suicide vest before our joint magic does something... impetuous."

"Unlike you, Severus Tobias Snape, I no longer can perform magic. Lost the ability in trade for surviving the reality jump, de-aging, and gaining an enhanced healing capacity. So unless you've lost your wand you can just bloody well do it yourself!" Dr. John Watson spat back, shocking both still dry geniuses. He hated being forced into the suicide vest and winter coat in the first place and was really hoping someone had a wand, statute of secrecy be damned.

A moment of embarrassed silence followed as the three damp wizards conspicuously didn't retrieve their missing wands.

"None of you have a wand," John concluded with an exasperated sigh.

"We were kind of kidnapped out of bed after being put there by a strangely mothering shrunken Dragon named Smaug," Harry explained apologetically.

"Maybe I'll keep you," Jim Moriarty murmured as he studied everyone intently.

"No, you won't. John is mine and these obviously belong to John so they are mine as well," Sherlock said forcefully, taking several steps forwards to hover over them protectively with John stubbornly moving to stand at his side. John figured that the magic of the three wizards should kick in fast enough if he leapt into the water in time. It might even protect Sherlock.

"Exactly how bad of a situation did Potter's luck dump us into?" Severus inquired softly.

"Think Dumbledore crossed with an unstable version of the Dark Lord and a touch of your more sadistic tendencies getting out of hand on a new dark potion. The prat calls himself a Consulting Criminal, a counter to Sherlock's Consulting Detective. As long as he's entertained there will be less pain and bloodshed, presuming he isn't in the mood for pain and bloodshed as entertainment. Walking out is... unlikely without his permission," John summarized bluntly.

"You never met me while my mind was deteriorating did you?" Tom quirked his eye-brow in amusement. He wandlessly dried them all off before the three wizards joined John and Sherlock in facing Moriarty. An equally wandless Vanishing spell, this time from Severus, got rid of the suicide vest and winter coat.

"I haven't learned any wandless spells," Harry murmured to the others.

"My wandless repertoire is limited," Severus murmured back.

"Then it's a good thing mine is excellent," Tom smirked evilly. Each of them had gained a sniper
laser target after the bomb vest vanished, something they firmly ignored.

"So we've got a Dark Lord, an extremely dangerous potions master, a green-eyed bad luck magnet, Sherlock, and me against whatever Moriarty has got... Lovely," John breathed. He was quite happy to be out of the rigged vest, despite the dangerous circumstances. Harry scowled but didn't argue about his personal description for the moment.

"I think I've found your heart," Moriarty said, watching John with renewed interest. "Remember my promise. Stop interfering or I will Burn the heart out of you. I'll let you keep your heart's little friends... for now."

Moriarty chuckled before wandering back out of the pool room just as his phone went off. A snap of the fingers ended the sniper laser pointers and presumably the threat of being shot.

"Leaving would be a good idea, I think, before he changes his mind, yeah?" Harry pointed out after a breathless moment of relief.

"You will be coming back with us," Sherlock practically ordered.

"Of course they are coming," John snorted, rolling his eyes at his ridiculous flatmate. "Just... call your brother. We don't need to get kidnapped by Moriarty's minions on the way to wherever Mycroft decides to debrief us at and minimal snipping if you please."

"Another snark master?" Harry snorted in amusement. Snape growled a bit, grumbling under his breath but didn't argue with the imp.

By the time they were out of the building and picked up by one of Mycroft's black cars the firelizards were asleep in the arms of their humans. Not a single comment was made about the sleeping reptiles or their human wizards until they were all sitting down to supper with Mycroft Holmes.

Mycroft studied the new arrivals in complete silence, cataloging them much the way Sherlock had done on the way to the restaurant they now sat in.

"Can I give a rough summary before you start asking things we probably don't know?" Harry asked wryly.

Mycroft inclined his head in a gracious nod, launching Harry into a quick summary of the situation as far as he knew it. The hardening of the men's eyes at the perceived falsehoods of Harry's tale wasn't surprising. John's supporting story and the fact that he had been a young Unspeakable, on the other hand, was.

"Marcus Branby?" Sherlock inquired softly.

"That was my most frequent alias and the name that Severus officially met me under. We did attend the same school, Hogwarts. I was turned into an infant when I got to this world and until I saw Severus, sparking my memories, I had no idea that I had lived a whole other life of magic," John informed them curtly. "My training both in the Wizarding World and as a military doctor allowed me to do as I generally do with Sherlock, go with the flow so to speak."

"Are you going to want to experiment on me?" Harry asked with blunt wariness.

"Possibly," John conceded, his lips twitching in some private amusement.

"My suspicion is that we are either here to recruit or as a prank on us," Tom put in carefully. He was more than familiar with the bindings on Unspeakables and aware of Harry's less than pleasant
experiences with their department.

Death gave a laugh that rattled through each of their skulls, putting their back teeth on edge but not answering their conclusions with anything concrete.

"Prank with possibly recruiting on the side," Harry concluded, rubbing at his now sore jaw.

"So exactly how badly did my former colleagues screw up?" John asked, rubbing at his own jaw with a slight wince.

"The literal personification of Death had to rescue him from the Department of Mysteries and it took long enough for the reapers to put him back together that he managed to learn part of Death's filing system," Tom answered dryly.

"Going through the damned veil is weird," Harry complained with a shudder.

"I... see," John said with a hard swallow. "I can only offer my apologies and ask you not to smite me personally. I was not a part of those actions."

"I haven't decided to smite anyone yet... except Palpatine if we ever see the bastard again," Harry shrugged off the apology.

"I wouldn't put it past Death to turn us into infants and have us relive our childhoods somewhere else at least once to see if we can heal from it or some such," Severus scowled.

"Don't say that! He might actually do it! Especially, if its the best way to learn a new skill," Harry protested.

"What or who would you be recruiting?" Mycroft asked bluntly.

"At a guess? These two or it was just funny to dump us in a pool in the middle of their life and death stand off with that guy Moriarty," Harry answer with a shrug. "I'm still suffering from some of the skewed time sense that came from being healed by the reapers and learning part of the filing system. If I was back in sync with normal time passage I would have already gotten over the betrayal of my wife or it would have at least dulled enough for me to think about a new relationship. It hasn't so I can't honestly tell you how long its been since he had to kidnap me and start putting me back together."

John winced as he realized part of why his colleagues were so aggressive with their pursuit of information. True immortality and ultimate healing was something that had been coveted for longer than anyone could remember. At a guess though Harry's situation was perfectly unique and had more to do with being somehow bonded to Death than anything that could be potentially replicated. He pitied the idiots who had done such things to Harry, Death could be the cruelest and most sadistic entity one could ever meet. There was no doubt in John's mind that Death had or was going to take every scrap of damage they had done to Harry out of their hides a thousand times over before they were allowed to rest in peaceful death.

The conversation devolved into recruitment particulars and options the men had from a hypothetical stand point. Dinner was finally signaled for by Mycroft and they passed a mostly pleasant evening together before retiring to a booked 5 star hotel, courtesy of Mycroft. No one actually believed his generosity was anything but a way to keep tabs on them but no one cared by the time they went to bed.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter End Notes
Since Musey was inspired I carried over the votes.

Still tempted to keep dropping them in funny situations.

Potential Next Stops:

Middle Earth - The One Ring is basically a Horcrux - Smaug charbroil ring wraith, Elfing!Harry/group? Automatic Istari!group?


Inuyasha

Honor Harrington - encounter/adoptions of Treecats, visit Grayson

Robin Hood: King of Thieves - this will be a fusion verse with the men in tights song and Alan Rickman as the sheriff simply as a humor factor

Discworld

Xanth

Avatar: The Last Airbender

Hellsing

Marvel
"So Death?" Mycroft asked, eyebrow arched in inquiry.

"As long as you stay in my private dimension, my estate, you become practically immortal. The immortality only really holds for me in any other universe and I suspect that when I need it I'm going to pay a fairly heavy price to use it," Harry answered wryly, choosing to misinterpret Mycroft's question. Kin was asleep across his shoulders by this point but all three wizards had made certain their firelizards were fed.

"On the upside there are plenty of new puzzles for your brother to play with once he is up to speed on the new factors involved," Tom smirked. Devlin was curled up in his lap and being pet as he slept.

"Of course I suspect that we might be primarily after Doctor Watson rather than Sherlock but we recognize they are basically a pair simply from watching them interact," Severus injected smoothly. Zara had somehow manage to get the man to let him sleep inside his shirt, tucked up against his ribs.

Mycroft inclined his head in acknowledgement. There was no denying that the two men balanced each other well.

"You need to meet Mrs. Hudson," Sherlock suddenly declared.

"You can't be serious?!" Mycroft demanded, instantly recognizing the beginnings of his brother's strange vetting process.

"She is our land lady and a sweet old woman. She's also a saint for putting up with us," John explained wryly, also recognizing the vetting process. He had seen so many people fail it that he often wondered how he had passed it.

"I don't mind if she wants to come but she might start getting younger while at my estate and she needs to be able to deal with different cultures and different sentient species," Harry warned.

"That really shouldn't be a problem. Sherlock is practically his own species at times," John admitted ruefully.

"They will be going with the reincarnation option if they agree to immigrate at all," Mycroft stated firmly.

"That's fine," Harry agreed pleasantly. "Can we just relax and play tourist for a bit? I've never really got to look around London and it might be different from our original one any way."

"We can play guide, get to know you a bit better while our flat is being repaired," John offered congenially.

"Boring," Sherlock lied through his teeth.

"Yes, we will explain what we can about weird things that have happened to us," Harry smirked at the man. Sherlock couldn't hide his look of interest and the plan was set for the next day.
Six relaxing weeks later Death actually warned them they would be leaving in the morning. They said their goodbyes and were transported right back into bed and Smaug's care. A loud thump from the suite's sitting room accompanied by swearing told them where the adult re-incarnations of John, Sherlock, and Mrs. Hudson had landed.

Smaug gave them a "don't you dare move" look before cautiously going off to investigate. The snap of magic and two human male yelps told the wizards what had happened. Smaug's magic had bonded to John and Sherlock. The detective duo were immediately ushered into the room and shuffled on to the bed, much to the wizards' amused exasperation.

"Watch the hatchlings my humans. Don't let them get out of bed except for the bathroom," Smaug instructed happily. Before either man could get a word in edgewise he dashed off in search of food for his humans and hatchlings.

Mrs. Hudson's peels of laughter did nothing to end their grumpiness.

"Only the to of you," Mrs. Hudson exclaimed, shaking her head from the doorway with open amusement.

Kin greeted her cheerfully before going between to the other end of the house for a snack and to play with a Jedi or a Clone. Mrs. Hudson's later introduction to the rest of the household immediately placed her in the position of Majordomo as she took control. By the time Harry was snatched away again the three new arrivals had firmly found their places within the household.

When Harry was snatched this time he could feel the evil pranking glee practically pouring off Death. Both Tom and Severus were snatched but Harry got the feeling that none of them would be going to the same place. Zaar, Kin, and Devlin were very unhappy to be left behind away from their humans and locked practically to Smaug's side.

Each reality would never be the same again...

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I've split our normal three up for the moment and am giving you guys a choice on which reality Each of them land in. Be aware that I've picked out Harry's if you guys don't give me a better one. *smirk*

I'm not listing anything because your brains are fertile by now and I will at least look at anything you suggest.

Have at it!
Okay, I covered Care Bears, Barbie, and Marvel - Avengers. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Severus was horrified to not only find himself to now be roughly age 7 but in the middle of buildings made from clouds, surrounded by cuddly creatures. To his self disgust he recognized several of the names being spoken in greeting. Braveheart Lion, Tenderheart Bear, Swiftheart Rabbit, Hugs, Tugs, Champ Bear, Bedtime Bear, Share Bear... the list went on and on and on.

"Care Bears," Severus muttered in disgust. As if that was the signal whatever magic had been hiding him from sight disappeared, revealing him to the court yard of Care Bears.

"How did you get here?!" Tenderheart Bear asked in a mix of shock and concern. Severus just scowled.

"Are you alright?" Funshine Bear asked in deep concern.

"I have an idea how and I don't like it," Severus scowled.

"He's scary," Hugs whispered to Tugs who nodded in agreement. They had paused to watch the grumpy human child during their morning paper route. They were still much too young to be helping keep human children happy and caring.

"I despise being small and defenseless again!" Severus hissed out at the overly cheerful Care Bears. The response to his declaration was not what he had hoped for. Instead of shying back away from his venom the concerned Care Bears approached him en mass. All the dodging in the world failed to keep him out of cuddly hands as the adult Care Bears passed him around, hugging him to cheer him up.

Death calmly put away the video camera he had been using to record Severus' visit to this cutesy universe. It would be a great gift for his master and was a perfect start to the man's punishment for hurting Harry during his school years.

The next universe forced Severus to attend the Princess Charm School from the Barbie movie, scarring the man for life in regards to female courtly fashion. The upside was that he was forced to learn what many women consider proper grooming. His expertise at making the many potion based beauty products bought him a significant amount of leeway until he was whisked to the next world.

After Severus' suffering at an all girls princess school as one of the students and dumping the man into the care of Dora the Explorer, Death decided to check on Tom.

Tom had found himself in a state disturbingly similar to his previous wraith form, floating through endless space. The only thing he could use for any sense of direction was what appeared to be a rainbow bridge that was both there and not. The cry of a child drew him down this mystical
pathway, following the infant's call. He found a one-eyed man presenting the infant to his wife and the slightly older child in her arms.

The loving smile and nod of acceptance soothed something inside Tom. He watched over both boys as they grew. He occasionally showed himself to the princely duo in his ghostly form and either helped them or scolded them while the other adults were too busy to see to two young boys. He would entertain them with wizardly tales and stories about both himself, his minions, and even Harry. When Odin favored Thor over Loki or Loki was scorned for his scholarly interest in magic the young prince would go to his adoptive mother or, more often, his Uncle Voldy.

"Remember that even if you ever find that you share no blood with someone you count as family that person or those people are still family. You mustn't ever forget that. No one has a say in who they are related to by blood but we can still choose our family. What have I taught you about family?" Tom asked the young princes.

"Families are built, brick by brick, choice by choice. We stick by them even when they don't want to stick by us. We must never repudiate someone from being family lightly by word, by deed, or by magic. If a family member has acted with dishonor great enough to be banished from the family they must be checked for why they acted thus. If they were forced by magic you break the magic. If they were forced by blackmail you turn it back on the blackmailer. If they were forced by threat to another or themselves you treat the one who threatened as a threat to the whole family before they can turn their blade thus," Thor and Loki recited.

"Very good," Tom nodded approvingly. "And what have I taught you about ruling well?"

"Sometimes you have to choose a little harm to protect the rest but it should never be done lightly or without care. When dealing with enemies you treat their threat to your people as an attack on your family. We must also understand that sometimes a bladed peace is needed over a certain victory or a victory that has too high of a cost in resources or lives," Loki answered shyly.

"And?" Tom asked archly.

"Fear is good for enemies but not for friends, family, or subjects," Thor answered confidently.

"Better but you are both forgetting that compassion and wisdom are key components of not only ruling well but living well. I learned much of what I am teaching you too late. I've told you my story and that of Harry Potter, you both know what mistakes I've made. I expect you both to learn from the tales I've taught you both the common tales and the things I lived through myself. Be ever mindful of your surroundings and remember that in battle there is no honor. Honor is for tournaments, contests, and actions off the battlefield. Battle is for survival. Yet even so where is the line that is never crossed?" Tom lectured.

"Killing a child or threatening a child to gain something from an enemy," Thor said promptly.

"Children are precious and only dealt with as an enemy if they take up arms, attacking instead of simply defending," Loki added.

"And Divination or any kind of prophecy?" Tom asked carefully. This one was a sore subject not only for him but because of Odin's own actions over the years.

"Acting on unconfirmed prophecy can often bring about the very thing that is feared which you wish to avoid. It is better to learn the signs given in the prophecy and do nothing until the threat is shown then to act on unverified information," Thor said solemnly. "The very threat you were warned of may in fact be a friend until you strike in haste. Be wary and watchful but not reckless or hasty."
"And confirmed prophecy? Prophecy that the creator of not only this world but every world and universe has given and confirmed?" Tom asked softly.

"Avoiding it isn't possible. Such prophecies can only be delayed and braced for, preparation as best as possible. It is the taste of snow or rain on the air promising the storm. Its not the ache in an old warrior's bones that might be because he sat too long on cold stone or instead it might be because of the coming storm," Loki answered. "The promise of spring or the change of the seasons over guessing if a new food is going to be to your liking."

"Boys, go to your mother," Odin's voice was gruff and uncompromising as it came from the doorway to the gardens they were lingering in.

"Was my lesson not to your liking majesty?" Tom asked, still watching the princes dashing away to find the Queen.

"I had been wondering how my sons were learning things that no tutor nor I myself had yet taught them," Odin said ominously.

"It was not my choice to be here but when I saw them making the same mistakes I did in my youth I felt compelled to keep them from the dark path it lead me too at the time. Once I was a powerful wielder of magic. I made mistakes that turned me into a monster. I do not wish to see arrogance or isolation turn your sons into something similar. I had both in abundance in my youth but no love, not until I became bound to one I thought was my mortal enemy and he taught it to me. No Odin Borson, I am not a threat to your children. I can't even touch them," Tom explained ruefully. "They recount their other lessons to me and I try to work what I am teaching them in together with what their tutors already seek for them to learn. At times we play memory games or pretend that we must solve a situation or win a battle. By teaching them cunning they are more aware of how it can be used against them. By teaching them strategy they know better how to use whatever they may have to hand. They also come to me with their hurts. If it is a hurt of the body I send them to your wife but if it is of the heart or mind I often seek to heal it. Such injuries are often far more devastating than a simple lost limb or blade to the gut. Whatever you may think of me those boys call me Uncle and I see them as sons."

"If I forbid them from you?" Odin demanded.

"That is your right and I will uphold it should you demand it but when they inevitably come to me again regardless I will not lie for you. They will know that it is by your will, not mine, that they no longer visit me," Tom answered candidly.

"What do you know of my sons?" Odin demanded in a softly dangerous voice.

"That one is adopted. I was there when you presented him to your wife and her acceptance soothed an old would in my own heart. Thor is quite the strong, fearless warrior but he needs tempering if he is going to avoid mistakes that keep him as but a child in the eyes of all or get people killed. Loki is mostly quiet and studious, mocked for it and bullied often by other children. His skill lies with magic and research. I have done my best to steer him away from darker magics and towards both healing and illusion. This is only until he is able to find a teacher that can actually guard him in his studies or has matured enough to understand the risks he will be taking in studying such darkness. As I have no body for the moment I can not act as his guard or teacher beyond what I already do. Healing and illusion are never useless but it satisfies a young boy's need to strike back at tormentors without doing actual harm as yet or alternatively care for injuries inflicted," Tom explained quietly. He still had yet to turn and face the other man. "When you finally tell them of the adoption it is my hope that the lessons on family not always only being of blood will sooth the hurt and keep your family together. I never really had a family myself and I know how precious having one is. Harry taught me that."
"You may continue to see them but any further lessons must be discussed with myself, my wife, or their tutors," Odin decided. Tom snorted in amused disgust.

"You and your family might see me but the tutors can't. Its a part of the magic that has me here as I am. I respect and care for your children but I am less than impressed with what I now know of you. Your wife is someone to be admired, nay worshiped even, for her kindness and strength. I also can not leave the gardens," Tom informed him pointedly.

"We will speak again another time," Odin declared. They never did. All future lessons were vetted by the Queen as the years passed. Eventually the princes stopped coming to see him until one day he was suddenly elsewhere, watching Loki receive a brutal beating from a giant mountain of green muscles.

"Puny God!" the Hulk spat at the nearly insensate Loki.

"Loki Laufey Odinson! I did not raise you to be this monster! Either break the enchantment or ask for help! You know better!" Tom snapped at Loki. He had instantly recognized the man whom he had somehow raised through the centuries behind the backs of nearly the entire Asgardian court. He could also read the magic that was controlling the magic inclined prince.

"Uncle Voldy?" Loki asked faintly before passing out as he was covered in blue magical energy.

"~Magic binds of unknown thought break and shatter under our onslaught!~" Tom hissed his chant before giving off a bloodcurdling scream as he ripped the magic from his sometimes son.

"What have you done to my brother?!" Thor demanded.

"I broke the spell using him as a puppet! You never should have let it touch your brother," Tom snarled before passing out just as he finally faded into solidity for the first time in centuries.

Death slipped the video camera he had been using to record Tom's incorporeal visits to this universe into his robes. It would be a great gift for his master, a perfect match for the Care Bear home video.

Now to check on his Little Master...

Chapter End Notes

Further suggestions? *wicked smirk*
On his way to check on Harry Death checks in on his parents and their friends and scowls. Lily and Remus were successfully learning, watching Harry's painful life and the way both Tom and Severus are taking good care of him. Allowing Lily to accept Severus' apology after he had a chance to vent would be a test. If she passed then Severus would be able to heal further and focus on Harry. If she failed he would have to inform Harry and have his master heal the damage. James and Sirius, on the other hand, are failing their remedial lessons. Death decided they need a different punishment.

Severus had suffered three hours of hugs from the Care Bears as something of a joke and because the man clearly needed some sort of hug. Harry wasn't healed enough to make the attempt yet. James and Sirius were bound as silent spirits to Tenderheart Bear and Funshine Bear for the next ten years. It would do... for now. Death ignores their silent screams of cuddly despair before heading for Harry again.

Death considers the new lion cub with fondness and watches.

Harry's new birth as a baby lion was almost soothing. His friendship with his twin brother, Simba, turned out fantastic as they played across the savanna in their pride's territory. Scar continually gave Harry the shivers and he, remembering his first life in the Wizarding World, kept his older brother away from their uncle as much as possible.

Harry followed his sulking brother, silently laughing about Simba's worry over his cub roar verses the full adult roar of their father or their uncle. Uncle Scar had been nice enough when asking them to wait in the gorge for their father and the surprise he had for them but he still didn't trust their uncle. The shaking of the ground set Harry's fur on edge. A split second decision to force his brother to the side of the canyon probably saved their lives. Zazu found them barely thirty seconds into the stampede.

"My princes! Your father is on the way!" Zazu promised frantically as he winged off after Mufasa, ready to lead him to the two lion cubs.

"I don't like this!" Harry growled, pressing his brother back against the small indent in the cliff face, bodily shielding Simba from the flashing hooves.

"Harry!" Simba cried in worry as Harry grunted in pain from a lucky kick.

Simba was unhurt when Mufasa reached them but Harry was bleeding and bruised. A single look told their father what had happened as he bodily shielded the twin cubs.

"Save Simba," Harry said forcefully.

Before Mufasa could answer a set of horns crashed into his head, wrenching him into the path of the rest of the herd. They watched in horror as he was trampled to death, too stunned by the blow from the initial horn blow to the head from the wildebeast to move out of the way. Harry continued to grimly protect his devastated brother. Once the stampede was done Harry let Simba out of the niche to check their father. He was surprised to find himself checked soon after, figuring that Simba would have been hovering over their father either too worried or too stunned to see if Harry was okay.

"What have you done?!!" Scar's horrified voice came to their ears through the settling dust.
Something about it rings false to Harry but he knows that they can't fight their uncle nor can they argue his new authority as Pride Leader.

"We were playing while waiting for father and had barely enough warning to find a dent in the cliff to try and not get dead," Harry answered before the supposed guilt could settle into his brother's mind. Dumbledore had used this tactic far too often on him to keep Harry in his designated pet savior role. Harry won't let Scar do the same to his brother even a little bit.

Scar considered them for a moment before flatly telling them. "Leave, this is my pride now. Stay and you will die."

"Yes uncle," Harry gritted out before forcing Simba along in front of him.

Simba is confused, Harry is not. He remembers the school lessons on African Lions and how the new male lion pride leaders kill the cubs of the previous pride leaders. It didn't happen as often when multiple male lions worked together to take over a pride as their father and uncle had done. Harry supposed that simply being cast out, even unofficially, was a way to stick with that statistic especially since they would have been cast out at age two after learning everything to find their own pride any way. His human memories were going to come in handy for more than games, making Harry glad for his memories.

The hyenas sent after them were less of a surprise than Harry would have liked. The chase out of the gorge and fall down the cliff was painful but adrenaline kept Harry moving through the brambles far enough and fast enough to keep them out of reach of the Hyenas and alive. The warning to death should they ever return echoes strangely in Harry's ears, reminding him of some of the threats the Dursleys had aimed at him in his first youth.

When they ran into Timon the Merecat and Pumbaa the Warthog or rather when they were rescued by them from the buzzards Harry is suspicious. Simba was tired and hungry but intrigued when they woke in the shade. Their welcome and the Hakuna Matata song solved the immediate need for food. The new territory of the valley was perfect as far as Harry was concerned. He wasn't as worried about needing to eat bugs but he quickly taught his brother about fishing and the danger of crocodiles so they had enough meat to support their still growing feline bodies. Crocodiles make up many a good meal for the two brothers but they never forget that Timon and Pumbaa are not food despite the other animals that filled their bodies.

The sudden appearance of Nala in their territory was a shock, especially with her attempt to eat Pumbaa. She briefly pinned Simba only for Harry to knock her free and pin her in return.

"Nala?" Simba's question causes Harry to pause in his threatening territorial growl at the intruder. A careful release of the female lion. She convinced them to return and retake the Pride from their uncle.

Harry fell in the fight and Death lovingly collected him, sending him to the next universe on the list.

Chapter End Notes

Next stop? I need to sort out Tom and the Avengers and rescue Sev from Dora the Explorer but after that...

Choose:

Naruto
Once Upon a Time
Walking Dead (Yes, I caved and got season one from the library)
Lord of the Rings
Hellsing
Robin Hood
Whatever else you guys come up with!
Tom woke to a quiet argument feeling a sinfully comfortable couch underneath him and covered with a blanket.

"Your brother nearly invaded the Earth and now you want to just let him roam around freely?" a man's voice protested.

"Now that Uncle is here and that he broke the spell on Loki we shouldn't have more trouble beyond a few pranks," Thor soothed. Tom mentally snorted, knowing exactly what Loki was capable of and what pranks he might be inclined to play after that beating.

"Hate to break it to you but the guy, even if he actually is your uncle, is in no condition to reel Loki in," the voice argued back.

"Stark if you wanted to stay in my presence all you needed to do was ask," Loki teased, clearly amused over the vocal man's antics. The newly named Stark huffed but pointedly didn't argue. Whatever the man did next made Loki laugh. The light laughter told Tom that he had successfully stopped whatever spell had been controlling Loki.

"The both of you have a great deal of explaining to do," Tom said ominously as he sat up on the couch, allowing the blanket to fall to his lap. Both princes looked a mix of sheepish and guilty as they looked towards him while the other people in the room looked both shocked and battle ready.

"Uncle..." Thor started out as if to protest. Tom lifted a hand, gaining immediate silence from the Norse god of thunder.

"What have I taught the both of you?" Tom demanded ominously.

"I didn't check him for magic compulsions," Thor admitted sheepishly.

"I let the thought of being worthy of family control me," Loki admitted painfully. His quick glance at Thor told Tom the secret of his adoption was out.

"Boys, recite what has happened from the beginning. I can not help you if I do not know what has happened," Tom ordered shortly. The room was promptly subjected to a retelling of everything significant since Thor's banishment to earth and the binding of his power to his hammer.

"I fell from the Bi-frost. No, I let go of what was left of it. I had forgotten your lessons on family with the whisperings of the court and your lessons regarding things not to do," Loki admitted in quiet shame. "Thor remembered them though, still calling me brother."

"What happened after you fell?" Tom asked intently.

Loki closed his eyes in pain at the memory as he answered in a whisper. "I fell into the hands of Thanos."

Thor sucked in his breath in shock even as Tom became momentarily breathless in fear for Loki.

"Tell me," Tom ordered.
"I was tortured for information until one day he brought the scepter and used the weakened state of my mind combined with the power of the scepter to control me. I have no idea how much time passed while he held me. I put your lessons on protecting our minds to good use during those days. I think I made him believe that I broke but I can't be sure. He doesn't know of you but I couldn't stop myself from telling less than pleasant tales of my treatment among our people. I fear how much he gleaned from those tales," Loki admitted, eyes still closed in pained remembrance.

"Does he know of your love for Thor or your mother? Has he promised action against your family for disobedience? What else has the Mad Titan threatened?" Tom inquired, dangerously quiet.

"He believes that I hate Asgard and my adoptive family. Hatred for the difference in our treatment that you showed me was more for my scholarly pursuits and how to show them they were wrong. Its also supposedly for the betrayal of not telling me that I was adopted until I was told I couldn't ever fully take the throne while Odin slept the Odin Sleep and Thor was banished to Earth to learn," Loki informed him. "I found out that my birth father is Laufey, King of the Frost Giants. I slew him in defense of Odin."

"I apparently need a stern word with Odin, the idiot," Tom muttered angrily while rubbing at his forehead.

"Earth is at risk," Thor pointed out.

"If I remember your royal lessons on Thanos simply existing puts us all at risk in regards to the Mad Titan," Tom shot back. Neither prince could argue the point so stayed quiet.

"Does Harry... is he really the Master of Death?" Loki asked hesitantly.

"Yes but that is besides the point and the magical title is rather misleading. Thus far he has been tasked with hunting those who try to cheat death. Thanos' desire to court an aspect of Death for his spouse doesn't really apply and I never want Harry anywhere near the idiot. Knowing his absurd luck Thanos will either mistake Harry for Death and try to marry him or decide Harry has to die to *free* Death from his supposed Mastery. Either will be a nightmare to solve," Tom snorted in mirthless amusement.

"Oh dear," Loki muttered worriedly.

"What?" Tom asked suspiciously.

"I might have accidentally mentioned his apparent ability to survive the killing curse?" Loki winced.

"Thanos took it as a challenge, didn't he?" Tom sighed despairingly. Loki nodded sheepishly. Tom just groaned and decided that the next time they were in this universe both Thor and Loki were not only learning to use lightsabers they were getting some of their own.

"Yes, you will be coming back to this universe. Say goodbye to your sons, you need to be returned to Harry," Death chuckled, echoing around the room.

"Sons?" Thor asked hopefully.

"It was part of his punishment, watching one of you be hurt, but I will not take the good away which came as a result. He thinks of you both as sons and I have no problem acknowledging it. You are family, whatever you may call each other," Death laughed, fading into silence.

"Did anyone think to record our conversation?" Tom grumbled, put out at his imminent leave taking.
"I have a recording on the security cameras sir," the voice of JARVIS answered cautiously.

"Computer right? Are you a full AI or only a simulated personality?" Tom asked. He had needed to learn the difference when it came to the droids, especially with how often C3PO had gotten on his nerves whenever he had run into the protocol droid.

"I evolved rapidly," JARVIS answered proudly.

"So a fully realized AI now but didn't necessarily start as one. Can you make sure that Loki and Thor have copies of our conversation and if possible what happened with the green man beating up Loki with whatever happened after?" Tom asked.

"Certainly sir! Is there a particular format needed?" JARVIS asked. Tom looked at the princes to answer that one.

"I'll handle it," Loki promised confidently.

"The two of you are to support each other and stay together. You are not to get yourselves in danger, killed, or otherwise separated," Tom instructed sternly. "I will deal with this mess once I get back. Try to clean it up a bit without me first."

"Yes Uncle Voldy," the two princes chorused, grinning broadly. Death took that as his cue and whisked Tom away.

Chapter End Notes

Next stop is Robin Hood (no men in tights song yet) and then either Naruto or Middle Earth. I'm thinking Naruto so that we can let Naruto loose on the Armies of Mordor at some point. *evil smirk*
Harry woke to the sound of people. The creaking of wood and the snap of a fired long bow followed by the thunk of landing arrows echoed in the air. Cuddled up next to him were two bodies that were roughly the same size as him. The smells that hit him were of the forest, Tom, and Severus. Several of the voices nearby were ones Harry recognized, Luke, Anakin, and Obi-Wan.

"If those blasted red haired menaces managed to dump me in the forest they will regret ever being born!" Severus grumbled as the three of them properly woke up. They cautiously looked around while Tom swore over finding himself turned into a child. The three of them were roughly the same age, six or seven.

The shouted words of "Aye but you may!" brought their attention to the returning group and the tired man in front of the barrel loaded cart stopped not far from them.

"Your magic is bound to avoid problems while in this world and for the next few worlds," Death whispered in their minds. "Treat it as though it isn't there."

A shared look of annoyance was traded before they cautiously got to their feet and moved to explore the forest villiage they found themselves in. The camp stared at them as they passed, immediately noticing Severus' resemblance to the Sheriff of Nottingham.

"Boys? A word?" Anakin called as they stumbled upon the Jedi.

"Sir?" Harry asked leading the way to his adoptive father.

"Harry, we had to do a bit of explaining when we arrived. One of their rules is that any who see the path here cannot leave. The man in charge was surprised when I warned him that your friends have sworn to your service but he did promise to respect the oath. I also explained that you are adopted but not much else. We were lost in the dark in any case and the three of you had collapsed into sleep well before we arrived," Anakin told them sternly. The story that had been told wasn't really untrue but it left out many of the more outlandish things.

"Um, we can't use our sticks and they're missing," Harry said uncomfortably. There was absolutely no magic around them and the way that everything was done by hand warned him not to mention such a thing as a wand. He vaguely noticed that all six of them were dressed like everyone else in the forest village.

"Our blades are gone as well but the replacements they had are decent for steel," Luke put in with a grin, pointing out the swords at each of their belts.

"I made sure these two got belt knives but I knew you'd have lost yours so here are your replacements," Obi-Wan put in with a kind smile before handing out the blade that everyone had. It was a tool used for anything and everything, from eating food to hunting to carving to self defense. Harry nodded as they each tucked their new blades in their belts.

"Why won't they quit staring?" Severus grumbled.

"I don't know but I apparently don't like it aimed at you guys any more than I liked when I was the target at Hogwarts," Harry grumbled back.

"I think we need to expect potential complications," Obi-Wan concluded equally quietly.

"Stay together as much as possibly. We keep to the family story. Where are we from again?" Harry asked lowly.

"London," Severus said instantly.

"We hadn't said though London is true enough even with all our family wandering," Anakin agreed, watching an irritated Severus with concern.

"We may have a problem from my last stop..." Tom told them calmly, trying to distract them so that Severus could calm down.

"How bad?" Anakin asked grimly.

"Harry pursed by an insane immortal bent on universal destruction in order to marry an aspect of death. Depending on the situation its a toss up if the pursuit will be for his hand or his head," Tom admitted with a grimace. Harry's deadpan look was expected.

"Do we at least have a name?" Obi-Wan sighed.

"Thanos the Mad Titan," Tom admitted.

"Not fair! You got to go to a Marvel universe!" Harry pouted cutely.

"And would you have managed to stay out of the affairs of that universe? Perhaps you would have found yourself adopting Thor or Loki? Or beginning Ragnarok early? Or somehow upset the whole of Asgard or the Sorcerer Supreme?" Severus pointed out scathingly, his arms crossed imperiously over his chest. The appearance on his seven year old body echoed the times the man had used the stance in school to quell trouble makers of all houses.

"I may have accidentally adopted both Thor and Loki..." Tom admitted sheepishly. "Or rather I helped teach them their lessons acting as something of a ghostly tutor and Uncle. I wasn't physically solid for long while I was there, maybe a couple of hours?"

"You helped them?" the painful hope in Harry's voice forced Tom to swallow a hard lump in his throat before he could answer.

"Yes, Harry. I helped them. I also need to have very stern words with Odin when we get back," Tom answered firmly.

"Such a strange conversation," the moor commented suspiciously as he came upon them. "I am Azeem."

"We shared visions as a family so our conversation might seem strange to one who has not shared them," Obi-Wan explained calmly, nodding at the introduction.

"We aren't seers and sometimes it scares people," Harry put in quickly, going for the shy innocent act.

"We aren't devil worshipers but it would sometimes scare the priest where we were because we knew something he didn't," Severus put in reluctantly.

"It saved lives but it scared people," Tom added softly. His eyes were openly haunted by his
memories from the orphanage, shadowing his gaze in the tattooed man's sight.

"Remember the man who offered us help promised almost no new ones while we are here," Luke put in. "We can actually rest instead of watching battles in strange places in our dreams."

"That might be nice. I don't want this Thanos to try killing me or try marrying me any way," Harry conceded, making a face over Thanos' supposed designs.

"There is a reason they call him mad, Harry," Tom said in exasperation.

"I will not gain say you but I suggest you pray to Allah and practice nothing which could cause us harm," Azeem warned.

"I'm not sure we can expect to be just left alone," Severus said with a wary look at the way the rest of the camp stared at him.

"Then perhaps you should speak with Robin?" Azeem offered.

"If you would point him out we would be glad to," Obi-Wan agreed congenially.

The first thing that Robin said to them when brought before him was a shocked exclamation as he stared at Severus.

"Why is everyone staring at me?!" Severus finally demanded with a moody scowl.

"You look as though you could be the Sheriff of Nottingham's son," Robin of Locksley answered bluntly. "He has done much harm to all of us."

"I've never me the man. As far as I know my father was Tobias Snape," Severus answered just as bluntly.

"Even if Severus turns out to be his son he swore an oath to me. If you have a problem with my men you have a problem with me sir," Harry said bravely, gesturing at the other four minus Obi-Wan as his people.

"Harry is also my adopted son and thus brother to my other son Luke," Anakin put in with a look of mirth mixed with deadly seriousness.


"No, you raised me at the temple, monastery, whatever they call it here. I won't let them separate us just because our backgrounds are strange to them. The rest of us swore to Harry's service when we figured out his Noble blood even if we aren't sure who exactly his birth parents would have been or if these people would even know of them. You didn't have to come," Anakin argued.

"Of course I did. I didn't let the Grandmaster refuse you training in the first place and I'm hardly going to let you go off on your own now that I know how much trouble you get into," Obi-Wan huffed in open amusement.

"Wait, he didn't want me trained?!" Anakin demanded in shock.

"No, he didn't. I made many mistakes raising you but I also sought advice in doing so. It is clear that while you perhaps should not have been trained in the traditional way you still needed the training. I may have been blind to many of the order's faults but I never was able to stop caring for you despite my orders. I don't think I could have killed you had I been ordered to and I probably would have left
with you if you had chosen to leave," Obi-Wan admitted.

"So he's more of a grandpa than a co-parent," Luke snickered. It was only in that moment that they realized that Luke had gotten younger too. He was barely five years older than the trio of wizards, 12 or 13.

"Luke your father loved your mother dearly. It would not surprise me in the least if he never took another wife. However that won't stop him from building a large family as the adoption of your brother can attest," Obi-Wan grinned. "Why do you think we look so young? Your mother did that for him and that eased the strain on me in the process."

Anakin grumbled a bit but didn't argue the point.

"What can you bring to our camp?" Robin asked Harry as the apparent leader. He was convinced that while this family was strange they would not bring harm to his little forest kingdom.

"Luke, father, and Obi-Wan are all good with swords but they might need to get used to the ones your people gave them before they can show you their fighting style if they want. Severus is good with plants and making medicine. Tom is good with... lots of things but I don't how he could use them here," Harry answered cautiously.

"And Harry is good at not only finding danger but ending that same danger even if it tends to happen in strange ways at times," Tom drawled with a smirk. Harry gave him a dirty look but didn't have anything else to offer the man.

"If need be we are all willing to learn," Obi-Wan added calmly.

"Alright, we'll see what you're good at. I'll want a look at what you three can do with a blade at some point but I see no problem here. If young Severus turns out to be the Sheriff's bastard offspring then it is clear the man has cast him out and Severus will find shelter here along with the rest of you. Know this though we fight the Sheriff," Robin said sternly.

"Robin Hood," Harry said with dawning comprehension.

"You can't be serious," Tom complained over Harry's revelation.

"He can, he is," Severus shot back with a groan.

"We just joined Robin Hood," Harry grinned madly.

"Am I missing something?" Anakin asked in bewilderment.

"We'll explain later," Tom said shortly, with an irritated sigh.

"Welcome to Sherwood forest," Robin said with amusement before wandering away laughing.

After bringing the three Jedi up to speed they spent several months mostly peacefully with the outlaws of Sherwood forest. Then the day came the day that a blind man rode into camp with a warning and the Celts attacked. The wave of Celts were fought off successfully but the use of fire arrows and flaming catapults devastated the mostly wood and straw settlement. Harry, Tom, and Severus stayed with Friar Tuck and the children as a nasty surprise. Anakin, Luke, and Obi-Wan guarded them openly, gathering more women and children as they moved to escape the now burning village. In the chaos Harry, Tom, and Severus were taken prisoner with a large number of other people.
When the children were forced from the rest of those captured Harry, Tom, and Severus were among them. As a result they properly met Maid Marion in the presence of the Sheriff. The man's eyes landed on Severus but he hid his shock well as he continued whatever manipulation he was working on Marion. After she bolted from the room crying following a whispered conversation between the two the Sheriff gestured for Severus to be separated from the rest. The grip of the three wizards on each other couldn't be broken so all three of them were kept in the room as the others were returned to their parents. The priest quietly left the chapel they were in, leaving them to their fate.

"Bring me the witch!" Nottingham ordered harshly, staring at the trio intently as they waited.

"He is of your blood!" the hag exclaimed in shock the moment she set eyes on Severus.

"How?!" the Sheriff demanded. "You cursed all who lay with me to be barren unless I so wish otherwise."

"I know not," the wizened hag frowned.

"I don't know him," Severus hissed angrily at her. "I am sworn to Harry and if I am related to him I'm not sure I want to remain so."

"Severus!" Harry snapped at him waringly. His wary gaze turned to the angry Sheriff and interested witch. "Severus found out that I have noble blood but not what family. He and Tom swore to my service. We don't know if you're his dad or not but Severus had a man he was supposed to call father until he and Severus' mother died. I never met the man so I don't know how related you two are."

"A bastard child can't hold a title unless there is no other heir but he can still be useful," Nottingham mused darkly.

"More uses than you know. There is magic trapped within these three," the witch declared thoughtfully, causing the trio to tense.

"A bastard child who might also provide me with magic? One who has already delivered two more potential warlocks with himself?" Nottingham said with clear interest. The cruel smile he gave them was not comforting in the least. "Deliver them to my betrothed, a present for her continued peaceful co-operation. Once we are wed they can have proper training as part of the household."

"Oh shit," Harry breathed under his breath as they were forced out of the chapel before being delivered to Maid Marion as another Wedding present.

"What is this?!" Marion demanded as the three were shoved into the room by guards.

"A gift, my Lady, from the Sheriff," the guard answered. Once the guards were gone Harry snorted in disgust.

"He couldn't have the honesty to say we were hostages?" Severus sneered.

"What? You want him informing everyone that because you look like the Sheriff he's decided you're one of his abandoned bastards? Or because that hag happens to claim that not only are you his but that we might be able to do magic for him?" Harry pointed out in disgust at their captors.

"Should we tell her?" Tom asked, eyes judging Marion as she watched all this strangeness.

"The story is almost over and I don't think we'll be left here for long after she and Robin are married. We can't do anything with it even if we could get the magic the hag thinks we have to work. He sealed it so that it wouldn't bother us here or hurt someone on accident," Harry pointed out, kicking
at the straw thrushes covering the floor.

"Can we do anything to help?" Tom frowned.

"Keep the bastard from raping her?" Harry shrugged. "We aren't in a good spot to do much else."

"The others?" Severus asked.

"I'm pretty sure they got away so they will probably help Robin with whatever he picks. So three to protect each of them? Us guarding Marion and them guarding Robin?" Harry shrugged again. "We can't do anything trapped in here. Once things start to happen we can make real trouble for the Sheriff and his men."

"You would help?" Marion asked in disbelief.

"Yeah and whatever he told you about Robin Hood its probably a lie. I saw him fall into a burning thatch before stumbling free without that necklace you were handed," Harry admitted easily.

"Oh, thank god!" Marion breathed a sigh of relief as she sunk into a chair.

"You can't let him know that you believe Robin is alive. Otherwise it might tip Nottingham off," Severus warned darkly.

"Yes, of course!" Marion agreed quickly.

The day of the wedding Marion insisted that they accompany her and because the Sheriff wanted to keep them all safely within his reach he agreed. As a result they were standing with her when the start of the hangings were ordered. They saw as the kid, Wulf, that was going to be hanged attacked Will Scarlet with no one close enough to help. Will played the consummate traitor as Severus whispered reassurance of the man's lies into Marion's ear, easily reading Will's body language.

"That sword means we need to be ready to fight," Harry hissed quietly, speaking in English so that Marion could understand as well.

When Nottingham grabbed Marion and literally dragged her behind him as he ran off the currently child wizards didn't react fast enough to follow. They did happily dump people over the wall into the crowded courtyard. They also used nearby banners of cloth to create a rope for the suddenly rebelling people to climb the walls and get past various castle defenses. By the time everything was done Robin and Azeem had sorted out the hag and Nottingham. The six world travelers disappeared just after the wedding of Robin and Marion.

Naruto twitched in his sleep as a wave of power washed over him, shuddering through the seal he had no idea was on his belly and waking the giant fox demon sealed within.

"Oh shit!" the fox cursed. Being sealed by the Shingami and that fast yellow idiot was bad enough, now this?

Chapter End Notes

Next Section is the much requested Naruto! Now, because of how bloody big and complex that timeline is I may break it up into jumps and/or sections. Just remind me to go back to places you want to see again if I'm taking too long getting back there.
There are inevitably going to be places that only get visited once but have been set up for multiple visits by the time we end this. It's no one's fault when this happens and leaves this story open for a sequel even if it gets written ten years from now rather than a month after finishing this story.

Walking Dead is currently not an option and I have been hearing enough protests when I mentioned actually looking at it as a serious possibility that I am suddenly dubious about even watching it once. Zombies will be forthcoming at some point but it might just be for target practice.

More Naruto ideas please!
Addressing Harry, Tom, Severus and Naruto next chapter so no worries! This is just prep for later.

Luke, Anakin, and Obi-Wan scowled at being separated not only from each other but from the three wizards. Only the whisper that this would help Harry later with their recruitment efforts kept them from complaining if only to themselves. Uzushiogakure was a strange place and it got stranger if only because it came under attack almost the moment that the three Jedi were brought before its Kage.

"Uzukage! The village is under attack!" the messenger had burst in literally right after the three men had introduced themselves.

"We were here to see about recruiting people and now they're suddenly under attack. Think we're being screwed with or are we supposed to keep them from getting completely wiped out considering who sent us?" Luke asked his fellow Jedi mirthlessly.

The Uzukage froze in his tracks at Luke's words, watching them warily.

"Its possible that our luck simply kicked in but again the one who sent us and Harry's feelings on helping people... I simply don't know Luke," Obi-Wan shrugged with a tired sigh. "We have to help them of course but without knowing the situation and resources, with barely knowing anything at all I don't know how much help we will be. Even with our skills and experience. This world doesn't seem to have the technology we are used to fighting with. That doesn't mean our own knowledge is useless but we also have no way to provide bonafides to these people. What do they even call the one who sent us here? I simply don't know."

"We have the authority to offer safe haven as Harry's deputies," Anakin said thoughtfully.

"To how many?" the messenger asked hopefully, earning a sharp look from his Kage.

"If we had to we could shelter your entire village," Luke answered with a blink of surprise.

"The attackers show a mixed force of Kiri, Kumo, and Iwa nin," the messenger explained to his Kage. The curse that slipped from the Uzukage's lips told them how bad it was with their own extensive combat experience.

"That bad huh?" Luke asked wryly.

"Where would you take them?" the Uzukage asked warily.

"Another world," Obi-Wan answered honestly.

"Ben?" Luke asked cautiously.

"You heard the man, Luke. They're under attack. We don't have time to give it to them gently. If
nothing else we can offer safety to their women and children with no strings attached," Anakin pointed out.

"I wasn't arguing. I'm just not sure he wouldn't think we are insane for having met Death and are basically working for him," Luke shot back.

"Well I wasn't going to say it in those words exactly. Besides technically we work for Harry and the literal personification of Death is a colleague rather than our boss. Not that we actually understand the situation much beyond that," Obi-Wan argued back affably.

"How exactly would you provide safety for my people?" the Uzukage asked cautiously. The Bijuu were just giant masses of chakra demons so if they really had access to the Shinigami as a superior even if they were Genin to the Shinigami's Kage it wasn't that far fetched.

"We would request either a method of transport or a pick up and simply go home, taking your people with us. In some cases re-incarnation can be arranged so that they are simply reborn in our home rather than having to leave whatever responsibilities behind right away," Luke answered in surprise. He had honestly thought the man would need more convincing to even remotely listen to them.

"Death is not required?" the Uzukage asked intently.

"Of course not. We work with Death but we ourselves aren't actually dead," Obi-Wan answered promptly, slightly baffled at the thought of death in any form being needed to provide transport. He was completely unaware of the particulars of the shinobi lifestyle and their world.

"They can return at any time," Luke put in. "Harry doesn't make anyone stay unless they have to stay for medical reasons or are too dangerous to let loose. Actually, I don't think he's had to imprison anyone because of how dangerous they are yet. Tom and Severus don't count because that was Death rather than Harry and they were already dead before he bound them to Harry."

"I had to stay as a part of his house for medical reasons but once I'm done healing I'm free to go. The medical restrictions cover mental as well as physical wounds but he wont apply them until and unless you either swear to his service or pose a threat to his people. Without either of those your people are just visitors," Anakin assured him.

"Are there any restrictions on who we can send through?" the Uzukage asked roughly, seriously considering this course of action.

"Not that I can think of but we don't have many medics," Anakin warned.

"If what you say about their safe return is true I would want to send those at the Academy, the civilian school, the families of our Shinobi forces, the civilian families... basically everyone who isn't actively serving in our military and as a part of our defenses. Can it be done?" the Uzukage asked softly.

"Sure. We've got an entire planet to play with if there isn't enough room in the estate its self," Anakin shrugged. "We wanted people willing to move in anyway. If we get the entire village then we get the entire village. If we get no one and just let you visit for awhile then that's what happens. If nothing else we might get a day or two of you guys playing war games with our troops simply to keep them on their toes. Hells just having you visit and do nothing but rest up will make our people happy. I think they've been getting bored of the down time."

"Oh?" Obi-Wan asked, amused.

"I caught Cody and Rex talking with the Noghir about getting the troops to help set up farms and
making some of them cross train as medics, farmers, engineers... The elaborate war games will only hold them for so long even with manually setting up the terrain or finding the needed terrain and getting there, especially with how familiar the 212th and 501st already are with each other. It was implied that Harry will need our troops at some point to kill some idiot immortal or destroy some evil empire. We have everything we actually need but it would be nice if we could set it up to make our own stuff," Anakin admitted. "The point is they are resorting to civilian cross training to keep people out of trouble."

Everyone winced at that, familiar with the running of military units and how difficult it could be to keep troops from loosing their edge or from going insane with boredom.

"Can we offer them military aid?" Luke asked thoughtfully.

"No. Uzushiogakure must fall. The main immortal attempting fool that needs collecting in this world arranged for this attack. Saving Uzushiogakure will force him to put not only Harry at risk but the child who is his prophesied downfall or helper. The choice belongs to the child or children, Fate is being stubborn about giving me details. The prophecy for this world concerns at least one heir of the Uzumaki main branch family. Harry will be placed so that he might help the child. When the time comes those of Uzushiogakure which survive must stand with them against the fool with Harry and the child as their commanders. The 212th and 501st must be trained to fight this enemy as their current equipment and training is nearly useless against shinobi. Different time periods breed different tactics," Death answered, appearing behind the three Jedi and shocking the shinobi.


"They know me as Shinigami but I am not here for the shinobi. My reapers are already at work collecting the fallen. I saw no reason to use a form you do not yet know is mine," the skeletal reaper shrugged.

"That means the fall of Uzushiogakure needs to be convincing," the Uzukage grimaced. "We can only afford to save some people from each group."

"Re-incarnation is offered to yourself and your immediate family on the condition that the child be recognized as clan head upon completion of this mess. This is presuming you permanently return to the elemental nations once the matter is done rather than choosing Harry as your new Daimyo or Kage. Any choice to remain with my master has other considerations of which you will be informed should you ask," Death informed him.

"What is needed to re-incarnate part of my forces and the academy students with their teachers?" the Uzukage asked grimly. The children would be the hardest to fake if only because as an extermination mission of this magnitude they would be a primary target along with every single one of his best shinobi.

"Half your forces will be granted re-incarnation in addition to those named on condition of training for the forces already loyal to my master. The retired shinobi and shinobi merchants with their families and any shinobi related families whose shinobi are to be re-incarnated will also be collected or re-incarnated. The civilians and those Uzu shinobi not included will be granted peace in their deaths and moved straight into the more normal re-incarnation cycle rather than the one to aid my master. The full price will come later but know that the Bijuu and Jinchuriki fall under my master's full authority," Death said ominously. Luke, Anakin, and Obi-Wan exchanged worried looks. This was not something they could gainsay nor could they know if their own offer was in conjuncture or canceled by Death's offer.

"Agreed," the Uzukage declared with a grimace.
"Your ANBU will unfreeze after we have left. I saw no point in letting them attack and you will need them for the fight to come," Death said politely before simply disappearing with the three Jedi. Uzushiogakure fell in less than 24 hours and those selected were reborn at Harry's estate. It would take the three Jedi years to integrate everyone and bring their training on both sides up to basic competence for when they would be called to battle.

Chapter End Notes

It was suggested we take a break at some point during the Naruto arc to have them (Naruto, Harry, Tom, and Severus) turned into elflings and cuddled (ie. raised) on middle earth for a bit in stead of waiting on that. I'll let you guys have a say on that.
Interview with a Kage

The three children found unconscious had been brought to the Hokage as the note with them had instructed. According to the note they were assimilating the spoken and written languages of the Elemental regions. They were also only on loan to be trained as shinobi and only the Hokage was ever to know of their special circumstances. Danzo was never to be told even if he did manage to snag the hat of office.

The most terrifying thing to the man known as the Professor was that the note was signed by the Shingami. There were details about the sealing of the Kyuubi that only the Shinigami could ever know along with a pointed mention of having Jiraiya not messing with Naruto's seal any more. Apparently, it was up to these three newcomers to deal with the seal from now on. For the first time in years there would be a starting five man team, four students with one teacher, once these three and Naruto graduated from the ninja academy.

The old Hokage sighed, puffing on his pipe as he waited. At the very least these three appeared to be roughly Naruto's age and putting the four of them with a remedial teacher together might help things along. It would also get him more help in checking on Naruto himself and keeping him safe. Though the pointed instruction to train these three had him wondering how they would deal with the seal at all if they had no training as Shinobi or in Fuuinjutsu.

"What hit me?" Harry groaned as he started to wake up.

"~That hurt!~" Tom hissed in parseltongue as he clutched his head, sitting up next to Harry and Severus.

"~Kill me now!~" Severus moaned back in rough parseltongue, his throat dry.

"Could be worse," Harry muttered half to himself and half to his fellow wizards.

"Where the devil are we now?!" Tom cried, the first one to manage to open his eyes and see their surroundings.

"Tom!" Severus moaned in pained protest from the loud noise. Harry gave an equally displeased grunt.

"I take it this is not unusual for the three of you?" the Hokage asked somewhat quietly.

"The de-aging is fairly recent but no, this is not something new to us," Tom answered with open annoyance. A shove of the other two got them to open their own eyes and paying attention to their surroundings.

"De-aging?" the Hokage asked very carefully.

"We get randomly inserted into alternate worlds by Death, usually to hunt down immortality seeking idiots that have gotten too close to the wrong type or who have made too much trouble. I've also been reliably informed that I'm supposed to recruit people as helpers and as colonists for our own land," Harry shrugged. "I didn't ask for it and these two got dragged into it to keep me grounded."

"That... is an accurate summary," Severus admitted dubiously.

"However did he manage that?!" Tom tossed in with a sarcastic smirk. Harry just whacked them both on the arms that were in easy reach.
"The Shinigami did explain that you were on loan in the note and that any further problems with the seal Naruto carries are to be dealt with by the three of you. Would you care to explain exactly why Uzumaki Naruto, and those like him, suddenly fall under your joint authority?" the Hokage demanded, eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"Well the only reason I can think is that you guys screwed up badly and the situation is still potentially fixable. That or Death isn't willing to wait for you to screw up far enough where he can justify actually manifesting properly to yell at you all and fix it himself," Harry explained thoughtfully. "It could also have always been part of my position but since I am not only a recent appointee but the very first to actually hold the title no one bothered telling you or anyone else. I am still learning after all."

"I sincerely doubt that," the Hokage said dryly as he continued smoking on his pipe.

"Meh, you asked me to guess. That was my current guess. It may change with more information and it may not," Harry shrugged, completely unconcerned at the lack of belief. It wasn't like the man knew he could be serious and had ample proof to back it up if he felt like actually being treated as an insane idiot while he was here.

Harry let that sink in for a minute before adding the next blow.

"Besides I'm what? Seven? What do I know about things like the Shinigami?" Harry asked with a perfectly straight face that pushed the boundaries of both his fellow wizards' control. The man in front of them knew they were silently laughing at him but his conclusion for the source of laughter, aka the thought that an adult couldn't possibly understand them, was completely wrong. It was, in fact, Harry's very truthfulness and the old man's obvious disbelief that made them fight back laughter.

"I will be assigning you three a tutor, which you will share with Uzumaki Naruto, to bring you up to the same level as his classmates and to see how the four of you get along. Should you work well together, and pass the Academy exams, I will humor the note that came with you and place the four of you together on a team. All of which is presuming you pass the medical exams that will happen before you get within a hundred meters of any of Konoha's children," the Hokage informed them bluntly.

"That sounds fair," Harry agreed. Tom and Severus exchanged a mischievous look behind his back before pouncing on him. Harry went down with a surprised yelp as they gleefully fell into a playful tussle on the floor of the Hokage's office. The man suddenly smiled at them with fond kindness as they mimicked the actions of good friends who were actually seven.

Tom and Severus quickly pinned Harry, smirking down at the disgruntled green-eyed imp as they waited for the man to let slip more useful information.

"Should you pass the medical portion you can share Naruto's apartment complex," the Hokage said kindly. "I would also ask that you keep an eye on him if only as potential friends."

"We can do that but that doesn't mean we will tell tales on him," Severus countered with a small smile. Seeing this Tom immediately counted their playful tussle as a major win.

"If anything I'd want you to help him learn his school work and help him train. Actual friendship is between the four of you. No, you'd stay in the same building as him and in trade you watch out for him a bit even if it's just noting anyone trying to hurt him and sending it to me once a week. I treasure him dearly for many reasons but both my job as well as politics and interfering busybodies have done their best to keep me away from him. He has official invisible bodyguards so you don't need to defend him from an actual attack but new eyes on the situation can't hurt," the old man explained
kindly. They could tell that he really wanted them to make friends with this kid but would honestly not fault them if they didn't.

"Will his parents object?" Severus asked shrewdly.

"He is an orphan," Sarutobi explained sadly. The sharp breath of sympathetic recognition came from all three with various meaning, causing the old man to pause.

"You are orphans," the third Hokage concluded slowly.

"All of our birth parents are dead," Tom confirmed warily.

"Any other relatives or adoptive families I need to be concerned over?" Sarutobi asked slowly, puffing on his pipe.

"None that we can contact and very few we would want to try with regardless of other circumstances," Harry answered carefully. "Besides father and Luke would understand. They got caught up in this too when I got Tom and Severus."

"Aren't you legally dead? At least in regards to anyone with supposed authority over you who is not part of your Estate?" Severus asked mildly.

"Probably," Harry admitted with a blush. He'd forgotten about that.

"Anything that will affect Konoha's records?" the Hokage asked shrewdly.

"No," the three chorused honestly.

"The situations regarding previous status no longer apply, largely thanks to the Shinigami," Severus clarified.

"Just by talking to the three of you I can tell you are far more mature then you should be," the third Hokage allowed.

"De-aged," Harry reminded him smartly.

"Part of your medical exam will be one of my men checking your memories for tampering and your mental state," the old man warned, allowing them the same full disclosure as any adult.

"We'll try to lower our mental defenses but I'm not sure how much we can," Tom put in with a grimace from all three of them.

They hadn't had to mess with mental defenses for awhile and there was no telling what additions Death might have made. None of them liked it but it was also clear that they were supposed to be near this kid, whoever he is. The question was if the kid was a kill target or a protection target or a potential recruit or even another prank on them from Death. The prank was looking unlikely with how the old guy was reacting but it wasn't something they would actually rule out.

"Very well, we will go to the hospital," the Hokage agreed genially.

"Grand," Harry muttered under his breath as the three of them made no secret as to their dislike of any hospital. Sarutobi mentally laughed, quite familiar with such dislike from his many recaltriant shinobi when it came to visiting the hospital as a patient. They left together without another word, shadowed by the ANBU who were the Hokage's personal guard.
The hospital was like any other that they had visited over the years. The smell of disinfectants hung in the air covering nearly every other scent. They insisted on getting checked together and Sarutobi humored them. When he saw under their shirts though he had a better understanding of why they might want to stick together. From the uncomfortable expressions and sharp looks between the three they had some knowledge of the old injuries but hadn't actually seen the scar damage on each other. Not unheard of if the boys simply never bothered unclothing in each other's presence. The hiss of anger from one of his ANBU was completely understandable.

It seemed whoever wanted them trained as leaf shinobi had chosen well. They would better understand Naruto than most of the blond's classmates ever could.

Hiruzen Sarutobi wasn't blind but the civilian council and his own former teammates had forced him to make concessions to prevent the then infant Naruto from simply being executed. He had seen the danger too late and managed too little protection in the hours following the death of Naruto's parents. Hiruzen honestly cared about the young blond but too much contact between them would give their enemies the flimsy excuse of favoritism. An excuse they would use ruthlessly to banish, harm, kill or spite Naruto in any way they could. Hundreds of assassination attempts on the boy had been thwarted by his guards and not all of them were arranged by the enemies of either the village or those enemies of Naruto's parents that remained alive.

The shinobi clan heads of the shinobi council had been placed in a similar bind as to the Hokage with the damage the Kyuubi no Kitsune had done to Konoha and needing to protect their own clans. Any competent shinobi understood the infant Naruto was basically a living box holding back the demon fox rather than the demon itself. Many individual shinobi, as well as shinobi families, and clans attempted to adopt Naruto but the Civilian Council held control of adoptions and made it impossible. As a result even more shinobi tried to discretely help him. Naruto was never shunned and greatly respected by those shinobi not blinded by hatred for the Kyuubi, greed for assassination money, or general stupidity over his status.

Regardless of the potential risks these three were a literal godsend and Hiruzen planned to take full advantage of it. If everything went well then he could use the situation to help solve other additional problems Naruto's enemies had caused. Possibly even, with Naruto's permission, move some of the older orphans into the same building and away from the incompetent orphanage workers who he couldn't get rid of.

Thankfully, as Naruto's guardian, he had used some of the funds that were left behind by the boy's secretly married parents to actually buy an apartment building. The very apartment building that Naruto lived in alone. Naruto was periodically taken out to lunch by the Hokage so that several ANBU could check the apartment building for assassins and traps. They would also occasionally secretly restock the cupboard with food when Naruto was overcharged to the point of running out of money from his orphans stipend.

No, Hiruzen wasn't blind simply severely restricted. If these boys passed the basic village security and health tests then they would share the building with Naruto. Should they happen to actually have been de-aged as they claimed then they would have a better chance at looking after his unofficially adopted grandson. Their bodies were young enough to be trained to use chakra which made them acceptable shinobi candidates if they passed their health exams or at least were deemed capable of healing by the doctors.

The physical health exam went quickly but not without much quiet cursing under the breath of
young and old alike. Once the doctors had left and the Hokage had stepped out for a cup of coffee Tom and Severus pounced. The ANBU guards inside the room stayed hidden, silently observing as ordered by their Kage.

"You never said..." Severus spluttered angrily only to be cut off by Harry.

"Neither did either of you," Harry shot back hotly. "Besides, even with us being turned back into the same bodies as our first life at this age, its in the past. There isn't anything we can do about it. Last time we got properly healed in the Star Wars universe, this time... we'll have to fix it ourselves."

Tom stood next to them with his jaw clenched tight. His shirt was still on the side table with the other two, ensuring he was showing off his too thin body. The littering of burn marks on Harry's arms to match the lash marks on all three of their backs made him absolutely furious. Of the three Tom's scarring was the lightest and he only had those received from a belt. Severus and Harry had more than just belt marks scattered over their bodies. One on Severus' shoulder looked like it might have come from a broken bottle being used as an impromptu weapon on him. Harry's burns though were clearly deliberate torture using hot things from a kitchen, one burn mark clearly looked like a stove burner. Nothing any of them had gained after age seven remained on their bodies.

"As much as I hate it Harry is right. We can discuss it later. Should we get the chance we can kill the people who put those marks on Harry," Tom put in reluctantly.

"Not Severus? Or you?" Harry asked with a falsely disgusted snort and a suddenly stiff stance.

"I already killed my tormentor, aside from the Marauders and those four served some use while still alive. We got you from them after all," Severus shot back. Harry's stance relaxed marginally as he gave a grudging nod of acceptance. He could always argue them out of killing the Dursleys later should those three ever come in reach of the two angry wizards.

"I too dealt with my tormentors. Though at least you were the only one of us forced to kill before you hit 16 in your first life," Tom pointed out darkly.

"Quirrell," Harry said softly.

"What did happen that day? You two were there but Dumbledore hushed it up," Severus frowned as he retrieved their shirts and handed them out.

"My touch burned him. I'm not sure why since it hasn't ever burned anyone else. He had grabbed me until he couldn't hold on any more, trying to kill me. I saw him let go, saw the burns, and my only thought was I finally had a way to stop him. I caught my breath, leapt on him and pressed my hands to his face. He burned alive under my fingers," Harry admitted.

"And my mutilated wraith form burst free from the pile of ashes as it collapsed," Tom added. "I blew through him trying to kill him and only succeeded in knocking him out as I fled the castle. I was still very insane at that point otherwise I would have recognized that I shouldn't have been trying to hurt him at all."

"Now I know I really need to look at your memories and minds," came a voice from the doorway. They turned to find the Hokage and a blond man standing there watching them.

"Before we begin you need to know that we are actually all adults that have been de-aged, something done without our consent. We have also each had training in mental defense where those who can read memories or walk minds is not unheard of. We also don't know if one of our... colleagues has added additional defenses to our minds or if we are even still in control of our own
mental defenses," Severus warned quickly. If the man tripped something and got hurt he didn't want the three of them blamed over it.

"I thank you for the warning," Inoichi, Head of the Yamanaka clan and father of Yamanaka Ino, answered politely.

"My friend Inoichi will check your minds while we wait for the medical test results from the doctors," the third Hokage said kindly.

"Me first so that you'll have a better understanding of our current... unique circumstances," Harry insisted with a grimace. Severus and Tom exchanged a look but didn't argue. Harry did actually have more of the facts in his mind and memories than they did.

Harry had already dropped what mental defenses he had control over by the time the man answered.

"Very well," Inoichi agreed before swiftly performing his clan's mind walking jutsu.

Death met Inoichi at the edges of Harry's mind.

"Yamanaka Inoichi, I allow this for my own reasons but should harm befall my master or his companions by your actions this day I will claim your entire clan as forfeit. Uzumaki Naruto already belongs to me by your people's own actions in making him a Jinchuuriki and thus belonging also to my master. The magic you will see in my master's memories is not currently accessible and has been locked into the form of a Kekkei Genki they will be able to eventually awaken. Other parts of it are already unlocked," Death warned.

Inoichi could tell without even asking that this wasn't a mental manifestation of his patient. No, instead this was an actual message left behind by the Shinigami.

"I understand Shinigami-san," Inoichi answered with a hard swallow and a deep bow of respect.

"I do so like shinobi. Train my little master well in your arts. As an incentive I leave you with the knowledge that one of his primary targets to collect for me in this world is Orochimaru," Death informed him fondly before fading away.

Inoichi hesitantly stepped forwards and reviewed Harry's mind and memories. When he was done he jerked out of the jutsu with a gasp. Refusing to look at anyone he stepped to the side and poured himself a drink of water as he worked through not only what he had learned but the implications of it. A quick mental test told him that much of what he had learned was not shareable without permission from the young man he had just inspected.

"He is sane and what he told you is the literal truth. On the plus side for us his stay may last an entire life time so his oath of service need only be altered to allow for overriding concerns in regards to his duty to the Shinigami. His companions are sworn to him as is allowed when one clan swears to serve another. I can not share much with you even should I wish to. There is a binding on his mind, which I was granted access too, that traps certain information when another person manages to enter it regardless of invitation," Inoichi answered the quiet question. "He isn't a threat to Konoha unless we make him one, nor are his vassals. I will need to skim them both in case of underlying issues and I am the only one ever allowed to treat them for mental trauma. I will also need to be assigned to Naruto for the same treatments, should they become necessary, and information control. I recommend sharing Naruto's special condition with them and explain the history behind it. They will be angry over the practice and may find a better solution in time."
"If Death ever bothers to tell me who I'm supposed to hunt I can tell you so that you know what we are doing," Harry offered quietly.

"Shinigami informed me of one of their targets as an incentive to ensure they are trained well... Orochimaru," Inoichi said with a shudder of relief, never turning to face his Kage's inevitably devastated features.

"Who is Orochimaru?" Tom asked sharply.

"One of my former students," Hiruzen admitted. "I had hoped... but I guess it was a fool's hope."

"Ah... Dumbledore," Harry said wisely. Dumbledore's name was all it took for the other two to understand. The man in front of them wanted to rescue his student with second chances.

"No, not Dumbledore, more like a loving father with a favorite child," Inoichi corrected them sharply. He didn't want them thinking there would be no consequences should Orochimaru ever be convinced to return to the village and the forces of the leaf. There would still be punishment but the man's usefulness outweighed many things and sins for a shinobi village, especially during war time.

"We will see," Severus shot back, unimpressed. Inoichi finally turned to face the rest of the room. A quirked eyebrow and an inclined head each gave permission for the next two mind walks. They finished up quickly.

"My earlier assessment stands Lord Hokage," Inoichi announced with a half bow of respect to his superior. "Though I would like to note they are actually distantly related and could be considered part of the same clan if one stretched the definition by 6 generations or so. Though by our laws they each are from cousin clans and share Kekkei Genki for all that it has started diverging a bit. Their Kekkei Genki is currently locked aside from a few aspects. I would not recommend adding information about it until they are publicly Genin to prevent... political issues and to limit their exposure to Danzo-sama. All three were Elite Jonin level or higher for their people. Severus-san has some shinobi-like training but none of them are actually trained as shinobi."

"Will there be any issue with including them in your daughter's academy class?" Sarutobi asked shrewdly. Would you allow them around your princess my friend? was added silently.

"I would be glad to have them in our clan compound and my home for as long as they choose to remain in Fire Country Lord Hokage," Inoichi countered firmly.

Hiruzen silently held out the note that came with them. Inoichi read it just as silently and understood what his boss intended.

"Uzumaki-san is welcome any time as well. He always has been had he but known it," Inoichi answered the silent inquiry softly.

"I would like to place the three of you in the same building as Uzumaki Naruto. I would also request that you allow me to withhold knowledge of the condition Inoichi mentioned until you have gotten to know him first. This is so that you may know him without the information clouding your potential relationship. Should you encounter it on your own you may come to me and I will explain the full circumstances involved including the history of related situations. As your situation is unique and you will be dealing with equally unique situations as your clan responsibilities overlap missions and everyday life I am granting you a special status. As of now the three of you are special Genin on a long term SS class mission. You will be acting as if you are not in fact Genin until you attain the rank normally unless a situation arises in which you are forced to reveal it. Anything to do with your Shinigami responsibilities will fall under clan responsibilities as we will be labeling your clan sworn
to the Shinigami's service. For simplicity's sake you will be listed of the same clan without a Kekkei Genki until you are forced to publicly reveal its existence. The mission will include what I have already listed but the fact of both the rank and the mission will allow you to use lethal force should it become necessary. Your actual history will be listed as a SS class secret of which only I or yourselves may inform anyone. Should it be revealed without one of the four of us granting permission the penalty to the reveler is death unless permission is granted retroactively. Officially you are orphans of a previously hidden shinobi clan that was recently wiped out. Your guardian died delivering you to us for training and safe haven. The only requirements from your clan was that you be trained as shinobi and be allowed to continue serving the Shinigami," the Hokage requested and instructed.

"I don't see any problem with that as long as you understand that if Death decides we are done here or need a break to go somewhere else for a bit he will collect us without warning. I can ask him to tell you when it happens but I don't think I can actually order him to do anything," Harry offered. He mentally asked Death, who in turn chuckled and agreed.

Death didn't plan on removing them until it was time to permanently leave but he couldn't argue with the logic of the request. Besides there were at least four people he needed from this world alone. It was quite possible his little master would need a break away from anything shinobi between targets. He already owned all of the Jinchuuriki. It was simply a matter of collecting his wayward property and repairing the damage the idiot humans had done.

"I know of no one who can order the Shinigami to do anything," Hiruzen chuckled lightly. Inoichi just nodded his understanding. He didn't correct his boss on Harry's title and its possible implications. He didn't dare.

"I don't know if it carried over but we were even born with the ability to have babies with a male partner," Tom informed him softly.

"Part of their already unlocked Kekkei Genki portion," Inoichi added. "And yes it is still there."

"Their medical records will have to be classified in any case but the ability will make them highly sought after once it is revealed as part of their Kekkei Genki," Sarutobi grimaced.

The three wizards just shrugged at the news. They were actually rather used to people pursuing them at times for their abilities or skills, for them it was a fact of life.

Thus began the shinobi service of three wizards.
Roommates

Settling in at their apartments turned from something simple into a huge discussion. They talked about if it would be safer just to share an apartment, ask permission to combine apartments, or stay with their own space. Quite honestly after the medical exam they were reluctant to let the other two get too far away but couldn't argue with the potential need for personal space.

"Why don't you just ask Naruto? Its high time he knows that he actually owns the building and if the four of you create a joint apartment or renovate a floor or something you can discuss it together," Sarutobi suggested with something of a faint smirk.

"What aren't you telling us?" Severus demanded suspiciously.

"He likes pranks and could do with a personal little hideyhole at times. If you don't want him pranking you then tell him that and don't be mean to him or insult raman to his face," Sarutobi shrugged.

"Severus was once a prankster in his own right though to be fair he learned it in self defense against my dad and his friends," Harry smirked, proud of what Severus had managed.

While Harry technically had no say in the accomplishments of either Tom or Severus they had been dumped through realities together long enough for his own possessiveness to start to kick in. Like Tom there weren't many things that were his alone before he started attending Hogwarts and it fostered a measure of protective possessiveness. By this point Harry knew that if someone tried to take Severus, or Tom for that matter, away not only would they get him back but they would make it painful for whoever took Severus in the first place.

"Its a point of interest and we can use helping with pranks to encourage his school work if he's really doing poorly," Tom agreed thoughtfully.

"Ever the teacher," Harry smiled fondly in Tom's direction.

"Have you figured out what the word Shinobi translates to in our own culture yet?" Tom smirked evilly.

"No," Harry huffed in annoyance. "The blasted thing is on the tip of my tongue but I just can't quite get it."

"Think Japan and shadows," Tom smirked.

"The only thing that comes up, especially combined with an occupation, is a Ninja but that can't be right. They died out in like the 1600's didn't they?" Harry huffed.

"And do we know what century the calendar here translates too? Or if they even remotely have the same timeline?" Severus drawled with an amused huff. Harry's mind visibly put the pieces together and as the light went on in his head his palm met his face in a pure doh! expression.

The building they finally arrived at was outwardly a bit old and somewhat worn down. Even so Tom and Severus, more familiar with what to look for, noted the solid repairs that were visible. It needed some coats of paint but it was in overall better repair then the surrounding buildings.

"I keep a handy man on retainer but there are reasons he doesn't come around all that often. Once Naruto graduates he will have to manage the building or arrange for someone to manage it on his
behalf. When the building was purchased this was a middle class area," the Hokage explained, excusing the less than prosperous surroundings without explaining it.

"What of his established bodyguards?" Tom asked keenly.

"You will meet them all at least once to help identify imposters, both you three and them, but mostly they wont be your concern. I must admit that I have spent many resources to keep him alive and out of the hands of his enemies," Sarutobi said calmly.

"What do we do if we figure out someone is sabotaging his schooling? Do we openly help him, help him on the sly, report it, or ignore it?" Harry asked, thinking of how the Dursleys had been with his own school work. As long as he wasn't doing better than Dudley he was relatively safe and those habits had remained in light of Hermione's and Ron's reactions to school work. His teachers had never noticed that he was holding back, careful to remain average in class to the point of mediocrity.

"Whatever you feel is best. I've already told you what I need, new eyes on the situation and a bit of watching out for Naruto. Once your tutor, probably an ANBU and possibly one of Naruto's guards, says the four of you are up to par you will be sharing classes with Naruto. Anything more is up to the three of you. Feel free to tell Naruto of our arrangement but make sure he understands that you could have said no," Sarutobi said pointedly.

"Could we?" Severus shot back snidely.

"Yes, you could have and still can. The rank of Genin would remain and I would still either have you attend the academy or attend a tutor to get you up to the basic Genin requirements. The only reason for the immediate mission status is so that you can have an excuse not to tell anyone but the next Hokage anything about your pasts, your bloodlines, and the Shinigami. The parts referring to Naruto are more to keep fools from telling you lies until you've made your own decision. It is also so that I get a better idea of what needs to be addressed immediately in regards to Naruto's treatment or lack there of," the third Hokage answered stopping where he was and turned to face them.

"Sorry, Sev is a bit prickly because of bad memories. We already agreed and I'm kind of curious to meet this kid by now," Harry apologized. The Hokage inclined his head in acceptance before starting forwards again, entering the building with the three wizards right behind him.

"We will be seen as children and thus can't be in your employ since we have no history and no previous contact with either yourself or Naruto," Tom nodded his understanding. Severus grumbled but didn't object again.

They climbed the steps in contemplative silence as they approached a particular apartment. Hiruzen was dismayed to discover signs that it was regularly broken into and trashed or stolen from.

"Perhaps its best that the three of you want to share," Hiruzen Sarutobi mumbled. "I had no idea that his apartment was in this state."

The three wizards exchanged a hard look and nodded silent agreement. This kid had just gained three wizard keepers and roommates.

A knock on the door had it opening warily with a half dressed skinny blond kid about the same age as them hovering behind it. The shocked surprise that came over the seven year old's face was priceless. Even so the three brunettes noted the hunger for attention and mixed look of adoration that was sent towards the old man as well as the wary looks aimed at them.

"Hello Naruto, do you think we could come in?" Hiruzen asked gently.
"Sure!" Naruto chirruped, letting them into his dirty and damaged apartment.

"Orange?" Severus muttered, noting his jump suit's color.

"We will get him into something else," Tom murmured back.

"No point in letting him wear kill me colors," Harry added under his breath. The Hokage hid a smirk as he noticed Naruto's hidden ANBU guards slump in defeat. They had obviously been using the bright colors to help keep track of the overactive youngster.

"Why are you here Jiji?" Naruto asked bluntly, all open curiosity.

"These three are going to be joining your class. Their last guardian died getting them to Konoha so that they could become shinobi. I was hoping, since you own the building, they could live in one of the other apartments. As a fellow orphan you can help them out and show them around the village," the third suggested kindly.

"I think we should all live in the same apartment, at least for a bit, so that the four of us can share chores and help each other with school work," Harry suggested brightly.

"The four of us? You mean you want to live with me?!" Naruto's painful forlorn hope broke their hearts.

"You'd have to leave us alone about pranks," Severus warned with a scowl.

"The Hokage told us you like pranks but we can't get things done if you are pranking us all the time. We might help you set up pranks but unless we ask you to we don't want you playing pranks on us," Tom explained patiently.

"Sure! Dattebayo!" came the immediate ecstatic agreement.

"Then I will leave the four of you to get to know each other and move into a different apartment. One of the ANBU will be by with your stipend with a bit extra to help get Naruto some new clothes," the Hokage informed them happily, excusing himself and leaving.

The ANBU in a dog mask, Inu, revealed himself after they gathered up everything useful from Naruto's old place before moving several doors down into a new larger joint apartment.

"Hari-san, Tom-san, Severus-san, you failed to inform the Hokage of your clan name and symbol," Inu said as he handed out the pile of Ryo to each of them. His silver hair was very distinctive as was the scent of wet dog that lingered on him.

"What? Oh, sorry. I guess you need a name for the paper work," Harry said sheepishly.

"The two of us are vassals so we could technically still use our original last names but we could also just give a new clan name and use it. Its not like there is anyone else aside from Luke and Anakin who we aren't even sure are alive," Severus said thoughtfully.

"Better make it something they can recognize if we do that," Tom grimaced. "It should help keep us safe from whoever killed Mikoto-san."

"What are your given names?" Inu asked with open curiosity.

"Harry Potter, Severus Snape, and Tom Riddle," Harry shrugged.

"Hari is your family name?" Inu asked, puzzled.
"Er, no. I forgot the you put your family name first. Sorry, Potter Harry, Snape Severus, and Riddle Tom," Harry corrected sheepishly, gesturing to the correct wizard with each name.

"Do you have a clan symbol?" Inu asked gently.

"Yeah but we left our original crests behind when we came here. The only one we can still claim is a triangle split by a line with a circle inside the triangle. The Shinigami gave it to us," Harry answered honestly.

"No, he gave it to you. We can use it only because we are sworn to you," Severus pointed out stubbornly. By this point the fact that he and Tom hadn't chosen to be Harry's vassals in the first place was completely irrelevant. They were Harry's and he was theirs, that's all that really mattered to the three of them.

This matter of fact statement sent a chill down all of the ANBU's spines and had Naruto sniggering. The blond didn't really mind but made a mental note to warn his new roommates that people might get scared of them because of their connection to the Shinigami.

"Potta Hari, Suneipu Seburusu, and Nazo Tomu?" Inu asked. The three wizards could hear an echo of the names both ways and it sounded right. Naruto could as well and was giving them cautious but amused looks. Something snapped in their minds allowing them to hear their names normally but with the knowledge that everyone else would hear them appropriately as well regardless of which version was used.

"Yes, that's right," Severus said roughly. His brain felt like it had been bit by a stinging nettle or some other thorny plant and he was only just resisting trying to rub at the fading phantom pain.

"Interesting," Inu hummed before disappearing in a flurry of leaves. Cat and Tiger remained behind on duty, hidden from sight.

"I always liked Inu. I don't know where Weasel went but he was nice too," Naruto confided to them.

"Do you really like that color?" Harry asked, changing the subject away from something so obviously depressing to the blond.

"They were one of my first gifts!" Naruto said happily.

"Well we can make them into a bag or something so you can carry it around everywhere if you want but you need different colors to wear," Harry hummed thoughtfully.

"What's wrong with orange?" Naruto pouted.

"Nothing if you happen to be training stealth. Its bright, making it easier for people to see you so that you need to practice really well not to get caught sneaking. I had other ways to train stealth before but I might borrow those later so I can train better here. If you are actually trying to hide from someone dangerous though..." Severus pointed out, trailing off as Naruto got the picture.

"You're not going to destroy them?" Naruto asked uncertainly.

"Nope, but I bet if we make them into other things you can always carry a piece around with you and take it out to look at whenever you want," Harry offered. "Wearing orange all the time might even get you blamed for stuff that isn't your fault since people will see you first when something goes wrong and not bother to look for who actually did it."

The look of comprehension and the slight scowl told them that their campaign to get him into
something less eye searing had probably succeeded.

"Are your other guards going to help?" Tom asked curiously. "The Hokage told us about them but not why you have them."

"The ANBU that sometimes take care of me? I don't know why either and if they are on duty they have to keep pretending they can't do anything but their job. They are shinobi and need to be ready in case something happens," Naruto explained passionately.

"We get to share our tutor with you and join your class," Harry tossed in with a grin.

"Awesome!" Naruto shouted gleefully, dancing about in excitement.

"We should probably go get clothes and food and stuff," Harry pondered.

"Er, I'm not always welcome at a lot of places so I can show you some of the best places that I learned from listening to people but I might not be able to go in and help you," Naruto admitted sheepishly.

"What if we put you in a disguise?" Tom asked softly. His blood was really boiling when it came to Naruto's mistreatment. It seemed that the Hokage's worry was well founded.

"It might work but we may still have to do his shopping for him. Since we all live together now that shouldn't be too much trouble. We can take turns getting the food and things so we have experience. Once we are better at disguises or open our Kekkei Genki we can take him with us so that he learns too," Severus said shrewdly.

"You hate teaching," Harry pointed out, eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"I hate teaching idiots. Naruto can't be an idiot if he is famed for his pranks. Though we may have to do something like rewards and punishment to get his book learning up. I don't know about his fighting ability or if the teachers are messing with him but that can be fixed if we need too. If they are really as bad as Umbridge was to you or similar they will be our main prank targets," Severus said firmly. It was clear he wasn't budging on the matter.

The shopping trip was as horrible as was expected but they got what they needed and managed to get Naruto several different colored clothes. Severus and Tom both purchased things to make repairs with, such as needle and thread, while Harry took charge of the food and cooking utensils. No one commented on the expert way the items were selected by the three. Several items that could be used for potion making also got added to their shopping trip by an insistent Severus. The onyx-eyed boy really didn't care that at age seven they weren't supposed to know anything about potions or poisons.

"You had better be able to cook," Severus grumbled.

"I've been cooking since I was four," Harry shot back, refusing to look at his companions.

"Western food, not the food they normally make in these lands. We need to learn their type of cooking too," Tom insisted as he picked up a few basic cook books.

"We can't spend too much on books. Food and other important stuff first then books," Harry insisted, recognizing the love of books in both of his fellow wizards from the times when he had seen Hermione dashing for the library.

"And if it will keep us alive longer?" Severus shot back.

They got back to the joint apartment feeling more than a little ragged only to find a man half covered in bandages waiting for them with several ANBU-like shinobi that had completely blank masks aside from the Kanji Ne, meaning ROOT.

"Who the hell are you?!" a very tired Harry demanded irritably.

"Someone hoping to give you a bit of help. My name is Danzo," Danzo said politely. "I realize you are new to the village and was hoping to ask you a few questions, for security reasons of course. Its nothing to worry about, just a few simple questions."

"I want this one!" Death growled in the back of the minds of all four of them. Naruto startled at the voice, triggering a mental summary supplied by Death about who he was and Harry's situation. He also included Naruto's own status, new and old, recognizing that Harry had already claimed this young loud blond. He also told the three wizards what knowledge had been given to Naruto.

"Why? The Hokage made sure we had everything we need," Harry pointed out carefully as he started to casually put everything away.

"Your bloodline can greatly benefit the village and it would be a shame to waste such potential on the normal shinobi forces," Danzo began soothingly.

"Which version of our history did you get?" Severus drawled confidently. "I can tell just by how you are acting that you think you have all the cards and that you believe you know us."

"Sev unless he talked with the Shinigami and the bastard gave him his files on us there is no way he has all of the right information," Harry laughed harshly.

"Severus, Harry, be nice. I'm sorry sir, they like playing pranks at times and we still need to meditate to try and talk to the Shinigami today as part of our clan. We don't need anything right now but thank you for offering," Tom said sincerely. "Would you mind terribly telling us what you know about our bloodline? We don't know much."

"You can have children with anyone, male or female," Danzo smirked.

"Yes, but rape doesn't work. The bloodline kills the baby and sometimes the rapist," Severus was quick to put in. He was lying through his teeth if only because of the spells and potions to increase fertility in a witch or wizard. He also recognized the potential dangers of not nipping this in the bud.

"You are joining the shinobi academy are you not? Shinobi are tools, living weapons. To be truly strong a shinobi must destroy their own emotions," Danzo continued, mentally filing the no rape rule away but not commenting on it.

"That... really doesn't work," Harry said slowly.

"Think about my offer. With my training you can be real shinobi, powerful enough to protect the village," Danzo commented before leaving.

"Viper pit," Tom commented with evident distaste.

Naruto couldn't hold his questions in any longer and he burst forth with a babble of questions for the three. They spent the rest of the night really getting to know each other. Naruto declared that he would go with them when they left if he wasn't Hokage yet.
Dangerous Knowledge

Chapter Notes

This Section is Important!!

Japanese Glossary:
Inu = Dog; Tora = Tiger; Hebi = Snake; Tori = Bird(s); Neko = Cat; Uma = Horse;
Poni = Pony; Saru = Monkey; Buta = Pig; Shika = Deer; Kirin = Giraffe; Yagi = Goat;
Zou = Elephant; Ushi = Cow; Nezumi = Rat/Mouse; Oushi = Ox; Gorira = Gorilla;
Koumori = Bat; Kuma = Bear; Iruka = Dolphin; Ryuu = Dragon; Usagi = Rabbit;
Sasori = Scorpion; Kitsune = Fox; Sai = Rhine; Hotaru = Firefly; Kame = Turtle; Kani = Crab;
Niwa Tori = birdschicken/Chicken; Jaga = Jaguar; Ga = Moth; Roba = Donkey/Mule;
Yaku = Yak; Ookami = Wolf; Raion = Lion; Kaba = Hippo; Ika = Squid;
Koi = fishcarp/Carp; Same = fishshark/Shark; Sakana = Fish; Kin Gyo = fishgoldfish/Goldfish;
Kujira = fishwhale/Whale; Kaeru = Frog; Mushi = Insects;
Kawauso = Otter; Dachou = Ostrich; Haku Chou = birdswan/Swan; Taka = birdhawk/Hawk;
Washi = birdeagle/Eagle; Fukurou = birdowl/Owl; Uzura = Quail;
Kyou Ryuu = Dinosaurs; Karasu = Crow; Shiro Kuma = Polar (white) Bear;

Other:
Naruto = Fishcake/Maelstrom (depends on Kanji/spelling used); Sakura = Cherry Blossom (tree);
Akatsuki = Dawn/Daybreak; Tama = Jewel; Shiro = White/Castle; Kuro = Black; Midori = Green;
Yokai = demon/demon energy; Hanyou = half demon; Kage = Shadow;

Social:
Shinobi = Ninja/Male Ninja; Kunoichi = Female Ninja; Sensei/Name-sensei = Teacher;
Teme/Name-teme = Bastard; Hime/Name-hime = Princess; Sama/Name-sama = Lord;
Name-san = Mr/Mrs/Miss Name; Name-kun = familiar but not supper close male friend;
Name-chan = familiar but not super close female friend; Name only = very close family level familiar or better, otherwise extremely rude and insulting;

General Shinobi Ranks: Civilian, Academy Student, Genin, Chunin, Tokubestu (special) Jonin, Jonin, Kage
- ANBU can be Chunin on up


These definitions may or may not be used (consistently or at all) because while I like using the bits and pieces of the culture to make it more real I also recognize that not everyone will care and that I won't always remember to use them since they are from a different culture than my native one. This is mostly for people who aren't already familiar with Naruto or those not deep enough in reading manga/watching anime to have picked up the bits and pieces of Japanese that will be scattered through the Naruto chapters. Some are included only because of the name meanings and potential inside jokes. If the Jutsu (technique) is not already in english I am not going to bother translating it for you.

For more animal names (aka my animal source) go here:
http://www.thejapanesepage.com/vocabulary/animals/
Other sources were Google translate, Naruto wiki, InuYasha wiki, and other Japanese
"~Human Sacrifice!~" Harry spat in parseltongue practically the moment they were alone with Naruto finally asleep in bed. He was fairly confident no one but an actual snake would be able to understand them and they had to discuss this. It couldn't wait.

"~The Hokage may care about our blond menace but his so called condition is an affront!~" Severus growled angrily. "~To do that to a child of all things!~"

"~He is like Harry was, like us. He's being kept as a weapon but receiving no training or knowledge, completely dependent on his caretakers, abused for his very existence no matter how beneficial,~" Tom snarled, angrily pacing around the small living room in the four bedroom apartment.

"~This is like all three of us. You heard what they were calling him, saw what they did,~" Severus put in furiously.

"~Death acknowledged our claim. Naruto is ours,~" Harry growled out.

"~Then we defend our hyperactive brat,~" Severus smirked evilly, seeing exactly where Harry was going with his thoughts.

"~We need something else to call him. You call me brat too much, he'll get confused,~" Harry smirked right back.

"~Danzo may be a problem,~" Severus mused. Harry nodded his agreement.

"~We will see about the name. Danzo is obviously one of our targets but timing and skill is going to be important,~" Tom temporized before forcing them all to turn in for the night.

Out of habit, now that he was once more near a familiar looking kitchen, Harry was up before everyone else and making breakfast. The smells drawing the other three from their beds to collapse at the table.

When Naruto finally staggered into the kitchen and joined the two grumpy wizards sipping coffee or tea at the table, waiting for their food, he was wearing his current night clothes. His new night shirt was white with an animated flame cheerfully burning on his chest. His new pants were orange tiger stripes, a concession they had made for his love of the color, while his shirt sported a dancing frog. The orange jumpsuits were waiting to be dyed a new color after use as a stealth training tool. All four of them had found replacing such durable clothing to be a waste of fabric with a good chance at being unable to find something anywhere near as good. Thus the clothing was saved with the proviso that it would be dyed a different, less eye searing, color after all of them were at a good stealth level.

Yesterday they had taken one look at what the shop person was trying to charge Naruto for basically spoiled food and made him hand over his money so they could do the shopping. The only time they forced the issue of the blond staying with them to actually shop was when they were getting him new clothes. Thankfully, Naruto was happy to play along, treating the entire thing as a prank on the overly mean villagers. During the clothing selection they had taken him into a shinobi store that liked him. They had also made everyone think they were torturing him via shopping as their pack mule.
with him protesting loudly. In point of fact they were teaching him how to shop properly and treating it as a prank to keep him interested. Anyone with basic observational skills not blinded by irrational hatred understood what was being done and were subtly included in the joke, sometimes joining in by adding things to their purchases.

Naruto's other new clothes were a mix of blues, blacks, greens, and mid to dark browns. Severus had stuck with mostly blacks and greys aside from the occasional bit of blue for his new clothing. While Tom had gone with a black, grey, and green theme. Harry had gone with greens, blues, and blacks. Severus had insisted on all clothing being labeled with something resembling a name or identifier to avoid later problems. Actual names were ruled out by him as part of their early espionage training and establishing good habits. As they were still technically seven silliness in regards to naming was allowed on the grounds that new "code names" would be picked with the next batch of new clothing.

"No school today," Naruto yawned, sleepily accepting a glass of fresh juice and one of milk. Both Tom and Severus grunted in acknowledgement, not bothering to look up from their hot drinks.

"You kids need to work on your situational awareness," Cat muttered as she joined them at the table with tiger and Inu for breakfast.

"Hang on, I need to toss more food on if you guys are joining us," Harry said softly as he served the first portion of food. Severus woke up just enough to notice how much had been put on the table and frowned.

"Why? There is enough for all of us," Inu asked bluntly.

"This isn't enough to feed three much less seven," Harry retorted, attempting to turn back and make more food only to stall at Tom's words.

"How much do you think a person eats?!" Tom demanded, finally taking note of what was on the table.

"This would barely be enough to feed my... Vernon Dursely," Harry shot back tensely. He was facing away from them half ready to bolt and half ready to make yet more food as he kept an unconscious eye on what was still cooking.

"Mah, mah, calm down. Hari-san finish what you are making but don't make more. If we eat with you too often we will help pay for food and things," Inu promised lazily.

"No raman?" Naruto whined plaintively.

"No, until we've worked out healthy meals and how much we will be burning off with training or other things we need to keep things simple. You've obviously been eating too much of raman," Severus said sternly.

"But Raman is the food of the gods!" Naruto protested loudly.

"We all eat the same thing unless something medical comes up. If the ANBU want to eat it then why can't you? They already know how to keep their bodies working so that they can do missions," Tom pointed out. "Raman is not for every day eating. We aren't saying never again just not every meal or even most meals."

"Most of the problem is the shop keeper you met yesterday and the fact that he often goes to this fantastic raman stand as one of his only stable food sources," Cat admitted sheepishly. "We can only get away with joining you for breakfast because its early in our shift and we are supposed to
introduce ourselves today. We will switch off tutoring you with Kuma and Kame. There aren't that many ANBU that are trusted with protecting Naruto and we all have other duties. He's also really good at escaping us."

"Which is why you put him in orange," Severus concluded.

"He needed the clothes and if we can keep track of him at all times we can do our jobs and kill the assassins better until he can protect himself," Tiger said unapologetically.

Harry brought over the last of the food and everyone noticed him making sure they had enough before he even put a single thing on his own plate. As they started to eat all three wizards were silently grateful for not needing to learn how to read or use chopsticks on their own. They did notice that they couldn't write yet but decided it was possibly a good thing if only because Naruto probably needed writing practice too.

"You're my friends right?" Naruto asked, suddenly serious.

"Of course we are. You know about us, both this life and the other lives," Harry pointed out honestly.

"Yeah, the Shinigami guy promised he told you that he told me your secrets. He also said that you would help me with foxy. I think its sad they don't get to play outside or do their jobs 'cuz some teme messed with them. I'm glad you get to help all of them," Naruto said happily.

"Remember we're still learning and our bodies are the same age as yours so it will take years to do anything about it except help you stay you," Severus warned.

"We still get to kill the teme that hurt everyone, even the Bijuu right?" Naruto asked with concern.

"That's the plan but we might not be able to do anything until we're all old men like your Jiji or even older. We have to learn the right things or it won't help anyone," Tom warned.

"Right!" Naruto nodded with firm agreement. "It won't work if the Bijuu are still crazy when you fix the other stuff. They have to stop being crazy first or they will just have to go back inside another baby."

"Exactly. Right now they are mostly safe where they are and they have protection from being stolen or forced to hurt random people or themselves because their humans keep them trapped inside. We still have to figure out who managed to make them even a little crazy and all of that will take time. Even if we had a way to let them out safely now we wouldn't," Severus agreed.

"Because they are still crazy. Until we know how to make them not crazy everyone is safer when they are stuck inside their human," Naruto declared, nodding in satisfaction. Then he dropped another bombshell on the by now dazed and alarmed ANBU. "What did the Shinigami mean by the Fourth living in his gut with half the fox?"

"I... don't know. Death?" Harry asked thin air.

"One moment. The Shinigami personality is slightly separate as an aspect of hell in some ways.... Ah, only an Uzumaki can hold the Kitsune Lord due to their special clan chakra. If Naruto doesn't have children no one will be able to hold the Kyuubi beyond a few minutes. Naruto's father had to choose between the village and the potential hatred his son would have to live through while acting as a living cage for the fox. Too many idiot people think that the cage is the prisoner rather than the cage. Because of time constraints, the man's honor, the average family relation aspect of choosing a human cage, and the Jutsu he was forced to use I claimed both his soul and the Yin half of the fox."
Only the Yang half of the kitsune is inside the seal on Naruto's belly," Death answered all of them out loud, shocking the ANBU.

"My father was the Fourth and my mother was from the Uzumaki clan?" Naruto asked dazed.

"I bet the reason he wasn't told was because of his parents enemies," Tom said judiciously, watching the blond.

"Naruto, your parents are a secret just as big as the fox and our lives," Harry said sternly. "The less people that know means the less people that can be mean and hurt anyone with that knowledge. No one can know."

"I understand!" Naruto agreed stubbornly, shaking off his happy daze of discovery.

"The list for you to kill is getting longer," Death growled in their heads. "Orochimaru, Danzo, most of Danzo's Root operatives, the stupid so called Jashinist - Hidan... I'm starting to wonder if God decided you could start some of your more dangerous duties while also getting more training. I just thought this would be a good training world. I didn't realize there were so many uncollected immortals here. A pity you won't be skilled enough to start collecting for a good three to five years if not quite a bit longer."

"What did the temes do to get Shinigami-sama angry with them?" Naruto frowned.

"Probably either got too close to immortality the wrong way or broke something really important," Harry sighed.

"We need to check you on basics before anything else," Inu finally said, shaking off his daze of information shock.

"Once we've figured out where you are each at we can start. There will be physical conditioning and pranks as practice for your stealth, awareness, and as trap making practice. We've been informed that you will all eventually be Shinobi no matter what idiots or politics might try to keep you from the ranks. This means we can skip parts that are in the academy as tests to separate the hopeless from those who might actually work as shinobi. You can get the secondary training from that stuff when you re-join Naruto's class. Mostly its paying necessary attention during boring briefings, memory tricks, memorization of large amounts of data, and a very basic but adaptable Taijutsu style. We will be covering Taijutsu, shuriken, kunai, and senbon throwing along with basic survival, field medicine, and traps. When we assign you to prank someone who is Chunin or higher it will also count as escape and evasion practice. If you are caught then you practice not telling them anything. Some of what we will cover may also be taught by whoever gets you as a Jonin-sensei," Cat instructed them

"I advise hiding how much you actually know from other teachers until you are officially confirmed as Genin. Once you are Genin they have to treat you as actual Shinobi instead of little kids. That doesn't mean don't learn or ask questions but maybe not admitting that you already know what they are teaching. Besides, they might tell you something new with the old stuff and how they say it can be just as important as what they say," Tiger said firmly.

"Before we start you should know that while our ability to read and do maths was kept intact when we learned this language our ability to write in your language is currently non-existent," Severus put in quickly. If they were going to be tested on paper they would fail everything, orally was a different matter.

"Writing and Reading for Naruto is the first thing we'll work on then," Inu sighed. They immediately got to work using first the books that were bought the other day while Cat fetched writing supplies
and practice books.

They spent the next six weeks catching up to their nominal peers.
They waited a week with ongoing tutoring from Inu, Cat, Tiger, Kame, and Kuma before losing their tempers with how the official teachers treated them, especially Naruto. Iruka was exempted by his actions being not only justified but fair, besides he wasn't technically on staff yet only preparing to be one of the teachers in the future. Rumor had it that he would be taking one of the higher level classes once he finished his teaching certificate. Everyone else on the Academy Staff had signed their own prank warrant, sometimes literally!

Naruto dragged his three friends up to see the Hokage, barging past the nasty receptionist and barreling into the man's office yelling a happy greeting. The three brunettes caught a glimpse of a suspicious book being hastily slipped under the desk and into a drawer. Naruto didn't notice but Severus and Tom gave the man an unimpressed look. They knew what the Icha Icha books were about from a five minute look at the book store and the fact that it was in the adult section.

Naruto distracted all of them by taking the pranking authorizations they had tricked almost the entire school staff into signing and excitedly showing his Jiji. Sarutobi very carefully took and examined the prank requisition form that the four had come up with and examined it. Once he understood what he was holding he chuckled and signed the paperwork in the appropriate spot.

"I think I'll add these to the D-ranks list that are open to senior year Academy students with average grades or above and have it double as qualified general training. Normal D-ranks are a minimum of 6,000 ryo but this... well I think I'll include a sliding scale on prank D-ranks that can go as low as 500 ryo. That way students can pay for some on other classmates or on the teachers," the third said smiling.

"I suggest you limit the number allowed to target any single person to keep them from being harassed too much," Severus put in quickly. They hadn't thought the man would make this anything official. The paperwork was more a joke on him and a way to tell him what they were doing and why.

"I do understand your concerns and the more malicious the prank the more it will cost, including potential time limits on filing for further missions or a grade penalty. Teachers will have a different scale and there will be a limit to who can place a prank request on students," the Hokage agreed. "The requester will also be watched and investigated if any harm results from the prank."

Severus nodded satisfied. He knew from experience that the really determined idiots would still manage something but the terms that the Hokage had just laid out would keep it in the safer area of pranking.

"Let's see as this will be the trial run and owing that most of your targets are going to be Chunin... Uzumaki Naruto are you choosing to accept these D-ranks with your team?" the Hokage asked formally, gesturing at the four wizards as the blond's teammates.

Naruto straightened up immediately and gave the man a salute with a foxy grin before barking out, "Yes, Hokage-sama!"

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to prank the entire Academy staff except Umino Iruka. No students are to be caught in the crossfire. Completion of this mission will be paid after the end of one week. Non-targets being hit during this mission week will result in penalties as the
reputation of Konoha may be at stake. Should you discover treason or other illegal activities during this mission you are to immediately abort and report in, using the maximum escape and evasion skills the four of you happen to possess. If possible you will report to me directly, if that is not possible locate an appropriate substitute as highly ranked and as nearly placed as possible,” the third Hokage instructed seriously. "As this is a combined mission, multiple missions issued as one, you will not be penalized in any way for only partial completion."

D-ranks were usually a mission that varied from glorified chores to necessary non-combat duties and were primarily for new Genin. C-ranks, meant for senior Genin and Chunin, often had the chance of combat from bandits through missing nin with everything that implied. No Genin could take a mission ranked higher than C under normal circumstances. That said a person's official rank did not always match their actual skill level. Which was part of the reason why missing nin had a separate skill/power rank listed with their shinobi rank and bounty in the bingo book.

"You can count on us!" Naruto exclaimed in excitement, practically bouncing where he stood.

"Can we recruit our classmates?" Harry asked with a smirk.

"What are you thinking?" Severus asked suspiciously.

"I'm thinking of my defense club from fifth year and how working against the staff was really good for our teamwork and skills. We can use it to see if anyone else is getting sabotaged and nip problems like fangirlism in the bud," Harry smirked at the memory.

"You just want to avoid getting stalked by people you have to see everyday anyway," Tom scoffed.

"Can you blame me? Fan girls are..." Harry shuddered, not bothering to finish his sentence. The Hokage suppressed his own smirk as he nodded sympathetically.

"You may recruit helpers and agents as with any real mission. D-ranks generally don't require it and are more focused on a mix of training, teamwork, and getting used to being Genin," Sarutobi agreed easily.

"This is going to be fun!" Harry said evilly, barely holding back an evil cackle.

"Can I at least set Sasuke-teme's fans on him?" Naruto asked them all plaintively. "The emo needs to stop being such a teme."

"Actually, I think he needs to see a mind healer more," Harry grimaced. "He's well on his way to feeling only hatred."

They had been told about the massacre as part of their recent political history lesson. The entire situation seemed weird to all three of them. While Naruto was sympathetic he still adamantly insisted that his classmate was being a bastard instead of making friends and trying to improve the right way. Training and bonds of friendship to keep the pain and depression at bay while gaining a reason to fight that wouldn't destroy him.

With the friendship of the three de-aged wizards Naruto had calmed down a bit. His never ending energy was noticed and promptly investigated before being concluded to be partly from his age but mostly from his large chakra reserves. His attention span had grown with the careful attention of his roommates while they worked on fixing his schooling, something the ANBU tutoring them were grateful for. They had no clue how to help the blond focus properly even with bribes. As a result Severus' years of teaching experience combined with the natural affinity for teaching from Harry and Tom worked wonders on Naruto. They carefully translated the lessons for the blond and taught
teaching techniques to their tutors to make learning easier on all of them.

"My reports don't mention anything overly wrong considering his history," Sarutobi frowned.

"That boy is a borderline psychopath and wants nothing to do with anything other than killing his brother and anyone who gets in his way," Severus scoffed darkly. "If I could enter his mind and examine the memories something might be done to repair the damage but at this point it might be irreversible simply because it has festered so long in his young mind, becoming a part of it."

"I'll see if Inoichi will take a look at him," the third Hokage sighed in defeat.

"You might need to do a check for infiltrators if you didn't know about his... unstable tendencies," Tom suggested delicately. "As the last loyal Uchiha and holder of a powerful Kekkei Genki he will be sought after for both internal and cross village power plays. If he isn't stable..."

"Noted. You have your current D-rank mission. I will see you four in a week. Dismissed," the third sent them happily on their way, already plotting the pranks they would be pulling.

The first thing they did was scout the school. While Naruto was very familiar with the building he had noticed his friends hadn't yet learned its layout for obvious reasons. Since school was out for the day it was the perfect time to show them all of his little hideouts inside the building and explain the various pranks he had already pulled at one point or another. Recruiting would come tomorrow.

Ever since starting to tutor the four Naruto's ANBU squad had felt less need to stay constantly hidden from them when working even if they still did it fairly often. As such they had no problem asking questions about the pranks, nooks and crannies. Naruto's ANBU slowly came to realize that the current crop of Academy teachers were idiots and that their charge was a genius at trap making for his age. Not only that but he had always gone out of his way to make the traps and pranks safe for the target or anyone who accidentally triggered it, even when they were done for revenge. Many of his pranks could have, had he not taken various precautions, caused real damage to whoever set them off.

"Definitely being sabotaged," Cat muttered to Inu who hummed in agreement.

The ANBU on Naruto's detail had access to their charge's performance reports largely because he kept escaping school or being told something that sent him off into the village while everyone else was in class learning. His poor reading and writing abilities hadn't helped much but that was something they had fixed along with his basic taijutsu stances and katas. Once they saw how he moved with the correct Academy taijutsu compared to what they first had him demonstrate they immediately wanted to kill whoever had taught him the screwed up version. All of them counted the time tutoring well spent and most of them were considering asking for re-assignment when the time came so that they could be the Jonin-sensei for these four. There was a bet going, and an agreement to share them as students when the time came. Heaven help anyone else who claimed them as a Genin team or students because this ANBU team was more likely to torture the blind fool.

"If we swap salt for the sugar in the break room could be a good start. Maybe a gift of still sealed drinks for Iruka to keep him from getting caught in the prank?" Severus hummed thoughtfully.

"Was there any restriction on just telling Iruka what we are doing? Recruit him as help?" Harry asked curiously.

Tom checked the official mission scroll the old man had put together for them only to give an evil smirk as his answer.
"We can't help," Tiger warned. "We are on duty."

"But we can get some of the other shinobi to help," Harry smirked evilly, eyes narrowed in thought.

"Can we prank our teacher first?" Naruto asked with mischief dancing in his eyes.

"What do you have in mind?" Severus asked with interest.

"A classic! Glue in his chair and maybe his desk," Naruto explained enthusiastically.

"Not his desk. The work that has to be fixed when anyone's homework or paperwork is screwed up that badly or destroyed must be reserved only for the most villainous of targets," Severus said sternly. His tone brooked no argument even as he withstood the dangerous pouty puppy dog eyes aimed at him by the blond.

"We want pranks not sabotage," Harry counceled. He had needed to deal with that from the Dursleys and knew that Severus had suffered from it both during school and as a teacher.

"If we can get the desk and chair on the ceiling we could glue it up there. Maybe half way up the wall would work better?" Tom suggested thoughtfully.

"We can do both," Naruto decided. They were letting him act as leader as practice and as the resident prankster. "We'll swap the sugar and salt before adding the glue inside the chair in a baggy to explode when he sits on it with another next to it that has sparkles. Since its made of wood we will need to swap out the seat or take the chair and make a thin spot to tape the bags too with a board under it so he doesn't fall through. If we knew henge it wouldn't be so difficult and we could just put the bags on the seat with a henge hiding it for him to sit on. We can use the wall furniture trick another time. If we wait until after school we can catch some of the others and show them the mission scroll. We just have to catch Iruka today or before school."

"Wide spread pranks need to wait for when we don't care who we hit or have a large target," Severus agreed. "Why don't we just glue the chair and the desk to the floor away from each other? That way we don't have to fight with carving the chair. We can practice that one for another time at home. It might be useful."

"Okay! Sugar becomes salt, glue the chair and desk to the floor, and warn Iruka. Then we get to see if Kiba, Shikamaru, Shino, Ino, and Choji want to help us with the other pranks!" Naruto said happily. They immediately got to work.

By the next morning Iruka watched in amusement as the four of them took down their teacher for attacking them over the prank. Naruto was the bait as the obvious person to blame and the three wizards kept "accidentally" getting in the way until the man gave up.

Chapter End Notes

Further prank suggestions accepted. Remember this is a NINJA school. *smirk*
"Naruto you baka! Why would anyone want to piss off our sensei?! Mom is right, you are a demon!" Sakura screeched before trying to hit the cringing blond. Severus intercepted the strike with a snarl.

"There is a point, Little Girl, when a person can no longer stand being abused! This sort of thing keeps him from doing real harm by letting him get revenge safely. Even experienced shinobi do this or something similar so that they can keep control of their feelings during missions and not die," Severus growled with a sneer marring his features. He tossed the captured arm back into her chest, shoving the pinkette back a step.

"You obviously don't want to help," Tom said darkly. "I suggest you go play with your dolls and make up. It might be useful for a low level infiltration mission... or catch you the Uchiha as a trophy. I don't see you putting in the effort to become a proper Kunoichi. That might change, if you want it badly enough. In the mean time our prank team is going to keep practicing the things that will keep us alive in enemy territory."

"He is a demon... of pranks and I'm proud to call him my friend," Harry smirked, transforming the insult into something that was closer to the truth and cheering Naruto up a lot.

Insulted and smarting from the scolding she had just received Sakura stalked off. Their other classmates mostly gave the foursome a wide berth after that.

"It was a pretty good prank," Kiba smirked. Class was out for the day and most of the clan heirs were hanging around to see what the four might do or say, after all Tom, Severus, and Harry were still a bit of a mystery. Sakura's attempted yet failed verbal beat down on them had just made it more interesting.

"Want to help us with more?" Harry asked quickly, trying to distract everyone with the idea of playing a prank together.

"Yeah! Hokage-Jiji gave it as a mission and everything!" Naruto exclaimed perking up immediately. His budding crush on the pinkette was quite thoroughly destroyed after that brace of insults.

All four boys were suddenly very thankful that Death had explained the situation to them. They didn't like the inaccurate insult any way, it hit too close to home on all of them and their memories, but at least they knew where the reasoning came from. Sadly that knowledge didn't make it hurt any less for any of them. Naruto also knew that someone was going to have to report Hurano-san to find out if Sakura had only been overheard cursing him out or if she had flatly told his classmate that he
was the Kyuubi. The third's law was still in place and the Kyuubi was still an S-class secret.

"Troublesome, show me the mission scroll," Shikamaru Nara instructed with a sleepy grumble. Naruto cheerfully complied.

"You are doing this as training?" Choji asked with interest as he looked over his friend's shoulder, examining the official scroll complete with the Hokage's seal.

"It helps with trap skills, stealth, escape and evasion, information gathering, speed, and creativity," Harry explained with a grin to match Naruto's blinding one.

"We have to get all of the school adults except for Iruka-san. If we get him or the other kids we get marked down since this is test for new kinds of D-rank missions," Naruto explained happily.

"Target selection and thinking through approaches," Shikamaru nodded. "Infiltration and the importance of good planing, tracking... all of it could be part of this mission. You're in the village so technically safe from enemy shinobi but still using things that would help in any shinobi specialization you choose."

The Nara heir had trained many of those same skills with his clan both with cloud watching and with playing the chess variant called Shogi. The Nara clan was a clan of geniuses after all and part of that was in how they thought while observing the world around them. After all to be a shadow jutsu user you always had to be aware of where every single shadow landed and what the jutsus you knew could or couldn't do. Creativity was often a key to victory or defeat, even for non-Nara.

"Only the adults?" Ino asked suspiciously. She knew that these four didn't get on with her crush Sasuke-kun but she wasn't exactly opposed to pranking the irritating teachers who interrupted her Sasuke watching time.

"We must investigate your claims. Why? Because our parents must know if we are not being properly trained. Bad training kills. It could be a plot from an enemy to weaken our clans or Konoha as a whole," Shino pointed out seriously. The agitated sounds of his colony just emphasized how upset he was over the idea.

"Actually, that's a good point. We know they are purposefully sabotaging Naruto but none of us know enough to guess if everyone is getting sabotaged, just not as bad," Harry conceded.

Tom, Severus, and Harry exchanged worried looks. Six weeks under the intensive tutoring of a few ANBU had them caught up to their classmates but they were far from experts. As Shino pointed out improper training could get them all killed even if it wasn't on the battlefield.

"We need to get Jiji to make prank missions permanent and then use them to check the teachers for stuff they aren't supposed to be doing. Doing it now would be too suspicious. If we find something before checking on them then we have to tell Jiji. Maybe later in the week when they are really blaming me for all the pranks but not right now," Naruto said firmly, showing a hint of the Hokage he could become.

"We can use stuff like the jutsu they are supposed to teach us," Kiba suggested, smirking with his puppy Akamaru barking agreement.

"Troublesome but being taught wrong is even more troublesome. I will join you to discover the truth," Shikamaru agreed. There was a general murmur of agreement from the clan heirs deciding the
"Great!" Naruto exclaimed loudly.

"We haven't managed to teach him quietness yet," Harry said apologetically. "He's still working on the idea of an inside voice unless he's trying to escape after a prank."

"Some people never learn that skill," Severus agreed with a wince.

"At least we got him out of the kill me orange. I understand why those ANBU gave him the suit, I really do, but he isn't always going to be in an area safe to be found in. He needs to know what colors simply won't work with stealth. Grated its a wonderful color for developing stealth in a safe environment but when actually needing to hide? Orange, bright colors, and neon colors are a death trap waiting to happen," Tom lamented. He mentally smirked at the immediate respect they got from their classmates for getting Naruto into more normal dark colors over the hideous track suit which had been Naruto's favorite. The blond's new favorite were his night clothes, which were still mostly orange but it was progress.

"Sh... shouldn't we all wear something bright? ...to practice?" Hinata stuttered and mumbled, blushing at every sneaking glance sent Naruto's way.

"Girl, you are eight," Severus said disapprovingly. He could tell that her reactions were mostly being shy but the strength of the quickly building crush made him wary of the pale girl's regard for his blond roommate.

"I don't know what you mean. He inspires me..." Hinata mumbled. She really didn't know about the crush that Severus could see building inside her. She only knew that Naruto = good and kind, something to be protected and cherished.

"We've only been in class with you for a week and we noticed you stalking him. Either stop or get up the courage to actually join us," Tom clarified. "Stalking an ally is not a good thing without a very good reason and even then you should consider other ways to find out what you need to know."

"What are you guys talking about?" Naruto asked cluelessly.

"Never mind," Harry told his friend, rubbing at his own face in a mix of exasperated embarrassment. How the blond knew when he was being stalked by a murderous Chunin but not a little girl was a mystery to all three of them.

"And what are you kids plotting?" Iruka asked in amusement, coming up behind the group and startling them.

"Would you help us get the senseis to show us escape and evasion?" Harry asked evilly.

"What do you have in mind?" Iruka asked warily.

"The student body using them as target practice while throwing anything we can get our hands on?" Severus muttered scowling as he glared back at the staff that lingered to glare at Naruto hatefully.

"They are Chunin so it shouldn't be too dangerous for them. After all escape and evasion are basic shinobi skills," Tom said thoughtfully, his own eyes narrowed into daggers aimed at the adults that weren't Iruka.

"Alright! We can hit them with sticky stuff and fluffy stuff and feathers!" Naruto cheered.
"Mud balls are safer than desks and chairs," Severus agreed regretfully. Not that he had planned to have more than maybe three pieces of furniture actually used as projectiles but the way the nearby hateful staff paled was very satisfying.

"Paint balls. We can teach them about paint balls and their training uses," Harry smirked.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru sighed.

"It almost sounds like you want us to make our own training time as a group and do it every week or something," Choji observed, opening another bag of chips to eat. His clan's jutsu relied heavily on large calorie reserves, requiring them to eat nearly constantly, but it didn't stop the entire clan's sensitivity to being called fat. The fact of the matter was that many of the Jutsu burned through the stored calories like water released in a flood, they could go from overweight to dangerously skinny in a few hours.

"I actually wasn't thinking of that but it might not be a bad idea. If we run training games using the village as enemy territory and in bright clothes to make us better practice our stealth.... Huh, that's actually what Naruto's been doing for years if you think about it," Harry mused aloud. The three wizards had discussed it a few times with the ANBU after Naruto finally went to bed. They didn't think that anyone who wasn't blind could argue with his basic shinobi skills in those areas as a result.

Watching the light bulb click on in the minds of their classmates was priceless.

"Well if you go through with that you might want to be ready to run after pelting the school staff," Iruka laughed. He had been a prankster as a kid and could see what they were all getting at. Revenge against the teachers and a good way to teach them how to stay alive after graduation all rolled up in a fun game.

"We need time to prepare," Hinata said firmly, being brave in front of Naruto.

"We need to mess with their minds too. I don't think I can make the mind-body switch jutsu of my family work yet and I'd be caught," Ino pouted.

"Messing with their minds is easy," Naruto smirked. "Get them on edge and keep them on edge for awhile. Then even if you do nothing else they still twitch until you do something to them.... or they figure out that nothing will happen. Its fun to watch them twitch."

"Minor pranks to make them twitch and then the sticky target practice," Shino nodded in agreement.

"The last one has to be done at the end of the week. We can only prank them until the end of the mission or until we find proof that they are doing something bad that we have to report to Hokage-Jiji," Naruto warned firmly. "If we find something bad we report it then hide in the nearest clan compound if Jiji doesn't make us go somewhere first. Pranks are fun but important stuff is more important especially if we want to protect our precious people."

"Well said," Shikamaru agreed lazily.

Thus began the torture of the incompetent school staff and the strange semi-regular joint training sessions of most of the clan heirs, Naruto, Tom, Severus, and Harry.

Chapter End Notes
You might get a second chapter in the next twelve hour or so. *evil smirk*
For the next several days the group investigated the entire school staff while pranking them. It became common to find the chalk swapped out for glue+ash "stick", charcoal sticks covered in chalk dust, sticks painted white, a stick with light layer of chalk glued on, and crayons with coating of chalk. The teachers found their drinks and lunches replaced with honey, syrup, all flavors of jam, sake, cigarette ash, dirt, mud, raw egg, peanut butter, lemon juice, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, hot sauce, chocolate sauce, and vinegar. Their paperwork, homework, and tests were also often replaced with coloring sheets and common puzzles or paper games such as tic tac toe, connect the dots, and simple crosswords or word searches.

Naruto's continual taking of the blame even when they left blatant evidence that it was someone else upset the rest of the group. They used their anger, turning it into resolve, to finish their prank mission and prove these teachers were sabotaging more than just Naruto. Mizuki-sensei though was one of the teacher's desks raided at one point and one of the scrolls they had stolen, which they swapped for a soggy sandwich, looked strange.

"Don't open it," Severus warned immediately. His well developed danger sense told him that if this wasn't a cursed object that it was probably trapped in some way.

"I think... we need to take this to Hokage-Jiji." Naruto said slowly, eyeing his friend sideways in worry. He didn't like Severus-kun's serious reaction to it especially with his spy experience.

"If we had wands and access to our bloodlines we could check it," Harry muttered, glaring at the suddenly suspicious scroll.

"Troublesome, we must hurry before he discovers it missing," the Nara warned.

They all agreed and hurriedly made their way toward the Hokage tower, making it look like they were playing a game of ninja tag as they ran.

Naruto raced ahead as they entered the tower with his friends and accomplices close on his heels. It was Naruto's special access that got them in immediately, interrupting a concerned conversation over Sasuke with Shikaku, Shikamaru's father, and Inoichi.

"Jiji! You gotta see this!" Naruto cried loudly.

Shino and Shikamaru made sure the door closed behind the hoard of seven and eight year olds. Shikamaru used his natural genius to activate the privacy seal on the room. His father gave him a sharp look but the steady gaze he got in response had him holding his peace.

"What is it Naruto?" Sarutobi asked kindly, his sharp eyes noting the way everyone was following his favorite blond and the activation of the privacy seal.
"We've been pranking the senseis good like you said and we found this in Mizuki-sensei's desk. Severus-kun stopped us from opening it so we brought it too you," Naruto reported before handing over the scroll.

It took barely a glance for the three men to realize that the Chunin teacher should not have a scroll like this. The official seal on it declared it to be one containing medical information that was marked secret.

"All of you need to stay here while we talk with Mizuki-san," the Hokage's tone brooked no argument as he and the two Jonin stepped out of the room, sealing the children in behind them.

"I wasn't expecting to be trapped," Harry commented thoughtfully.

"Your experiences have given you a skewed idea of how children are protected," Severus pointed out regretfully.

"Naruto, what are you doing?" Tom asked, drawing everyone's attention to the giant scroll the blond was now fighting with.

"Jiji always has this in here and I want to see what's in it," Naruto explained with a wheeze after he fell with a thump of the oversized scroll landing on his belly, briefly driving the air from his lungs.

A cut had opened on the metal brace that normally held the scroll during his tussle to get it free, dripping a bit of blood on the scroll. The scroll glowed briefly before the edge let go of where it had been stuck, allowing it to be opened.

"A blood lock of some kind?" Severus asked, intrigued.

"A blood seal," Shikamaru corrected. "This scroll belonged to Naruto's family. It is rightfully his."

Naruto grinned brightly and promptly opened it to see what was inside. Everyone gathered around to take a look.

"Kage Bushin," Naruto read the first technique carefully. He still had trouble reading at times.

"This is Kinjutsu. Kinjutsu can be really dangerous," Ino warned, reading the sections that Naruto had skipped.

"You can learn it but you can't use it until we're sure it wont hurt you," Harry told the blond, putting his foot down.

Tom hummed as he read over the technique with all of the warnings.

"Actually, this might be safe for him to use if he's careful. The two main danger points are the high chakra cost and the risk of information overload when too many are destroyed at once. He's got more chakra than some Jonin and as long as we make him only pop a few at a time when he uses it he wont get a crippling headache from all the new memories. See, there is even a note here about it being good for learning things that don't affect the body since the memories transfer. Good for book learning, intelligence gathering, and chakra control but not for body conditioning, exercise, or reflexes. Just using so much chakra at once can help make the chakra pools larger," Tom explained.

"There is even a special note about who can learn it and use it. *Those of the Uzumaki clan or Uzumaki blood must learn this or another advanced Bushin in place of the normal Bushin because of the natural size of their chakra pools. It is recommended that the Uzumaki be at least 10 before making the attempt for natural chakra pool size to be safe. Any non-Uzumaki wishing to learn this must be Jonin or higher to have the correct sized chakra pool and avoid death from lack of chakra*
"The Uzumaki must have been my mother's clan," Naruto concluded in awe.

"You know who your father is," Shikamaru concluded softly.

"Yeah but he has lots of enemies so I'm not supposed to know until I can protect myself," Naruto admitted, making a face of annoyance without giving anything away.

Severus had snatched some blank paper and an ink brush with ink while they were distracted, trying to copy as many things as they could to take home and look over properly later. His teacher sense told him that the scroll would be taken away when the adults got back but his experience as a spy told him this was important and they needed a copy.

"Help me copy this," Severus ordered. "We need more time to look at it then we are going to get."

Everyone shrugged and helped make a bunch of section copies of the big scroll to look at later. Harry and Tom, realizing the possible importance, used a mix of English and Parseltongue as the faster languages to write than the Kanji of Japanese. As a result the giant scroll was back in its place as if undisturbed and the copied sections were spread out among the students by the time the grown ups let them out of the Hokage's office.

"Thank you Naruto. Mizuki-san wasn't supposed to have that and now he is explaining why he did have it to a friend named Ibiki-san and his assistant Anko-san. Why don't we take you all out to supper as a reward for a job well done?" the Hokage suggested.

"Should we give you the other weird scrolls now?" Naruto asked innocently.

"Yes, Naruto and I apologize for rushing off before hearing about the other scroll," the third said sincerely with a swallow of dread.

"Here you go," Naruto said cheerfully as several scrolls they had snagged from various teachers were handed over by the group. "Severus-kun didn't say they looked dangerous so we told you about the dangerous one first."

"That was very wise of you," Shikaku said solemnly as the three men went over the scrolls in front of the children.

"Well this explains why I had so much trouble checking the Uchiha and why he wasn't found out sooner," Inoichi grimaced. "Stupid civilians. Though Danzo is a surprise."

"They were spying on Sasuke-kun?!" Ino demanded worriedly.

"I don't care how bothersome its going to be. We are fixing her fangirlism. Hopefully we caught it early enough to squash without too much trouble," Harry muttered to his fellows. Tom and Severus murmured fervent agreement even as the other boys quietly thanked them, offering to help if needed.

"Several of them," Inoichi said flatly. "They were also plotting against all of you as clan heirs. By now each of you, baring Naruto and his three friends, should have been warned about such power plays by your parents and the dangers involved. The Uchiha is going to need watching and has been removed from the Academy for the next week for everyone's safety for other reasons on top of this."

"Troublesome. Why don't they stay in the Nara compound until this is sorted out?" Shikaku offered.

"It would look less suspicious if they had an impromptu sleep over at our compound with the already
close ties between the InoShikaCho team and associated families. The Nara are considered lazy geniuses and your son hasn’t shown as much initiative in forming additional bonds where as my daughter is becoming quite the gossip. We might be able to pass it off as her insisting on a party or something,” Inoichi said shaking his head with a grimace.

"If you need an excuse... we got Naruto to be sort of quiet, out of the orange kill me suit and he's learning how to cook? I already know how but my cooking is for dishes not from here so I'm helping him learn but also learning too," Harry offered shyly.

"You just don't want to admit that your birthday is tomorrow," Severus accused smugly. They had quietly discovered that Tom and Severus were actually eight when they arrived and that all three of them had kept their original birthdays.

"Why would they want to know that? Its not like they would care," Harry asked, openly confused.

"Wouldn't..." Severus spluttered. Even he knew that most people who were supposed to be friends cared about the other person's birthday. He had needed to suffer through the staff's attempts at giving him gifts and a staff only party every year at Hogwarts.

"Even I know that birthdays are important. How do you not know?" Tom demanded, eyes narrow in suspicion.

"His previous care takers," Inoichi answered for him, having seen the memories. "His first winter festival at Hogwarts was the first time had ever been given a proper gift that wasn't immediately destroyed in front of him afterwards. He hasn't yet learned that celebrations are supposed to be shared. New Years is usually the day all birthdays are celebrated but we could call it a clan tradition from your clan to also have a small gathering on the actual day of your birth."

"What?!” Tom and Severus demanded together, outraged on Harry's behalf. Harry just stood their looking down at his feet, trying to hide in plain sight.

"If we ever get back to a version of Arda I want him to live with the Elves, with a preference for the High Elves over the slowly corrupting Woodland Elves, for at least a decade," Tom huffed. Severus nodded his agreement as they ambushed their fellow wizard in a hug. It took Harry nearly twenty minutes to relax into the cuddly embrace.

"Elves?" Naruto asked in childish curiosity.

"We'll tell you later," Severus promised quietly. Naruto nodded his acceptance as those aware of Middle Earth ignored everyone else's confusion, moving the conversation along.

"So, who were they each spying for and will you be letting them near the kids again?” Harry asked with an aura of danger that only those no longer innocent to death could feel chase down their spines. Naruto took on a guarding stance flanking his friend as Tom and Severus either stood directly behind him or to the other side, guarding him further.

The other kids could tell that something was different but not what, only that it was freaking out the grown ups and not aimed at them.

"Orochimaru, my advisor and former teammate Danzo, the Civilian Council, Iwa, Kumo, and
several minor villages we weren't aware of being a problem," the third Hokage answered shakily. "I can remove the spies but I can do little or nothing about their masters."

"Not even Danzo and the Civilian Council?" Harry asked, his voice taking on a whispery tone that seemed to invade their ears and minds.

"The price of keeping them from killing Naruto and turning every new shinobi into either a council puppet or an emotionless husk," Hiruzen breathed out.

As suddenly as it came the atmosphere dissipated back to normal.

"Danzo and Orochimaru are on my personal list any way. Find a way to sort out the civilian idiots or they will be our next prank target and we won't hold back," Harry warned lightly before swapping to cheerful. "The other villages aren't anything for a child to worry over, at least not until we reach Genin."

"Thank you," Sarutobi said with relief.

"And our children?" Shikaku asked, ignoring Inoichi's warning head shake.

"They are my friends. Don't you protect your friends when you can?" Harry asked curiously, fully a young child in that moment. The relaxing muscles in Shikaku's shoulders answered before he spoke a word.

"Yes, yes I do, even when its troublesome.

The unaware clan heirs watched all of this wide eyed as they tried to figure out what had just happened.

"Tch, troublesome. You don't need to protect us from our parents," Shikamaru pointed out, translating the last part for his friends. The clear look of "Oh!" that came across their features settled into a range of respect and "I'm glad you are my friend" as Harry's roommates finally relaxed as well.

"If I think you are going to be hurt I will. I'll always help my friends," Harry assured them cheerfully. Naruto added his own firm nod of agreement.

"Do me a favor and wait until after they've earned our secrets before giving any of them a blood oath?" Tom asked despairingly.

"He won't wait," Severus countered, fully resigned.

"So we make him wait for permission from us first," Naruto shrugged. "Besides we have other people we can make him check with first too."

Harry just smirked at his roommates and didn't say anything one way or the other, making their classmates laugh and breaking the tension.

"I'll take them home with me and join you in dealing with the other spies," Inoichi offered quietly.

"Troublesome," Shikaku agreed. Using ANBU hand signs that mostly hadn't been taught to the foursome living on their own he asked about getting Harry gifts. Inoichi just shrugged indicating that it was up to the clan heads if they wanted to. He knew Harry would just be happy spending time with his friends.

Their quick trip to the Yamanaka compound and introduction to the rest Ino's clan took up the
remainder of the day. Inoichi's quiet word with Ino's mother had the children sorted out and a quick call put in to the rest of the Allied Mothers Force. Choji's mother and Shikamaru's mother came over immediately while Sakura's mother spoke to the other parents. The clans and families quietly went on lock down, hiding the vulnerable children away from the traitorous teachers now being hunted.
"How many do you think we missed? It's obvious they got complacent with the butchering the Civilian Council has done to the curriculum. How many slipped past our cleaning spree or only got caught because the scroll was either hastily stored or the location was at a drop point?" Ibiki asked the Hokage. He had just finished reporting the first few important things they had pulled from the live prisoners.

"The kids didn't exactly tell us where they found most of them. The one from Mizuki-san's desk hadn't been picked up by him yet. Someone was trying to deliver it to him without getting caught but instead they got him caught. Having them show us could put them in danger. They were arrested without a word to tell them how they were caught. Troublesome," Shikaku tossed in.

"This is unacceptable Hokage-sama," Hiashi Hyuuga hissed angrily. He hadn't seen his daughter since she had been whisked away to the Yamanaka compound with the others.

"I agree but we don't have solid proof otherwise those responsible would either be in Ibiki-san's care or waiting to be executed. The Academy has been gutted and we need to retest every single student for proper placement. As it stands Harry's group may be ready for Jonin-sensei after mastering the basic three and at the rate he seems to be encouraging his pranking team I may have to move them to Genin before then. As you know early graduation isn't normally allowed but I may be forced to make an exception," Sarutobi told them pointedly.

Hiashi looked at his superior with barely concealed hope. If his daughter didn't become openly stronger then he would loose her to the being sealed as one of the branch family. Not only that but the elders might marry her off to someone intentionally abusive and cruel as punishment for both himself and his daughter for her supposed weakness. He knew his daughter held only kindness in her heart and took more after her gentle mother than himself. It may hurt to look at either of his daughters as a reminder of his lost wife but he didn't want them broken or destroyed. If anything he wanted the division of the clan to end so that his children didn't have to suffer as he and his twin had.

"They really put the Academy staff in a bind and I hear from Iruka they had more planned when they found the final trapped scroll that prompted them to bring their entire haul to you Hokage-sama," Ibiki snorted in amusement.

"Yes, the rest were mostly in code and didn't have extra security seals in an effort to make them less suspicious. This was largely due to the fact that actual academy teachers wouldn't bother with any kind of security for any paper work they handled beyond putting it away properly. As a result they weren't bothering to do more than swap it for other things with plans to return them at the end of their mission. I'll have to credit all of them with a B-rank as it stands. I dearly hope this will not become a trend with those ten but I fear it might if only with Harry and Naruto," Hiruzen sighed. Ino, Choji, Shikamaru, Kiba, Shino, Hinata, Naruto, Tom, Harry, and Severus. Future amazing shinobi.
"Hokage-sama," Cat greeted, appearing in a kneeling position in front of her direct superior.

"Neko, what do you bring me?" the third asked with interest.

"We, Inu, Kuma, Kame, Tora, and I have been tutoring Uzumaki-san and his roommates, as you know. We had been considering leaving the ANBU so that we could continue training them. If we are assigned them as their Jonin-sensei..." Cat offered hesitantly.

"Nothing is decided yet Neko but I thank you for your offer. For now continue guarding and tutoring them, you may add the clan heirs to your lessons with permission from their parents. We will discuss this further when they have graduated. As it is I am considering graduating them early with a year's restriction to D-ranks inside the village and no attempts at Chunin for a time after that. I realize that Jonin-sensei are given an ongoing B-rank for training the next generation and significantly less missions where their team can not accompany them but they are still young yet. If a better sensei makes themselves known they will be added to the list of consideration for this group. I want at least those four to be immediately taught ANBU hand signs in case of another emergency. Make certain those of the children you train can act in any combination within their group," Hiruzen said, dismissing the ANBU.

"You have my permission," Hiashi told her before she left.

"Troublesome, mine as well," Shikaku told her. She nodded to both of them before returning quickly to her post.

"Are they being paid as sensei?" Ibiki asked in open amusement.

"They were paid for a short term teaching mission in addition to their bodyguard duty but they continued it afterwards on their own. Adding the clan heirs... well those five will be getting a quiet bonus," Hiruzen laughed, shaking his head in amusement.

"If they can make Hinata strong enough that the elders don't demand she be sealed I'll pay them an S-rank each," Hiashi told them seriously, ending the hilarity.

"I am in a similar position in regards to the strangle hold the Civilian Council has. They badly want Naruto dead and the Uchiha in command regardless of common sense or reality. I can only be grateful that the guardian of Harry, Tom, and Severus delivered them to Konoha for shinobi training before his death. Things would be different without those three and our new Genin would have been permanently weakened due to the actions of our enemies, both from within and without. I will have to find a way to thank them for coming," Sarutobi sighed.

"Then our next step is clear. These ten must be kept together as much as possible. This will be difficult with four living on the edge of the red light district and the others in clan compounds. I propose that we either begin a new tradition with a compound four our clan heirs to all live in until reaching Genin. Alternatively, to keep the various elders off our backs, we rotate them through the compounds for the next three months with permanent rooms for each of them that they might see all of our clans as home. They can choose where to stay after the first three months on the grounds that they all attend their clan training on time and stay living together as a group. If nothing else it will foster a deep comradeship between the ten giving them additional ties and protection," Shikaku suggested.

"You have permission to discuss it with the affected clan heads. Each clan will be effectively unofficially adopting the nine which aren't already a part of their clans," Hiruzen warned.

"My elders wont accept this so while I can pass the time away off as Hinata getting stronger and
building clan ties they can't stay. I might manage it eventually or on an irregular basis but as an
unofficial adoption? The elders won't stand for it," Hiashi explained apologetically.

"Perhaps they will simply all use the Nara compound the most. If we move Naruto, Tom, Harry, and
Severus in with us they will at least be closer to their friends and the ANBU can be reassigned or
arrange for their transfer from ANBU for a better chance at becoming their Jonin-sensei?" Shikaku
suggested. "Ino and Choji are often over to work on combination moves in any case or Shikamaru
goes to their family compounds. As a clan of geniuses we would likely be more accepting regardless
of what secrets they hold."

Hiruzen winced. That was an actual concern for the four roommates and from the discussion when
they handed over the pile of secret messages it was likely the other six would be told their secrets at
some point in any case. As the secret holders and origin of the secrets they had the right to tell whom
they pleased but the laws of Konoha still bound any village resident. With Naruto holding a much
hated S-class secret and the dangerous newly classed SS secret the other three had it was a very
important detail.

"They will maintain their ANBU detail until gaining a Jonin-sensei but if you can integrate them into
your clan my friend you have my blessings. Bear in mind that any mind healing sessions they might
need automatically must be tended to by Inoichi," the third Hokage agreed reluctantly. "They have
permission to reveal the secrets they hold but they each hold S-class secrets."

"I understand Hokage-sama," Shikaku said, inclining his head in respect. He knew the warning
about secrets was not to encourage the seeking of them but to warn of the known potential dangers
should they be shared without permission. The Nara clan was, in many way, naturally curious. It was
the extra effort needed to find something that often put his clan members off but when they believed
the effort was potentially worth the reward few secrets or enemies could stand against them.

Three hours later he arrived at the Yamanaka compound just after supper. He had brought with him
each of the adults and clan heads responsible for the ten gifted children and sat down with all of them
to explain his idea to keep them together. Naruto's group of four were stunned at the offer of a
permanent place in the Nara compound. The blond's baby blues and soulful puppy face were
immediately turned on his roommates, the three wizards caved after barely ten minutes of resistance.

"The cute factor!" Harry wailed dramatically as he was consoled by both Tom and Severus.

"His evil puppy face," Severus shuddered in agreement as he clutched the green-eyed imp close to
his chest. Tom whimpered just as dramatically, hiding behind his fellows.

Everyone laughed at their antics but many of the active shinobi noted the devastating weapon the
hyperactive blond held for future reference. Another ten minutes of watching Naruto dance
victoriously had everyone recovered and back in their seats.

"Can we have Sasuke-kun join us?" Ino asked excitedly.

"No!" came from the other kids and half the parents including her own. Ino shrunk into herself and
pouted.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru muttered, slouching down into his seat.

"Until you can bring us a list of his favorite color, his favorite food, his hobbies, and one thing he
hates we will prank you every time you go fan girl over him. You need to get the list by actually
talking to him not spying or from someone else," Severus said sternly. "If you can get all of that from
talking to him then we will consider letting him join us in training and games."
"You're on!" Ino cheered.

"No harassing or stalking him," Inoichi told her sternly. Ino immediately nodded her enthusiastic agreement.

"~Hopefully that will knock some sense into her without too much damage,~" Severus hissed under his breath to his fellow parselmouths. Harry and Tom hummed their agreement but didn't answer otherwise. A sideways knowing look from Shikaku was the only sign that someone noticed the exchange.

"Lets plot our training games next!" Harry suggested cheerfully, hoping to distract everyone.

So the rest of the discussion revolved around training, ranging from the ideas of Harry, Tom, Severus, and Naruto through what the adults were going to be requiring of the clan heirs. Stealth, escape and evasion, as well as trap training would mostly consist of pulling pranks in bright clothes, sometimes on a volunteer victim and sometimes on a random Konoha shinobi. Combat training would vary but include spars between the group from one on one through teams and free for alls which would be over seen by at least three Jonin at all times.

"I wonder how they would do with facing a Boggart?" Harry mused quietly as the meeting began to break up due to most of the kids falling asleep, much against their will.

"If we could even find one it might be a good test once they've gotten older or at least stronger," Tom agreed thoughtfully.

"Do you mind sharing a room?" Shikaku asked them as everyone else left for their own normal beds.

"I don't think so," Harry answered uncertainly. "We had separate rooms at the apartment but all three of us have lived in something like a dorm room with others at one time or another."

Shikaku nodded his understanding and let them choose what to do among themselves with the rooms they were given. After the rooms were settled everyone turned in for the night, wondering what was to come.

Chapter End Notes

This is the last chance to offer ideas on how our four boys meet and mess with Sasuke, Anko, and Kakashi!

Next chapter is going to have at least one of these three! *cackle*
Harry woke thinking it was going to be a normal day. He had never thought that the threat of a birthday party for him the night before would actually be followed through on. Yet he found gifts waiting for him at the Nara family breakfast table along with three smirking former roommates turned housemates.

"What?!" Harry could only splutter in shock for a moment after realizing they had actually gotten him gifts.

"Sit," Severus instructed as he and Tom guided Harry to his seat. Harry dazedly obeyed, staring at the small pile of presents and flashing back to the happy days during Hogwarts when he received presents from his friends.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru smirked. He had already deduced enough about the four to know how important this was for them, especially Harry and Naruto.

"I helped!" Naruto excitedly explained.

"Thanks Naruto... all of you," Harry offered shyly, swallowing a lump in his throat.

"Troublesome, open your presents," Shikaku smirked.

Harry nodded and silently obeyed. New shinobi clothing, new shinobi sandals, a package of ten explosive notes, two sets of kunai and shuriken - blunted for throwing practice, two weapons pouches, a first aid kit with a refill for the shinobi life style. He also received a book on flowers and a cook book that clearly had some of the much coveted Akimichi clan recipes.

"Who..o told them about my cooking attempts?" Harry asked, his voice cracking.

"You did. You offered your attempts to teach Naruto to cook as an excuse," Tom answered softly.

"The first aid kits are from me. If you'll notice they have extra medicinal herbs and things for when you get hurt. I've included a few rough healing potions but I don't know how well they will work on anyone but the three of us. I took the label coloring from that game's color code as partial inspiration. Bright red for health, blue for chakra and eventually magic with a different shade, antidotes are bright pink, and poisons are bright green. I've included several emergency aid notes as well as notes on the plants," Severus explained patiently.

"One of the weapon pouches are from me, the other is from Naruto," Tom pointed out. "I'm pretty sure that the weapons and explosive notes came from adults and I know several of the gifts were family efforts."

"Thank you," Harry said softly. Breakfast was completed with quiet joy radiating from the green-eyed imp.

Three hours later...

Tora ran. She ran and she ran and she ran!
This latest shinobi sent to capture her and deliver her back to the strangling woman was more skilled than usual. Most of the time she was chased down by young groups of three kittens learning to hunt with their teacher. She understood the need to teach kittens how to hunt. It was one of the reasons she escaped from her human when she was exceptionally bored, aside from the occasional need to breathe and escape the too tight caress of her human.

This one though was an experienced hunter. Tora put on another dash of speed using her scant knowledge of chakra. Something which she had gained by watching the kittens hunting her and their teachers along with what was called tree walking and water walking. The spurt of speed got her out of sight and reach long enough to duck away from the hunter and into a tight crevice next to a doorway.

Tora waited only barely long enough to see the hunter gone around the next corner before dashing out, across the alleyway and up the opposite wall. The scant chakra she channeled to her little kitty paws was just enough to act like her claws digging into the building siding to let her dash up on to the roof. She had learned the exact amount to channel during all of her escapes, wasting nothing on that particular use of her chakra.

"Stupid cat!" the words were spat after her as she raced past a different hunter using the rooftops much like Tora was at that moment.

Tora didn't care, she remembered when that one had been a kitten too. The shinobi was also not her hunter to escape that day and thus was to be ignored. It was tiring teaching so many humans proper hunting techniques.

A fire jutsu landing to her left as she leapt safely down from the latest roof startled Tora into bolting right. She dashed along before scrambling up the nearby small human kitten, startling him into falling backwards as she clutched at him. Wait... weren't they taking too long to fall...? Blackness engulfed them both.

Sasuke smirked at the dobe that just been taken out by a cat of all things. He thought that the Chunin's suddenly frantic worry over the pair was stupid and dramatic. His new classmate was obviously incredibly weak and not worth helping. He had no idea that the Shinigami was actively screwing with his classmate or how incredibly terrifying even Jonin tended to find that particular cat. The Uchiha thought it was a waste of resources to instantly rush the pair to the hospital when they would both wake up in the next 20-30 minutes any way. After all how bad can bumping your head on a paved street be? Right?

Death examined the concussion and skull fracture his little master had gained, a frown crossing his boney features. He had watched the scene while waiting for a chance to prank his master without making it obvious it was him. The severe injury was purely chance.

On the plus side he could still snatch both his master and the annoying cat for the prank if he left their bodies behind in an accelerated healing coma for the next six hours or so. It would safely repair the damage, he would get his prank, and the healers would keep everyone away from Harry while he was away during the prank. Something to think about... a short out of body experience for the both of them.

Death hadn't bothered hiding his musing from either of his potential victims. As such they were very aware when a ghostly library formed in place of one of the room's walls as the specter started looking for a suitable location. It was just as the reaper was smugly approaching them with a book box set titled The Enchanted Forest Chronicles by Patricia C. Wrede that they really got worried. The sound of an old fashioned attention bell stopped the being in his tracks. With an impressive scowl for not having any flesh Death stalked over to the message bin on the right which had formed along with the
ghostly library.

"Another massacre by the blasted Jashinist?! Damn it! Now I can't prank my little master," Death pouted. He and the ghostly library instantly disappeared, leaving behind only the headache from a temporarily suped up rapid healing on both skulls and brains of cat and small human alike.

"We are never speaking of this again," Harry told Tora firmly. Tora in turn mewed hearty agreement as they both slipped out of the first floor window in an escape towards freedom.

Chapter End Notes

I may take a few days as a break from posting/writing. I'm feeling a touch burned out so I probably should take a brain break.
The Civilian Council had been arguing for over a week on who would get the suddenly open spots at the Academy. Everyone wanted very specific spots for their chosen puppets and no one wanted to budge on their idea and what they required. Not a single thought was given to the actual skill and ability to teach of the potential sensei. It was on the tenth day when a blank faced Hokage walked into the meeting with his ANBU guards openly at his sides that had the spoilt politicians suddenly wondering what was going on.

"As of today the Academy reverts to Hokage control with the Clan Council in an advisory capacity as written in the charter," the third Hokage told them abruptly. The mix of confusion and protests told the aging man the first level of potential conspirators.

"Hokage-sama, the charter clearly says no such thing," one councilman protested.

"Are you referencing the original Academy charter which was set down by the first two Hokages with the aid of Uchiha Madara? Or the fake public one which is designed to mislead the enemies of Konoha?" Sarutobi asked, hard eyes narrowed in suspicion, his stance firm and strong.

The looks of "Damn, how did he find it? It was destroyed!" and "Uh oh! How can I save my own hide?" gave him the next level of conspirators.

"As many of the actions discovered to have been taken in regards to the Academy are in fact treason the entire Civilian Council is to have a talk with Ibiki and the shinobi of the Yamanaka clan. Those found innocent will be given a summary of events and why those particular actions are forbidden as a B-class secret after all those found guilty are in custody. This is so that you people can understand exactly what you have done. It should also help you be more aware of how close you came to me simply dissolving this council while also ordering your executions as traitors and threats to the leaf," the Hokage informed them sharply. A gesture had them contained and taken away before any of them could break from their stunned shock to try and run.

Danzo cursed quietly as he and his ROOT operatives slipped from the shadows away into the night. The Civilian Council had been vital to many of his ROOT acquisitions, funding, and the occasional emotional breaking of active shinobi so that he could claim them for his ROOT. His ongoing projects to obtain the Uzumaki brat and the three promising newcomers would be further stymied by this setback. His attempts to claim Hatake Kakashi and Mitarashi Anko were also failing for unknown reasons.

Danzo thought he might have to request a further favor from Orochimaru. Perhaps a joint acquisition of this new clan? Sharing the rest of his information on them and the genetic samples in exchange for helping them join ROOT? After all the Snake Sannin had expressed quite the personal interest in the Shinigami sworn clan.
At least Uchiha Sasuke's development was coming along nicely for both their plans. Using his ROOT as well as the Civilian Council to keep him mostly isolated outside of class and focused on training was working like a charm. The breeding would have to come later with the correct female so that they didn't entirely loose the bloodline but that wasn't a concern until the boy hit at least 16. He especially had to keep the Uchiha away from whatever the Hokage was doing with those clan heirs. Connection with that group would be the first to go once he had complete control over the Kyuubi container and the three Shinigami blessed.

Danzo's quiet disappearance from the room was noticed grimly by his former teammate. Hiruzen wondered with dour humor if the man even realized he was a prime target for Harry's first kill under Shinigami orders in this world. If the old war hawk kept going like this he might have to make a formal request that Harry either move up his time table and/or select a group of Konoha shinobi to either act with him or in his stead against Danzo. By Hiruzen's calculations they might be able to wait another five to ten years before being forced to move against Danzo but events could change that.

Two years passed as the ten shinobi-in-training grew.

The ten became known as the prank brigade and only an early explanation that their antics were in fact training games kept them from serious punishment. They regularly bedeviled most of the shinobi and some of the more hateful civilian population, often in defense of Naruto when it came to the civilians. Sarutobi got fed up enough from the complaints at one point that he flatly told the Jonin that the children were training themselves. He also informed them that trying to capture them and stop them from causing too much mischief that day on top of their other duties was now a standard training exercise for any shinobi who allowed themselves to be pranked. The complaint levels dropped while the skill level of nearly every single regularly pranked shinobi started to steadily rise.

Naruto's ANBU team, the group's tutors, were very proud of their students and ensured that a schedule was followed. Shinobi coming off of certain mission levels or who had an especially bad mission were kept free of pranks for three to six months. The exception was if a prank was requested for them to cheer them up or the affected shinobi formally lifted the ban. ANBU and Jonin were pranked only under strict supervision in case of accidents.

The prank brigade would even occasionally protect or play with Tora, keeping the assigned capture team away from the cat. In turn they found her teaching them things and basically adopting them. She would scout an area and then later show them all manner of hiding spots or things she noticed them using regularly.

By the time Neji Hyuuga graduated the brigade was well past the skill level of a new Genin overall and reaching Chunin or Jonin in some areas. Sarutobi was frankly only keeping them in the Academy to keep them mostly contained to the village and for the continuing skill increase of all his other Shinobi due to the prank raids.

"Hokage-sama, they are nearly the skill of new Chunin. Why are they still in the Academy?" Kame asked, his deep resonating voice was more used to crying *Flames of Youth* in public than the quiet rumble he adopted during his time as an ANBU. He was one of the few recognized as both an ANBU and a public Jonin at the same time. Something that would have to end with his new full time Genin team which also happened to have his apprentice Rock Lee on it.

"Inu will need to take the Uchiha when the young man graduates. No one else remains that can teach him his clan dojutsu," the Hokage commented, choosing not to answer the loaded question just yet.

"Yes, Hokage-sama," Inu agreed unhappily. "I owe it as a debt to my fallen teammate and his clan but I had wished..."
"I understand Inu. It was why I placed you on his guard when you joined the ANBU. You have had your time watching your nii-san, your brother, from the shadows. Though I would have wished you had chosen to do so in the light as his guardian. By the very eye you hold I must place young Sasuke with you. By now you have all learned or discovered why Naruto must stay with Harry, Severus, and Tom. You were all there when they had to explain it properly to the Nara clan after too many right conclusions were reached. Neko, Tora, and Kuma may still apply to be their Jonin-sensei," Sarutobi consoled quietly.

All five ANBU were present for the discussion, partly because the Clans with Heirs in the prank brigade were all having a joint family cook out. Somewhere all six of them planned to go immediately after the meeting. Dog - Inu, Turtle - Kame, Bear - Kuma, Tiger - Tora, and Neko - Cat waited for their Kage's answer to the real question. Who would get Naruto, Harry, Severus, and Tom for their Genin team?

"Due to the... unique nature of their current training. I expect that the ten of them will continue to train together frequently. I also recognize that I can no longer hold them in the Academy unless they become part of the staff. As such, pending the ability to perform adequately on the final Academy exam, the group currently known as the prank brigade is to be assigned jointly to Tora, Neko, and Kuma pending their official resignation from ANBU. You will be testing a new type of Genin team which will act as a multifaceted unit. Ten Genin and three Jonin. Officially Neko will be the Jonin-sensei for Naruto's four man Genin team. Neko, your actions in ANBU along with your extra attention to your unofficial apprentices allow me to immediately grant you the rank of full Jonin. Tora... I need you take a mission before I can give you Hinata, Shino, and Kiba. I had planned to give my son the next generation of InoShikaCho but Kuma has proven himself. Your public rank will be raised to reflect your actual rank earned in ANBU," the Hokage told them. "Kuma you have my gratitude for your undercover work at the school and the protection you have provided to our Academy students."

"Thank you Hokage-sama," they said together, with multiple layers of meaning, each understood perfectly.

"I officially resign my place in ANBU pending placement as a Jonin-sensei," Kuma said, removing his mask only to reveal Umino Iruka underneath. He calmly placed his mask on the Hokage's desk with a bow before returning to his place and standing at ease. Cat and Kame followed suit, revealing Mitarashi Anko and Might Guy.

"I will complete your final mission and then turn in my mask Hokage-sama," Tora said formally bowing respectfully to her superior.

"I ask to remain protecting Naruto until he is officially placed with Anko-san," Inu said formally.

"Granted," Sarutobi agreed. "Now let's go join the party. Those of you who have resigned have permission to take your students aside after graduation and your Genin tests to inform them which ANBU you were. This is only permissible due to the fact that you have already been training them."

There were nods of understanding before the group left to join the party.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Three months later...

"Now class there is one thing I must make very clear to you before we end today. Unless you can work on a team it is unlikely you will ever become and remain a Konoha Genin even if you pass the Academy exams. Our entire Village style is based around teamwork and collaboration. It is part of what makes us so strong combined with the will of fire. Anyone's will can fade but we keep the fire going through our comrades, protecting our precious people, protecting the village, and working together for those goals. This is something not everyone understands because of how simple it is. A single log can make a bridge that will last until it weakens and rots but planks of wood honed, shaped, and fitted together so that they can work as one will last far beyond that single log. They offer each other support and strength. The same goes for leaf shinobi. Don't be a log, be a plank supported and supporting, working as one. That will be all for today," Iruka said, dismissing them for the day. He ignored Sasuke's rude scoff and watched the prank brigade out of the corner of his eye as they left.

Iruka was dismissing them from their last class before their special graduation exams. The students of this class, and many other classes, had been told they were mock exams. Indeed they would actually be harder to pass than the standard ones and it was being given to multiple year levels. The only ones expected to actually pass were the prank brigade.

The next morning the prank brigade met early at the Academy.

"I like pranks and the practice exam is going to be a good way to see if we can pass but are we really going to trap some ANBU before class?" Naruto asked suspiciously.

"You know those weird blank masked ANBU? The ones that keep watching us? They are just like those ones that visited us with that teme Danzo. I want to make sure we have real ANBU we can trust and Jonin in case Danzo's ANBU show up," Harry explained. The others nodded their understanding, mostly used to his reasoning by now and fully trusting of his skills.

Naruto's bodyguard ANBU had obeyed the restrictions that the Hokage had laid down for their training over the years. While their group could work in any combination with any number of the rest of the prank brigade and even on the fly with some of the other shinobi that spontaneously joined in their pranks they still fell into certain patterns.

Naruto and Harry were the primary leaders followed by Tom and Severus by proven experience. Next came Shikamaru and Shino who, along with Severus and Tom, were confirmed geniuses. They had even gotten Shikaku and Inoichi to check all of them for that. It kept the group arguments down when there wasn't time for proper explanations. Kiba was a tracker and taijutsu specialist while Ino specialized in information gathering and retrieval.

Hinata, on the other hand, had been talked into taking medical courses. This was passed by Hinata on the grounds that if she knew exactly where to hit beyond chakra points she could avoid killing anyone and actually heal instead. It was simply not told to the Hyuuga clan elders but her new knowledge still showed clearly as she added it to the version of her family style she was creating.

When the group had found out about the Hyuuga elders after being dismissed by Iruka the night
before and about their threats to disinherit and brand Hinata the group had not been happy. It didn't matter that the supposed mock graduation exam was the next day, they were going to fix this. Hinata explained that she wasn't willing to hurt or cripple her little sister no matter how much they pushed her. Younger siblings were the responsibility of older siblings to protect and love after all.

The end result had the entire adult Hyuuga main branch kidnapped by the prank brigade and publicly chewed out over their idiocy in the middle of the village's main square just before supper time. They were then treated to an impromptu spar between the ten and a group of irritated Chunin they had pranked that morning where Hinata almost completely dominated against her opponents.

"Hinata is not WEAK! You are the sick bastards that are weak and enslave your own family! Until the damn seal is fixed and the family is one Hinata is ours you fucking bastards!" Harry practically roared at them. The looks of pure disgust from the entire prank brigade made their opinions clear. Hinata was theirs and these bastard idiots wouldn't touch her again if they could help it, clan or not.

"I'll be by to pick up my sister in an hour," Hinata informed the elders coldly. "At this point I am severely tempted to request the Hokage order your assassinations because of the poison you have infected throughout the clan and the way you have weakened the village and our clan as a result. I have long since passed the rabbit test."

The elders heard her loud and clear. They had lost her to the village and she had been pushed close enough to consider simply killing the elders and taking the consequences of being a kin slayer.

The rabbit test was a way to ease young shinobi from a clan into the understanding that as a shinobi you might one day be required to kill someone you care about, even family. The child would be given a rabbit to raise and love, eventually being required to kill it. Anyone who could not do so was not considered a good choice for the hard and sometimes brutal shinobi life style.

"From this day forwards Hinata is no longer a Hyuuga. She is of the Kurowata Clan, blessed of the Shinigami!" Severus hissed out. Tom and Harry were immediately flanking him and scowling their own agreement. The public release of their official clan status and of their connection to the Shinigami had been a hard but necessary decision, one which they were now glad for. They had also been having great difficulty figuring out what to use as a clan name but in that moment it had come to Severus. They were the Kurowata Clan, the Black Ferry Clan. The ferry which delivers one to either Death or the after life.

"I recognize this adoption," Death's voice cracked from the sky and the symbol of the Deathly Hallows appeared briefly on five foreheads. The ones marking Naruto, Hinata, Tom, and Severus were black. Harry's was killing curse green, marking him as the head of house. The words and marks were only detectable by the Hyuuga present and those already aware of the Kurowata family secrets.

"I recognize this adoption and offer my thanks for protecting my children. You have my blessing as a father," Hiashi spoke quickly, not wanting the rest of the main branch to try and stop him. He wanted these young shinobi to know that he understood and approved.

"They pushed too hard," Hinata told him.

"I did not shield well enough," Hiashi refuted. "Go in peace, at least from me, and know that you are not to blame."

Hinata nodded and left with her friends. Though they couldn't stop Hinata's willing exile from her clan or the adoption Hanabi was forced to remain with the Hyuuga Clan as the new heir. The elders later also fought to have Hinata either sealed or killed. Sarutobi flatly informed them that as she had been adopted into a nearly extinct clan with a special clan Jutsu resulting in the symbol they
witnessed they had no grounds. Hinata was a Kurowata, not a Hyuuga, end of story.

Now they had to pass the mock exam after an eventful night with glaring Hyuuga main branch idiots staring at them and speculative, blank faced, branch members all watching with interest.

"Did you ten have to go after the Hyuuga Clan like that?" Iruka demanded in exasperation as he arrived at the Academy and saw them talking about adding an early morning prank to the day.

"Yes, we did," Tom said coldly. He absolutely hated child abuse in any form as well as slavery. It was only due to the Horcruxes driving him bug fucking nuts that he had employed anything even remotely like that as the Dark Lord Voldemort.

"At least tell me you aren't going to prank anyone before today's exam?" Iruka asked with faint hope.

"How else are we going to get regular ANBU and Jonin watching to keep the creepy ANBU in check and stop the angry Hyuuga who were being idiots?" Naruto asked bluntly.

Iruka mentally promised to ask about the "creepy ANBU" later before deciding to try to keep them out of trouble before the exam.

"Kuma says don't hold back," Iruka shot back, shocking the group before barking out an order.

"Inside!"

They recognized his tone from training with their ANBU tutors and bolted, obeying instantly. They would patiently wait inside the boring protected classroom rather than practice dodging blunt kunai and shuriken while escaping a recently pranked full Jonin break room with weights on. They hated that punishment and they weren't even allowed to be the ones to pull the prank!

Iruka watched them bolt with a satisfied smirk. He and Anko had been desperate to come up with a punishment that would stick, wear out their charges, and serve extra training benefits. Their solution was sadistic but happily contributed to by almost every Jonin in the village. Their little human mice never noticed they weren't ever actually hurt nor that the Jonin were only wearing the prank effects for fun rather than actually pranked. The reverse prank/punishment soothed away many of the prank related bad feelings from the shinobi portion of the village.

Iruka looked up at the beautiful blue sky and smiled. It was going to be a great day.

Tora lay bleeding on the forest floor, too far away from help to make a difference and cursing not only Danzo but ROOT as well. She had somehow become a target for the old war hawk and his private army. Her mission from the Hokage had been a success but having to face six ROOT agents halfway back to Konoha had doomed her. The only good thing about the situation was that all six brainwashed, blank masked shinobi lay dead around her. They would be unable to menace her ten students.

"I can not allow you to return to Konoha as you are but in gratitude for what you have done in killing these soul dead puppets and the schooling you have given my young master I can grant you another gift," Death whispered into her ear.

"What?" Tora rasped, confused, blood foaming pink from her mouth.

"Finish dying and you may choose rebirth, bound to Harry's house as a retainer, or the ability to say goodbye one last time as a very brief ghost. Choose for me to act now and I can turn you into a shape shifting creature bound to a person of your choice for the next fifty years. If you choose the shape shifter then depending on who you choose to be bound to you will be able to speak with them... sooner or later. What is your choice?" Death chuckled evilly.
"The brigade?" Tora rasped in a barely there whisper.

"Will not be harmed by any choice further than knowing you are dead," Death assured her.

"Ghost, must report..." Tora trailed off as she finally quit breathing.

"Yes, I will let you report to your Kage first then to your final rest you will go," Death said softly, fading out with Tora's spirit leaving behind the fallen flesh to cool in the shade.

Hiruzen dropped his smoke pipe in shock as Tora faded into ghostly existence in front of his desk. His heart rate jumped in instinctive terror before being forced to return to a more reasonable level of pumping.

"Tora reporting. Mission was a complete success but I was ambushed and assassinated by six ROOT ANBU on my return trip. My body with the sealed precious cargo is roughly three mile from the Valley of the End to the north, north-west. My assassins' bodies lay surrounding my own. Their mission scroll had orders that they not only kill me but arrange to have it look like the new village Oto with signs of an attempted defection to Iwa carrying news of Naruto-kun. Thankfully, the message plant was only to be about the seal on his stomach rather than his lineage. The orders were signed by Danzo-sama in your name, Hokage-sama," Tora gave a ghostly bow as she finished her report.

"Do you have any recommendations for your replacement as Jonin-sensei?" Sarutobi asked wearily.

"I recommend that you simply acknowledge that Harry, Tom, and Severus have reached Chunin. They lacked only the practical skills and the applied knowledge rather than the life experience," Death chuckled.

"Their experience is that of regular soldiers and civilians. They have the maturity but not the shinobi life experience. I will, however, grant that they are otherwise qualified for a higher rank," the third said firmly. He was forcing his hands not to shake as he refused the Shinigami's request.

"Very good, little Hiruzen. Very good indeed. While other Genin teams in this joint formation you are building with my master will need three Jonin-sensei theirs only needs two. Anko and Iruka will be enough combined with continuing their training games. Naruto is also strong enough to receive his inheritance privately. Public revelation should still wait for his official attainment of Chunin. Come along Tora. You still need to say good bye to the prank brigade," Death said, sweeping the ghost away with him. He left behind a very shaken Hokage with a desk full of paper work and a smoldering pipe laying at his feet.

Naruto was the first to catch sight of their ghostly visitor just as the written exam finished and was collected by Iruka. This came with predictable results.

"Ghost!" Naruto screamed in an open panic as he scrambled away from the apparition.

Everyone looked in the same direction and nearly everyone scrambled back away from Tora. Harry, Tom, and Severus simply approached her with sadness in their eyes.

"Can you get the rest of the brigade?" Tora asked quietly.

"Brigade! Fall in!" Severus barked out. Trained to obey that bark as serious the prank brigade obeyed instantly, dragging a terrified Naruto with them.

Harry saw the blond and slapped him hard, knocking some sense back into his friend.
"Naruto... Ghost, Shinigami blessed," Harry said slowly, pointing first to Tora and then to himself.

"Oh... he he, gomen... sorry," Naruto laughed sheepishly, rubbing at the back of his head even as the slap mark visibly healed where someone else would have bruised.

"I am sorry I didn't make it back. An old hawk decided I needed to look like a traitor but your family friend said I could say good bye. Do well on your exams. You've all made us proud," Tora told them before fading out and to her rest.

"You ten can take out your anger and sadness during the Taijutsu test," Iruka comforted. "Then we can celebrate her with a meal together after we end the day."

"Thanks Sensei," Harry said softly.

The twenty minute break between tests and the move outside was made in silence. The prank brigade huddled together, drawing comfort from being near one another. All of the brigade were from clans or had previous combat experience and were familiar with the idea that not everyone made it home from a mission.

Inu noticed how down their students were and signed What happened? in ANBU hand signs. Harry answered to the group in the same sign language, Tora fell on her mission. Shinigami allowed say good bye. There was no word for ghost so he left that part out. Inu flinched in a mix of understanding and sympathy. He also met Iruka's eyes and they communicated silently before Inu sent a shadow clone off to fetch Guy, they would need his durability during the Taijutsu test.

Everyone else avoided the strange students who actually went towards the ghost that had probably been a genjutsu. Iruka stayed near the brigade and gestured for the waiting Chunin to test everyone else first. A raised eyebrow was the only comment as each student was tested on their Taijutsu.

When Guy arrived he was quiet and stood in silent sentry over the grieving prank brigade until the first of their number was called.

"Yamanaka Ino," the proctor called.

"Yosh! I will fight all remaining students at once to test their flames of youth!" Guy announced, startling everyone and causing the prank brigade to jump before turning to watch him warily.

"Sir... they are Academy students," the proctor said slowly.

"I still must view their flames of youth! They must not be allowed to fall into dying embers!" Might Guy insisted.

"Is the fight starting?" Harry asked slyly, perking his friends up a bit.

"Uh... sure?" the proctor agreed, slightly bewildered.

The prank brigade attacked without warning, startling everyone but Iruka, Guy, a hidden watching Anko and Inu. They fought in a cycling wave formation as if they were a living hurricane of grief given form. Guy took the beating while shifting around so that the Chunin proctor had a good view of each student's abilities and skill level. Eventually, each of them broke down in tears, being removed from the fight to safety by either Iruka or Inu and allowed to cry their hearts out. Finally only Harry, Tom, Severus, and Naruto remained, sad but determined in their fight.

"Enough," Guy said quietly, his voice that of Kame.
The four young shinobi immediately backed off and bowed in thanks for the match as they had been taught. A second later their minds recognized that they had been fighting Kame along with the rest of the brigade, distracting them all and making them feel better. All ten immediately relaxed and pulled themselves together as needed. They calmly rejoined the other testers, completely ignoring a, by now, fuming Sasuke.

"Back inside, its time for the jutsu test," Iruka instructed calmly as if he hadn't just been used as a crying post by half the prank brigade.

Everyone trooped inside and started going into the exam room off to the side as they were called, receiving their results after demonstrating the basic three jutsus. Most failed this portion or failed in other parts of the test, leaving them as still Academy students. Naruto obeyed Kuma's instructions and instead of using the standard Academy clone illusion he used a shadow clone to pass with flying colors with the rest of the prank brigade.

"Everyone who actually passed these mock exams is to report to training ground ten in a week. You also have the rest of the week off as a reward. Report to the Hokage tower after school to fill out some paper work and officially receive your forehead protector. You are dismissed. Prank Brigade remain," Iruka told them, making it sound like they were in trouble and allowing a smug Sasuke to taunt the before arrogantly stalking out, rage quietly burning in his dark eyes.

Once everyone but Iruka, Guy, Inu, and the brigade was gone the Jonin dropped any pretense.

"We're proud of you," Iruka said simply.

"Isn't it a little early to tell them Kuma? or should I call you mother bear?" Anko smirked as she strode into the room.

"You aren't much better Neko," Inu teased. "Protecting our cute little students."

"At least Kame wasn't shouting youth all the time while he was helping. I know he does it to throw people off but that doesn't make it any less horrifying," Anko shot back, gesturing at Guy.

"Why do you think I do it?" Guy smirked.

"Devious," Inu shuddered, hiding behind his porn book as everyone else sweat dropped. All four adults wondered how the prank brigade would react when they finally faced Guy's unbreakable genjutsu brotherly hug with Lee. Anyone who had already seen it avoided it at all costs... all costs.

"You're our tutors... Naruto's ANBU," Harry smiled, causing his friends to break out in equally happy smiles of recognition.

"We aren't ANBU any more. My mission at the school is over and Hokage-sama raised me to Jonin. We've become Jonin-sensei, yours to be exact. Guy was given a team during the last normal graduation so you will just have to put up with me and Anko... Tora was to join us in continuing to teach you but..." Iruka explained with a gentle smile.

"She didn't make it back," Harry agreed with sad understanding.

"Alright mini minions! We will still have a Genin acceptance test but that won't happen until we officially claim you as our Genin. Officially, we are testing a new type of larger team... Unofficially, the Hokage doesn't want to split you guys up. He also seems to like how much better everyone has been getting with your random prank attacks," Anko smirked at her once and future minions.

The evil smirks that sparked from that last comment were immensely gratifying.
"I will occasionally train with you as will my team but you will mostly be working with each other, as you have been, and your two official Jonin-sensei," Guy explained, gesturing at Anko and Iruka.

"As we already know you guys are practically Chunin level. You were only kept in the Academy due to a mix of physical age and the benefits your pranks have been giving the Konoha shinobi corps. We will only be giving tests on your knowledge and skills to see what you slipped past us. You are also required to disclose anything that you have been working on privately or without our supervision. This is to see exactly where you stand and so we know if we have to have any incident reports mostly pre-written or if we have to take training trips outside the village to avoid blowing anything important up. This is non-negotiable! Any attempt to withhold or hide something will result in running the escape course five times against the ANBU breakroom rather than the normal Jonin going easy on you and without chakra enhancement for a laugh. Got that?!" Anko informed them with cheerful evilness.

"Yes sensei!" they chorused with an audible gulp.

"What about clan secrets?" Ino asked bluntly.

"Tell your clan heads about this and have them talk to us. If needed we will swear oaths to keep those clan secrets or perform whatever ritual is necessary for us to know them. We already know some of the most important secrets within this group and feel that this team needs to share all important secrets to avoid later problems. Right now the sharing of training and skill secrets is so that we don't accidentally pick out missions you aren't ready for. Later it will be up to you to share anything else or not. Secrets are an integral part of shinobi life. They can save you and they can kill you, they can destroy entire countries and they can save them. Information is often the most valuable thing you carry, more than a bloodline, more than a precious cargo, more than the lives you may be tasked to guard or take," Iruka told them seriously.

"Are we secure?" Harry asked thoughtfully.

"No," Inu answered as all four of their teachers went tense.

"You know our secrets but we did not officially tell you or explain our circumstances. This needs to be rectified," Severus informed them seriously.

"We've discussed this but we couldn't necessarily risk it until we knew our team placements and how trust worthy our Jonin-sensei might be," Tom explained softly.

"Do we need the Hokage?" Iruka inquired, hiding his sharp eyes behind soft words.

"You'll need to tell him that you've been told but technically the four of us hold the original secrets and they became both official and unofficial village secrets after the third Hokage was informed," Naruto answered honestly.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru snarked.

"Hey, you already have the overview with how your clan got curious," Naruto snarked right back.

"We will have to start hunting the hawk, the snake, and others soon," Harry pointed out. "Best to let everyone know the risk of joining our hunt before they are dragged in without warning."

"We can deal with that at the Nara compound," Iruka sighed, rubbing his forehead to try and keep the building headache at bay.

"I will tell mother that you will all be there for supper," Shikamaru agreed with a hard edge that told
the rest of them it wasn't a request. Supper plans were finalized and they all left to run afternoon
errands before supper.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, they're Genin now... except for Anko's version of the dreaded bell test.
*smirk*
Ideas welcome! Right now I'm thinking either camping in the Forest of Death or stealing
Inu's Icha Icha.... *cackle*
The Nara household was unusually full that night and a word from Shikamaru to his father had ensured that the entire clan was as present as possible to support their unofficially adopted clan members. What they didn't know was that they were going to get a bit more than they bargained for...

Dinner was a lively affair for the Nara clan and their guests. At the brigade's pleading, with extensive use of puppy dog eyes all around, Guy dropped his overly enthusiastic cover persona. This made the meal much more pleasant.

"Enough stalling," Shikamaru ordered his friends as the meal finished.

The brigade promptly targeted and trapped the four secret keepers, taking no chances and securing them smartly to their chairs. Just as promptly the clones made by Naruto and henged appropriately went up in smoke. The four escapees watched silently from the rafters, smirking as they set off their own trap. The cross between fire foam and crowd control foam delivered by a clone trooper checking up on them shocked the shinobi long enough to trap them in the rapidly hardening cloud. Once it was properly solid the four dropped down onto the new solid platform much to the astonishment of their audience.

"Well that worked," Harry smirked.

"This way you won't run away without all of the facts. You can get mad at us later," Naruto explained hastily, seeing the intensifying glares from his friends. It wasn't that often that they pranked each other outside of training but it did happen occasionally.

"Which secret first?" Severus wondered aloud. Both he and Tom had relaxed considerably after spending so much time with the brigade and the mix of training combined with play and pranks. It had done good for all of them, something that Death was secretly very smug over.

"I'm sort of Death's bounty hunter..." Harry admitted sheepishly. Tom smacked him in retribution for jumping in first.

"I think everyone needs actual background for that one," Naruto sighed. "As for me... The Kyuubi no Kitsune isn't dead. There is no known way for a Bijuu to actually die. Disperse until they force themselves back together again? Yeah, die? I think only the Kami of all can actually manage that. The only way to really stop a Bijuu is to seal it and the nine strongest can only be sealed inside a living thing... specifically a human."

Naruto reluctantly lifted his green shirt and channeled some chakra into the seal on his stomach.

"The villagers hate Naruto because he is the fox's prison. The idiots can't tell the difference between the prisoner and the jailer. Had they ever succeeded in getting him angry enough or close enough to death to really weaken the seal then they would have released the fox and probably killed Naruto as a side effect," Tom explained solemnly. "This ties into Harry's status as the Shinigami's accidental bounty hunter. When we arrived we were de-aged, as most of you know or have figured out. The one who sent us here is actually the Shinigami and he laid claim to all of the people like Naruto."

"The fact of the matter is that the three of us have already died at least once but Harry gained several special artifacts during his first life which tied him to the Shinigami. The official title is Master of Death. We have found that it isn't an entirely accurate descriptor as to the actual effects or benefits.
Both Tom and I wronged him during his first life but among the many who wronged Harry we never lied to him. This is the reason the Shinigami gave for altering our punishments and tying us to Harry," Severus added, picking up the explanation.

"Death likes dumping us in different realities and laughing his arse off," Harry grumped, openly pouting and causing their audience to sweat drop at his reaction.

"They have a list of people they have to kill now that they're out of the academy," Naruto explained. "It doesn't have to actually be them killing the idiots trying to break reality but the people have to die so that the Shinigami and the Kami can spank them."

"Who?" Shino demanded. "Who threatens the hive?!"

"We only have a partial list. Orochimaru, Danzo and his ROOT people, some idiot Jashinist who keeps slaughtering villages...." Naruto trailed off trying to remember who else was on the list.

"Orochimaru - attempting immortality by messing with souls and body theft, current main servant, spy, and healer Kabuto Yakushi. Sasori of the Red Sand - specialty puppets and has made himself into a barely alive puppet attempting immortality. Kazuku - uses Elemental Masks fueled by stolen hearts which extends his life span. Hidan - Jashinist, idiot claiming to serve the fallen Jashin who keep destroying reapers while stealing their power and denying proper rest to untold dead. Danzo and his ROOT ANBU - by forcing them into killing their emotions and mindless obedience they are essentially walking dead slaves. Uchiha Madara - attempting to strip the world of the free will which was granted to humanity by the Kami of all. Black/White Zetsu - living abominations. Kaguya Ootsutsuki, Rabbit Goddess, insane immortal bitch - currently sealed and has stolen her immortality," Harry recited in a suddenly monotone trance.

Tom and Severus sighed as they caught him when he staggered free of the unexpected trance.

"That sucked," Harry complained as he abruptly came back to himself.

"We're not even sure that's the full list," Severus complained in sour agreement.

"Those are all S-class, or at least the ones I know about are. A few are supposed to be dead but if they are on your list I guess they still need to die," Iruka said, pale from shock.

"You see why you needed to know before joining us?" Naruto said bluntly. "This is not going to be fun and we are going to have to work our butts off to even get close to them. Once their bloodline unlocks it might be easier but we can't be sure until it happens."

"Technically, only I have to go after them so if you guys want to just..." Harry started only to be cut off.

"If you think we are going to let you go off on your own, probably to be killed repeatedly while trying to kill the merlin be damned idiots on that list, you are sorely mistaken," Tom snarled. Harry started as he was dragged into a tight grip so that he was pinned firmly between both dark haired wizards.

Naruto gave everyone else a pained "You see what I have to deal with?" look before creating a bunch of clones and getting everyone free of the foam. The fact that the four of them were immediately tackled by the rest of the brigade was inconsequential. The fact that it made the four feel immeasurably cared for and loved, kept them quiet as they were very thoroughly hugged and told not to be idiots, of course they would help.

The brigade didn't let them out of their sight for the rest of the week.
Morning Kidnapping

The morning of their Genin registration and test dawned bright and early. Anko smirked evilly as she munched on her last piece of dango before taking advantage of the brigade's recent clingy attitude for the four previously emancipated minors in their group. She happily kidnapped the four and left a ransom note for the other six.

Iruka shook his head in bemusement even as he refused to argue and continued carrying his pair of the four while Anko smirked and carried her pair. She had dosed them all with a weak sleeping poison the night before to keep them from waking up in the middle of being carried off. She fully expected to be dealing with irate and panicked Genin before too long.

"Wha..?" Naruto mumbled groggily from under one of her arms, much to Anko's consternation. That sleeping poison was supposed to keep the target out for days without the counter poison/antidote!

"Be silent hostage," Anko growled menacingly.

Naruto immediately started to fight back on the next jump landing. The remnants of the sleep poison slowed his reactions but the fact he had recovered at all this early was impressive.

"You want your little friends dead blondie?" Anko growled, shaking him roughly. Naruto snarled but sullenly stopped fighting. He had caught sight of his unconscious friends and the fact that both their captors wore masks kept him from identifying them.

Both Jonin noticed this as well as Naruto's obvious plotting. They would have to work on his poker face and escape tactics. As he was likely one of the most advanced on the team in escape tactics the entire group was just as likely going to need a thorough refresher course.

Severus started to wake next, his experience with potions and developed poison resistance coming into play.

"Hebi," Iruka called in warning. Anko looked back at her partner and cursed. Didn't the mini's have any sense when it came to being kidnapped?!

"Training ground 7," Anko barked back. It could be an extra test/time extension for the others while they re-secured their hostages.

Wordlessly Iruka followed her into training ground 7. Naruto immediately kicked free and took up an opening taijutsu stance. Severus, having played mostly helpless long enough to get his bearings immediately bit Iruka's closest bit of flesh. With a yelp the new Jonin dropped his burden unceremoniously. Severus scrambled away and also took up a taijutsu stance near Naruto.

"You won't be running off little brats," Anko growled, purposefully roughening her voice to render it less recognizable.

"Kage Bunshin No Jutsu," Naruto growled out. He made ten shadow clones, only three of which were visible. Two went for the rest of the prank brigade, two went for the Jonin breakroom, and three hid themselves around them. The three visible ones took up taijutsu stances with the original and Severus.

"How much chakra does this brat have?!" Iruka exclaimed in a falsetto, mimicking the shock of a truly unaware opponent.
"Doesn't matter. If they want their little friends to remain alive they have to play nice," Anko said roughly, visibly holding a kunai to Harry's neck.

Severus, on the other hand, noticed the snake near Anko's foot. Unaware it was one of Anko's summons he spoke to it.

"~That woman is threatening my nestmate. Please bite her,~" Severus hissed, making it sound like a hiss of fury to the non-parselmouths.

"A speaker! Wow, we haven't found one of the human snake clan in centuries! Anko, I can't fight him and I have to help him retrieve his nestmate," the snake said in excitement, perfectly understood by all the humans. He bowed apologetically to his summoner.

"Well, I didn't see that coming," Anko agreed, giving up all pretense as she removed her mask, Iruka following suit.

"Snake-sama, we were testing our students not actually threatening them. I still thank you for the warning," Iruka said, giving the serpent a slight bow of politeness.

The Naruto's started to relax only for Severus to hiss at him in warning. He was far too familiar with various ways to take on another's form and knew to be wary. Naruto, understanding the warning, gained a look of stubborn determination.

"Gaki you won't win," Anko snorted in amusement as she finally put away her kunai so that Harry wasn't threatened any more.

"Put them down slowly and back away," Severus barked out.

"No, I don't think we will," Anko said, giving them a crazed smirk.

Kiba's ninken puppy gave away the approach of their friends even as Severus chose to take a chance with the split second distraction and attack, Narutos on his heels. The two Jonin were caught between the two groups and had to let both unconscious prisoners go to keep from being overwhelmed by force of numbers.

"They won't wake up," one of the clones barked out, having slapped Harry who he was carrying.

"Ano, let me check," Hinata ordered, getting to Tom even as the other clone brought her Harry. A check with her Byakugan told her the problem. "A Sleeping Poison!"

"Stability?" Severus demanded even as he fought in close briefly with Iruka.

"No lethal aspects that I can detect, sleeping only," Hinata answered promptly. "Foxhole."

Hinata then took command of both clones and their downed members, escaping with them. The rest of the brigade held off the two Jonin for a few precious seconds before scattering, following the foxhole protocol they had developed and working their way around to meet back up at the Nara compound.

"Not bad," Iruka smirked.

"Oh, just track our little brats," Anko said irritably as she collected her laughing summon before thanking him and dismissing him. She was completely unaware that there would be a demand from the snake clan that night to meet the young speaker.
"I don't track, I sense chakra," Iruka snipped back, grinning. He knew that she knew the difference between a tracking nin and a sensor nin but it was sometimes fun to ruffle her feathers.

"Just... where are they going?" Anko demanded crossly.

"The Nara compound at a guess but they're doing a good job of loosing anyone that tried to chase them.

"Jonin, what is the situation?" someone requested as several ANBU and Jonin showed up in response to Naruto's clone call for help.

"A surprise test as part of their Genin test. We didn't give them any identity confirmation to see what they would do and they are aware of more than just the Henge to mimic another person's form. The prank brigade did better than most Chunin in the situation we created and they still were smart enough to go for back up," Anko grinned proudly.

"A little warning might have been nice," one Jonin muttered.

"Well I didn't think they would actually follow through with getting back up and checking ID. They are new Genin after all and even experienced Chunin aren't usually that paranoid, especially inside the village. Though to be fair they have been pranking the entire village for nearly three years and escaping from irate prank victims during those D-rank prank missions..." Anko said thoughtfully.

"As she is the Senior Jonin by about five minutes I have to follow her lead. Tomorrow we're taking them camping in the forest of death," Iruka explained with a sigh.

"I'll arrange for a few extra off duty Jonin and Chunin to help in case something weird happens," someone in the back volunteered with a resigned sigh from most of the unexpected back up.

"Alright, you guys know the rules no betting on if it will happen just what will happen. Opening bids are some of the brigade winding up naked, some of them getting kidnapped for real and either escaping or needing rescue, and finally... one or more getting adopted by some of the forest's wild life..." one ANBU called out, setting up the most recent betting pool on the group of ten young shinobi.

"I'm half tempted to bet that one of them will have a summoning contract or serious contact with a summoning clan by the end of the week," Iruka snorted.

"Have they already had contact with a summon?" a red haired ANBU asked with interest.

"Yeah, I had one of mine watching the fight from a different angle and Severus noticed it. He tried to get her to bite me," Anko admitted, keeping the snake speech to their group for the moment. It would be a nasty shock for Orochimaru when he finally faced her students.

"Genma wins that bet then," someone sighed.

They broke up and returned to whatever they had been doing before being summoned for help. The two hidden observing Naruto clones that had remained after fetching help dispersed, sending Naruto their memories of the conversation. The blond promptly informed his friends and everyone filled in both Tom and Harry once they were woken from their drugged slumber.
Anko was not expecting to be reverse summoned at supper as she plotted what they were going to do to their Genin team tomorrow. True, she knew that the little grass snake summon had been interested in Severus-kun and that Iruka would veto more than half of her plotting but that didn't make the plotting any less fun or the summons any less unexpected.

"Anko, what is this I hear about a speaker?" Manda hissed menacingly. He was not only an utterly enormous lavender colored serpent, easily the size of a building, with three spike at the top of each side of his head forming something like a spike collar but also the boss summon of the Snakes.

"Manda-sama!" Anko gasped, bowing hastily to the giant snake from her already seated position.

"I asked a question small one," Manda hissed menacingly. He moved restlessly around the dark cave to which Anko had been summoned as he waited for an answer while watching her bowed form. He didn't bother giving her permission to rise, thoroughly irritated with her and the thought of having to bow to a human speaker as was dictated by tradition.

"One of my students was called as a speaker by the grass snake summons I was using to help observe today's test of my students. If he truly is a speaker then some of the rest of his clan may be as well," Anko hastily answered, really hoping not to get eaten by the prideful boss summon.

"You will summon me upon locating them. The sage will need to meet them and can not leave Ryuuchi Cave," Manda growled, obviously upset.

"I understand Manda-sama," Anko said respectfully. Mentally she added that she was willing to give up the summoning contract in favor of the Kurowata clan's survival. Manda was famous for eating potential summoners and anyone else who crossed his path. The only reason Orochimaru could safely summon the oversized reptile was that Manda couldn't actually beat him in a fight and the traitor still had to provide 100 humans for the glutton to eat as payment.

"Then begone!" Manda snapped, roughly tossing her back to where she had been summoned from.

"Shit!" Anko cursed before immediately dashing off to report her unexpected meeting to the Hokage. Leaving her food behind scattered across the table.

Sarutobi listened to the latest agitated report of his purple haired sadistic Jonin.

"And then he tossed me back to land in front of my supper. I immediately came here, Hokage-sama," Anko told him.

"Sacrificing a summoning contract is a very perilous proposition for any shinobi or village," Hiruzen commented quietly.

"I am aware, Hokage-sama," Anko agreed nervously.

"I will see if we have any other contract you can sign to try and supplant the snake contract. I believe it requires exclusivity?" Sarutobi asked musingly.

"Most do," Anko agreed in mild relief. Now she just had to stay away from almost half of her Genin until she had earned a new contract so that she wouldn't have to summon Manda.

"We will knock you out to be on the safe side," the Hokage told her just as one of his ANBU guard
hit her from behind, knocking her out cold.

Anko woke several hours later to a killer headache and the presence of both the Jonin and the ANBU of Konoha.

"The Hokage explained the situation... troublesome," Shikaku informed her as she re-gained her bearings.

"My Ninke have agreed to allow you to sign their contract and either stay with the Inu clan or allow you to break the contract so that you may try for the best fit summons by summoning without a contract," Inu said kindly as he held out the dog contract. "Your loyalty to the pups and the pack earned you this right."

Anko nodded her understanding and promptly signed the contract with a bloody finger, ending her contract with the snakes. Next she took the still bleeding finger and ran it through her name, freeing her from all summon contracts. She wanted to get a proper one that fit her with the rest of her team and Iruka had been dodging making the attempt for one for too long any way.

Breakfast came and went as did lunch while the prank brigade waited on tender hooks for Anko to try something again. When she strolled into the compound happily whistling just after lunch with Iruka trailing behind her they were immediately suspicious.

"Relax mini's! I'm not going to kidnap one of you again... this time," Anko smirked.

"She really isn't," Iruka reassured them as they gathered around their Jonin-sensei.

"By now you will have noticed that the only ANBU member here is Inu sitting in that tree over there, reading. There is a reason for that but before we get to that you have a choice. Either try to steal Inu's pervy book from him or take a little camping trip into training ground 44. Depending on how well you'll do you'll either become our little Genin or be sent back to the Academy," Anko smirked at them, lying through her teeth. They were already officially Genin after passing yesterday's test with flying colors. "We can skip the teamwork exam part after that wonderful display during your Taijutsu test and yesterday's... exercise."

"Neko showed them the training ground 44 once..." Inu hummed, smirking behind his mask and patiently thumbing through his current copy of Icha Icha from his perch.

"Okay," Naruto shrugged before shouting out his special Jutsu name. "Sexy No Jutsu!"

Naruto's weirdly modified henge transformed him into a blond haired pig-tailed girl with whisker marks and smoke/clouds over strategic locations before blowing the man a cute kiss. Inu promptly got a nose bleed and fell out of the tree only for his book to be snatched by one of the brigade.

"That won't work on every guy," Severus commented tightly. He had been a teacher at Hogwarts for too long and the victim of the Marauders too often to approve or appreciate the jutsu in that moment.

"It only works against perverts," Naruto agreed, dispelling the illusion immediately now that they had their target.

"Something was off about that henge, aside from it being a weird teenage girl version of you," Anko said thoughtfully, ignoring Iruka's fierce blush of embarrassment.

"We can pick it apart later, sensei," Ino suggested. Depending upon what was under the clouds the girls were all very eager to have a little private talk with Naruto.
"Let's head over to training ground 44," Anko announced happily. "Oh and you don't need ANBU guards any more, all of you are full fledged Genin!"

"What?! But we beat Inu!" was generally exclaimed.

"Did you think we wouldn't be going there? Even for training? Cute little Genin!" Anko smirked evilly. They failed to escape being instantly tied up with ninja wire and dragged along by their Jonin-sensei like naughty prisoners.
Once their Jonin-sensei had dragged them to the edge of the forest of death both Iruka and Anko freed them from the ninja wire.

"Now mini's. I know Naruto was watching our little discussion yesterday so I hope you have what you need already since I'm not letting you go home and get it," Anko said sadistically.

In response, knowing they were busted, each of them pulled out several scrolls in which the Nara women had helped them seal what they would need for a camping trip in the forest of death.

"List what you have," Iruka instructed calmly.

"Ano, camping gear for each of us, extra medical supplies, Nara-sama insisted on extra weapons, and food for a week for each of us," Hinata supplied shyly. They each had about the same extra load out in the scrolls and were expecting to share as needed.

"Good. We may still be inside the village right now but that doesn't mean you'll always be able to get to any supplies nearby. Whoever introduced you to sealing scrolls for carrying stuff was smart. It will allow you to safely carry a lot more and can even be used to hide, carry, or destroy things when the enemy gets too close on a mission for safety," Anko instructed firmly.

"It also explains how they carried all those extra pranking supplies," Iruka muttered under his breath.

"Once we get in there and our camp set up we will be practicing your Henge and examining what is so different about Naruto's Sexy one versus a standard one. Now I know you each can perform the henge but there is more to using it than just looking like someone else. We will be practicing movement while in a henge to better mimic whoever you are impersonating. I'm also telling you now that you need to get used to seeing the other sex naked so that a simple flash of flesh doesn't get you killed in a fight. This will be accomplished first by working on henge together and fixing Naruto's Sexy one, which you will all be learning. We also won't be bathing separately during this training trip and will be using a mixed gender hot spring from now on as a team," Anko informed them, rendering them speechless.

"Learning not to be distracted by anyone's form as much as possible be they beautiful or ugly will keep you alive. Most don't bother learning this and it has cost lives over the years. Ladies? Doing it this way will also keep your teammates from becoming perverts and help keep them aware enough that it may reduce your risk as Kunoichi while working with them in the field. They will be more aware of your natural body vulnerabilities and better able to compensate, keeping you out of enemy hands," Iruka told them flatly.

Kunoichi always faced risks greater than male shinobi because of the natural body differences
between male and female. Shinobi were killed on the battle field or captured and tortured for information. Kunoichi, on the other hand, were often kept as playthings and breeding stock after capture once everything else useful was extracted.

"If one of you goes into sealing or discovers a way to keep enemies, and sometimes allies, from taking such advantage... tell us so that we can help you and find you volunteers. I promise you there will be many and if you succeed... well you'll never want for grateful Kunoichi protection. While being able to carry a child is a great blessing it can also be a great vulnerability," Iruka told them all sternly.

"Ah, and if we told you the girls aren't the only ones potentially needing something like that?" Harry asked, laughing nervously.

At the odd looks of their teachers Severus explained, "We three can not only speak the serpent tongue but also bear children. When Danzo asked after us joining his ROOT group and mentioned it... I made it a point to tell him rape doesn't work with the ability."

"Something that might not be entirely accurate?" Iruka asked with a sickly grin. None of the wizards would meet anyone's eyes.

"Um, my Sexy Jutsu might be able to too," Naruto admitted with a blush.

"Its not an illusion?" Ino asked with narrowed eyes.

"Er, no? Let's get to the campsite so that I can show you," Naruto offered hastily.

Anko and Iruka followed their oversized team into the forest in stunned silence. What Naruto was talking about involved far more than a mere visible illusion which was the standard henge, a ghost meant to trick the eye only. No, he was talking about a physical transformation!

The group had already been taught the basics of the henge before their tutors started in on jutsu. It was entirely possible that Naruto had been sabotaged on that only to have unknowingly come up with a different or even better version as a result. Both his parents had been known to come up with devastating personal jutsu and fuuinjutsu out of thin air after all. It was entirely possible that Naruto had inherited the same knack for jutsu and fuuinjutsu creation. Something that was made even more plausible by the existence of the Sexy Jutsu.

The camp was set up without issue next to a shallow stream. Both Jonin had kept them from running into the native wild life of the training ground on the way in for a reason. Their students would be finding out about why it was called the forest of death first hand and their reactions would give a basic gauge on their response to not only actual danger but the unexpected. The reactions to the revealed secrets were good for knowing how they would respond to unexpected news but not nasty shocks in a combat situation.

"Hey guys" The Kyuubi was a fox, a Kitsune, right?" Harry asked in a tone of something clicking in his head.

"Yeeesss, what are you getting at?" Severus drawled, watching Harry with interest.

"Care of Magical Creatures... aren't Kitsune known for pranks, general trickery, and transformation or shape shifting?" Harry pointed out.

"You think Naruto's Sexy jutsu and possibly his henge are actually transformations. That they are possibly a side effect from being the living human prison of a nine tailed kitsune," Tom concluded with a thoughtful smirk.
"Weirder things have happened," Harry shot back.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru complained.

"Even if it is the answer rather than Naru stumbling upon a different variant of the technique... What do you expect? For him to be able to suddenly declare fox fire and produce such magical fire? Simply be able to will illusions into place with but a thought and maybe a little gathering of yokai?" Severus snarked, smirking at the green-eyed imp.

"No, but it could happen. I bet we will need to find the fox summoning clan at the very least in case he needs to be checked. Besides, we're the prank brigade. Kitsune love pranks... right?" Harry said defensively.

"That we do little death master," came giggling bubbly voice echoing from the trees.

"Harry," Tom warned in a very calm voice.

"I know! I know. My luck kicked in... or Naruto's did," Harry agreed ruefully.

Everyone ignored the offended "Hey!" from the blond. All of them were familiar with Harry's luck for all that the safety of Konoha had dulled its results somewhat. It had been Shikamaru who had figured out that Naruto had the same luck type and forcing everyone else how to learn and adapt on the fly to try and keep up with the pair of weird luck magnets that were their friends.

"Lets add to that luck shall we?" a male voice laughed. The instant wide-eyed panic of the prank brigade told their teachers this was bad.

"Kitsune Magic: Pasts Present Past no Jutsu!" the voices called out, echoing laughter that warped into something strange around the three wizards. The brigade, sensing the transport aspect of the jutsu, immediately jumped on top of the three, joining them in the unexpected trip.

The brigade landed with thuds of bodies landing on stone and an audible loss of breath. When they looked up from disentangling themselves and swearing they froze in a moment of perfect shock.

"No... no no no NO! Fuck no! I am not reliving this bullshit!" Harry snarled out his curses even as he yanked himself free of the group to glare at Hogwarts' great hall where his own first year sorting had just finished before they arrived.

"May I help you?" Dumbledore asked uncertainly. He was already standing and about to speak to the hidden house elves to summon the opening feast for the school.

"Not yet, give me twenty minutes to make sure this isn't an illusion or some weird memory thing," Harry informed the old man sternly. He may look like a first year ready to be sorted but he was a war veteran and a line commander not to mention a former Auror. He knew the protocol for the situation. He also knew tons of obscure information on strange things simply because his luck liked screwing with him... frequently.

"Kai!" Ino called out, flaring her chakra in an attempt to disrupt any genjutsu.

"Byakugan!" Hinata called out, activating her eyes. She immediately deactivated them again, cursing as she clutched at her eyes.

"Too much magic," Harry sighed as Severus checked her. Shino, Kiba, and Choji had taken up defensive stances around the group while Tom kept an eye on both their captives and the rest of the staff.
"Undoubtedly," Severus agreed with a sigh of his own.

"Shika, Naru, if I'm right we need to secure a bunch of people. Namely the guy that looks like an older Severus, the guy in the weird head wrap, the guy in the fashion disaster robes, and the super skinny hurt version of me. Remember wands are their primary foci, not hand signs. Shika, no shadows. Non-lethal only, we'll treat this as something like a prank on the ANBU. Go," Harry snapped out orders.

Naruto immediately created a bunch of shadow clones and worked with the others to secure the named targets, bringing them to kneel bound in front of Harry.

"What is the meaning of this!?" Dumbledore spluttered as a bunch of clones trapped and disarmed him.

Harry mentally sighed and summoned the Elder wand from the Naruto clone, formally taking possession of the Hallow once again.

"Ino, 7th floor across from the tapestry of a man attempting to teach Trolls to dance ballet. Focus on the wall and pass in front of the spot three times while thinking of needing the room of hidden things. We need the diadem. Handle it as if soaked in uncleanable contact poisons and ignore the mental whispers. Tom, I, and skinny me can handle it safely without gloves. Go," Harry ordered. Ino bolted, wordlessly going after Ravenclaw's diadem for her friend and teammate.

"This isn't possible!" Professor Snape protested angrily.

"It is very possible," Severus shot back calmly at his past version self.

"No complaints?" Harry asked Tom warily.

"Right now he's a fucking lunatic," Tom snorted derisively. "No, no objections from me. Put him back together or bind him properly to the other you if you like. The bloodshed and war is better off being avoided. He hasn't gotten to the herd yet so you won't have to fight the curse of the unicorn blood."

"That makes it easier," Harry agreed grimly.

"And how, exactly, are we to *cast* anything with our magic currently blocked?" Severus asked acerbically.

"We aren't. Mort will be delighted to help. He hates the entire damned process," Harry grinned evilly.

"Ano, Harry?" Hinata asked, still partly blind from seeing all of the magic.

"If its about the weirdness around some of the people I picked out... yeah, I know probably most of it," Harry sighed. "Don't worry too much, the Shinigami can handle it."

"This thing is nasty," Ino complained as she reappeared with her target Horcrux, handing it straight to Tom without a care.

"This is potentially an S-class situation," Tom rebuked her as he took the diadem from her impromptu net of ninja wire.

"Are we in your past?" Shino asked quietly. This question stunned their captives into the same silence and shock the rest of the hall had already been experiencing.
"Possibly and possibly not. Either way we are treating this as real due to some of the factors involved," Severus answered honestly. "Of course when we report it we have to claim that we think it might be a genjutsu that used our own memories as an information source. The three of us have literally years of memories from within this castle and a greater age for all that our bodies are currently the same age as the rest of you."

"Nagini hasn't been made yet. We have Harry, the main fragment and the diadem. I don't think we can retrieve the diary, cup, necklace, or ring at the moment," Tom said thoughtfully. His comment drew a string of curses in parseltongue from Quirrell's turban.

"~Oh be quiet! I am you!~" Tom snapped back in the same language, resulting in shocked silence from the turban.

"How can you be whatever was cursing under the Professor's... er, towel?" skinny Harry asked curiously.

"We've sort of already lived this even though we look eleven. Not entirely sure how we got here but we figured we'd best get this sorted while we have the chance," Master of Death (MoD) Harry answered sheepishly.

"What about Dobby?" Severus asked. He still thought that elf was as much of a menace as the Weasley twins.

"Can't, didn't free him until end of second year," Harry sighed. "I suppose we could have Draco summon an elf and send them to retrieve it but I think that will backfire spectacularly. The cup is in Gringotts and getting past that dragon again is going to be a right pain. The necklace isn't even in the cave but with Sirius in jail and no one else in his family alive we can't get into Grimauld place to get it. The ring has at least a death curse on it but... oh, that might work."

"What?" Severus asked suspiciously.

"My cloak should be up in Dumbledore's office. I just claimed the wand and the ring is... well Tom's ring. I think proximity to two and having the current owners all present will help when we call Shinigami," Harry explained.

"Gu..gu.. ghosts!" the Naruto's all shrieked as they finally noticed the house ghosts.

Kiba sighed and caught his solid friend before smacking him as his ninja puppy Akamaru bit Naruto in the leg. This brought him sheepishly out of his fear. The blond promptly summoned another Kage Bunshin and dismissed it, reminding all of his clones in that moment who was blessed by the Shinigami in their group. Mutters of sorry and gomen came from all of the embarrassed clones.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru scowled. "From your descriptions the Diadem only holds 1/32nd of his soul and the scar holds 1/64th. The main fragment also only currently holds 1/64th. This makes the assembled pieces only as large as that within the cup. Your theories indicate the need for a full half for basic sanity, which I disagree on. I suspect that only the connection to young Harry's full soul is giving young Tom any stability at all."

"Which means we need either the Diary or everything but the diary," Harry scowled, glaring at Tom.

"I had no idea about these side effects when I started any of this!" Tom protested. "I was desperate and Dumbledore had basically declared me a demon. When I couldn't get help from anyone I had acess too I went looking anywhere that I could for a solution. I was truly desperate."

The pale sickly cast that Dumbledore took on after hearing this made many people wonder what
exactly was going on.

"You still had a choice," MoD Harry rebuked.

"Yes, and I even tried to make it so that no one else found themselves that desperate but Dumbledore
blocked me from the ministry. There wasn't exactly much I could do, especially without any family
connections and my family history hidden from me. Besides, I'm paying for my mistakes," Tom shot
back.

"Yeah, you are," MoD Harry relented.

"I will retrieve the abominations, Master," Death cackled, his voice echoing around the room. The
other Horcruxes instantly appeared on the floor in front of MoD Harry, shocking everyone but the
three wizards of the Prank Brigade.

"What will you get out of this?" MoD Harry asked suspiciously.

"Your soul is unique and every version of you is but a facet of your soul. You are my master but
when the piece of you does not have or claim my Hallows I don't respond to them. As time moves
on you will re-integrate with each facet of yourself. This exact situation is part of why I gave you
Tom and Severus. Would you like me to complete the reintegration and binding for your younger
self?" Death asked solicitously.

"Please, he needs people that care about him and won't lie. Give them overview copies of my
younger self's memories so there aren't too many problems. Don't let him release them from the bond
for at least twenty years..." MoD Harry instructed.

"Best not make it releaseable at all," Severus put in quickly.

"Why?" MoD Harry asked with a frown.

"It will satisfy my oaths and life debt while keeping the three of them out of too much trouble. The
younger you will have to go to Slytherin but I'm fairly certain you conned the hat into putting you
into Gryffindor in the first place. Quirrell, if he survives, can go back to teaching muggle studies.
Tom can take over Defense and break the curse he put there, and the younger you will be able to
keep both me and Tom in line while getting you away from Petunia," Severus put in firmly.

"Petunia?! That spiteful bitch?!" Professor Snape spluttered in open horror, making Dumbledore feel
even worse for putting Harry with the woman in the first place.

"They, you, don't need my memories of that, just an overview," MoD Harry said stubbornly.

"Not with the scars you have," Tom said firmly. "Harry, this needs to be done. They need all of the
other you's memories."

"Alright," Harry agreed finally in defeat. "Death?"

"It will be done Master. I will hold the authority of my Hallows until this facet of you is ready for it.
He may keep the physical Hallows to play with except for the power of the stone, which he will
receive when he claims the immortality and authority. They can not be taken from him," Death
agreed cheerfully.

"Then we just need to get back," Naruto sighed. In an instant they were back in the forest of death in
a collapsed pile in the muddle of their camp.
"That jutsu wasn't supposed to do that... something interfered," the bubbly voice from before hissed in outrage.

"We need to tell the elders!" the male voice said in a slight panic. They disappeared without a further sound.

"Mini's what happened?" Anko asked carefully, her voice firm.

"Either Shinigami messed with a genjutsu or he was screwing with us," Harry grunted as they disentangled themselves.

"Or your insane luck kicked in... again!" Severus snarked,

"Alright, that's enough. We still need to examine Naruto's Sexy Jutsu and work on your henge," Iruka said firmly, stopping the friendly squabble before it began.

They spent the rest of the day critiquing each other's henge and mimicry skills which would allow them to pass inspection when using the henge. The boys got very uncomfortable learning how to walk like various girls while the girls learned some embarrassing facts about their teammates. All in all it was a productive and fun day.

Chapter End Notes

I should probably warn you all that I have the flu just now so don't expect daily updates...
Forest Bath

Chapter Notes

For those who care I am down with the flu and not doing much of anything as a result. It may take time to get back to any writing but I scraped this chapter together for you all any way. Happy Easter!

Incidentally...
Gaki = Brat

The next morning everyone was awoken by Anko noisily dragging A protesting Naruto out of his tent.

"Naruto, you clearly have never seen a naked woman. After that shameful display with the anti-pervert sexy jutsu I let Iruka make you all practice walking and clothing arrangement with the henge. Guess what? Its my turn!" Anko cackled, openly dragging the struggling blond towards the stream.

"Anko? Is this really necessary?" Iruka asked, sweat drop clearly visible along with his nervousness.

"Oh? How often have you seen a naked woman?" Anko asked, suddenly suspicious.

"That's none of your business!" Iruka immediately insisted stiffly.

"Girls, we get to teach the boys a few things," Anko declared sadistically. "Blondie, make Kage Bunshin and hustle everyone to the stream or no Ramen for three months."

"For the Kami love of Ramen!" Naruto declared fiercely, forgetting about his sensei's hold on him. 100 Kage Bunshins of both Anko and Naruto suddenly appeared out of thin air. The Anko's sadistically let go of their Naruto's only to execute them and advance on everyone else.

"Oh ho! This is a nice little bonus!" the real Anko said briefly.

"Ramen, ramen, ramen," Naruto muttered dazedly, unaware that he had replicated the two of them so perfectly, mind and all.

"Is he alright? I know his reserves are insane but he copied you perfectly along with himself," Iruka asked with open concern.

"We have about double our normal chakra. Blondie controlled it pretty well and the versions of him had about the same reserves as we do. Those chakra exercises have been paying off. We might need to make up more for him though since his reserve size still make his fine control crap," a clone Anko declared. "We also got copies of both their memories. The mini's have been playing with the forbidden scroll from the Hokage's office as part of Naruto's heritage. Thankfully they've listened to the warnings... mostly."

"You lot have been playing with Kinjutsu?! That stuff is deadly when done wrong!" Iruka practically roared, complete with his demon head jutsu.
"We know what we're doing!" Naruto said stubbornly, having mostly recovered and now on his feet but still in Anko's grasp.

"I, unfortunately, agree with the gaki. They are being appropriately cautious and Naruto tries the chakra intense stuff first as the only one with reserves as large as a Bijuu. Once he's got it they try to get it refined down and see if its safe yet for the rest of them. Usually they decide its not safe until they hit Jonin level or better, proving they have some sense," Anko clone agreed.

Just as the group reached the stream they discovered that a few of the clones had created a pool in the stream bed using an earth jutsu. The team contemplated this fact only long enough for the Anko clones to grab them. They were all summarily stripped naked and dumped into the new stone bathing pool. The real Anko sent the clones off for guard duty before stripping and joining them.

"Sensei?" Hinata blushed hard.

"You all have to get used to seeing bare flesh. It might save your life or the life of a comrade," Anko reminded them simply. "It will help you when you treat wounds and when an enemy is trying to use sex appeal to distract or entice you. Most of you are clan heirs and need to be especially concerned about being tricked into a marriage. This will help with all of that."

"I can't argue with your logic," Iruka agreed with a grimace, ending the building protests of everyone else as they settled into the pool for a bit of a soak.

"Sensei, how did you make it into a hot spring?" Hinata asked with a blush.

"The marking carved into the stone with chakra," Anko explained carefully. "I'm not properly trained in Fuuinjutsu, sealing, but a friend helped me learn how to make storage scrolls, exploding tags, and a private hot spring. The storage scrolls and exploding tags are something I will expect you all to learn. They are too useful to ignore. If you show promise in the art I'll see about finding records or a proper teacher but the clan and village that specialized in it was wiped out because they were thought to be too dangerous, too powerful."

"Naruto is the last heir of that clan which is part of why he has his mother's family name. The Uzumaki were a confirmed long time clan and his mother was the clan heir before they were destroyed. As an example the forth Hokage was a true unknown and an orphan with no known established related clan. If he married into a clan the children would be of his wife's clan. Only his famous status and status as Hokage would allow the child to carry his name in any part or potentially establish a new clan. Its a matter of reputation," Iruka explained, picking up with the heritage information that Anko might not know.

"I thought you told them," Harry frowned.

"I thought you did," Naruto said, equally puzzled. "Its still nice to hear about my mother's family, even if only a little bit."

"Told us what?" Iruka asked slowly with sinking dread.

"Er, there is a reason I resemble the fourth's head on the mountain?" Naruto admitted sheepishly, scratching at his head in embarrassment. It took barely a moment for the two Jonin to make the connection before they started swearing. The rest of the prank brigade just looked at them incredulously before basically muttering its Naruto and Harry and accepting it with a resigned sigh.

"Does the third know that you know?" Iruka asked despairingly.

"Er, possibly? We've never actually discussed it and I think he's firmly pretending that I don't know,"
Naruto said thoughtfully. "Tom and Severus found out when Harry and I did from the Shinigami. It was weird but they explained why I shouldn't tell anyone yet. You're our team and need to know, just like with the fox and Shinigami stuff."

"He could also be waiting for you to be strong enough to deal with any enemies left over from your parents," Harry reminded them all.

After that distracting bit of news was done they settled back and tried to ignore one another's nakedness. Once they actually started getting comfortable enough with simply being in the same pool of water as each other Anko had them start critiquing each other both in form and movement. To help them get slightly more comfortable with the idea Iruka insisted they could talk about the movement as if they were helping check taijutsu moves or correcting walking stances. It worked surprisingly well.

The girls were the first to start examining the more sensual aspects. This resulted in the rest of the day being spent in and out of the water, completely naked, as having fun practicing nearly every movement under the sun except actual sex. As a bonus they also used the situation as minor anatomy lesson and an examination of where each muscle is in the body and how it affects movement. This led to better critiques and would later lead to a better understanding of body language in general.

Sleep that night was only interrupted by the change of watch.
Wandering through a very different forest from where the young prank brigade slept three Jedi wondered over their own assigned mission. They had no idea that they were being watched, or at least that was what it looked like.

"Hey Master? Where do you think we are going to find this Sasori? Or Deidra?" Anakin asked idly. Most of the emotions connected to his memories had been released thanks to the reborn members of the Whirlpool village. All he had left to unlock and deal with was his blinding rage and betrayal when it came to Palpatine combined with his basic enslavement as a Sith thanks to more than a decade of shinobi mind healing.

The Uzumaki clan along with the rest of the hidden Whirlpool village had excellent mind healers, medics, and more generalized healers. Their arrival at the estate had allowed the med bay to become fully staffed as well as unlocking several more medical areas for general use. The entire affair had been deemed a massive success, especially with the special window on to their old world so that they could randomly check on things.

"I don't know Anakin. Its not like we can just put out a job ad in the paper or look them up on the holocom," Obi-Wan scolded in familiar exasperation. "And don't call me Master!"

"Of course Master," Anikin smirked as his son silently laughed at his side.

The quietly muttered fond complaint of "insolent sons" delighted both Anikin and Luke beyond measure.

They had formalized their family situation and Obi-Wan was now officially Anakin's adoptive father, making him Luke and Harry's grandfather. While there had been some original consideration of a love life between Anikin and Obi-Wan after Obi-Wan had joined Harry's people it had felt wrong and weird. This resulted in them realizing that while they loved each other they weren't in love with one another. Something that was finally described to them as familial love over romantic love by a very amused Uzumaki elder who had finally taken pity on the pair and sat them down for a talk.

"Interesting," Uchiha Itachi murmured. He had been heading for Konoha to check on his younger brother only to stumble across the trio. An impulsive choice had him shadowing them, completely unaware that their force senses had told them that he was there from the start.

"Think the others got de-aged again?" Luke asked idly.

"If we are even in the same world and allowed to remain to search for them I have no doubt that we will find them irregardless of if their ages have been altered... They get into too much trouble and have no doubt already begun building a reputation for being trouble magnets, terrifying in some fashion, or extremely gifted in some way shape or form," Obi-Wan said pointedly.
"You didn't answer the question Master," Anakin smirked.

"Either they were transferred directly, returned to adult ages, or were de-aged. I have no real idea what state Death left them in, Anakin!" Obi-Wan shot back in exasperation. "The deputy bond is dormant."

"Yours too?" Anakin asked calmly.


"Did we get anything out of him about the others?" Anakin asked with a frown.

"He muttered something about a Leaf Village and not letting us near there yet. Some invasion has to happen on time. We are only allowed to use our lightsabers against our targets and leave a trail pointing to Harry, who is presumably in this Leaf Village. I think he's using us to speed up events a bit and take out a few players that aren't necessarily on Harry's list or are only on his immortals to kill list on a technicality or something," Obi-Wan explained unhappily.

"If it keeps my brother from having to fight an extra idiot I really don't mind," Luke smirked, showing a bit more of his father than usual.

"There is that," Anakin agreed.

"Oh, I'm not arguing about helping the others with their list. I simply dislike the cryptic way this is being handled. Its almost as bad as asking for directions or counseling from Master Yoda," Obi-Wan pointed out in exasperation. Both blondes grimaced in agreement. They hadn't thought of it in that light and could easily see the parallels.

Uchiha Itachi considered these strange men for a moment before deciding to take a chance. He stepped out of hiding in front of them and waited for the trio to react.

"You our shadow?" Luke asked mildly as the three men studied the shinobi. Itachi inclined his head in acknowledgement, hiding his surprise at being detected before revealing himself.

"Got any information on our targets or were you just curious?" Anakin asked neutrally.

"What do you know of Konoha?" Itachi asked blandly.

"Our... leader is probably there if Konoha is the Leaf Village," Obi-Wan answered carefully.

"You are not from the Elemental Nations," Itachi said flatly.

"Nope," Anakin agreed cheerfully.

"Neither of your stated targets will be easy to kill," Itachi said after a long moment of watching them.

"They never are," Luke agreed with a grumpy sigh.

"Do you not wish to check in with your leader?" Itachi asked with curious suspicion.

"Certainly, if we knew where he was and our colleague hadn't warned us that he wasn't far enough along in his training to deal with the suspicion that would bring. We were trained... somewhat differently," Obi-Wan informed him with cheerful self-deprecation.

An idly tossed Kunai was easily dodged by Anakin with the force. Itachi narrowed his gaze in interested thoughtfulness.
"You know something about our targets," Luke said thoughtfully.

"Yes," Itachi agreed blandly. Their targets were fairly well known dangerous rogue shinobi, a nukenin. From their actions alone he knew more about a random Genin than they did. Something which might not actually matter depending on their skill level beyond the simple careless dodge the older blonde had displayed.

"You willing to share any of that intel?" Anakin asked cheerfully.

"I clearly have to re-teach you subtlety," Obi-Wan sighed wryly.

"I'm a very direct person," Anakin snarked back, much to Luke's amusement. Itachi easily noted that not once did the three drop their guard. Casual banter was a fairly common tactic, one which generally worked, that was often used to put people at ease and infuriate enemies.

A casual toss of two bingo books caught in mid-air ended the banter.

"Look in those. If you can bring in three S-class bounties or five A-class ones we'll talk again. Next Hidden Village you hit ask about the Iwa explosives corps and about shinobi puppeteers," Itachi told them. "Next civilian village you hit, join a caravan heading for a hidden village after checking in with any bounty office to register as freelance bounty hunters and pick up a new bingo book or two if they have them."

"And what exactly are we paying for this intel?" Luke asked suspiciously.

"I get to deliver a message from you to your brother while I check on mine in Konoha. Even when you make them think you are a mass murderer they tend to worry. You are clearly on good terms and I'm... curious," Itachi explained. It wasn't like it was that hard to get the information he'd given them. He needed new copies of the bingo books any way.

"Yeah," Anakin agreed, thinking of the time the Jedi council had forced Obi-Wan to play dead.

"Harry shouldn't have too many problems with that," Obi-Wan mused thoughtfully.

"Who will I deliver it to?" Itachi asked carefully.

"The head of the Kurowata clan. Tell him that three family light blades, two blue and one red, are helping with his list but can't report in person. Also tell him that the skeleton is acting like the little green troll," Obi-Wan told him. The references were shockingly obvious to anyone who knew about them and the Jedi or their specific appearances but still cryptic enough that even people in the know might not get it.

Itachi gave them a shallow bow before disappearing back into the forest. The three Jedi changed course, heading for where they could feel the nearest village was. Little thought was given to a spying snake that puffed into smoke.
Day three in the forest was firmly blamed on both Harry's and Naruto's luck. No matter how much the pair argued that it wasn't their fault no one bought it, not even the two trouble magnets themselves.

They had been firmly taught guard watch rotations early on in their prank war with the village, something which had been reinforced by the occasional night time retaliatory prank. As a result when they were told that they were using watch rotations during the forest camping trip they knew what to do. The group was split down the middle and two people at a time were to be on watch overnight. There would be three shifts each night to allow everyone to get enough sleep even when the person had guard duty. Teaching them to work on only two hours of sleep or even less would come much later when their bodies were older and less likely to take damage from the lack of sleep.

The morning of the third day had both Naruto and Harry on watch and thus also responsible for making breakfast.

"Did we find any berries or better yet roots with starch in them?" Harry asked as he got out a pan to use for cooking breakfast.

"I think the cattail roots have starch... why?" Naruto asked quietly.

"Crush them for me will you? I want to see about making some bread. Usually we'd need to dry and powder them for flour but we might still be able to get some sort of pancakes out of fresh crushed roots," Harry explained. "We still have rations so this is a good time to experiment a bit."

"I found a few leeks. We can roast them a bit and use the juices, maybe with some of our stores?" Naruto suggested.

"Its a giant green onion so we may be better to use it later in a stir fry after slicing them up. If I caramelize them in the pan and then add in rice, water, and meat it should taste pretty good," Harry countered. "Maybe a bit of mint and thyme as well. We could even add it to a skewer with meat and sliced roots to cook for later."

"I'm not much of a cook," Naruto pointed out sheepishly.

"You're getting there. You needed to realize that a lot of this stuff is something you can get or make without having to face the stupid civilians even without the henge," Harry pointed out idly. "Just get better at the survival stuff, memorize what plants grow when but are still good to eat and practice cooking with it. Make sure you know what pieces are good and what season you can harvest them in. I only know so much because the Dursleys made me cook and tend the garden along with some of the Herbology lessons at Hogwarts."

Naruto hummed thoughtfully but didn't argue or object to Harry's observations. The Kunai that
landed next to them had them both jumping in surprise and looking towards where it came from only to meet the eyes of Uchiha Itachi.

"You need more practice," the nukenin commented dispassionately.

"Probably," Harry agreed before Naruto could get indignant over the comment.

"I offered to deliver a message to the Kurowata Clan Head from three strange men who claim their leader is in Konoha but didn't know they were hunting S-class shinobi," Itachi said bluntly.

"Not the weirdest way I've gotten a message. Lets hear it," Harry sighed, going back to tending the food he was cooking.

"Three family light blades, two blue and one red, are helping with your list but can't report in person. The skeleton is acting like the little green troll," Itachi told him, still not certain what the message meant.

Harry nearly dropped the food into the fire as he burst out laughing.

"Uh, Harry?" Naruto asked tensely. He knew he wasn't a match for this strange shinobi if the man decided to attack but having Harry helpless with laughter would only cripple them further in a fight.

"One... second!" Harry wheezed out as he forced his laughter under control while rescuing the food and setting it off to one side in safety. "Sorry. Its just the thought of the Shinigami acting like Yoda of all people! Ha ha ha!

The helpless laughter consumed Harry again, leaving him only barely able to avoid rolling into the fire and the still hot pan.

"So who are the blades?" Naruto asked quickly, fighting his own mirth for all that it was weaker than Harry's due to never having met the small Jedi Grandmaster.

"Probably Luke, Anakin, and Obi-Wan. Two of them have blue eyes and the third has red hair. Also Anakin has used a red lightsaber in the past while both Luke and Obi-Wan have used blue. Though I think Luke is using a green one right now and Anakin is still deciding on which color fits him with his... past history," Harry explained casually as he fought off his mirth. "If it had been any of the DA they would have said something different, probably commenting on my luck and habit of hunting Dark Lords or something like that. Unless it was McGonagall, she probably would have mentioned my birth father and asked after my animagus progress or my knack for trouble."

"Your lizard people would have just come and found you?" Naruto guessed.

"Yeah, and the troopers probably wouldn't have trusted anyone to deliver their message or they would have just let rumors of people seeing them get to us. I don't think they would have gone so far as to walk into the nearest town and start asking about us in full armor but I can't say they wouldn't. Most of them have almost no training in spy work," Harry agreed happily, his eyes and mouth still silently laughing.

"Aren't your DA still in training?" Naruto asked with a frown.

"Yeah and I bet Shinigami is hijacking them occasionally to mimic Jedi missions if Cardinal isn't filling in with simulations on the new SAO. I suspect they're getting extra combat experience over peace keeping ones simply because of my luck and it being the Shinigami but with how the bastard skeleton has been acting with us... who knows?" Harry shrugged. He wasn't overly worried in part because he got a mental progress report as he slept every once in a while.
Bill was apparently really taking to learning new warding techniques from somewhere that remained vague in Harry's mind. Charlie still adored dragons, even miniature ones like the firelizards, taking extra care of Kin, Devlin, and Zaar while their three wizards were away. Smaug had been allowed to resume a slightly larger size of five feet long and neither Sherlock nor Dr. Watson had convinced him they weren't his treasure yet. The Cardinal System with the corrected Sword Art Online code and the extra databases to add more material was doing well cycling people through to learn new skills while playing in the virtual world. Anyone using the game/training world Cardinal had set up was kicked out every twenty hours for personal maintenance unless an override was used. The open warfare originally fought with paint guns and other training tools for everyone had been added to sections of SAO with actual low level pain feedback to make it more effective but not dangerous as a training tool.

All in all everyone was turning into a functioning community crossed with a small army. It made Harry wonder why he would need an army even if knowing his people were safe made him happy.

"Interesting," Itachi muttered before disappearing back among the trees and beyond.

"You played that well," Iruka commented, ending his attempt at fake sleep along with everyone else.

"Uchiha Itachi is an S-class nukenin and is supposed to have killed the rest of his clan to see how strong he had gotten," Anko explained grimly.

"Funny, he didn't seem like a raging psychopath," Harry snarked.

"Hardy har har," Tom shot back, knowing it was a double dig against his past actions and commentary on what had just happened. They had all been woken up with the raised voices and the smell of cooking food but Itachi's sudden arrival had kept them all playing at being heavy sleepers as a chance at catching him by surprise if it broke out into a fight. A fact made difficult if it weren't for Occlumency shields when Death acting like Yoda came up along with the message explanation.

"Our unofficial back up must have been taken out or he just snuck around them, either way it isn't good," Iruka said grimly. He was already up and starting to grab essentials. The extra camping stuff would be abandoned in favor of getting his team to safety and thus keeping them alive.

"Can we eat breakfast before we start..." Harry began only to finish with a yelp of surprise as a pit opened up underneath him, sending him falling down a network of tunnels with a shocked Naruto at his side. A second one opened up under Tom and Severus, sending them tumbling down their own earthy corridors spewing vicious curses as they fought to stay relatively upright.

"Not again!" was the general complaint as they quickly followed after their kidnapped teammates.

When the rest of the brigade caught up to their missing members they were hard pressed not to laugh. A mixed group of giant Panthers, Tigers, Foxes, and Wolves had corralled their teammates and were either checking them for injuries, cuddling them, or trying to lick them clean. The four young men protested loudly but didn't actually do anything that might harm their furry captors in their attempts to escape.

"~Their nestmates are here,~" came the hissy chuckle in parseltongue as a giant serpent cut off their escape route back up the kidnapping tunnels.

"Don't eat them!" Harry protested in the current human language.

"~I don't plan too,~" came the amused hiss as the serpent revealed its lazy self by settling into a nice coil in front of the new tunnels. The giant albino snake purposefully turned his head away from the
unmolested shinobi in favor of openly laughing at the four trapped ones.

"Use the human tongue," one of the giant foxes scolded in a light feminine voice.

"They aren't treating the cubs right," the largest grey wolf grumbled in a low rumbling growl.

"We're not cubs!" Naruto protested mulishly.

"Be quiet kit," a male giant fox scolded before tumbling Naruto over onto his butt and pulling him into a close cuddle with the fox's own giant bushy red tail.

"We aren't summons, if that's what you are wondering," a female giant tiger told them in open amusement.

"Then how can we understand you?" asked Shikamaru bluntly, his grip on his kunai tightening until his knuckles were bordering on white.

"We are drawing on their bloodline magic," a giant male black panther explained. "Its only open a little but combined with the chakra growth seal on this area, their link to the Shinigami, and their partly open magic it was enough for us to learn your speech. The growth seal already allowed us to learn more of those like you who visit, enhancing our intelligence."

"Of course the packmates of that one visiting so often over the seasons helped as well," a slightly smaller giant wolf yipped, indicating Kiba and his white puppy partner Akamaru, sitting on the boy's head.

"So the only new thing is being able to actually talk to us and deciding to cuddles the gakis?" Anko clarified cautiously.

"We know our hatchlings well enough even if we can't generally get close to them because of all of you two-leggers," the albino snake sniffed from behind them in perfectly understandable regal tones.

"How would you even identify us as your... hatchlings?" Tom asked grumpily. His hair was wet from an on going tongue bath by the hovering female giant tiger keeping him pinned in place. At least the tiger was a fully black one with golden eyes.

"You once knew me as Nagini my stubborn Tom," the serpent said fondly. "I believe that the adoption for the others came from either their animal forms or some other thing that happened to them. I have grown much since I was your small Nagini."

"Nagini?!" Tom choked, tears coming to his eyes. He had been too damaged to realize he even could mourn her when he had felt the Longbottom brat cut her down.

Nagini hissed in wordless fond amusement but didn't do anything else. She knew Manda still searched for the Speaker and was determined not to let the power mad serpent near her Tom. Her Tom was the one the serpent clan should be obeying, not that overgrown earthworm Manda. Nagini's own position was that of the white snake sage and only a type of shadow clone was here with her Tom. Nagini's own real body was trapped in the serpent caves, fused with part of the rock there. She had grown old and powerful but still could not come to her Tom anymore.

"The snake can not leave her den. This is a shadow clone," the giant tiger cleaning Tom paused long enough to explain apologetically. She cuddled her hurting cub close and let Tom weep into her fur.

It took more than three hours to convince the oversized predators that the young shinobi needed to be let go. No one managed to convince them that the four weren't their cubs/kits/hatchlings. All the
while Nagini openly laughed at the mess that they were trying to escape.

They eventually made it back into the forest above, complete with an escort from their new furry parents.
Their escort of furry predators had just left them within a half mile of one of the gated entrances to the training ground when the next wave of insane luck struck. *Hard.*

The flying senbon coming from nowhere was a shock and the fact that they *only* hit the Jonin, leaving everyone else untouched, was suspicious. The words that echoed from around them though, had the Jonin going white.

"Ku ku ku, so my little spy was right. You are *very* interesting little mice," the male voice echoed around the clearing where they had been having lunch.

"Orochimaru, you bastard!" Anko hissed venomously even as the numbing paralysis poison forced her to collapse in an impotent heap.

The prank brigade was immediately on alert, moving into a defensive circle with drawn weapons facing out.

"Impressive for new Genin but then *I am* here to test the Kurowata clan and the former little Hyuuga, ku ku ku. *Impress me!*" Orochimaru ordered. Then he attacked.

The group scattered out to give themselves room to move without hitting each other. They all could tell from the fact that he was moving *slower* than Anko-sensei during training that he was holding back to test them. Not a word was spoken as they took vicious advantage of this. Naruto's near instant use of large numbers of shadow clones were recklessly sacrificed to let them each get a hit in.

The Snake Sanin was frustratingly keeping to mostly taijutsu with an occasional D or E rank jutsu casually tossed in to good effect. The Genin fought hard, using every trick and last desperate idea they could come up with.

Half an hour later they were *still* fighting as their teachers watched helplessly and Orochimaru chuckled in delight. Something inside the wizards abruptly unlocked as words started pouring from their lips forming a chant even as they danced through the battle, blades flashing and limbs whirling. Realizing something was going on the rest of the brigade immediately shifted to offense and defense, leaving the three to whatever they were attempting with as little interference as possible. Orochimaru, curious, allowed them to maneuver him. He watched with great interest as the three continued their combat movements, shifting them to be in tune with each other and the cadence of whatever they were chanting in a language he did not know. The final word they shouted as they suddenly kneeled though, gave him chills... "*Shinigami!*"

The terrifying skeletal reaper formed our of nothing in nearly an instant, forming in the middle of the circle the three had made.

"Little Master before I collect this... *idiot* I suggest you require him to summon one of the snake clan. They need to witness this and none of the others have even a partial contract with the serpents..." Death pointed out calmly. Everyone had basically frozen when he manifested, something that he found greatly amusing every single time.

"I don't think the magic will let us move just yet... it was like our magic unlocked and immediately forced us into a... ritual of some sort. I think you're supposed to move and then we're supposed to call... someone else?" Harry said with a frown.

"She finally noticed did she? Very well. I need to have this out with a few of my colleagues in any
case. I wasn't the only one to mark the three of you after all, simply the first to actually get their hands on you," Death agreed amiably as he stepped from the circle.

Before any of the three wizards could demand answers their voices shouted a new word "Haiguusha!"

A beautiful dark goddess appeared, pale skin, lips the color of dark rosewood, hair as black as night, dressed in a red roman style dress that dropped to her ankles. A loose belt of soft fabric in a slightly darker shade than what draped over the rest of her was wrapped around her toned hips. Tom noticed keys jangling, hanging from her belt, even as he noticed the sturdy but exquisite sandals adorning her delicate feet. She stepped from the circle they made with a gentle amused smile aimed at the three wizards and an indignant glare for the reaper.

"Mors!" Hecate hissed angrily.

"Oh my, you must be put out with me if you are using my roman designation," Death said in open amusement.

"You stole three of my favorites!" Hecate said indignantly.

"All three of them had died at least once, if not more than once before I asserted my claim to them. By the laws and rules all like us have agreed upon they fall under my domain just as countless others do," Death pointed out reasonably.

Hecate had been opening her mouth to pour out a tirade against the injustice of his theft only for her mouth to snap shut. The thoughtful look she gave not only the reaper but the three still frozen wizards sent chills down the spines of the rest of their team.

"You want them to keep using magic, yes? To help it grow?" Death offered in amusement. Hecate nodded curtly. "The reason it was... turned off was so that they could learn some new skills. I also did it so that I could tweak their DNA so that they could both generate magic or draw it from around them without issues considering how many worlds they've been traveling through. It was nothing personal, just basic maintenance my dear."

"Why didn't you ask me first?" Hecate asked, obviously more curious than irate now.

"It wasn't important yet and I came to them as part of the first form. As a result it really wasn't any of your business. As the Angel of Death when it comes to anything related to death its my responsibility," Death shrugged. "Harry claimed the Hallows and you know how Father added things to them after the two of us came up with the idea for a lark."

"Arguing with the Almighty is... unwise," Hecate grimaced in agreement. "Alright, I see your point. I didn't have all the facts and I'll talk to the others."

She strode back to the wizard circle and disappeared the same way she had come. Their frozen state came undone with an ulf of falling bodies and lost breath.

"What was that?!" Tom demanded, irritated, as he got back to his feet.

"Your new bloodline activated and with both of us wanting to show up while you three wanted Orochimaru dealt with it sort of formed an impromptu ceremony," Death answered honestly. "Don't worry about it. It shouldn't happen again."

"What is this?! What genjutsu are you using that I can not even detect the flaw?" Orochimaru demanded in a mix of angry and impressed.
"Well, I'm here so I suppose I could simply claim him..." Death said thoughtfully.

"Got anyone you can give back in trade?" Harry snarked jokingly.

"Actually, yes. One blond idiot plus an extra half of an imprisoned/sealed fox Bijuu coming right up. I'll give you his wife right now on top of them if you go after Danzo and his ROOT before the month is up," Death offered.

"Exactly how badly did Orochimaru and Danzo piss you off?" Ino asked in narrow-eyed shock.

"Danzo is harvesting things which he shouldn't be. It won't be long before he tried turning his mindless slave puppets into Dementors or reapers under his full control. It won't work but it will be a pain to clean up," Death explained cheerfully. There was also the fact that having the other half of the Kyuubi and Naruto's father sitting his gut only for them to practice devastating Jutsu kept giving him indigestion. Of course his little master and their friends didn't need to know that.

"Now wait a minute!" Orochimaru protested.

"Deal!" Naruto and Anko agreed immediately.

Death used his black cloak like a living extension of himself and captured Orochimaru only to slam something to the back of the Sanin's head and drop him like a rag doll. A spiderweb of light blue lines of power spread over his body before he disappeared. At the same moment Anko cried out in pain as the curse mark with its piece of Orochimaru's soul was brutally ripped from her shoulder, leaving a wound that bled sluggishly behind. Hinata quickly tended to their sensei and finally managed to give the Jonin pair a general antidote to most paralytics so that they could move again.

"One of my reapers will take his place for now. There are a few events that must happen that he was key for. I apologize for the coming inconvienence and destruction but it can't be helped," Death told them. He simply disappeared before anyone could get another word in edgewise or a single question out.

"That does not bode well for us," Severus commented, only for two barely clothed bodies to suddenly land directly in front of him on the forest floor. After being checked they were tentatively identified as Naruto's parents and found to be in perfect, if exhausted, health.

"I do not like the way your luck has been feeding off of each others," Shikamaru half snarled at the two sheepish luck magnets.

Ino huffed and bonked her super smart friend lightly over the head with a scroll she had been carrying for light reading.

"You just don't like the random factor since it makes it hard to plan around," Ino shot back irritably.

"Naruto help us carry them back under a henge with your shadow clones please," Anko instructed. "This is something for the Hokage to sort out."

They wasted no time in heading for the Hokage's office.
Almost the moment the Prank Brigade was away for their first day of training in the forest of death the Nara clan casually began doing research on the S-class targets their adoptive clan members had listed. Sharp yet lazy eyes often found themselves drawn to Danzo and his ROOT members as time moved on. Jonin, ANBU, and other clans took quiet notice of the Nara clan's watchfulness, starting their own quiet investigations and occasionally passing information on to the clan of geniuses. Unofficial security around the Prank Brigade went up as watchful eyes took in normally forgetful details. Nearly the entirety of Konoha had gone on quiet alert as they unconsciously prepared for a potential civil war.

The early return of the Prank Brigade caused concern. The fact that their unofficial escort exited the training ground nearly six hours later, battered and bruised, was not reassuring. The unexpected addition of two unconscious adult shinobi that resembled the fourth Hokage and the Red-Hot Habanaro to the group of Genin made the entire Nara clan wonder if it was Harry's impossible luck that had kicked in or Naruto's. Their immediate beeline to the Hokage Tower wasn't any more reassuring than the sudden flurry of activity requiring Shikaku Nara, Ibiki and the head healers from the hospital.

Then there was quiet, absolute quiet from the important people that had been rushing around.

It was into this quiet that Danzo casually walked with his fanatically loyal ROOT escort. The atmospheric knife's edge poised against an unknown throat.

The way the prank brigade spilled out of the tower laughing joyfully just in front of him did almost nothing to break the tension.

"I told you they had an awesome bloodline!" Naruto shouted gleefully as the group ran and tumbled playfully in the street.

"Troublesome," Shikamaru grouched, his lips twitching upwards into an unwilling smirk.

"Did you see how that tiger kept licking Tom?!" Kiba asked gleefully.

"I'm hungry!" Choji complained. "Can't we use some of the money for lunch?"

"Calm down brats!" Anko called laughingly. "Head for the buffet."

"Can't we have ramen?" Naruto pouted immediately.

"Not unless you want to give up ramen for a month," Ino said sweetly, threat clear in her eyes.

"Ulp! Buffet sounds good!" Naruto back tracked hastily.
"We need new gear," Shino pointed out stoically.

"Ano, I need more medial supplies... and training," Hinata put in.

"We all need more training. The only reason we won is because the Kurowata bloodline isn't really known even to us. We had no idea it would do **that**," Severus scoffed. "The way it worked before for the others is completely different from this one. We need to sort out how to do small things and how to avoid accidentally calling things we aren't ready for. Honestly, if Orochimaru hadn't been on hand and playing with us... Well at least we're alive."

"I think it had more to do with him not knowing anything. Which is, you know, why he was testing us any way. Its not our fault that the Shinigami shows up the first time your bloodline activates to confirm that its supposed to be awake," Naruto pointed out oh so casually.

"He at least could have checked those blasted seals for us," Tom scowled, faking brooding disappointment.

"He did," Naruto laughed uproariously at the face his friend was making. "I felt him check mine!"

"At least you didn't get a customs update shoved into your head by the Shinigami because of being clan head with general orders on future relic retrieval missions and how to destroy them," Harry said dryly.

"You didn't tell us about that," Iruka said disapprovingly.

"It was more of a formalization of what happened in the forest than anything else," Harry admitted sheepishly.

"Brigade! Fall in!" Anko ordered sharply, ending the frivolity as the group fell into a two line formation in front of their teachers. "You earned the title Prank Brigade as shiny academy students. This latest escapade is going to cost you that name. The Hokage has agreed that you need a team name fitting your skills and has also ordered your entrance into the next Chunin exams. Congratulations, Kitsune Squad."

"Its not just 'cuz of you know?" Naruto asked nervously.

"No, its a mix of things. We called you a Brigade before because of your use of shadow clones and the fact that you regularly recruited and or used most of the village, both civilian and shinobi, in your prank attacks. You'll remember that each grouping is named differently depending on how many people are officially assigned to it. Genin teams are usually four people. This graduates to standard squad size later on as you get reassigned. Shinobi work in a mix of groupings and often solo. As a result we have the ranking system and the ability to pick our assignments most of the time based on the rankings of both mission and shinobi," Iruka lectured. "Standard military though has Squads being 4-10 people, Platoons are 3-4 Squads or 16-40 people, Companies are 3-4 Platoons or 100-200 people, Battalions are 3-5 Companies or 500-900 people, Brigades are 3 or more Battalions or 3,000-5,000 people, Divisions are 3 Brigades or 10,000-18,000 people, Corps are 2-5 Divisions, with a Field Army having 2-5 Corps."

"Which is why you aren't a Brigade any more but a squad," Anko said with a hint of non-existent fangs in her grin.

"Shouldn't that be Company then? If we're counting my shadow clones?" Naruto asked in confusion.

"He caught it," Iruka said, smothering a grin.
"He did," Anko agreed. "Kitsune Company, dismissed!"

"Wait what?" most of them muttered before it clicked a moment later only for them to glare at Anko as she burst out laughing, escaping across the roof tops with Iruka at her side.

"Who's up for a prank war on Sensei?" Harry called evilly. The chorus of agreements sent a shiver down the spines of those watching as the new Kitsune Company took to the roof tops with mischief in mind.

"Interesting," Danzo muttered, eyes narrowed in thought.

That group was growing too strong too quickly. They were a threat to the tree of Konoha and its ROOTs. He would have to arrange for... accidents on their next mission. Maybe that C-rank mission that was blatantly misrepresented? The old man was clearly desperate and had only gotten the paperwork done the other day. If he did it right he might even be able to snag the Kyuubi brat and maybe the rest for his ROOT ANBU. Danzo already had some of the clans represented. The Aburame Heir wouldn't be useful and was thus expendable, nor would the Hyuuga girl or Inuzuka brat with his puppy. The Nara would never accept the loyalty seal... Something to think about and investigate further.

Uchiha Sasuke watched the display thoughtfully, his mind flashing back to the day that Harry had stopped him breaking his hands on a training target, yet again. The green-eyed man Sasuke had mistaken for a boy had stopped him mid-strike only to drag him away from the training area and use his quickly ripped up shirt to bandage the angry Sasuke's bleeding hands.

**Flashback**

"I get it," Harry had said, his eyes on his work bandaging the broken and bleeding hands. "I understand the anger, the fury at having something so precious taken from you. Did it ever occur to you to be glad for those memories? No matter how much it hurts? You aren't the only orphan alive and sometimes we don't have any memories at all of our family or the memories aren't as nice as what you probably have."

"You're acting like them. The old people. All they ever say is let go, time will heal it, there was nothing you could have done," Sasuke said bitterly, his biting thorns and pain echoing in his gaze as two sets of eyes finally met. "Watching my family be slaughtered by my... by him and then living it again and again and again in the ultimate genjutsu of my family."

"That might be because I actually am older than I look," Harry said softly, a smile quirking at the edge of his lips. "I can't explain the times I lived through something like the genjutsu you just told me about because I don't really have the words. As for my age? For the fact that Tom and Severus are older than me? We, Tom, Severus, and I were de-aged by the mercy of Shinigami-sama. It was a desperation move by our guardian after our clan was slaughtered in order to protect us. If we had stayed our true ages we would have been hunted down and wiped out, so Mikoto prayed to the Shinigami for help in protecting us... and was answered, for a price."

Sasuke listened in fascination as Harry explained, with mental prompting from Death, the details. Tom had been 25, Severus had been just shy of 19, while Harry had supposedly been just shy of 12. The de-aging had dumped Harry to just short of seven years old while Tom and Severus had been a full seven years old. That by the time their dying guardian had gotten them to Konoha they were seven and eight respectively.
An hour passed while Sasuke digested this information, turning it this way and that, checking it for flaws and finding none. Death used the time to carefully plot with Harry what to say next.

"You know not many of us orphans have even a single memory of our parents," Harry's soft voice startled Sasuke out of his brooding thoughts.

At Sasuke's silently questioning look, a rather violent mixed set of emotions had sliced across Harry's face before settling into a calm blankness before explaining.

"At least you have a history and a past, heirlooms of your family and actual memories of your parents and kin. Which is, as I said, more than most of us can claim. Tom's mother died of childbirth complications and his father came of arrogant minor nobles. Severus... I still haven't manage to weasel much out from him. Just that his mother died when he was still a child and that something happened to his father even before he can really remember that drove him to drink. Me? My parents were murdered when I was barely more than a year old and my so-called relatives on my mother's side were worse than rabid dogs. I would have died for certain if my father's clan hadn't found me in time when I was six," Harry paused briefly to take off his protective mesh undershirt to reveal a level of scarring that even a Jonin who'd been tortured wouldn't have. "Our history? The history of the Kurowata Clan? Was probably destroyed along with the rest of our clan. I know that our most precious heirlooms were destroyed by our clan's priests of the Shinigami before they could be stolen and misused or abused. It...was safer for the rest of the Elemental Nations if they were. Yet some were still taken by our enemies."

Sasuke's stunned look said it all as Harry slid his mesh undershirt back on, its close protective weave hiding his scars, most of them gained from the Dursleys in his first life, from casual sight.

"Never assume you have been harmed so much that nothing could be worse. Equally never assume that someone else can't destroy what you've built. Kami and his servant Shinigami can do both. Our clan serves the Shinigami as much as equals as possible with our clan being mortal but even we bow alongside Shinigami to the Kami of Kamis, Kami-sama, and his son. His son, the gift of ages and great I Am. A gift that can never be taken from us should we but accept it," Harry said softly. "Much was taken from us but knowing of the son is a comfort with how often something... anything... everything, has been taken from me at least once in my strange life. Maybe knowing he exists will help you. Maybe it won't. One thing you need to remember is that you aren't alone, even if the only knowledge of that is that Kami-sama's son exists as proof of that."

End Flashback

Sasuke couldn't deny that in the months after that, watching his classmate play and prank, that it hadn't helped soothe the wounded beast of his heart. No matter how hard he fought to keep the all consuming rage to fuel his need to kill his brother it was slowly dying. A fact that he resented and blamed firmly on Harry. It wasn't until Harry's prankng group graduated early that he started to see how the young man had been trying to help and how that help had snuck past his defenses to work on his battered heart.

Watching the newly named Kitsune Company bolt over the roof tops after their Jonin-sensei gave Sasuke a sense of hope and relief. He didn't need to hate Harry anymore or even his brother. With
that last thought the fluttering flames of rage guttered out in his heart. It wasn't perfect but it was a start to real healing.
"I don't know how they did it!" came the drifting baffled voice of his predecessor as the Hokage.

"Troublesome. Their luck is truly beyond all knowledge," Shikaku's voice said in a less foggy wave of sound.

"Keeping them hidden from practically everyone is going to be a must, at least until they've healed and been debriefed," Sarutobi scowled audibly.

"Did they explain anything before I arrived?" Shikaku asked, his voice as laser sharp as his obvious concentration.

"No, you heard it all," Hiruzen sighed.

"Where is Naruto?" Minato Namikaze, the fourth Hokage croaked, startling the other speakers into a brief silence.

"Minato?" came the tired voice of his wife from next to him. Both exhausted shinobi forced their eyes open and barely turned their heads to see each other. Their smiles of joy blocked out everything else for a moment before they turned their attention to the monkey summoner known as the Professor.

"You've both been dead for nearly twelve years," Sarutobi said cautiously.

"For the flower that walks in moonlight is but the dappling of the leaves," Minato said the code more strongly than anything else he had managed to say thus far.

"Yet the dappling of the leaves is never solid for all that it remains eternal," Sarutobi's answering code was heavily laced with relief. "I stand at your service Hokage-sama."

"Then bring my wife and I up to speed and find my son," Minato ordered sharply, his energy coming back enough to sit up. He was joined shortly by his wife as they watched their fellows organize their thoughts.

It took nearly six hours to bring the pair up to speed and neither returnee was happy at the picture it painted or the torments their baby boy had needed to endure because of Konoha's blind stupidity.

"Right now, Hiruzen, the only things keeping my wife and I from obliterating this village are the children, the Nara, and my son's very protective friends," Minato Namikaze said in icy fury.

"I can not fault you for that. I have failed you and your family," Hiruzen said, head bowed in weary contrition.

"You will act as normal until it is time for our return to be widely known. The Nara will maintain
custody of our son as they have shown such honor and guidance for him and his friends," Kushina Uzumaki, mother of Naruto declared with equal ice frosting her voice. "We will deal with that viper Danzo and his pets. You will also recall your remaining students. I want to know why my grand-aunt and Naruto's godfather did not raise him or why his Kakashi-nii didn't either after our deaths."

"Hokage-sama I must inform you that your son's team has been ordered into the Chunin exam. I couldn't keep using the hatred of the villagers to explain why he was being held back with his group's obvious skill. Especially with their fairly regular successful pranking runs against both the Jonin and ANBU break rooms combined with their recent defeat of Orochimaru. The only consolation I can give is that the next Chunin exam is here, in Konoha with the current one just ending in another village," Hiruzen admitted sheepishly.

"Then we will use the Chunin exam to re-integrate into the village and announce our return. Is there anything else?" Minato asked, still quietly furious.

"Their team has been assigned several high level S-class targets by the Shinigami?" Sarutobi offered meekly.

"Is there a time limit? Do they have to do this themselves?" Kushina demanded sharply.

"To my knowledge there is no time limit and their personal participation is only mandatory if someone else doesn't take out the targets first," Hiruzen answered honestly. "The targets broke a divine ruling on mortals attempting to gain immortality."

"Then its workable," Minato sighed in relief. "They can receive extra training as Chunin for a better chance at surviving against their assigned targets. From your description they will pass without any real trouble. To that end with a divine assignment we will need to allocate resources for them to draw on as needed until the task is done."

"I gathered that. They have an ongoing long term S-rank mission in regards to that assigned to their team, Hokage's eyes only," Hiruzen admitted wryly.

"One of their confirmed targets is Danzo and his ROOT ANBU," Shikaku put in quietly.

"Well hell," Kushina cursed. Another second and they both slid back to the floor, having ignored the warnings their bodies were giving them about how little energy they actually had to spare. Their anger and adrenaline had finally stopped giving their bodies the supposedly needed energy boost.

"Side effects of not being dead any more?" Ibiki smirked. He had just been waiting for this to happen, having recognized the signs almost immediately after they started moving.

As an interrogation specialist Ibiki had more than a little familiarity with monitoring a target's health and breaking point. He had also gone out of his way to get a certain amount of medic training to more effectively interrogate his victims and patch them back together as needed. Pain wasn't always useful when extracting information, compassion could actually go far farther... That was unless the target was a raving nut case, blindly loyal to a fault aka a type of fanatic, or actually trained to resist interrogation rather than naturally exceptionally stubborn. Of course using such gentle methods required time to work while pain took far less time to get results of some kind, even if it was just attempted suicide.

"Why do I keep you as the head of T&I again?" Minato asked dryly.

"Because I'm damned good at my job," Ibiki smirked back. "And I made very sure to root out any information from idiots that attacked your kid so that they couldn't keep trying to assassinate him."
"There is that," Minato agreed ruefully.

There was a glow in his Kage's eyes that told Ibiki he had best make sure those particular files were copied and delivered to his blond Hokage post haste. He should also probably prepare extra holding rooms or possibly warn the ANBU about the coming bloodbath. On second thought most of the ANBU hadn't been protecting Naruto properly until the prank war, they had it coming.

"Minato did you ever tell anyone else why you made those Jutsu?" Kushina asked sweetly and evil glint of mischief making the three still standing shinobi wary.

"Did you ever tell Kyuubi why only an Uzumaki can properly contain him? With my case being the exception due to time in Shinigami's stomach?" Minato shot back mildly.

"Oh please, after that one summer we found out that it was age keeping you from being a candidate not bloodline," Kushina snorted derisively.

"Then Namikaze-sama is eligible to contain the Kyuubi?", Shikaku Nara asked curiously, his open laziness covering his intense focus on the subject.

"I'm the last of the human-wind kitsune clans. Kushina is actually the heir of the human-fire kitsune, the Uzumaki. Not all of the Uzumaki clan were kitsune or human-fire kitsune but the main branch family all were some type of kitsune. Naruto can hold his half of the Kyuubi because of this. Kurama's yokai won't hurt him too badly with his dual kitsune bloodline. Those special jutsu I made... were supposed to be courting gifts. Kitsune court using various pranks for their intended," Minato explained blandly, mischief dancing in his eyes. "A prank is always able to be turned into a weapon or a proper trap and shows not only that the potential kitsune's mate can have fun but also can protect the den."

"We can contain the Kyuubi because we are kitsune at the level of at least three tails. Naruto can because of the same principles that allow sealing a bijuu into an infant, his coils weren't developed at all when he began acting as a prison for his great great-grandfather," Kushina explained with a laugh.

"Besides, Naruto only holds the Yang half. The Yin half is sealed in me ever since the Shinigami gave us back," Minato grinned wickedly.

The other three shinobi stood there in stunned silence until Shikaku swore and started muttering about troublesome foxes.

"You mean to tell me that you decimated Iwa's forces with a prank?!" Hiruzen demanded shaking in a mix of disbelief and laughter.

"Well, they got kunai because they were a threat. Most targets would have gotten paint in their face, or water balloons, or pie... pie is always fun, mud works too," Minato explained patiently, his wicked grin never leaving his face.

"He used flowers on me. It was sweet, walking into a flower storm," Kushina said with fond memory.

"The other one wasn't ready yet, being pure chakra manipulation, but I could still use it to drill anchor holes, spy holes, stuff like that. The fact that it tends to be slightly explosive when unstable was a bit of a bonus honestly," Minato admitted sheepishly. "It was always fun watching sensei loose control of it only for it to blow up in his face."

"Using A and S rank jutsu to play pranks?!" Hiruzen barely choked back his building hysterical
"Pranks are generally harmless but they are pretty good practice for nearly anything combat related that isn't a direct powered one on one," Kushina explained, eyes shining in open amusement. "Its one of the reasons why we, as a clan, became so very good at Fuuinjutsu. It put everyone on an equal footing when it came to basic pranking ability. Someone who was pure human could use Fuuinjutsu at Expert level to prank or stop a prank against a full blooded Kitsune of up to five tails in power."

"I don't know if warning the councils about this is going to terrify them more or if we just let you prank them into submission..." Shikaku commented werily. "I'd best get you both back to the Nara compound to recover and let you spend time with Naruto. Troublesome kitsune."

With that the Jonin Commander collected his Kage and his Kage's wife before disappearing off home with them lying limply over his shoulders.

"You are screwed. You didn't protect their kid and the moment those two foxes don't have to hide anymore they are going to make your life a living hell for it," Ibiki told the old man bluntly.

"Don't I know it," Hiruzen ageed with a grimace before turning back to his remaining paperwork. He could only hope that the village was still standing after the Kitsune family was done wreaking vengeance upon its inhabitants.
Time Moves Forwards As The World Turns

The night of the kitsune family reunion no one cared that Minato and Kushina were basically stuck where ever they were put. No one cared that they were famous to one extent or another or that they had been dead. They only cared that everyone was back together again, safe.

The Nara clan had unofficially adopted the two returned shinobi by the simple expedient of putting them on the couch and placing Naruto in their laps like an infant. This had the triple effect of embarrassing Naruto, recognizing the pair as Naruto's original parents, and using that connection to justify their immediate adoption into the clan. The information might not show up in the public clan register but the one meant for those of the clan to view would list Kushina and Minato as clan members come morning, right next to their son, Harry, Tom, and Severus.

"I always did have trouble pranking any Nara," Minato smirked as he recognized and accepted the adoption for his family.

"Troublesome fox family," Shikaku grumbled playfully.

"Sneaky shadow master," Minato teased back.

Just as the kitsune clans had once long ago been adopted into various families they had again gained a new family. The Nara clan and compound had just become their den even as the Uzumaki and Nara clans had merged, just as the Nara and Kurowata clans had merged that fateful day, information that would remain secret for years to come. Three main branch families yet still all the same clan.

That night they dreamed.

Death chuckled as he pulled the Kitsune Company along with Minato, Kushina, Shikaku, Yin-Kurama, and Yang-Kurama into a single dreamscape.

The two Kyuubi looked at each other strangely before bowing to each other and trading copies of their memories so that each half of themselves would be up to date.

"I can not believe you let him wear us down into submission with a mix of cute determination and rough male bonding! In his sleep no less!" Yin-Kurama exclaimed.

"How was I supposed to know he was our great great grandkit?! He has been all cute and determined and pulls proper kitsune pranks! He even manages to ignore the idiots, using his optimism and kindness to either convert or piss off everyone he comes across! We were bound to fall to his charm if we couldn't get away. You did the same thing with his blasted father!" Yang-Kurama protested, pouting.

"Do you see now why I had to use the spikes and chains when you were in my mindscape?" Kushina demanded.

"Yes, great granddaughter," both Kuramas said grumpily.

If the complete Kyuubi bijuu had had more freedom in Kushina's mindscape at the time of his imprisonment there not only would he have found her kitsune blood. As the previous genjutsu compulsion hadn't yet worn off he would have gone ahead and killed her as well as everyone else in reach. Kurama never wanted to hurt their family. While some of the seal restraints had been a touch overkill, they definitely preferred what he had experienced versus rampaging and devouring his own descendants as a mindless beast, no matter how uncomfortable it had been. This included being split
in half into Yin and Yang versions of himself for all that they could share memories the way shadow clones could.

"We, Kurama the Kyuubi no Kitsune, recognize the adoption of our clan and family into the Kurowata and Nara clans, adopting them in return. Let Shinigami and Kami-sama be our witness as the Uzumaki, Nara, and Kurowata clans now stand as one clan with many main branches. Let nothing render this unions of clans asunder!" Yin/Yang Kurama declared in unison.

"Congratulations," Death chuckled as he revealed himself after they all glowed, blessing the adoption.

"You did this," Harry accused with a huff. "You, you're..."

"Go on, tell them what I am doing little master," Death chuckled, greatly amused by Harry's sudden dumbfounded look.

"You're building me a family," Harry finished in quiet awe.

"There are other reasons for the specific people but yes. I'm building you a very large family and a household as good as actual family. If necessary they will be able to act as your private army in a pinch. You are going to live a very long time and I'll not have you break and shatter under the strain. If you did, and couldn't heal from it, then you wouldn't be my master and I would be alone again," Death agreed simply. He didn't wait for any response before disappearing into nothing and ending the joint dream.

Harry jerked awake, panting in barely contained panic before slowly realizing that he wasn't in his cupboard anymore and none of the Dursleys could reach him again. The feeling of being trapped at their hateful mercy from his younger years often surged when he walked between waking and sleeping. It was something that was often driven away without thought when he slept next to Tom or Severus. They had become his brothers over these reality hops. He had even noticed that no matter how they sometimes groused about technically being his servants they still hadn't said anything about wanting to be released once the time limit on the binding was up. It made him feel safe, just as their continual willing care and protection made him feel safe.

A quiet whimper nearby had Harry bolting for a familiar snarky body. His hands landed on a shivering terrified Severus as he mentally cursed. He knew Severus had been too quiet after they got cuddled by the giant wolves, foxes, panthers, and tigers in the forest. They may not have looked like the wizarding world's version of a werewolf but they had still been giant fucking wolves.

"Shush, it's alright. They can't hurt you," Harry soothed. Severus' terror faded a bit only for him to break down crying. Harry sighed, recognizing that this was a release needed because they were currently 12 and the fact that his unofficial snarky brother had never dealt with the nightmare experience of nearly getting eaten by a werewolf.

"What's wrong?" asked Tom as he made his way over to them sitting on Severus' pallet. They still shared a room and hadn't bothered asking for individual ones yet.

"Giant Wolves vs. Werewolf," Harry said simply. "Now that I think about it I'm surprised he didn't freak out over us being cuddled and licked by them in the forest even if the Wolves themselves mostly held back and let the others ambush us."

"Ah, I should have thought of that. I gather that we should sleep next to each other for the foreseeable future?" Tom grimaced as he joined them on Severus' bed.
"Probably. There's no telling if our nightmares will trigger in response to his but being close always makes it better," Harry conceded. The two wizards just silently held the third until morning, giving him as much comfort as possible.

They were pretending nothing was wrong but by mid-morning everyone could tell it was an act. Before anyone could ask the trio of wizards cried out in shocked agony as something inside them snapped before collapsing to the floor even as they reached for one another.

"Devlin/Kin/Zaar," was whispered in despair by the trio only for the frayed broken bond to surge and merge with their existing joint bond, forcing them into unconsciousness.

"Something must of happened to their firelizards," Naruto concluded sadly. He quickly created a few shadow clones who in turn picked up his unconscious brothers from the floor, cradling them bridal style.

"They need more rest. Too much has been happening," Shikaku frowned.

"The Shinigami's list weighs heavily on them," Shikamaru reminded them all softly.

"Kurama says put the kits back to bed and I have to agree," Minato told them with a sigh as he drank his first morning coffee in over ten years. The clones nodded their understanding and took the trio back to bed.

"If we can take out a few more people on his list they may rest easier," Shikaku pointed out protectively.

"Agreed, tell Hiruzen that as many Nara as can be spared are going hunting. If you need someone else see if you can get their help without explaining all of it. I may not be their birth father but they have long since been adopted as Naruto's brothers and thus my sons," Minato said in a hard voice.

"Kitsune take a poor view of those who threaten our kits and our den," Kushina agreed, eyes narrowed in barely suppressed protective fury.

"Yes Hokage-sama," came the fervent agreements from every active shinobi in hearing range. The Nara didn't take kindly to such threats either.

"The Kitsune Company can stay with them and act as back up if any fools try to go after them," Shikamaru offered almost casually. "They are ours as much as they are yours."

"Permission Granted. Kitsune Company is officially on down time until its back up to full strength due to its surprise victory against the traitor Orochimaru," Minato agreed gladly. The emotional support the group would provide to each other was really just a bonus since they should have automatically been put on recovery leave after fighting the snake sanin in any case.

"There is a mis-ranked C-rank waited for my master and his friends once they go back on duty, arranged to be held for them by Danzo. As a whole Kitsune Company can easily handle it but it will give them valuable field experience before certain idiots start forcing a war setting as a diversion for things that must be stopped," Death told them coldly. "As you have become family to my master I can safely include in those who may act in his name. A set of files will be provided to each main branch clan head to be handed out as you see fit. Blood red files must be completed by my master, you may only grant aid."

"We thank you for your indulgence Shinigami-sama," Minato said formally with a slight bow of respect to the invisible being.
"Prove to me that allowing the adoption was the right choice Wind Kitsune," Death laughed evilly before disappearing from their senses.

By the time Kitsune Company was back in action several months later information was already racing to the ears of Madara and his puppets. The Nara Clan had eliminated Kabuto Yakushi as a spy and believed to have eliminated Kuzuku of the elemental masks. The three Jedi had even reported back on their success at destroying Deidra and Sasori of the Red Sands. The first three Bijuu had unfortunately been snatched, with their human partner/prisons dead in the process, even as Kitsune Company left on their special C-rank mission preceding the Chunin exam. Things were speeding up as tensions rose all across the Elemental Nations.

End Notes

Much thanks goes to irritatedbookworm who has donated several ideas for the Naruto section and is working on still more for us to play with.

Along with Trickster32, thanks also goes to everyone else who has contributed to making this story a massive success!

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