Broken Wings
by StarLight_Massacre

Summary

Abandoned by his friends after the defeat of Voldemort in his fifth year, Harry comes into a creature inheritance during the summer. As a submissive Dracken he is thrown into dealing with new instincts and new people and he's left to make vitally important life decisions on his own at just sixteen. Just as Harry believes that things are finally looking up, his reality comes crashing down when he is abducted from a gathering and imprisoned. Can he survive his brutal captivity and make his own escape, or is his only hope to be rescued by the Drackens, who don’t even know where he is or how to find him.

Notes

Author: StarLight Massacre
Title: Broken Wings
Rating: Explicit
Warnings: Abduction, abuse, domestic violence, sexual violence, abortion, forced child destruction, rape, gang rape, forced imprisonment and forced impregnation, mental abuse and manipulation, potion drugging, attempted suicide and detailed cesarean birthing. It also
contains themes akin to slavery and Stockholm syndrome and character deaths (Not Harry).

Pairing: Jefferus/Harry, eventually Max/Nasta/Sixten/Harry

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See the end of the work for more notes
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**Chapter One - Unbent**

Harry was sat, lost deep in his thoughts, by the fireplace in the Gryffindor common room. He’d had a long talk with Dumbledore the other week about him being a submissive Dracken, a species of humanoid dragon-like creatures. He had been terrified of saying anything about it to anyone at first, as the single, lone book that he’d found that had even mentioned Drackens had warned that they were very dark, very illegal creatures who were to be executed on sight. That dreary, morbid warning had really terrified him, but being smart enough to understand that he did need help and that he couldn’t go through a creature inheritance on his own when he knew next to nothing about what he even was, he’d gone to Dumbledore, as the most trusted person that Harry had left to him, now that Sirius was dead, it had seemed the logical choice. He needn’t have worried so much about mentioning his inheritance, Dumbledore, ever the grandfather figure to him, had calmed him down, had talked him through everything and he’d immediately started to help him find his feet in this new body, that was still his, but was completely new at the same time. After all, how many regular humans suddenly sprouted wings, claws and fangs? And that was without mentioning the scales that were everywhere.

It had been Dumbledore who had done everything for him, from contacting the Dracken Counsel (that Harry had absolutely not known had even existed), to helping him to control the random urges that he had to bring out his wings, claws or fangs during the day. Dumbledore had even given him a large stack of books that had been written by actual Drackens, telling him firmly that the information in most Ministry sanctioned books, like the one that he’d read back in Privet Drive, were very biased or contained misinformation, often on purpose, to turn the general public against the supposedly ‘dark’ creatures. That in turn then made it much easier for the Ministry to pass restricting laws upon the creatures and even allowed them to execute said creatures without dispute or a backlash from the general public.

Harry was going to meet with an Elder of the Dracken Counsel in another week or two. According to Dumbledore, who had spoken to these Elders in person, they had lost their heads a little and they had wanted to talk to him immediately, to make sure that he was alright and that he was being taken care of as their foremost priority. They’d wanted to come immediately to the school, right then and there, as soon as Dumbledore had told them about him, but the Headmaster had refused and told the Elders that surrounding him so soon would make him panic and withdraw into himself, and truthfully, it probably would have.
So Dumbledore was fending off the Dracken Elders daily, holding them off until Harry came to him to tell him that he was ready to have a meeting with the Dracken Elders. He’d already done so, but he’d shyly asked if Dumbledore could set it up in another week or so to give him time to get used to the idea of the meeting. He’d also asked if it could be just the one Elder and if it was alright that he didn’t have the meeting at the school, because he didn’t want to associate the school, his safe place, with anything that the Elder he met with had to say, especially if he didn’t like what he heard, because some of the things written in the books that Dumbledore had given to him were a little hard to stomach. He definitely did not like some of the things he was reading, or how these meetings were going to be conducted, if what was written in those books was actually true, but as each book differed, it was very difficult to deduce what was real and what wasn’t, or what was something that was no longer practised. It was why he most certainly did need to have this talk with the Dracken Elder, but that didn’t mean that he had to have all eleven of them surrounding him and staring at him for that talk, just the one would be fine, so that he could ask the questions that he had and get actual answers from someone who would know them.

He sighed and looked into the dancing flames of the fireplace and he sucked his bottom lip into his mouth and nibbled on it. He was sixteen. He didn’t really want to be mated to a complete stranger and start having babies so soon. He wanted to at least finish his schooling first. Surely that wasn’t asking for the Earth?

Dumbledore had assured him that he could talk it all out with the Elder that he was going to be meeting with and the Headmaster had told him firmly that he, Harry, could sort out his mate meeting his way, exactly as he wanted it, even if he did want to postpone it. Though he had been warned that his Dracken might rebel if he held his meeting back for too long. His Dracken side wanted to be mated, it wanted a dominant mate and babies, it would not appreciate being told to wait, but wait is exactly what Harry was going to do, for as long as he could, at least until the idea of all of this wasn’t quite so alien to him.

But why did he have to be a Dracken? Why was it him who had come into a creature inheritance? According to Dumbledore the Dracken genes had specifically chosen him while he was still in the womb, but why? Why was he so special? He glared at the flames of the fire harder. He felt so isolated and alone. More so now than he had before his Dracken inheritance and before it, he hadn’t actually believed that it was possible to be even more isolated and lonely than he already had been.

He looked over to his former friends, all of them sat on the opposite side of the common room to him, who had all abandoned him after he’d finally killed Voldemort at the end of their fifth year… when he’d also lost Sirius. He’d never forgive them for abandoning him when he’d needed them the most and now he had gone through a creature inheritance as well and he was an illegal Dracken also. He felt more alone now than he ever had before, including when he was a child at the Dursleys without friends and living in a cupboard. At least back then he hadn’t truly known what he was missing, but now, having had best friends and having them abandon him, it was just so much worse than it had been when he was a child with no true friends to actually lose.

He looked back into the fire and he sighed heavily, wearily. He didn’t know what he was going to do or what was going to happen next. He just wanted someone to tell him what to do, but he had no one. No parents, no parental figure now that Sirius had died, and no friends left to act as a sounding board for him either. He was alone, truly alone, and he needed to make this decision on his own. It was just another situation where he was being forced to shoulder responsibility that was far beyond him or his age. He shouldn’t have to deal with all of this on his own, it wasn’t right.

Sitting forward and putting his head into his hands, he thought about what he was going to have to do to ease off the pressure of his Dracken side, which wanted a mate and babies more than anything else in the world. It was funny, he’d always thought that dragons would want gold or treasure, but
no, that was just in children’s books. Humanoid dragons apparently wanted mates and babies more than anything else. Even thinking of babies calmed him down and Harry let out a shuddering breath. He hoped desperately that the Elder that he was going to be meeting with actually helped him and didn’t just pressure and bully him into taking a mate before he wanted one. He didn’t feel ready for this. He wasn’t nearly prepared enough for this magical creature business.

He sat by the fire and he was lost in his thoughts until a clock chimed midnight and Harry looked around, startled, to find that the common room was empty and dim around him and the fire that he’d been staring at was slowly guttering out. He hadn’t even noticed, he’d been looking at it without actually seeing it as his thoughts chased one another around and around in his mind.

With a heavy sigh, Harry hefted himself up to his feet and he made his way to his dormitory. He didn’t really want to sleep, his mind was racing and he didn’t think that he’d be able to sleep anyway, at least not without nightmares, but he had to at least try.

He stripped off his thick robes and pulled his heavy, leaden feeling limbs through the cuffs of his pyjamas and he closed his curtains before climbing into his four poster bed, settling down and trying to shut off his mind so that he could get some sleep.

He lay awake for another couple of hours though, tossing and turning, unable to sleep as his mind wouldn’t allow him to drift off. He just couldn’t stop thinking, worrying over his new creature status and his upcoming meeting with Elder Jacob Midate, who was going to talk to him and hopefully help him through this very stressful time.

He hoped that this could work out for everyone involved. He knew that other Drackens lived happy lives with their stranger mates, but they’d known about being a Dracken, about their upcoming meetings, for nearly all of their lives…he hadn’t even known that there was a magical Dracken species, let alone that he was actually one of them, until he’d woken up on his sixteenth birthday with wings, scales, fangs and claws. A very, very disconcerting, and frankly alarming, experience, especially with all the blood that had accompanied the, very painful, emergence of his new, pure white wings.

He knew next to nothing about Drackens or what it entailed to be one, he didn’t even know what he had become! He was reading a lot of books, disguised as ordinary textbooks to keep away prying eyes, but it wasn’t really helping him. He wondered if this Dracken meeting in May that he’d been told about would actually help or if it would just stress him out more. He wasn’t sure that he wanted to go to it anymore, the more he thought about it, the more he felt like he was just going to be exposing himself to a situation that he was not going to be able to control. He didn’t like the thought of it at all.

He finally fell into an exhausted, fitful sleep, still agonising over his future and the meeting with the Elder. He woke up in a sweaty panic, tangled in his duvet, just three hours later with a half formed image of a nightmare still in his mind where he was being hunted down by countless, faceless men, in what looked to be the same arena that he’d faced off against the Hungarian Horntail two years previously, while he had his arms full of ugly, squashed-faced, squalling, newborn babies that reminded him of mandrakes.

He just wanted to be normal, it was all he’d ever wanted. To be normal, to have a normal life and when he’d killed Voldemort, he had hoped that he might actually be able to get that normal life. His hopes of that had actually been dashed when Ron and Hermione had turned away from him and now they had been utterly shattered with his creature inheritance. Why couldn’t he ever just be normal, like everyone else?
Jacob Midate, one of eleven Elders for the Northern Hemisphere Dracken Counsel and one of only five trained and experienced submissive chaperones, was truly shocked when the very beautiful, but very obviously male, submissive fell out of his fireplace and landed in a heap on his rug.

Shocked and worried, he rushed to help the tiny slip of a boy from the floor and his brown eyes met the most stunning, wide emerald eyes that he could have ever imagined. The boy gave an adorable, shy half-smile, almost on the verge of being self-depreciating, and he expressed his hate of floo travel. If he landed like this every time that he used the floo, then Jacob definitely understood why the boy hated it so much as he watched the tiny boy rub at his sore forehead.

“When Headmaster Dumbledore said that he had a submissive at his school I never once thought he’d meant a male submissive. It didn’t even cross my mind to ask.” Jacob said sincerely as he couldn’t stop himself from helping Harry up to his feet.

He just couldn’t believe that he had an actual male submissive in his home. Britain hadn’t had a male submissive in several decades and he knew that none of his four colleagues had ever dealt with a male submissive before. The planning of this meeting had just been taken up another several notches. The protection of this adorable, if clumsy, boy had just taken precedence.

“I am Elder Jacob Midate.” He introduced himself when the boy turned terrified eyes onto him. “I am also a trained submissive chaperone and I would be honoured to assist you when you decide to have your meeting. It was your decision to hold your meeting back, wasn’t it?” He couldn’t help asking as he sat himself down and indicated for Harry to sit on the adjacent settee.

Not many submissives were strong enough to hold off their furious need to have a mate and children and the very last thing that he wanted at the moment was for this boy in front of him to be tormented by his Dracken side. That sort of torment could force the boy to decide that he’d had enough of the pain and anger building inside of himself and run off in his Dracken form while releasing mating pheromones, which would subsequently lead any and all unmated dominants who smelt the strong pheromones right to this scared and unprotected young boy. Such a situation could lead to this boy being attacked, raped or even killed by the feral dominants trying to claim him. He needed to make sure that this was what his tiny charge wanted and needed and if it was, then he needed to be sure that the boy could handle the pressure that his Dracken side would pile onto him as he went longer and longer after his inheritance to get a mate and to fall pregnant. This is what he’d trained for after all, for years, decades even, all so he could protect the submissives placed into his care.

“Yes. I…” The very uncomfortable boy paused and licked at his lips as he gathered his thoughts and Jacob sat calmly and patiently, not rushing him. He had long since learnt the value of waiting for a submissive to gather their thoughts in a coherent manner. “I had no idea that I was a Dracken, so this has all come as a bit of a surprise really, so if I can hold back being mated until I know just the basics of being a Dracken and what that entails, then I think I’d feel happier about it all. Oh and I’m Harry.”
Jacob had to smile at the boy, Harry. Dumbledore had told him all about the submissive not knowing anything about being a Dracken and the inheritance coming as a complete surprise, which had shocked him enough as he’d fully believed that all the lines that had Dracken blood were currently being watched for such occurrences, but it seemed that one had slipped through the net. The Dracken community was going to explode when they realised that the Dracken who had slipped through said net was the first known, British born male submissive in decades. The dominants who leaned more towards males were going to have a field day with Harry. Even worldwide, male submissives were still rare enough, but having one on the proverbial doorstep was going to cause quite the stir.

“It’s nice to meet you, Harry, truly, but that’s all I care about, your happiness and your wellbeing and if that means holding off on your meeting, we’ll do just that.” Jacob explained. “You can call me a liar if you want to, but that’s the truth and while you are in my care, my priority is your health and happiness over everything else. While I am your chaperone, from now until you are happily mated to however many dominants that you need, you are my priority. Now, your Headmaster has told me that you have expressed interest in the Dracken meetings we hold yearly?”

Jacob was pleased that Harry was interested in the meeting, it might actually help Harry to go to the Dracken meeting, especially with the armed guards and all eleven Elders who would be in the Halls to keep an eye on Harry, himself especially. He would protect this young sixteen year old at all costs.

Harry nodded his head a little hesitantly. “It’ll be a chance to observe other Drackens at a distance and see for myself how they act around others. I’ve been reading a lot of books when I’m not studying for my lessons, but I think having the chance to go and see them in person and be able to actually talk to them would help me come to terms with everything that has happened. It might make me a little more relaxed about finding out that I’m suddenly a Dracken and that I have to be mated to dominants and have this huge, unending string of pregnancies and babies.”

Jacob was so impressed with Harry that he couldn’t help but admire him.

“You are much more mature than most submissives that I have to deal with; this will make everything a lot easier.” He said happily.

Harry shrugged a little uncomfortably and Jacob had to smile. Most submissives would have puffed up arrogantly at being told such a thing. Harry actually hunched down and tried not to draw such attention to himself. He got the feeling that he was really going to love getting to know Harry.

“I think that it’s going to be an absolute pleasure to be your chaperone, Harry.” He said sincerely.

“I don’t…from the books I read its…well to be absolutely frank these mate meetings sound like
they’re played out in the same way that feeding time at the zoo is handled, only the starved pride of lions are let out to chase the injured zebra until it just can’t run for any longer. I don’t want that, I need space and time to think and observe without distractions, this one decision will affect my entire life, it will be a huge, major part of my future. I want to make my own decision carefully, after long, serious consideration and thought, not be bullied into anything or hounded into the ground until I have to give in because I just can’t take it anymore.” Harry told him and Jacob picked up on his nervousness, but also his determination to do things his own way, to try and keep things under his own control.

Harry was a very independent boy and Jacob had to wonder why a sixteen year old seemed so independent and so used to doing things on his own like this. Surely he had some family members who looked after him? Something felt off about this and he didn’t like it.

“If that’s how you truly feel about it then I’ll make certain that there is extra security at your meetings and with your permission I’ll enlist the help of two additional chaperones if it’ll make you feel more secure, but no unmated dominant is allowed in your private rooms, Harry, not even for a moment and your bedroom will be right next door to mine.”

Jacob shifted forward and wrote several notes on a pad that he left on the coffee table under the nervous, almost suspicious, gaze of the young boy. Harry seemed happier that he was writing the notes where he could easily see what he was writing down. Jacob wondered if Harry had had people writing things about him before for him to be so wary of someone doing it in his presence, or if he was possibly kept in a very judgemental environment. He was even more worried about Harry now and he was determined to get him a good dominant to take care of him, because from the look of the too thin frame and the stressed and drawn, too pale face, Harry was not taking care of himself and from the black bags under his eyes, he hadn’t been sleeping well either. Jacob hated that his inheritance was obviously affecting Harry so negatively.

The submissives always had a hint of nervousness to them before their meeting, it was a stressful time for them, but it was usually more nervous excitement than the nervous fear that Harry was exhibiting. Jacob couldn’t imagine how terrified and stressed Harry was feeling when a few months ago he hadn’t even known what Drackens were, much less that he was going to have an inheritance to unleash the creature that he’d always been upon his sixteenth birthday.

“So they won’t be able to touch me or…or grope me or anything?” Harry asked and Jacob rather thought that they were getting to the root of the problem now. Harry was afraid of having these proceedings out of his control and he was afraid of having something happen that he either didn’t like or didn’t want.

“How about I make you a deal, Harry. I’m known within the community as a hard arse, excuse my language, but those dominants all know by now that if they mess with me, they’re going to get a punch to the head, so you say the word and I’ll sit them on their arses for touching you inappropriately.” Jacob promised. He was going to do his absolute all to protect this boy.
Harry let out a burst of surprised laughter that brought a smile to Jacob’s face. Harry had a nice laugh and it lit up his entire face, especially his beautiful eyes. He didn’t look quite so tired or ill when he laughed. Harry needed to laugh and smile more, happiness looked very good on him.

“That sounds brilliant.” Harry told him with such a gorgeous smile that Jacob knew that he was going to need the additional security. The dominants were going to be all over Harry like a swarm of ravenous locusts.

“I’ll pull in Elder Quintalus Trintus and Elder Henry Kirrian too, those dominants will be too afraid to make any sort of move on you between the three of us.” Jacob said. He was going to brief them of the circumstances and make sure that they both understood this fragile situation, not that it would take much. As soon as the Counsel found out that the submissive who he was chaperoning was a male, they were going to go ballistic. More so when he told them that Harry hadn’t known before his actual, physical inheritance what a Dracken was, much less that he was one himself.

“I just don’t want to be pawed at like a piece of meat with no thoughts or feelings or opinions; I’m not only good for sex. I have a mind too and I want to use it and if I tell them to back off, I don’t want them ignoring me or brushing me off because they think that they can. I can think of nothing worse than being in a room of men and women all touching and pulling at me, not listening to me and outright ignoring me if I tell them to stop. I don’t want that for myself and anyone who treats me like that is going to be discounted as a mate immediately.”

Jacob sighed internally. Back to Harry’s need to obsessively control the situation. He needed the reassurance that if he said no, then he’d be listened to. Jacob was just afraid, and very ashamed, to admit that things might not play out in such an idyllic way. He was really going to have to stick close to young Harry while doing his best to control the dominants. This was going to be one of the most difficult meetings that he’d ever chaperoned.

Though Harry had reminded him of another issue that needed to be addressed, though Jacob was a good enough judge of character that he would put money on Harry still being completely sexually inexperienced. He wasn’t acting like a submissive who had slept around and was then hiding it with potions and spells. Jacob doubted that Harry even knew about the spells and potions that would cover his scent and make the dominants think that he was still a virgin when he wasn’t. No, Jacob would bet money that Harry really was completely pure and untouched, which was going to make his job much more difficult when it came to the Dracken meeting in May, and Harry’s own mate meetings when he decided to hold them, when the dominants smelt his very intoxicating scent. He was going to have to help Harry learn to control his pheromone emissions to prevent any dominant from turning feral and jumping him.

“I will make your wishes perfectly clear and I will ensure that those dominants don’t do anything that you don’t want them to.” He assured Harry as much as he was able to. “You can exile them from your meetings too, you say the word and they’re gone. Just be careful going down that route because
they may not come back if you change your mind at a later date. But while we’re on this subject line, Harry, have you had sex or any sexual contact? Your scent says no, but there are always spells and potions to mask a scent. I need you to be excruciatingly truthful here, Harry, no matter how embarrassed you may be over it, as it is very important. But that being said, I do understand that you didn’t know about your inheritance, and thus didn’t know that it could potentially impact upon your future mateship.”

Harry nodded in understanding. “I read the books that the Counsel sent me, I know that if I’ve slept with a non-Dracken then I’ll be unable to have children, but I haven’t. Slept with anyone that is. I’m a…a…”

“A virgin.” Jacob offered with a nod when it looked like Harry wouldn’t be able to get the word out.

Harry blushed deeply and Jacob had to smile at him. Definitely sexually inexperienced, he blushed at the very word ‘virgin.’

“That’s a good thing, Harry, a very good thing. Some of these submissives are so into themselves that they don’t even want to become pregnant. They sleep with humans early, before they’re of legal age to consent to it even, just so they won’t have to deal with a body altering pregnancy when the time comes. Then when they actually choose a dominant, or even more than one if they need them because she believes that she’s entitled to a dominant mate even though she’s selfishly made herself barren, then she’s entrapping those dominants to a life with no children. It’s disgusting as the only thing that that dominant could have wanted in life was a child, a family, of his own. Drackens are very family orientated creatures after all, though there are always exceptions to every rule.” He explained and he smiled again when Harry pulled a disgusted face.

“That’s part of why I wanted to hold my meeting back, I don’t feel ready…I don’t feel old enough to have sex yet and that probably makes me sound pathetic as a sixteen year old, but I’m unsure of the whole thing and I’m nervous about it too.”

“It’s natural to be nervous and even afraid of sex when it’s been so far from your mind that you haven’t really thought about it before except as this strange, outside concept. I assume that that’s what has happened?” He asked kindly. Harry really was far too mature for a young sixteen year old.

Harry nodded again to his question. “I’ve never…I just don’t think about it. I know about it obviously, I’m not stupid, but it’s not something that’s ever popped up in my mind and my friends either don’t do it or they don’t feel the need to tell me about what they’ve done and I’m thankful for that. But until my inheritance, sex and babies was the furthest thing from my mind, I just wanted to get through all my exams! But now it’s all I can think about because they’re such a huge part of Dracken culture. It’s just…worrying, it’s scary to go from one side to the opposite overnight.”
“That’s alright, Harry, in the coming weeks and months now I’ll help you through any worries or fears that you may have. By the time that you decide to hold your meeting you’ll feel so ready for it that you’ll be chomping at the bit to get to those dominants so that they can get you pregnant.”

Harry laughed at that and grinned at him and Jacob relaxed a little. Harry was coming to trust him and he would do his all to keep that trust.

“I hope so, I just feel so unsure and nervous about it at the moment and I am scared of having a room full of dominants with their attention on me. It would be nice to feel excited about it, but at the moment, I just can’t. All I feel is fear and nervousness and absolute dread over the very thought of it.”

“Which is completely understandable, some submissives are scared going into their meetings and they’ve known that they’re Drackens and that they’ll have to have these meetings for most of their lives. I can’t believe how well you are handling all of this after being thrust into it so suddenly and unexpectedly; you are a very mature and amazing young man.”

“I’ve sort of had to be.” Harry told him sadly and Jacob sat up straighter and took note of the change in Harry and his body language. Perhaps he actually was all alone and had no one to look after him. If that was the case then Jacob would be furious on Harry’s behalf…and he’d immediately petition to take Harry under his wing and into his own home and family. He would be the perfect candidate to do so, as only his daughter was a Dracken and she was a submissive and mated too, so there would be no problems with any of the protection laws.

“How do you mean?” He asked carefully. The very last thing that he wanted at the moment was to frighten Harry away now that he was poking his head tentatively out of his shell.

He was slightly concerned when Harry bit his lip and seemed to be warring with himself. He was silent for a long while and Jacob was very patient with him, even though his heart was beating a mile a minute. Something was wrong, he could feel it, but he remained calm, at least until Harry moved his hand to lay it over his own forehead and he pushed his thick, jet black hair out of the way to show a thin, red scar over his right eye…a lightning bolt scar.

“Holy fucking Merlin! I’m going to kill that Dumbledore.” Jacob hissed angrily, cursing up a storm.

He couldn’t believe that the old man hadn’t told him that the submissive that he was going to be talking to was a male. Now he found out that not only was the submissive a male, but he was also
Harry Potter, an orphan and the boy who had KILLED that disillusioned monster, Voldemort, just several months ago! It wasn’t any wonder that Harry wanted to keep everything firmly within his own control after such a life of trials and uncertainty.

“I’m definitely getting you that extra security now; I’m afraid to say that if this information gets out then some of the dominants are going to want you only because you’re famous and they may try underhand tactics or even force to get you as a mate. They’ll lie, promise you the world, hide their true selves and tell you anything and everything that you want to hear. Don’t fall for any of it, Harry. Question them and then question them again, hound after them, dig out all the details and uncover their lies and then discount those that have dared try to trick you and lie to you in such a manner.”

“I sort of figured that could happen which is why I showed you my scar.” Harry sighed, looking very worried and very stressed. He seemed to have aged ten years and for a sixteen year old carrying that sort of stress and pressure, it just wasn’t right. Jacob just wanted to hold this tiny boy in his arms and never let him go. He wondered if he’d be accepted if he applied for Harry’s custody. Harry needed someone to care for him, a platonic family who could love him just for himself and not for any other reason. “I’m used to it happening though, people lie to me to befriend me, to get things from me, even if it’s just a photo in the newspaper of us shaking hands, so don’t worry, I can look after myself.”

“You’ll have me there with you too.” Jacob said firmly and with a nod of his head. “I won’t let anyone take advantage of you.”

He damn well meant it too. No one, absolutely no one was going to get close to this boy with ill intentions. If he, or Henry or Quintalus, did not like the look of a dominant or how they were speaking or acting towards Harry, then they would damn well get shot of them. As submissive chaperones they had that power too, to exclude dominants from Harry’s meetings, with or without Harry’s knowledge, though they would have to write up a full report on exactly why they had excluded a potential candidate from a fair chance of getting a mate. Usually if it came down to a chaperone having to exclude a dominant, it was for harassment, bullying, blackmail and once or twice it had even been for attempted rape. It was very rare that actual rape took place, but that was a more serious crime, and the dominant was often (nine times out of ten) executed for it afterwards.

Harry smiled at him. “Thank you.” He said so sincerely that it almost hurt Jacob to hear it. He could count on one hand the amount of times that a submissive had actually thanked him just for doing his job and he’d been a chaperone for decades now. Harry was going to be very fiercely sought after, he already knew it.

“Right, are there any questions that you want me to answer?” Jacob asked Harry, trying to lighten the mood. “Anything that’s been rolling around in your mind that you haven’t read in the books that you were sent yet?”
“No, I think I’m alright for now.” Harry told him with another small nod and another of those beautiful smiles.

“Okay then, you can always owl me if you think of something else to ask or you don’t understand something that you’ve read in one of the books. Feel free to floo call me if you need to talk about anything face to face too or you feel like you can’t wait for a reply. I’ll be around to see you again soon and I’ll take you to meet Elder Kirrian and Elder Trintus in the coming weeks so that you’re used to them as well. I’ll talk to you more about the meeting in May too, if you do decided that you want to go to it. I will be escorting you there and staying with you all night if you do want to go. I think that that covers everything for now.”

Jacob stood up and shook Harry’s tiny hand, seeing him safely back through the floo to Hogwarts. He scrubbed a hand over his cleanly shaven face and sighed heavily. He seriously, seriously, had his work cut out for him with this meeting. First things first though, he had to go to the Counsel Halls and inform them that they had a male submissive under their jurisdiction. He knew one thing for sure though, there was going to be utter mayhem surrounding Harry until the novelty of him being a male submissive wore off. It was going to take a very long time for that to happen.

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Jefferus Bernardus Perrot stormed angrily through his parents’ home and called their house-elf, Barbry, just so that he could kick it.

He couldn’t believe that the rumours of that male submissive in Japan were completely false! It had just been a man-ish, female submissive with short hair! All that time and effort wasted. He didn’t care about the gold that his Father had lost to get the information on the submissive in the first place. He was just angry that all his attempts to find a male submissive were failing!

It was the one thing that he wanted in all the world! He’d never had to wait so long for something that he’d wanted before! His stupid Father just wasn’t trying hard enough to get him what he wanted!

He’d always been more interested in boys than girls, he blamed his older brothers and the ugly pigs that they’d chosen as their wives, as he was the only Dracken born into their family since his grandfather, Liniacus. They’d obviously turned him off of women and made him more inclined to have a male mate.

It wasn’t so bad to have a male submissive, in his opinion they were cuter and more beautiful than the bitches he’d met at social gatherings and parties that he had attended over the years. There was something disgusting and desperate about the female submissives, who’d hang off of anyone who’d let them sink their claws in. He was considered a very eligible dominant too, he was the only current Dracken of the Perrot family, his grandfather had been an Elder before his untimely death, and his family were very, very wealthy and influential. Those female submissives badgered and bothered him at every social gathering, hanging off of his arms and fighting with one another to get near him.
He enjoyed the jealousy of the other dominants as he got the attention of all the submissives in a room, but he did not really enjoy the grabbing and grasping of the submissives, nor the blatant demands for his attention or the very unsubtle requests to be mated to him.

Of course it helped immensely that male submissives were very rare. He’d only ever seen one before and not one of his friends or family members had ever seen a male submissive before. He’d be the only one with a male submissive mate and he was determined to stand out in such a way. He deserved it!

Slamming the door to his apartment suite shut, he stalked through his receiving room and into his bedroom. He threw himself onto his large bed and snarled angrily, he couldn’t believe how long it was taking to find a single male submissive in the entire world! He was already twenty-two and he’d had his parents looking for him since before his inheritance six years previous.

He’d come closest with that male submissive in Brazil, but the boy hadn’t been particularly good looking though, so he’d hesitated just long enough for some prick to sweep in and steal the boy from under his nose. At the time he hadn’t cared, the boy hadn’t been to his tastes, but now, five years after that with not even a hint of another male submissive coming into an inheritance, he was wondering if perhaps he’d made a mistake in hesitating and not seizing that boy while he could.

It was his parents’ fault that he hadn’t found a mate yet, if they had had better connections then they’d have found him a male submissive! They weren’t ambitious enough and they were deliberately sabotaging his chances at being mated!

Furious, Jeff stood up and he stalked back out of his rooms and went in search of his Father to demand that he find him a male submissive. A real one this time, not a female submissive with short hair or an ugly one. He wanted a young, beautiful male submissive and he wanted one now! He deserved it.

“Are you sure, Penny?”

Jeff stopped as he heard his Father talking to his Mother in his office.

“I’m sure, Carter. Messana was absolutely positive that it was a male submissive! We need to tell our Jeff! He’ll be so excited, he could finally have a mate after all this waiting around.”

“Perhaps we should check this out first, I’d hate to disappoint him again, Penny. He was ever so upset when that submissive in Japan turned out to be a female.”

“I told you that we couldn’t trust Beastoma! He was just looking for more money, Carter. He’s completely addicted to Pixie Pollen.”

“I couldn’t take the chance that he wasn’t lying, Penelope. Can you imagine what would have
happened if I hadn’t paid him for his information and that submissive had turned out to be male?”

Jefferus didn’t bother knocking, he just walked right into his Father’s personal study and into his parents’ private conversation.

“Where is this submissive?” He demanded.

“Britain.” His Father answered promptly.

“Britain hasn’t had a male submissive in decades!” Jeff replied angrily. “You’re obviously being fucked about with again!”

“The information comes from an Elder of the British Counsel, Jeff.” His Mother said excitedly. “One of the ones that we’re paying for information, he’d have no reason to lie about it.”

Jeff blinked and he started getting excited. “So he’s actually seen the submissive?”

“Well, no, sweetheart. But his colleague, Elder Midate, has seen and spoken to him! He held a meeting with the other Elders immediately after finishing with his young charge, a boy named Harry.”

Jeff sneered. “What a horrible, common name. There’s no way that this information could be real, who names their Dracken son Harry of all things?”

“Elder Messana was very insistent that he was a male submissive.” His Mother all but pleaded with him.

Jefferus sneered again. “Fine, we’ll go and check it out. If this is another female who has the nickname Harry, I want that Elder killed for his misinformation. I won’t be played about anymore, I’ve waited long enough. I want a mate!”

“Of course, anything you want.” His Father agreed immediately with a proud smile.
Jeff scowled as he left his Father’s study to wrap his head around the fact that he might be mated soon, his previous anger forgotten. He needed to prepare and he needed someone to check that the wards on the house were still up to scratch and were at optimum productivity…if this Harry did turn out to be an actual male submissive then the last thing that he wanted was to lose him soon after he got him if the boy actually managed to escape before Jeff had him under his full control. That would be a complete disaster as it would mean his death and his family’s utter disgrace and alienation from the whole Dracken community.

No, that couldn’t be allowed to happen, none of them would be able to take the shame of it. So everything needed to be ready, just in case this Harry was a real male submissive and this time, this time there would be no hesitation. If Harry turned out to be an actual male submissive, then he’d belong to him as quickly as they could get him here, to this house. He would not wait another five years for another male submissive to come about. If he turned out to be ugly, like the submissive in Brazil, then he could always keep a look out for another, more beautiful, male submissive while playing with this Harry in the meantime. But he had waited long enough already, more than long enough. The next male submissive to come out into the open would be his. He’d make sure of it.

Harry was stunned with the size and beauty of the Counsel Halls and as he stuck close to Elder Midate, he let himself just look around at all the marble floors, the gold and silver engraving and embellishments, the ancient looking carvings and what looked to be ivory columns.

“It’s really old ivory.” Elder Midate told him, noticing where he was looking. “Hundreds of years old even. This house has been the Dracken Counsel Hall for centuries and the Head of the Counsel always lives here. It’s been Vipond for eight decades now and he really suits the job. Personally I think it’s a little macabre to have anything made of a part of an animal decorating your home when we ourselves are animals and we decorate the walls of poachers, but then it isn’t my house and I don’t have to live here.”

Harry smiled and let out a small chuckle. He was here today to meet the rest of the ten Elders of the Northern Hemisphere Dracken Counsel. He was nervous, really nervous, as he was supposed to only be meeting two other Elders, Henry Kirrian and Quintalus Trintus, the other submissive chaperones who would be helping him with his meeting, but one Elder, Sesto Messana, had apparently insisted on a full Elder meeting. It had only served to make Harry twice as nervous as he’d been when he’d thought that he was only meeting Elder Kirrian and Elder Trintus.

Elder Midate steered him through a long corridor, around another, and all the way down the end of the new, massive corridor to a highly polished, white, wooden door at the end. It led into a comfortable room with a massive fireplace on the one wall and eleven armchairs set around a large, highly polished, circular table. Ten of the chairs were occupied by silently staring men and Jacob steered him to the empty eleventh chair and sat him in it, standing behind him. Harry wanted to curl up and die from the unwavering attention from ten pairs of eyes all focused completely on him.
“Hello, Harry. I may call you Harry, yes?” The one man asked, he was easily the oldest there and though he was sat in an identical chair to everyone else, there was just something about his bearing that made Harry think that he was more important than the rest.

Harry nodded shyly.

“I am Aanthaneric Vipond, Head of the Elders of the Dracken Counsel in Great Britain and of the central Counsel of the Northern Hemisphre.”

Harry said nothing, looking at his lap. He could still feel several sets of eyes on him, staring at him, crawling over him like the legs of hundreds of insects and he shivered, moving his hands to his arms.

Elder Midate’s hands touched his shoulders and smoothed down his arms and he took over so easily that Harry could immediately breathe again. He trusted Elder Midate.

“Harry is very shy and he doesn’t like attention. So stop staring at him like a bunch of overeager, school boys.” Midate demanded of his colleagues.

“We apologise for putting you on the spot, Harry.” Elder Vipond told him and Harry just nodded, wishing that he was back at Hogwarts doing his homework. He’d rather be in detention with Snape, scrubbing revolting cauldrons and picking out dried on bits of flobberworm than sat here for this cringe-worthy meeting.

“It has been a while since we last had to hold a meeting for a male submissive.” One of the unknown members said.

“Harry, this is Elder Quintalus Trintus.” Midate introduced him. “He will be helping me to conduct your meeting, when you decide to have it.”

Harry peeked up and took a breath. He held the breath as he shifted himself and pulled his shoulders back. He tried to ignore that these men were going to try and pair him up with a stranger who would take his virginity from him and get him pregnant. It was excruciatingly embarrassing but there was nothing that he could do about it.

“You have decided to hold your meeting back, I understand.” Vipond said simply.
Harry nodded. “I don’t feel ready to be mated just yet. I want to finish my schooling first, before I have a baby to distract me from my studies.”

Vipond nodded, but Harry could see some Elders looking at him as if he was being completely irrational, as if they truly didn’t understand why he was putting his education before mates and babies. He lifted his head and pointed his chin out in stubborn pride and he glared back at them.

Midate patted his head and when Harry looked back at him, he was also glaring at those staring at him as if he had a few screws loose.

“Ignore them, Harry.” Another Elder said fiercely. “They’re stuck in the last decade and don’t think submissives need an education and believe it to be the worst thing imaginable if a submissive expresses a wish to have their own job. Merlin forbid that the boy actually wants to finish his compulsory schooling before he has his first child.”

“I will.” Harry said stubbornly.

“Gone are the days when submissives, and women in general, were considered more sought after if they were uneducated and illiterate, Altier. The boy has every right to finish his education first if those are his wishes.” The fierce Elder all but spat at one man in particular. Harry liked him too.

“Harry, this is Elder Henry Kirrian, he is also going to help me with your meeting.”

“Merlin help any dominant who tries to hurt you, boy.” Elder Kirrian growled as a greeting.

Harry smiled. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Back to the original issue. It is a very difficult thing to do, to hold your Dracken side back for so long, when you are of mating age.” Vipond told him.

“I don’t care how difficult it is. It’s what I’m going to do.”

“We can’t have you rushing off and causing mayhem for the dominants.” One Elder said angrily, glaring at him. Midate snarled loudly, glaring back, but it was the fierce Elder who verbally defended him before anyone else could so much as inhale a breath.
“This is why you are continuously denied the honour of being a submissive chaperone, Giroux. You have absolutely no care for the submissives.” Kirrian bit out. “Harry has every single right of this Counsel to conduct his meetings how he pleases within the laws of our kind. If he wants to hold his meeting back for two, three or ten years, that is his right and we will see it done! It is his choice when to hold his meeting, not mine, not yours and not the unmated dominants’. It is no one else’s decision but Harry’s.”

“If he can’t handle his Dracken and he runs off leaking his pheromones all over the country it will cause chaos and havoc with the dominants! They are always blamed for such things, for attacking the submissive, for taking them when they get a hold of them, all because of submissives like him, who think they can deny what they are and prevent the natural order of their bodies! Submissives need to be mated at sixteen, they need to start having children that is why they have such instincts at that age. If they deny such natural impulses then they should be the ones who are blamed, not the dominants who are following their own natural instincts.”

“I am sure that it will not reach this point.” A smooth cultured voice cut in. The overly eloquent words couldn’t hide the slight Italian accent of the man who refused to raise his voice.

“How can it reach that point if we are looking after Harry properly? Or are you trying to claim that Henry, Quintalus and I are unfit chaperones, Giroux?” Midate demanded.

“This sort of issue should be handled internally and not when we have a newly inherited submissive in our midst.” Elder Vipond cut in harshly. “Harry’s wishes are his own and we will be respecting them.”

That made Harry smile and look up at Elder Midate, who smiled back down at him and petted his head.

“Harry wishes for his meeting to be as controlled as possible, which is why I have also asked Elder Trintus and Elder Kirrian to oversee Harry’s meetings with me and why the request for additional security has gone in earlier than usual.”

“When were you hoping to hold this meeting, Harry?” Elder Vipond asked as he wrote down, slowly and carefully, what Harry assumed were his wishes.

“I…I was thinking of the summer after I’ve graduated.”
“That would be a year in June, yes?”

Harry nodded. “I wanted it to be in August, though. After my birthday.”

“If you can hold off your Dracken side for that long, of course. You can change your mind at any moment, Harry. Even if it’s at short notice.” Elder Vipond assured him and Harry settled down and took a breath. This wasn’t quite as bad as he’d been envisioning and worrying about. A few of the Elders even seemed really nice and reasonable, even if other’s didn’t.

“You’d be eighteen by that August?” Elder Vipond continued, still writing slowly and deliberately.

Harry nodded. “Yes. I think that I’d feel more adult about everything then, more ready and able to handle the pressure of this sort of situation. I don’t really have anyone to help me through it. I don’t have parents or a parental figure to turn to, I have to do it on my own. I have to make my own decision and do it based off of my own judgement. I’m not ready to do that for something as important as this meeting. Not for something that is going to affect the rest of my life.”

He was stared at again and he bit his lip and ducked his gaze away. Midate patted his shoulders and Harry could almost feel the proud gaze boring into him.

“I told you all that Harry was very mature and intelligent. He knows what he wants and how to go about getting it.”

“I now see what you meant.” Elder Vipond nodded. “Are you completely happy with your decision to wait, Harry?”

Harry nodded. “Yes. I need more time to get used to the idea that I’m a Dracken, without adding in needing a mate and immediately falling pregnant after I’ve gotten one.”

“You’re a very powerful boy, you’re going to need more than one mate, definitely.” Elder Vipond told him and Harry’s eyes widened before immediately looking to Elder Midate for confirmation.

“He’s right, Harry.” Midate told him gently. “You’ll need two very powerful mates or three moderately powerful mates. You could even need four or more depending on how powerful a mate
you pick, if they’re all relatively weak magically, then there’s no telling how many you might need.”

Harry looked utterly aghast at such news. “There’s no way that I could need just the one?” He asked in a small, uncertain voice.

Elder Midate shook his head. “I’m sorry, Harry, but you’re just too powerful for one, sole mate to contain.”

“I don’t need containing!” Harry burst out angrily.

“I’m sorry, that was the wrong choice of words.” Midate explained quickly, trying to placate him. “When you go onto your heat period, your magic will become as feral as your Dracken and it will lash out. You need a certain number of mates in order to absorb this wild magic lest it hurt you, them or even destroy the area you are in. The more powerful the submissive, the more powerful or more numerous the dominants need to be.”

Harry bit his lip. “But… I couldn’t get my head around needing one mate, and now you’re telling me that I’ll need two?”

“As a minimum.” Midate told him quickly. “I wouldn’t want to alarm or overwhelm you, Harry, but I would realistically tell you to expect three to four mates based on your magic levels. There aren’t many dominants who would be on or even near the level that you would need to only have two mates and even then the chances that you’ll like them or that you’re actually compatible with them and will want them as a life mate is very slim.”

Harry sucked in a deep breath and his shoulders quivered. He nodded his head and settled himself again. It was useless to argue. If he needed three mates, then he needed three mates. He’d just have to endure it like he had with everything else in his life. Besides, he might actually like the three mates chosen and he might even come to love them in time. He smiled. If he did fall in love with them and them with him, and with each other too, then he could make his own little family. It might be nice to have his own family as it had been one of the only things that he’d ever wanted in his life.

“I think we should leave this meeting here.” Elder Vipond insisted. “I realise that we’ve given you a lot to think about, Harry, but I do hope that it doesn’t frighten you off.”

Harry shook his head. “No. I just need time to get my head around everything, especially needing more than one mate, that’s all.” He said softly.
“And onto the last issue before Elder Midate escorts you back to Hogwarts. Did you wish to come to the Dracken meeting in May?”

Harry bit his lip. “I’m not so sure that it’s a good idea. I’m interested in going and seeing and speaking to other Drackens in a more…casual setting, but I don’t want to have to walk through them all alone.”

“If I escort you there myself?” Elder Midate encouraged.

Harry chewed harshly on his lip. “I’m still not sure that it’s a good idea.”

“You don’t have to make a decision yet, the meeting isn’t for another four months, you can take your time to decide and then let us know your decision, whatever it might be.” Vipond insisted.

Harry nodded and he stood up, Midate moved him around the chair and the other Elders all said their goodbyes.

“Bye.” Harry said shyly. “Thank you for all your help.”

Midate was practically beaming as he led Harry back into the hallway. Harry didn’t really understand, but from what the Elder had told him, most submissives were rude and self-entitled and did exactly as they pleased, taking everything around them, even people, for granted. He could only imagine what would have happened to him if he’d behaved that way at the Dursleys, but it wasn’t anything good.

He was led back through the long, maze of corridors to the incredibly large, ornate fireplace that was decorated with real gold embellishment and white marble in the front lobby of the Dracken Counsel Halls, he spied a long corridor with a young woman sat behind a desk at the end. He hadn’t noticed it in his nervousness when he’d arrived earlier.

“What’s down there?” He asked curiously.

Elder Midate stopped and looked down at him before he looked down the corridor.
“I’ll show you, come along, Harry.” Midate said as he changed direction and he led Harry down the corridor. “This hallway leads to the Dracken Healing Halls, they’re kept here at the Counsel Halls for added security.” Midate told him as they came out into the room with the woman behind the desk and several chairs and low tables. It was obviously a small waiting room as well as a reception area.

“Oh, oh! I’ll go and get a Healer.” The woman said as she leapt up as they walked in as if a fire had been lit underneath her. She knocked her chair flying in her haste.

“Calm yourself, Jo.” Elder Midate soothed. “This is Harry, I’m just showing him around, he doesn’t actually need a Healer.”

The woman pressed a small hand to her chest and breathed deeply. “Thank Merlin.” She cried out in pure, sincere relief. Harry immediately liked her.

“Do you have any patients?” Elder Midate asked.

“Only the one. There was a submissive meeting called last week, as you know, Elder, but the dominant who was chosen had a corrosive potion thrown over his wings by a rejected, jealous submissive when he was picked by the submissive at the meeting. She had wanted him for herself, but she hadn’t even called any sort of official meeting, so when the other submissive called her meeting, and chose the dominant in question, the other submissive sort of lost her mind.”

Harry’s eyes were wide as Elder Midate shook his head in disgust.

“I told you, Harry. All these new generation submissives leave a lot to be desired.”

“I beg your pardon.” The woman, Jo, teased with a wink.

Elder Midate laughed. “Except for the lovely Joanne here, of course, and my darling daughter and you too, Harry. The three of you, oh and young Aelia too, you all give me hope that not all submissive Drackens are a lost cause. Come along, let me introduce you to some of the Healers that we have here.”

Harry was led into another wide corridor that had at least a dozen doors leading off of it. At the very end was a door that was open and inside the room, three men were laughing together in what looked to be a large, very lavish, comfortable break room for the Healers. It looked like a plush living room.
cum kitchen, complete with three very squashy looking settees, a large screened TV, a good sized bookcase up one end and a fridge and an oven at the other, with cupboards and counters.

“Jacob!” One called out happily as the Elder knocked once on the open door and greeted the three men. “What brings you here? Did you hear about that submissive who threw a flesh eating potion over a dominant’s wings just because he was picked by another submissive? Bloody disgusting!”

“I did hear, Jo just told me. It’s absolutely awful. The Counsel will need to be official informed of it, with a full report, and we’ll deliberate on the best course of action to take.”

“Who is this?” The youngest asked alarmed as he caught sight of Harry. He stood up to a very considerable height which almost dwarfed the room he was in. He had to have been over six foot five at least.

“Calm yourself, Georgio. I’m sure that if the young one had needed medical attention then Jacob wouldn’t have wasted his words greeting us.”

“Exactly right.” Elder Midate answered. “This is Harry. We’ve just had a meeting with the other Elders and I decided to show him around a bit first before taking him back to school.”

“Nice to meet you, Harry. I’m Georgio.”

Harry accepted that massive hand and slid his much smaller one into it and they shook firmly.

“Alfred Grant.” One of the oldest men Harry had ever lain eyes on told him in a strong, sure voice. He held out a withered hand that didn’t so much as quiver as Harry reached out and shook hands with him.

“Jackson Moore.” The other elderly Dracken introduced, though he was nowhere near the age of Healer Grant.

“This is Harry, he’s sixteen and recently inherited. He hasn’t had his meetings yet.”

“He was here to plan them then.” Jackson nodded.
Harry nodded too. “A year next August. I don’t want to be mated immediately.”

“Finally, someone with his head screwed on properly! A sixteen year old shouldn’t be put through such pressures or pregnancy after pregnancy. It’s too taxing on their young, fragile bodies!” Alfred Grant insisted sternly.

The other two Healers made noises and grumbles of agreement, Georgio even nodded his head. Harry smiled and ducked his head away bashfully. He’d never felt so shy in his entire life, but he couldn’t help it.

“Shy one, isn’t he?” Jackson mentioned.

“Harry is likely feeling a little overwhelmed after his meeting with the other Elders. He didn’t know that he was a Dracken, so this inheritance has come as a bit of a shock.”

“You didn’t know?” Georgio asked with wide eyes. “Are you alright? How did your inheritance go?”

Harry grimaced. “It was…painful. Shocking too and very bloody.”

Alfred narrowed his eyes and looked to Midate. “I’m giving the boy a check-up, no complaints, no arguing.”

Harry frowned and wrapped his arms around himself. “I don’t want…”

“Such inheritances are dangerous,” Georgio explained. “If your wings didn’t come through properly it can cause problems with your flight and the sooner we check, the easier it’ll be to correct, if indeed it needs correcting.”

Harry was led back out into the corridor and through one of the twelve doors that led off from it. It led to a large, spacious and very beautiful room with lots of windows flooding in a lot of bright, natural light. There was a large, not quite double sized, bed with two bedside tables and it was to the bed that he was led to.
He climbed up and sat facing the trio of Healers and Elder Midate who’d come to oversee everything.

“I’m sorry, Harry. If I’d known that this would turn into an impromptu check-up I wouldn’t have brought you for a visit.”

Harry smiled a little nervously. “It wouldn’t be the first time that my curiosity got me into trouble.”

“Come on, young one. Take your shirt off.”

Harry did as was asked and he sat with his shirt off looking at the four men in front of him.

“Can you bring your wings out, Harry? Is it still painful for you to do so?”

Harry shook his head. “No. It was only painful the first couple of times. The first time they came out was the worst though.” Harry said as he brought his pure white wings out easily.

Gloriously white, studded thickly with shiny, white scales and stretching out fully to their full length of eleven feet, Harry loved them. He gently touched the buttery soft, paper thin membrane that stretched between his wing bones.

It was Jackson who approached him and he touched professionally and non-intrusively, which settled Harry down insurmountably. Jackson touched and prodded all around his wing joints and the slits in his back that his wings had made when they’d sliced through his skin, the slits that would heal and disappear as soon as he pulled his wings back in.

“Scales out, sweet boy.” Alfred told him as he sat on a small stool at the end of the bed and waited for Harry to pull his scales out.

They were the same colour as his skin and could barely be seen, but they were masquerade mask like over his face and tribal like over his body, running in swirls and spirals over every inch of his skin, gathering in patches and patterns that were mesmerising to look at, but seemed completely random. Some of his scales even looked misplaced, with just the odd, lone one being stranded away from a cluster of others and some were larger than others or the smallest, merest speck, but every single one of them were flat and flush to his skin, unlike the scales on his wings which were bigger and much more chunkier. The scales on his wings had an edge to them and he could just about catch the tip of his fingernails against them if he scratched at them.
These were examined carefully by Alfred as Jackson carefully grabbed the edge of his wing and stretched it out to its fullest extent, watching for any abnormalities or undue stress or tears in the lining of his wing.

“I feel like a doll.” Harry grumbled.

“You’re as cute as one too.” Alfred quipped back immediately.

Harry scowled and sulked. A knock on the door interrupted them and a woman stepped inside.

“Oh! I’m so sorry, I had no idea that we had a second patient. Forgive me.” She said quickly as she caught sight of Harry, bare chested and sat on the bed with his pure white wings being played with and examined, the white scales marking him as an unmated submissive to the human woman, his flat chest marking him as a male. “Is there anything that I can do to assist?”

“Harry’s just having a check-up, Claire.” Elder Midate told the woman. “There’s no reason to worry.”

“His wings came through fully and they are fully flexible and there are no tears or weak joints. Good job, Harry. Some submissives can’t get their wings fully out with instruction from other Drackens.”

“He’s one of the lost lines?” Claire asked shocked. “Julius was telling me about some lines that were having inheritances despite being discounted. I thought the Counsel had rectified that issue.”

“We’d thought that we had too.” Midate said with a sigh. “It seems that there were some lines that even we missed. Harry is one of them.”

“I got my inheritance from my great-grandfather, Cygnus Black, on my Father’s side.”

Everyone stopped and Harry wondered if he should have kept his mouth shut.

“The Black line is so riddled with creature blood that I’m surprised that the Dracken genes chose you. The genes don’t really like competition from other creatures.”
Harry shrugged and sighed. “Nothing has ever been easy for me.” He said quietly.

He looked to Elder Midate and cocked his head. The tall man sighed and waved a hand. “They’re Healers, Harry. They won’t be judgemental and this information will get out at some point, so go ahead.”

“What? What is this?” Jackson asked as he looked between Harry and Jacob.

“I…I…don’t…I’m…”

“Just show them, Harry. It’ll be easier.” Elder Midate said as Harry fumbled his words.

Harry bit his lip before he lifted his fringe to show the lightning bolt scar that had changed his life when he was just fifteen months old. There were gasps and the woman, Claire, even put her hands to her mouth.

“Yeah.” Harry said uncomfortably as he flattened his fringe back down.

“An orphan Dracken.” Alfred was absolutely furious, Harry could tell. “Such a disgrace hasn’t been seen in a century or more! The Counsel needs to rectify this immediately!”

“You need to comb through the Black tree and make sure that there aren’t any more orphans or Drackens littered through it! There’s no telling how dangerous it could be if the Dracken blood is coming back through the Black line. They could die from the stress of their inheritances!”

“We’re already doing so, but there aren’t very many Blacks, or indeed those linked to the Black line, left.” Elder Midate insisted. “Now, are we done here? Harry needs to get back to school.”

“His inheritance seems to have gone off without a hitch. Very surprising for an orphaned Dracken with no idea of his inheritance before it happened. But you’ve done very well, Harry.” Alfred Grant told him.
Harry smiled. “Thank you.”

“You’re a bit on the thin side, so try and bulk up a little more over the next year or so, Harry.” Jackson told him. “It’ll help with the pregnancies.”

Harry looked down at his thin chest and he nodded his understanding, pulling his shirt back over his head.

“Come on then, Harry. Let’s get you back.” Elder Midate said softly. “You’ve met the other Elders and now you’ve met the expert medical Healers we keep on hand, just in case. I think that’s more than enough for one day.”

“It was nice to meet you.” Harry said shyly.

“It was wonderful to meet you too, young one.” Alfred told him with a gentle touch to Harry’s head. “You look after yourself and hopefully, the only time I’ll get to see you is at the yearly Dracken meetings.”

Harry laughed lightly at that and turned to Georgio, who looked like he expected Harry to run from him. He was hanging back, looking a bit awkward, at least until Harry held out his hand and then Georgio smiled kindly and stepped forward to shake.

“You’re a good kid and you’ve got a sound mind.” Georgio told him. “Don’t let your Dracken side bully you into rushing things.”

“If I can help it, I won’t.” Harry insisted stubbornly.

He said goodbye to Jackson and to Claire too before Elder Midate put a hand on his shoulder and led him back out of the room and into the long corridor.

“That boy is going to be completely mobbed at his meetings.” He heard Jackson say to his fellow Healers just as Midate shut the door.

“Is it going to be that bad?” He whispered to the Elder.
Midate smiled softly. “You won’t be hurt at all. I won’t allow it and neither will Elder Kirrian or Elder Trintus. But you need to understand that these dominants want a mate, they want a family, Harry. You are a very sweet, kind boy and they’re going to see that and it’ll attract them to you.”

“So if I act horrible and nasty…?”

Midate laughed, a nice deep belly laugh. “They’ll see right through you.” He insisted with a smile. “Acting mean and selfish is one thing, but actually being mean and selfish show in different ways. You don’t want to attract the wrong type of mate for you, Harry, so it’s best to just be yourself.”

Harry nodded nervously.

“It’s normal to be nervous, unsure and shy during these meetings,” Midate continued on. “It’s absolutely fine if you want to take a moment and stand behind me or one of the other Elders, or even leave the room. The dominants are going to be cock sure and arrogant and they’re going to be swaggering around as if they own the place to try and get your attention, but if they have any respect for you, then they will listen to you.”

“And if they don’t?”

“Get rid of them, immediately. If they won’t listen to you during your meetings, they’ll never listen to you and they’ll never respect you. You deserve so much more than a dominant who won’t respect you or look after you.”

Harry nodded and he took a big breath. He was feeling slightly more confident about everything, but for now at least, he was completely fine with never meeting an unmated dominant. He could likely feel very differently in a year or so, or even in a couple of months, but for now he was very happy to just be Harry. He would finish his education before he had his first baby and his meetings would be as controlled as he could possibly make them. With the three Elders with him, he was going to be completely fine, he was sure of it.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------- X

Claire Maddison could barely focus on her work for the scant few hours that she had left of her shift after her first meeting with Harry and as her clock-out time approached, time seemed to be slowing down even more as she all but glared at the clock, waiting for it to be time for her to go home.
“Are you alright, Claire?” Jo, the receptionist asked her in concern. “You see a little out of it.”

“I’m fine, Joanne.” She insisted. “Alexander is having a family get together and I’m preparing myself to put up with my child like husband for the next couple of hours. When he and his brothers get together….” She trailed off with a long suffering sigh.

Joanne laughed and gave her a smile.

“Kevin’s the same when he gets with his brothers. He’s like a completely different man when we’re on our own.”

“Well I wouldn’t go that far with Julius.” Claire laughed. “But he’s not quite so bad when we’re alone.”

“Claire, Jo!” A happy voice greeted them as a bubbly, young woman bounced into the reception area.

“Aelia! I was wondering where you were, night duty?” Claire asked.

Aelia nodded. “Yes, me and Jackson are on night duty tonight.”

“Jackson came in several hours early, of course. Claimed that he’s so old now that he barely needs to sleep at all.” Jo laughed.

“Good luck tonight.” Claire added.

“We have a patient?” The young woman asked, a little shocked. It wasn’t at all that often that they actually had a patient, she had been expecting a night of theory instructions and more medical training.

Claire nodded. “A very stubborn dominant. A submissive got jealous that he was chosen by someone else and threw a flesh eating potion all over his back and wings. He obviously couldn’t go
to St Mungos due to the location of the injury, so he’s here, in room three and he hasn’t stopped complaining since he got here.”

“You should have seen the young cutie who came in earlier, Aelia!” Joanne gushed, seemingly unable to wait any longer to tell her friend the news. “A male submissive!”

“No!” Aelia gasped. “I can’t believe I missed that just because I’m on night duty this week! Was he okay?”

“He’s fine. A little sixteen year old. He’s under the care of Elder Midate, who was just showing him around. Alfred, Jackson and Georgio manhandled him into a check-up though.” Jo explained. “He’s adorable, Aelia! Thick black hair, milk pale skin and the biggest, shiniest green eyes ever! He was so sweet and shy too, I just wanted to pinch his cheeks and coo at him!”

“I’ll leave you two, to it.” Claire said with a smile.

“Have a nice night wrangling in Julius, Claire!” Jo laughed.

Claire laughed herself. “Oh I will. I’ll be stood to the side with all the other wives and mates and we’ll share a kinship over our husbands all messing around like toddlers.”

The two young women laughed and Claire made her way to the fireplace in the waiting area and threw in a pinch of floo powder from the large jar on the mantel.

She arrived home and she changed from her work clothes into something more casual, her excitement growing again. She couldn’t wait to tell the Maddison clan about what had happened today.

Julius was already at his Father’s home. When the Maddison’s had a get together, it was an all-day event and it happened at least once every couple of months and it was always an open invitation party, if you wanted to go, you could go, if you didn’t want to, you didn’t have to. Claire smiled. It was amazing to be a part of such a large, loving family. Of course, there were exceptions. Some of the dominant sons of the Maddison family were mated to downright rude submissives who would be stood in full Dracken regalia, clutching their furious, frustrated children to their breasts and hissing or trying to claw at anyone who got within three feet of them.

She flooed over to Alexander and Kimberly Maddison’s home and made her way out to the back garden. It was mid-winter, but that never stopped the Maddison’s from meeting and sure enough there was a massive bonfire with mesh fencing around it to stop the young children going near it and the marquee was more like thirty feet of fabric stretched out over them to keep away the snow and the biting wind.
But everyone was laughing and there was hot food and warm drinks. She could see the oldest Maddison son of Alexander and Kimberly, Xerxes, leaning over the bonfire with several metal skewers studded with marshmallows and a clamour of kids around his feet begging for the sweet, gooey treat. It made her smile.

She found her husband in a ring of his brothers, and his Father, laughing uproariously.

“Claire! There you are, I was getting worried.” Julius said as he caught sight of her.

“Sorry, love. Work was interesting.” She explained as she stepped into the circle of his arms and kissed him back when he bent his head to hers to greet her.

“I heard about the dominant who was attacked.” Alexander said shaking his head. Claire was not at all surprised that Alexander already knew of that incident, despite it only happening that morning. Alexander had friends absolutely everywhere, and there were no doubts that he’d heard the story from someone who knew the dominant, or his submissive mate who had been in the house when her new dominant had been attacked by the other submissive. She wouldn’t be surprised if someone didn’t approach him and tell him about Harry as early as tomorrow, despite him being very closely guarded.

“The submissives are getting worse, Dad!” One of the identical twins, either Nicodemus or Cepheus, complained. “There isn’t a single one who I even want to sleep with, let alone mate to! I wouldn’t trust any of them with a child.”

“I wouldn’t go that far.” The second oldest Maddison son said with a grin and Claire knew what was coming before Cassander said it. “I’d sleep with all of them, I just wouldn’t mate with them!”

“Cassander!” Myron, the youngest Maddison son snapped. “Stop being so disrespectful.”

“There’s going to be a change there.” Claire said, unable to stop herself.

She immediately had the attention of several Maddisons’.

“What have you heard?” Alexander asked her curiously. It wasn’t often that she could surprise him or catch him off guard with such news, most times he knew before she did what was going on in the Dracken circles.
“Elder Midate brought a young submissive to the Counsel Halls today. Sixteen years old and very sweet and shy. Very beautiful too and with a gentle personality to match.”

“Was she alright?” Julius asked her with a frown.

“Oh, the submissive was there to meet the other Elders, but Jacob brought him to come and meet us at the Healing Halls too.”

“Him?” Alexander asked with a warm, happy smile.

“Oh yes. Harry. He’s absolutely adorable! I couldn’t believe it when I saw him, but he’s an orphan and from the Black line to boot!”

“Seriously?” Xerxes asked as he wandered over to join them, having finished dishing out roasted marshmallows, and catching the tail end of the conversation. “The Black line has had so many creatures in it throughout the centuries that I wouldn’t be surprised if it produced the odd hybrid.”

“Yes. His great-grandfather Cygnus Black, on his Father’s side, passed on the Dracken genes and Harry was orphaned at fifteen months old.”

“Are you saying what I think you are?” Myron asked, as ever his very swift mind piecing information together at lightning speeds. Not a lot ever got passed Myron Maddison.

She nodded. “I am. None other than Harry Potter himself has just had a Dracken inheritance. A submissive Dracken at that! He’s so sweet, so kind and he knows exactly what he wants too!”

“Which is what?” Myron’s oldest son, Maximilus, asked curiously. He was unmated and he’d be meeting Harry soon enough. He was very handsome, very tall, though not as tall as his Father, and very broad too. He and Myron were like two peas in a pod and apparently they, and a few other Maddisons, had gotten the tall and broad gene from Alexander’s Father, Angelo, who had been six foot seven and wider across in the shoulders than some people were tall. Alexander himself had taken more after his Mother, Evelyn.

“To finish his education before he mates. He’s holding his meeting off until the August after he turns eighteen in a year and a half.”
“Really?” Alexander asked. “How very curious!”

“He might not be able to.” Julius said.

“You never saw him.” Claire denied. “He is so determined and Elder Midate said that Harry is planning his meeting to very strict specifications. Harry has the overwhelming need to control the situation, which isn’t very surprising when you consider what he’s been through in his young life. But Harry has put emphasis on security and his own safety. Elder Midate is co-sharing his chaperone duties with Elder Kirrian and Elder Trintus too and there are going to be triple the amount of mated dominants acting as security.”

“He’s really paranoid!” One of the twins said with wide eyes.

“I think that after everything that that boy has been through then he’s earned the right to be.” Alexander said seriously. “He destroyed that vile creature less than a year ago at just fifteen years old. Too young for such wars and pressures. The poor boy is likely traumatised and he needs someone to take care of him and he’s obviously worried about someone trying to harm him if he is insisting on additional chaperones and security.”

“He’s not going to be harmed with Midate, Kirrian and Trintus there.” Max said. “Between the three of them, they’re going to box him in and give him anything and everything that he needs. As they should!” Max added with a roguish grin.

“What are you all looking so serious over?” Kimberly asked as she wandered over, handing her husband and mate a mug of hot chocolate, which Alexander accepted gratefully, holding his mate close and kissing her before taking a deep drink.

“There’s a submissive male just been inherited, Mum!” One of the twins burst out excitedly.

“Really? That’s wonderful news, Nico. You must be very excited, Maxie.”

Max blushed. It was no secret within the family that he preferred males to females, but having it mentioned by his grandmother had him burying his face in his hands and groaning.
“He’s an orphaned boy, dear.” Alexander said sadly.

Kimberly gasped and pressed a hand to her mouth. “Oh no! The poor sweetheart! Alexander, can’t you do something? We could look after him.”

Alexander shook his head. “No, love. You know the laws that I helped to enforce. We have unmated dominants in our family. The Counsel wouldn’t allow it, no matter the good intention behind the offer.”

“He’s being well looked after, Kimberly.” Claire assured the kind hearted woman. “Elder Midate is his chaperone and he’s actually at Hogwarts School until the summer.”

“Where will he go for the summer?” She asked sadly.

“Presumably where he’s been staying every other year.” Myron put in softly.

“I hate the thought of him being alone, with no family.” Kimberly said with a soft sniff.

“Oh, love.” Alexander chuckled and pulled her in tight to his body.

“With any luck one of us will snap him up.” One of the twins, now known to her as Cepheus, laughed happily.

“He needs three or four mates according to Jackson.” Claire told them. “He’s a very powerful boy.”

“Wow.” Nicodemus chuckled.

“What did you expect from the defeater of the so called dark lord?” Xerxes laughed. “It would be an honour to welcome him into the family. It’s Max’s turn I think.”

“What about me?! I’m your brother!” Cassander demanded.
“Max is younger and he’s actually ready to settle down.” Xerxes waved away. “You are not, Cass, and you happily admit it.”

“If he picks me, I’d be honoured.” Max insisted. “But I’m not going to hound him when it’s obviously not what he wants from his meetings.”

Myron looked on in utter beaming pride at his oldest son and Claire chuckled.

“You need to get in there, Max or you could lose out.” Cassander told him.

“No.” Max shook his head. “If he wants everything to be controlled, then the last thing he’ll want is a bunch of dominants rushing him and clamouring for his attention. It’ll scare him and fear is the last thing I want him to associate with me.”

“I grow prouder of you every day.” Myron told his son and pulled a blushing Max into a hug, clapping him on the shoulder.

“Dad!” Max whined embarrassedly.

“Aw, did I miss you being humiliated again?” Myron’s younger son, Caesar, asked his older brother with a massive grin, so much like his biological Father, Myron’s subordinate mate, Richard.

“What are you doing here?” Max demanded. “Your mate is pregnant!”

“She’s with her family. Eden was annoying the hell out of me so I had to leave. He’s such a little shit! He should have been a submissive with how arrogant he is. You know he actually believes that no submissive is good enough for him, the little short arse. I wish that there was just one submissive who would look past the boyish face, the muscles and the pretty coloured wings and reject his arse and drag him off his egotistical high horse. The autumn dominant.” Caesar scoffed.

“Breathe, Caesar.” Max coached with a grin. “How are Silas and Aiden?”

Caesar scoffed harder. “Silas and Ivey have just had another child, a boy. The poor thing!”
“Is he alright?” Kimberly asked concernedly.

“No. The poor boy is going to be laughed into his own grave. They named him Tealeigh.”

“What?” Max spluttered out in surprised laughter.

“Yeah, exactly! Spelt T-E-A-L-E-I-G-H. I thought they’d called him tea leaf at first! They have got to stop with the colour themed names, it is not working!”

Claire joined in with raucous laughter, though she did feel sorry for the poor newborn boy. She took some comfort in the knowledge that he could change his name when he was seventeen, when he became a legal adult.

“That’s their fifth daft named child, isn’t it?” Cassander asked.

Caesar nodded. “Ivoree, Violettie, and then there are the twins Scarlette and Lavendette. I’d hoped that the boys would escape relatively unharmed, unlike their sisters, but no. He has the worst name of them all!”

Max wiped his eyes free from the laughter tears and caught his breath again. “And Aiden?”

“He’s the only normal one, I swear.” Caesar insisted. “It must be his mate, Lucy’s, influence. She’s very level headed and stubborn. If she doesn’t get what she wants, she gives Aiden the cold shoulder and she’s stubborn enough to keep it up for as long as needed. He’s learnt to give in quickly.”

“The Walkers always were crackpots.” Cassander sighed. “Why did you have to associate our family with theirs, Caesar?”

“Cassander!” Myron snarled with more than a hint of threat in his strong, deep voice.

“Myron’s right, Cassander.” Alexander said sternly. “You don’t make anyone feel disgraced for having a mate. Not in this family.”
“Sorry, Caesar.” Cassander apologised shamefaced.

Caesar nodded. “I hate the thought that my own family doesn’t like my mate.”

“That’s nothing new. I don’t like half the mates my brothers or nephews have mated to.”

“Oliver!” Alexander growled at the new man who’d walked past them.

“What? I don’t, Dad!”

“As if your mate is any better!” Xerxes growled.

“What did you say?!” Oliver snarled.

“Inside, the both of you!” Kimberly ordered. “Now!”

Glaring at one another, Oliver and Xerxes followed their Mother into the house for an earful as if they were still boys and Claire shook her head and turned to kiss Julius. If there wasn’t at least one more argument or fight tonight then it would be a first.

“I think we should have an early night.” Julius whispered into her ear.

Claire’s stomach clenched and she slipped her one hand into Julius’ pale brown hair and tugged gently with her nails, turning her face into his neck.

“Perhaps we should.” She replied breathily.

“We are.” Julius said in a low, tight voice and before she knew what was what, or could even formulate a protest, her husband had swept her off of her feet and was carrying her into the house and to the floo with the catcalls and whistles of the other Maddisons following them.
Claire laughed. “You’re like a teenager.”

“I’m taking that as a compliment, my beautiful, darling wife.” Julius grinned back.

The two of them flooed back to their own home, leaving the gathering in full swing. Another two arguments broke out that evening, one of which led to a fist fight and one submissive having her head dunked into a serving bowl of pumpkin juice by another submissive. It was always the same when the Maddisons got together, complete and utter chaos and carnage.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ X

Elder Sesto Messana was apprehensive as he made his way through the large, stone mansion. It was very old and had been in the Perrot family for centuries. It was almost a partial castle and Sesto was sure that it had actually been a castle at one point in time and had been converted within the last couple of centuries into something akin to a manor house.

Inside of the mansion the stone was covered over with highly polished, wood panelling and very old tapestries and family portraits. Each ancestor was uglier and looked more cruel and cold than the last. He had set this ball rolling and now he had to report his findings. He’d wanted the gold and the connection to this ancient, powerful, influential family so he had agreed to spy on the new submissives for them and inform them if a male submissive appeared. He’d been doing as such for several years now.

He had failed half a dozen times to become a submissive chaperone, but that wasn’t strictly needed to find any male submissive as they were so rare that they were immediately coveted and put into the protection of the Elders. In fact, he had come to realise that it was safer for him if he wasn’t a submissive chaperone as he had no ‘need’ to go near the submissive and he wouldn’t be suspected of being involved, at least, not before he could cover his tracks thoroughly.

He’d never thought that he’d ever have to deliver on his side of the bargain, but here he was with the news of a male submissive in Britain for the first time in decades, the odds of it were astronomical.

“There you are. I was beginning to wonder if you were backing out of our deal.” The Perrot patriarch, Carterum Patricum Perrot, spoke from behind him in an icy, steely voice.

“Of course not.” Messana insisted, burying his fear and nerves down deep, leaving his voice dispassionate and steady. There was no going back now, it was already too late.

“The submissive is an actual male then?” Carter asked as he strode forward so that he was in front
and he led the way into a large drawing room, where an elder woman and a young man in his early twenties sat impatiently drumming his fingers on the dragonhide of the settee he was lounging on.

“Finally!” The brat, Jefferus, spat. “You were told to be here at noon, not ten past!”

“I got waylaid by Elder Getus.” Messana said, trying not to clench his teeth and suppressing the urge to smack the Dracken in front of him.

“Well?” The brat demanded. “Is the submissive a boy?”

“Yes, he is. Harry is sixteen years old, but he is very strong willed and stubborn. He doesn’t want a meeting until he’s eighteen and he doesn’t want to go to the meeting in May. With him being at Hogwarts through the year and Elder Midate already petitioning to gain custody of him, it’s going to be impossible to get near him.”

There was silence for several heartbeats, but to Sesto it felt so much longer and the silence was agonising.

“You need to convince him to go to the meeting in May.” The elder woman, Penelope, demanded after she’d thought of a way around the predicament. “He’ll be less protected there and it’ll be easier to sneak him out.”

“I want him sooner than May!” Jefferus screamed like a petulant child demanding a new, expensive toy.

“Oh, sweetness. I know.” The woman cooed as if he was still a small child. “I just don’t think it’s possible.”

“It’s not.” Messana said. “He’s too heavily protected at Hogwarts and Midate visits him very often. More often than the usual submissives as the boy is an orphan and Midate is discussing custody options with him.”

“The fact that he’s an orphan could work in our favour.” Carter said happily.
“There is another problem with him.” Sesto said slowly, reluctantly.


“No, he’s very beautiful. But he’s Harry Potter.”

“The celebrity teenager who killed the creature, Voldemort almost a year ago?” Penelope gasped. “We heard about him, even here!”

Messana nodded. “Which contributes to the heavy security around him. It might be best to grab him at the meeting in May. If the first attempt is botched in anyway and he gets away, there will never be a second chance. It needs to be planned intricately and perfectly to the letter.”

“You have to get him to go there first!” Jefferus sneered at him and Messana had to work very hard not to clench his fists. He repeated over and over that this vulgar slug was beneath him, like a calming mantra.

“Oh, but just think, Jeff! You could have a beautiful, celebrity boy as a submissive mate!” Penelope gushed.

“He can never be allowed outside.” Messana warned seriously. “He’s too easily recognised. That cursed scar will not ever be healed or covered.”

“Do we look stupid to you?” Carter demanded furiously. “I’ve already had the house severely warded to keep the boy inside, there is even a ward that will distort his distress call so that it can’t be pinpointed to this location. After our Jeff has mated to him we won’t need to ward the house quite so much, or as heavily, but he will never get to go outside the boundaries of our estate. He will never be found.”

Messana nodded. “I will convince the boy to go to the meeting in May and I will get him here to you.”

“You had better.” Jefferus snarled. “I want this one and I will have him! Everything’s already planned. I only need him! I won’t let you ruin this chance for me! Do you know how long I have already waited for a male mate? Six fucking years!”
Sesto bit his tongue at the vulgarity being spat at him as if he were a common servant and he bit harder to swallow down the immediate retort that he gave to people who were so common and coarse as to use such crude words in general conversation.

“It will need planning.” Messana insisted. “It is not going to be easy to get the boy from the Meeting Halls to this house. Harry is no fool and he doesn’t trust easily, if at all, after everything he’s been through, he’s not going to walk off with a stranger.”

“It has to be you.” Carter told him firmly and Sesto swallowed down his fear and the immediate reaction of denial that he had to hearing that. It would mean his own life on the line if he was caught smuggling a submissive.

“You need to get the boy and bring him here. All submissives trust the Elders of their Counsel.” Penelope said as if spouting a fact, but it wasn’t true, at least, it wasn’t true anymore. Not all submissives instinctually trusted the Elders as they once had. People were more suspicious, were more independent and they had families to turn to. They didn’t need the Elders as much as they once had hundreds of years before.

“It will take subtlety, and trickery.” He said.

“Just drug him and get him here! How hard is that?” Jefferus sneered.

“It will not be that easy to drug the boy under the other Elders’ noses.” He replied, getting angry and frustrated now at the mammoth task he was being given that these people all seemed to think would be as simple and as straight forward as taking sweets from an infant.

“I’m sure it will. He’s just a submissive.” Jefferus waved away. “What can he actually do?” He laughed.

“He defeated one of the worst, most powerful Dark Lords of the century at just fifteen years old.” Messana ground out. “He’s powerful in his own right and he’s intelligent and resourceful too.”

“We’ll make amends to the wards to contain him.” Carter insisted. “But it’s up to you to get the boy. It’ll be easy enough, he’s a sixteen year old submissive boy.”
“Just do it and get out!” Jefferus raged, standing up tall. He was taller than Sesto was and more muscled too.

Messana sighed and nodded. He turned and left, walking quickly to get out of this accursed house, away from this family. He should never have agreed to this spying position. It had been wonderful for several years, he got paid for doing nothing, he got powerful connections to throw around for doing nothing, and he’d thought that he would never have to keep up his end of the bargain by delivering a submissive male to this family.

There hadn’t been a male submissive in Britain for decades, the chances of one just popping up only a handful of years after he’d agreed to deliver a male submissive to the Perrot family, if one actually turned up at all, that was…well, he’d never believed that it would ever happen, which was one of the main contributors as to why he had agreed to do it in the first place. The Perrot family had spies like him in every country worldwide trying to get a male submissive for their vile, insect of a son and male submissives did pop up all over the world, perhaps not often, but more regularly than they had on the relatively small island of Britain.

He’d thought…hoped, that he would never need to be the one to smuggle a submissive to this family, but now he was the one who needed to do so and he was terrified of getting caught, because it would mean the end of his life and the utter disgrace of his family. He couldn’t get caught and he had to get the boy to this family. It had to be done as there was no backing out now. He’d taken seven years’ worth of gold and thrown around his powerful connection to the Perrot family, using it fully to his advantage for seven years. He couldn’t give that back, so he had to uphold his end of the bargain and he had to plan and execute the abduction of the boy by himself.

This family, these people, were not accustomed to being told no, or that something wasn’t possible. They just expected successful results and from the not so vague and unsubtle hints, his life was on the line if he failed. He couldn’t afford for anything to go wrong, just one slip up could cost him his life. He would be killed by the Perrot family if he failed to get the boy to them and he would be killed by the Dracken Counsel, his own peers, if he was caught smuggling a submissive.

He sighed incredibly heavily, the only option he had was to plan this abduction to the letter, with as little involvement from others as possible, and he had to succeed. He had to get the boy to the Perrot family on the night of the Dracken Meeting or he would be hunted down and killed, perhaps his family too, who had no idea of what he’d agreed to do seven years ago.

He’d never told his mate, Fiammetta, who would have killed him herself if she’d known what he’d been up to. Nor had he ever told any of his numerous siblings and definitely not his children. He hadn’t wanted them involved in this dirty business and now he was in too deep to back out of it. There was no other choice anymore. The boy had become the property of the Perrot family from the moment he had poked his head out into the open after his inheritance. He just hoped that no one ever found out about his involvement when Harry Potter went missing after the May meeting in a few months’ time.

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Harry was naturally very nervous as he made sure that the dark, charcoal grey suit that he’d chosen to wear instead of dress robes was straight and neat. His tie, a gift from Elder Midate for agreeing to come to the Dracken meeting, was a beautiful dark green and made of silk. It almost perfectly matched his eyes.

May had come around very quickly, much quicker than he’d wanted it to, and Harry had had several meetings with his three Elder chaperones, just talking to them about anything and everything and giving him a chance to ask any questions while he became more comfortable with them and more confident with his sudden, unknown inheritance.

Elder Midate checked in on him often, at least twice a week, making sure that his Dracken wasn’t tearing his mind to pieces as well as teaching him more about being a Dracken. He had learnt a lot in the last couple of months of talking to the Elders and he was much happier about everything to do with his Dracken inheritance. He was learning etiquette, illnesses, laws and even how he would give birth when he did finally mate and have his first child. He was almost relieved to hear that his Dracken side would take over and everything would come naturally to him, his Dracken doing everything automatically and instinctually while his human side was almost completely unaware of everything going on. It wasn’t uncommon for some submissives to remember very little of their nesting, labour, birth and then the recovery afterwards, though it was rare that they didn’t remember anything about it at all. Apparently, according to the Healers, every nesting, birth and recovery for each and every baby would be different, and it differed between submissives too, so there was no telling how he would act or react to his pregnancy, or how he would handle his nesting, labour, birth or the recovery after it, and it was impossible to say how much of it he would remember, he’d just have to wait and see for himself.

Harry’s first flying lesson, with his wings and not a broomstick, had gone as spectacularly as his first broom lesson in his first year had. He definitely had a talent for it and Elder Midate had called him a natural as Harry needed very little instruction and as soon as he found the muscles that had been pointed out to him, the ones used to control his wings, he had wasted no time in using them and stretching them out. He’d almost given the Elders, and the Healers who had come just in case, a heart attack as he took a running leap into the air and just…flew.

He was so happy in the air, so free, it had been exhilarating and joyous and he’d flown for as long as he possibly could, recreating the tricks he did on his broom with his wings. It was harder to do and needed a lot of adjustment to compensate for the wings being attached to his back and not a broom underneath him, but it felt…it was just…it was more natural to him. He was meant to be doing this, up in the air, so high, no broom, just a part of his body that he’d always had inside of him. This was why he’d always enjoyed flying, because on an instinctual, subconscious level he knew that his body was made for flight.

He’d finished off his little zoom around the grounds of the Dracken Counsel Halls, purely because he was getting tired from the use of such new muscles, by diving straight down toward the ground before using his wings like a parachute behind him, pulling them up tight so that they touched behind his head and he righted himself in the air. He’d spread his wings out and touched down to the grass as lightly as a feather. He couldn’t have kept the face splitting smile from his mouth if he’d cared to try. It had been exhilarating and he was both exhausted and exultant. Elder Midate had seized him and held him tight, sniffing him all over with wild eyes.

‘What’s wrong?’ He’d asked innocently at the time and he grinned now as he remembered Elder
Midate’s worried, almost panicky look, almost like a parent.

‘That was incredible’ Georgio Alessandri, one of the Healers, had said in astonishment. ‘There isn’t a mark on you either!’

‘I love flying!’ He’d gushed happily. ‘It’s so much better with wings and not a broom! All I have to do is adjust my body and think about the slant of my wings and I can recreate all the tricks I can on a broom!’

‘Merlin, I’m going to have a cardiac arrest with you around, Harry.’ Elder Midate had gasped, sinking to crouch down on his haunches as he sucked in deep, calming breaths.

Still thinking of his first, and only, flying lesson in Dracken form put him in a good mood and he stepped away from the mirror and left his dorm room, and Gryffindor Tower, ignoring the strange looks that he was getting from his house mates as he was dressed in a Muggle suit in the evening on a weekend. It probably was a strange sight for them all, but Harry didn’t care and he didn’t offer to explain himself either, he was done with his house mates, they’d turned on him and he wouldn’t let them in on his plans now.

He’d been almost bullied into going to the meeting in May by several of the other Elders, particularly Elder Messana, who had insisted that he needed to get used to other Drackens as he was an orphan. So here he was, dressed in a suit after being arm wrestled into attending the meeting.

He sighed, trying not to let the Elder’s pompous demands ruin his previous good mood as he made his way to Dumbledore’s office. Elder Midate was going to be waiting for him as soon as he arrived as Harry didn’t want to be alone. At least not at the beginning of the night, he’d see how it went first.

He took a nice and deep, cleansing breath and made his way through the corridor and up to Dumbledore’s office, speaking the password he’d been given to the stone gargoyle, which leapt aside, allowing Harry to climb the winding stairs and to knock on the door.

“Come in, Harry.”

Harry entered the room with a soft smile.

“How are you, Sir?” He greeted.

“Very well, thank you. How are you, my boy?” Dumbledore asked him, coming around the desk and resting a gentle hand on his back.
“Alright, Sir. A bit nervous.”

“Stay close to Jacob Midate, Harry and I’m sure that you’ll be fine.” Dumbledore encouraged. “There is always heavy security around the Dracken meetings.”

“I don’t really want to go at all, Sir.”

“I know that it was not your choice to attend, but you only need to go for an hour I would imagine. Elder Midate will see you back safely when you decide that you want to leave.”

Harry nodded and he steeled himself to stick to this meeting for at least an hour. Maybe it wouldn’t be that bad. Maybe he could actually find someone who wouldn’t hound him or harass him. Someone he could actually talk to. That would be nice. After all, not all of the Drackens at this meeting were going to be unmated dominants. There would be other submissives to talk to, both mated and unmated, then there would be mated dominants too, maybe they would be alright to talk to as well. It couldn’t be as bad as he was imagining, he was not walking into a hall filled with just unmated dominants, it wasn’t going to be like his mate meetings, which really would be just him in a hall of unmated dominants. It would be alright, he was going to be fine, he would have the Elders with him, and the Healers had said that they’d keep an eye out for him too.

He said his goodbyes to Dumbledore and he flooed to the Dracken Counsel Halls, trying, and partially succeeding, in keeping his feet…he went to his knees, but at least he didn’t smash in his face into the floor this time, like he had when first meeting Elder Midate. There were quite a few people milling around the entrance he noticed, including mated Drackens who were being paid to stand on guard with guns tucked under their open jackets.

Harry immediately spotted Elder Midate and he quickly and self-consciously made his way over to him and he tucked himself under his arm like a child. He felt like a child at the moment with all of the tall, unmated dominants he could scent out roaming around the place. He wanted to hide and Elder Midate made him feel safe. Elder Midate had always made him feel safe, from the very first time that he’d met him.

“Ah, there you are, Harry. I hope that you’re alright?” Jacob asked him with an understanding smile, holding him tighter.

Harry nodded. “I am, but there are lots of people here.”

Elder Midate nodded. “There are, but don’t let that discourage you. Come on, let us go and mingle for a while.”
Harry was led down the corridor again, around the corner and down another corridor, only this time, about halfway down, they turned left, through two huge, massive doors that were twice the height and width of normal doors. These doors had been closed a few months ago, when he’d come to meet the other Elders and when he’d met the Dracken Healers and then again when he’d come here for his flying lessons, but he’d spent most of that day out in the grounds to be fair though.

There were hundreds of people milling around the absolutely massive room, laughing, talking and drinking. Harry stuck very close to Elder Midate, though he did notice that there were lots of dominants standing around with guns hidden, badly, under open jackets. An obvious warning and threat.

He clocked the very large soft play crèche that was on three levels in the corner, which was thickly guarded by the dominants with guns. It was swarming with children of all ages, laughing, giggling and screeching happily and it made him smile.

“Do you want a drink, Harry?”

Harry turned back to Elder Midate and he bit his lip and nodded.

“There’s the bar, it’s all open, you don’t need to pay. So you go and get yourself something and I’ll be right here waiting, I won’t move.” He assured him.

Harry knew with those words that it was a test and he squared his shoulders. He took a deep breath and he made his way over to the bar and he leant on the shiny top.

“Hey there, cutie.” Of course the unmated dominant bartender immediately made his way over to him, looking him over like a piece of meat, drawn to him like a moth to a bright flame and Harry tensed immediately, but the bartender didn’t move from behind the bar, he didn’t try to touch him and he couldn’t get much closer to him because of the wide bar top that separated them.

“Can I have a glass of juice, please?” He asked politely.

“You can have anything that you want, cutie.” The bartender promised him, with an undercurrent of something sexual that Harry didn’t fully grasp. “Tomato, pumpkin, pineapple, apple or orange?”

“Apple please.”
“Coming right up, don’t go anywhere now, cutie.”

Harry smiled. If all unmated dominants were as harmless as the bartender, then maybe this meeting wouldn’t be quite so bad after all.

“What’s your name?” The bartender asked as he brought over a tall tumbler glass of apple juice.

“Harry.” He answered as he took a deep drink of the chilled juice. It was really nice.

“I’m Taylor.” The bartender introduced.

“Nice to meet you.” Harry said politely, if a bit awkwardly, but he was very glad when the bartender was called away to serve someone else. Despite Taylor insisting that he stay where he was and to not go anywhere, Harry turned and scurried away, back to Elder Midate, who hadn’t moved and was talking to Elder Justo Getus.

“There you are, young Harry. I was hoping that you might like to meet my grandson, Dominic. He’s here tonight and he’s very excited to meet you. He’s just had his inheritance several months back.” Elder Getus immediately said upon noticing him, before Elder Midate had even spotted him.

“No, thank you.” Harry insisted stubbornly.

He didn’t like Elder Getus and he hadn’t liked him from his scoffing and bemusement at the full Elder meeting he’d had, when Harry had shown that he had a mind of his own and wanted to do things his own way, not the way that he was necessarily supposed to do things.

There was no way that he wanted to meet the man’s grandson, Dominic, especially not if he was anything like his narrow minded grandfather who didn’t think that submissives deserved an education or wishes or desires of their own.

Elder Midate tried to hide his smile in the sleeve of his robe, but Harry noticed it, even as he watched Elder Getus mouthing silently in astonishment at Harry’s rebuffal.

“What do you mean, no?!” The man demanded, finally finding his tongue.

“I mean no, I wouldn’t like to meet him.” Harry said firmly.
"Elder Kirrian is by there, Harry. Why don’t you go and greet him?" Elder Midate offered as Elder Getus mouthed wordlessly for a second time in offended outrage that any submissive had so easily dismissed his grandson, the only Dracken to have come into his family line since himself.

Harry nodded and made his way over to Elder Kirrian, who was talking to an elder man who smelt safe and mated to Harry.

"Hello, Elder." Harry greeted softly, waiting for the two men to reach a natural lull in their conversation before butting in.

"Harry! Here he is Maddison, told you he was stunning, didn’t I?"

Harry blushed beetroot and buried his face into his hands, taking care with his glass of juice.

"Very shy and sweet natured too." Kirrian added proudly.

"I’m going back over here." Harry muttered as he made to turn away.

Elder Kirrian laughed with his friend, Maddison, and tugged him back. "He’s as stubborn as a mule too. Thankfully he doesn’t look like one."

"Not everything is about physical appearance!" Harry grumbled hotly.

"No, it’s not." Maddison agreed. "It’s lovely to meet you, Harry. I’m Alexander. Alexander Maddison." He elaborated when Harry shot him a confused look. "Henry has never called anyone by their first name."

"I forget which one you and yours are." Elder Kirrian waved away blithely. "There are a hundred of you Maddisons floating around, you can’t expect decent folk to know which one of you is which anymore."

Harry chuckled and he picked his chin back up, looking around himself curiously. He noticed people
staring and pointing at him and he glared at them when he caught them being so rude.

“You’re supposed to be making friends.” Elder Kirrian laughed at him. Harry swung back to see him and Alexander grinning at him.

“They’re staring at me like I’m a side show at a circus!” He complained. “They should MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS!” He said really loudly, glaring at a group of women, all in their early twenties if he had to guess, who were a couple of feet away, pointing and giggling at him as if there was no way that he could actually see them behaving in such a way.

They looked scandalised that he’d interrupted their mockery of him and they moved off, the one stomping stroppily over to a very large man, gesturing and pointing in his direction. The man flushed red, probably in anger if his gritted teeth and clenched fists were any indication. Harry wondered what she was actually telling him to make him that angry, because it certainly couldn’t have been the truth from his overly emotional reaction.

He gave the woman a gentle touch, nodded his head and then he stormed over to where she had been standing with her little friends, glaring at all the dominants within the area that his, supposed mate, had pointed to.

“Which one of you shouted at my mate?!” He demanded aggressively.

“I did!” Harry answered immediately and the man swung around to face him and he visibly deflated like a pierced balloon…even the angry colour in his face drained off.

“You?” He asked, as if he were hoping that someone else would step forward instead. Someone who wasn’t a foot shorter and two hundred pounds lighter, someone who wasn’t ten years younger and smelled strongly of an unmated submissive. Someone he could actually, physically fight like the bull headed dominant that he was.

“Yes me. You should tell that…that child, that it’s rude to point and talk about someone else, especially when they can see and hear you! How old is she, five?” He demanded. “She needs to grow the fuck up!” He shouted so that there was no possible way that she hadn’t heard him, standing and looking smugly over as if she fully expected him to back down from her dominant mate…or perhaps she was expecting to see her mate to beat the shit out of him.

“She’s pregnant, so…” The dominant tried to explain gently, as if to a small child.
“I don’t give a flying fuck!” Harry interrupted. “Being pregnant doesn’t entitle her to be an utter bitch to other people! You don’t just fall pregnant and become a horrible person, she’s using it as an excuse!”

“How dare you say that about my mate, I should…”

“This conversation is over.” Harry interrupted, holding a hand up and turning his back on the dominant, who flushed purple.

“Move along now.” Elder Kirrian chided sternly.

When the dominant didn’t listen and actually took a step forward, no less than six armed guards rushed forward, their guns swinging out from under their jackets, ready and willing to be used. The dominant growled furiously and swung around himself and he thundered away, back to his awful, bitchy mate. The armed guards melted back into the crowd and retook their positions against the wall.

“Are you alright, sweet one?” Elder Trintus, who had been rushing over as soon as he’d heard the commotion, asked him concernedly as he held his shoulders gently.

“I’m fine.” Harry answered with a small shrug. “I can’t abide people being horrible for the sake of it and she was just awful. There was no need for it.”

“There wasn’t. That was a job well done.” A new, unmated dominant came over to say.

“My son, Nicodemus.” Alexander introduced, pulling his son to the other side of himself, further away from Harry and that made Harry smile happily. Alexander wasn’t like Elder Getus, he wasn’t trying to push his unmated sons or grandsons on him and that made him feel so much better to be stood here with him.

“Cepheus, don’t you dare!” Alexander warned angrily, but too late as a hand smacked Harry’s bum. Hard.

He swung around and jabbed a punch right at the face of the man behind him. His fist connected with a jarring pain through his knuckles, but the man’s lip burst and started dribbling blood down his chin. Harry had been aiming for his nose, but he wasn’t too disappointed that he’d caught the man’s
mouth instead.

“That’s no less than you deserve!” The biggest man that Harry had ever seen, and that included the giant Georgio Alessandri, said angrily as he touched Harry’s shoulder very gently.

Harry inhaled quickly and then he relaxed. This man was mated, that made him nice and safe in Harry’s opinion and it was alright for him to touch him in such a platonic way. He was just being kind and supportive, and that was fine.

“I’m your brother and this boy has savaged my beautiful face!” The man whined as he held his hand over his cut lip.

“Good.” The tall man grunted as he hauled his brother away from Harry easily.

“You Maddisons are popping up everywhere!” Kirrian complained. “Piss off!”

Harry aborted a laugh and snorted instead, almost choking on his laughter before he gave up trying to stop himself and he just let his amusement show.

“You have a nice laugh.” A new voice told him as stopped chuckling and wiped his eyes.

Harry looked at the new man and then around him in bemusement, seeing that a couple more people had turned up out of nowhere too. He blinked in surprise and no small amount of shock.

“They really do pop up out of nowhere!” He said with a giggle that he couldn’t quite suppress. That got him a round of genuine laughter and Elder Kirrian clapped his shoulder.

“I told you, boy! They just come out of nowhere and they keep coming! There are hundreds of them, they breed like cockroaches and they scuttle around like them too!”

“Harry, how are you?” A kind woman asked him.

It took Harry a moment to place her, to remember her kind eyes, before he smiled. “Hi, Claire.” He
said shyly. “I’m okay. How are you?”

“I’m very well, thank you. You look much happier than the first time we met.”

Harry nodded. “I feel happier now that I’ve settled down a bit.” He said with a small smile.

“Introduce me!” A man whined from beside her, giving her ribs a couple of pokes with his finger.

Claire sighed. “Harry, this is my very childish and impatient husband, Julius Maddison.” She told him, indicating the man almost bouncing beside her.

“You poor woman, I’m so sorry for your burden.” He sympathised genuinely and Claire blinked and then laughed with a few others while he got an indignant ‘oi’ from Claire’s husband, Julius. His blue eyes were twinkling with mischievous amusement however, so Harry assumed that his comment was forgiven and hadn’t been taken to heart.

“This is Xerxes.” She indicated the silent, hulking shadow who had appeared behind Alexander. “That is Alexus and Sean.” She indicated the sandy haired man who was hand in hand with a grey haired man beside him. “This is Oliver, he’s Keanu and the tall mountain over there is Myron.” She indicated two smaller men who looked like twins and then to the tallest man, the one who was mated and had hauled Cepheus away from him. “The young one by there is Myron’s son, Max.”

She indicated the last man, the one who had told him that he had a nice laugh and Harry blushed as he caught those bright blue eyes. He couldn’t break his gaze away and neither could the big man, Max. They were just staring, at least until Elder Midate caught up with him and he glared at Max and broke the spell by standing in front of Harry, blocking his view of Max. Harry shook his head as if to clear it.

“Uh?” He grunted questioningly.

He got a couple of laughs and he looked around curiously, wondering what was going on.

“I think he likes you, Maxie.” The man introduced as Nicodemus ribbed.
Harry blushed and it was too much for Elder Midate, who took Harry’s shoulders, turned him around and marched him off without even saying goodbye.

Harry couldn’t help turning and looking over his shoulder at Max, who was looking right back. Harry blushed harder, but kept looking. He smiled softly at the man, Max, before he turned back to face forward when Elder Midate started talking to him. He heard someone say clearly from behind him. “Fuck, he really likes you, Max. Don’t fuck it up.”

“Do you like him?” Elder Midate asked him lowly, having also heard the comment.

Harry went beetroot red and slightly light headed. “He seems nice.” He answered after a steadying pause. “I wouldn’t mind getting to know him better.”

Elder Midate groaned. “Just what our small Dracken circles needed. Another Maddison mating and procreating more Maddisons to terrorise us all.”

“I might not actually like him yet!” Harry insisted.

Elder Midate shook his head. “Max is a wonderful man, Harry.”

“He is?” He asked interestedly and he turned to try and see him again, but Max, and the Maddisons, had vanished from his sight, a couple dozen moving bodies now between them, blocking his view.

“Yes. He’s kind, respectful and intelligent. His Father, Myron, raised him right. Myron’s a stern man and he wouldn’t allow his children to be anything other than polite and respectful. Max would actually respect you unlike some other dominants. If you’re attracted to him physically, then there’s very little that’s going to stop you from liking him internally too.”

“Can…can we go back and see?” Harry asked.

“You wanted to wait until you were eighteen to mate, Harry.” Elder Midate reminded him firmly. “That’s why I pulled you away.”

“Can’t I get to know him without mating to him?” Harry asked curiously.
“It might not be possible. If you bond to him, it’ll offset your breeding cycle and then you’ll attract him to you like a starving man to a feast, no matter how far away you are from one another.”

Harry bit his lip and warred with himself. He was adamant that he didn’t want to have a baby while still in school, but a year and three months was a long time and Max might have been snapped up by someone else by then, especially if he was as respectful and kind as Elder Midate was making him out to be. It made him wonder, if Max was so great, then why wasn’t he already mated when he looked like he was in his late twenties, early thirties?

“It is known that touch is required to bond.” Elder Midate sighed when he saw how crushed Harry looked at being told to keep away from Max. “I suppose if I stood between you both and prevented any touch, then you should be able to talk to him without bonding to him. Just remember that you wanted to wait to bond to anyone, that you have plans for your future, and remember not to touch him or let him touch you, though I will be there to prevent it if needed.”

Harry grinned and he went to the bar and got himself another tall glass of juice, thankfully avoiding the unmated bartender, Taylor, who seemed to be trying to get his attention while serving someone as fast as he possibly could. Harry thanked the kind, safely mated, bartender who did serve him with his juice before waiting for Elder Midate to get his own flute of champagne before they made their way back over to the Maddison clan, which seemed to have grown thrice fold since he’d left. He knew they all had to be Maddisons because they all had the same facial structure, or the same hair colour or eye colour, or that impossible seeming height paired with those incredibly broad shoulders. In other words, they all looked like one another in some way.

“How many of you are there?” He asked, before realising that perhaps that had come out as incredibly rude without him meaning it to. Thankfully none of them seemed to take offence, in fact several of them laughed and seemed to take it as either a joke, or an accomplishment of their family that there were so many of them.

“Couldn’t keep away?” One of the blond haired, black eyed identical twins, Nicodemus, asked him with a very unsubtle, lascivious once over that made Harry feel like he was walking around naked. It was a very uncomfortable feeling and he tucked his suit jacket around himself more firmly, an act that didn’t go unnoticed if the several glares Nicodemus received from his family members was any indication.

“There are over a hundred and thirty of us.” Alexander answered him with an indulgent smile, trying to put him back at ease.

“I know I’m gorgeous, but to come back this quickly. I’m flattered.” The other twin, Cepheus, told him, the one who had slapped his bum. Harry knew it was him because his lip was still split, despite the fact that it had already stopped bleeding. He went to touch him again, this time going for his face,
for bare skin, and Harry reared back quickly, but he needn’t have bothered as Elder Midate stepped in very quickly, grabbing a hold of Cepheus’ hand and he twisted it at the wrist sharply.

“Do *not* touch him.” Jacob hissed furiously at the startled Cepheus. “Harry doesn’t want to mate until he is eighteen and you *will* respect his wishes.” Midate said it like a threat and it made Harry all warm and gooey inside to know that he had someone like Elder Jacob Midate to look after him. Perhaps it wouldn’t be a bad thing if Elder Midate and his mate, Bertha, adopted him after all.

“I’m disappointed in you, Cepheus.” Alexander said softly and Harry could see exactly how much that clear disappointment in Alexander’s eyes, and in his tone of voice too, hurt Cepheus, and that made Harry settle back down. Cepheus wouldn’t try to touch him again, he just knew it.

“When are you seventeen, Harry?” Max asked him, trying to distract him and draw him into conversation, but Harry about choked on his own tongue because he was being spoken to by such a handsome, physically imposing man. He blushed and looked shyly at his shoes, feeling like a thick tongued, fool. Why did Max have to be so fucking sexy?

Elder Midate touched the back of his neck and rubbed soothingly, calming him down. Harry breathed in deeply and then let it out again.

“July.” He answered quietly. “The thirty-first.”

“You graduate a year in June, yes?” Alexander asked him, sounding so much like an adoring, doting grandfather. He reminded Harry of Dumbledore and he smiled, calming down a bit.

Harry nodded. “Yes, but I want to wait until the August after my eighteenth birthday to hold my first mate meeting. I’ve been assured that I can change my mind at any moment, but I don’t want to, not at the moment at least. I’ve made up my mind and I doubt I’ll change it. I can’t handle being pregnant and having a baby while I’m trying to do my final exams, I just don’t see how it’ll work. So I want to finish my education first, before I mate to anyone and start having children.”

“I think it’s very admirable of you.” Alexander said proudly.

“I think it’s ridiculous!” An unmated dominant, who was passing just behind him, scoffed when he caught the conversation. “The whole point of you is to have children. What use is a submissive if they won’t breed?”
“Who the fuck asked you?!” Harry demanded poisonously, spinning around sharply to glare at the dominant. “When I choose to have a baby it will be at a time when I can devote all of my time, effort and attention onto them. Not when I have to split being a parent between school work and exams, thank you very fucking much!” He turned to Elder Midate, his eyes furious. “What is with these petty, bigoted morons floating around? What cess pit did they crawl out of because I want to avoid it! I don’t see why the other Elders wanted to force me to attend this meeting so badly. It’s not exactly endearing me to dominants in general or to actually wanting a dominant as a mate. Quite the opposite.”

The dominant growled at him and Harry turned to face him again to snarl back at the dominant, his eyes narrowing. He felt threatened as the other man took a large, looming step towards him and immediately his claws and fangs were out, he managed to hold onto his wings by the skin of his teeth. He kept his hands curled loosely, but he was ready to spring at a moment’s notice if he needed to. He was ready to defend himself when the dominant attacked him.

Elder Kirrian was just there, head locking the dominant and flinging him into a space in the room, where he was set upon by eight guards who wrestled him out of the room, watched by furious, disgusted onlookers. Harry was shocked and very curious. He looked at Elder Midate for an explanation.

“Any dominant who makes a submissive feel threatened enough to bring out their claws or fangs is immediately evicted from the Halls.” Elder Midate said with a sneer as he watched the dominant being hauled away with satisfaction.

Harry looked at his claws in a new light and he smiled, before they disappeared. His fangs took a little longer to sink back into his gums, but the four small, delicate points soon vanished too.

“I hope you know that not all unmated dominants are like that.” Max told him gently.

“No, I don’t.” Harry sighed sadly. “You alone are different. Everyone else I’ve met seems to be exactly the same. They’re all awful!”

Max actually grinned and went to touch him, but he stopped himself without the need for Elder Midate, or anyone else, to tell him not to. He was still smiling, but his hand fell back to his side. Elder Midate was right, Max would respect him and his decisions and that made Harry like him even more.

He stayed talking to the Maddisons for a long time, he barely noticed that he’d been at the party for two hours when he’d only wanted to be here for one. Max was so interesting and innately happy that he was very easy to talk to and very soon, Elder Midate was able to sink into his own conversations, content in the knowledge that Max would not break Harry’s wishes and that he wouldn’t touch him. He stayed close to hand though, Max wasn’t the only unmated dominant trying to get Harry’s attention, and the other dominants weren’t as controlled or respectful as they tried to touch and grope
him. Max had even bodily stood between him and one persistent dominant who had tried to sneak up behind him like a rat. What that particular dominant had been planning on doing, Harry didn’t actually know as Max had quickly intervened, but the dominant had gotten a hard kick to the shin from Harry for his comments about him and then, when he still didn’t leave, Max had shown the strength that that big, muscled body promised and he’d lifted the dominant from his feet and thrown him into a clear area. He had moved off quickly after that, with the threat of Max going after him again.

Elder Sesto Messana wandered over shortly after that incident with two glasses in hand and he handed the one containing juice to Harry.

“Thank you.” Harry said politely.

“How are you finding things here tonight?” The Elder asked pompously in his elaborate manner, trying and failing to hide his Italian accent.

“Fine.” Harry shrugged, taking a drink of the juice. “It’s not so bad if I stay close to Elder Midate, and Max here is really nice to me.”

Harry could almost feel Max grinning behind his head and he had to turn to wink at him, catching his beaming smile. Max’s smile was gorgeous. In fact everything about Max was gorgeous.

“Have you met many others?” The Elder asked primly.

“Not really.” Harry said, swirling his juice and taking another drink. “Not many of them have been nice to me. There have been some who were downright rude and one who even had to be thrown out.”

“I’m sure there will be many more that you’ll like.” The Elder said, but the way that he said it made Harry doubt that the Elder even believed his own words.

Harry drained his juice, mostly ignoring the overly formal Elder and going back to talking to Max, but very shortly after he’d finished the glass of juice, he felt funny. There was a strange pressure on his bladder and he frowned. It didn’t feel like it normally did when he needed to wee and it made him frown.

“Are there bathrooms here, Max?” He asked. “This is my third glass of juice.”
“Yeah sure, come on I’ll show you.”

“I do not think that that is entirely appropriate.” Elder Messana cut in seriously, again showing that weird formality and propriety. “I will take him myself.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Max has been nothing but gentlemanly since I met him.” He argued.

“It is not appropriate.” The Elder insisted firmly. “Follow me.”

Harry sighed but he followed the Elder as the pressure continued to increase on his bladder. It wasn’t right, it wasn’t normal.

He all but dived into the toilets when Elder Messana pointed them out to him and he sighed in utter relief as the pressure was immediately eased. He needed to go to Madam Pomfrey and see if there was something wrong with him, maybe a bladder infection of some sort, could Drackens even get bladder infections? Maybe he should see one of the Dracken Healers instead as that strange pressure just wasn’t normal and it hadn’t felt right, he needed to have it checked out.

He’d been at the meeting now for over two hours, it was about time that he was getting back anyway. He’d had enough of unmated dominants for one day. He’d already asked Max if he could send him letters and Max had almost bitten his hand off to agree. It made him smile to think of Max. He’d actually asked Max why he wasn’t mated yet and he’d gotten a shrug from one of those massive, broad shoulders. ‘I’ve never found any submissive that I actually liked and wanted to be mated to before’ he’d said with a smile. Harry really liked Max’s smile, it was bright, open and happy. He just really liked Max.

Harry finished up after what seemed like an extraordinarily long time and he washed and dried his hands. He made his way out of the bathroom and the hallway was empty except for one lone guard. Even Elder Messana was gone.

Harry rolled his eyes. All that posturing over Max showing him to the bathroom and the Elder just left before he’d finished anyway. He had to walk past the lone guard to get back into the cavernous room where everyone was mingling. He was intent on finding Elder Midate and telling him that he’d had enough and wanted to call it a day. He’d just made it past the guard when arms wrapped around him, a large hand pressing hard against his mouth and nose and Harry lashed out. His claws immediately came out and he swiped at the mated dominant guard who had grabbed him.

“Keep still and you won’t be hurt.” The mated dominant told him, almost pleading with him to stop trying to sink his lethal claws into him. Harry didn’t listen and he tried all the harder to get away.
“Quickly!” Elder Messana’s voice sounded shriller than Harry thought possible and Harry couldn’t believe that the Elder was behind this attack. Too late he remembered that the juice that had given him that strange pressure in his bladder was given to him by Elder Messana. He’d eat his own wings if it hadn’t contained some sort of laxative to get him to go to the bathroom, that was why Messana hadn’t wanted Max to come with him, not for any ridiculous excuse about it being improper or for his own protection, but to get him on his own.

Harry tried to shout, to scream, all the while he tried to sink his claws into the guard who was supposed to have protected him from every conceivable threat in these Halls.

“Don’t let his mouth go, if he gives out a distress call, we’ll both be dead.” Elder Messana said fearfully, looking at the two open, double doors. All it would take was one person, just one measly person, coming out of those doors and into the hallway, either to go home or to go to the bathroom, and their jig would be up. “Get him to the back rooms, now.”

“This is wrong on so many levels.” The mated dominant worried, but he still half dragged, half carried Harry back down the corridor, away from the door. Away from Elder Midate and away from all safety.

Harry kicked back with the heel of his shoe, catching the dominant’s shin and the man shouted out in pain, immediately moving to stand on one leg, lifting the injured leg from the floor. Harry redoubled his efforts to squirm away, or even to dislodge the hand from his mouth, but he failed and the dominant grabbed him harder, tighter and dragged him back quicker.

“Hurry!” Messana ordered urgently. “Midate won’t wait forever and you need to be back at your post before he comes looking for the boy!”

Harry was dragged into a room with a fireplace and Messana brought out a pouch of floo powder and he took a pinch and he threw it into the flames, turning them a bright, emerald green.

Harry panicked and he redoubled his efforts and he wriggled and twisted, trying to stab his claws into flesh and he tried to kick out, all to no avail as the man holding him was twice his size and weight and he was a grown man too, a dominant Dracken, and Harry was only a sixteen year old submissive boy and he felt the hot tears that had been burning his eyes finally fall. He’d been warned so many times, by his Elders and by the books that he was reading, about the need for secrecy, about the Ministry who would execute him for what he was, about the poachers who would harvest his body for hundreds of thousands of Galleons in gruesomely painful ways while he was awake and aware of what was happening. The tears fell down his cheeks and over the hand that the dominant had over his mouth and nose.

“I can’t do this anymore.” He growled. “I have a mate, I have children. Take him and go or I’m
“You won’t.” Elder Messana snarled, his voice still high and shrill with the fear of being caught. Smuggling submissives was punishable by unofficial torture and a very public death after all, he had a lot to be fearful for.

“Take him!” The dominant growled, thrusting Harry out at the Elder, hand still over his mouth and nose, almost stopping him from breathing.

The Elder’s hand slipped over his mouth and then his thumb clamped over his nose to cut off his breathing completely as the other dominant tugged his hand away and he stormed out without looking back. As soon as Messana’s hand was secured, he moved his thumb and allowed Harry to breathe again through his nose.

He started pulling Harry towards the green flames and Harry fought viciously. He could beat one old Dracken, dominant or not. He could do it, he had defeated Voldemort…he cursed himself for leaving his wand safely at Hogwarts, but he hadn’t expected to need it tonight. He was supposed to be safe here, protected and looked after by the Elders and by the guards, but no, one of the very people who should have given his all to protect him was the one who was betraying him. He redoubled his efforts to fight off Elder Messana, using every last drop of energy that he had to get away from this man and what horrors he was forcing him into. He didn’t want to know what plans Messana had in store for him, but he was adamant that it would be nothing good, nothing that he wanted to do by choice and he was not going into that fireplace. He wasn’t.

“I should have put a sedative in that drink.” The man panted, almost to himself, as he fought with a ferociously struggling Harry, trying to both keep a hold on him to stop him either getting away or from crying out and to drag him backwards, towards the emerald flames and to whatever waited on the other end of the floo connection. “I couldn’t have you passing out in the hall though.”

Harry kicked back, hard, and his heel caught an old knee. It buckled immediately and sent the Elder to the floor. Harry ripped himself free and he screamed at the top of his lungs, his distress, fear and the tears he was crying immediately being conveyed through his call. Being this close to a room filled with hundreds of Drackens, every single one of them would have been able to hear him and they would react immediately, instinctually, to his desperate, pleading call for help. He hoped that they reached him in time, he just had to fight off the Elder until they came to help him…he had to.

Harry ran through the doorway and around the corner, back into the hallway, trying to reach the other hall, trying to give the others time to reach him, before he was ripped backwards by his hair. He screamed again, this time with an added edge of pain, before a hand was shoved over his mouth again and he was yanked back, very painfully, by his hair. He fought back, trying to lash out, trying to bite and claw, but his feet were kicked out from under him and he was bundled up higher, high enough that his feet weren’t touching the floor, a hand still clenched painfully tight in his hair but the hand clamped tight around his mouth, the nails digging in deeply to his left cheek, suddenly let go to hold him around the waist instead, keeping him from touching the floor.
He screamed again now that his mouth was uncovered and he heard a hundred answering calls, but before he could fight back against this new hold, before anyone could follow his call and come to help him, he was carried into the fireplace, his breathing cut off by the dust and ash of the fire and a hand clenched painfully in his hair still. Elder Messana clearly said an address and they were gone before anyone could reach him to help, or to see exactly who had taken him.

He knew he should have stuck by his gut and refused to come to this stupid fucking meeting. He hadn’t wanted to come to this damn meeting in the first place and now he’d been abducted by one of the Dracken Elders, one of the few people who he had supposedly been able to trust, one of the few who were supposed to have looked after him tonight and cared for him no matter what. Elder Messana was supposed to be one of the ones that he could always seek out, who he could always go to if he needed help or a safe place to destress for a while…and he had been the one who had betrayed him in the worst possible way, snatching him from the meeting hall while he was alone and defenceless, separated from his chaperone and from all others who would help him and protect him.

It had been a cruel, calculated move, and he realised now that it had been a planned attack, perhaps it had even started during that first meeting, when Harry had first been introduced to the eleven Elders several months ago, and if he ever got the chance, then he was going to kill Elder Messana himself, with his bare hands and his own teeth, and the dominant guard too, who had helped the Elder to abduct him, he swore it.

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Beaten

Chapter Notes

WARNING: This chapter is where some of the aforementioned warnings come into play. There is violence, rape, gang rape, domestic violence, abuse, attempted suicide, forced impregnation, forced child destruction and forced imprisonment. There are also themes akin to slavery and Stockholm syndrome and things that no decent person with a soul would EVER consider doing, but the Perrot family aren’t decent people with souls or compassion. Please read these warnings and adhere to them, they’re there for a reason and not to be ignored.

Last Time

Elder Messana was supposed to be one of the ones that he could always seek out, who he could always go to if he needed help or a safe place to destress for a while…and he had been the one who had betrayed him in the worst possible way, snatching him from the meeting hall while he was alone and defenceless, separated from his chaperone and from all others who would help him and protect him. It had been a cruel, calculated move, and he realised now that it had been a planned attack, perhaps it had even started during that first meeting, when Harry had first been introduced to the eleven Elders several months ago, and if he ever got the chance, then he was going to kill Elder Messana himself, with his bare hands and his own teeth, and the dominant guard too, who had helped the Elder to abduct him, he swore it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Two – Beaten

Maximilius Diadesen Maddison felt like he was floating because he was so happy. Harry was truly amazing and he was sweet and kind and shy and beautiful and a million other things as well, but he had a fierce, innate fire that Max just adored. Seeing him so flushed with anger, his eyes spitting his rage and disgust as someone said or did something that he didn’t like sent a bolt of pleasure down Max’s spine.

Harry was perfect, just…perfect. Max was already in the first flush of puppy love, he was sure. He’d almost squealed like a preteen girl when Harry had shyly asked if they could exchange letters while he was at Hogwarts. He’d sucked in a breath and played it cool as he agreed casually to write letters to Harry. His family had all been grinning at him, they could see straight through him, but Harry had only just met him and didn’t know that he was as nervous as a kitten behind his cool, confident façade.

He was terrified of messing things up, of doing something to turn Harry away from him and that pressure, coupled with making explicitly sure that he didn’t so much as brush Harry with the tip of a finger, had him very nervous and stiff. He wanted to respect Harry’s wishes, but he really, really wanted Harry and it was so difficult to remind himself not to reach out, to not hold that small hand in his own, to not cup that beautiful face in his hands and especially not to lean down and kiss those plump, pink lips like he wanted to.
“Where is Harry?” Elder Midate demanded as he turned around to check on his charge, only to find the spot where he’d been standing empty and Maximilius Maddison staring blankly into space, a goofy grin on his face.

Max jerked out of his day dreaming and he blinked, ignoring his family’s teasing grins and knowing looks.

“He went to the bathroom with Elder Messana, Elder.” Max answered.

Elder Midate nodded, settling and calming down a little to hear that Harry was under the protection of one of his colleagues, even if Elder Messana wasn’t actually a submissive chaperone. “How long ago?” He asked and Max frowned as he realised that it had been a while.

“A while ago.” He said with a worried frown. “It shouldn’t have taken him this long.” He insisted as he started moving before he’d really thought about it, towards the bathrooms and changing rooms on the opposite side of the corridor from the Meeting Hall.

His family followed and Elder Midate strode off in front, almost running to make sure that his charge was well.

“What is it?” Elder Kirrian asked as he shoved people indiscriminately out of the way to join Elder Midate.

“I’m not sure, a bad feeling.” Midate answered and Max felt it too. There was a deep pit in his stomach that was making him feel strange and empty. Something didn’t fit, something wasn’t right.

“You, who has passed this way?” Elder Kirrian barked at the lone guard stood just outside the door as they finally reached the main corridor.

“Elder?” He asked confusedly. “A lot of people have passed by me tonight.”

“You couldn’t have missed this one. Small, cute looking submissive male. Black bird’s nest for hair and emerald eyes.”
“He went to the bathroom ten minutes ago.” The guard nodded to the three rooms opposite, one for dominants, one for submissives and one that was a unisex child changing room right in the middle of the two bathrooms.

“With Elder Messana?” Elder Midate demanded.

The guard nodded. “Yes, Elder.”

“Have they come out yet?”

“Not yet, Elder.”

Max thought that this was very odd, so too did the other Elders, who both stepped forward together, towards the submissive bathroom. Before they could reach it, a very shrill, distinct distress call sounded incredibly loudly through the Halls and Max’s wings all but burst from his back with no warning and no conscious control. That had been a distress call from an unmated submissive. A call filled with fear, panic, tears and pain that was urging, beseeching for help and assistance.

Max was running before he’d thought about it, his family charging after him, the two Elders pounding along in front as Harry let out a second, more urgent call and Max felt Harry’s fear like an echo in his own chest.

He pushed himself to run harder, faster and he rounded a corner, hearing a third call that was closer…they were going in the right direction. He let out his own call, trilling to Harry for him to let him know where he was. There was no answering call this time, so he started kicking down doors, smashing them open to look for Harry. But there was no one and nothing out of place, no signs of a fight or a scuffle.

“Harry?” He called out desperately, his voice coming out gruff while he was in his Dracken form. There was only silence as his answer.

The head of the Dracken Counsel, Elder Anthanaric Vipond, came careening down the hall, his robes in disarray and champagne spilled down the front of them. He hadn’t waited to put his flute down or hand it off to someone else…he’d immediately dropped it to come running to the source of the trouble.

“Where is the submissive in need?” He demanded, his wings vibrating hard.
“We can’t find him.”

Vipond’s eyes widened. “The male submissive?” He asked breathlessly. “Young Harry?”

They were all thinking the same thing, feeling the same horror at what had assumedly happened. There were very few reasons why an unmated submissive would have been taken and not one of them was good or moral. Harry had been snatched and very likely sold, perhaps there had even been an underground bidding war on him, going on without any of their knowledge. But it was assured that Harry had been snatched to order, for whatever reason, but it would be nothing good.

“You lost him, when he was under your care!” Elder Vipond snarled viciously at Elder Midate and Max felt the need to interfere.

“Harry wasn’t under Elder Midate’s care at the time, Elder Vipond.” He said respectfully. “Elder Messana had escorted him to the bathroom.”

“Messana? Where is Messana?!” He demanded at the top of his lungs, looking around, wild eyed at the group of onlookers.

They were all dominants, mated, unmated, male, female, Elders, guards with their guns drawn, even newly inherited dominants, just sixteen years old, who weren’t even used to their own bodies enough to be able to fight. They had all answered Harry’s call instinctively, as if he had been their own child as that was what an unmated submissive’s call sounded like to all dominants, a distressed child. It sounded that way purposefully to get the maximum reaction from the dominants to protect the submissive.

“I’m here!” Messana called out, pushing his way to the forefront. “What in the name of Merlin has happened?!”

“Where is Harry?” Elder Kirrian demanded, almost spitting in his rage.

“I was trying to find him when I heard the call!” Messana insisted. “I escorted him to the bathroom and left him in privacy, and the next thing I knew, he wasn’t there any longer and I’ve been searching for him since! I believed that he might have gone to visit the Healing Halls, they would be quiet and if he needed a moment then I reasoned that he might have gone there.”
“He just so happened to sneak past you and the guard?” Elder Midate asked sceptically.

“I wasn’t lingering in the hallway like a suspect spectre for him.” Messana sniffed. “I was by the entrance to the hall, talking.”

“Where is the guard who was on the door?!” Elder Vipond commanded.

A mated dominant stepped forward, looking small and meek under the rage of so many Elders and other dominants, some of them his own peers.

“Did anyone else pass you by when Harry was in the bathroom?” Elder Vipond asked, trying, and partially failing, to rein in his temper.

“Four.” The dominant answered immediately, trying to prove that he wasn’t completely useless. “A submissive and her newborn, they went into the changing room. A dominant male with his daughter, they also went into the changing rooms. One dominant female, she went into the dominant bathroom and…”

“A male dominant who went into the bathroom with Harry?” Midate answered when the guard hesitated. The shamefaced guard nodded silently.

“I didn’t think about it.” The guard insisted, his voice wavering. “I…male submissives are so rare, I…I just saw two men go into the same bathroom.”

“You heard nothing? No shouts, no banging or clattering or loud noises?” Messana demanded.

“Nothing, Elder.” The guard insisted beseeching. “I heard the newborn crying and the little girl giggling as her Father changed her, but nothing else, nothing out of the ordinary.”

“Can you describe the dominant?” Kirrian demanded.

The guard thought for a moment, before he shook his head. “I took note of them all passing me, but I
wasn’t actually expecting trouble, so I never noticed what any of them looked like, I just took in their gender and denomination. I didn’t even take in if he was mated or not, I’m very sorry, Elder.”

“You never saw Harry coming out of the bathroom?” Elder Vipond asked, sounding and looking disbelieving. “You see, the problem I have here is, how did Harry get from the submissive bathrooms to this corridor without you seeing him leave the bathroom in the first place? There are no windows in those bathrooms, the only exit is the door into the hall that you were guarding, so why didn’t you see Harry leaving the bathrooms and coming down this corridor?”

The guard shifted nervously and he ducked his head under the gaze of so many people, the Elders, the other guards, all the dominants who were still poised on a knife edge, their Drackens telling them to find the submissive, to help in any way that they could.

“I…I may have been distracted by another submissive, Elder.” The guard admitted, a dark blush staining his cheeks. There were actually hisses and snarls from those watching, as the mated dominant admitted to looking at another submissive, one who wasn’t his mate, and who had likely been mated herself.

Henry Kirrian actually growled ferociously and took a step forward, but Alexander Maddison laid a hand on his arm.

“That isn’t going to help.” He said diplomatically. “We have an unmated submissive missing and he needs to be our priority. Every moment that passes we get further away from finding him. If he’s in the hands of poachers, then every minute that we stall could mean his death.”

“How did the poachers get into our meeting?” One dominant watching the proceedings cried out in alarm, his gaze shifting back to the hall, where likely his mate and possible children would be.

“We all know that there are traitors in every walk of life.” Elder Vipond said loudly, cutting across the clamour. “The only way the poachers could have gotten anyone away from this building is if they had a traitorous Draken on the inside, shopping other Drackens to them for gold. But whatever has happened here, Harry has been taken and this is a direct violation of our most fundamental laws! Abducting and smuggling children and unmated submissives is the most abhorrent of crimes that I can possibly think of. The punishment for such a vile, repugnant crime is death. When I find out who was responsible for this, and I will find out, their life will no longer be worth living.”

“Everyone who isn’t relevant to this situation, get out of this hallway.” Elder Kirrian demanded. “We need to search for traces of where Harry has been taken. We have a window of opportunity and we can’t afford to miss it.”
Max bit his lip and allowed himself to be pulled away from the hallway, back into the hall where his Mother and grandmother, his sisters and his submissive aunts and his little cousins were waiting tensely.

There was a thick line of guards, their guns out, facing outwards, their faces hard and stone like as they stood shoulder to shoulder with one another in front of the crèche, where every single child had been placed, their Mothers’ standing fiercely right outside the crèche, just behind the wall of dominant guards, their claws and fangs out, ready to defend their children.

“It’s alright, the threat has gone.” Max’s Grandfather said sadly. “An unmated submissive has gone missing.”

There were shrieks from the submissives and gasps of shock from the guards.

“Taken?” One of the guards asked painfully, his gun lowering. He was behaving as if he had personally failed his life’s mission by allowing even one unmated submissive to be taken. He looked for his own mate in the crowd of submissives and he shivered visibly when he locked eyes with her.

Alexander nodded. “Yes, as painful as it is to admit, an unmated submissive has been abducted from these very halls tonight.”

“The Elders are looking for the submissive?” One guard asked through a lump in his throat.

Alexander nodded again as he rounded up his own children and grandchildren, touching their backs, shoulders or heads, as if reassuring himself that they were still there and perfectly safe.

“Yes, but the window of opportunity is closing by the minute.”

“It was poachers then?!” One submissive screeched out fearfully.

“We don’t know why Harry was taken, but we do know that someone who was here tonight is the one who took him. There are going to be inquires now in the next coming days. Harry needs to be found.”
Max was in shock and he felt sick. Harry was the only submissive that he’d even paid much attention to in the last several years and from the way that Harry had responded to him, he’d liked him just as much as he’d liked Harry. Now he was gone and the rampant thoughts of what Harry was going through right at this minute, the fear he must be feeling, the horrors that he could be being subjected to, it brought his breath faster as his stomach lurched as he dry heaved.

His Father gripped him in a tight hug and Max, feeling like a scared little child, turned into his Father and buried his face into his neck. His Father wrapped his huge arms around him further and squeezed tighter.

“We’ll find him.” Myron promised him in a stern voice that Max had come to know meant that his Father would keep his word. “I don’t care how long it takes, we’ll find him and make him safe again.”

“He’s going to be hurting.” Max sobbed. “I don’t want him to be hurt.”

“We don’t know that yet.” Myron comforted strongly. “If he’s been in a bidding war and he’s been snatched for an unmated dominant somewhere then it’s unlikely that he’ll be hurt.”

Max’s breath came faster and faster as he thought of Harry being raped and forcibly bonded to a dominant not of his own choosing. Tears stung at his eyes and his breathing hitched.

“How can you say that he won’t be hurt when…when…when he has to endure that?!” He choked out, still sobbing.

“I know, Max. I know.” Myron comforted. “He’ll be freed with the death of the dominant who has done such things to him and then with therapy and help, he’ll recover.”

“I don’t want him to go through such things in the first place!” He shouted.

Several more hands touched him and he picked his head up to see his Grandfather, his other Father and a couple of uncles around him, all comforting him.

“We can’t help that he was taken, Max. None of us would have expected such a thing here. Nothing like this has happened in these halls in the last two centuries, perhaps more.” Alexander said softly. “But as your Father has said, we will get him back. We will not give up on that sweet boy, we will find him. No matter how long it takes.”
“What…what if he’s been taken by poachers and we don’t find him in time?” Max asked aloud the deepest fear that was trying to take over his mind.

“Then we recover his body and we bury him with the dignity he deserves.” His Father told him with no preamble.

Max keened like a wounded animal at that thought, as if they were already talking about his own mate, when he knew full well that he wasn’t even bonded to Harry. But he wanted to be, desperately. He wanted Harry and he wanted him back as soon as possible, before a hair on his head was harmed. Max’s fear was that he was already too late for that.

Harry tumbled out of the fire in Messana’s arms and before he could get his bearings he was immediately set upon by two big, burly dominants who looked as mean as they’d come.

He was hefted from the Elder’s arms by each wrist, so his claws couldn’t harm anyone and the dominants were so tall that his legs swung uselessly, even as he snarled and kicked out. He let out another distress call, but the several people in the room just laughed mockingly at his attempt to get help. He knew then that his distress calls wouldn’t work for whatever reason. No one could hear him or help him.

He grit his teeth and glared defiantly through his damp eyes at the group of men around him. The dominants holding him felt wrong to him too. They weren’t normal Drackens, they weren’t acting as normal. Even the guard who’d snatched him had felt some level of self-disgust at what was happening, despite obviously being motivated to snatch him still.

“I need to get back, quickly.” Messana stammered.

“You have served your purpose.” An elder man said without taking his eyes from Harry. “I will be in contact at a later date.”

Elder Messana Disapparated from the room immediately and Harry shivered as he was left with complete strangers. He felt fear, terror, of which he’d never known before. He had never felt this swell of panic before, not even on the numerous times that he’d faced off against Voldemort. He had always feared the unknown, the fear of fear. Voldemort had wanted to kill him in a grand show of his own power and superiority, he had never hidden that desire. Harry had always known what Voldemort wanted, why he was the target, why it had to be him against Voldemort, even if sometimes he had rebelled against the injustice of it being him and his family, he had always
understood why. He didn’t understand this.

He didn’t know why he was here, what these people wanted and he didn’t know why he had been abducted. He didn’t know and he was terrified. He let out another shrill cry, unable to stop himself and the elder man immediately stepped forward and smacked him right across the face with an open hand. The smack was hard enough to jerk his head around and it left his cheek smarting with the sting of pain. He automatically checked the inside of his cheek for blood with his tongue.

He growled, turning his head to glare at the man who had hit him, struggling to get free to hit him back. One of the dominants moved his one hand from under his armpit and he was immediately lopsided and he tried to use it to his advantage, but the dominant hadn’t let go of his wrist. He was cuffed, very heavily, across the back of the head by a huge hand before the dominant propped him back up with his hand against his upper ribs, stretching his arm back out so that he looked like he was about to be crucified.

“Don’t ruin his face!” A whiny snarl sounded and a handsome young man stepped into Harry’s line of sight. He had pale brown hair and pale blue eyes. He was tall and slim, but Harry could see the play of muscles under his clothes. In any other circumstances, he might have been a very good looking man, the permanent sneer on his face however, ruined everything else in Harry’s opinion.

“He’s so beautiful.” The man said almost wistfully, drinking in the sight of Harry dangling between the two dominants.

“I told you, Jeff. He needs to be brought under control quickly.” The older man said sternly. “I know you want the boy, but having him right now would be dangerous for you and I will not risk your life. The boy will be trained first.”

“Can we at least give him the potion now?” Jeff asked eagerly.

“I see no reason not to.” The older man said and Harry clenched his mouth closed before anyone could grab him. Just in the nick of time too as a huge hand dropped him again and gripped his chin, large, blunt fingers digging into his jaw, trying to get between his teeth, but Harry would rather lose his teeth than open his mouth. He was not going to be swallowing any sort of potion, for any reason thank you very fucking much.

Those fingers dug in harder and tried to find an opening to exploit, but Harry clenched his teeth harder together in response, almost on the edge of making his own jaw pop, but he refused to open his mouth, not even when the older man stepped forward again and pinched his nose hard, so that he couldn’t breathe.

He went pink first, then eventually he turned red. Very quickly after that he edged on purple, but he still didn’t unclench his jaw, not even when his head started pounding and his lungs burnt with the need to open his mouth and just breathe. The urge to breathe was so strong and his body was crying
out for oxygen, but Harry ignored it, firmly clenching his jaw tighter...perhaps if he died then he would ruin their plans for him.

“You stubborn little fool.” The older man said as he let go of his nose, allowing Harry to suck in some much needed air, just before he would have passed out. “You couldn’t have been one of the easy submissives, one of the ones who just curl up and do as they’re told.”

Harry glared venomously, but he didn’t retort. He wasn’t entirely stupid after all. He saw someone baiting him a mile off and the hulking muscle on either side of him were just waiting for him to open his mouth with an angry response to pounce on him.

The man smirked then, as he realised that Harry had already figured out his ploy. “Not quite so stupid as a sixteen year old should be either. If things had been different, perhaps I might have liked you. I still might yet, if you stop fighting so much.”

Harry glared harder, trying to will this man in front of him dead with his gaze alone. The man read his mind as he laughed mockingly.

“If looks could kill, hmm?” He said before his face hardened. “Enough of this. You two, I’m paying you a fortune to contain him until he’s under Jefferus’ control, do your jobs! Open his damnable little mouth!”

Harry found himself on the floor on his back in the blink of an eye, one hand around his throat as the other brute held his hips down. Fingers pried between his lips, but met the barrier of his teeth, which he still had clenched tight.

“Don’t mark him, he’s mine!” The younger man, Jeff, shouted. “You won’t get him to respond with force, he’s too stubborn. Try tickling him instead.”

“Good idea, Jeff.” The older man said proudly, making Harry think that he was the man, Jeff’s, Father.

His heart sank though as someone prodded his side and he couldn’t help jerking and squirming away. More tears fell from his eyes as he tried to keep his jaw clenched, but it was a lost battle as soon as those fingers found the softness, right in his side, down by his hip. He wriggled and tried to twist but he was held down and still.

Fingers brushed over the line of his waistband and he jerked. They’d found a weak spot, a chink in
his armour and those fingers exploited it mercilessly. They did the same thing, back and forth, back
and forth and unable to move, Harry couldn’t do anything else as he started half laughing, half
sobbing and as soon as his mouth was open, fingers were pushed right into his mouth, almost to the
back of this throat, making him gag.

“It was a battle, but we got there in the end, didn’t we?” The older man said with gleaming eyes and
that fucking smirk. He was holding a potion in his hands. “Let’s force your body into its first heat
cycle, hmm?”

“How long will it take?” Jeff asked eagerly.

“It depends on his breeding cycle, Jeff.” The man insisted. “It’ll be personal to him. It could be a few
weeks, or half a year.”

The man, Jeff, growled. “I can’t wait half a fucking year to make him mine!”

The older man sighed. “We’ve been through this before, Jeff, we cannot control the length of his
breeding cycle, it was determined by his genetics before he was even born.”

Jeff stalked back and forth, like a caged tiger and he let out small snarls.

“You had better have a short breeding cycle.” He spat at Harry, still pinned to the floor by the two
brutes, three fingers jammed into his mouth.

He tried to dislodge them by twisting and moving his head, but the fingers followed and jammed
further into his mouth, causing him to heave with a small burp.

“Ease up!” The older man growled. “This carpet costed more than your lives are worth if he vomits
on it.”

The man knelt by his side and Harry’s eyes bugged out as he saw him tip the potion a second before
it splashed into his mouth. He gargled with it, trying to get it out of his mouth.

“Swallow it. You won’t like what I’ll do to you if you spit this back out.” The man growled at him.
He was terrifying, despite his slim, slender body, wrinkled face and his iron grey hair, and Harry warred with himself.

He didn’t want to go onto heat, he knew what that would mean. But he didn’t know what would happen to him if he spat out the potion. He decided then that he didn’t care, he would take any pain, any punishment, he was used to that after the Dursleys, he just would not lie here and meekly swallow a potion that would force his heat period unnaturally. He thrashed and spat the sticky potion onto the expensive fucking carpet and he glared defiantly at the older man who sneered at him.

“We are going to have some problems with you, I can see.”

“Did he just…?” Jeff swelled with rage and his face went red with anger. “How dare you!” He shouted at Harry. “I am Jefferus Perrot, you should be eagerly swallowing that fucking potion so that we can be mated together.”

“What deluded planet are you from?!” Harry shouted back breathlessly, sitting up as much as he could with the two brutes pinning his legs, wrists and waist down. “Who the fuck would want to be mated to you?!”

Jeff lashed out quicker than Harry could focus on and Harry tasted blood as pain exploded in his mouth. He rocked backwards and his head smashed into the floor hard enough for him to see bright white spots. He cried out at the pain and fear, letting out another trilling distress call.

“Will you stop making that awful fucking noise?!” Jeff scoffed at him. “They might be able to hear you, but no one can pinpoint your location. They can’t find you, no one is coming for you!”

Harry tried to control himself, knowing that he was just opening himself to more mockery, but he really was scared and if his one chance of getting help, his distress call, wouldn’t work, and his ability to defend himself with his claws was taken away, all he had left was his defiance.

He’d be fucking damned if he gave into these fuckers without a fight. If they wanted him to do anything, he’d fight them every single step of the way, no matter how much it hurt or how much pain he went through, he would not just lie down and take it. Someone would come for him, he was sure of it, even if the Dracken community abandoned him, (though he couldn’t see Elder Midate, Elder Kirrian or Elder Trintus just leaving him to his fate) he still had Dumbledore.

He was sure in his belief and devotion to his grandfather figure, the man who had always tried to protect him and keep him shielded while giving him the tools and information that he needed to work things out for himself, so that he could make his own decisions and learn to look after himself.

He was sure in his belief that Dumbledore would not just leave him, that he would track him down
eventually, no matter where he was or how long it took, he believed that someone would come for him and he held onto that belief with both hands and his heart. He would not give in without one hell of a fight.

“Get him to his room. We’ll see if he’s more agreeable in a few hours.” The elder man sighed, waving a hand at the two brutes, who got to their feet and yanked Harry from the floor.

He was dragged through a huge house. It was all wooden walls and wooden floors with runners down the dead centre. He could hear Jeff shouting and screeching from behind him and Harry felt tears welling up in his eyes again.

He was dragged up the stairs, his feet hitting each stair as the two brutes just didn’t care. He trilled softly, almost begging, but it had no effect on either of the dominants, it was as if their instincts had been cut off.

He was thrown into a room on the third floor. It was large, but empty. There was a large, heavy bed and not much else. He landed in a heap on the floor and the door slammed shut. Harry leapt up and tried it. Naturally it was locked. The windows were sealed too, he found out when he tried them next, and no matter how hard he hit them with his fists, they didn’t break, not even when he slipped his shoe off and used the heel of it as an impromptu hammer. They had been warded unbreakable.

He sighed heavily and sat on the bed, the only furniture in the room. There was nothing to stimulate him and also nothing to harm himself or others with, nothing he could use as a weapon. Just the heavy bed that he couldn’t move and the soft bedspread that was pinned at the bottom of the bed with a sticking charm so he couldn’t pull the duvet or the sheets off.

Left alone to process what had happened, and what he suspected was going to happen to him, he felt his eyes burn. He let his tears fall as he laid back on the bed and he just allowed himself to cry. He didn’t know what had happened, why or what was going on. He had no clue where he was or why Elder Messana had brought him here. He wasn’t stupid, he understood that the man in his twenties, Jeff, wanted to forcibly mate to him, he just hadn’t understood that it was possible. Throughout all the talks with everyone, it had always been stressed that it was his choice, that everything would be his way, to his specifications and that whatever happened, his was the final choice in everything. He had the final say.

This wasn’t what he’d been told. That he could be abducted and forcibly mated to someone not of his choosing. That his heat could be forcibly started by a potion, that he could be force bonded to someone with a mere potion. He didn’t want to be mated to Jefferus fucking Perrot, the arrogant bastard.

He cried harder into the soft pillow and he trilled several times with increasing volume, hoping against hope that someone could hear him. Still clinging to the childish delusion that, despite what he’d been told, that if he cried loud enough, then someone would hear him, that they could find him. He didn’t sleep at all for the scant hours left of the night. He knew from how quickly morning came that he was in a different time-zone to the one he’d left and from the accents of those around him he suspected that he was in Australia, or at least that the Perrots were originally Australian, but he knew in a few hours that worse was to come and it kept him awake and fretting all night. He couldn’t stop that one sentence from floating around in his mind. Worse was to come.
The distress calls continued through the night. Most dominants had shut Harry’s calls out after the Elders had assured them that they couldn’t do anything to actually help Harry and that it would just drive them insane and feral.

Max, however, couldn’t bring himself to shut Harry out. If Harry was suffering through those horrors, then he could share the echo of his pain and fear through his calls. He had been devastated when the first call had come, because none of them could pinpoint the exact location. A ward had been used to distort Harry’s call so that he couldn’t be found, no matter how much he cried or called. Whoever had taken Harry was no fool and Max cursed them from the bottom of his heart.

Max had sat up all night in his own home. He had refused to stay at his parents’ home, he had refused to stay at his grandparents’ home. He had wanted to be at his own home. He couldn’t help imagining how things could have been if he’d been bonded to Harry, he kept imagining Harry with that infectious laugh, living in this very house with him. In his mind they were happily and consensually mated together and it crushed Max’s heart to think of Harry being hurt. Sweet, sixteen year old Harry living through an endless nightmare of pain and fear that he couldn’t escape from.

Max sobbed and he hunched over, hiding his face in his hands. He’d blocked his floo connection and locked and warded his house so that no one could get in. He needed to be alone as he wandered, ghost like around his home, listening intently for Harry’s next call, just in case the distortion wards had failed and he could locate Harry. He refused to miss a single call, he would be there when Harry needed him.

“Stay strong, Harry.” He whispered tearfully into the silent house.

He hadn’t heard a call in a couple of hours and he wondered if Harry had been knocked unconscious. He doubted that Harry was sleeping, not after being abducted as he had been. Not knowing why Harry wasn’t calling was driving him mad.

Hammering on his front door at dawn had Max sighing. He knew that his family wouldn’t leave him to wallow for too long. Not when it felt like a piece of him had been stolen.

He opened the door to his Father and he stalked angrily back to his living room.

“I want to be alone!” He growled.

“None of us always get what we want, Maximilius.” His Father told him deeply, following him into the living room. “I’m not leaving you alone like this.”

“He’s been crying all night.” Max sobbed again.
“We know. We’ve been listening in to him too.”

“He’s gone silent.” Max said worriedly.

Myron nodded his head and touched his son’s shoulder, before he pulled him into a hug when he wasn’t shrugged away. Max clung to him as he had once done as a child. It broke Myron’s heart to see his son hurting so much.

“You really liked him.” He observed with a sigh.

Max nodded silently. “I want him back. I don’t care if he never chooses me as a mate, or anyone else as a mate for that matter, I just need him to be safe.”

“Your grandfather has been talking with the Elders, they think, and we agree, that Harry has not been taken captive by poachers. They would have immediately harvested him, there is no reason to wait as they don’t get a Knut for him unless he’s in pieces and every moment increases the danger to them. They would have acted immediately and Harry was still calling out hours after he was taken.”

Max heaved at the very thought of it and his Father supported him upright, stroking his back and head.

“We believe that he’s been taken by an unmated dominant who heard about him and chose to abduct him instead of trying for him like every other dominant has to. If they can even think to do something like this, then they obviously had no chance of getting a submissive anyway. But this gives us time, Max.”

“It doesn’t!” Max cried out. “Every moment he’s there he’s being hurt! He’s terrified! Those sickos could be doing anything to him and the thought of it makes me feel sick.” He sobbed.

“At least it wasn’t poachers, Max. He could have been dead and he’s not.” Myron told him sternly.

Max nodded. Even though it wasn’t any sort of choice, he could be thankful that Harry was still alive at least.
“We need to find him.” He said with no room for argument.

“We will. Someone knows more than they’re letting on and we will find them and get that information by any means necessary, starting with that dominant who followed Harry into the bathroom. Harry didn’t kidnap himself and take himself to his captors. Someone who was in that hall last night knows where Harry is and we will find out who was responsible for taking him, Max and we will get the information from them in whatever way we need to.”

“Torture is illegal.” He sniffed.

Myron nodded. “It is, but that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t still happen outside of general view, on the quiet. Your uncle Benedict was beaten in his holding cell before he was executed.”

Max flinched at that, remembering seeing his uncle with a bloodied face just before he was executed by his Grandfather, Benedict’s own Father, Alexander. The memory of it still haunted his Grandfather, he saw it in his sad, grey eyes every time it, or anything like it, was brought up. It had almost destroyed Alexander to kill his own son, but it was one last kindness to Benedict for his easy compliance and acceptance of the consequences for what he’d done. His death would have been that much more painful, that little bit longer, if Benedict had been killed by a court executioner.

“The Elders are outraged, the Dracken population worldwide is disgusted with what has happened and there have been hundreds of complaints and demands for security to be tightened, or overhauled completely. The Elders want this sorted and Harry found, sooner rather than later. He called so loudly last night that dominants as far away as eastern America, northern Australia, parts of southern Asia and Greenland have heard him. He can be heard almost worldwide, Max. You know what that means.”

“He isn’t in Britain. We can hear him because we’re listening out for him, but he is not in Britain if America, Australia and Asia can hear him too.”

Myron nodded. “If we can find out who could hear him before that loudest call, we might be able to narrow it down to the country he’s in. We know the exact times of all the calls he made last night, we need to find the earliest call that he made that was heard by which country. Then we might just find out exactly where he is. At the very least we’ll narrow it down considerably so that we know where to start looking.”

Max clung to that small bit of hope and he nodded his head. “We’ll get him back, no matter what
state he’s in. I’ll help him, I’m always going to help him now.”

“We all will.” Myron said strongly. “Now come to your Grandfather’s, stop locking yourself away and come and help us. You would have had this information last night instead of hurting yourself with your wild thoughts and imaginings. Harry doesn’t need you to create scenarios of what he’s going through, he needs you to help find him.”

Max swallowed and sucked in a massive breath. He nodded and pulled himself together. His Father was right, he needed to actually be productive about finding Harry. He couldn’t find the poor submissive by wallowing and trying to share his pain and fear when it was useless and so unhelpful. He needed to be doing something that could help Harry, that could benefit him…they needed to find him.

“Come on, Max. To your Grandfather’s.” His Father said, before leaving his son’s home and Disapparating from the front garden to the home of Alexander, the Maddison patriarch.

Max took another breath and firmed himself, clenching his jaw. He strode from his home, closing the door behind him and he Apparated to his Grandfather’s home too. He would help Harry in a way that was useful, not a pointless waste of energy. They would find Harry, because he would not give up until he had found him.

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Harry was still awake, his eyes raw and itchy from his tears, when the door was quietly opened and the two brutes accompanied the older man into the room.

Harry noticed something then that he hadn’t last night, in his initial panic he hadn’t taken much in about where he was or those around him. He had scented dominant Drackens and he had assumed that everyone was a Dracken, but that wasn’t the case. The older man was a human and as such, he was very vulnerable to Harry, who despite being just a sixteen year old boy, was stronger and more deadly than him. One scratch from his claws and the man would be dead. It was no wonder that he’d bought in the two brutes to protect him.

“I had hoped that you’d gotten some sleep.” He sighed as he looked at Harry sitting on the bed, his smart suit still on, his shoes still on and his face raw from exhaustion and crying. “Jeff will not be pleased to see you looking so ragged and puffy.”

Harry gave the man the look that he thought that comment thoroughly deserved.
The man waved his hand and the two brutes advanced on him. “Strip him and bathe him.” He ordered as if he were merely ordering them to mow the lawn.

Harry leapt up and brought out his claws, standing on the bed as the two strange dominants circled him and tried to grab a hold of him. One went for his arm, the other for his leg and he jumped out of their way, raking his claws across the one’s face, sinking them in deep.

The Dominant bellowed like an enraged bear as blood poured from the four gouges over his cheek and the other redoubled his efforts to grab hold of Harry as he moved continuously out of their way.

He screamed out a distress call, this time filled with anger and triumph at hurting the one dominant, but still urging someone, anyone to come and help him.

The door was thrown open and Jefferus stood framed in the doorway. He looked from the one dominant, holding his bleeding face as Harry’s venom got to work, to the other dominant, jumping and almost dancing, making a fool of himself to try and grab Harry who was batting him away with his claws, those on the left side bloodied all the way up to his fingers.

“Are you fools so inept that you can’t keep control of a sixteen year old submissive?!” He roared as he strode forward, dodged Harry’s attempt to open his neck with his claws and he easily grabbed hold of Harry’s wrist as it swiped past his face and yanked him from the bed and into a heap at his feet, still holding his wrist tightly.

“He needs a bath.” The older man said blandly. “I had the elf prepare one next door before entering the room.”

The young man scoffed and using his own claws he shredded Harry’s clothes and before Harry could even cover himself, he was dragged on the floor, along to a room just outside the one that he’d been locked in for the last few hours.

He was all but thrown into the bath and dunked under the warm water and he was held under. He struggled and lashed out, but he didn’t know which way was up as he had lost his bearings.

He was yanked out of the water and he sucked in a huge breath before a thick potion was dumped on his head and a different one, a paste, was slathered over some of his skin on his chest.

“Rub that in.” Jeff ordered with a sneer as he threw Harry’s wrists away from himself and into the water.

Harry half rose from the bath in fury, but a clawed hand fell on his naked shoulder threateningly and he looked behind him to see the uninjured dominant behind him, his own claws out and ready if he
made any sort of move to get out of the bath.

He refused to wash himself and he sat in the bath, fuming silently as he glared at Jefferus’ back, even as the vile fucker puttered around, getting a thick, white towel out of a cupboard and laying it out on the floor.

“Wash yourself or I will do it for you.” He snarled, his pale eyes promising violence as he looked over and saw Harry doing nothing. “Don’t forget your legs either.”

Harry swallowed, still glaring, but he decided that this was a battle that he was willing to lose. He did not want Jeff, or the mindless grunt behind him, touching his naked body in any way.

He broke eye contact with the smug bastard as he started rubbing the potion into his hair and the paste into his skin. He didn’t like either of them at all, from the way it felt, to the way it smelt. It wasn’t him at all. It was too flowery, too sweet smelling where he preferred sharp, citrusy scents. He grimaced and continued to wash himself, ignoring how the one on his skin felt like it had bits of glass in it as he rubbed it in. It was too harsh and it was taking off the top layers of skin, he was sure of it.

He rubbed and rubbed until he was pink and clean. He rubbed until Jeff told him to stop and rinse himself off. He seemed indescribably pleased that Harry was doing what he was telling him to do. Harry glared and mentally told him not to get used to it, even as he was hauled from the bath by the brute, who clamped his hands around his wrists as Jeff laid Harry on the towel that he’d left on the floor.

Harry struggled and thrashed, trying to get his hands free so that he could at least cover himself, but the dominant was too strong and Jefferus easily slipped himself between Harry’s legs and held his naked thighs down.

He laughed. “Now now.” He said mockingly. “Let’s not make this more painful than it has to be.”

Harry panicked when Jefferus brought out his wand and he suddenly found himself in a full body bind. Tears fell from his eyes as his body was frozen in place and the brute released his hands and sat back.

Jefferus sat back too and he looked leeringly down at Harry’s body. Harry felt sick. He tried to break the curse, but he couldn’t. He tried to move, but he couldn’t.

Jeff took another soft, white towel and he started patting Harry’s body dry gently, but his sky blue eyes were burning with lust.

“You’re so beautiful. Your body is beautiful.” He said softly, an edge of breathlessness to his voice that made Harry want to vomit.
After he’d dried Harry’s body, he just touched him as if he felt that he had the right to do whatever he wanted with him. Harry’s skin crawled, even as he was forced to lie still and silent and endure the touches.

“So soft.” Jeff murmured as he touched Harry’s inside thighs, getting higher and higher.

Harry tried to move more desperately as he felt those hands on him. Tears leaked out of his eyes, the only part of himself that he could actually move as the body bind curse didn’t affect eyes or breathing.

Jeff stopped touching him suddenly and Harry flicked his eyes up to look at him, to see him fingering his wand. He pointed it at Harry’s body and said a spell that Harry had never heard before. Nothing happened to him that he could tell, though he knew that it had to have done something.

“That’s better, all smooth.” Jeff grinned at him and Harry felt queasy looking at him smile.

Jeff got another potion from the countertop and he knelt back down. It was a creamy lotion this time and Harry screwed his eyes closed and tried not to feel as Jefferus smoothed the lotion onto every single inch of his skin, starting from his legs up, including his groin.

Burning in his throat alerted him to the fact that he really was going to be sick, but as his mouth was stuck closed by the curse, he had to just swallow the sour bile back down, his eyes and throat burning, tears leaking faster from his screwed closed eyes.

“I like you better like this.” Jefferus told him conversationally as he continued to smooth in the lotion up his belly and hips to his chest, shoulders and arms. “I might have to gag you permanently. But then I’d like you to be more pliant and docile, so this curse isn’t practical for that as you’re too stiff like this. It won’t be a problem when we’re mated, you’ll do what I say then, but until we’re mated, I need to find a different way to keep you still and quiet without making you as stiff as a board.”

If Harry could have moved he would have throttled the arrogant prick leaning over him. He had to settle for glaring. Never had he wished more that he had the killing gaze of a basilisk.

“Hold him.” He directed at the brute, who was looking incredibly pleased and happy to be seeing so much of Harry’s naked body and that made Harry feel even worse.

The brute immediately dropped to his knees and put pressure on Harry’s stuck arms. Jefferus released the curse and Harry could wriggle and squirm once more and he did so violently.
“None of this now.” Jefferus insisted as he forced Harry’s legs open and put his own legs over Harry’s thighs, pinning them open.

Jefferus grabbed his penis and stroked it and Harry was so shocked that his mind froze. Two strokes later and the tears came thick and fast as he sobbed loudly and messily, outwardly showing his distress and terror, but neither of the men in the room cared.

“There we go, that’s better.” Jeff said happily as Harry was forced to react.

He cried loudly as he felt himself get hard and he tried to stop himself from reacting and getting an erection, but the physical stimulation was too overwhelming and Harry tried to move his hands or legs, but he couldn’t, so he lay still and he cried, slipping a terror filled distress call between his gasping sobs.

A hard smack to his cheek had him full on crying, mouth open, eyes streaming and his nose dribbling too as his terror and distress and confusion took over as Jeff continued to pull on him and stroke him.

“You want this. You wouldn’t get hard if you didn’t.” Jeff spat at him. “Stop crying and pretending that you don’t want this when you do! The evidence is in my hand.” He said giving him an extra tight squeeze that had Harry choking on a keening gasp of pain. “Oh, you liked that, did you?”

Harry shook his head as he cried harder. He shook his head from side to side furiously, trying to deny the words being said to him. Despite physically reacting, he was not enjoying himself, he was too terrified to feel any pleasure. It was all so wrong, he didn’t want to be touched in this way by anyone.

“Please.”

“Oh, begging now too? You do like this. Good.”

“No! I don’t. Stop. Please stop!” He said as he wriggled around, trying to get away, but that hand followed, increasing the pressure again, making him cry out.

Harry shook his head, even as another set of tears slipped out. He gasped as a spike of forced pleasure tightened his gut and he was so ashamed of himself that he heaved bile into his throat.

He reached orgasm and Jefferus petted him, like a proud owner even as Harry rolled over and curled up as much as he could and he vomited onto the tile floor.

“Stop overreacting. You enjoyed it, this is proof.” Jeff said as he thrust his dirtied hand into Harry’s face.

He stood up and washed his hands. “Get him into his clothes, they’ve been laid out. I want him downstairs to have breakfast with me in ten minutes.”

The grunt nodded and yanked Harry up by the wrists that he was still holding. Harry was dragged back into the room that he’d been kept prisoner in for the last few hours and with a simple spell, he was back to being under the full body bind curse and as stiff as a board, his arms above his head still.

The clothes he was apparently supposed to wear consisted of a shapeless, white, almost see through, tunic with a square neckline and nothing more.

Harry would have immediately refused to wear it, it was disgusting, but as it was forced over his head and he was all but manhandled into it, he realised that he was not going to be given the option of refusing it. That he was never going to be given any sort of choice about anything anymore.

He was held up and the tunic was tugged down. It barely hit his mid-thighs and if he could have blushed, he would have. He had not been given any underwear, not even shorts to put on underneath, and as he was dragged back out of the room, he realised that he was not going to be wearing any. He felt so humiliated and shamed. It wasn’t supposed to be like this. Not at all.

He was dragged back down the three sets of stairs to the ground floor and though his tears had stopped, he felt like he had a head cold as he sniffed and tried to control his breathing. He was back to glaring defiantly as he was dragged through a never ending corridor and into a dining room.

Three people were sat at the table, two humans and one Dracken. Jefferus and the older man and an older woman had joined them. Harry was assuming that they were Jefferus’ parents.

“Oh, he’s stunning!” The woman gushed as soon as Harry was dragged through the door.

She stood gracefully and cupped Harry’s face in her hands turning his head this way and that. “Oh, Jeff, you’ve done so well!”

“Oh yes, because the abduction and forced imprisonment of someone else is everyone’s greatest goal in life. What a wonderful achievement.” Harry snapped as sarcastically as he could manage.
Her hand connected with his cheek with a hard, painful slap that left his eyes watering and his face stinging.

“What an insolent, rude boy! We’ll have to change that!” She insisted.

“I was thinking of just gagging him until the potion takes effect.”

“He needs to be able to eat and drink, Jeff.” The older man said blandly, turning another page in his newspaper that he’d laid flat on the table without even looking up.

Jefferus scowled. “A half hour free every couple of hours?” He tried to compromise.

“That would be more prudent.” The man nodded as the utter snob used a knife and fork to cut up a slice of toast. “It would be a shame if he died of starvation or dehydration after all the effort we took to get him for you.” He added before using his fork to pop the tiniest piece of toast into his mouth.

He couldn’t believe these people. Not even Malfoy cut up a piece of toast with a knife and fork. Harry had watched him using his fingers like everyone else. He wanted to scream and rage, did they have no conscience, any morality at all?

“Sit him here.” Jefferus ordered the brute, patting his own lap and Harry dug his heels in, suddenly thankful for his bare feet. If he’d been wearing socks he would have just slid uselessly over the highly polished wooden floor.

The dominant snarled and just hefted Harry up and off of his feet and carried him over to the table, Harry was kicking and snarling all the way.

“Put me the fuck down!” He screamed, trying to wrench his hands away from the one hand holding his wrists.

The elder man sighed and touched a hand to his head. Harry hoped he had a fucking migraine as he released an incredibly loud, particularly shrill distress call. The man winced, so he probably did have a headache at least.
“Shut up, my Father has a headache.” Jefferus snarled, confirming Harry’s thoughts before he grabbed Harry and held him tightly on his lap.

Harry screamed louder and in the next moment, he was dizzy and had no clue what had happened as his forehead exploded with pain. It took him a minute to realise that Jefferus had wound his hand into the back of his hair and smashed his head into the table top.

A house elf had appeared with a potion for its Master and a strange device in its other hand. It offered this device to Jefferus with a petrified squeak before it left.

Jefferus held the device by one of the black straps and to Harry it looked like a child’s rubber ball had been weaved into the black straps.

“Must you use that garish thing? Just put a silencing charm on him.” The woman insisted.

“I want to see him wearing it.” Jefferus insisted firmly.

Harry’s eyes widened as he realised that it was supposed to be some sort of gag. He’d been expecting a rope of fabric stuffed between his teeth, how the hell was a ball supposed to work?

He moved his head away and Jefferus growled and grabbed hold of his hair and yanked it so hard that Harry was sure he’d lost clumps of it. The ball was shoved into his mouth and the straps were clipped behind his head and adjusted.

“There. That’s better.” Jeff huffed out with a smile as he adjusted Harry on his lap and wrapped one arm around his waist.

“He hasn’t eaten or drank anything since last night, Jeff.”

“He can wait until lunch.” Jefferus insisted as he shifted under Harry.

Harry blinked and then he struggled hard as he realised just what he was feeling pressed up against his back. His tears came again and he struggled, making muffled noises behind the ball clamped in his mouth. The tears fell, but no one, not a single one of them paid him any attention. They just sat there, eating their fucking toast with knives and forks while he was sat on this monster’s lap with his erection digging into his back. He tried to scream, to let out a distress call, to dislodge the ball with his tongue, but he couldn’t and he kicked out his legs, knocking the table and almost tipping the chair, very nearly succeeding in throwing himself and Jefferus to the floor.
“For f**k’s sake, stay still you little shit.” Jeff snarled, gripping the back of Harry’s neck tight, digging claws into his throat.

Another spell and this time tight bonds wrapped around his arms, pinning them together behind his back and he was unable to move them.

Jefferus dismissed the brute and shifted Harry back onto his lap and he held Harry tightly to his lap. Harry struggled and kicked out again.

“You can’t eat like this, Jefferus.” The woman fretted.

“Leave him be, Penny.” The older man said stiffly. He obviously didn’t like that his son was doing such things in front of him, but neither was he going to speak up or stop him. They were pandering to their own monstrous son, as the Dursleys had pandered to Dudley, giving him anything and everything that he wanted despite knowing that it was bad for him or even dangerous.

“Carter, our son isn’t eating, I don’t…”

“Penny, leave him be.” The man, Carter, said more firmly.

The woman sighed. “Make sure that you eat something, Jeff.”

Jeff wrapped one arm around Harry and took the other one away. His legs wrapped around Harry’s and pinned them back to the chair, effectively immobilising him and Harry showed his frustration in the only way he knew how to, screaming behind his gag and thrashing his head.

Jefferus grew fed up of this behaviour quickly and he yanked the back of the stupid tunic up, exposing his bum and Harry stilled in acute fear.

“That’s better.” Jefferus grumbled. “Stay still.”

Harry was too afraid to move as one hand roved over his exposed skin, touching, tracing and probing into places that Harry had never even touched himself, let alone allowed anyone else to touch. He shivered in revulsion and the tears started before he could stop them. He had no idea what else to do. What could he possibly do?

He felt ashamed that he couldn’t stand up for himself, that he couldn’t protect himself from this sort of unwanted attention. What was he supposed to do? He was tied up, gagged, now naked from the
waist down and he was being touched in a way that he had never been touched before and it was without his permission. He didn’t know how to react, he didn’t know what to do and he was scared. He huddled down and he cried.

He mentally called out to anyone and everyone to please just come and save him from this horror. He wanted to be saved because he didn’t think that he could possibly get himself out of this situation. He had no idea where he was, how far he was from the places that he knew and he had no way to get himself out. He was trapped here and he was easily manhandled and tied up, gagged and immobilised. He was just sixteen, he didn’t know how to Apparate, he hadn’t taken his wand with him to the Dracken meeting, he had no way to protect himself from what was happening. As a tear slipped out from each eye, he begged that someone came for him. He just wanted to be back in a place where he felt safe. He just wanted to feel safe again.

Jacob Midate had the very unfortunate task of flooing to Hogwarts early on a Sunday morning. As he was Harry’s chaperone, it fell to him to explain to Harry’s Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, why his student hadn’t come back to the school last night after the meeting and why he wouldn’t be coming back until they had found him.

He cursed himself again for not taking better care of his charge, for allowing him to go off with anyone, even another Elder. Harry had been his responsibility, not anyone else’s, his and he absolutely should have kept a closer eye on Harry. Why hadn’t he paid closer attention and gone with Harry himself? He would never have left Harry in a bathroom alone, at least not without standing right outside the door. It was this sort of backwards reasoning, this fundamental lack of judgement in giving the submissive privacy in a bathroom while surrounded by unmated dominants, that had prevented Elder Messana time and time again from failing to secure the honour of being a submissive chaperone.

Jacob pressed a hand to his face and held the cool hand over his eyes for a moment. He would never have left Harry alone while surrounded by unmated dominants, but it was useless to say such things now. He had left Harry alone, he had taken his attention away from him and now he was in disgrace because a submissive under his care had gone missing. He could be stripped of his chaperone duties or even removed from the Counsel itself for his grave error. He loved being a submissive chaperone, it was what he’d trained to be and as soon as he had known that he was a confirmed dominant Dracken at sixteen, he had wanted to be a Dracken Elder.

Jacob steeled himself and he sighed wearily as he took a pinch of floo powder and threw it into the flames of the fire, turning them emerald green. There was no use procrastinating and putting off this talk. Dumbledore needed to be informed and hopefully, he could help them to locate Harry.

“Ah, there you are.” The old man said jovially as Jacob stepped through the flames and into the room. “I was wondering where you had gotten to, I was fully expecting Harry to be back last night. I was starting to get worried.”

Jacob closed his eyes and he sat down without being invited to do so. His chest hurt with the
pressure of his failure, with the weight of knowledge that Harry was, perhaps right at the moment, suffering through hardship and pain.

“Where is Harry?” Albus Dumbledore asked in a neutral tone, but when Jacob looked up at him, those soft blue eyes were icy and cold.

“There is no easy way to say this.”

“So just come out with it.” Dumbledore’s voice was hard and flat, so unlike the old man, that Jacob knew then and there, if he hadn’t already, that he truly loved Harry as a member of his own family and that he could guess, or that he at least suspected, what had happened to Harry.

“Harry was abducted last night.” He said clearly. “We’ve been trying to locate him, but those who took him know how to block us from finding him.”

Dumbledore sat up very straight and for such an old man, and a human too, he was very intimidating and Jacob felt a trickle of fear slide into his belly. He now understood why that creature Voldemort had been so afraid of this man.

“You allowed Harry to be abducted from a meeting that he had no desire to attend in the first place?” He demanded lowly, calmly.

Jacob would have felt better, more reassured, if Dumbledore had shouted at him. He had never liked this cold, calm fury.

“Yes. We’ve been trying to locate him, but we don’t know who took him. We’ve already conducted several raids on prospective suspects, but Harry was not found at any of the residences and none of those raided had any information on him.”

“At what time was he taken?” Dumbledore asked calmly, in a way that Jacob suspected that the old man already knew that he wasn’t going to like the answer.

“Half seven in the evening.” Jacob answered with a bone weary sigh.
“Harry has been missing for over twelve hours and you are only now informing me of it?”

“We have been trying to find him!” Jacob insisted.

“Without success.” Dumbledore replied frostily. “I could have been searching for Harry myself!”

“He’s a Dracken so naturally he is…”

“He is also a wizard and there are ways to find someone with magic that Drackens often forget about in favour of their natural instincts.” Dumbledore cut him off angrily, his blue eyes blazing. “You have allowed Harry to be taken captive when he has already suffered through so much in his young life. With Voldemort dead he was supposed to be safer, happier. He was not meant to be snatched at a social gathering! You will give me all the information that you have. I will find him.”

“We will find him.” Jacob said sternly. “Together. If we pool everything we have to offer together, then we’ll have a better chance of finding him. So far our lead is an unknown, unmated male dominant following Harry into the bathroom at which point we believe that he was attacked and smuggled out of the Dracken Halls via a fireplace further in the Halls.”

“Do all the fireplaces have floo powder?”

Jacob shook his head. “No, only the main fireplace had any floo powder at the time of the meeting and there were four guards around it who would have seen anyone taking a handful of floo powder without using it. The attacker would have had to have brought their own floo powder with them, which is how we know that it was a predetermined attack and not a spur of the moment decision. Harry was likely targeted and then as soon as the opportunity arose, such as going to the bathroom, he was snatched.”

Dumbledore sat in silence for a moment before he shook his head. “No. There was too much that could have gone wrong if they had left it to chance. What if an opportunity never arose? What if someone not involved had walked into the bathroom while Harry was being attacked? There must have been more than one person involved.”

Jacob frowned. “The guard at the entrance to the corridor that the bathrooms are located in saw only four people pass by him after Harry went into the bathroom. A mother and her newborn, a Father and his daughter and two unmated dominants, one female and one male. Only the unmated male went into the same bathroom as Harry, the guard didn’t immediately see anything wrong with this as
both Harry and the dominant were males… it was only afterwards that he realised his mistake in letting an unmated dominant in the submissives’ bathroom.”

“The unmated female couldn’t have slipped in while the guard wasn’t looking?” Dumbledore questioned.

“It’s a possibility.” Jacob admitted. “He was distracted at the time by another submissive.”

“There is also the possibility that the attacker was already in the bathroom with Harry when he went inside, that they were lying in wait for him to enter the bathroom and the other male who entered was an accomplice.”

Jacob hadn’t considered this possibility and he pinched the bridge of his nose hard before rubbing at his exhausted eyes.

“If you would consent to coming to the Dracken Halls? Perhaps you’ll see something more that we’ve missed or overlooked.”

Dumbledore nodded his head in amiable agreement and he stood.

“Armando, if you could inform Minerva of what has transpired here in this office and where I have gone?” Dumbledore asked a portrait of a nearly bald, feeble looking man who nodded immediately.

“Of course, Albus.” He answered before walking right out of the side of his portrait.

“Let us be off then. Harry does not have the luxury of time, I fear.” Dumbledore said gravely and Jacob nodded in agreement.

He took Dumbledore through the floo, they had to go together as no human could get into the Dracken Halls without a Dracken with them for security purposes, unless by special, specific written invitation.

He hoped that they could find Harry quickly. They knew that he hadn’t been taken by poachers, he’d been calling through the night and he’d called twice since the morning. The poachers would not have kept him alive overnight, it was too dangerous to their own lives, they would have harvested Harry as soon as they’d gotten him to their current base of operations. That Harry was still alive lifted
a huge weight from his shoulders. The poachers did not have a spiteful Dracken informant who was shopping other Drackens to them within their community. That being said however, they still had a traitor in their midst, or even more than one if Albus Dumbledore was correct in his theory. It didn’t bear thinking about. He was disgusted with anyone who could even think of doing such a thing, let alone more than one of them. When he found the bastards who had done this to Harry, he would execute them personally, he would make sure of it. After, of course, making sure that Harry was well and being taken care of as his paramount priority. Nothing would come before Harry now. Nothing.

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Harry had learnt that he’d killed the dominant that he had raked his claws over. The Perrot’s hadn’t been able to take him to a Dracken Healer as any medical professional would have immediately known that a submissive had caused the injuries to the unmated dominant and they would have become highly suspicious. So they’d just let him die and then disposed of the body where no one would ever find it.

‘They’re on special potions too, see.’ Jefferus had told him. ‘It blocks all of their natural instincts making them able to stand here and keep you captive when perhaps their Drackens would have been forced to intervene and help you. But no matter, you’ll be on your heat period soon and then you’ll be mine and I won’t have need of paid underlings to help me contain you.’

Harry had been horrified to learn that the scant bit of toast and pumpkin juice that he had been given for lunch that day had actually contained the same potion that he had spat onto the floor last night. He had been tricked into taking it as he’d been expecting another vial of potion to be tipped into his mouth, not for his food to be laced with it. He just hadn’t expected it to be put in his food and now there was nothing that could be done to get it out of his system.

Because the potion had contained Jefferus’ blood, it pinpointed just him and the potion had forcibly bonded them together and now Harry’s Dracken thought that he was bonded and his breeding cycle had been kick started. He felt sick to his stomach as he learnt what was going to happen to him. Jeff was going to mate to him, with his Dracken now thinking that they were bonded, there was nothing that he could do anymore.

His only hope had been not taking that potion, but even that had been a very slim hope. He could have fought all he wanted to, but he would have been forced to take that potion eventually. He was learning, very quickly, that these people were not the most compromising or the most patient in the world. Quite the opposite in fact.

His only hope now was for rescue. He closed his eyes and shivered. Jeff had actually left him alone for today, sprouting snappishly that Harry’s crying was getting on his nerves, so Harry was lying in the living room that he had first arrived in with Jefferus’ vile Mother, Penny, who was going on and on about the beautiful grandsons that he was going to give her, and his equally vile Father, Carterum, who was ignoring them both while he rifled around in bunches of parchments and wrote letters.

If Harry had had any doubts about what was going to happen to him when he went onto his heat period, they had been well and truly lifted now that Penny was gushing over grandbabies.
He was still wearing the stupid, square necked, too big tunic and he still had no underwear on, but he had been given a blanket, as apparently Penelope and Carterum Perrot did not want to see Harry’s bits on display as much as their son, Jefferus did. Thank Merlin.

The potion dazed dominant was stood behind the settee that he was laying on, at the ready just in case Harry tried to go anywhere or do anything. He was tired having not slept last night, plus he was out of sorts because he was in a different time-zone, and he was happy to be laying down on the sumptuously soft settee with a blanket wrapped tightly around him and clamped between his knees so that it couldn’t come loose, or be easily pulled from him.

He drifted in and out of sleep, floating, but not really sleeping at all, so he heard the soft voices around him, he heard them talking and planning out babies and names and nurseries. It made him feel sick to his stomach that they were planning to have him raped and impregnated by their son. It was as if the world had gone completely mad and backwards. They had actually abducted him and imprisoned him, just to have him raped repeatedly to give them grandchildren. It wasn’t right.

“Has he slept for long?”

Harry tensed when he heard Jefferus’ voice in the room.

“He’s been in and out, he’s not really sleeping at all, just resting.” Carter said. Harry had underestimated how observant Carter was. He’d have to be aware of that from now on.

Jefferus sat on the edge of the settee, only he was so uncaring that he actually sat on Harry’s arm. Harry’s eyes snapped open and he glared at him as he yanked his arm out from under Jefferus’ arse.

“Get up, I want you to meet one of my friends.”

“Braven?” Penny asked with a smile.

“Yes, he impressed me more than my other friends, so he’s the one who I have chosen to help me.”

“I like that young man.” Penny said happily. “I knew he’d agree to help you.”

Harry was confused and he frowned.
“Are you going to wait or…?” Carter asked.

“I think I’ll wait. I just want to show my mate off to him today. He’s already jealous.”

Jeff stood back up and he yanked Harry with him, the blanket falling away before Harry could recover enough to grab at it. The brute just followed along behind them silently. Harry hadn’t heard him speak yet and he wondered if he had a silencing charm on him. It had to be better than the ball that had been thrust into his mouth and tied in place as soon as he’d finished eating the potion laced toast at lunch time a few hours before.

Jefferus took him up to the first floor and dragged Harry along like a dim-witted pet or a naughty child and he screamed in rage behind his gag and ripped his hand free and aimed a kick at the bastard. He actually managed to catch his thigh too.

“Fuck Merlin! You little fucking whore!” Jeff screamed.

Harry, who had been caught in his escape attempt by the mute brute, was punched in the face twice in quick succession by large, balled up hands. Jefferus stopped hitting him and scowled.

“Now look what you’ve done, you’ve ruined your face!” He said angrily, as if Harry had actually been hitting himself in the face.

Dazed, bleeding and now in pain, he whimpered as Jefferus hefted him up and threw him over his shoulder.

“I was going to be nice to you today, I was going to introduce you to Braven and leave it at that, now you’ll be sorry.”

One of Jeff’s hands touched his naked bum and Harry’s struggles picked up again, despite being dazed and dizzy. There was no way that he could misinterpret that, not even after being punched in the head, and he screamed behind the stupid ball and he kicked out again. Jeff grunted at the frenzied movement but he was much stronger than Harry, being older and a dominant too, and he held fast to him as the brute behind them clamped Harry’s wrists bruisingly tight when he brought his claws out and tried to stab them into Jeff’s back.

“I was wondering where you’d gotten to.” There was a pause and then the new voice sniggered. “I can see everything under that little dress, Jeff.”
“Do you like what you see?” Jeff laughed. “I do.”

“He’s very smooth.”

“Hair removal charm. He’s as smooth as a woman now too, just how I like him.”

“I can’t wait for his breeding heat.”

Jeff actually shivered and Harry felt physically sick. If he’d eaten more than a single slice of toast he might have actually been violently sick. He wriggled and kicked his legs, but Jeff moved his hand and pressed one finger to Harry’s hole, a very clear threat and Harry stopped moving suddenly and the tears started to fall.

“You said we were going to wait for his heat.” The new voice said with a strained breathlessness to it.

“He kicked me, so I changed my mind. There’s no reason we can’t have a taste of him early.”

“Bed?”

“Conjure some rope, we’ll enjoy him without worrying about his fucking claws. He’s already a killer.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, he’s got a taste for it. He killed one of the dominants we hired to contain him until we’re mated just a few hours after he arrived.”

“Small, sexy and dangerous.”

Jeff chuckled deeply and Harry wanted to curl up and hide. This was a nightmare that he couldn’t
wake up from and he sobbed as he was carried through what seemed to be a small, personal living room and into the room next door, which seemed to be a bedroom. The largest, most disgustingly opulent bedroom he’d ever seen. He was dumped onto the bed, his hands still being held tightly together by the remaining brute.

A couple of spells later and he was tied, spread eagled, to the bed and Jeff had dismissed the brute. Harry tested the ropes as he couldn’t just lie there and let this happen to him, but they were tight and they held. He couldn’t even move his arms.

“Merlin, does he have to screw his face up like that?” The new man sneered. “It looks like he’s been stung by a fucking wasp.”

Jeff snorted. “He’s been doing that since he got here. It’s as if he doesn’t appreciate the honour he’s being given.”

“Exactly, Jeff! That won’t last much longer though, no?”

“No. We have no way of knowing when his heat will hit him as we don’t know what his breeding cycle is, so it could be at any time now, but we have gotten the potion into him and as soon as he goes onto his heat period, that’s it. He’ll be mine.”

“Are you ready to be a Father?”

“Of course, Braven. I’ve been ready for years. I just needed the submissive that I wanted. He was worth the wait and I’m sure he’ll give me strong, Dracken sons. Our first will be called Bertrandus.”

“I love that name.” The other man said with a grin. “Strong, prestigious, just like you.”

Harry mentally scoffed and called this Braven a complete and utter suck up, lick arse, even as he wriggled and tensed both of his legs, trying to get free. He couldn’t have stopped the tears if he’d tried.

“Can I touch him, Jeff?”

“Course, it’s why you’re here. Do you like him?”
The man, Braven, laughed. “Of course. He’s gorgeous! The others are going to be so jealous of you!”

Jefferus grinned proudly at that, as if Harry had actually picked him himself and he had a reason to be proud. But he hadn’t. Jefferus had ordered him to be abducted and brought here against his will so that he could forcibly mate and impregnate him. He had NOTHING to be proud about! He shouldn’t be bragging about abduction and rape, but he was! It was all backwards and Harry didn’t know how to react or what to do. What could he do when people were acting as if nothing was wrong and that this horror was perfectly normal?

Braven touched Harry’s leg and he tried to thrash, glaring at him and yanking on his own arms and legs to try and break free of the ropes, despite the fact that it hurt and rubbed abrasively at his skin.

“Will you just lie still?” Jeff growled at him.

“Not doing as he’s told?” Braven laughed.

“Not just yet. That’ll change as soon as he’s mine though.”

Jeff pushed the stupid tunic he was wearing right up over his body, over his head and left it on his arms, leaving his body naked. Harry watched as both of their eyes gleamed with lust. He wriggled about, but that just made them both chuckle, like they were two peas in a pod.

“I like this addition.” Braven said, poking at the red ball in Harry’s mouth.

“He likes shouting when it’s out.” Jefferus groused.

“His fangs?”

“It’s reinforced. It can take being bitten by his fangs. Now stop talking and enjoy him. As soon as he’s had that first heat period you won’t be needed anymore. You know how much I hate sharing my stuff.”

Braven nodded and did as he was told. It was no wonder that Jeff didn’t like Harry talking or
fighting against him if his own friends were mindless followers that he didn’t allow to speak and when they did open their mouths, all that poured out was exactly what Jeff wanted to hear. Jeff even shouted and ordered around his own parents. He was a bully. A spoilt, self-entitled bully who was allowed to get away with anything and Harry absolutely hated him.

He flinched repeatedly as different parts of his body were touched and he ripped his legs back, trying to get them free, knowing that it was useless, but he couldn’t just lie here like this, he couldn’t. He begged internally for someone to help him. Why had the world turned upside down? Why did these people think that this was normal?

“He’s so soft!” Braven sighed happily as he touched Harry’s thigh.

“I’m going to keep him soft too.” Jeff grinned to his friend and touched Harry’s penis. “Except here. Here he gets very hard, because he acts like he doesn’t like it, but he really does. He orgasms hard too.”

Braven laughed and he bent down. Harry tried to move to see what he was doing and he wished that he hadn’t as he watched Braven put his mouth over his penis. The pleasure of having a warm, wet mouth around him made him react and he cried out behind the ball in his mouth. The tears that had abated in his rage came back quick and fast, welling up and over his lashes and he sobbed.

“You’re right.” Braven laughed. “He’s reacted already, all I did was put my mouth over him.”

“I told you.” Jeff laughed happily. “He pretends that he doesn’t want it, but he gets as hard as rock as soon as you touch him. He’s perfect.”

“Merlin, he’s fucking salty, though.”

“Yeah, that’s why I wouldn’t put my mouth on him.” Jefferus laughed. “He’s still a Dracken, so lots of red meat. It makes semen taste worse than it normally does. He was probably hunting a lot before we got him. Apparently fruit will make it better, not that I’m ever going to be sucking him, so it doesn’t really matter.”

“He really likes being sucked though.” Braven laughed.

“So you suck him. I just want to touch and fuck him.”
Harry screamed as he heard that and he shook his head. The two men above him just smiled down at him as if he were being cute and ridiculous.

“See? He pretends he doesn’t want it, but this, tells a different story.” Jefferus said as he placed his hand over Harry’s penis again and squeezed tight, bringing an involuntary whimper from Harry.

“I can see.” Braven laughed. “He loves it! You don’t have to play the virgin submissive for our benefit, we can already scent that from you.” He directed at Harry.

Harry cried, tied naked to a bed, unable to move or make much of a sound as these two men touched and played with him as if he were nothing more than a doll. Like he had no feelings. He felt sick and humiliated as they laughed over his involuntary reactions to their touches. It was as if even his own body was against him, as if his own body was betraying him too, and he sobbed harder, almost choking as his nose started running and he couldn’t breathe through either his mouth or his nose. He wanted this horrific nightmare to be over. He wanted to crawl into his bed at Hogwarts and he wanted to curl up under his covers and he wanted to stay there forever. He wanted to hide away forever and he tried to use that wish to his advantage and apply it here. He tried to remove his mind from what was happening from his body, but it was difficult, incredibly difficult and he couldn’t do it. He couldn’t separate his mind and body. He had been abysmal at Occlumency too.

He felt every touch, heard every slur and lustful comment made about him and his body and he was forced to endure laughter and mockery as he was forced to orgasm. He cried, hard and messily as he was forced to endure this vile attack on his body.

“I told you. The little slut says he doesn’t want it, he pretends to cry and move away, but he loves it!”

“He so does. Who wouldn’t like their dick sucked?” Braven laughed.

“Give me that lube. He’s been here overnight already and I’ve waited long enough for him.”

Braven laughed and rolled over on the big bed to get a bottle that had been left on the bedside table. He passed it over to Jefferus, who wasted no time in waiting as he squeezed the bottle over his own hand and then threw it away.

Harry’s struggling picked up and he screamed in rage and denial as what he’d been dreading was finally about to happen. Fingers touched one of his most private of places and they just shoved into his body with absolutely no regard for his comfort or pain.

He screamed in pain behind the gag and the tears that fell this time were from pain as he was torn open for the first time.
“Don’t be such a little fucking bitch.” Braven sneered. “Merlin, you submissives are made for this, what’s the problem?”

“That’s what I’ve been telling him.” Jeff insisted. “I’m only lowering myself to shoving my fingers up your arse this once because I know you’re a virgin. After tonight, you won’t get that luxury.”

“He shouldn’t need it this time!” Braven scoffed.

“That’s what I thought!” Jeff nodded. “But Mother said he might not be able to conceive or something if I scarred him internally when taking his virginity or something. I wasn’t really listening. I would have thought it was only women who were affected like that. Maybe that’s what she was referring too, I don’t know.”

“He does look like a woman.” Braven snorted.

“I’m done with this. It’s utterly disgusting and beneath my status.” Jeff sneered as he pulled his fingers out of Harry and then moved further up.

Harry, who’d been in so much pain from just a couple of fingers, struggled harder and shook his head viciously.

“I’ve had enough of you.” Jeff sneered.

Harry was punched in the face for the third time in less than an hour and he screamed behind the ball as his face exploded with pain and then he screamed harder as something was forced into his body. He knew what it was and it was agonising.

He screamed and thrashed as much as he could, his eyes streaming and his nose running too as he cried and cried. The one thing he’d been dreading happening had happened now and there was no going back. His head pounded with the force of his crying and he huffed, trying to breathe behind the ball as he was forced to just lie there, tied up and immobile, as he was raped of his virginity.

He begged for it to be over soon, if it had to happen, he didn’t want it to be strung out, but every minute was a minute too long as his lower body felt like it was being stabbed repeatedly with a hot knife.

He clenched every muscle, hoping that it would make things less painful for himself, but he still felt the stabbing, throbbing pain. He was relieved when Jefferus finally reached his orgasm and fell onto
him, crushing him back into the mattress.

He sobbed hysterically as he was forced to lie on the bed, an unpleasant wetness between his legs and Jefferus’ bulky weight on top of him.

Jefferus laughed happily. “Oh, I’m going to enjoy doing that.” He said as he pushed himself up and moved away.

Harry was too hysterical to notice as he sobbed and cried, his breathing hitching as he tried to curl himself up.

“Come on, Braven. You need to rub it in to the others.”

“I’m definitely going to. That was the best orgasm ever.”

Harry peeled his eyes open, begging that he didn’t have to go through that awful experience again, but he was relieved to notice that Braven was already wet and tucking himself back into his underwear. Harry let out a relieved, shaky breath that Braven had brought himself off and he didn’t have to endure more of this torment.

“He loves it. I told you.”

“You did. Fucking submissive sluts.” Braven sniggered.

Harry sobbed some more and he was relieved when his legs were untied and he could pull them up to his chest and bury his face into his knees.

His arms were left tied up, but he was left alone. He wished he had a blanket that he could hide under, as though his legs had been untied, his stupid tunic thing had not been pulled back down and he was lying there, naked and covered in fluids that he didn’t want to even think about.

He cried and he cried, his face still in his knees, his head pounded and his body ached unbearably. He was twitching and spasming, cursing his traitorous body as his own bodily fluids dried on his stomach. He couldn’t even wipe it off.

He eventually cried himself to sleep, where he suffered horrific nightmares that had him jerking on the ropes holding his hands and when he finally woke up from those nightmares, he shivered from how cold he was from being uncovered and unable to move. He had no idea how long he had lain here, but he kept reminding himself that it was at least better to be alone than to be with anyone else, especially Jefferus fucking Perrot.
It had been a month and Max was a complete wreck. A shade of his former self. It really was as if his own mate had been taken, because he had been confident that when the time had come for Harry’s meetings, he would have been chosen. It wasn’t arrogance, not really, he had reacted to Harry as strongly as Harry had reacted to him. If they’d been allowed to touch, he was sure that they would have bonded then and there in the meeting halls.

Harry’s meetings would have been better than this farce of a meeting too, he was sure of it as he was forced to take his shoes and socks off for this Egyptian submissive. It wasn’t often that a meeting was called for an Egyptian, they didn’t have the same laws as some other countries and the submissives were often put into a contract with a dominant while still children. This practice had been outlawed from Britain and most of Europe since the nineteen-seventies, but not so much in other countries.

Every country had its own set of Elders whose job was to uphold peace and justice in their countries and Dracken communities, but there were only three Counsels in the world. One in the Northern Hemisphere, one in the Southern Hemisphere and one massive, very public, Counsel in South Africa that was considered the ‘hub’ of the Dracken community worldwide.

One of the Egyptian Elders was stood with the submissive at the top, but he was accompanied by one of the Northern Hemisphere Elders, Elder Getus. It was unusual to request additional chaperones from either of the three Counsels, but it did happen from time to time, especially if the submissive or their family were worried about security. After what had happened to Harry last month, it was no wonder that the submissive had her seven brothers, her Father, four Uncles and two Elders surrounding her. This was the first meeting worldwide that had taken place since Harry had been abducted. It was likely going to be the safest since Harry had been taken too, no one, absolutely no one, wanted to put a toe out of line here. The repercussions would be swift, incredibly harsh and whoever dared to misbehave would be made an extreme example of in front of the world’s dominants.

“I feel like a Neanderthal walking around completely barefoot.” His uncle complained. “Why can’t we keep our socks on at least?”

“Will you stop whinging?” Cassander ribbed. “It’s one step closer to being naked. There’s less to take off.”

Max’s Aunt Kyra smacked the back of Cassander’s head and glared at him when he swung around to glare back.

“Remember your decorum!” Kyra insisted.
“If that submissive lifted her skirt and begged, you’d be the first to bury your face in her…”

Max didn’t hear the end of Cassander’s sentence as Kyra buried her fist in his mouth, but he didn’t need him to finish the sentence to know what he’d been aiming at. He grimaced in distaste. He definitely leaned more towards men, which is why he’d been so excited to meet Harry. Having an all-male mateship was what his dreams had been made of when he’d been newly inherited, but it was only possible with a male submissive and there were precious few of those running around and they were always snapped up incredibly quickly for their rarity, often in the very first day of meetings, often before Max had even had a chance to lay eyes on them, let alone get the chance to actually speak to them to gauge their personality to see if they were even compatible. Male submissive or not, if the submissive wasn’t compatible to him, he would not be mating to them, which was why he had loved Harry so much. They had meshed together so easily, so quickly and the almost magnetic attraction had been very much mutual.

“Max!”

He turned and he managed to drag up a smile for his old friend, Nasta Tabrien DeLericey. Nasta was older than he was by six and a half years and had sort of taken him under his wing when he’d come for his first submissive meeting and he’d been harshly rejected, just because he was so young and still growing.

They’d known of each other since they were children, their Fathers were on speaking terms and often helped one another out in the business world, but since Max had turned sixteen and Nasta had started looking out for him personally, they’d become friends themselves. They even gave birthday and Christmas presents to one another. He had long since forgotten who had started the ball rolling with the presents, but it had probably been Nasta. He was more thoughtful and sensitive about those sorts of things than he himself was. He was happy to give gifts, of course, but he would never have thought to have done it off of his own back like Nasta had.

“Nasta. How are you?”

“Fine.” He said. Nasta was also a man of very few words. Max had been trying, unsuccessfully, to bring Nasta out of his shelled bubble for years, but nothing he did worked.

“You look like hell.” Nasta’s best friend, Sixten, told him with no preamble.

“Thanks.” He grunted bad temperedly.

“You do look really pale. My Dad said that you we’re taking the abduction of the missing
“submissive really hard.” Nasta said softly.

Max nodded. “I was talking to him just before he was taken. He was lovely, amazing. Then he was gone.”

“You wanted to mate to him.” Sixten said.

Max nodded. “Of course. He was amazing! Truly amazing!”

“I’m sorry, Max. Do the Elders have any leads?” Nasta asked sincerely. “I wasn’t there the night he was taken, I don’t know much.”

“No, you were at mine fucking me into the wall.” Sixten grinned.

Max sighed heavily, but he managed a small smile for his friends. “The Elders are following every tiny scrap of information that’s coming forward, but they’re running out of leads because the guard at the door doesn’t remember what any of the people who passed him looked like. They think that someone waited in the bathroom for Harry to go in and then someone else followed him in and then the both of them smuggled him out.”

“But it’s all speculation and it hasn’t led to anything?” Nasta asked.

Max nodded. “It’s been a month. I don’t even want to be here, I don’t want any other submissive!”

“Damn, you got it hard for him.” Sixten said in surprise.

“You didn’t meet him, you didn’t speak to him. He was so sweet and shy, but he had this fierce personality that just shone around him. He was so different to all the other submissives. I honestly think he was my perfect other half.”

“Is there anything that we can do?” Nasta asked him seriously.

Max choked out a mirthless laugh. “There’s nothing I can do!” He said a bit hysterically.
“He meant for you, lummox.” Sixten elaborated.

“You need help too.” Nasta nodded his agreement to Sixten’s words.

“I don’t feel much like socialising.” He said. “I keep thinking of what he might be going through. He hasn’t called in a few days now. All through this last month he’ll stop calling for several days, then he’ll call once or twice and then stop again for another several days.”

“He’s being gagged then.” Sixten said sadly. “If he can’t make a noise, then he can’t call.”

“He’s still alive.” Nasta told them both sternly, forcing them to think of the positive. “It has been a month and he’s alive.”

“I know, but I keep thinking of whether he wants to be alive or not anymore.” Max said, ducking his head.

Strong hands pulled him to a strong body and one hand cupped the back of his head.

“He probably doesn’t, but that’s okay. Therapy and support can help him overcome what’s happened to him. He’s alive, Max.” Nasta told him soothingly.

Max really felt like he loved Nasta sometimes. This was one of those times and he clung to Nasta tightly, just absorbing his strength and the innate confidence that this man carried.

“Alright, Maxie. Enough of making a public spectacle of yourself.” His Uncle Sandor coached him.

“Leave him alone.” His Uncle Cassander growled at his younger brother. “If he wants to swoon into the arms of the strong and dependable Nasta Delericey, who could blame him?”

Max sighed and tightened his arms on Nasta for a moment before he stood back and straight.
“Come to mine after this farce.” Sixten insisted. “We can hunt for dinner and, if not cheer you up, then at least keep you company and keep you from wallowing quite so much. As the saying goes, misery loves company.”

“Can we hunt in Canada?” Max asked softly.


“You just want to take out a bear, don’t you?” Nasta asked amusedly.

Max nodded. “It might help take out some of the tension I’m feeling to go up against a bear.”

“So we go hunting in Canada, I’ve got a couple bottles of Dragon’s Breath Firewhiskey lying about and several unopened boxes of Valentine chocolates I got given several months ago. We can have a guy night.”

“We need to survive this first.” Max groused.

“It won’t be long. The pull is already lessening. Soon we’ll be able to leave and not come back.”

“At least this one is covered.” Sixten said as he looked up at the submissive, who was covered from neck to ankles for once. Her arms were fully bare from the shoulder however.

“Abayomi would like to thank you for coming.” The Elder called out suddenly, hushing the talking dominants. “Your gifts to her are to be received immediately.”

“I hate submissives who expect gifts.” Sixten growled. “I want to save every Knut I earn for my actual mate, not spend it on gifts for bitches who just want stuff.”

“Agreed.” Max said. “I never brought anything with me, anyway. I don’t want to be here as it is.”

“I like getting to know the submissive first.” Nasta said. “So that I can get them a present that they actually want and not just throw clothes, perfume or jewellery at them when they might not like those
“I usually make biscuits for meetings.” Max sighed. “I haven’t felt like cooking or baking since Harry was taken. My Mum has been forcing me to eat since.”

“Good. You don’t want to lose that luscious body of yours.” Sixten said, eyeing him appreciatively.

That made Max smile. Sixten was well known for liking to bottom to other dominants. He knew that Sixten and Nasta had a fuck buddy thing going on where if one of them really needed sex, they floo called the other to see if they were willing to help out. It would work out perfectly for them if they got picked by the same submissive, because they were already intimate with one another, they were best friends and they already knew that Nasta would be the top dominant out of the two of them. There would be no tension and no strife between them like some mateships who had multiple dominants who were strangers to one another.

“There are some of you who have not brought your gifts forward, could you please do so now.”

“The dominants are not required to give the submissive that they’re meeting gifts.” Elder Getus cut in. “It is a courtesy only and they do not have to hand over a gift if they do not want to.”

“I’m glad he’s here.” Sixten said under his breath.

“Abayomi is not pleased by any dominant who does not want to give her a gift.”

“Who the fuck cares?!” One dominant yelled out. “I work hard for what I have, why should I waste a gift on someone who won’t even appreciate it?”

Several of the dominants hooted and clapped their agreement.

“Couldn’t have said it better myself.” Nasta grumbled.

The Elders both bent towards their young charge when she started speaking and Elder Getus actually looked angry.
The Egyptian Elder moved back and stood primly and he cleared his throat.

“Abayomi will not consider anyone who has not given her a gift.” He said it like a threat, but one particular dominant, a really young one who had to have been only about seventeen years old, actually cheered and he didn’t hang about as he rushed out of the room as if the hounds of hell were after him. That would have hurt anyone’s pride, let alone a recently inherited sixteen year old.

“Well, I think he summed that up perfectly.” Another, older dominant, said loudly as he turned and walked out, much more dignified than the baby dominant, but the symbolism couldn’t have been plainer.

“A bit harsh maybe, she doesn’t seem as bad as some others, but still I’m not going to hang around.” Sixten said. “You two coming? If we’re hunting in Canada, we need time to find the bears, take them down and then skin them.”

“Yeah, I’m not staying for someone who demands a gift before I have one.” Nasta answered. “If she won’t wait for me to consider a well thought out gift for her, then she doesn’t even deserve one.”

“I never wanted to be here to begin with.” Max agreed.

“Come on then.” Sixten urged as he moved off.

“You leaving, Maxie?”

Max nodded. “I never brought a gift with me.” He told his Uncles and lone Aunt. “I’m going to spend some time with Nasta and Sixten.”

His Uncle Cassander grinned naughtily. “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t, Max!” He said happily.

It was a rather tame comment for his Uncle Cassander, but Max still rolled his eyes at the sexual implication.

“We’re going hunting.” He said dryly. “I don’t like fucking my food, Uncle and I don’t think the bear would appreciate it either.”
Cassander looked surprised for only a moment before he just about started rolling around the floor, laughing.

“Maximilius!” His Aunt chastised him, looking shocked and angry.

“Sorry, Aunt Kyra.” He said, but he wasn’t sorry at all and it probably showed. He made a hasty retreat, taking Nasta and Sixten with him.

“Come on, let’s go get you a bear to chew on, buddy.” Sixten said, throwing an arm around his waist and snuggling in like they were mates themselves.

Sixten had always been very touchy and Max didn’t usually mind, but Sixten also had wandering hands and he made it very clear how good looking he thought Max was, but for once Sixten’s hand didn’t slip down lower to his arse and grope him. He appreciated that, sex or even sexual contact wasn’t what he wanted at all right now and he liked to think that Sixten could sense that. He just needed his friends. His friends who he could be himself with, could lounge around with, his wings out on display as they just relaxed and drank together. His friends who would help him take down a bear for them to eat together without having him committed to an asylum.

“My house is bigger.” He told the two others.

“Yeah, but we’re trying to get you out of your house. So we’re going to mine.” Sixten insisted. “Seeing as Nasta lives in a cave that is four rooms and not even big enough for him, let alone your giant self.”

“It’s not that bad.” Nasta said in such a way that Max just knew that Nasta already understood that his living conditions were poor.

“We had sex in your room once and I could touch all four walls at once on orgasm.” Sixten deadpanned.

“No, you just thought that you were touching all four of them on orgasm.” Nasta smirked.

“I put a hole in your one, paper thin, wall with my foot and banged my head against the one behind
Max laughed in surprise. “I didn’t think your apartment was that bad.”

“It’s not!” Nasta insisted.

“Why don’t you move? You have enough money.”

“I’m at the reserve most of the time, I even sleep there sometimes. I want to save as much as I can for when I’m mated.”

“So you’re living in a tiny, cramped, squalid apartment on the off chance that you’ll be mated?” Sixten snorted.

“I’m very neat and clean, thank you.” Nasta said in his defence.

“That doesn’t solve the tiny and cramped issue. You’re too tall for such a small apartment. You’re lucky to have a separate living room and kitchen!”

“I couldn’t have a living room cum kitchenette, I drew the line at that, but it was very cheap and I can save a lot of my wages for my mate by living there.”

“Just never take your submissive there. Can’t even have decent, limb thrashing sex.” Sixten grumbled.

The three of them made their way out of the building they’d been called to for the meeting, collecting their shoes and socks on the way, taking a few moments to pull them back on, and then, with Sixten touching both of their elbows, the three of them Apparated to Sixten’s home. Nasta had been there before, but Sixten just enjoyed touching him and Max just needed some guidance as to where to go.

The place was tidy, but it wasn’t clinically clean as Sixten grabbed an abandoned shirt that had been strewn over the back of his settee and took an empty glass to the kitchen. It was homey, lived in and Max relaxed his huge shoulders. It was smaller than his own home, but Sixten had owned every inch of space and made it his own, right down to the green leafy potted plant in the corner of the room that had a tiny little dragon statuette half hidden in the pot that made Max smile.
Nasta sat on the settee as if he was home himself, but then he and Sixten were best friends and they were intimate with one another. Max wasn’t surprised that Nasta was as comfortable here as he was in his own home.

“Right, we’ll have to eat our kills in the kitchen, I doubt even magic would get the blood out of this carpet and I like it. So in the kitchen. Now Max, take us to your favourite hunting ground.” Sixten said, holding his hand out.

“Clothes off first, Sixten.” Nasta instructed, in the process of folding up his shirt.

“If you insist, my love.” Sixten purred as he started stripping off. “You’re so commanding when ordering me to strip, I love it.”

Max smiled at them both, at the easy way they interacted with each other. Going hunting was just what he needed. He could unleash some of the pent up stress and rage that he was feeling at Harry going missing and just kill something that could actually fight back. He really needed to kill something and if he got a meal out of it too, all the better. His Dracken might calm down more if they got to sink their fangs into warm, raw meat that was hot, bloody and soft.

He took off his own shirt and jeans, leaving his boxers in place before he held his hands out to either side of himself. He felt two hands that were smaller than his own, but still large when compared to average standards, slip into his own. He closed his eyes and he Apparated to his favourite hunting grounds, deep in the remote Canadian mountains, guiding Nasta and Sixten with him.

They landed in a densely packed forest filled with the scent of pine and fir trees. It was still light outside, but it was a strange light where everything could be seen, but the sky was a dark purple-blue.

“Where are we?” Sixten asked, looking around in awe.

“North west British Columbia, in Canada.” Max replied.

“It’s gone one in the morning.” Nasta replied with a frown at the light, knowing from his numerous travels exactly which time zone they were in and what time it would be. Of course he did.

“Welcome to the land of the midnight sun. Summer in Canada means that the sun doesn’t properly set.”
“It’s not a true midnight sun territory.” Nasta told him. “There are only five places in the world that experience a midnight sun. This would be a white night territory, where the sun isn’t visible, but there is still enough natural light to see.”

“You are such a fucking nerd.” Sixten ribbed.

Nasta shoved him hard into a tree and Sixten growled playfully, his wings snapping out. Max always smiled at Sixten’s, very pastel coloured, wings.

They were a muted lilac colour, something that a paint shop would have called sugared lilac or some such, with cyan blue and seafoam green scales. All bright, but pastel pale. It looked oddly good, but they did not fit that tight, muscled body.

Max brought out his own twenty-eight foot wings and tucked them in slightly to avoid breaking his delicate wing bones on the trees. His scales were a beautiful dark blue on paler, brighter blue, but with his Father’s black mixed in to break up the monotony.

“I love your wings.” Sixten sighed, touching him in such an intimate place and making him shiver with an edge of lust.

“I like yours.” Max grinned.

Sixten snorted. “I look like a cartoon sweetshop.” He complained.


Nasta’s wings were like giant, hulking shadows studded with pieces of yellow gold. He stretched them out to their full twenty-four foot length before folding them up slightly as Max had done.

“I can smell bears!” Max said, almost vibrating with the urge to run, to hunt, to feed.

“I can smell a feast!” Sixten added with a grin, his four fangs on clear display.

“There’s so much variety to choose from.” Nasta said with his own grin. “I can see why you like this area, Max. I might have to start hunting here permanently.”
“Bears.” He said excitedly.

“Right lads.” Sixten addressed them. “We have two or so hours, let’s hunt and then get back. I want a full stomach and some of that Firewhiskey I have at home, so don’t take all night to get a bear, Max.”

He and Nasta nodded in understanding and then Sixten fled and Max gave chase before he consciously thought of it. He came back into himself easily enough, Sixten was no unmated submissive after all, but he took the time to enjoy the wind rushing through him from his speed and he allowed himself to enjoy the ‘chase’ and the clean, sharp smell of the twilit forest all around him.

He could detect several smaller prey animals close by. Marmots, lynxes, beavers, rabbits and even pine martens. He let them filter in and then pass him by. He knew what he wanted and nothing less than a bear would do. Not tonight. Not when he had so much aggression to work out. Not when he was spoiling for a proper, hair raising fight.

He only went after male bears, he would never hunt females because of the unnecessary loss of any cubs she might have had. He wanted food, not to be responsible for the death of one or more cubs to a slow, painful, not to mention distressing, starvation. He wasn’t needlessly cruel when he hunted for his food.

He was aware of Sixten locking onto a scent and veering off to his left. Max carried on heading deeper into the forest, his bare feet almost bouncing off of the scattered pine needles that carpeted the forest floor, but he kept a small part of his mind locked onto Sixten, scenting him getting further away before suddenly stopping and then came the heavy scent of blood. Animal blood. Sixten had found his meal and he was already gorging.

Max carried on, his hunger ramped up higher now that he’d smelt freshly spilt blood, hunting down his scented bear. He kept another part of himself on Nasta too, who was still pace for pace with him, hunting whatever appealed to him the most. They did have a lot of choice here to choose from, smaller prey if they weren’t too hungry, but also larger prey if they wanted to gorge. Bears, moose, wolves, wolverines and far, far off, he could even detect the scent of a cougar.

They ran through the pine needles and brushed past plants. There were masses and masses of wild flowers, each of them sending up a shower of pollen that stuck to their bare skin. They didn’t let it bother them, but it did cause a sneeze or two when the pollen got into their noses.

Max was the one to veer off of their, mostly straight, course first. He smelt a male bear that was closer than the one he’d originally been tracking and it was mouth-wateringly tempting to him. He immediately turned left, tucking his left wing right into his body to avoid a tree as he dodged around it and he tore after the scent of the bear that was getting stronger with every stride.

His mind immediately left Sixten and Nasta to their own devices as he put his entire focus on hunting the bear that smelt so delicious to him. From one moment to the next, he was crashing through trees and undergrowth and then he was in a small clearing, startling a full sized, well fed, male bear.

Max launched himself at it, knowing that the element of surprise wouldn’t last long. Despite surprising the bear, he still had a fight on his hands and he had to use every instinct and every ounce of his intelligence and strength to dodge the furious, enraged attacks as the bear roared at him.
Not willing to draw out the fight for too long, lest he make a mistake and get himself injured, or even killed, Max stuck his claws into the meaty bear before surging forward and sinking all four fangs deep into its throat, his other teeth just breaking through the skin when the bear slumped. Max ripped his head to the side and tore out the throat, killing the bear and allowing him to use his claws to skin it.

It took a surprising amount of time to skin the bear and he bundled the fur up and left it to one side before he took a few bites of his favourite meal.

Rustling had him picking his head up and he growled, pulling his top lip away from his teeth to warn away any scavengers. He inhaled deeply before relaxing, just as Nasta and Sixten walked into his clearing. Sixten’s face and front were bloody and his stomach was distended, like he was newly pregnant. He had killed and already eaten. Nasta was just as bloody, but he had his kill thrown over one shoulder.

“You ready to head back?” He asked, even as Sixten stared in awe at Max’s massive kill.

“You will not eat all that by yourself. I’ve never tried bear before.” Sixten said, licking his lips.

“I’m willing to share, but I want the bearskin. If you carry that for me, you can have some of my kill.” Max compromised as he stood.

Sixten nodded and sunk his hands into the bear fur and he shivered. “It’s so soft.” He said. “Do you put this on your bed?”

“Yeah. I give them to my Mum who uses them to make blankets for me. With every bear I kill, another pelt is added and the blanket grows.”

“He could make a carpet with it now.” Nasta chuckled, having seen Max’s bearskin blanket before.

“I only bring it out in the winter. It’s cold being in bed by myself.”

“I could keep you warm.” Sixten offered immediately.

Max just shook his head and laughed. He hefted the bear carcass up onto his one broad shoulder, straining under the weight of it and he locked his knees to keep them from buckling to the ground. He quickly accepted Sixten’s hand, who was holding Nasta’s hand as well. A moment later they had Apparated and they found themselves back in Sixten’s kitchen.
Max immediately off loaded his kill onto the kitchen floor with a wet, bloody splat and he stretched out his body with a drawn out groan.

“Heavy?” Sixten grinned as he held out the bear skin.

“Of course it’s heavy, that’s nine feet and three hundred and fifty kilos of bear meat.” Max groaned.

“I’ve never had bear, either.” Nasta grinned.

“Help yourselves.” Max offered as he sat on the tile floor and brought his mouth to the meat, his two friends doing the same.

“Oh wow, I can see why you like bear.” Sixten moaned as he immediately copied Max and took his mouth to the meat instead of the other way around. “It’s delicious.”

“Filling too. One kill could keep all of us easily fed.” Nasta added.

Max nodded. “I always have left overs, which is why I hardly ever hunt bear just for myself. It’s just a waste unless I want a weekend binge. My Dracken doesn’t like the taste of magic so I can’t preserve it very well.”

“I don’t think any Dracken likes the taste of magic on their food.” Nasta said before taking another bite of meat.

They remained mostly quiet after that, eating and gorging on their food, Nasta sharing his kill too and Sixten gave up first, having already eaten, and he collapsed backwards and just lay on the cool tile of his own kitchen floor. He groaned pathetically and rubbed his belly. He definitely looked pregnant now.

He and Nasta finished eating and they banished the remains, laying on the floor with a sleepy Sixten and recovering from the binge.

“I needed that more than I was willing to admit.” Max moaned happily.
“Glad we could be of assistance.”

Max just lay down and he didn’t allow himself to think. He curled up in a puppy pile with his two friends, his wings cushioning him and Nasta, who snuggled on his other side, and he just absorbed their comfort and presence.

The Elders were doing all they could for Harry, he and his family were doing all they could for Harry and they had the legendary Albus Dumbledore, who was something of a grandfather figure to Harry as he understood it, helping them to look for him. They would find him, but he couldn’t continue to torture himself in the meantime. He needed to be strong now so that when they did find Harry, and they would regardless of how long it took them, he would be able to be of some use to the young sixteen year old. He sent Harry mental support and pleaded with him to stay strong, to keep fighting and to not give up hope. They would find him, it was only a matter of time.

Harry didn’t know how long he’d been at the Perrot’s Manor, but it had been weeks. He’d already been here too long and every additional day of his stay was one too many. It was another day closer to the heat period that was clawing its way forward and would tie him to Jefferus Perrot forever.

He was locked back in his bare room with just the bed that had the bottom of the covers charmed stuck. He was listless, unmoving on the bed in another stupid tunic that was identical to the one he’d been stripped of and nothing else. He’d forced himself to pull the duvet over himself, but other than that, moving was agony.

Jefferus had taken to hitting and kicking him for sport and it reminded him of the Dursleys, only much, much worse. The petulant, vile man was angry with him because his breeding cycle was taking far too long. He’d lost patience after the first five days when Harry had still not shown any aversion to meat whatsoever.

He’d been beaten today, viciously, and he found it difficult to move. He’d been dumped on the bed, where Jefferus had gotten the look on his face that Harry had come to hate and fear in equal measure. He’d been raped as he was bleeding and in pain from the beating, causing even more pain and humiliation, before he’d been left to curl up and shake through the pain that kept coursing through his body. Sex with Jefferus still felt like his stomach and guts were being repeatedly stabbed with a large, hot, sharp blade. He hadn’t gotten used to it at all, despite how often he had to endure it.

He’d just about managed to pull the duvet over himself to cover his body so that he wasn’t on show for anyone to see as they walked into the room, but that was all that he could manage. He felt utterly broken.

He still lashed out, he still fought, but it was getting harder. With the only food that he was getting a mere piece of toast or some fruit at lunchtime every day paired with being raped and beaten almost daily, he was at his limit. He wanted to just give in now and let himself die. It had to be better than enduring more of this treatment.

He’d tried defiance and it hadn’t worked. He’d tried fighting and it hadn’t worked. He’d tried to escape, he’d even made it to the grounds outside after he’d almost severed the neck of the last
remaining grunt, but as soon as he’d ripped out his wings and gone to fly off, an invisible chain had anchored him to the ground by his one ankle, which had almost dislocated from the force of the tether ward pulling him back.

He’d gotten back up to his feet and he’d forced himself to run on his injured ankle. He’d run for what seemed to be hours in his distress, but had probably only been several minutes before he’d reached the perimeter wall. He’d tried to climb over it, only for the same tether ward to pin him back to the ground. Not one to give up so easily, he’d run around the outside edge, looking for a gap or something. He’d found a metal gate and he’d been relieved to find that it was just big enough for him to squeeze through, only for it to give him a massive electric shock that had crumpled him to the gravel pathway when he’d touched them, his fingers and toes tingling unpleasantly. In tears and desperate to be free, he’d screamed his rage and desperation, unleashing it in a massive distress call that coupled together with the biggest surge of accidental magic that he’d ever released.

His hope had picked up, he’d gotten himself to his feet as quickly as he could, and even then he was still as wobbly as a newborn foal, but he’d tried the gate again, only to be given a second, more powerful shock that threw him back a couple of feet. Unwilling to give up when freedom was so very close, he’d struggled to his feet and tried to fly into the open air, only for the tether to yank him back to the grass. He’d failed.

A mocking laugh that he knew all too well had had him sobbing at his failure as Jefferus had sauntered over to him. He had still been huddled in a pile on the grass, and Jefferus had delighted in taunting him with freedom, but of course the Perrot’s hadn’t been worried when he’d run off, heading right outside, because they had known that he couldn’t actually escape. But they’d been sadistic enough to give him the tiniest shred of hope that he might be able to get away from them, only to watch it ripped from his very soul as the realisation sunk in that he couldn’t escape.

Harry felt a chill go through him as he thought back to his failed escape. Jefferus hadn’t been pleased with him once he’d managed to stop taunting him, he became so angry with him for trying to get away from him and Harry had been severely punished. He felt sick as his mind played over the pain and the humiliation that had accompanied his punishment and he forced himself into a tighter ball under the duvet.

He tried to hold on, he tried to be strong and patient, but he wasn’t sure how much more of this appalling treatment he could stand. He was in pain, externally as well as internally, and he was constantly on edge. He didn’t feel safe, he didn’t even feel like a person any more, he was a prisoner and he wanted…needed to be rescued. For once in his life he needed someone else to come and help him, to rescue him, but they weren’t coming.

Jefferus had told him numerous times that his distress calls couldn’t be pinpointed to any one location, he’d been told that no one would suspect the Perrot family, who were all well known, well respected Dracken nobility in this country. Jefferus had even told him that as soon as Harry was under his control, then he’d be introduced to his friends and family as his mate. That he would have no choice but to follow Jefferus’ orders that he sadistically told him would include forcing him to act like a very willing submissive mate.

Harry sobbed and he shifted just enough so that he could hug his pillow. Why had he ever gone to that stupid meeting in May? Why had he allowed himself to be bullied into going by the very same Elder who had orchestrated his abduction and had sold him to these vile, cruel, inhumane monsters? He should have stuck to his guns and stood by his own decision. He hadn’t wanted to go, so he shouldn’t have gone.

But of course, hindsight was a terrible curse. It was all well and good for him to chastise himself for
not sticking by his original decision, he knew now what happened in the end. He hadn’t known what was going to happen at the time and he had been enjoying himself with Max. His heart ached when he thought of Max, the very tall, very handsome man who made his stomach flip and caused a blush to rise on his cheeks. He’d really liked Max and now that he’d been used and broken, Max wasn’t going to want to look at him again. No one was going to look at him twice now. The tentative future that he had envisioned for himself had been ruined. His life had been ruined.

He sobbed into the pillow and he eventually cried himself into a stressed, exhausted sleep. He hadn’t been sleeping much lately, he just couldn’t sleep properly, not under this roof, not with the knowledge that the people who were hurting and abusing him were sleeping under the same roof. It made him feel sick to think of it and it kept him awake, worried that they would come for him in the night or that he wouldn’t wake up quickly enough in the morning and he’d be caught vulnerable and unguarded.

He slept in short little cat naps, but he never felt rested afterwards. He always woke up in a panic, wondering if anything had been done to him in his sleep, still in pain from the previous day’s horror. He just couldn’t take much more, he was being beaten down bit by bit and it was only a matter of time now before he was completely broken. It was only inevitable at this point.

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When Harry started feeling queasy around meat, he knew that his time was running out rapidly. Jefferus and his horrible parents were over the moon, but Harry could have vomited and not just from the smell of the raw meat being waved under his nose either.

“It’s taken us five weeks to get to this point. If we keep to this very neat, orderly schedule then we can reasonably estimate that he’s on a two month breeding cycle or there about.” Carterum said, completely ignoring Harry, as if he wasn’t even worth his attention. Nothing but an animal for him to breed.

“We need to be prepared.” Penelope Perrot said primly. “I think that two weeks from now you should have Braven here permanently, just in case, Jeff.”

Jefferus nodded as he stroked Harry’s back, as if he were a cat or a dog that had pleased him in some way.

“I thought that maybe the idiot had gotten the potion wrong, that it wasn’t working. Knowing now that it is working, it’s such a relief.”

Harry flinched and lashed out when he felt something that was slightly wet touch his cheek with a gentle pressure. It took him a moment to realise that Jefferus had actually kissed him and he screamed
behind the stupid fucking ball in his mouth and thrashed. Jefferus had never tried to kiss him before and that tender, loving gesture was not something that Harry ever wanted to associate with Jefferus Perrot. It was a line. A line he did not want crossed and he’d be fucking damned if he ever willingly crossed it himself or allowed that line to be crossed.

“What is wrong with him now?” Carter sighed, looking up at the ruckus.

“He’s feisty is all. He’ll give me very strong sons.” Jeff said happily.

Harry screamed harder behind the red, rubber ball in his mouth and gnawed on it again, sinking all four fangs deeply into it, imagining that it was the neck of any one of the three people around him.

“Be careful, darling. He’s killed both of the mindless goons that we hired to protect you and no one else wants the job after word spread in those lower, sordid circles about what happened to them.”

“It won’t be for much longer.” Jefferus said happily, grinning like a spoilt child on Christmas Day. “Three weeks or so. I can live with that now that I have a timeline. I can wait that long.”

“He’ll make you very happy.” Penny told her son. “I can’t wait to have some beautiful grandsons to spoil.”

“He’ll give you more than a few.” Jefferus chuckled deeply and Harry heaved into his mouth behind his ball.

“Get that ball out, quick.” Carter said urgently, looking up immediately at the noise. “He could suffocate.”

Jefferus slipped the straps from behind his head after first tapping them with his wand and the ball was popped out of his mouth, followed by a stream of bile. A gentle hand rubbed his back and that made Harry feel worse. He didn’t want Jefferus to treat him gently, it was too at odds with the violent behaviour that had been shown to him over the previous five weeks and all it did was make Harry feel worse.

“I believe that he needs more food. At least more fluids.” Carter said in distaste as he shook his newspaper out and held it up so that he couldn’t see Harry vomiting onto his wooden floor.
“Is that all you need?” Jefferus asked him. “It’s just that you never behave!” He complained. “If you sat still long enough and shut up long enough to eat and drink, you’d get more! But you just don’t and we can’t reward bad behaviour. It won’t be much longer now, three weeks and you’ll be forced to follow my orders when we’re finally mated together. You won’t need the ropes or the ball gag then.”

Harry finished coughing and he reached out for Jefferus’ glass of water with his tied wrists. It was snatched away from him and Harry was going to kick up a fuss, before it was offered to him.

“The last thing I want is you to spill this over my lap.” Jefferus grunted, but Harry could see the ulterior motive as clear as day as he allowed Jeff to tip the glass into his mouth for him to drink.

It was a very submissive gesture, him having to drink from a glass offered and held for him by someone else. A threat too as Jefferus controlled how much he could have to drink, as he demonstrated by telling him that he’d had enough and took the glass away from him.

Harry didn’t like it. He hated everything about this situation, about this place, about these loathsome people. He hated all of it and if he truly was running out of time, then there was nothing else for it. If he couldn’t escape and he wasn’t getting rescued, then there was only one other option left to him, his last resort. He needed to try and find a way to take his own life.

It was the only option left to him now. He’d tried to escape and found it impossible, he’d tried distress calling and it didn’t work, he had no way to purposefully access his magic and these people were entirely without compassion or kindness. He’d tried to be patient, to wait for rescue, but he was running out of time now, he couldn’t wait much longer as he refused to be mated to this vile, cruel man. He would die first. He’d ensure it.

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Harry woke up slowly, the now familiar ropes that were tied tightly around his arms and wrists dug in and the pins and needles through his left arm stabbed into him as soon as he woke up, yet he couldn’t move to relieve the awful sensation.

He’d been beaten several times every day for the last week, Jefferus’ rage was unquenchable and though he was shouting at and ordering his parents around like his personal servants, he was taking the majority of his rage and frustrations out on Harry.

Harry had tried to kill himself the week before, after he’d started wanting to eat only fruits and vegetables for every meal. Apparently he did have a two month cycle and wanting only fruits and vegetables was the sign that he was in the last stage of his approaching heat, his body was trying to stock up on foods that would give him a serious vitamin boost over the course of his heat cycle for as long as possible in order to conceive a healthy child. He had run out of time and with no hint of rescue, he’d turned his own venomous claws onto himself.
What he hadn’t known, however, was that he was protected from his own venom. It had exactly the
same effect on him as his own saliva did. Nothing. So where the gashes and tears in his own sides
had needed healing, he hadn’t died and his own venom hadn’t even affected him after it had killed
the first grunt with only a mere scratch.

Jefferus had taken delight in gloating to him over his own stupidity after Harry had only just woken
up, woozy and confused, having failed to actually kill himself. Harry had been so groggy, barely
able to understand where he was or who he was even and the first thing he’d seen was Jefferus
gloating about him being immune to his own venom. Though since his initial gloating and taunts
over his failure Jeff had been very angry in his offence that Harry actually thought that death was a
better prospect than being mated to him. Harry had to wonder why he was so very surprised and
offended that Harry preferred death over being mated to him when he brutally raped and viciously
beat him whenever the fancy took him. When he humiliated him, degraded him, starved him and
kept him tied up and barely dressed. There was no way that any sane person wouldn’t understand
why he wanted death more than a life of miserable slavery.

Jefferus’ friend, Braven, had moved in at the start of the week, just the day after Harry had tried to
commit suicide. When Harry had woken up, having been healed up from his physical wounds,
Braven had been there with Jefferus. Harry hated them both. He hated it worse that they were both
talking and preparing for his heat period. He’d known that something was going on, but it was only
within the last few days that he’d found out that in order to get him pregnant, it was going to take
two dominant Drackens to rape him on his heat period. That was why Braven was here. He was
going to rape him too and the horror of it made Harry feel cold, even tucked up under the duvet.

He was being watched even more than he had been before he had committed suicide. Knowing that
his venom wouldn’t harm himself, he had been intent on shredding up his insides, no matter how
painful, as nothing was going to be as painful as becoming Jefferus’ mated slave and bringing an
innocent child into the world to suffer growing up with this hideous family, but his arms were always
tied together now, his ankles were bound together with what seemed to be rubber handcuffs that
were completely seamless. He hated magic sometimes. Or rather he hated the people who used
magic in such a heinous way.

He was just lying here, waiting. Waiting for the day that he went onto his first ever heat period.
Waiting for the day that Jefferus finally got his wish of gaining a male submissive mate.

There was nothing more that he could do. He was trussed up like a pig waiting to be slaughtered.
He’d tried everything, even suicide to get out of this situation, but he had failed and his failure hung
heavy on him. It clouded his mind, along with the betrayal and shame he felt at having his body used
in such a way, out of his control, but as Jeff pointed out every time, his body still reacted. If he really,
truly didn’t like it, then he wouldn’t react in such a way and he felt utterly betrayed by his own body,
because he couldn’t understand why he wanted such a painful, humiliating intrusion into his body.
He didn’t like it, but his body did and it reacted and it made him feel colder. He shivered violently.

He felt out of control. Nothing since he’d been brought here had been in his control and he felt like
he was abandoned, lost to fend for himself when he couldn’t. Everything was out of his control and
he hated it. The hot tears started to fall, cutting over the bridge of his nose and down to be absorbed
by his pillow. How had his life come to this? This living, waking hell of rape and pain and abuse. He
just wanted to be back at Hogwarts. The only place that he had ever felt truly safe.

The day continued on in his new routine for this week. He was taken from his own room to be tied
up in Jefferus’ bedroom, where the disgusting, cruel man, along with his equally vile friend, would
feed him fresh fruits from their own hands and then give him a few sips of water. He was then
ignored as the two men talked about this and that and Harry tuned them out as he tried desperately to
free his hands. Even now he still couldn’t sit still and allow these things to happen to him. On some level he knew that it was fruitless, that it wouldn’t work, but he did it anyway. He might have been beaten, but he wasn’t broken just yet. Or at least not entirely broken just yet.

“He’s doing it again, Jeff.” Braven ratted him out.

Harry looked up as he heard the voice and found Braven and Jefferus looking at him. Jeff clenched his jaw and strode over to him and he just punched Harry in the side of the head, with absolutely no hesitancy or any preamble.

Harry’s head exploded with immediate pain and when he opened his eyes he was on his side, having been thrown over with the force of the punch. Jefferus was checking the ropes that tied his arms together and he grunted.

“They’re fine. I doubt he could get these loose.” He told Braven.

He touched Harry’s bare and exposed bum and Harry flinched at the touch. He hated being touched by these people and being touched in such an intimate place in an intimate way made him shiver. He was cold again and he curled up as much as he could, crossing his ankles and pulling his legs up tight behind him to press his heels against his bum to hide himself. It was painful to hold himself in such a way, to stretch himself into such a tense position, but he didn’t care. Holding himself like this was better than the alternative.

Braven and Jefferus both laughed at him for his show of ‘chastity’ when the both of them had seen and touched more of him, but he still didn’t care. So much was out of his control that if he could just do small things like this, it helped to centre and settle him a little.

As it turned out it didn’t actually matter. From one moment to the next, everything changed. One moment he was huddled up in a tight ball, his legs pulled up behind him and his arms tied tightly together, also behind him. The next, he felt strange. A hot, hot heat flared in his belly and all of his muscles loosened and he was making a soft sound as he rolled over the bed cover, trying to get his arms free.

“Do you smell that?” Braven asked Jefferus, inhaling deeply before looking over to Harry.

“Yeah, he’s gone into heat.” Jefferus replied excitedly as he stood up, his wings immediately surging out, his skin glittering with his scales.

Braven joined him and they both stripped themselves naked, taking a moment to size each other up before turning to Harry, who was screaming with need behind his ball gag.
He saw himself as bonded, as pre-mated, and he was burning. He didn’t understand why his bonded wasn’t immediately jumping him, but of course, Jefferus wasn’t bonded to him back and Braven certainly wasn’t, so neither of them felt the overwhelming need to claim him. They could smell his pheromones, could see how he was acting and it flooded them with lust, which caused them to react. It was so different from what a heat period should have been, because it was a forced heat and not a natural one.

Harry whined and let out a shrill call to his mate to hurry up and his mate chuckled deeply. As did someone else and Harry turned to him, trilling in confusion at the unknown male there before asking his mate wordlessly, with several trills, to get rid of the other presence.

“It’s alright. He’ll only be here for this first time.” His mate spoke to him.

He frowned, not understanding the jumble of noise his mate murmured to him. He trilled again.

“Just ignore him. He’s gone feral.” Jeff told Braven as he severed the ropes around Harry’s arms and as soon as his hands were free, Harry stripped himself out of his tunic. His small hands roved all over his body, from his thin chest with the pale pink, hard nipples, down over the beautiful curve of his slim belly and down to his small thighs and his hard cock nestled between them.

“He’s fucking gorgeous, Jeff.” Braven moaned as he all but drank in the sight of Harry squirming on the bed, touching himself with his small hands.

“He’s so much more agreeable like this too.” Jeff said breathlessly as he touched the milk pale skin and allowed his fingertips to feel how soft Harry was, hairless and covered daily in an expensive lotion to make him so soft and to smell exactly how Jeff wanted him to.

“He smells so warm.” Braven groaned.

“It’s the heat pheromones.” Jeff explained, just before Harry trilled again, trying to get what he desperately needed. “I love him like this. I almost hope he doesn’t catch on this heat period, just so he’ll have another one in two months.”

“If I don’t have sex with him…” Braven trailed off. He was incredibly unhappy with such an option, but he hid it well.

“No. The two months leading up to his next heat will be hell if the previous two months are anything to go by.” Jefferus sighed regretfully. “He’s too dangerous to be out from under my complete
control. I need him to have my child first and I just hope that he recovers soon and he’ll have another heat period soon after he’s given birth.”

“Besides, just because he’s pregnant doesn’t mean you can’t still have sex with him. My Dad said so.”

“Mine said the same.” Jeff grinned. “Though my Dracken doesn’t like the thought of taking him while pregnant, it’s not as if we see him as a real mate.”

Harry trilled angrily and squirmed on the bed, drawing the attention of the two men to him, flushed a dark pink and rapidly turning red.

“I think you need to sort him out first before he starts harming us to get our attention. I don’t want to be clawed to ribbons, only bonded mates will share his immunity to his venom.”

Jeff laughed. “No, I suppose not.”

He turned his attention to his ‘mate’ and touched his soft skin again. He could see how frustrated and pained Harry was getting and he took a moment to enjoy it. Listening to his whines and trills, his mate all but begging for his attention, and watching the flush creep over his skin.

He moved himself over Harry and pushed into him with absolutely no hesitancy. It felt good to have Harry reacting normally for once instead of trying to pretend like he didn’t like or want the sex.

He knew that this heat period was going to be difficult. His Dracken didn’t see himself as mated, only Harry thought they were mated together because of the potion given to him, so though Harry was on heat, he wasn’t himself and he wouldn’t be able to keep up with Harry, as was proven only a few hours later when both he and Braven were exhausted and drained dry, yet Harry was still writhing around and trilling at them for attention.

“Fuck off.” Braven groaned as he, very slowly, rolled over and curled himself up in pain as all of his muscles screamed at him.

Harry trilled like an angry bird as he rolled himself over and tried to straddle his mate, only to be pushed off. He didn’t understand, this wasn’t how things should be and he felt awful. He needed the pain to be taken away, the heat of his body was only growing and he felt like he was going to die if his mate didn’t touch him.

He trilled again and tried the other man. He wasn’t a mate, but his mate hadn’t protested him being there, so perhaps it was alright for him to try and alleviate his pain with him too.
“Merlin, I didn’t know it would be like this.” Braven groaned. Harry trilled at him, not understanding the jumble of noise.

Braven rolled Harry over onto his back, pinned him down and pushed into him, his thighs burning with every small thrust, but he pushed on, past the pain he was feeling, aware that this was the only time that he’d ever be allowed to touch Jefferus’ mate and he forced himself to take advantage of it, of Harry.

He was under a temporary sterilisation charm that would prevent him from impregnating Harry, but that was more than fair. He didn’t want a baby with Harry, he just wanted to fuck the gorgeous boy and he was getting his wish. But he’d be damned if this heat wasn’t taking it out of him. His balls were aching and not from too much sexual tension with no real relief either. He’d had no clue before this that too much sex in such a short period of time caused quite so much pain.

He sighed happily as those slim, soft legs wrapped around his hips and Harry did all of the work. He was too tired to do much of anything and he felt raw, like every piece of skin had been rubbed off and any stimulation at all was agony.

He orgasmed and he fell of off Harry, not caring that Harry hadn’t finished himself. He just didn’t care for the boy past fucking him, and even that was rapidly losing its appeal.

“I can’t do this anymore, Jeff.” He moaned. “It hasn’t been four hours yet and I’ve had enough. We have to do this for ten days!”

“Fuck that.” Jeff propped himself up and groped for his wand. With a few spells Harry was gagged and tied to the headboard. “I need some sleep.”

Braven laughed and poked at Harry’s cock with a finger. “That looks painful.”

“I don’t care. I need some fucking rest.” Jeff said as he yanked a pillow toward him and settled down for a decent sleep.

Braven did the same on the opposite side of Harry. Harry was tied too tightly to disturb them, though he screamed and cried silently behind the gag. He tried to thrash as the heat took him over, burning him, searing him. He was in agony and there was no relief. He felt like he would burst into flame and his mate had abandoned him.

He screamed and tried to trill, but he couldn’t make a sound behind the gag and he cried as he was forced to remain still and silent, his agony growing. He didn’t understand why his heat period was so painful. He didn’t understand why his mate wasn’t responding how he was supposed to. It wasn’t right and he didn’t like it. He tried to trill again, but he got no response.
The next nine days carried on in this fashion until Harry, who was absolutely exhausted, his nerves raw from his utter agony of going through such a farce of a heat period, collapsed down very suddenly. He fell deeply asleep and he stayed asleep for four further days, undisturbed and resting after his ten days of excruciating suffering. When he woke up, he wouldn’t remember much of his heat period, just the sensation of burning up inside and a deep rooted feeling of pain and almost fear that had him dreading his next heat period for reasons that he didn’t fully understand.

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The agonising wait for his pregnancy to be confirmed or not was offset by Jefferus’ awful mood after experiencing Harry’s heat.

“It’s nothing like it should be!” He complained for the hundredth time.

He still hadn’t gotten over the exhaustion of the heat period a week after it had happened and Harry, who had been near enough comatose for four days afterward, was almost fully recovered physically. Not mentally though, he would never be able to put something so huge behind him.

He felt…strange. Not like himself. For the first time, he didn’t feel like running away. He knew that he’d wanted to, before, but now he didn’t.

He was changing, slowly. His mind set was changing. He was mated now and there was nothing more to it. He’d failed and now he belonged to Jefferus like a slave.

“Jeff!” Penny chastised, one of only a handful of times that she had reprimanded him since Harry had been there, as Jeff went to lash out at Harry. “We need him to be pregnant, darling.” She stressed.

Jefferus growled and started walking in tight circles again, pacing, trying to work out the tension he usually would have dealt with by beating Harry to a whimpering pulp.

“You had better be pregnant.” Jefferus threatened. “If you’re not, I’m going to have to punish you.”

Harry made a soft, fearful noise and he trilled lightly to reassure his mate that things would be okay.

“Stop making that awful noise!” He ordered harshly.
Harry had no choice but to bite his lip and do as he’d been ordered to. He didn’t understand why things were so wrong between him and his mate. He wanted physical reassurance, but he didn’t know how his mate would react to him approaching him at the moment and he didn’t like it. He should be able to go to his mate and receive comfort and reassurance without having to even ask for it. He didn’t understand why it was so wrong.

“When is that Healer getting here?” Jefferus snarled as he paced tighter.

“When, Jefferus.” Carter replied soothingly from behind his newspaper.

Jefferus growled harshly and after several more tight circuits he stared at Harry again.

“Sit down.” He barked.

Harry immediately sat on the settee and he stared at the carpet between his feet. He didn’t understand why everything was so very wrong. He’d never been mated before, but instinctually he knew that he should feel safe. Not this disembodied sense of panic and fear…as if a part of himself was worried and scared for reasons that he just didn’t understand.

The longer he was awake, however, the clearer his memories became. He was confused when he realised that he hadn’t wanted to be here, that he’d been trying to get away because he’d been abducted. His thoughts and memories were at complete odds with his feelings and it was very confusing, dazing, as he tried to figure out what had happened and why he thought that he wanted to run away, compared to the feelings of wanting to stay.

He didn’t like being ordered around, not at all, but his mate was not in the best of moods, he could scent that from his pheromones, without the need for the visual of watching his mate pace in tight circuits and hearing him growl and snarl. He didn’t like his mate being this upset and angry. He hoped that he was pregnant, because he had a feeling that it was imperative to his mate’s happiness that he was pregnant, yet even that simple desire was overshot with a ghostly feeling of being sick and almost crazed with anger and fear at being pregnant. He hadn’t wanted a baby and he couldn’t understand why. He was a submissive Dracken, of course he wanted a baby. In his head popped up a giant of a man with a gorgeous smile and laughing blue eyes. He blinked and the memory was gone. He’d wanted a baby with that man, a man who wasn’t his mate.

Harry pressed his hands to his face and pressed hard. Was that why his mate was angry? Because he’d wanted a baby with a dominant who wasn’t his mate? No, that didn’t make any sense. He was mated, he wouldn’t have a baby with someone else…but then he was only just mated. Had he chosen the other man over his mate? But then why was he mated to Jefferus and not to the other man?

His head hurt and the harder he tried to force himself to understand, the worse his headache got. He couldn’t even remember the name of the other dominant, had it started with an M or an N? He couldn’t remember, his brain felt scrambled. He made a soft sound of confusion, seeking some reassurance, and all he got was a filthy look for it. He bit his lip and looked back at the carpet. He
didn’t understand what was happening or what was going on. Where was Elder Midate? He was too afraid to open his mouth to ask, his mate was in a foul mood and he had actually gone to strike him. How could his mate want to hit him? He didn’t understand.

The fireplace turned green and a stern looking man stepped out, brushing off his lime green robes.

“Carterum, this is certainly a surprise. Now what seems to be the matter?” The man greeted firmly, getting straight to the point of why he was there, with no preamble or small talk.

“Frand, always a pleasure. Our Jefferus has finally mated to this wonderful young man by here. This is Erickian and we believe that he might be pregnant.”

Harry looked up with a frown and went to open his mouth, but his mate sat next to him suddenly and pinched the skin at his ribs tightly and he knew that he had to stay silent for his mate.

“Do you prefer Eric?” The Healer, Frand, asked him, trying to establish a personal connection.

“Kian.” Harry answered, displaying a small act of defiance when he saw Carter open his mouth to agree.

If they were going to change his name, he would be known as something that he actually marginally liked, though he had no idea what was wrong with the name Harry. A thought trickled into his head that he couldn’t be known as Harry to those outside of this family because people would be looking for him. He swallowed, there was that feeling again, of fear and panic. He had a moment of thinking that he should talk to the Healer, that he should tell him that he wasn’t here of his own free will and that his name was Harry James Potter and that he’d been abducted. But then his mate put an arm around him and he shoved those thoughts away in favour of the happiness that went through him at such a small act of loving kindness. He was here with his mate, that’s all that mattered as he turned his head and nuzzled into his mate’s neck.

“Kian.” The Healer nodded. “Well, let’s check to see if you’re pregnant, Kian. Was this your first heat?”

“Yes.” Harry answered promptly, again before anyone else could do so for him, and he could almost see the three others in the room panicking. He didn’t understand.

“Alright, let me check you over.” The Healer said as he got down onto his knees in front of him.
Harry sat there, feeling a strange sense of wanting to be pregnant and fervently hoping that he wasn’t. It made his head spin and he didn’t understand why he was so conflicted over something that should have been a joyous occasion. He felt like he wanted to be anywhere else but here, but at the same time, his mate was here and he wanted to be with his mate.

“Well, Kian let me be the first to congratulate you. You are pregnant. Thirteen days to be precise.”

Harry was consumed by overwhelming joy and utter panic and his head span so fast that he thought he was actually going to be sick.

“Oh that’s wonderful news.” Penelope simpered.

“Thank you very much, Frand.” Carter said with a wide smile, playing the part of a doting grandfather to be, but his eyes were still a bit too wide, a bit too panicked.

“Can you tell if the baby is a boy?” Jefferus asked.

“No at this young a gestation, no.” The Healer answered, getting back to his feet. “If you’d like, I could oversee Kian’s pregnancy and as soon as I am able, you’ll know the gender.”

Jefferus nodded, but he was back to being moody and surly. It put Harry on edge. Everything since he’d woken up after his heat had put him on edge and he didn’t understand why it was this way. It shouldn’t be. He was pregnant! He should be happy, celebrating his thirteen day old foetus, but he was just conflicted over it.

Carter said goodbye to Frand, shaking his hand happily, and then, as soon as the Healer had cleared the fireplace, he rounded on Harry.

“You could have ruined everything, you stupid boy!” Carter spat and suddenly Harry was alone and afraid as his mate left his side and stood up, rounding on him too.

“You’re supposed to be called Eric! It’s a more prestigious name than fucking Kian. Who the hell is named Kian?!” Jeff demanded.
“My name is Harry!” He complained.

“Not any more it’s not! If you ever mention that name to anyone I’ll rip out your fucking tongue!”

Harry flinched and he hunched in on himself. So this was why he was having those feelings of fear and panic. He had a right to be scared, even if Jefferus was his mate, he was afraid of him and for a good reason.

“All is not lost.” Carter sighed, calming down. “I don’t think Frand suspected anything. We just have to keep his interactions with Harry to a minimum. I think we can just focus on the positive now. Our plans have paid off. Jeff, you have the mate that you’ve always wanted and now he’s pregnant. Penny, we need to sort out that nursery soon, so that it is ready for the birth.”

“I’m so excited I’m almost giddy.” Penelope giggled. “We’re going to have a grandchild from our little Jefferus.” She sniffled then. “How did you get to be old enough to be mated with your own child on the way?”

Jeff just rolled his eyes and sent his mother a disgusted sneer before he turned, grabbed Harry’s arm and yanked him to his feet.

“Remember, Jeff. Gentle.” Carter encouraged. “If he loses this baby, we’ll be back to square one.”

Jefferus relaxed his grip a little, but he still pulled Harry across the room.

“I know, Father. He needs to be treated like glass until after he has the baby.” Jeff sighed as if even that was going to be a struggle and Harry flinched. What did that mean for when he gave birth? He didn’t know but a memory of being beaten to a pulp by his mate had him almost quaking in fear. Why was everything so wrong?

“I’m very happy that you’re pregnant from our very first try.” Jefferus told him as he led Harry through his sitting room and into his bedroom. “But you’d better have a boy. I will not suffer the indignity of having a girl.” He spat out the last as if it were a curse word and Harry bit his lip, because he wouldn’t mind either way if he had a boy or a girl, as long as his little newborn was healthy.

He saw no indignity or problem with having a baby girl at all, but for the sake of any daughters he
had, he hoped that he had a boy, because he didn’t want any daughter of his to suffer through this hell. He didn’t want any child of his to suffer through this hell.

Perhaps that was why he felt so conflicted over being mated, over being pregnant. Because he knew that any child that he brought into the world now would be treated to the same intense scrutiny and control as he himself was.

“Get in the bed.” Jefferus ordered him and Harry had no choice but to obey, even though he wasn’t even tired and it was still early. “Don’t get back out.” Jeff told him, tucking him in.

He fleetingly touched Harry’s still flat belly for a mere moment and then he left the room, all but slamming the door behind him, leaving Harry confined to the bed without the use of any ropes, bonds or spells. It wasn’t needed anymore. Harry could no more climb out of this bed than he could build his own rocket ship and fly to the moon.

He bit his lip, trying to keep the tears back, but he wasn’t able to and his bottom lip trembled and then one tear slid down his cheek, followed quickly by another, before they started to fall faster and more rapidly until he was full out crying, sobbing messily into his hands.

He didn’t know what was happening, why things were so wrong, but they were and now he was pregnant. He was stuck here, with Jefferus as his mate. A mate who didn’t like him very much it seemed and didn’t want a daughter. He had more of a chance of having a boy, but he could easily have a little girl too and Harry would love her just as much.

This was why he’d felt so conflicted, he was sure. This was why he didn’t want to be here. This was why he was so confused and sad. His mate didn’t want him and he didn’t want a daughter either. His mate hit him and hurt him, shouted at him and sneered at him. He didn’t like his mate, but at the same time, he loved him. His head spun with the contradicting thoughts and emotions running through his mind and he cried harder. He didn’t know what to do or how to get himself out of this mess, or even if he could get out of this mess now that he was pregnant. He was stuck here, stuck in this house, with Jefferus and his parents and then it truly sunk in, he was trapped here, trapped with Jefferus as a mate and he was pregnant. He was pregnant.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: The response for this fic has been massive, thank you so much lovelies, I truly appreciate all the love and comments that you’ve given to me! Thank you!
Chapter 3 will be out today as well, as soon as I can possibly manage it, so that you have both of the worst chapters for this fic out together and you won’t have to suffer through the actual abuse events of this fic for much longer, just one more chapter.

StarLight Massacre. X
Broken

Chapter Notes

WARNING: This chapter contains the worst of the warnings I have included for this fic, including rape, abuse, domestic violence, child destruction, forced impregnation and child neglect.

Last Time

He didn’t know what was happening, why things were so wrong, but they were and now he was pregnant. He was stuck here, with Jefferus as his mate. A mate who didn’t like him very much it seemed and didn’t want a daughter. He had more of a chance of having a boy, but he could easily have a little girl too and Harry would love her just as much.

This was why he’d felt so conflicted, he was sure. This was why he didn’t want to be here. This was why he was so confused and sad. His mate didn’t want him and he didn’t want a daughter either. His mate hit him and hurt him, shouted at and sneered at him. He didn’t like his mate, but at the same time, he loved him. His head spun with the contradicting thoughts and emotions running through his mind and he cried harder. He didn’t know what to do or how to get himself out of this mess, or even if he could get out of this mess now that he was pregnant. He was stuck here, stuck in this house, with Jefferus and his parents and then it truly sunk in, he was trapped here, trapped with Jefferus as a mate and he was pregnant. He was pregnant.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Three – Broken

Things went from bad to worse as Harry was ordered around like a pet despite the fact that he was rapidly filling out more as his pregnancy progressed. He’d been very slight before, so his pregnancy was showing sooner than it otherwise might have. At least now he was allowed to eat almost as much as he liked. Though any and all of his requests were ignored. He ate what he was given or he didn’t eat at all and sometimes, he couldn’t even stomach what was being offered to him as it made him feel queasy.

He’d be forced to eat as he was hungry, but not half an hour later he would be bringing it back up again. He’d tried to explain that certain things were setting off his stomach, but he’d been told to shut up and do as he was told and he’d had no choice but to obey the orders given to him.

He was walking on egg shells around everyone, terrified and jumping at every small sound. He was afraid and on edge every moment of the day and it was turning him into a nervous wreck. His nights were not any better either, he and his mate had an active sex life, but underneath the surface emotions of getting positive attention from his mate, terror lingered. He always had the thought in the back of his mind, was his mate going to hit him, hurt him? He was always tense and he dreaded sex with his own mate, it was just so painful and he nearly always bled afterwards and it was very rare that he reached his own orgasm. His mate would orgasm and then roll off of him, leaving him hard and aching and unsatisfied. Jefferus would drift off into a peaceful sleep as the pain drifted into Harry and
the blood dribbled out.

He was restless, always on the edge of panic and he suffered with nightmares on most nights and he would wake up breathless, gasping for air and covered in a cold sweat. His mate slept beside him, as peaceful as a baby. Harry never woke him, not after the first time which had resulted in him receiving two black eyes and a split lip when all he’d wanted was a bit of comfort. His mate had concentrated his attack on his head and face, so as not to risk the baby, as he explained curtly to his parents the next morning when they’d seen his beaten face at breakfast and had politely inquired about it, as if they’d merely been asking after the weather.

Almost tiptoeing to the bathroom, Harry took a moment to revel in the locked door. It made him feel just the slightest bit safer, even though he knew logically that everyone in this house could open the door with ease. It didn’t matter, he could breathe a little easier while he was locked in the bathroom and he eased out of his tensed stance and rubbed at sore, bunched muscles that had come from being continuously tensed and on edge all day, every day.

Harry sat on the toilet to have a wee, just so his shaking knees could have a break from holding him up, he stayed sitting there even after he was finished. He wasn’t allowed clothes, not even underwear, just the ridiculous oversized tunic that he’d been wearing since he’d come here. He’d since realised that it was oversized to accommodate his pregnant body, so it wouldn’t have to be changed as he got heavier pregnant. He cupped his growing, healthy child and rubbed gently.

“I love you.” He whispered softly, his voice strained with lack of use. His mate didn’t permit him to speak in his presence unless asked a direct question.

The baby within squirmed, as if he could be heard in the womb and Harry smiled gently, the action tugging painfully on the large scab on his bottom lip. He’d gotten that one from his dominant because one of his mate’s brothers, Theodorus, had insisted that his wife was more beautiful than Harry was.

Jefferus had four older brothers, Edwardius, Josephicum, Theodorus and Arthurum, they were born in that order and Jefferus was the youngest. None of the older brothers were Drackens, so they all had human wives. Edwardius had two sons, Petrum and Charlus. Josephicum had one son, Franciscus. Theodorus had two sons, Benneitus and Nereus, and Arthurum had three children, two sons, Gerardius and Leonardicum and to his everlasting shame, a daughter, Eudoxia. None of their children were Drackens either, leaving Jefferus to gloat and strut about, lording over his brothers, nephews and his lone niece as the only Dracken in their living family.

Harry thought that they were all ridiculous, and their names were downright hilarious, but he would never have dared to say anything, or to even show in his expression how much he wanted to laugh every time he heard one of their stupid names. He had to remind himself that they thought that he was called Erickian. He hated that too. In fact he hated it here, he hated walking on eggshells, he hated living his life in constant fear, but he loved Jeff, he couldn’t help but love him. He just wished that his mate wouldn’t hit or hurt him all the time.

Someone hammered hard on the door and Harry almost died of fright as he gasped and clutched a hand to his chest, the tension immediately drawing back into him as his muscles bunched up tight, causing aches and pains to appear all over his body, particularly in his neck and shoulders.
“What are you doing in there?” His mate yelled through the door.

Harry flushed the toilet and quickly washed his hands, knowing that he didn’t have much time.

“Are you ignoring me?!” Jeff raged, his fist thumping into the door harder.

“N…no!” Harry insisted in his wavering, unused voice as he dried his hands as quickly as he could, rushing to the door to unlock it.

“Get out here right…”

Harry had the door open before his mate could finish…he still got a punch to the head for it and he went stumbling back into the door frame. His mate caught his arm so that he didn’t harm the baby before yanking him back into the bedroom.

“You never, ever, lock any door in this house again, do you hear me?’”

“Yes.” Harry whispered, trying to keep the tears at bay at losing his only shred of safety that he’d felt here with these people.

“Get on this fucking bed and stay there!” His mate yelled at him, letting go of his arm and pushing him towards the bed.

Harry dutifully climbed onto it and sat down.

“Don’t you fucking move!” Jeferus ordered.

“I won’t.” Harry said, hoping to calm his mate down.

“Stop speaking too, I can’t stand your whiny voice!”
Harry swallowed and just huddled into himself, every muscle tensed and expecting another punch, his shoulders hunched right up by his ears, the pain of his sore muscles in his shoulders and neck increasing.

He couldn’t even relax when Jefferus left the bedroom, slamming the door hard enough behind him to rattle the windows. He knew that at any moment he could come back and torment him some more, or hit him again and he cried silently, as he knew that his mate hated seeing or hearing him crying because he found it irritating.

He was in constant pain, his head throbbed from where he’d been hit yet again and he was confined to the bed again, like a naughty toddler receiving a time out. Only his time out would last for nine or ten hours. He got a beating if he wet the bed, but as his pregnancy progressed, he couldn’t hold himself very well. At least today he’d only just had a wee before being confined to the bed, on other days he wasn’t as lucky.

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It had been half a year. Six months ago Harry had been abducted from the Dracken meeting and no one had seen him since. He had yet to be found and there were no leads left to follow anymore. The Elders had exhausted all lines of inquiry and no new information had come forward for months now.

Max felt like he was slowly going out of his mind. He was unshaven and he hadn’t cut his hair, which was growing in wavy curls down the back of his neck and over his forehead. He hated his curly hair, but he just couldn’t be bothered cutting it.

Nasta and Sixten did what they could, having ‘guys nights’ with him, until they realised that he was consuming more and more Firewhiskey as a way to cope with the loss of Harry. As soon as they stopped providing him with alcohol, he’d shut himself away from everyone, even his own family.

He might have already lost his job, he didn’t know. He hadn’t been into work for five months now and he’d blocked the floo from all calls and visits. He just didn’t care. He felt bereft, like someone had taken a part of himself away and he knew it was ridiculous. He and Harry had not been mates, they hadn’t even been bonded. Hell, they had barely known one another for a few hours before Harry had been abducted, but he felt a keen sense of loss regardless.

He couldn’t speak to anyone, he barely understood his own thoughts and feelings on the matter, all he knew was that Harry had not called for four months now, that the Elders had no more leads and that they’d run out of ideas. A lot of people were claiming that Harry was dead. The thought made Max feel physically sick and crazed with panic. He didn’t even want to think of such things, let alone hear them spoken aloud.

Talking to Nasta and Sixten helped a little, because they were both rational and they calmed him down, explaining that the most logical theory was that Harry had been abducted to order by an unmated dominant, that Harry had been kept mostly gagged over the first few months to prevent him from calling out and now, Harry had been force mated to this dominant who had ordered Harry not to call out, which would explain why Harry had been giving sporadic calls for the first few months, and since then, nothing.

Sixten had calmed him down and had insisted that this lack of calls did not mean that Harry was dead. He’d told him rationally that it most likely meant that he’d been ordered not to call out. There
was still hope. Max grasped onto that hope with both hands and held it close to his heart. There was still hope that Harry would be found. He would never give up on Harry while there was still a glimmer of hope, no matter how tiny that glimmer was.

Someone tried to hammer down his door, but he ignored it. He’d warded the door, so it couldn’t be opened or kicked in. He didn’t want to see anyone or speak to anyone, not right now.

His stomach roared and he frowned. He couldn’t remember the last time that he’d eaten anything. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d even cooked anything.

He went to his kitchen, ignoring the continued banging on his front door, as he opened the fridge and considered what he had. He decided on a simple sandwich. He didn’t want to spend too much time making something to eat, but he needed something easy.

Rubbing his red and raw eyes free of tears, he ate the sandwich quickly, almost choking on it as his mouth was so dry. It tasted like he was chewing on an old carpet. He threw some of it in the bin as he just couldn’t finish eating it. He made a pot of tea and took it up to his dark bedroom and he crawled into his bed and just laid there, drinking his tea and trying not to think.

He felt wretched and sick…it wouldn’t surprise him if he was actually sick in some way. He rolled over onto his back and he tried not to think about what Harry might be going through right at this moment. He did this at least fifty times a day, thinking, torturing himself with all the evil, horrible scenarios that Harry could possibly be facing at that moment while he ate, drank, slept, or just wandered from room to room. He’d been showering the other day when he’d wondered if Harry had had a bath or a shower recently. He just couldn’t switch his mind off.

He didn’t know why the loss of Harry had affected him so badly, if it was purely because he’d really liked him and thought that he had a chance of being his mate or if it was something more than that. He certainly felt guilty over Harry’s abduction. He had been stood there, within touching distance of Harry, not ten minutes before he’d been taken. He should have shoved Elder Messana aside and taken Harry to that bathroom himself. He would never have left an unmated submissive, one who hadn’t even known that he’d been a Dracken and didn’t know the layout of the Counsel Halls very well, alone for a single moment and he would have stood outside of that bathroom door, stopping anyone from going inside and immediately putting Harry back into his protection once he came back out. That was what Elder Messana should have done! Not left Harry in ‘privacy’ and gone to talk to someone out of view of the bathrooms, leaving him vulnerable to abduction.

Curling into a tighter ball in his bed, Max swallowed hard and he tried to breathe normally once he realised that he was almost hyperventilating. He just…he needed Harry back, he needed him to be okay. He swore that no matter what state Harry was in, he would still be there to protect him. He would still love him.

Max jolted upright as that thought filtered through and he shook uncontrollably as he realised the gravity of his thoughts. He loved Harry. He loved him! That was why he was taking all of this so hard. Just an hour or two of interaction and he’d fallen head over heels in love with Harry, with those shy smiles as they spoke, the pink blushes when Harry caught his eye, the fiery determination when someone said or did something that he didn’t like.

Max had never been one to put stock into love at first sight. He’d always scoffed and insisted that it took more than just glancing at someone to determine love and compatibility, but…but he’d stood and spoken to Harry for an hour and he had adored everything about him, even his little temper fits at others who had upset him or offended him in some way. He…he had loved Harry, right from the start and he hadn’t realised it, now Harry was Merlin only knew where and Max had no way of knowing what was happening to him or what he’d already suffered through and the thought was
driving him crazy.

“I will get you back, Harry.” He swore to himself aloud. “You will be found and you’ll be given all
the help and support you need and I will be there in whatever capacity you need me to be. Even if
it’s just as a bodyguard, I’ll be there.” He broke off on a sob and fisted his hair. “Just hold on, hold
on for as long as you can. We’ll find you, even if we have to turn over every single stone one at a
time. You will be found.”

Max cried to himself, laying back down in the bed and trying to calm himself down, but everything
was twice as painful now, after his realisation that he truly loved Harry, that that was why he was
feeling so terrible and so guilty over Harry’s abduction. He had fallen in love and now Harry was
being hurt and abused and the thought drove him and his Dracken mad. Harry needed to be found,
or he was not going to be able to recover from this huge blow. Harry needed to be found or he was
never going to rest or get back to normal. Harry needed to be found so that the poor boy could be
healed and made safe, so that no one could ever hurt him ever again. Max swore that he would
dedicate his life to protecting Harry from now on, just as soon as he was found, even if that meant
sacrificing his own life to protect Harry, he would.

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Harry had been beaten black and blue the moment that he’d lifted the wards from his nesting area.
As soon as he’d gone feral, he’d thrown up an incredibly strong, unbreakable ward and he’d settled
down to give birth. As soon as those wards had come down a month later, Jefferus had been there,
snarling, shouting at him for locking him out of his own bedroom, so terribly angry that Harry’s
innate sense of dread had come flooding back and had him curling up to escape his mate’s wrath
even as he was still recovering from his labour and birth.

Jefferus had yanked him away from his little nest by his hair and all Harry remembered after that was
pain, crying out and pleading with a hoarse voice that he’d only recently started using again. It had
been Carter who had stopped that beating, by reminding Jeff of the baby.

Harry had been left in a blooded, bruised heap as Jeff excitedly went to the sleeping newborn, safely
tucked up in the nest that Harry had hastily made at the last minute. Harry made a distressed noise
and he crawled afterwards, ignoring his own pain as he tried to reach his baby, knowing what was
coming when Jeff immediately looked at the baby’s sex.

He still remembered the bellow of rage as Jefferus had turned on him for a second time, attacking
him again and Harry had been knocked unconscious soon after.

When he’d woken up that second time, he’d been in his own room. He’d shrieked in distress and
he’d torn out of the room, scenting the air, trying to find his daughter. He burst into the living room,
where the Perrots were sat and he picked up his baby from the bassinet and sunk to the floor with her
in utter relief, scenting her and sniffing her for injuries. There were none.

He’d been told off for doing that, as it was ‘undignified’ to run around, naked as he was too, but no
one had tried to take his daughter from him once he had her, perhaps expecting his claws to come
out, but Harry was just glad that she was actually here and hadn’t been shipped off to fuck knows where or even put up for adoption.

He looked to her now and he smiled at her with his broken face. All the pent up rage that Jefferus hadn’t been able to fully show while he’d been pregnant, he’d finally been able to unleash it now that he’d given birth…it had been a month and he still hadn’t gotten it all out of his system, he never would now. Harry was being punished for giving Jefferus the ultimate shame. A daughter. And not just any daughter, no, but a human daughter.

That had been ordered out of him too, when he would have kept it with him until his baby girl had turned sixteen and he could no longer hide the lack of inheritance. But Jefferus had ordered it from him and though his Dracken had screeched and protested telling anyone so soon, he had been forced to reveal that the baby was a human and not a Dracken. He’d been attacked for that too, as apparently it was his fault that they’d had a daughter and that she’d been human too.

Jefferus’ four older brothers had not stopped laughing at their younger brother since the news had been announced that the baby had been a girl and Harry hated it. He hated that girls were seen and treated as second best in this family, that from her birth, his perfect little girl had not been good enough for her Father and his family, and no matter what she did, she was never going to be good enough for them. It was not an environment that he wanted for her, he still remembered the Dursleys and he didn’t want his daughter subjected to that treatment either. He loved her so much, but he also loved his mate and his Dracken denied any thoughts of leaving him, his mind playing over their perfect baby, how their mate could give them more, but Harry didn’t want another child…not with Jefferus.

He was so conflicted and confused, he was back to being tense and skittish, jumping at loud noises or when someone near him raised a hand. He remembered that he didn’t want to be here, that his mate had ordered him to never leave and his Dracken side obeyed easily, without question.

His daughter was a month old and Harry was her full primary carer. Jefferus didn’t do anything for her and if she dirtied a nappy or started crying while he was in the room with her, he looked at her as if she were the most disgusting thing he could possibly imagine, that fucking sneer stuck on his face as Harry tried to sort her out as quickly as he could so that Jeff didn’t get angry. It was Harry’s waking nightmare that Jeff would hurt their daughter just because she was a baby and needed around the clock care, and as a result, he kept her as close to hand as possible. He’d been forbidden from refusing to allow Carter and Penny to take her though. If they came and took her, he had to allow them, no matter how much it hurt him or how much he didn’t want to let her go. He hated that too.

He’d woken up after the beating when he’d given birth to find out that they’d already named her and had filled out her birth certificate. His signature had been forged as Erickian Perrot. They’d called her Ethelana Perrot. Harry hated the name and he’d said so, to which Jefferus’ reply had been that it wasn’t up to him and that it was already too late, the name had already been filed as official.

Harry had gotten his own revenge. He was calling his beautiful daughter Ismay in secret, where no one could hear him, and he was determined that she would think of herself as Ismay Potter, not as Ethelana Perrot.

Harry twirled a lock of dark red hair around his finger and he smiled, thinking of his Mother. Jefferus had had a fit about her being ‘ginger’ too. To him, their daughter was everything that was wrong with the world, a girl, a human, redheaded. When her eyes had gone hazel too, when Jeff had blue eyes and Harry green, that had been enough for Jeff to beat him again, somehow finding a reason to blame Harry for their baby’s ‘defects’ as if he had consciously controlled her gender, species, hair
and eye colour.

The door flew open and Harry leapt to his feet, his white wings surging around him. They had never gained Jefferus’ red scales. It helped to remind Harry that they weren’t properly mated, that in order for him to gain his mate’s colours, they had to be bonded to one another, not just him to Jefferus. His submissive would hear no such thing, but Harry knew.

“Why are you hiding up here?” Jefferus demanded.

“She wouldn’t stop crying, so I brought her up here to keep things quiet.” Was his automatic excuse. Truthfully he’d just wanted as much time with her, on his own, as possible.

Jeff nodded as if it was perfectly acceptable to hide away in an attic with a month old baby just to keep things quiet.

“Put her away.” Jeff ordered, as if she were a box of shoes or a book. “It’s been two months and I’ve waited long enough.”

Harry’s fear flooded his entire being, every sense was on high alert as he heard that, even as his Dracken obeyed the order that had been given to him immediately, and without question.

He went down two floors to the nursery and he gently, and lingeringly, tucked Ismay into her cot. He was thankful that she was sleeping and he didn’t have to leave her awake as he went back out into the corridor and made his way to Jeff’s bedroom on the first floor with leaden feet. He knew what was coming, but he was powerless to stop it.

His heart hammering in his chest, almost on the verge of hyperventilating, Harry walked through the private living space and he closed the bedroom door behind him. He slipped off his stupid tunic and put it out of sight. Jefferus hated seeing any of his things in his bedroom.

“Hurry up, I haven’t fucked you in two months, my balls are aching.” Jeff snapped at him and Harry turned to the order, his Dracken side hurrying to obey their dominant. Harry was almost sick as he slid onto the bed and laid down on his back. Jefferus always fucked him face up as he said it was more intimate. It made no matter to Harry which way up he was, nothing about this encounter was intimate or loving to him.

There was no preamble, no foreplay, no teasing, not even any preparation. Jeff had used the bottle of lubricant to put a blob of lube on himself, to make it easier for him to slide in and out, so he didn’t feel any pain of dry friction, before he just shoved straight into Harry, who was only a month post birth and hadn’t been subjected to this treatment for two months.
The pain was indescribable. Harry didn’t have the words to explain how that first penetration had felt, or how the push and pull felt after that. He didn’t make a noise, Jefferus had long since tired of his pleads, begs and screams to stop and he had ordered him to never make a sound during sex again. He had to obey, even when all he wanted to do was scream and cry and thrash around with the agony. Instead his arms had been placed around his dominant’s neck by Jefferus himself in some cruel mockery of normalcy and he was forced to obey and endure this agonising intrusion without a murmur of complaint.

He laid there, with his eyes open as Jeff liked looking into them, and he stayed still, trying to control the urge to curl up around himself to protect his body from this pain, but knowing that he couldn’t. He blocked out the noises that Jeff made, his grunts and foul words, and he imagined himself back at Hogwarts, he tried to make himself believe that this had never happened. It never worked, but he believed that it helped in whatever small way, so he carried on doing it, until with a last grunt, Jeff spilled into his body and sighed happily.

“You can go now.” Jeff told him a few moments later and Harry forced himself to get up, to walk to where his tunic was to pick it up before leaving the room, blood and other things trailing down the backs and insides of his thighs.

He went to the bathroom outside of his own room, up two floors from Jeff’s, and he turned on the shower and he collapsed into the bottom of the bath, his violently trembling legs unable to hold him up any more and he cried. He cried out all of the pain and agony that he’d been forced to endure silently as he scrubbed himself raw with hot water and a soft flannel. He’d been forbidden to use anything more abrasive lest it ruin his beautiful skin.

His body cramped, his stomach cramped, the pain of the aftermath was almost as bad as the actual event and Harry felt like he’d gone mad with the pain as he stared at his trembling legs and wondered if he’d ever be able to walk on them again, as he felt the pain in his lower back and wondered if it was as broken as it felt.

He cried until he had nothing left to cry, he scrubbed until he was pink, but nothing would cleanse him of the Perrots. Nothing now would ever make better or make right what had been done to him.

He thought of his beautiful little Ismay with her beautiful red hair, big hazel eyes and the little happy burble she always gave, just for him, when she caught sight of him and he somehow found the strength to climb out of the bath and turn off the shower. He found the strength to lock himself away inside as he patted himself dry and got dressed. He checked his violated entrance with a blot of toilet paper. He’d stopped bleeding and leaking, he took a towel with him just in case.

He walked as normally as he could manage, which still gave him a slight limp, and he went right back to his daughter, taking her from her cot, and he sat gingerly on the padded rocking chair with her in his arms, the towel underneath him to catch any stray drips of blood and he sung to his sweet Ismay as she slept, once again thanking every and anyone that she had taken his face, and not her Father’s.

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Harry watched with mounting pride as his softly babbling daughter manoeuvred herself over the floor. He was so proud of her for being able to crawl at all under the oppression of the family that she’d been born into.

She was eight months old and she was utterly perfect in his eyes. She lacked absolutely everything in her Father’s eyes. He scoffed at her milestones, expected her to do unreasonable things at such a young age and he called her names and he’d even aimed a kick at her once as she crawled around the living room floor. It was the only time that Harry had tried to attack Jeff since they’d been mated and the only time that Harry had seen Carter and Penny admonish their son’s actions. Of course they used the excuse that if he killed the baby, then nothing, not even ordering it of him, would prevent Harry from trying to kill him and they couldn’t have that. Of course not.

“Mama.” Ismay called out to him and Harry’s heart filled with utter joy as she smiled at him and lifted her arms up to him.

Harry picked her up and sat her on his lap. He’d become a lot more creative since she had started to get more active. She wasn’t allowed any toys, not even one, so Harry had been inventing games for them to play together. He still sung to her, he was actually getting better at it because of how often he needed to sing to her, just to stave away her boredom.

He tried desperately not to think that Ismay should have a baby sister. When pregnant with Ismay Harry had refused to have the Healer sex his baby when he’d gone for his first scan with Jefferus, the next time, after Jeff had ordered him to tell the Healer to sex the baby, the Healer had apologised and said that the baby wasn’t in the right position to show the gender. Harry had been pleased, Jefferus not so much. This had continued throughout his pregnancy with Ismay and Jeff had only known her gender after she was born. The same could not be said for their second daughter.

At his fourteen week scan, the Healer performing the sonography test had joyfully told them that they were having a girl. Jeff had barely held on to his temper in public. He had calmly asked the Healer if he was sure that he hadn’t made a mistake and that the baby could possibly be a boy. The Healer had shaken his head.

‘She’s clearly displayed.’ He’d said happily. ‘I can see three lines that are indicative of a girl, there is no little penis in sight, she’s definitely a girl.’

Harry had been marched to the floo point in the private Healer’s clinic and as soon as they’d arrived home…Harry choked even as he thought about it now, tears welling up in his eyes as he remembered being thrown immediately to the receiving room’s floor, the horrific pain that had followed, the fear and the sheer dumbness that had enveloped his brain as his own dominant had kicked the baby out of him, right there in that room. What was supposed to have been their second daughter.

Jefferus had calmly told his parents what he’d done and why and they had nodded their heads happily, as if what he’d done was normal, as if he’d just swatted a fly or stood on a spider instead of kicking a fourteen week pregnant person into miscarriage. Just six more weeks and his second daughter would have been the same age as his Ismay when she had been born.
He held Ismay to his chest and inhaled her dark red hair. It smelt of the ridiculously expensive shampoo that Penelope bought for her. She was dressed up today, more than usual, because the Perrots were going out to eat. Harry had not been invited.

“You be a good girl tonight, no crying and no messing.” Harry explained to the big, bright hazel eyes that turned to look at him. “Don’t give them a reason to hurt you, sweet girl.”

Harry went down to the living room before Jeff could come and get him. He didn’t want anyone to harm Ismay or to be unhappy before they even left.

“There they are.” Penelope said. “Is Ethelana ready?”

Harry nodded mutely.

“Ethelana, are you pleased to go to a restaurant for the first time?” Jefferus called out, their daughter ignored him. “Ethelana!” Much more used to being called Ismay, the girl didn’t turn around at hearing ‘her’ name as she didn’t associate it with herself and instead she carried on playing with her own hands, as she had no toys to entertain her. “What is wrong with this fucking girl?” Jeff spat.

“Nothing is wrong with her!” Harry hissed immediately.

Jeff’s blue eyes narrowed on him and Harry knew what was coming for answering back. He calmly handed Ismay to Penelope and he accepted, without trying to resist, the punch to the face that sent him crashing to the floor.

“We’re going to be late for our reservations, your brothers and their families will already be there.” Carter said, as if it was Harry’s fault that his son liked beating him so much.

“Go to the bedroom and you stay there.” Jeff ordered. Harry had no choice but to obey.

He sat on Jeff’s bed and he was effectively trapped there, unable to physically climb off of the bed. It was as if some force was keeping him here, preventing him from getting back off the bed, but he knew that it was himself, his Dracken couldn’t disobey an order from his dominant mate.

Sitting on the bed, agonising over how Ismay was and if she’d been hurt or not, gave Harry a lot of time to think. About his life, about what had become of him, about Ismay, about his second daughter
who hadn’t stood a chance, and the forbidden topic…Max.

He’d remembered his name shortly after the lingering fuzziness of his first heat period had slipped from him. He remembered Max and how he had made him feel. Max would never have treated him like this. Max had liked him, had respected him. Harry liked thinking of Max, but it hurt too, because he knew that he was never going to see him again. That even if he did, that Max wouldn’t want him now. Especially as he believed himself incapable of even functioning normally any more.

His every move was micro managed, he was ordered to do everything, from bathing for a specific amount of time, to exactly how much he could eat to where he sat (always on Jefferus’ lap) and how he acted. He didn’t even know how to speak to people any more. He was afraid of everyone who came near him, he flinched if they scratched their noses or their heads, he was a nervous wreck…why the hell would anyone want him now? Especially the gorgeous, hunky Max, who could have absolutely anyone he wanted. Max had probably been mated by now, he was such an amazing person, someone somewhere would have definitely seen that, as he had, and jumped on him by now.

It was an agonising three and a half hours before the Perrots came back and Harry was subjected to a further half hour of Jefferus’ painful attentions before he was dismissed and he could go and check every inch of his sweet Ismay.

She was sat up, waiting for him, despite it being very late and past her bedtime. She stood up with help from the bars of her cot, wearing another very expensive, utterly atrocious, vintage lace nightgown, and she reached up out of her cot for him and Harry picked her up and hugged her tightly, sitting her on his lap when he sat on the towel he’d placed over the seat of the rocking chair.

The backs of both her hands were red and Harry grit his teeth. He’d hoped that they wouldn’t do such a thing in public, but it seemed that even when outside of this house, the Perrot family were completely abnormal. They were using a stinging spell, aimed at Ismay’s hands, to prevent her from grabbing food with her hands. At just eight months old, she was expected to be able to feed herself with utensils. To prevent pain to his daughter, he had taught her meticulously, in the form of a game, how to use a spoon to feed herself, but if they had expected her to be able to manage a knife and fork while at the restaurant…Harry hated them. He hated every single one of them and he cradled Ismay tighter to his chest and soothed her as she cried. She only ever cried with him now, after being shouted at and getting no comfort from the Perrots when she cried in front of them. At eight months old, when most babies her age were learning how to bang blocks together or how to throw a ball, Ismay was learning to censor herself to avoid fear and pain. It made Harry feel sick.

“It’s okay, my love.” Harry soothed her gently. “I’ve got you now, I love you. Go to sleep and get some rest.”

“Mummy.” She sniffled.

“I know, baby girl. Shhh. Go to sleep.” He said softly.

He started humming, and then singing as he rocked her slowly in the chair. She eventually went to sleep in his arms, and Harry stood, locking his knees when they went to buckle underneath him, and
he placed his daughter back into her cot.

She’d only just gotten the hang of crawling and standing with objects, yet those vile people had expected her to be able to eat at a restaurant like an adult. Harry wouldn’t have been surprised at this point to hear that they’d asked her opinion on the current political situation and had expected her to debate her point to them.

Harry took the bloodied towel with him and he went to bathe in the shower. He cried his heart out under the stream of hot water and he again begged that someone found them, that they came to rescue them. It was too late for his second daughter, who had been killed before she’d even gotten a chance to be born, but it was not yet too late for Ismay to be saved from more of this horrendous fate. She was still very young, she could forget what had already been done to her, or in front of her, and she could have a normal life, with normal people, but they were running out of time. He needed someone to come for Ismay soon, before she got to an age where she would remember everything.

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It had been over two years since Harry had been taken and those few who had had a small piece of hope left after the first year of him being abducted, were starting to give up on him too.

There had been births, there had been more mate meetings and bondings, there had been marriages and birthdays, all within his family. His family that was still carrying on as normal, his family that he felt completely isolated and excluded from. He felt like a black sheep. A miserable black sheep who no one wanted around because he always brought rain clouds and misery with him.

His life had been changed suddenly and he was very slowly moving back to getting used to his life without Harry. He’d gone back to work, after finding out that his Father, Myron, had been staving off his work colleagues and the owners for him. He’d been given a warning and told that he was not allowed to have several months off whenever he pleased, but after threatening to leave for a rival company, things had settled down. The owner still didn’t like him, but as nearly all of their contracts were in his name, not the company’s, Max had the owner bent over a barrel and they both knew it. If Max left, those contracts would come with him and the company would fold within a few weeks at a very optimistic estimate. They both knew that Max was too valuable and that he’d get a job with whichever company he asked as soon as he asked for it. They couldn’t afford for him to leave.

He’d started off slowly, an hour or two here or there. He’d let his Granddad cut his hair for him, because he couldn’t be bothered to do it himself and his Granddad knew how much he hated it when it grew out enough to go curly.

He’d fought with his Uncle Sandor, actually physically fought with him, because he’d tried to chide him into getting back to normal by reminding him that he had only known Harry for an hour at most, that he hadn’t been anything to Harry, and that Harry hadn’t been anything to him. It had only served to make Max’s frayed temper snap and it had led to a fight which had to be broken up by other family members.

He’d told Nasta and Sixten about his revelation of his love for Harry, but no one else. He could trust that his friends wouldn’t scoff at him and berate him for such thoughts, he couldn’t say the same about his family, not after the punch up with Sandor.

He was still morose and his temper was very easily stoked, especially after how easy and laid back
he’d been before all of this had happened, but he was now functioning more normally. He’d gotten used to carrying around the pain in his heart. He could eat fine, he could work a full day, he could go out for casual drinks now without getting paralytic in his misery as he’d learnt to cope with the loss of Harry without drowning his mind and body with alcohol and he had even learnt to enjoy laughter for a small amount of time. That didn’t mean that underneath he wasn’t an absolute wreck, it didn’t mean that he had forgotten about Harry, how could he when the young submissive took up most of his thoughts? It just meant that he’d learnt to live with the pain and distress of not having Harry there.

“It’s good to see you smiling again.” His Mum, Ashleigh, said softly as she passed beside him, bending a kissing his forehead before leaving the room.

“It really is.” His sister, Talia, insisted a moment later, snuggling into him to give him a big hug.

Max hugged Talia back on automatic, smoothing her hair back from her face, those jet black eyes sparkling at him, so much like their biological Father, Myron’s. He smiled again, just for her.

“How is work? Have you needed to deck that bitch owner yet?” Talia asked him, a snarl on her pretty face.

“Not yet.” Max said seriously. “I might inquire about vacancies at other companies though, just to prove to him that I’m not bluffing.”

“They’ll be fighting over you.” Talia insisted firmly. “You could name your price. Potions Masters, and Mistresses, are scarce at the moment, there’s a nationwide shortage because of the record low numbers of apprenticeships, right? You’re all in huge demand, so there would be an absolute mob around you if you declared yourself a free agent, there’d be a bidding war on you, with each company offering you a bigger salary, more benefits, more bonuses than the last.”

Max frowned, thinking about that seriously. “That’s a good idea, Tal. If I declared myself a free agent, I could legally work for all those companies and name my price to each of them.”

“I…I didn’t mean that you would work for all of them!” Talia said sternly. “You’d run yourself ragged, Max! You’d work yourself into an early grave if you worked for a dozen companies!”

“It wouldn’t leave a lot of opportunity for me to think very much, it could be perfect.”
Max moved away from his sister and she scowled at him, before running straight to their Dads’ and telling them exactly what he was planning on doing. They would try to stop him, Max would even welcome it, because he was not going to change his mind now. The more he worked, the less time he would have to wallow or agonise over what Harry was going through. It would be perfect.

His Dad Myron came tearing after him, catching up to him before he’d even made it to the kitchen of his Grandparents home. Myron pulled him straight into a hug and petted him, the hand on the back of his head stroking through his hair, keeping his head tucked into his neck.

“What’s this about you offering yourself to all Potion companies to run yourself into the ground?” Myron asked him softly.

“It wouldn’t allow much time for me to think.”

“That’s not the way to deal with this, Max.” His Dad told him. “Not thinking about it is going to make things worse in the long run. You need to think about it, you need to think of Harry, no matter how painful it is for you. If you don’t, it’ll only find its way out of you in other ways.”

“I can’t keep thinking of what horrors he’s going through.” Max said desperately. “I just can’t handle it anymore, it hurts to think of what he could be going through at every moment of the day and every time I think I’ve thought of the worst thing imaginable, I… I imagine something new, something worse and I think of him going through it and I can’t…I can’t do it anymore.” Max sobbed. “I need to do something that doesn’t let me think. Something I can do that takes so much concentration that there’s no room for those horrors in my head.”

“Working yourself to death isn’t the answer.” Myron told him. “Those horrors would still find a way to torment you, Max. You need to sleep at some point and those thoughts would manifest as nightmares. It wouldn’t be the occasional one now and again either, as you’re suffering with now. It would be every single night, it would be utterly relentless. You’d be bombarded with those horrors as you slept, because your mind hasn’t had time to deal with them during the day.”

“It’s been over two years.” Max sobbed. “Why hasn’t he been found yet?” He demanded of his Father.

“Because whoever has him is very clever.” His Grandfather told him from behind.

Max turned to face him, looking at him questioningly.
“They’ve likely changed his name, if not his appearance too, or they’re just not letting him outside.” Alexander said wearily. “Everyone within our community worldwide knows who he is and what he looks like. They’re all looking for him, but whoever has him also knows that we’re looking for him too. So it’ll make them more cautious. They’re going to be keeping him very closely monitored, they’re not going to be allowing anyone near him in case he lets slip something that would clue others in to his true identity and situation. They’re clever enough to have evaded us for two years. At some point they’re going to slip up, Max, and we’ll be waiting for them to do so, ready to strike at a moment’s notice, because we are not going to give up on him.”

“He can’t last out forever.” Max insisted. “He needs to be found, we can’t wait for the possibility of his captors slipping up.”

“We have a new idea. It’s drastic, but if it works, it won’t matter.”

“What is it?” Max asked, latching onto the small bit of hope being presented to him. The Counsel had had no leads, no idea what to do to find Harry. He was so excited that someone had thought of an idea, something to help search for Harry, after so long with nothing.

“Every single Elder in their respective countries is going to visit each Dracken family and search their property and test their knowledge of Harry. As I said, it’s a drastic measure, but that poor boy is out there somewhere, suffering, and all three Counsels have had enough. We’re going to find him, Max.”

“It could take another few years to search every Dracken family for him.” Max said breathlessly.

“But it also means, that if every single family is searched fully and properly, that we will find him eventually.” Alexander pointed out.

“When does the search start?” Max asked.

“It already has. The first families were searched yesterday. Starting with the mated guard who was on the door that night and all his relatives.”

“He always gave me the feeling that he knew more than he let on.” Max growled.

“Well Harry wasn’t at his home and he’s been cleared. If he knows anything about Harry’s
disappearance then it wasn’t to keep the boy for himself and none of his family members had Harry hidden away anywhere.”

“He should be given Veritaserum.” Max growled. “I’d even be willing to make it myself for free!”

“The Counsel deemed that a step too far.” Alexander sighed. “I insisted to them that no one need fear the potion if they had nothing to hide, but the Elders still refused that, rather excessive, measure. They said that searching the property was enough.”

Max swallowed and he took a nice, deep breath. “I hope they find him.”

“We all do, Max.” Myron insisted. “You’re not the only one who has been affected by this, I was stood by him too, we all were, just before he was taken. I felt so protective of him and when he was gone…I felt like a failure.”

“I need him back. I need to know he’s going to be okay.”

Alexander nodded and his Father pulled him into a tight hug. “We’ll find him, and we’ll get him the help that he needs. This is almost over. Someone somewhere knows where he is and who has him, it’s only a matter of time now.”

Max nodded and he breathed deeply and slowly to calm his racing heart. Whoever had done this to Harry, whoever had abducted him, sold him or kept him, they were going to wish that they’d never set eyes upon Harry after he was finished with them and he would then spend every single moment of the rest of his life working to make Harry better, to make him feel safe and loved and happy. Even if Harry didn’t want to mate to him, or to anyone else for that matter, Max would be fine with that, as long as Harry knew that he would never, ever hurt him or let him out of his sight ever again. He was going to get Harry back and he was going to protect him and love him in equal measure for the rest of his life, he swore it.

Harry was distraught as his tearful two year old daughter came to him for comfort. It was her birthday today, and once again, as per her first birthday, she hadn’t been allowed any presents or treats. She’d had several boring, generic cards from family and nothing more.
“It’s alright, Ismay.” Harry soothed her. “I love you.”

Ismay smiled at him and rubbed her damp eyes. He’d told her several times over the last two years that his love was all that he could give her, as it was all that he had to give her.

He hated not being able to spoil his daughter, he hated not being able to even feed her or give her the things that she wanted. He hated that all he had to his name was the tunic that he was wearing that he hated. He didn’t even feel human anymore. He wasn’t treated like a person and after two and a half years, he was starting to believe it.

He had resigned himself to not being rescued, it had been two and a half years and no one had even come to question the Perrots. He had had four more heat periods, all resulting in a pregnancy. The first of them had been a third girl and once again Jefferus had kicked her out of him when he was fifteen weeks pregnant. The next had been another confirmed girl and he’d tried to fight back, but she had been beaten out of him too, again at fifteen weeks, after he’d been knocked unconscious by a powerful punch to the head that had given him a headache for two days afterwards.

The third had been miscarried when he was only eight weeks pregnant and Jefferus had raped him in the bathroom. Harry had climbed gingerly to his feet once it was over, only to slip on his own blood on the tile floor. A Healer had confirmed that he’d miscarried, they hadn’t found out if they’d been having a girl or a boy. The fourth pregnancy had been with twins, the Healer had confirmed that they were identical, both girls. Harry had cried and begged and pleaded, promising anything and everything if he could just keep these ones, and could he please just have them, please, but Jefferus had been ice cold and unmoving. He had kicked and beaten him until Harry was violently sick and then he’d beaten him unconscious, for daring to conceive yet another two girls.

Harry hadn’t gotten another heat period since and he prayed that he never did. The pain of the heat periods was excruciating and as he remembered more and more about them, he likened it to how he imagined being flayed alive would feel like. Ten days of being raped by Jefferus whenever he felt like it and then tied up and left to suffer, feeling like he was burning and blistering, when Jeff couldn’t be bothered with him anymore. Even his Dracken was feeling neglected and depressed. They knew that something was wrong. Harry had tried to get his base Dracken instincts to understand that Jefferus wasn’t their mate, that they’d been tricked, but the Dracken side of him was so basic and feral that that part of himself just did not understand and rejected all thoughts of Jeff not being their mate.

But now, with the five miscarriages, his Dracken side was so distressed and depressed that that side of himself was starting to blame Jefferus. Again the Dracken side of himself didn’t understand that Jeff had caused those miscarriages, he just knew that they’d been pregnant and then they weren’t and they had no new baby and they blamed their mate.

“Mummy.” Ismay queried from his arms. “What do cakies taste of?”

Harry’s heart shattered and he sniffed, trying his best to smile for her and hold back his own tears.

“Cakes are very sweet and soft.” He told her. “As soon as we get away from here, I’ll let you try
“them.”

“Cookies too?”

“Yes, cookies too, my love, and anything else that you want to try.”

Ismay smiled. Harry had been promising to get her out of here since she’d been born, but Harry was no nearer to getting them both away from the Perrots than he’d been back then. He had no access to any money, no idea where they were, or even how he’d get past the wards that prevented him from leaving the house and the grounds. He didn’t even have shoes or underwear, only his hated, too large, opaque tunic. He could probably sell the jewellery that Ismay had, all the gaudy necklaces, bulky bracelets and brooches and all the dangly earring that he couldn’t stand. He’d thrown a fit when Penelope had brought a month old Ismay back home with her after taking her out for the afternoon with her ears pierced and he’d been beaten and ordered not to take the earring out by Jefferus.

But even if he did sell all of Ismay’s jewellery that wouldn’t get them far. Once again his Dracken screeched inside his head at the thought of leaving his dominant mate. Harry tried to tell him that Jeff wasn’t their mate, that he’d tricked them, but again, his Dracken instincts just didn’t understand what he was trying to say.

“Stop looking so depressive, moping about the place.” Penelope Perrot snapped at him. “You’re ruining Ethelana’s birthday.”

“You’ve already done that.” Harry snapped back.

Harry got a slap to the face and Ismay started crying. “No!” She cried out. “Don’t hit Mummy!” She demanded of her grandmother.

“Ethelana, go to your Father.”

“No!”

“Sweetheart, go.” Harry said softly, shimmying her off of his lap. “Go on.”

Harry watched her go sadly, as she tried to walk in the stupid heeled shoes that Penelope pushed on.
her. He looked up at Penelope and he glared hatefully at her.

“You’re ruining that girl.” Penelope told him.

“Oh no, you and your vile family are doing that.” Harry hissed. “Just because she’s a girl.”

He was slapped again, but he was so used to Jefferus’ violent beatings after two and a half years that he could take a bitch slap or two from an elderly human woman without batting an eye.

“I did my part.” Penelope spat at him. “I had five children, all boys, for Carter. You need to do the same for Jeff. All he wants is a son and you deny him at every turn! He wouldn’t have need to terminate your pregnancies if you stopped giving him girls that he doesn’t want!”

“Are you truly in your sixties and still unknowing of basic biology?” Harry demanded. “It’s him who determines the sex of the baby, not me! It’s his fault that his sperm run to girls. I hope I never have a heat period again, I hope I never give him a son and I hope that I never have another daughter for him to murder! The lot of you are unstable lunatics!”

Harry got yet another slap, but he just smiled at Penelope. He could tell that it unnerved her as she took a small step back and drew her decorative shawl tighter about her shoulders in a nervous gesture.

“You will give him a son.” She tried to tell him with an air of authority.

“Never.” Harry insisted in a hissed snarl, his top lip pulling away from his teeth. “Even if I have to take a leaf out of his book and terminate any boys. He’ll never get a son from me if I can’t have any daughters. He’s taken six daughters from me already, I owe him six lost sons to balance the scale.”

Penelope looked shocked, then she turned and went straight to her husband and began whispering to him.

Harry ignored them all and he stayed secluded in his little dark corner. He didn’t want to socialise with this family, he didn’t want to be a part of them, he wanted to get away from here, with his little Ismay. He did get a shock when Arthurum’s wife, Willow, came over to sit by him. She was pregnant again and she looked distressed by something, she was very shifty and that made Harry wary of her.
“I heard Arthur when he was calling Jeff through the floo. They were…they were laughing about…is it true that the five miscarriages that you’ve had…that he’s caused them purposefully?”

Harry laid a gentle hand on her swelling belly. “I hope you have a boy.” He said softly, because he’d been ordered not to tell anyone outside of the family about the truth of the miscarriages, but that didn’t mean that he couldn’t lead others to the right conclusion if they were already on the right track and asking the right questions. He didn’t know if Willow counted as family, as she was only Arthurum’s wife, but he wanted to be able to deny saying anything outright if she had been put up to it by Arthurum and Jefferus.

Her eyes widened and she went pale. She looked to her own daughter, Eudoxia, who was just four years old and was being ignored and pushed aside like a bothersome stray, just like Ismay was, despite this little get together being for her second birthday. It wasn’t just their Fathers’ doing it either, everyone there was behaving the same, pushing the two girls out of the way or shushing them harshly if they spoke up. It made Harry’s hand clench tight.

“Arthur would never…he didn’t when we had…” She swallowed hard and looked to her belly. “This baby is a boy, we’re going to call him Tomican. Were all five of them girls?” She asked.

“Yes, the last pregnancy was twins. Identical girls.” Harry said stiffly, trying not to think about it lest he break down in tears. “He’s taken six daughters from me.”

“No one deserves that, not even you.”

Harry looked at her then, narrowing his eyes.

“No even me?” He questioned stiffly.

“I just meant…well, you’re common.” She explained as if being a common person was the worst thing that she could imagine. “And poor.” She added as an afterthought. “But no one deserves this.” She stressed.

Harry hated all of these people, these stuck up, snobby fuckers who thought that they were better than anyone else just because they were rich and had been inbred with one another to stop them from being ‘common’ like him. If only they knew that he had a vault full of gold back at home and that he could rival them all for wealth.

He swallowed hard and he steeled himself. Rescue wasn’t coming, he needed to be the one to rescue
Ismay. He just needed to figure out how.

“Does he hurt you often?”

“Perhaps if you looked closer you’d actually see what is right in front of you.”

“I saw…I saw Penelope slap you and then I wondered. She’s never done that to me, only you.”

“All of them are vile.” Harry said, glaring at Jeff who paid his tiny daughter absolutely no attention. For all the notice he gave of the small girl by his feet she was just a footstool or a side table.

“He ignores her too, Arthur does the same to Dottie and I…I was wondering if it was just Arthur, but…but it’s not.” Willow said, looking to where Harry was staring.

“He never wanted her. We didn’t know her gender until after she was born. This family has a thing against girls being born into it, they see it as shameful, as if having a daughter is the worst possible thing that could ever happen.”

Willow looked upset, but she was silent for several minutes, just sat beside him and then she stood and she left. Harry hoped that she didn’t confront Arthur, or worse, Jeff. He needed to protect Ismay at all costs.

“What were you talking about?” Jeff hissed, coming over immediately once she’d gone.

“Her new baby.” Harry told him. “She wants to name him Tomican.”

Jeff looked thoughtful. “I like that name, I hope she has a girl.”

Ismay ran over to them, cutting off their conversation and Harry could have kissed her for her perfect timing as she clambered onto his lap.

“Mummy, I’m tired now.” She said softly. “Can I go to bed?”
Harry looked at the ancient grandfather clock, then to Jeff. “It’s past her bedtime.” He pleaded, inexplicably sad that Ismay would rather go to bed than stay up late at her own birthday party.

Jeff sneered at Ismay. “Go on then. Stay upstairs afterwards, you’ve already ruined the mood of the party by moping about the place.”

Harry said nothing, he stood and he carried Ismay from the room. Not even stopping when Penny tried to grab him to say goodnight to Ismay. He just walked right on past her and then up the stairs and to Ismay’s bedroom, he didn’t even care if he was punished for it later, he wanted some time by himself, and away from critical, judging eyes, to be with his daughter on her second birthday.

He put her on the massive double bed and delighted in taking off her ridiculous shoes and dress. He hated that she had a double bed too, with its canopy, lace and netting, as if she were some sort of eighteenth century Queen. The bed was too big for her, it was meant for an adult, not a two year old who was still in nappies. It was his biggest fear that she would roll off it in the night because she could really hurt herself as it was much too high. As such he always tucked her in right in the centre of the bed, so she had some room to roll around if she moved in her sleep.

“I’ve got you a surprise.” Harry said. “Can you keep a secret?”

Ismay sat up and nodded. “Yes, Mummy. What is it?”

Harry reached under her pillow and brought out an incredibly rough whittled horse. Or rather it was supposed to have been a horse as Ismay liked horses. He’d made it himself from a ripped up floorboard, with his own claws and he’d smoothened it out with a used metal nail file that he’d found in the bathroom bin. He’d used his claws to cut out clumps of his own hair to make a mane and a tail for it.

“A toy, for me?” She asked, holding it like it was made of glass, tears in her eyes.

“I’m sorry that I can’t get you something else, sweetheart.” He said, his own eyes welling up.

“I love it, Mummy!” Ismay declared as she just stared at it. “It’s my first toy ever! I’ll keep it always.”

Harry swallowed around a thick tongue and he hugged her tightly as he tried to remove the lump in
his throat.

“Remember to hide it from…”

“From them.” Ismay nodded.

She petted the odd angles of the horse and then popped it under her pillow and lay down on it.

“Thank you, Mummy, for the best present ever.”

Harry sniffed hard and kissed her, tucking the duvet up to her chin.

“Sleep now, Ismay. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mummy.”

Harry hummed and then he started singing softly. He stayed until Ismay fell asleep, smoothing out her dark red hair with gentle hands.

With a sigh he stood up and went to Jefferus’ bedroom and he laid on the bed. He hoped that his mate had drunk too much Firewhiskey at the party. He was always more violent when he drank too much, but he could never get an erection while he was drunk either. Harry would rather take the extra beating tonight.

He was in luck and when Jefferus stumbled into the bedroom three hours later, he tried to have sex with him, but he was so drunk that he couldn’t sustain his erection.

“It’s your fault!” Jeff roared at him, trying to hit him, but the alcohol had messed with his depth perception and he hit the headboard instead. “Stop moving!”

Harry hadn’t moved a muscle since Jefferus had stumbled into the room. Jeff was well and truly drunk if he couldn’t even hit him properly. Harry stood up and he left, to Jeff’s angry, slurred shouts and screams. Harry knew that he wouldn’t remember any of this in the morning.

He went to his bedroom and he sighed as he laid in his bed. He smiled as he had escaped one night of torment. Tomorrow would be a new day, of course, but for tonight, he was alright, he hadn’t been
hit or hurt and he hadn’t been raped. Tonight he had escaped relatively unharmed and in his book, it was a good night. He drifted off to sleep with thoughts of his beautiful Ismay in mind and with more forbidden thoughts, these ones of Max.

Harry’s heart felt like it had been torn from his chest as he held Ismay tight to him. The Perrots were going on holiday for two weeks over Christmas. He wasn’t invited.

They were taking Ismay with them and Harry felt bereft of her and she hadn’t even left yet. Jeff had delighted in telling him that they were taking Ismay away from him for two weeks. He’d been ordered not to go outside the house and to not go near any windows, just in case someone, anyone, saw him inside the house and came knocking while they were away and couldn’t limit the damage that he could do.

“Mummy, why you not ready?” Ismay asked him curiously as he knelt in front of her, making sure her coat was buttoned up properly.

“I’m not going, sweetheart.” He told her as emotionlessly as he could.

“What?” Ismay asked, pulling back to look at him. He smiled as naturally as he could.

“I’m not going with you.” He said clearly. “You’re going with Grandfather, Grandmother and your Father.”

“No! I want you to come!” She cried hugging him tightly.

Harry shushed her quickly. “No, it’s okay. I’ll be here when you come back.” He told her, stroking her hair. “You’ll have so much fun.” He lied, knowing that this holiday was going to be torturous for her. It was not a child friendly holiday, it was an adult one, of course.

“I want you to come.” She insisted.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Ethelana. He can’t come.” Penelope sniffed. “Now come along or we’ll miss our Portkey.”
“I’m not going!” Ismay said stubbornly.

“What have you said to her?” Jeff demanded, kicking him over with a powerful blow to the ribs.

“No!” Ismay shrieked, throwing herself on top of him and trying to shield him from her Father with her tiny body.

Harry twisted her around so that he was the one shielding her, just in case, and he held her securely.

“You go now, sweetheart.” Harry said gently, hiding his pain from her. “Go on.”

“I don’t want to leave you.” Ismay cried.

Jeff scoffed and he picked her up roughly and strode over to his parents. He held a crying, screaming Ismay as he touched the Portkey and the Perrots left for their holiday, and that had been the last sight he’d had of his daughter. Her crying and kicking out, trying to get back to him and his heart shattered and he stayed on his knees on the floor, crying his heart out at her distress. He wouldn’t see her for a fortnight and the thought of it about killed him. Those people could do absolutely anything to her in two weeks and he wouldn’t be there to soothe her or protect her. The thought made him feel sick.

“I love you Ismay.” He whispered softly to thin air.

Having the run of the house by himself was a novel experience, but he quickly found a flaw. Jefferus had long ago forbidden him to eat anything unless he was expressly permitted to do so by his mate. Jeff had not lifted this order…so he found that he couldn’t eat anything.

This was a punishment, he was sure of it. Jefferus was punishing him, just because he could, and now he would have to survive for two weeks without food. He knew that Jeff wasn’t trying to kill him. Not after all the trouble there had been to abduct him and get him here and with how long Jeff had waited for a male submissive to come around. He still didn’t have a son, Harry knew that he wouldn’t try to kill him until he had a son at least, this was a punishment intended to make him suffer, because Jeff loved watching him suffer.

He went and he filled his belly from the bathroom sink, he’d been forbidden to enter the kitchen, which was the house-elf’s domain anyway, when he’d first been brought here. He would have to survive now drinking from the bathroom tap…he was thankful that he was a Dracken and used to long periods of fasting thanks to his heat periods and his nesting. He’d gone a month without food in his nest, because his dominant mate hadn’t even tried to feed him. Of course Jefferus hadn’t tried to
feed him, he hadn’t cared and he hadn’t cared about the baby either, from the very same moment that he’d found out that she was a girl.

It was hard, unlike when he was in his nest or on a heat period, his belly growled for food and he found it very difficult to sleep because his hunger pains kept him awake. It was like being back at the Dursleys and that made him cry to himself, into his pillow. What had he ever done to deserve this sort of treatment? He thought he was free of this, he’d had a small taste of freedom and then he was straight back to being abused and hit around like a punching bag. Why? Why was this happening to him? Why couldn’t he have finished his education and then mated to Max? Why couldn’t Ismay have been Max’s?

He cried himself to sleep on most nights, as he had the freedom to do so now, but he always woke up with his head pounding because of it. Why couldn’t everything have just gone to plan for once? He dreamt and fantasised about Max, of his big, strong body. Max could have protected him. Max could have broken Jefferus in half like a twig and those big arms could have wrapped him and Ismay up tightly, to keep them protected and safe. Max would never hurt them, he would never have forbidden Ismay from having toys or order Harry around like a slave.

Harry sniffled and he sobbed into his pillow. Why did he go to that bathroom alone? Why hadn’t he taken Elder Midate with him? Why the hell had he let himself be bullied into going to that meeting in the first place when he hadn’t even wanted to?

Two weeks passed like an eternity, as he struggled through every day with no food, the only relief he got was when he filled his stomach with water from the tap and even then it wasn’t satisfying. He felt himself getting weaker, but he refused to give in, thoughts of Ismay forever in his mind. He had to survive for her. Because without him, he wasn’t sure how long she could last.

He did use his time wisely though, he did scout out every inch of the house, looking for something, anything that could help him to escape with his daughter. He tested the wards, with his downtrodden, dampened magic, but he found nothing to help. He felt so useless and panicked. He just wanted to get away…as soon as he thought those words his Dracken snarled at him and fought back the thoughts of leaving their mate. It didn’t matter how many times he tried to tell his Dracken that they’d been abducted, that they weren’t really mated, his Dracken side ignored him and suppressed those thoughts until all they could think about was their perfect little Ismay, their mate’s child.

It was on his twelfth day that he knew that something was wrong, when he heard voices in the front room. He cautiously, timidly, went to peek into the room to see what was going on. He didn’t even get to the door before Jefferus came striding out of the room and headed right for him.

Harry swallowed and huddled himself up into a standing ball, his arms going around his head and face automatically and he hunched over.

“This is all your fault you little shit!” Jefferus screamed at him. He swung a punch at him with no hesitation, aiming at his unprotected stomach and ribs.

Harry grunted in pain and tried to curl up more. “I don’t know what has happened.” He cried beseechingly, wondering how anything could be his fault when he hadn’t even been with them.
“Don’t you even fucking speak!” Jefferus roared at him.

Harry found himself on the floor, curled up, his knees to his elbows, his arms over his face and head as he just tried to get through the beating.

“That little brat didn’t stop crying and whining for you! I take her on a holiday to the Maldives for two weeks and all she cares about is coming back here to you! We had to leave early because she wouldn’t shut the fuck up and started causing a scene in public! I was so mortified, everyone was looking and staring!”

Harry felt all-encompassing fear then, and he tried to crawl down the hallway to the front room, looking for his baby girl, praying that she was alright and unhurt.

Jefferus let out a roar of rage, gave Harry’s back a hard kick and he stormed off. Harry took a moment to breathe before he forced himself to stand, using the wall as some serious support. He was wobbly on his feet and he bit back a scream as he shuffled forward, trying to reach his baby Ismay.

He almost cried in relief when he saw her, stood in front of Carter and Penny getting a telling off. He hated them all so much and if he could bring his Dracken to do so, or at least get it to butt the fuck out, he would kill them all and free himself and Ismay.

“Mummy!” She cried and she ran to him in those stupid, heeled shoes.

“Ethelana, you get back here right now!” Penny demanded. “We are not done with you yet.”

Ismay just held onto Harry’s knees and refused to let go. It was painful, oh god was it painful, but Harry managed to bend down and pick her up. He held her to his chest, shielding her with his arms and inhaling her delicate, familiar scent. She hadn’t been physically hurt and he could have cried in sheer relief.

“Put her down, she is being punished.” Carter told him sternly.

Harry levelled such a poisonous glare at them both, his lip pulling back from his teeth in such a fearsome snarl that the two humans showed their visible shock with a slight widening of the eyes and a small recoil backwards in fear.

Harry ignored them both, Jeff was his forced dominant mate, not them, it was Jeff’s orders that he had to reluctantly follow, not theirs and he turned his back on them and he walked right out of the room, all but crawling up the stairs with Ismay in his arms. He took them both to the attic, hoping that it would take the vile beasts longer to find him when they would eventually come to find them
both, but for now he struggled up to the far corner of the room and he held his two year old daughter in his arms, trying to erase the twelve days that she had spent with those people alone, where he had no delusions that she had suffered and been neglected. It made his heart ache and he prayed again that someone was coming for him, that he was found. Neither of them would be able to take much more of this treatment. It was going to end up killing them, because, though he hated even the very thought of it, he was near certain that if he died first, likely from a beating that went too far, then Ismay would not survive much longer without him.

Max was sitting on his Grandfather’s settee, just thinking, and staring at the wall opposite him. He was coming to love Nasta and Sixten, who had taken it upon themselves to always cheer him up or to listen to him if he needed to offload his emotions. Nasta had been doing as such since he was a small, rejected sixteen year old and of course Nasta’s best friend had been roped into looking after him too, but these last few years, almost three years now, they had truly become the closest of friends, all three of them. Neither Nasta nor Sixten ever complained about having to babysit his arse for him, not once, not even when he flooed or Apparated over to their houses in the middle of the night needing a shoulder to cry on because of a nightmare or because his thoughts had kept him from sleep. Not even when he came to them in the middle of the day, when he’d hunt them down at their workplaces, to rant and rage as his fear and anger got too much for him to handle alone.

They’d put up with so much from him and they’d just accepted it and helped him to move on. They truly were wonderful people and he would still be suffering with depression and unable to function properly if it weren’t for the both of them helping him and supporting him upright from either side.

They had given him anything and everything that he’d wanted and needed over the years, they’d given him alcohol, hunting trips, guy nights, a shoulder to cry on, a target to shout at and they’d even had sex together a few times, and even once with all three of them. That had been an experience that he wasn’t going to forget in a hurry.

Nasta and Sixten had been so good to him and he would never be able to repay them for all that they’d done for him. He loved them and he knew that whatever he needed, whatever he wanted, he could ask them for it, no matter what it was, what time of the day or night it was, and he was always going to be grateful to them and he would always try his hardest to repay the favour to them both too, because in his own way, he loved them.

So many emotions came with such love, the most prominent of which was guilt. Guilt that he was trying to get back to normal when Harry might be suffering through unknown horrors, guilt that he was falling in love with Nasta and Sixten, which led to the worry that he was forgetting about Harry, that maybe he wasn’t as in love with him as he’d been imagining, or even worse, that he was getting over his infatuation with Harry and was moving on to others, which made him feel almost physically sick.

As such he always held himself back and he never asked Nasta or Sixten to have sex with him again, he let them think that he hadn’t enjoyed himself as much as they had, which only made him feel worse, as he knew that it was a lie. He had enjoyed himself and that made his guilt increase every time he thought of Harry. He was so confused and so distressed and he didn’t even know what to do, so he threw himself into his work instead, drowning himself in potions order after potions order and contract meeting after contract meeting, dining in lavish restaurants to sign another contract or meeting in a stuffy boardroom for the same reason. Either way he always left with yet another
contract to fulfil and he didn’t care how many hours he had to put in at work, he always got those orders done and on time, sometimes even before they were due too, which always kept those contractors happy and coming back for more, which made his bosses happy, not that he cared about them. He had taken his sister, Talia’s, unwitting advice and he’d gone freelance. He no longer had set hours to work or even really any steady employment, but he had never been busier brewing potions. He’d never been so rich either.

Taking his Father’s desperate pleas to heart, Max had limited his services to just five firms, three more than his family had begged of him, but still less than the twelve who had begged for his services after he’d declared himself freelance. He was on a temporary contract with all of them, they had all tried to tie him to their companies with a permanent contract, but he’d refused to sign them. He worked now just a month or two in advance, long enough for him to win the different companies a contract or two and then to fulfil them, before he’d take a break, see how he was feeling and then he’d sign another temporary contract for a month or two and the process would start all over again.

This way of working was very unstable, but it worked for him at the moment, because of his emotional imbalance. He wasn’t stable himself, so he couldn’t work a stable job, he needed something that he could just walk away from with no consequences if he needed to, though he was getting a little better…slowly.

About the only good point to working for five companies as a Potions Master, even on temporary contracts, was the pay. He was now accumulating a vast amount of gold that he couldn’t even hope to spend, not least because he didn’t have the time to spend anything, as such his savings were soaring and that made his Dracken happy at least, because more gold meant that they could provide more for their mate. Max was still hoping that that mate could be Harry and he knew that the therapy and treatment that Harry needed wasn’t going to come cheaply, so he definitely felt better about bringing in more money, because he could explain it away as a fund for Harry. Even if Harry didn’t want to mate to him once he was found, then Max would still offer the gold that he was earning to pay for his therapy, or even to take Harry on a shopping spree for anything that he wanted, or perhaps he would offer to buy Harry his own home if he just needed to be by himself for a while. Whatever Harry needed or wanted, Max was determined to foot the bill if Harry would allow him to. He hoped fervently that Harry would allow him to do so once he was found. Because he had to keep thinking in terms of when Harry was found, the very thought of thinking ‘if” made his heart start beating four times as fast and take up residence in his throat.

Perhaps he did still love Harry after all, perhaps he could love Harry, and Nasta and Sixten too all at the same time. Though Harry would always come first, he would make sure that he would always put Harry first, no matter what, because Harry deserved it and much, much more.

“Wake up!”

Max nearly jumped out of his skin and he turned to glare at his younger brother, Caesar. He let out a small growl too, lifting his top lip and snarling, warning Caesar off.

Caesar, never deterred by anything, especially as he had complete faith that his big brother would never, ever harm him, just fell into Max’s lap and wrapped his arms around his neck.

“Whatcha thinking about?” He asked.
“Nothing.” Max grunted.

“Liar. You’re thinking about Harry again, aren’t you?”

Max sighed. “Yeah. I can’t help it, Caesar. I can’t explain it either.”

“I know. You don’t have to explain it to me. But come on, you’ve thought about him enough for today. Nora wants her Uncle Max to play with her.”

“I’m surprised that you could wrestle her from Amelle’s arms.”

“She’s pregnant again, she can’t fight too hard and as soon as Nora started kicking, I demanded she put the poor girl down under the guise of protecting our unborn baby, which has earned me brownie points I might add.’’

“Have you found out if you’re having a girl or a boy?”

“Not yet, though I’m worried about Amelle. She’s having nightmares and mumbling in her sleep about demon boys. I can’t understand it.”

“Maybe you should coax her to see another therapist, Caesar. I understand about her past, but surely this is a little odd, even by her standards.”

“Her parents don’t seem worried, though Silas does seem worried. But surely if anything was wrong then her parents would be the first to protect their daughter?”

“Caesar, it’s not for them to be her protector anymore, that’s your job now and it has been since you mated to her.” Max explained sternly.

“I know, but I just don’t know what to do for the best! Amelle hated having to go to the therapist, even when it was all new and she knew that she had to go to get better. She won’t agree to go back and with her pregnant, I don’t want to stress her out.”
Max sighed. “Whatever is wrong with her, it is obviously distressing her more to have it not dealt with. Take her to a therapist and stay with her, offer her your support. You stay quiet, let her talk out whatever is wrong with a therapist and give her your support afterwards.”

“Is that what you are doing mentally with Harry?”

Max stood up and dumped Caesar on the floor. He stalked off and went to the kitchen. He ignored his family as he took out a bottle of Firewhiskey, the first bottle of spirit to come to his hand, and he ripped out the cork and he didn’t even bother with a glass, he swigged straight from the bottle.

“Max, sweetie, it’s eleven in the morning.” His Grandmother tried gently.

“I don’t care.” He grunted, taking another hefty gulp. He’d long since gotten used to the burn and the taste of high percentage spirits, he didn’t even shudder or pull a face these days, it went down as smoothly as honey.

“There are children around.” His Mother told him.

Max grunted uninterestedly as he walked back out of the kitchen with his bottle in hand.

“What did you say?” He heard his Father, Richard, hiss at whom he assumed was Caesar. “He was having a rare good day, Caesar, what did you say to him?!”

“He’s just so sensitive about anything to do with Harry. You only have to mention his fucking name and he goes off on one. It’s not even like they were bonded or anything! He knew the submissive for all of an hour and a half and it’s been two and a half years, this is insane! Maybe he’s the one who needs a fucking Mind Healer!”

Max growled and he went out into the garden, gulping twice from the bottle as he went to find the boulder by the stream to sit on. He stayed there, away from the kids in the house, away from his family, away from fucking Caesar and his judgements.

He knew that he’d only spoken to Harry for an hour and a bit. He knew they hadn’t been mated or even bonded, he knew that! He didn’t understand why it had hit him so hard, or how he could say that he loved Harry when they’d met once and had only spoken for a short time, but he did love Harry and he couldn’t help the way that he felt or the way that Harry’s abduction had affected him.
He gulped again from the bottle in his hand and he rubbed at his tear filled eyes. He would give anything for this to have never happened at all. He wouldn’t be a depressive, alcoholic bore who ruined every family get together that his family had if this had never happened. Harry would be safe and happy, he’d still be protected and loved and maybe by now he would have been mated and would be doting upon his first, maybe even his second child, as he’d wanted to be mated the month after his eighteenth birthday, after he’d graduated. Harry would be twenty now in the coming July, yet he had never gotten the chance to graduate as he’d wanted to, he hadn’t chosen his own mate and no one knew how many children he would have currently via his abductor.

The thought made Max feel sick. Harry had planned everything out himself, he had wanted so much out of his life, and someone had taken all of that away from him. Some cruel, sick fucker had taken Harry’s dreams and hopes away from him just because they couldn’t get their own mate like a normal Dracken. They had selfishly destroyed Harry’s life and his future, had taken away and disregarded all of his choices and his wants, all because they didn’t want to go through a mate meeting for a submissive. It made Max so angry that tears spilled from his eyes as he thought of the tatters of Harry’s life. He’d been so headstrong, so stubborn and independent. He’d known what he wanted and how to go about getting it and now he had nothing of that left. All of his plans had been ruined by the selfish actions of one vile individual. It made Max so sad and so angry and he swallowed another several gulps of Firewhiskey consecutively.

He didn’t want to be this way anymore than his family wanted him to be this way, but he couldn’t help himself and that made him angrier and sadder. His free hand clenched into a fist and he threw a hard punch at the tree next to him, taking in the physical pain to try and wipe away the emotional pain. It worked for all of a minute. He punched the tree again.

“Is this is what you’ve become?” His Father, Myron, asked him sadly. “Drinking all day and self-harming?”


“You’re my son, of course I care about you, Max.” Myron replied sternly.

“I’m the family outcast, the embarrassment to the Maddison name, I already know that. Just leave me here to drink in peace, the kids can’t…they can’t see me here.” Max carried on, waving his bleeding knuckles towards the house.

“Max, we love you.” Myron told him, standing beside where he was sat on his rock and wrapping an arm around his neck. “You’re not an outcast or an embarrassment. You’re unhappy, you’re feeling so many negative and destructive emotions, but you can’t help it, we know that. We just want you to take better care of yourself, to try and deal with these emotions in a more constructive and healthy manner. Getting drunk every other day, working yourself into an early grave and smashing up your own body is not the way to deal with these thoughts or emotions, it’s not productive and it’s not helping you.”
“I can’t help it. Drinking makes me numb, working stops me from thinking and the physical pain interrupts the emotional pain, even if it is only fleeting. It’s the only thing that helps.”

“It has been nearly three years, Max. Have you thought at all about going to see a therapist?”

“Caesar’s wrong! I don’t need a Mind Healer!” He slurred angrily.

“So you did hear that, I wasn’t sure.” Myron sighed.

“I heard him. The spindly rake is lucky I don’t snap him in half.”

Myron covered his face and sighed. “Don’t threaten your brother’s life. I fully believe that you do need to see a Mind Healer, Max. I’ve been saying so for almost three years now. Can you at least consider the idea?”

“I don’t want to forget about Harry or have anyone undermine the way I feel for him!”

“No one is going to do that, Max. It’s not possible.” Myron told him gently. “We’re not going to forget about him, we’re not going to stop looking for him and no one is going to diminish what you feel for him. But this self-harming, overworking and alcoholism needs to stop. You’re going to end up killing yourself and I can’t allow you to do so.”

“If I start thinking differently, then I might forget.”

“Max, you claim to love Harry. If you can’t remember him or that love just because you’ve spoken about such things to a Mind Healer, then it isn’t love that you have with him but something entirely different.”

“Like what?” Max demanded.

“Something more like obsession.” Myron told him. “Instead of true love for Harry, you’d be confusing it with obsession. It would be that you’re obsessing over Harry so much purely because he
"was taken almost from under your very nose. Are you confused over your love for Harry? Do you only believe that you love Harry because you can’t stop thinking of him?"

Max truly considered what his Father was saying, pushing back the automatic, furious denial that he wanted to shout out. Was he only thinking of Harry so much because he was obsessing over what he could have done differently that night?

"No, Dad. That’s not it.” He said, throwing the bottle of Firewhiskey away and thrusting his hand through his hair. “I do think about what I could have done differently that night, of course I do, we all do. I think about how I shouldn’t have let Harry go off anywhere with anyone, and yes, I know that Elder Messana is an Elder, but he’s not a submissive chaperone, he more than proved that he wasn’t up to the task of looking after a submissive in the way he dealt with Harry going to the bathroom. I should have gone with him, or I should have told Elder Midate and had him go with Harry as his actual official chaperone. I think of all of that and more, Dad, but…but more often I’m thinking of what we could be doing together if…if that night had gone differently. I would have respected his wish to finish his schooling first, so we’d have mated a year and a half ago if he’d wanted me as much as I want him. We might have had our first child by now, maybe even our second or he might still be pregnant. I…it drives me mad, Dad, thinking of such things. If only I’d touched him that night, bonded to him, I could have found him straight away.”

Myron sighed and he hugged his son tighter. He bent down and kissed that chestnut hair that was so much like his own, only Max had neglected his hair again and the curls that Myron loved so much were growing in again. They made Max look sweeter, younger, more innocent and it reminded Myron of Max as a young child, back when he was still small enough to bounce on his knee, back when Max was still giggling and he wasn’t crushed by such heavy burdens of the cruel world. It was a lot simpler back then to care for his son, to protect him and shield him from such awful things, and Myron was at a loss as to what he should do for his son now. He felt so utterly useless as he couldn’t help his son when Max needed him so very much.

“Please speak to a Mind Healer, Max. Harry is going to need you when we find him. It’s not fair to him that we need to split the attention and support that he will need between you as well.”

“It’s been almost exactly three years since he was abducted, Dad, and no one has heard so much as a whisper of him!” Max cried out. “Everyone already thinks that I’m mad for clinging onto him so tightly for so long. The only ones who don’t think so are Nasta and Sixten!”

“I don’t think as such, and neither do your Mother and Dad Richard.” Myron told him sternly. “Your Grandmothers and Grandfathers don’t think so either.”

“Granddad Zack called me ridiculous for still trying to cling to Harry.” Max admitted.
Myron cursed his Father-in-law to hell and back and swore to punch him in the head the next time he saw him, his husband’s father or not.

“Don’t listen to him, he raised your Dad Richard, that was bound to have addled him slightly.”

Myron almost let out a relieved breath when that brought a small smile to Max’s face.

“At least Granddad Chris hit him for it.” Max said.

Myron rubbed his eyes and wondered how Richard had ever been raised to adulthood under the care of Zachary and Christopher Seppen. The two human men were wonderful people, they really were. They were very kind, caring and loving men, as such their three children, Jaime, Katie and Richard were wonderful, loving people, but they had treasured their youngest son, often to excess. Thus Richard was a very immature, childish man at times who had never really grown up and some of the things he’d done over the years as a result of that…they made Myron’s heart skip a beat in fear, even now, years later.

“Don’t listen to others, Max. Your love for Harry is a little overwhelming for other people to understand, but they don’t need to understand it, you are not living for them. You are living for yourself and as long as you understand why you feel the way that you do, then no one else matters. Just remember that we love you, Max, and we always will.”

“Thanks, Dad.” Max sighed softly and turned into the hug, burying his face in his Father’s chest. He truly did feel better now.

“Promise me that you’ll see a Mind Healer, Max. You need to talk to someone. I won’t watch you kill yourself with alcohol, overwork and self-harming.”

“Okay, but if I don’t like it, I’m not going back.” Max relented.

“Do you want me to come with you?” Myron offered.

Max shook his head. “No, I need to do this on my own.”
Myron was so proud of his oldest son in that moment and he gave Max another kiss to the head.

“Come on, you might think that you’re the outcast of the family, but those kids in there haven’t stopped asking after their Uncle Max.”

“I’m only an Uncle to Eleonora.” Max said.

“That has never stopped your baby cousins from calling you Uncle. They love you, Max and they know that something is wrong with you, and they just want to make you feel better. You were always laughing and joking with them, giving them piggyback rides and spinning them around. They miss you.”

Max nodded and he rubbed at his itchy eyes before looking at his oozing, blood encrusted hand.

“I think I better sort this out first.” He sighed.

Myron heaved a deeper sigh of his own and he rolled back his sleeve to expose his forearm. With nary a thought he had his claws out and he’d used just the one to slice a short, deep line into his own arm before holding it out to his son.

Max didn’t protest as he put his lips to the small wound to drink the blood offered to him. He pulled back after a few moments and looked at his healed hand with a smile. He did love being a Dracken sometimes.

Myron pulled out his wand and after a quick spell, the wound he’d made in his own arm was gone. Another quick spell and the blood was gone too, leaving behind nothing, not even a scar or any sort of mark to show where the wound had once been. He rolled his sleeve back down again. He threw the same arm around his son and dragged him away from the rock by the stream and towards the house.

He actually felt accomplished for once where Max was concerned. He’d gotten Max to finally agree to see a Mind Healer, so hopefully his self-destructive behaviour and his dependency on alcohol to numb his thoughts and emotions would finally be sorted for good and they could start building Max back up to the man that he always had the potential to be. The man that he had been growing into before Harry had been abducted three years ago.

Not that Myron blamed Harry for Max’s change in behaviour, of course not, the poor boy had not abducted himself after all. The fault lied with whomever had taken Harry in the first place and had now, almost three years later, kept him a prisoner for that length of time. If Myron ever got his hands on them for a mere five minutes, oh what he would like to do to those people. They were the sort of scumbags that he’d truly never get sick of beating over and over.
With any luck though, both Max and Harry would be safe very soon, Max because he was finally agreeing to see a Mind Healer, and Harry because he would be found now with the Elders new plan, and the cooperation of all the Elders in every country, to search every single Dracken household worldwide. It might take them a while to get through all households and properties and to search them thoroughly, but Harry would eventually be found and then with endless support and help, Harry could finally heal.

Harry was pregnant again. It was his seventh pregnancy and he was dreading the scan. He was so anxious and fearful that he couldn’t rest or relax. He kept Ismay closer to himself and he watched her as closely as he was allowed.

His personal Healer, Frand, who knew him as Erickian, or Kian as Harry insisted on being called in public, had confirmed his pregnancy with a weary sigh five days after his heat period had ended.

‘Try not to lose this one.’ The Healer had told him sternly. ‘Be more careful and take better care of yourself and your unborn child, like you’re supposed to.’

Harry had wanted desperately to scream at him that Jefferus had kicked the previous six babies, over five pregnancies, from him because they were girls, but he had been ordered to never mention it outside of the family. His Dracken obeyed easily, placidly, and so he had to sit here and take the blame for his five miscarriages onto his own shoulders, instead of telling the Healer where the blame truly lied…on Jefferus fucking Perrot.

His gender scan was in a few days and he wasn’t looking forward to it, because no matter what he’d kept threatening to the Perrots, he knew that he could never cause himself or his unborn baby any harm, his Dracken side wouldn’t allow it. He hoped that he wasn’t having a son, because that could threaten Ismay’s life. But then he also didn’t want another daughter, because he knew exactly what was going to happen to her as soon as Jeff found out her gender. His only hope had been for his heat period to be infertile, or better yet, to have not happened at all. But it had happened and it had been fertile and now he was pregnant for the seventh time. He hoped that the baby wasn’t displaying during any of the scans and kept its gender a secret until birth, like Ismay had, perhaps then he could keep this one too.

“Mummy, can we go to the attic?” Ismay asked him.

Harry swallowed hard, trying to cover his heartbreak that his two, almost three, year old daughter wanted to hide away in an attic in what was supposed to be her own home.

“Of course.” He said softly, picking her up and leaving her bedroom, where they’d been singing
songs that they’d made up to one another, and taking her immediately to the attic.

He knew why she wanted to go to the attic too. For her second birthday he’d given her a handmade wooden horse that he’d carved out of a floorboard that he’d pulled up and shaped with his claws and a metal nail file that he’d pilfered from a bathroom bin. They kept it hidden in the attic, under the patch of carpet in the corner, from where Harry had pulled up the floorboard to make the horse, much like his old hiding place back at Privet Drive, only his had been under a loose floorboard and Ismay’s hiding place here was a flap of carpet. But the horse was Ismay’s only toy and she liked stroking it and holding it. He’d even used his own hair to give the toy horse a mane and tail, Ismay liked brushing it with her own comb.

He smiled as they reached the attic and he closed the door and placed Ismay down on the floor. She ran straight to the far corner and lifted the flap of carpet, put her hand into the hole underneath and pulled out her precious horse. She’d named it Cloppity shortly after Harry had first given it to her almost a year ago now.

Harry sat by the door, for security reasons, as the very last thing that he wanted was for Ismay to be caught with the toy and for it to be taken from her when it was all that she had, he didn’t care about the punishment that he’d get for making and giving her the toy in the first place, he only cared that it would be taken from her and how much it would devastate her to lose Cloppity when she loved the crude thing so much. If anyone came up the stairs, he would hear them and call out a warning for Ismay to hide the horse back in the hole, he would also be the first thing the person coming through the door would see, as they’d near enough trip over him as soon as they walked in, so their attention would immediately be on him and not on Ismay.

He smiled as he sat and watched Ismay play with Cloppity and he felt a sort of peace up here with just her for company. It wouldn’t last, of course not, nothing in this place was ever peaceful or calm for very long, but for now, it was a perfect moment.

“Mummy, Cloppity says we can fly!” Ismay said excitedly.

Harry smiled. “All you need to do is close your eyes and think of the sky.” Harry told her.

Ismay did as he’d said and she giggled. “I can fly!”

He smiled wider as he watched her as she spun around and made the horse dance through the air too. Harry sighed and swallowed hard against the urge to cry, squeezing back the tears that threatened to choke him. He hadn’t cried in front of another person in years now. If only things could have been different, if only Ismay had been Max’s.

“Mummy, are you okay?” Ismay asked him concernedly, a tiny hand touching his face. He hadn’t noticed that he’d slipped into his own thoughts…he hadn’t noticed that Ismay had looked at him and had immediately known that something was wrong from the expression on his face.
Harry covered that tiny hand with his own and opened his eyes to meet her concerned hazel gaze.

“I’m fine, my love.”

“Does your baddie lip hurt?” She asked him, referring to the scabbed over split lip that he had.

“No, I don’t feel it anymore, love.” He said honestly. He was so used to being in daily pain, and having his emotions and his own thoughts tormenting him, that such trifle injuries didn’t even register to him anymore.

Ismay still bent forward and kissed it gently. Harry hated that this was so normal for her, that him having cuts and bruises all over his face was normal to her, because ever since he’d been brought here, to this accursed house, it had been normal. Harry didn’t think he’d ever been without a bruise or a cut since he’d come here, and since he was now pregnant, as per usual those cuts and bruises were centred around his head and face.

Harry gave his daughter a gentle hug and sent her back to play with her horse while she could, reminding her softly that they couldn’t stay up in the attic for very long. That got her moving, darting back to the open space in the centre, Cloppity in hand, her little heeled shoes clicking on the floor. How Harry hated those heeled shoes.

“Where are you hiding?!”

Harry jumped, his heart in his throat as he heard Jefferus yelling from the floor below.

“Quick, Ismay. Put Cloppity back in the hole.”

Ismay had already rushed to do so and she covered the hole with the flap of carpet carefully and lovingly before hurrying back to him.

Harry picked her up and hurried out of the attic and down to the floor below. Harry heard Jeff yelling for him again and he hurried to where he heard him.

“I’m here.” He said, trying not to pant or wheeze.
“Where were you?!” Jeff shouted at him, looking furious.

“In the attic.” Harry answered, placing his daughter down on the floor beside him, putting his own body between her and her Father, just in case. “Ethelana and I were sorting out those boxes that you asked me to look at.”

Jeff blinked, as if he had forgotten all about those boxes, which usually happened as he often gave Harry orders to do things just to torment him or keep him out of the way, and then he nodded. “Fine. Ethelana, it’s time for your violin lesson, go to your Grandmother, she’s in the drawing room waiting with your instructor.”

“But the violin makes my fingies hurt.” She sniffled, wiggling her fingers for emphasis.

Jeff grit his teeth and ground them together. “Firstly, its fingers you dull girl, second, I don’t care if it does hurt, you’re learning the violin! You have nothing else going for you, you might as well be a musician! Now don’t ever question me, do as you’re told and go to the drawing room!”

Harry had to clench his hand harder and he touched Ismay gently on the shoulder.

“Go on, love. I’ll see you after your lesson.”

“But, Mummy, I don’t like it!”

“You are testing my patience!” Jefferus roared at her and she visibly jumped in fright.

Harry immediately stood in front of her and spread his arms wide, shielding her and making himself the target instead.

Harry took a punch to the head, but he was caught before he hit the floor, because of the pregnancy. Ismay screamed and started crying and Harry fought his way out of Jeff’s hold and hugged her tightly.

“Run along now, go for your violin lesson.” He urged her.
“I didn’t…didn’t mean for you…you to be…be hit!” She sobbed hysterically.

“I know, my love. It’s alright, I’m fine. Run along now.”

Ismay did as he’d said this time, obviously fearing that he’d be hit again if she refused, and she hurried off, all the while looking over her shoulder with tears rolling down her soft cheeks.

As soon as she was gone, a hand gripped his hair and yanked him up to his feet.

“Come with me.”

Harry didn’t have a choice as he was being yanked by his hair and he started dry sobbing. He couldn’t remember the last time that he’d felt the relief of having a proper cry.

“Stop that immediately!” Jeff snapped.

Harry did as ordered, he had no choice but to obey, as he was pulled to Jeff’s bedroom and he knew what was going to happen, but he was powerless to stop it. Jeff didn’t even remove his tunic, but then he didn’t have to as Harry hadn’t been given underwear in over three years now, Jeff just lifted the tunic up at the back, bent Harry over the side of the bed and pushed into him.

Swallowing against the wash of bile that swept up his throat from the pain, Harry tried to remove himself from the situation by thinking of Hogwarts. He pictured all of the corridors, the classrooms, retraced the secret passageways and tried to picture the grounds and the towers. The pain was awful, yet familiar, the yanking of his hair was new and added a new layer to the pain that he was already feeling.

“Oh fuck, you feel amazing!” Jeff grunted and pushed into him harder while pulling his head back by his hair.

Harry breathed through the intrusion, trying to ignore when Jeff slipped a hand down to stroke him. He hated it when Jeff made him cum. He didn’t want to get off while being raped by the man who had forcibly mated to him via a potion.

He couldn’t help reacting to the stimulus and that made him feel worse. He pleaded silently for it to be over soon and he knew that if he hadn’t been ordered not to cry out or make a sound, he would have been doing just that. Jeff reached his own orgasm and the wetness inside him made Harry feel sick. At least as soon as he orgasmed Jeff let go of him and pushed him towards the door.

Harry didn’t even look back as Jeff fell onto his bed with a happy sigh and relaxed back to enjoy his
afterglow. Harry went right to the bathroom down the hall, stripped himself off and climbed into the shower, forcing back his erection and locking his knees to keep upright. Away from Jeff he let his body go into shock as he tried to wash the grimy feeling from his bruised skin. He was so numb to this sort of treatment, so used to it, that it just didn’t faze him anymore. He swallowed hard as he cleaned himself up, washed himself off and then slid out of the bath, not even caring that he knocked his baby bump on the side of the bath as he did so.

He and his Dracken had been pregnant so often in the last few years with no baby to speak for it that this new pregnancy barely registered on his Dracken’s radar. They wanted the baby, but they had lost so many over the years, would they lose this one too? Only if it was a girl, Harry thought to himself sadly as he touched his barely there bump. He didn’t know what he wanted more, a girl so that he wouldn’t have to have a second child with Jefferus, or a boy just so that he wouldn’t have to suffer yet another miscarriage, what would become his sixth miscarriage. It was a torturous dilemma for him and both were as equally horrific, but if he could choose, it would be to have a daughter, as a boy would threaten Ismay’s life. Jeff had alluded to such before. He’d cruelly whispered to Harry that they lived in a big house, and she was a small girl and that the Healers already believed that Harry was a spoilt and pampered prat and that he was neglectful towards his children, resulting in his many miscarriages. They would certainly believe a spun story of the Perrots going out to the garden for some tea, leaving Harry and ‘Ethelana’ inside, only to find that she’d fallen down the stairs and broken her neck under his lacklustre, neglectful care.

Harry’s Dracken side had gone feral at hearing that and they had tried to attack Jeff for the threat against his child, his venomous claws swiping and trying to catch just a pinch of skin to kill this filth who had paid for him to be abducted and brought here, to be raped and beaten daily over the last three and a half years, and who was now trying to kill his beautiful daughter. He would not have his child threatened, he would not have her life toyed with like his own. He would kill all three of them first.

His furious assault had only ended when Carter had cast a very powerful body bind curse on him and then forced a sleeping potion into his mouth.

Harry had woken up eleven hours later, groggy, confused and tense. He remembered the threat to Ismay, but when he’d rushed to her bedroom to find her sleeping peacefully, unharmed and safe, he had calmed down a little. He didn’t forget the threat to her, but his Dracken was calm and his human side was back in control, he was no longer feral. He kept her closer to him and he watched her and the Perrots endlessly, he watched all three of the Perrots with such a look of hate and violent consideration that the two humans especially kept dropping their gaze away from him and he could tell that it was unnerving them, especially as he would sometimes lift his top lip and snarl at them, even if it was silently. He wondered if they ever regretted paying for him to be abducted, now knowing what a disturbance and disruption it was to their previously quiet and structured lives and with only the one, inferior (in their opinion) granddaughter, to show for their trouble.

They had complained to Jefferus about his snarling and he’d been ordered to stop, but because it was his Dracken’s base behaviour, no matter how often Jeff ordered him to stop doing it, his Dracken could no more stop doing it than he could stop breathing, so Harry continued lifting his top lip at the two humans, pinning them with a dead eyed, considering stare, almost like a wild animal that was sizing them up for a meal. Harry was older now, he was twenty, not a naïve sixteen year old anymore, he knew that they feared him, and as often as he could get away with, he stared at them, he snarled at them, he licked at his four fangs and played with his venomous claws…they were afraid of him, and it was the best feeling in the world to him, after they had abused and beaten him so often for so long, kept him enslaved and downtrodden, after hurting his own child, it felt great to get a small dose of revenge, but his revenge wouldn’t be complete until they were utterly terrified of him and then dead. He would kill them slowly too, and he made sure that he conveyed as such through his
dead eyed stares and bass snarls. He was older now and he would protect Ismay with all that he had. He might have been beaten and broken, but he was far from giving up, not while his daughter still drew breath would he ever give up and leave her alone to the mercy of this family. Not while Ismay was still alive would he ever leave her.

Harry dried himself off and made his way up two floors to his bedroom, finding a fresh tunic, that looked exactly like the one he’d just taken off, and he checked that he was no longer bleeding or dribbling. He wasn’t.

He went to the drawing room and he slipped inside and he sat in on Ismay’s violin lesson. She was completely hopeless at it, but that didn’t stop her instructor, some dried up, old prune of a woman, from shrieking at his two year old daughter to do it correctly, as she’d been shown, all under the stern, overly critical gaze of Penelope, who had likely expected ‘Ethelana’ to have picked up a violin for the first time and immediately started playing Bach’s Chaconne.

He took savage pleasure when Penny turned slightly and caught sight of him. She jumped a foot in the air and Harry could almost smell the fear rolling off of her. He smiled at her, as he had at Ismay’s second birthday party when she’d merely slapped him across the face, the act more like a tickle to him these days. He made sure to think of all the things that he would do to her, from ripping out her iron grey hair to stripping the skin from her body piece by piece, a small patch at a time. He could tell that she’d seen the violence reflected in his eyes when she shivered and quickly turned away from him. Like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, a childish thought that if she couldn’t see him, he would no longer be sending her such looks.

Ismay’s violin lesson didn’t last much longer, not when Harry started laughing at Ismay’s attempts and she had started giggling with him, so happy to have made her Mother laugh…after that things had gone downhill quickly as she’d stopped trying to work on her lesson and instead she’d started making the most awful noises that she possibly could on the violin, just to make Harry laugh. The lesson had ended abruptly when she’d broken the bow in her hands, Ismay had pressed the bow so hard into the strings of the violin that the head of the bow had snapped clean off. She had looked terrified, darting a glance to the shocked, horrified teacher and her mortified grandmother, until Harry had laughed loudly. She had run to him in fear, for his protection, but he’d kissed her and he had held her tightly. He’d taken the violin from her tiny, trembling hands and he’d thrown it at the stand that was holding the music sheets that Ismay was meant to be learning and he watched it topple with a loud crash of wood on metal as the violin collided with it.

“That was a very good lesson, my love. Well done.” He told his daughter with a grin. “I can’t wait for your piano lesson in a few days. I always did wonder how attached those keys were and how easy it would be to rip them off.”

With that parting shot he took Ismay’s hand and pulled her from the drawing room.

“Will I be in trouble, Mummy?” She asked him.

“Not from me, my love.” He told her softly. “I thought it was very funny.”
Ismay smiled then, before she stopped and frowned, looking worried. “I don’t want to be here anymore, Mummy. I want to leave. I want it to be just me and you on our own.”

Harry’s heart seized in his chest and he felt like he couldn’t breathe. He had been telling Ismay since before she was born that he would get them away from here, from this house and those loathsome people, but three years on and he still hadn’t managed it. This was the first time that she had ever told him that she wanted to leave this place, leave her Father and his family.

“I don’t want to be here either, my love.” He said softly. “We will be free one day.”

“But when, Mummy?”

“I don’t know, my love. I can’t leave here, your Father won’t let me.”

“Should I tell people that your name is Harry? Will that help?”

Harry’s eyes widened and he looked down at her in shock, his face bleaching pale. “Where did you hear that name?” He asked, terrified. He had been ordered, as soon as he was mated, to never even mention the name Harry ever again, he had never uttered it out loud since. Where had Ismay even heard it? If Jefferus even suspected that Ismay knew his real name…

“I heard Grandmother and Grandfather talking when I was going to your room. I thought your name was Erickian? That’s what my uncles and aunts call you.”

“You know how they call you Ethelana, but I call you Ismay?” Harry said to her, trying to lead her to the answer, as he couldn’t tell her outright.

“Is it like that? Do they call you Erickian, but your name is Harry? I like Harry better, like I like Ismay better.”

Harry nodded, so proud of his intelligent girl, but he was terrified too, if Jefferus ever found out, if anyone ever found out, she would be killed to hide the secret of who he really was. He couldn’t allow it.
“If I tell people, they’ll know who you are and they’ll come for you. We could be free, Mummy!”

“If you told the wrong person, my love, they’d hurt you.” He said, not trying to frighten her, but to make her understand the seriousness of the secret surrounding his real name.

“Grandmother and Grandfather said that people were looking for you, that they were searching houses.”

Harry shushed her quickly, looking around the corridor they were stood in with wide, frightened eyes.

“Not here, my love. To the attic, come on.”

Harry picked her up and hurried to the attic, his heart was beating a mile a minute and his mind was racing. The people back home hadn’t given up on him. They were searching for him, even three and a half years later, they were still searching for him. His heart soared and he started quaking in fear, relief, terror and joy. He was torn between the fear of Ismay knowing this secret and the knowledge that there were still people searching for him, that they were getting closer to finding him. They really could be free very soon. All of this could be over soon and this ordeal would finally be over.

He closed the attic door and scouted every inch of the attic space as Ismay ran to the secret corner and pulled out Cloppity.

“Now, tell me what Grandmother and Grandfather were saying.” He coaxed gently.

“They were worried, Mummy. There are people searching houses for Harry, and Grandfather said that that was you. Grandmother said for Grandfather to try to stop it, but he said that it would be supicious if he tried too hard.”

“Suspicious, love.” Harry corrected gently.

Ismay nodded. “Grandfather said that he tried to protect his family by using his name and gold, but that it wouldn’t work for long.”
Harry almost passed out with relief and he kissed Ismay gently on the mouth.

“We won’t be here for much longer.” He told her and she grinned happily. “Those people looking for me are going to help us get away, my love.”

“It’ll be just you and me?”

Harry nodded. “Just me and you. No more stupid clothes, no more dance or instrument lessons, no more hitting or shouting. Just us, with cookies, cakes and Disney.”

“Oh, I can’t wait to see Disney for the first time!” She giggled excitedly.

Harry smiled, he remembered being a lonely little boy locked in the cupboard under the stairs and Dudley demanding that Petunia put a Disney video in for him. He remembered listening to them as a young child, but his Ismay didn’t even have that. He would give her anything and everything that she ever wanted, he just hoped that they were rescued very soon. His heart was beating so fast that he was worried that it might burst, but he couldn’t get his hopes up, the Perrots had hidden him in plain sight for three years and three months now, they were very resourceful people, if anyone could squirm their way out of this, then it was them. His heart wouldn’t take the devastation of having rescue come so close, only for it to slip through his fingers because of the Perrots political influence or even a payoff. It would finally completely destroy him, heart and soul, he knew it, but still he couldn’t help but nurture the growing hope in his heart that finally…finally, they were going to be rescued, that they could finally get away from these people, from this accursed house. He wanted so much for this to be real, for it to be soon, he wanted it so much, and he couldn’t prevent his hope from rising.

He held Ismay tightly and kissed her head, even as he tried to tell himself not to put so much faith in the thought of rescue, he couldn’t help but hope deeply, from the bottom of his heart, that this ordeal for the both of them would be over very, very soon.

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They were having a boy. Harry swallowed past the sour bile that kept trying to climb up his throat. He’d gone for his sixth week scan and the baby had been displaying proudly. The Healer had delighted in telling them that they were having a boy.

Jefferus was in such a good mood that he had allowed Harry to eat more than he was usually allowed at dinner. It was almost a full plate of food and Harry was feeling full and sluggish afterwards, because it was the most food he’d been allowed to eat at one time in roughly forty months.
He’d been forced to interact with the Perrots after dinner, including their older sons and their wives and children, who had all come around to celebrate the joyous news of a boy as Jefferus had called them and invited them to the celebratory party. Harry was sat next to Jefferus, being snuggled up like they were oh so happy with the joyous news. It was all Harry could do to stop the despair that he was feeling from showing on his face. Every time he tried to move or get up, Jeff would pull him back into his arms and pinch the skin at his ribs, a warning to stop and to stay still as they paraded as such a loving couple. Harry just wanted to go to Ismay, to hold his poor daughter who was being ignored and pushed about like a stray dog. She didn’t even try to interact with her own family members anymore, she had learnt long ago that they wouldn’t talk to her or interact with her. It made Harry so very sad for her.

An hour later and Harry had finally been let go when Jeff had wanted a drink and moved away from him at last. Harry was hovering in a corner of the room, trying to avoid Jeff so that he wasn’t pulled back into his arms and forced to parade around as a normal couple, when Willow, Arthurum’s wife, sidled up to him. She’d had her boy, Tomican, and the baby was currently toddling his way around the floor, his Father keeping a close eye on him, smiling proudly. He was ignoring his own daughter, Eudoxia, even as the little girl tried to speak to him. These people made him feel sick.

“I’m glad you finally have a boy.” Willow told him, smiling tightly.

“Jeff is threatening to kill Ethelana as soon as he’s born.” Harry told her, trying to control his Dracken side as it raged inside him at the threat to his baby girl, who was trying to play with her cousins to no avail, as they were all ignoring her like their parents, the fucking little snobs.

“Surely he wouldn’t.” Willow said immediately, even as she looked to Jefferus, proudly showing the scan picture to everyone, bleating on about his perfect son who wasn’t even born yet. Harry wondered if he expected their son to be eating with a knife and fork at eight months old, or debate politics with him. Perhaps their perfect son would come out of the womb already walking and singing concerto. If one listened to Jeff then that’s exactly what would happen.

“He’s not Arthur, Willow. He is not his brother.” Harry hissed. “He’s already beaten six girls from me, he’s using Ethelana to control me, as soon as this boy is born, he will kill her and use the boy to control me instead. He makes it no secret that he doesn’t even like her.”

“I…I can’t…she doesn’t…she’s just a baby.” Willow warbled.

“Ethelana, stop that!” Jefferus roared at the small girl as she picked up a discarded toy from the floor that belonged to her cousins.

Harry’s fists and jaw clenched.
“Why can’t she…?” Willow whispered as Ismay dropped the toy as if it had burned her hands the moment that she’d heard her Father’s voice.

“She has no toys. He doesn’t allow her to play with anything. It’s a form of punishment because she was born a girl.”

Willow bit her lip and swallowed hard. Ismay came pelting over to him, in her lacy, puffed up dress that looked like a vintage ball gown, and her stupid heeled shoes that clicked over the wooden floor with every step. Her hair had been meticulously styled and pinned up and Harry hated it so fucking much as he held her tightly to him and calmed down her fear.

“It’s okay, he won’t hurt you while I’m here.” Harry told her softly.

“What if you aren’t here, Mummy?” She asked in a tiny, scared voice.

Harry swallowed. All he could do was shush her and hum gently, not answering, which was telling in itself. Willow sniffed beside him and Harry saw her subtly wiping away tears.

“Why you sad, Auntie Willow?” Ismay asked curiously.

“You shouldn’t be in this place.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he tried to shush Ismay, but she was only two after all, she didn’t understand the danger.

“We will be free soon.” She told Willow, whose head snapped up to him, his face now several shades paler and his eyes wide with fear.

“You’ve found a way out? I’m so glad. The way Jeff speaks of you and Ethelana…” She trailed off, shaking her head. “If he’s going to hurt her, then you need to leave. Why has it taken so long?”

“Daddy orders Mummy to stay here.”
Understanding dawned on Willow’s face. “Oh, Merlin. A submissive Dracken has to follow their dominant’s orders, I remember Arthur telling me that once, when Jeff said for you to drop the drink that you were holding and you just let it go. He was shouting at you because the glass had smashed on the floor and I asked Arthur why you hadn’t just put it on the table and he told me then that a submissive Dracken had to follow the orders of their dominant to the letter. He’s ordering you to stay here!”

“Do you truly think that I would stay here, keeping my daughter in danger and fear, letting myself be beaten and raped daily, if I had the option of just getting up and leaving?” Harry demanded in a harsh whisper.

Willow went pale and swayed slightly. “I…I knew you were slapped now and then, I didn’t know that you were being beaten and…and raped! I’m so sorry, Erickian.” She said desperately.

“Mummy’s real name is Harry.”

Harry closed his eyes and prayed that Willow was too shocked over the beatings and rape to hear her.

“What?!” Willow hissed under her breath. “The Dracken boy from Britain that everyone is looking for?”

Ismay nodded seriously. “They’re coming for us and we’ll be free, Auntie Willow.”

“I…I…oh my.” She gasped. “I don’t…it all makes so much sense now!”

“Don’t tell anyone, especially not Arthur!” Harry hissed at her.

“He doesn’t know!” Willow insisted hotly…rather loudly and Harry immediately darted a look around the room.

“No, he doesn’t.” Harry agreed, once assured that no one was paying them any attention, and that settled Willow down again. “Only Jeff, Carter and Penny know the truth, no one else knows. I’m forbidden from even mentioning my old name. I can’t even tell anyone what happened. I’m not
allowed to leave the house, I have to wear these stupid tunics and no underwear and no shoes…”

“But, they said that that’s what a submissive is supposed to wear.”

Harry was shaking his head before she’d even finished. “Of course it’s not true. It’s to stop me from being human, to stop me from running. It’s a way to control me, to keep me here, Willow.”

“This, it’s not right.” She said.

“You can’t tell any of them, they’ll kill you for knowing the secret and they’ll kill my daughter. I can’t allow it.”

“They…they wouldn’t hurt me.” She laughed off nervously.

“Do you know what will happen to them if this secret is found out? Death would be a blessing.” Harry told her firmly. “They would rather kill you than have this secret get out. It’s more than their lives are worth if my real identity is found out, if I am found. If they thought that you knew…if they thought that my daughter knew, you’d both be in terrible danger, Willow, they cannot risk this secret getting out!”

Harry sucked in a breath after his little outburst, as he darted a fearful look around, only to catch sight of Jeff striding over.

“We were talking about Tomican and how well he’s progressing and how my unborn son is coming on so well.” Harry hissed urgently.

“What…?”

“What are you doing all the way over here?” Jeff asked through a forced smile.

“It’s just a little quieter over here.” Harry said meekly, clutching Ismay tightly.

“What were you talking about?” Jeff demanded of him.
“I…”

“Tomican, of course.” Willow smiled. “He’s coming on so well! I was just saying that your new son would be the same. Erickian agreed, he’s feeling very strong and he believes that it’s the baby making him that way. Your son will be very strong, he must be a Dracken.” She flattered.

Some of the tension in Jeff’s broad shoulders eased off and he smiled then, holding Harry around the waist and putting his hand over his belly, completely ignoring Ismay.

“He’s going to be perfect, our Bertrandus. He’s going to be so clever and strong, not like our other one.” He sneered.

Ismay gasped and Harry wrapped his free hand around her and hugged her to the other side of himself, even as Willow looked horrified. Apparently Arthur did not take his neglect of his own daughter, Eudoxia, as far as Jeff did with Ismay.

“Go away.” Jeff glowered at her and Ismay sniffed twice before hurrying away. Harry’s hands clenched into fists.

“Don’t speak to her like that.” He glared.

A fist clenched tight into his hair. “You don’t speak to me like that.” Jeff spat back as he yanked on his hair.

“Jefferus, he’s pregnant with your son!” Willow told him sternly. “Be more careful, especially as he’s prone to miscarriage.”

“He is prone to miscarriage, yes.” Jeff said, sounding pleased that others were also blaming Harry for the destruction of the babies that he’d beaten out of him.

Jeff petted Harry like a dog then, in a parody of care, and Harry wanted to tear his hand off, so that he couldn’t touch his body, and he wanted to jam his claws through Jeff’s eyes.
“Exactly, so you need to be careful with him, the last thing you need is for him to lose your first son.” Willow announced before leaving. She went straight to her daughter, who she affectionately called Dottie, and gave her a big hug.

Jeff left Harry, after ordering him to be careful of his son, and Harry breathed easier. He went to find his own daughter and he gave her a gentle kiss. He begged that the people searching for him found him soon, anything had to be better than this.

Willow was nervous and jumpy as she slipped her expensive handbag over her shoulder and flicked through it, as she usually did, to check what she had inside.

“Shopping again, love?” Her husband, Arthur, grinned at her.

She giggled lightly. “Of course, do you mind?”

“Of course not. Here you go.”

Willow loved her husband so much as he dug in his pocket and pulled out a large purse of Galleons and handed it over to her.

“Buy yourself something nice and not just for the kids.”

“Well I have to spoil our baby son.” She played her part perfectly as she gave gooey eyes to their baby Tommy, who was toddling strongly now that he was approaching two years old.

“Spoil yourself too.” Arthur told her. “Get your hair and nails done, buy some new clothes or shoes, just have some fun.”

“Well, if I’m having my hair and nails done, you’d better sort out lunch for these angels.”

“I’m sure I can get the house-elf to rustle up something for the kids.” He chuckled.
Willow gave him a loving kiss and then she Apparated away from their mansion. It was then that she let her nerves show as her hands shook. She was not going shopping. She’d sent a message to one of her friends in Britain. She had arranged to meet with her today, in an out of the way café, under the guise of bragging about her youngest son. She wanted to know as much about the disappearance of this boy submissive from Britain as she could, before she sold her husband’s family out to the Elders. If Erickian…Harry, was telling the truth, then it would mean the death of Carter, Penny and Jefferus. While the latter wouldn’t be a big loss to her, or to her husband, as he had never particularly liked or cared for his bratty baby brother as much as he did his other brothers, she knew that Arthur would be devastated if his Mother and Father were killed too. That was why she needed to make sure, before she decided to do anything.

“Willow, this is a surprise.”

“It has been too long, Margot.” Willow returned the expected platitude gently.

“Now, come, what is the news? You have to tell me everything.”

Willow smiled, she had chosen Margot to meet with because she was a notorious gossip, if there was anything to know, she was the person to ask about it.

“Arthur and I have another son, Tomican. He’s just about to turn two now.” She said proudly, already pulling a photo from her bag to show to Margot, whose sharp blue eyes memorised every inch and line of her son’s smiling face, like a vulture scanning the ground for carrion.

“Oh, he’s just darling, Willow!” Margot insisted as they sat at a table and ordered tea and fruit cake.

They made small talk for an agonising hour, Willow was almost at the edge of her nerves, but she had to remove any suspicion and thus, an hour of small talk was more than acceptable, so when Margot went quiet for more than a minute, Willow knew that it was time.

“Arthurum was just telling me about that boy who went missing a few years ago, is it true that they’ve found him?” She asked, lying through her teeth. Arthur had never discussed such things with her.

“Oh, you mean poor Harry?” Margot asked, her eyes lighting back up as another topic of gossip was brought up. Margot was the type of person who revelled in knowing about such things that others
didn’t. “No, the poor boy is still lost in the world somewhere. He was snatched when he was just sixteen, a few months before his seventeenth birthday, from the annual British Dracken meeting in May nineteen-ninety-seven. He hasn’t been seen or heard from since, but the Elders worldwide are desperate enough now to start searching houses! You know *I* was searched the other week? Me!”

“How awful! Surely they would never have believed you capable?” Willow played along, her mind racing behind her falsely concerned façade, her heart hammering as the pieces fell into place. Erickian and Jefferus’ relationship had always bothered her, but she’d played it off as them being Drackens, of being magical creatures, but now she knew that it hadn’t been that at all. It was something much worse, much more vile and unsavoury. She could barely believe the truth of it.

“Of course not, I was assured staunchly that I was not a suspect, that every single family and house connected to them are being searched, with no exceptions. Of course they found no sign of the boy from me. The poor darling, he must be terrified wherever he is.”

“He might be well looked after.” Willow said.

Margot snorted. “You are not a Dracken, dear. You don’t understand. The boy wasn’t abducted for his own good, no. Wherever he is, he is not there by choice and he must be so scared and sad. A submissive has to follow the orders of their dominant and after three years, the boy would assuredly be mated by his abductor by now. He will be being forced to remain where he is, against his will, and the Elders have had enough. They will find him, it’s only a matter of time now.”

“Indeed.” Willow answered, sipping at her second cup of tea nervously. “Do the Elders have any clue what has happened?”

“None whatsoever.” Margot said conspiratorially. “Though it doesn’t take a genius to understand it. Some foul dominant couldn’t get a submissive by themselves, so they stole a newly inherited boy, before he could be bonded or mated to someone else, and then forcibly mated themselves to him. That poor boy.”

“So it would be rape?” Willow asked, not even needing to act disgusted.

“Of course, Willow dear. Poor Harry didn’t ask to be abducted and forcibly mated, any interaction from that would be rape. It will be one of the charges given to the one found with him.”

Margot took another nibble of cake and Willow tried to calm her heart down.
“What is the penalty for such?” Willow asked.

Margot laughed daintily. “Why, death, of course.” Margot said easily. “Those found responsible will be publically shamed and executed for such a thing, thus freeing poor Harry from bondage and allowing him to salvage what he can. Not that there would be much left to salvage, after three years the poor boy is likely a downtrodden wreck.”

Willow wanted to tell Margot that Harry was still clinging onto hope, that he was still stubborn and had his heart set on rescue, but she couldn’t. She couldn’t let slip that she knew where Harry was, not yet.

After another half an hour with Margot she was able to make her excuses and hurry to the post office, where she wrote a detailed letter, telling the British Elders where Harry was and how she knew such a thing, how she had guessed about what had happened from the way he was treated. She hoped that they were able to help, and that because she was the one to inform them, that the damage to her family, that was to say her husband, children and her parents, was limited as a result. She didn’t want her little family to be dragged down with Carterum, Penelope or Jefferus.

She paid for her letter to be sent and watched the owl fly away and she swallowed, hoping that she’d made the right decision, but then if the Elders were searching every single family with no exceptions, including Margot, then there was no escape for the Perrots. Harry would be found and it was only a matter of when he was found now. If it was discovered that she had known and done nothing, things would be much worse for her and her family. This was the only thing that she could think of to do that would help limit the damage this backlash was going to bring. It had been the threat of harm to a two year old little girl that had swayed her mind in the end. Arthur wasn’t exactly loving towards their Dottie, but he would never call her such names in front of either of them, nor threaten to harm her or to kill her. It was too far in her opinion, she was doing this to protect her family and to protect Ethelana. It was the only thing that she could do, her conscience would never let her rest again if she had done nothing and Ethelana ended up hurt or even killed, as Harry insisted that she would be once his and Jefferus’ son was born.

She nodded to herself and, now much happier with the decision that she had made, she went into her favourite salon for her hair and nails to be done before she went on to shop for an hour or so, just to cover herself and her true reason for going out today, before she went back home to prattle on to Arthur about her day, just for appearances. She would expect the Elders to act quickly now that she’d sent them a letter, it would take the owl several days to fly to Britain, after that, she reasoned that it would only be a few more days afterwards for the Elders to strike and for Harry and Ethelana to be free and away from Jefferus…the very worst of the Perrots.

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Anthanaric Vipond was feeling every single one of his two hundred and eleven years. This whole mess with Harry had been going on for far too long and there had not been any sort of hint of him for almost three and a half years now, the poor boy.
They had been searching endlessly for him, with no luck, their leads had all dried up, their tip offs had stopped coming, they had nothing left to go on anymore. People were losing hope, but not him, not him or his Elders, he wouldn’t allow them to give up and he would never let them forget or stop searching for Harry, that poor boy would not live the rest of his life enslaved to a dominant Dracken who had abducted him from a social gathering. They would find him, it was only a matter of time now.

They were searching every single Dracken and every single family linked to them, even if they weren’t Drackens themselves, after all, it wouldn’t do to miss Harry because he’d been given to the human relatives of a Dracken for the day of their search. No, they were being incredibly thorough with the searches, they had planned exactly what to do in every situation and Harry would not slip through their fingers, he would be found. The searches had been going on for some months now and a lot of families had, naturally, been cleared, though they were upset for being searched in the first place. He had smoothed over a lot of ruffled scales since the searches had begun, but the Maddison family, one of their champion Dracken families here in Britain, were helping to smooth over everything by accepting the search willing and wholeheartedly and encouraging the same from others, all in the name of finding Harry, their lost male submissive.

So far their searches had yielded them nothing. Not even a small sniff of Harry had been found and it was discouraging to say the least, especially when all they wanted was him back and finally safe under their protection once more…none of them would take their eyes off of him this time, not again. They had truly learnt a painful lesson about how they handled their unmated submissive community members and they had already changed their conduct to better protect them.

Of course the possibility had been voiced that perhaps Harry was dead, or whomever had taken him had killed him when the searches had started, in place of being caught with the submissive in their midst. Anthanaric sincerely hoped that such a thing had not happened, it was too awful, too grisly to think of. Of course with the in depth search they were conducting such a thing would be uncovered and then Harry would be avenged for his abduction and murder.

Of course Anthanaric hoped that such a thing had not happened. He wanted to find Harry alive and well and bring him back to where he was safe and could be protected. He would not take his eyes off of that boy when they finally got him back, not for a moment, not again.

An owl tapped on the glass of the window, disturbing him from his musings and circling thoughts and he was rather surprised to see it. The owl itself wasn’t unusual, as the Head of the Dracken Counsel of the Northern hemisphere, and head of the Elders of Great Britain, he was often in demand and being sent letters, what made it so unusual was that it was currently nearing a quarter to one in the morning.

He stood up and he went to the window, letting the unfamiliar owl into his personal study, it landed on his desk and immediately dipped its beak into his glass of water and started drinking. It had come a very long way with little rest.

He untied the letter gently and curiously, trying not to disturb the owl from its drink, breaking the unmarked wax seal, unfurling the letter and reading the contents by candlelight. He needed to sit down not half way through the letter that had been sent to him, by the end he needed to place a steadying hand upon his head and relearn how to breathe. He prayed to Merlin that this was not some sort of sick, cruel hoax. They’d had a few of those to deal with over the years too, all of which had been dealt with swiftly and harshly, and those involved had been penalised heavily for being so cruel.

He read the letter again, just to be sure that he had all of the details, before he called all of the on duty
He met with Jacob Midate, Henry Kirrian, Octavian Thorne and Kajetan Calabrese not five minutes later downstairs in the Elders meeting room. Jacob was not supposed to be here as he wasn’t technically on duty, but he had been spending every spare moment that he had around the Counsel Halls ever since Harry had gone missing. Anthanaric had tried to put a stop to it, but Jacob’s mate, Bertha, had begged him to allow Jacob to do his all to find Harry, so Anthanaric had stopped trying to prevent him from coming in at all hours, even on his days off, or indeed, in the middle of the night.

“What has happened?” Kajetan asked in alarm.

“We’ve had what seems to be a legitimate tip off about the whereabouts of Harry.” Anthanaric said as he seated himself at his place at the round table, the same table that Harry himself had sat at just a few months before his abduction.

“Where is he?!” Jacob demanded, a crazed look coming across his face.

“If the letter is legitimate, then he’s in Australia.”

“That is one of the countries that we singled down to the location of his early distress calls.” Henry pointed out. “This tip off could actually be real.”

“As the informant insists that she is the sister-in-law of the dominant who has mated to Harry, this tip off could very well be legitimate, but regardless, this is the greatest lead that we have ever been given.”

“What in the hell are we waiting for?” Jacob demanded, standing up, looking about ready to charge off to Australia by himself.

“For the called strike force to arrive and be debriefed. We are doing this properly, Jacob. I know that you want Harry back as soon as possible, but if we rush this then we could make a devastating mistake. We need to wait for the strike force and set this rescue up properly. We owe Harry that much.”

Anthanaric watched as Jacob inhaled deeply and blew out that breath in an effort to calm himself. Of course the urge to just rush in and shield Harry with their wings was immense, but he had been the Head of the Dracken Counsel in the Northern Hemisphere for decades. He knew all too well exactly how devastating it would be to rush in to this rescue without proper planning, they could very well
save Harry in a surprise flurry of activity, but a lot of things could go wrong and Harry might easily be harmed or even killed instead, or they could miss those who had taken Harry captive and thus condemn Harry to a life of looking over his shoulder and never getting the justice that he deserved for three and a half years of near enslavement. No, this had to be done right, he had well and truly learned that in his eight decades of heading the Counsel of the Northern Hemisphere.

It took a while for the strike force to be set up, mostly as several of the team had to be dragged out of their beds first. The Counsel didn’t keep a strike force on call at all hours of the day, it often wasn’t needed, but this time, in this situation, Anthanaric was seriously considering setting up a twenty-four hour strike force, even though this was the first time one had been needed during the night for a decade or more.

Elders were needed on duty overnight, as were the Healers, just in case a submissive went feral during the early hours of the morning, or in case an injury happened at night, but a strike force was not often needed at this time.

He was very unimpressed when several of the mated dominants of the strike force called to respond to this emergency turned up yawning or rubbing at tired eyes. This would not do.

“Rouse yourselves!” He demanded of them furiously. “You are not here for a mere drill, nor were you called from your beds for a trifle reason. Captain, rouse your men!”

The honoured Captain of the strike force, who took his duties very seriously, turned immediately and swept his eagle eyed glare across the men that he trained with nearly every single day, it came as no surprise to him that those being called out were newer, younger members of his team. Taking out his wand, he punished those responsible for such a disgrace with a quick, powerful stinging hex that had them cursing, but otherwise standing straighter, all traces of tiredness and sleep washed away.

“I apologise for the disgrace, Elder. Some of my team are still new, this will be their first mission.” The Captain, Tuathal Nevin Foss, a Dracken in his prime at a hundred and two years old, excused the actions of his men. He would ride the young twenty year olds later, after this mission had been completed. They would not be leaving the obstacle course until they were fucking crawling on their bellies with exhaustion.

“Your mission is to detain and extract.” Anthanaric said seriously. “We have had what seems to be a legitimate tip off that the missing submissive, Harry, may well be in this house.”

There were excited mutterings and gasps of shock from the strike force, they had been some of the team used to search all the Dracken families for Harry, they had been searching for the poor boy since his abduction almost three and a half years ago from these very halls. To find that they were now going to be the very team to extract him, to save him…they stood straighter, threw their shoulders back and set their jaws to convey their readiness for this mission.
“We do not know the state that Harry will be in when he is found, he might attack you or even harm himself, he might already be injured or even too harmed to move himself. Your mission is to extract him as easily and as gently as possible.”

Anthanaric handed over a small vial of potion to Captain Foss and watched the Dracken slip the vial into a pouch on his belt. The Captain knew what to do with it, he knew to administer it to the imprisoned submissive as soon as possible.

“Harry may well have children by now, we have no way of knowing how many and our informant did not mention any children, but be aware that the house you are infiltrating is a residential home and as such there may well be children there. You have trained to deal with children of all ages, detain them gently, calm them and bring them back here.”

“What of anyone else in the house, Elder?” Captain Foss asked, knowing that there must be those who had abducted the submissive in the first place at the residence also.

“I don’t care if they are on their deathbed, Captain. Anyone in that house who is not Harry or a child, you detain immediately and treat as a prisoner.”

“What if they have more than one submissive captive?” One of the strike force called out. He was a Dracken in his sixties, bulging with muscles and was well known for his overly analytical mind. It was why he’d been invited to the task force in the first place, as he looked at things from all angles and thought of things that others would never have considered, such as a second submissive captive. “If they can abduct one submissive, it is not such a leap to think that perhaps they have another one also.” He added when everyone turned to stare at him.

“No, it is a very good point. You will all be able to tell a submissive from a dominant, be wary, in case the additional submissive is there by choice and knew of Harry’s abduction, but be more gentle in your detainment, just in case.” Anthanaric said clearly, feeling much older than his two hundred years. Merlin he hoped that these disgusting people didn’t have more than just Harry as a captive.

“How quickly can your team be ready, Captain?” Elder Jacob Midate asked impatiently, almost growling in his agitated state.

“An additional half an hour, Elder. We need to run through the layout of the house if known, arm up and then consider options and escape routes. Is time of the essence? Do these people know that we are coming and might be moving the submissive?”
“No, there is no worry of the surprise being ruined.” Anthanaric told them. “We are merely anxious to see if this tipoff is true and to get Harry back to safety. I have the address and I have found as much about the house as I can, it is very large.”

Athanaric handed over the floor plans and watched as Captain Foss turned to the table and laid the papers out for all his team to see. They immediately started sorting out access points and where best to set up anti-Apparation wards and anti-Portkey wards.

“The house has already been disconnected from the floo network.” Anthanaric said before it could be asked. “Once you are inside, their only route of escape will be through a window and then flight.”

“I will have sharp-shooters waiting for anyone who tries to fly away.” Captain Foss insisted. “They know to aim for the wing joints.”

Athanaric nodded and he rolled his tensed up shoulders. He was so anxious now to get this mission started. It was agony waiting for the strike force to get themselves ready and prepared to go out, but he couldn’t put them at an increased risk either.

What seemed like hours later, in which only thirty-five minutes had passed, Captain Foss was ordering his force to get into their smaller teams and into position. They were ready.

“Elder, with your blessing we will now infiltrate the house.”

Athanaric took a deep breath, knowing that the next hour or so was going to be even more torturous. He nodded his head.

“Remember Captain, your mission is to detain and extract. If it comes down to a choice of getting Harry here safely or to detain one of the suspects, Harry has your priority, do not lose him. Am I understood?”

“Yes, Elder. We will not fail you…or him.”

Athanaric nodded again and then, on their Captain’s shouted orders, the strike force were all touching elbows and Apparating out, to the coordinates of the Perrot mansion in Australia.

He watched as they all left within seconds of one another, before he turned back to his Elders.
“We need to prepare. Henry, go to the cells and set up several to receive guests. Octavian, go and rouse the off duty Healers, we may have need of all of them before the night is over. Kajetan, we may have immediate need of a psychologist. Jacob, Harry may well want to see a familiar face once he is brought back here, make sure to stay close at hand, but in the meantime go and round up the guards within this estate, they will need to be briefed.”

Those orders given, Anthanaric left to the Healing Halls himself, to inform the on duty Healers of what was about to transpire, after that, he would need to make a late night floo call to the Elders in Australia, to inform them that they had arrested several members of their poster family, the Perrots, and were holding them on charges of abduction, imprisonment and rape at the minimum. It was going to be a very, very long night, but with any luck, their endless searching for Harry would now come to an end, hopefully with Harry being brought back here safe and well and put back into their protection. Very soon this would all be over.

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Harry was woken by a strange noise coming from outside. In any normal situation he wouldn’t have even heard it, but he was so hyperaware after the beating that he’d received just hours ago that any slight gust of wind kept waking him up.

He’d been fast asleep, taking a nap as ordered, and Jefferus had snuck into his room and started beating his head while he slept. Harry didn’t even know what he’d done wrong…he probably hadn’t done anything wrong at all, Jeff had just felt like taking out some of his frustrations on him for whatever reason. He usually used sex, but Harry would rather take the beating than be forced to endure sex with Jefferus.

Hearing a noise again, he sat up and forced his beaten, pregnant body from the bed. He was nearing three months pregnant now, it was nearing the end of September and Ismay’s third birthday was coming up in just a month, at the end of November. He was ashamed that he couldn’t give her anything more than his everlasting love. The horse, Cloppity, had been a one off, he couldn’t keep doing as such, lest the crude toys be found. He hoped that Ismay understood and wasn’t too disappointed that she would only have Cloppity to play with.

Harry peered out of the window, just to make sure that it was just the wind, and he turned away, only to turn right back as what he’d seen registered in his sleepy mind. There were people out there, approaching the house, using the trees and strategically planted rose bushes as cover.

His first thought was Dracken poachers and his mind immediately flew to Ismay. He needed to protect her. She was his child and it was for his dominant to protect him and for him to protect their children. He pelted out of his room and down the hall to the stairs. He rushed down them and went to her bedroom. He opened the door and went right to where she was playing with a pair of shoes…that made him want to cry buckets of tears, but it would have to wait until later.

“Mummy, you’re awake!” She cried in delight, then her face fell when she saw what must have been fresh cuts and bruises and dried blood on his face.
“Ismay, you need to come with me.” He said urgently. There was no time to waste explaining to her that he was okay, that the injuries had been from an hour before and would heal soon. He needed to get her to safety.

His intelligent daughter immediately picked up on his tone and she went quiet and hunched her shoulders down as Harry pulled her out of her bedroom and hurried to the stairs, quickly going up to the top floor of the house. He stopped for a moment on the top landing, listening hard, before he swung her up into his arms, holding her tightly, and he ran, uncaring of his unborn son, to the other side of the house and to the stairs that led up to the attic.

“Mummy, what’s happening?” Ismay asked quietly.

“You need to stay behind me and stay quiet, Ismay, okay? Can you do that for me?” He said seriously.

His daughter nodded, going to the hole and taking out Cloppity and holding it tightly. Harry got them both into the corner, behind several large boxes and he wrapped himself tightly around his baby girl, holding her on his lap and curling up tight.

Everything was painfully silent, ordinary, and all Harry could hear was the pounding of his own heart, the rush of his own blood in his ears as his face throbbed with pain from the most recent of his beatings. The next moment there was very sudden, and very loud, shouting and all sorts of noise and commotion and the clamour of heavy footfalls in heavy boots stomping on the wooden floorboards and up the stairs. Harry held Ismay closer and stroked her head and shushed her as she started crying onto his chest. He placed her face into his neck and stroked her gorgeous hair from the top of her head, all down her back.

Gunfire made Harry jump, then he heard Jefferus yelling and screaming and a shiver slipped down his spine. He knew deep down that Jeff would never have put his life on the line to save them, he wasn’t that type of person, he would have rathered use him and Ismay as a shield than be their protector, but to know that he couldn’t protect them panicked his Dracken side and he held Ismay impossibly closer to his chest.

Shouts and thumping footfalls just below them had Ismay whimpering as she clung to him.

“Mummy, I’m scared.” She told him.

“It’ll be okay, Ismay, I’ll protect you.” He insisted. “Place your face here and don’t look up.”
“What’s happening?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart. Just be quiet now, love, okay?”

Ismay nodded from his neck and Harry curled up tighter as he heard more shouting, someone reporting clinically that ‘the submissive’ still had not been found and that the missing child hadn’t been located, then Penelope screaming and then what he’d dreaded. Several of those boots stomping on the stairs up to the attic. The door was kicked open and Harry didn’t even dare to breathe as the people who had come in started sweeping the room, they would find them soon. He couldn’t allow it.

He gently put Ismay down on the floor and he brought out his claws as his Dracken overpowered his human side...he had been ordered to never bring out his claws after Penny and Carter had complained to Jeff about him silently threatening the both of them with his claws and fangs, but his innate need to protect his child overrode the order of his dominant and he stood up furiously, stretching out his white wings in a threatening manner.

“Captain, submissive target located in the attic! He’s feral.” One of the men called out quickly, urgently, while touching a pendant that looked like a small pair of Dracken wings that was attached to his jacket.

“On my way, Asaph. Keep the submissive calm and do not approach. Any injuries to report?”

“He’s been beaten and he’s bleeding, Captain. He’s also pregnant.”

“Affirmative, Asaph. I’ll be there in a moment.”

He didn’t know what was going on, but he wasn’t being threatened, his children weren’t being threatened. He eased down a little and one of the men in front of him made soft, soothing noises, which settled him down more.

He cocked his head and looked at the several men around him, he inhaled deeply and he detected that they were all mated dominants. He was confused. He trilled lightly, questioningly, to them and they all rumbled back soothingly. They weren’t here to hurt him or Ismay.

There were rushed footfalls on the stairs and he hissed, raising his wings and claws again as someone else came hurrying into the attic. This man had his purple wings out, but they were folded in, in a non-threatening manner.

He cocked his head, but this new man approached him, coming closer. Harry slipped backwards, but he didn’t want to retreat too far, because of Ismay. He hissed in warning, flexing his claws.
The dominant in front of him, who was also mated, made more soft, soothing noises that calmed Harry down, but that the dominant kept approaching made Harry’s wings flare in warning. His daughter was just to the side of him, he couldn’t let anyone touch her.

More soothing, quiet noises and Ismay jumped up and came to stand behind him, remembering that he’d told her to always stand behind him, and she started speaking to him, making noises, but it was all just noise to him while he was feral. He backed her up to the wall, hissing at the men in the room, feeling very threatened now that they knew about Ismay. He snarled and flexed his claws, warning them of his intent to kill them if they approached him and his daughter.

The one out in front held up his hands to show him that they were empty. His breathing picked up and then from one moment to the next, the one out in front with the purple wings leapt at him and the dominant had caught both his wrists easily and expertly with one hand while he forced a potion into his mouth with the other. He could hear his daughter screaming and then he could make out words as his claws and wings sunk back into his body and his Dracken was separated from him, almost like there was a screen between them.

“It’s alright, shh, calm down. We’re going to get you out of here now.” The dominant holding him was soothing him.

“Shh, little girl, we’re not hurting your Mummy, nor are we going to hurt you.” Another dominant was hunched down, speaking to Ismay.

“You jump on Mummy!” Ismay cried, backing away from the man.

“We had to be careful of his Dracken side, you know about the Drackens, yes?”

Ismay nodded, rubbing her eyes.

“We’re going to get you away from here now.”

“We no come back?” She asked timidly.

“You’ll never have to come back.”

“Mummy too?”
“Yes, Mummy and the baby are coming too.”

Harry shook his head and groaned, sitting back.

“Mummy!”

Ismay came to him immediately and he held her tightly.

“Mummy, the people came for us, we’re leaving!”

Harry held her tighter. “Who are you here on behalf of?” He asked seriously.

“The Dracken Elders of Great Britain.” The one holding him said immediately. “We were sent here on behalf of Elder Anthanaric Vipond.”

Harry let out a huge, relieved sigh that made his body sink.

“Will you come with us?”

Harry nodded and he stood up with Ismay in his arms. He immediately had several men making noises and hurrying forward to support him and help him. He backed away, holding Ismay tighter and he looked at them strangely, not used to such things.

“Go and secure our exit, I have him.” The one who’d given him the potion ordered. “Harry, I am Captain Tuathal Foss, though everyone just calls me Nev, as my middle name is Nevin. Are there any more submissives in the house? The people downstairs insisted that the only submissive in the house was one named Erickian. Where is Erickian, do you know?”

Harry shook his head. “It’s me, that was what they renamed me for the public.”

Captain Foss nodded, understanding the situation, and then he picked up him and Ismay gently. “Let’s get you home and safe, Harry.”
He was carried down the four sets of stairs and then straight out to the front garden, where the three Perrots were stood with invisible chains wrapped around them.

“Where are you taking Erickian?!” Jefferus roared. “That is my submissive, my unborn son and my daughter Ethelana!”

“My name is Ismay and I don’t have to listen to you anymore!” Ismay cried out from his arms. “I’m going with Mummy and we’re going to be safe and I can eat what I want and have all the toys in the world! Mummy said so!”

“You’re my submissive, you do as I tell you!” Jefferus roared at Harry.

“He has been given a suppression potion. You can’t order him to do anything anymore.” Captain Foss said with a smirk.

Harry gave his own smirk. “I can’t wait until you’re all executed.” He said, overjoyed at the very thought of it. “Ismay and I are free and you’ll never be able to hurt us ever again.”

“He’s lying, we’ve never harmed him!” Penny cried out desperately.

“Oh? These cuts and swollen bruises just appeared out of thin air, did they?” Captain Foss, Nev, demanded. “Don’t even try to take me for a fool, you loathsome beasts. Take them away to the holding cells!”

“I demand a representative.” Carter shouted out.

“You’ll be represented by my fist if you don’t be quiet.” The dominant holding Jefferus threatened. “You’ll be dealt with once the submissive and his daughter have been seen to and settled in safety.”

“I want to leave. Now.” Harry pleaded. “I don’t want to stay here a moment longer.”

Captain Foss reacted immediately as he started striding off to the gates of the house. Harry’s heart
sank and he almost had a panic attack.

“I…I can’t leave the grounds.” He said breathlessly. “They have wards up to stop me from leaving.”

“We have removed those wards, but kept the signature of them as evidence. You will be able to leave now, Harry. It’s alright, we’re not going to leave you here, you’re coming back to Britain with us.”

Harry swallowed twice and he had to close his eyes and breathe deeply to calm himself. He was so relieved that he started shaking. Captain Foss shushed him gently and then cooed to him with his Dracken, like he was a child. It was unbelievably reassuring and he could have cried he was so happy.

Harry watched, holding his breath as the gates came into view and his body quivered as he remembered the electric shocks that it had always given him if he touched them. Captain Foss shushed him and soothed him gently as Harry held Ismay tighter to himself.

When they walked straight through the open gates with absolutely no issue or pain, Harry’s body went boneless with utter relief and he huffed out several breaths, almost on the verge of crying, but he held himself together with the last shreds of his stubbornness.

As soon as they were outside the gates, Captain Foss spun on his heel and with a loud crack and the sensation of being squeezed through a tiny tube, they Disapparated from the Perrots house and Apparated into the entrance hall of the Dracken Counsel Halls. It was deserted, being the middle of the night now here in Britain, but Harry scented an unmated dominant and he panicked, screeching in alarm and bringing several mated guards with guns running to their position from all over the huge house.

“Is that…?” One asked in amazement.

“This is an injured, captive submissive who has just been liberated. Who is the unmated Dominant here?”

“An injured male brought in half an hour ago, he poses no threat, he’s got an almost severed leg. He can’t even get up and the Healers are keeping him knocked out.” One reported quickly as they hurried down the corridor and towards the healing halls, giving them an honour guard.

Harry was placed in a private room and Captain Foss made sure that he was settled before he turned to face the several mated guards.
“I need to go and report to Elder Vipond, you two...” He said pointing at two of the guards. “You stay outside this room and do not allow anyone but the Elders in. You two...” He pointed at two more guards. “You stay inside this room and protect Harry with your very lives!”

Then Captain Foss was gone and those guards who hadn’t been given jobs left with him, leaving four guards, two of which left the room and closed the door. The remaining two guards, neither of which Harry recognised, took up posts on either side of the door.

“Are we okay now, Mummy?” Ismay asked.

Harry nodded. “Yes, my love. We’re in the Counsel Halls now, very soon the Elders will be here to see us, but we’re safe now. No one will ever hurt you again.”

Ismay buried her face in his chest and Harry held her as she cried onto him. He was almost numb himself, with the sheer relief of what had just happened. They hadn’t given up looking for him, even after three and a half years, they had still been searching for him. He clutched at Ismay tighter and stroked her dark red hair gently as she cried out her own relief, Cloppity still clutched tightly in her tiny hand.

Harry swallowed himself and he drew in a deep breath. It was almost surreal, like this was merely a dream, he just couldn’t believe that he’d been found and rescued after so long being the Perrots captive.

But it was over now. His terrible ordeal, that he had feared would never end, was now over. It had ended and he was so relieved that he and Ismay had come through it in the end. They would need some help and support to get over all that they’d been put through, but now Harry wanted to give his daughter everything that he’d always promised her, starting with a visit to the biggest toy store that he could find where he would buy her everything that she even looked at.

But for now, it was all over. He could rest and relax a little, he could breathe for the first time in what felt like forever, because after three years, four months and sixteen days of being a captive of the Perrots, he had finally been found. He had been saved. He was free.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: So Harry is finally rescued and he and Ismay are finally going to safety. We’re taking a bit of a break now, chapter four will be up in three days, and the fifth and final chapter will be up in five days, but Harry’s time with the Perrots has come to an end at last. It’s surprising how hard and horrible just two chapters can be, but hopefully you lovelies have all bared up through it, we’re almost at the happily ever after now. That
will be worth it, I promise.

StarLight Massacre. X
Chapter Notes

Warning: This chapter contains the explicit death of several characters, abortion, mentions of past rape, past abuse and past child destruction, as well as past child neglect.

Last Time

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See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Four – Liberated

Harry had been taken directly to the Counsel Halls after being rescued and he’d been placed into one of the large, private rooms in the Healing Halls.

The four mated guards that Captain Foss had ordered about had stayed with him, two on the inside of the door, two on the outside of the door and Harry held a hysterical Ismay tighter as she trembled. She didn’t know who these people, who had taken them from her home, were and she didn’t know where they were, all she knew was that they were free now, that they were away from those people, and she clung tighter to him and cried through all the overwhelming emotions that she was feeling.

“Where we, Mummy?” She asked him tearfully.

“We’re safe.” He told her truthfully, pulling her tighter to his slight baby bump.

“Safe? No more hitting or yelling?” She asked, lifting a hand to touch Harry’s broken, bloodied face.

“That’s right.” He said, finding a real smile for her, his beautiful daughter.
He took her mind off of things by humming, too self-conscious and extremely aware of the guards in
the room with him to sing aloud. He played with her gorgeously thick, dark red hair and he plaited it
for her. She reminded him so much of his Mother with her hair and precocious manner. The beautiful
hazel eyes however, with their very slight tint of green in the right light, were completely unique to
her. A mix of his Father’s eyes and his own, which he had taken from his Mother.

There was a commotion outside the door and he tensed, pulling Ismay further into his lap and
shielding her with his arms and curling his legs up over her back as much as he could while three
months pregnant.

“Harry.” The man who strode in first breathed a sigh of utter relief upon seeing him.

Harry relaxed and he bit his split lip, even as tears welled up in his eyes. “Elder Midate.” He said, his
voice cracking on him.

The tall, broad man made a move towards him, but he stopped as if rethinking his actions, perhaps
thinking that Harry wouldn’t appreciate such a touch, but Harry needed it. He’d always felt safe with
Elder Midate and he needed the touch to confirm that this wasn’t all a vivid dream or another pain
induced hallucination. He needed to know that this was real and actually happening.

He held one arm out, the other cradling Ismay, and Elder Midate stepped forward immediately and
wrapped him in his big, strong, safe arms and Harry melted into him, inhaling the familiar scent of
his old chaperone, releasing over three years’ worth of tension, hate and pain as he started crying and
he couldn’t stop. He couldn’t remember the last time that he’d cried freely in front of someone else
and now he couldn’t stop. He sobbed, hard and messily as he clung to Elder Midate and he was held
back, gently, kindly, caringly. Everything he’d needed over the last few years and hadn’t received. It
was offered to him freely now and Harry took it, selfishly, needily, all for himself.

“Oh!” An almost frail voice broke them apart and Harry pulled back from the hug.

He mopped his face up of his tears, snot and blood with his bare arm. He was handed a handkerchief
and he accepted it gratefully before he looked up to see the Head of the Counsel, Elder Anthanaric
Vipond.

“I am so thankful to see you back here, dear one.” He said genuinely and it made Harry’s eyes well
up again. It had been years since anyone had said a kind word to him and he hadn’t realised how
much he’d craved it. “Who is this little one?” The Elder asked gently.

“This…this is Ismay.” Harry said. He refused to call her Ethelana, even if it was her official, legal
name. To him, she had always been his sweet little Ismay.
“Your daughter?” Elder Midate said with a hint of sadness.

Harry nodded. “She’s two, three at the end of November.”

Ismay peeked out from his shoulder. Her curiosity winning out over her fear of being introduced to new people. After all, it had been the people she’d known, those closest to her, who had always hurt her and made her cry, not strangers.

Elder Midate smiled at her and he stretched one finger out to chuck her chin and stroke her cheek. “Hey there, monkey.” He said with a grin.

Ismay giggled. “I’m not a monkey. I’m a girl!”

Harry smiled adoringly at her and when she shifted from his lap, he felt some slight relief. She’d been leaning against his bump and it really was rather uncomfortable.

Midate and Vipond both sucked in their breath as they caught sight of his bump and they shared a look. Harry laid a hand over the bump and he sighed heavily. He felt as if the weight of the entire world was laid over his shoulders, crushing him.

“How far along are you?” Elder Midate asked him softly.

“Almost three months.” Harry replied sadly, looking down and glaring at his pregnant belly. “A boy.”

“Johnson!” Vipond called out.

One of the guards stepped forward immediately. “Yes, Elder.”

“Perhaps, if Harry allows, you could take Ismay to get some milk and cookies.”

“Cookies?” Ismay asked, her hazel eyes huge. “Real cookies?”
“They never allowed her to have any treats.” Harry explained sadly. “Not even one. So, she’s never had cookies before.”

“Can I have cookies, Mummy?” She asked and Harry tried to make his smile something that wasn’t painful as he kissed her.

“You can have whatever you want now that we’re safe.” He said seriously, cupping her tiny face with his least injured hand…or rather his least bloodied hand.

He placed her on the floor and she trotted over to ‘Johnson’ and took his hand trustingly, allowing him to take her to get her first ever cookie. Harry swallowed the lump in his throat.

“You wanted her out of the room. Why?” He asked the two Elders.

“I didn’t think she needed to hear what I am about to ask you.”

Harry nodded acceptingly and he looked up patiently.

“I…I have no doubts that you love Ismay very much, but…however…that is to say that…”

“She wasn’t wanted.” Harry said bluntly when Elder Vipond seemed to struggle with his words. “If given the choice then I wouldn’t have had her and I don’t want this one either. It’s different with Ismay now that she’s born, I can’t exactly give her back. I do love her very much and I would kill anyone who tried to harm her. But, no. I didn’t want her when I was pregnant with her and I don’t want this baby either.”

“There is a potion that we can offer you. A very powerful, heavily controlled potion that would in effect allow you to have an abortion.” Elder Midate said delicately. “We understand that this is a massive decision and you may want to take some time to think about taking…”

“Are…are you sure? This decision can never be undone and…”

“I’m sure.” Harry interrupted again. “As I said. I never wanted Ismay, I don’t want this one. It’s a boy.” He said, his voice cracking again. “I got lucky with Ismay, she looks like me. But with a boy…he…”

“There’s a bigger chance that the baby will look like your captor or that side of the family and you can’t deal with that.” Elder Vipond finished and Harry nodded with a stifled sob.

“The potion will take some time to be made. It is very heavily controlled, which means it is not premade in advance and it is not kept stocked as most other potions are. It has to be made specially for you and the rest of the potion will be dumped out and destroyed as soon as you’ve taken the correct dosage.” Elder Midate told him. “If this is what you want, we will start having it brewed for you today.”

Harry nodded firmly.

“Harry, this might upset you, but…we need to know how you were taken.” Elder Vipond asked him, looking so apologetic that Harry took strength from it.

He purposefully cast his mind back to that night, running through it all once more, and he startled as he realised that perhaps Elder Messana hadn’t been caught and that he might be in this house at this very moment. In the same house as his beautiful, vibrant daughter.

“Ismay!” He cried out and he leapt off of the bed, ignoring his injuries and his pregnant state and he inhaled deeply to locate his daughter.

Elder Midate caught him around the chest and shushed him. “She’s safe, she’ll be safe. I know this is the place from which you were taken, but you’re safe, she’s safe. Only mated guards, the Healers and some Elders are here at the moment. Please, tell us what happened that night, Harry.”

“No, you don’t understand, you don’t understand! It was Elder Messana. He was the one who sold me to them!” Harry cried and from the sudden lax grip on his body, he knew immediately that the Elders hadn’t known that one of their own had been involved in any of this.

“Are you sure?” Elder Vipond asked, placing a hand under his chin so that he could get eye contact
but he never held tight, he never squeezed, he didn’t hurt or control him and Harry settled.

Harry nodded. “The guard on the door that night, he grabbed me as I came back from the bathroom and Elder Messana was there, hurrying him up and saying that they’d both be killed if they were caught. The guard left when…when we reached the fireplace and it was Messana who took me through the floo to *them!* They’d paid him to take me.”

“Elder Messana isn’t here at the moment, Harry.” Elder Vipond told him with a fearsome grin. “He doesn’t know that we located you in the early hours of this morning and immediately moved to put a plan together to go and get you. I say I should go and pay him a visit and give him the excellent news.”

Harry let out a shaky, relieved breath, calming down, and he got a soft touch to his head before Elder Vipond left to once again mobilise the strike force of armed guards who’d come to free Harry, once again calling upon the incredibly dependable Captain Tuathal Nevin Foss.

Very soon everyone who had orchestrated his abduction and had hurt him so terribly, those who had known and had kept him imprisoned for nearly three and a half years, they would be the ones punished, they would get what was coming to them and he couldn’t wait.

“We’ll find the guard involved too. Was there anyone else?”

“I don’t think his brothers or their wives knew in the beginning. They were human and didn’t really understand, they thought it was willing in the beginning.”

“Then he started hitting you more often.” Elder Midate said, touching the edge of Harry’s blackened right eye.

Harry nodded. “I’m not sure what they thought afterwards. I think they thought that it was a normal Dracken mateship, that it was normal for Drackens to be so physical and primal. I only ever told one of them, Willow, that was very recently.”

Elder Midate gave him a look. “I will show you the letter we received that tipped us off about where you were as soon as you’re a little better. It was sent by a woman called Willow.”

“That has surprised me.” Harry said. “She was always self-centred and rather shallow.”
“That was what we understood from the letter.” Elder Midate agreed with him before he sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. “This is a very difficult question, Harry, but we do need to know in order to capture these people so they can face justice and not run and hide. You needed two dominants to get pregnant, who was involved in your first heat?”

“One of his friends. I only know that his name was Braven."

“We’ll find him too.” Elder Midate promised firmly.

Harry smiled tenuously for all of a moment before he swallowed and looked down to duvet that he was once again sat on.

“Your Headmaster needs to be told too.”

“Dumbledore?” Harry asked, not lifting his head.

Elder Midate nodded. “He’s been frantically searching with us to find you. I need to floo call him. You need to be looked over by the Healers too, they’ve all been called in and they’re now next door, waiting to be called so they can check you over.”

“I don’t…I don’t think I can go through with any…not naked. I can’t be uncovered.” He said, his face burning with his shame as he pulled at the stupid tunic that he was wearing.

Elder Midate’s eyes went wide and he snapped his fingers. Immediately afterwards a small house-elf popped into the room.

“What can Jojey be doing for Master Midate?” The little elf said with a small bow.

“I need maternity clothes for young Harry here.” He told the elf, who nodded, looked Harry over for several moments consideringly, nodded again and vanished for all of a heartbeat before it was back and presenting Harry with a pile of soft, fresh clothes.

“I…I can have clothes?” He asked with such a happy smile and a wavering voice that the guard at the door made a pained noise and an involuntary movement towards him. Harry reared back from
him, giving him wide eyes.

“Ignore Hussein. He has children about your age.” Midate said sadly. “You go into that bathroom over there and get yourself dressed.”

Harry all but ran into the small, but functional en suite and he took great pleasure in taking off the tunic that he’d been forced to wear since he’d first been abducted. He tore it into tiny little shreds and threw it to the floor and he ground it under his bare heel before he took the pair of soft, clean smelling lounge trousers with an elasticated waist and stepped into them. He didn’t care that he still had no underwear, having the trousers was just so amazing and being able to decently cover himself was more than he’d been allowed in years. He felt like a person again and it made him so happy.

He pulled on the long-sleeved shirt and smoothed it down, trying to ignore the baby bump. He felt no regret, no guilt in his decision to terminate his son. He wanted no reminders of Jefferus and the Perrots. Ismay was going to be hard enough, but at least she looked like him, at least she had his Mother’s hair and his Father’s eyes. She looked nothing like Jeff and perhaps his son wouldn’t either, but he couldn’t take the chance that he might. He had the choice to abort him and he was going to. It was the first choice that he’d been able to make in three years and he was happy to have made it for himself.

He came out of the little en suite and he almost shyly handed Elder Midate the remains of the shredded tunic.

Elder Midate chuckled. “I bet that felt good.” He said understandingly.

Harry nodded. “It was all I was allowed to wear since…since all of this started. I wasn’t allowed clothes or shoes. Where is Ismay?” He didn’t feel all that comfortable having her out of his sight. He knew rationally that she was safe, that she was protected, but his fear was only increasing the longer he went without seeing her.

“He’s so good to see you again.” Elder Midate sighed. “I need to floo call Dumbledore, will you be alright for a moment? No one can get into this room, the guards on the outside of the door won’t allow anyone to get in, and your Headmaster will really want to see you again. He needs to know that you’ve been found.”

Harry nodded and he sat back on the bed as Elder Midate left, relishing wearing actual clothes again as he took some time to just touch them and get used to the feel of not having bare legs and bare arms for the first time in three and a half years.
He was tense in the room, but he was alone. At least he was until the door opened and the two guards came back in followed by his little girl, who came charging back in, her flame coloured hair flying out behind her, a milk moustache above her top lip and a half eaten cookie in her one hand.

“Mummy! I love cookies.” She said happily as she clambered back up to him, snuggling back into his side. She offered her remaining half cookie to him, but Harry pretended to take several bites and then pressed it back to her mouth, wiping the milk from her lip with his thumb as he did so.

“I’ll make you some special as soon as we’re alone.” He promised.

Ismay stopped chewing, as if remembering his promise to her and her eyes widened again. “You said I could help you make cookies and cakes when we got free.”

“That’s right, sweetheart.” He said with a sad smile. “We’re free now and we can bake cookies and cakes all the time.”

Ismay hugged him and buried her head in his chest. His eyes narrowed when he heard raised voices outside and he hunched over, protecting his daughter.

Hussein and Johnson both reacted immediately to his fear, their guns coming out and they turned to put their backs to Harry and Ismay and they faced the door. They stood down when Elder Midate stepped through, though the Elder nodded approvingly at them and their actions.

Harry was so happy when Dumbledore stepped through the door behind him.

“Harry, dear boy.” He greeted and Harry felt his eyes welling up yet again. He was crying more today than he had in years. Jefferus hadn’t liked him crying and had always cruelly ordered him to stop at the first hint that Harry was going to tear up.

The two of them embraced and Harry grabbed two handfuls of the deep purple robe that the man was wearing, clutching hold of it for dear life.

“Jacob has told me everything.” Dumbledore said softly. “Are you well?”

Harry nodded.
“You’re not hurt too badly?” Dumbledore asked as he touched Harry’s head gently.

“Not too badly.” Harry sniffled. “He wanted a son, so he…he wasn’t as bad as usual.”

A growl came from Elder Midate and Harry looked up at him with tear dampened eyes.

“Did he beat you harder when you weren’t pregnant?” Midate asked angrily.

Harry nodded. “Or when he found out I was having another daughter.” He said very fragiley.

“He had to let you have Ismay because his hold would only remain over you if you had a child, but he…he forced you to terminate your other daughters because he didn’t want another one?” Midate asked, his lined, weary face was as appalled and as disgusted as Harry had ever seen anyone look and that included the Dursleys looking at him after a bout of accidental magic.

“Not with potions or anything civilised. He…he used to enjoy kicking them out of me.” Harry said delicately, covering Ismay’s curious ears. “He did that four times. Another one was lost through an accident when I was eight weeks pregnant. I slipped on the bathroom floor before we knew if it was a boy or girl.”

“So you’ve lost five pregnancies and Ismay was your first?”

Harry nodded. “He needed me under his complete control, so he was very careful around me with Ismay. Of course he wanted a son, but he couldn’t risk that first pregnancy.”

“And this pregnancy is a boy.”

Harry nodded.

“Then why has he beaten you, risking his son?”

“He always beat me. This isn’t anywhere near as bad as he’d beat me when I wasn’t pregnant. He…he wouldn’t stop until I was unconscious usually.”
The four men in the room looked appalled and Harry shivered. There had been a time, back before being beaten and raped had become a part of his daily life, that he had found such things just as appalling. Now it was just normal, it had become normal to him and he was completely desensitised to it.

“Can I get the Healers in to see you, Harry? You don’t have to get undressed. But you and Ismay need to be checked over.”

Harry hugged Ismay tighter. “I would never have allowed him to touch her.” He said fiercely.

Elder Midate nodded. “Of course not.” He said mildly and Harry settled back down. “But just to be sure that she’s in perfect health. Has she had all of her vaccinations?”

Harry nodded. “They made sure she had all her injections and then gave her back to me when she was crying.”

Elder Midate nodded. “Will you please allow them to see you, Harry?”

Harry hesitated, before he begrudgingly nodded.

“I don’t want to take your choice away, Harry, or make you uncomfortable, but you…you look quite a state and I think we’d all feel better after you’ve been looked at by professionals.”

“The Healers will make your face and chest better, Mummy.” Ismay piped up and Harry sighed.

He nodded. “Okay, but I can’t…I can’t…”

“No undressing, I understand.”

Harry took a breath and he sat his daughter on his lap, smoothing out the ridiculously expensive, pale pink, designer skirt that she was wearing, paired with a white designer shirt with a ridiculous fabric rose on the one shoulder, pink tights that were more expensive than most people ever spent on
clothes in their lifetime and the shoes. The dainty, flower buckled, white dragonhide shoes with the tiny, inch high heel that had costed over three hundred galleons and Ismay would have grown out of them by the end of the year.

Harry hated dressing his daughter this way, but Penelope had bought the entire contents of Ismay’s wardrobe for her granddaughter and dressed her meticulously, and styled her hair, every morning. Harry had had no say in any of that. Ismay wasn’t allowed to get dirty or she was punished and she wasn’t allowed to play like normal two year olds. Harry hated that and as soon as he could, he was going to burn the clothes that she was wearing and he’d put her in leggings and a top and let her run riot.

Even without thinking about it, he unbuckled the white shoes and slipped them off of her tiny feet. He hated that the Perrot’s had forced his little girl into heels, no matter that they were only an inch high. He hated it and he threw the shoes across the room.

“Mummy!” Ismay giggled at his actions, wiggling her freed toes.

“No more stupid shoes for you.” He promised as he massaged her tiny feet.

“No more bows or nasty hairbands and smelly spray?”

“No, no more of that either.” Harry said as he ruffled her flame coloured hair. “No more stupid clothes, no more staying clean and neat. I’m going to take you to a park and roll in the mud with you.”

Ismay shrieked. “Yay, Mummy! Can we please?”

“Of course.” He said, hugging her tight, ignoring her knee in his bump. It would be gone soon. He felt no bond and no connection to his son at all. There was only resentment and fear. He was already afraid of his unborn son. He had sworn that Jeff would not get a son from him, he remembered telling Penelope that he owed Jeff six lost sons for his six lost daughters, he would be keeping that promise it seemed.

Ismay lay on her back on the bed and pulled her feet up, playing with her covered toes and giggling. Harry watched her adoringly.

The door opened and Harry saw the same medical team that he’d met before, what seemed like another lifetime ago now, enter the room. Alfred Grant seemed more ancient than he had been before. Jackson Moore was completely unchanged. Georgio Alessandri had grown impossibly taller and Claire Maddison seemed overly stressed. There was a young woman with them too, one he hadn’t met before, and she seemed younger than all of them at perhaps mid-twenties. Yet all of them
smiled at him when they saw him.

“It’s so good to see you again.” Claire told him genuinely.

Harry nodded and he shivered again, before dropping his gaze to Ismay.

“Who is this beautiful girl?” Claire asked brightly.

“I’m Ismay.” His daughter introduced herself from her back. “I’m two!”

“Two! You’re so good at talking!”

“Mummy talks to me lots.” Ismay said happily. “I’ll be three in November!”

“How about, we go over to this chair over here so that Mummy can get checked over and we can have a talk with Aelia.” Claire asked.

Ismay looked immediately to Harry, trusting his judgement, looking to him for permission and for safety. He sighed and then he nodded. “Go on, Ismay. It’s alright.”

“You won’t be hit or hurt or shouted at?” She asked quietly, but in the way that all two year olds said things quietly, which meant that everyone still heard her in the silent room.

“No, I’m going to be fine. Go with Claire now, Ismay.” He said gently, very uncomfortable with everyone’s eyes on him.

Ismay nodded and she shimmied down from the bed and she delighted in actually being able to walk properly, without her stupid shoes on for once. Claire led her over to the other side of the room, with the youngest woman, who he assumed was the mentioned Aelia.

Harry looked back to the three male Healers and he flinched involuntarily at their scrutinising gazes.

“It’s alright, Harry.” Elder Midate said gently.
“We’re just going to gently check you over, Harry.” Georgio said calmly. “If you say stop, we’ll stop and talk about it, okay?”

Harry swallowed hard and he nodded. It had been a long time since someone had actually stopped when he’d said to. It would be a novelty for a while, until he got used to it again.

The Healers were all very deliberate around him. They moved slowly and carefully and only one of them touched him at any one time. Harry got the feeling that Alfred and Jackson had done this before, but Georgio, who was hanging back slightly and was taking his cues from the two older Healers, was out of his comfort zone.

He put his last tiny fragment of trust into the Healers hands and he remained as still and as calm as he possibly could as he let them check him over. His heart was racing out of his control, however, and his breathing was faster than it should have been, he also flinched involuntarily when he was touched, but he couldn’t control it, any of it, not at the moment.

“Harry, you’re two and a half months pregnant.” Jackson told him. “Do you want a scan of the baby to make sure that its alri…?”

“I’m having an abortion.” He said tightly, daring anyone to say anything about it. “Nothing about it matters, not to me. I don’t want to hear anything about it.”

The three Healers nodded and said nothing, which allowed Harry to relax his shoulders back down and release some of his tension.

The three of them carried on, while Harry kept an eye on Ismay, who was chatting to Claire and Aelia and having her own, subtle and non-intrusive check-up that the two women were making into a game.

“No broken bones.” Georgio said carefully. His voice was very controlled, as if he wanted to be angry, but didn’t know what reaction it would garner.

“There are a lot of contusions and some lacerations.” Jackson sighed. “Harry, your face has received particularly extensive bruising and damage.”

“He couldn’t aim for my middle body. He wanted his son.” Harry said blandly.

“So your head was his target?” Alfred said with almost bared teeth and a tensed body.
“Head and upper chest.” Harry admitted. “Sometimes my legs too, but only if I was sat down or already on the floor.”

“May we see your upper chest?” Jackson asked. “If you’d preferred, you could keep the blanket over everything else but your upper chest.”

Harry shivered as a cold wave swept through him.

“It’s alright, Harry.” Dumbledore said quietly. “You’re safe now.”

Harry nodded and he looked at his lap.

“Can you all turn around please?” He asked in a timid whisper.

It was amazing to him that they didn’t even question him, they just immediately did as he’d asked. He quickly took the new shirt off and pulled the duvet up over his legs, covering the bump that he didn’t want to look at and some of his torso, leaving the vivid, ugly bruises on display.

“Okay.” He said softly.

They turned around and Harry saw that they were actively working not to visibly show their anger. He looked down at his lap again and tried not to look at the disgust on their faces as they looked at him.

A touch to his arm had him flinching, and automatically curling away, but he looked up to Dumbledore, who smiled at him, his blue eyes twinkling. Harry immediately flinched at the eye contact and he dropped his gaze to look at the crooked nose instead.

“Remember Harry, it does not do to dwell on things and forget to live.”

Harry smiled weakly and he swallowed heavily at the words and he nodded. He could live through what had happened. He’d need help, but he had gone through it and now he was out the other side. It was going to be tough, he already knew that, but what aspect of his life hadn’t been tough thus far?
He’d been a target for a war before he was even born. His parents had been killed because of the prophecy that Voldemort had believed. He’d grown up neglected and abused thanks to the Dursleys. He’d been singled out as soon as he’d arrived in the wizarding world. He had never been normal, he had always been stared at and pointed at. He had been someone to be held up, nothing but a shield and a weapon to the wizarding world who had no care for the scared child he’d been underneath.

He’d lost Sirius, his friends had abandoned him, he’d had a creature inheritance that he hadn’t known about, or even wanted, that he then had to hide from everyone else and then…then came the Perrots. All the ugly little details, the pain, the humiliation, the fear. The bittersweetness of having Ismay, knowing that she was Jefferus’ child…the five miscarriages that had followed, losing six babies. Then this pregnancy. A son. A son that might look just like Jefferus. A son who would be a continuous, hideous reminder of his torment. At least with Ismay he could forget for a little while. He could pretend that she was just his because she looked like him. He couldn’t take the risk that another child, a son especially, might look like a clone of Jefferus, or even of Carter or Penelope. He just couldn’t.

There were slight touches to his chest, but Harry ignored them as much as he could, flinching a little, visibly trembling, but biting his lip and not complaining as he stared at his happy little girl. He smiled as she told one of her stories to Claire and Aelia, the three of them laughing. She was such a character and he adored her, but…but he hadn’t lied when he’d said that it hadn’t been his choice to keep her. If he’d had any choice, he never would have met Jefferus and Ismay would never have been born.

His heart throbbed with love and for a moment he sunk back into his instincts, his Dracken fighting the deep, dark pit that the potion he’d taken had thrown it in. They still loved Jefferus for Ismay, Jefferus was his mate, he loved him. Only he didn’t and he never had and in the cold light of day, with the effects of the dampening potion he’d been given clearing his mind of the forced mateship and the instincts of his Dracken side, he knew that he loved Ismay for Ismay, but those feelings did not stretch to Jefferus fucking Perrot.

“Can I take more of that potion?” He asked quietly.

“Which one, Harry?” Elder Midate asked him.

“He was given a suppression potion, Elder. So that he could be removed safely with the child.” One of the guards who’d been there to receive the rescue team said from the door.

“You can’t take too much of that potion, Harry. It damages your mind and your instincts.” Elder Midate told him, being backed up by the three Healers, who were nodding very seriously.

Harry swallowed. “It’s wearing off.” He said shakily. “He’s coming back. I can’t…I don’t want him! Not again, I can’t do it all again!” He cried, rapidly turning hysterical.
He immediately had several hands touching him and reassuring him.

“Get another dose of that potion here, now!” Alfred Grant ordered and one of the guards ran to get what the Healer had asked for as Harry had a full blown panic attack.

Harry was calmed down and he was allowed to take several sips of water before the guard hurried back in with a recently arrived Elder Trintus, who had a potion in his hands.

“This potion is needed?” He asked as he handed it over to Midate.

“We’ve found Harry.” Midate told him, indicating the bed as Trintus handed over the potion to Healer Jackson Moore.

“Where was he?” Trintus asked in shock as he shifted so that he could see the occupant of the bed, realising after only a moment exactly who it was under the blood, bruising and swelling.

“He was in Australia, with the Perrots.”

“No! They’re a family of Dracken nobility out in Australia!” Trintus hissed in complete shock.

“Extreme prestige, wealth and respect.” Midate sighed. “But they were hiding a very dark secret in their old, ancestral manor house.”

Trintus stepped forward as the three Healers stepped back, Harry having being given the potion and having settled down, drowsy and sleepy after his panic attack.

The Elder touched Harry’s broken face with a heart wrenching look of sadness.

“Those beasts did this?” He whispered.

“Anthanaric has already contacted the Australian Elders about this, they are coming to see him for themselves. They can’t believe that one of their poster families have done such a thing.” Midate snarled as Harry drifted off.
“Mummy napping?” Harry’s little girl, Ismay, asked as she clambered onto the bed. She immediately had four pairs of hands hovering over her back, just in case. “Mummy, its wakey time!” She insisted.

“Mummy needs some sleep, Ismay. He’s very tired and he’s hurt.” Claire told her.

“But, Mummy will be okay?” She asked with a trembling bottom lip.

“He’s going to be just fine, Princess.” Jackson told her firmly. “Why don’t you curl up next to him for a bit? It’s night time here.”

Ismay nodded and slipped herself under the duvet with her Mother and turned to tuck herself into a tiny ball next to him. A very defensive position, they noted, as Harry’s arms subconsciously wrapped around her back and head, protecting her as they both slept. They’d had to do this before.

“Hussein, Johnson. I want you both in this room at all times. If you need the bathroom, a drink, to call your families, you do it all in the next ten minutes.”

“Elder.” They both nodded and turned on their heels and left the room.

“Albus, are you staying?”

“For a time, yes.” The elderly wizard said as he conjured an incredibly plush, comfortable chair and sat at Harry’s bedside, but making sure that he wasn’t too close, so that he didn’t make Harry feel at all threatened, not even in his sleep.

Jacob nodded before turning back to his colleague. “Quintalus, Anthanaric went to Messana’s home. He was involved in Harry’s abduction.”

“What?!” The other Elder asked in total horror, keeping his voice low out of respect for the sleeping submissive and child. “One of our own did this?”

Jacob nodded sadly. “It came from Harry’s own mouth. It was Messana and one single guard. The same one who was on the door that night, Carlos Spatch. Do you remember him?”
“Yes.” Trintus growled furiously.

“There was no other dominant who went into the bathroom either before or after Harry, he said as such to mislead us. He needs to be punished for his involvement in Harry’s abduction.”

“Shall I go and see to him?”

“If you would. Anthanaric has dealt with Messana, but not the guard yet. Take Henry with you too and a strike force. I don’t think his mate is going to be best pleased.”

“If she’s any sort of decent woman then we’ll have to protect him from her in order to bring him to justice for Harry.” Trintus snarled as he left to go and grab Elder Kirrian and a strike force of mated dominants. They hadn’t had so much to do in months.

“Elder? Are we keeping Harry’s rescue private?” Claire asked softly as she took in all the details that she was hearing.

“Ah, yes, poor Maximilius.” Jacob sighed. The poor boy had been a wreck, a pale shade of himself since Harry had been taken. He had never gotten over it and he had shown no interest in anyone else since. “No, go and put him out of his misery, Claire. He’s mourned for long enough. I would reasonably expect Alexander to know by the end of the day anyway, it might as well come from one of his family members.”

“Thank you, Elder.” Claire said respectfully and she left the room after casting a lingering glance over Harry and Ismay. She spoke to the guards on the way out and bumped back into a family friend, Captain Foss, and it was he, who had been the very person to carry Harry from the house, who told her the most about what had happened during the rescue, and how Harry had been found and extracted, and what state he’d been in when they’d found him.

“How is he really?” Jacob asked the Healers, looking at the sleeping Harry sadly.

“In bad shape physically. I remember telling him to eat more to support his pregnancy almost four years ago now. He has been eating less now than he was back then.” Jackson said unhappily. “He’s far too thin and he is in absolutely no fit shape to be pregnant.”
“He’s not going through with it, Jackson.” Midate said firmly. “I don’t care what your personal thoughts are on abortion or if you think he’s right or wrong. He wants an abortion and he’ll have it with the full support of this Counsel.”

“He was raped.” Georgio said simply. “No one has the right to force anyone who fell pregnant through rape to carry their attacker’s child. It’s not right and the mental anguish it could potentially cause to Harry needs to be taken into consideration too.”

“Georgio is exactly right, but that potion, and the after potion he will need to take, they’re powerful, Jacob.” Jackson said. “My concern is not for the baby, but for what that potion could potentially do to Harry. He’s not in the best of health and that potion will clean him out. He’s going to have to fast before he takes each dose, which in his condition is dangerous enough, but he will be exhausted for days, if not weeks afterwards and he’ll feel completely hollow, which is a very disorientating, distressing feeling. He’ll be weak and dizzy, he might not be able to stand up or move his own body, and after what he’s gone through, that could cause him mental anguish too. It’s a heavily controlled potion for a reason. His Dracken is not going to be happy to lose a child either, which will only make it that much more difficult for Harry to deal with.”

“He’s already lost six babies over five pregnancies, Jackson.” Jacob said tiredly. “I don’t think his Dracken will be able to tell.”

“There is always that possibility.” Alfred agreed. “Five miscarriages in just two years is an appalling record and his Dracken must be driving that poor boy mad. One more will make little difference to his Dracken, but it will make a huge difference to Harry. He does not want this baby and we have no right to force him to have it and look after it day after day. It wouldn’t be good for him or the baby to be put through such a stressful, loveless situation of pain and fear.”

“I’ve already filled out the forms for the potion to be brewed.” Jacob said. “We’ll just have to keep an incredibly close eye on him and make sure that he is not left unsupervised while he’s going through this, to ensure that no complications arise and that Harry remains as calm and as safe as possible.”

“I’ll brew it personally.” Jackson said. “It’s been some time since I’ve had to brew this particular potion.”

“It’s been a while since we last had a submissive who was attacked and violated in such a way.” Jacob sighed sadly.

“Anthanaric has already implemented a change to the wards and the laws.” Dumbledore spoke up
softly. “He has consulted me on my thoughts on the matter and I believe that between us, we can make this a safer country for all Drackens.”

“It’s just a shame that it took Harry being snatched for us to realise it.”

“I will see him safe.” Dumbledore said firmly. “Nothing more will happen to him. He has already been through too much.”

“We need to learn from this or it was in vain.” Alfred sighed tiredly, wringing his three hundred year old hands together.

“We already have learnt from it.” Dumbledore insisted. “Though I do hope that it helps to teach that even the most respected of families can be capable of unspeakable acts of atrocity.”

Jacob nodded his head and then, one by one, Johnson and Hussein came back into the room. They silently stood on guard on either side of the door and they settled themselves down for a night of watching over the submissive and his daughter in the bed. No one would be coming through the door without being vetoed by their comrades on the opposite side of the door. This boy and his daughter would not be harmed again. Not on their watch.

Claire was preoccupied with her racing thoughts as she flooed home. Her mind was still back in that room with Harry and the adorable Ismay. He’d done wonders with her despite being forced into such a deplorable situation, though she didn’t know the whole story. Ismay had told her, in answer to her delicately probing questions, that she wasn’t going to miss her Grandparents, not one little bit, or the house, and Ismay had said she’d hated her bedroom too, but while she had said all of this, she hadn’t once mentioned her Father and Claire thought that that was rather telling in on itself.

“Love?”

Claire looked up to see her husband, Julius, looking at her with concern. He had likely been talking to her and she hadn’t responded or shown any indication of hearing him. When she had been called in to work in the middle of the night for an emergency he had gotten up with her and waited for her to come home, just in case she needed some comfort or support after whatever emergency she had to deal with.
“We need to go to your Father’s.” She said as she reached out to grip Julius’ hand.

“What’s happened?” He asked seriously.

Claire shook her head. “Your entire family needs to be told. All of them.”

“Give me ten minutes.” He told her. “You go and get changed and have some tea to make yourself feel better and I’ll sort everything, even if I have to drag them all from their beds myself.”

“No kids.” She told him.

“No little kids or do you mean none of my nieces and nephews?”

“No little kids.” Claire clarified. “This is too…it’s not…just no.”

Julius nodded his understanding and Claire left him on his knees, floo calling his family members. It would take him a while to get them all congregated in one place, especially given the very early hour, it wasn’t even seven yet, so she went into the kitchen and set up her cup and left her tea brewing while she went to change out of her work robes, she would need the tea to be strong after what she’d heard and seen this night.

When she had been woken up and called back to the Dracken Halls for a shift, she had known that it would be bad. Then the unmated dominant had come in with his one leg severed almost to the bone. He’d had a fight with his brother, who was also a Dracken, and he had lost. She had believed that this was the reason that she, and her colleagues, had all been called in during the night, to support the two of them who were on duty during the night. Then the whispers had started, coming to them from the guards who had been debriefed of the situation. And then Alfred, who had been on the night duty, had come to the rest of them and they had learned then of the letter in the middle of the night, the possibility of Harry being found after a tip off from a claimed family member. She had crossed her fingers and toes in hope, all of them had been praying and talking softly, hoping that the tip off wasn’t another cruel hoax, that it was Harry who was found. It had been.

Captain Foss had dropped Harry off in a free room, one of the larger rooms with plenty of light and space, then he’d come straight to them. He had given them a tight, almost pained smile.

‘It is him.’ He’d said. ‘Harry has been found, but he’s in a state. He can’t handle too many people around him. Let me go and debrief the Elders, they’ll let you know when you can see him. It might take a while, he’s very skittish and scared.’
Claire licked her lips. Skittish was perhaps too soft a word, Harry flinched if anyone raised their voice or if they approached him too quickly, or from one of his sides. She didn’t even want to think on how he’d react if he was approached from behind. He was going to need very extensive care and support.

“Is everything alright, love?” Julius asked her worriedly as he came into the kitchen fifteen minutes later.

“I’m alright.” She insisted. “I’ve just had a shock and things have happened that your family needs to know about and it might seem better coming from me rather than from someone else. This will be all over the community by the time the evening paper arrives.”

Julius nodded and he didn’t rush her as she finished her tea and took a moment to compose herself. They flooed over to Alexander’s home together and it was milling with Maddisons all asking questions, all wondering why they had been dragged out of bed so early.

“Ah, there you are, Julius.” Alexander said. He was looking incredibly worried. “What’s happened? Are you and Claire alright?”

Julius wrapped an arm around her waist and allowed her to speak. She took a deep breath and looked at all of the silent Maddisons. She noticed the hulking form of Myron Maddison and just in his shadow, only a few miserable inches shorter than his Father, the pale form of Max stood. He was looking much better in recent months, ever since he had found a Mind Healer that he connected to. He had also stopped drinking and he’d cut back on his workload too. Hopefully the news she brought here today would well and truly jump start his recovery.

“I just…” Claire sighed and trailed off. This wasn’t easy, despite how happy she was to have had Harry found in reasonably good health. It was still a very big, sudden shock and the state of him…it didn’t bear thinking about.

“Take your time, sweetheart.” Kimberly coached her gently.

“I have an announcement and…it’s quite shocking. Joyous, but given the circumstances…that is to say…” She trailed off again as she realised that she was coming off as confusing. She just couldn’t believe that this day had finally come at last.

“You’re pregnant? Baby Julie has finally managed to knock you up?” One of the identical twins
“You could have left us in bed and told us about that later, at a more reasonable hour!” The other twin pipped up.

Claire forced herself not to blush, she wasn’t a young woman anymore and she refused to rise to her brother-in-law’s bait.

“No. Julius and I have decided against having children, you know this.”

“Then what is the announcement?” Xerxes asked.

Claire steeled all of her nerves and she decided to just come straight out with it, it was going to be shocking whether she just blurted it out or eased them all into it.

“I was called back into work last night at three in the morning in preparation of an emergency. Even I could never have imagined what it was for, but Harry has finally been found.” She said crisply and clearly.

Max’s head snapped up and there were gasps all around the room.

“Is he back in the Counsel’s protection?” Alexander asked immediately.

Claire nodded. “He is. The on duty Elders met immediately after getting a sudden tip off in the middle of the night. They took a few hours to set up a strike force and prepare all that was needed to be done before they infiltrated the suspected house and they found Harry there, right where the informant said he’d be. He’s currently at the Healing Halls.”

“Can I see him?” Max asked desperately.

Claire was shaking her head before he’d finished asking.

“No, Max.” She said gently. “I’m sorry, sweetheart, I am, but Harry is not up for any visitors at the moment. He’s not the young boy that you knew. He’s very scared and he flinches when even mated teased.
dominants come near him. The guards said that he almost fainted from panicked fear when he smelt the unmated dominant in the room down the hall when he was first brought in.”

“Where was he?” Myron demanded, a look that promised murder on his face.

“He was found in Australia. In the company of the Perrot family, who have all been detained for questioning.”


“They’re the ones. Carterum’s youngest son, Jefferus, was the one who was forcibly mated to Harry. He’s in a secure holding cell, but Harry is still convinced that Jefferus is coming for him. That he will somehow escape his cell and take him again.”

“That poor boy.” Kimberly warbled.

“He’s in a right state too. About three months pregnant and he has been beaten black and blue. His face is a real mess of cuts, scabs, awful bruises and even swelling.”

“What?” Several men hissed around her.

She nodded sadly. “Apparently Jefferus never stopped beating Harry just because he was pregnant. The Perrots were being careful with this pregnancy, because Jefferus wanted this child, but…and this is truly disgusting, but apparently Harry has already had five miscarriages in just two years, because Jefferus didn’t want a daughter and he physically beat the babies out of Harry when a daughter was confirmed with a scan.”

Kimberly actually retched and she placed a hand over her mouth and dashed to the downstairs toilet.

“Does he have a child apart from the one that he is currently pregnant with?”

“Yes. The Perrots couldn’t risk Harry falling out of their control so they took extreme care with the very first pregnancy, though Harry says that he was still hit about. He has a beautiful two year old daughter, Ismay. She seems to have been relatively unharmed, if a bit neglected, but…she seemed to
think that her Mother having a broken, bloodied face was normal and she never once mentioned her 
Father, even as she told me firmly that she wasn’t going to miss her Grandparents, the house or her 
bedroom, which she apparently hated. She never even mentioned him.”

“The new pregnancy is a boy then, if that cunt wanted a son.”

No one reprimanded Caesar for his language. Not even Myron and that surprised Claire, but Myron 
looked like he was a hair’s breadth away from snapping and going on a murderous rampage. His 
mate and husband, Richard, was pacing in angry strides just behind Myron, cursing and clenching 
his hands tightly.

“That’s right.” Claire sighed. “But Harry immediately took the offer of an abortion and he admitted 
to not wanting Ismay. He said that if it had been his choice, he wouldn’t have either of them, so he’s 
aborting his unborn son. Elder Midate told me that there wasn’t even any hesitancy, he immediately 
accepted the offer of an abortion as soon as it was made.”

“I wouldn’t have expected any hesitancy or uncertainty.” Alexander sighed. “What that boy has been 
through, to give him a second unwanted child is just cruel. He needs support now.”

Claire nodded. “There…there’s one more thing.”

“What?” Sandor asked her in dread.

“I was speaking to Captain Foss, the one who was in charge of Harry’s rescue, and all those 
involved in Harry’s abduction and imprisonment are being detained by his strike force. The entire 
Perrot family, one of Jefferus’ friends who helped to rape Harry to get him pregnant that first time 
and…one of the guards of the Counsel.”

“I knew it!” Max raged. “I knew that guard at the door knew more than he was saying!”

“It’s more than that, Max, he was directly involved. He was waiting for Harry when he came back 
from the bathroom and he was the one who grabbed him, but it gets even worse.”

“How can it possibly get worse?” Enrique asked her, his body tense and both fists clenched.
“Elder Messana was the one who organised the abduction and sold Harry to the Perrots.” She said. “He has been detained for questioning himself.”

There was silence and then a bestial roar. “I’ll kill him!” Max shouted. “He was supposed to protect him, not sell him!”

“Allegedly he’s been on Carter Perrot’s payroll for a while. As soon as a male submissive came up, he was to tell them and then get the submissive directly to them so that they could mate the submissive to their son, at least that’s what Captain Foss told me. It’s a horrible coincidence that the submissive involved was Harry, but if it wasn’t him, it would only have been another poor boy.”

“That’ll mean his death.” Nicodemus put in. “Won’t it, Dad?”

Alexander considered it for only a moment and then he nodded. “Yes. I know his mate, Fiammetta. She’s a very formidable woman and she would kill him herself if given the chance once this comes out. Fia is a very strong advocate of submissive rights and I’ve worked with her countless times before. She’d rather be mateless than remain mated to someone who had shopped a submissive. Sesto will be executed for this, I can guarantee it. It’s just a matter of who gets to him first, the Counsel or Fiammetta.”

“The guard?” Max asked, his teeth bared.

“It would depend on his submissive, Maxie.” Alexander said sadly. “If she shows any distress at the thought of his death, then legally he can’t be touched thanks to the new laws that have been implemented. But I couldn’t imagine any submissive wanting to remain mated to a dominant who they knew had helped abduct a submissive to be sold. I would imagine that it would always be there, in the back of their mind, that they could be next or their children could be next.”

“Is he really okay, Claire?” Max asked her, near tears.

“He’s going to need a lot of support now, Max. He’s been broken. But he loves his daughter and there is still a flicker of fire in him. It’s only small, but it is still there. You should have seen the pleasure on his face when he was told that Jefferus would be killed.”

“Isn’t he supposed to be distressed over that?” Lydia, Alexander’s youngest daughter, asked her confusedly.
Claire shook her head. “As soon as he was found, the first thing the strike force did was give him a suppressant potion so that they could remove him safely. He almost had a panic attack in the Healing Halls when it started wearing off and his Dracken instincts woke back up, so he was dosed again.”

“They won’t keep him on that for long, will they?” Max asked worriedly, having grown up on horror stories of the suppressant potion and what it did and more importantly, what it could do and the damage it could cause, especially if taken for an extended period of time. Since becoming a Potions Master himself, knowing the ingredients and the effects they could cause, his healthy respect for the power of the suppressant potion had escalated.

“He’ll only be on it for a few days, Max. He’s at the Healing Halls and he’s being very well looked after and very closely monitored. I’ve never seen old Healer Grant so dedicated to any one patient before. But he needs that potion, he really does, just until Jefferus Perrot has been executed, to control his raging Dracken. He needs to feel like he’s been rescued, not be brainwashed into thinking that he wants Perrot back by his Dracken side while harming and distressing himself over the thought of his execution when truly, he wants to kill Perrot himself.”

“It’s been so long, I never thought that he’d be found.” Xerxes sighed.

“I’ll keep you all updated on how he is, but the news is going to be spreading around the community now like a wildfire, I thought that you all deserved to know first, which is why I had Julius wake you all up so very early.”

“Thank you, Claire.” Alexander said genuinely. “I think we all need a drink.”

“I’ve got it, Dad.” Xerxes said as he went into the kitchen, to the very top cupboard where Alexander kept his spirits.

Most of them were gifts from his friends or were tokens for his hard work advocating Dracken rights and reforming laws. He had more than a dozen bottles, which was just as well after the news they’d just received. Max hadn’t touched any of the bottles in months now and they were all proud of him and supporting him through his therapy and recovery. He was doing so very well and now that Harry had been found…it was the best of news.

Max slumped into a convenient seat and his Dad, Richard, sat next to him, wrapping him up in his arms to comfort him.

Myron placed a hand on his shoulder and kept it there. It truly was wonderful news, that Harry had finally been found. But it was now over three years since he’d been taken, most people had given up hope of ever finding him, but not his Max. Max had always kept hope that one day Harry would come back and now he had.
Xerxes came back carrying a tray of crystal tumbler glasses that were filled with a dark amber-brown liquid. Almost everyone took a glass and drank from it, including Max, who barely stopped to taste it before swallowing it down in one. He could drink a glass now without needing a bottle, but his binge drinking of Firewhiskey in the past meant that he no longer had a problem with either the taste or the burn, it no longer bothered him.

“He’s going to be okay. He’s back now.” Richard soothed him. “Those responsible will face justice.”

“They will. I’ll make sure of it.” Max growled. He meant it too, from the bottom of his heart, he meant it.

Harry woke up thinking that, like countless times before, he’d dreamed of his rescue. When he opened his eyes after feeling Ismay squirm against him, he did not see the ceiling of Jefferus’ bedroom, or his room or Ismay’s room, but one which was a refreshingly pale, minty green. No ceiling in the Perrots manor was such a colour.

He blinked and looked around and then the memories of a few hours before slammed back into him and he couldn’t keep the grin from splitting his lips, quite literally as some of his newly formed scabs pulled painfully.

Ismay poked her head up, blinking sleep from her beautiful hazel eyes and pushing her dark red hair from her face. It was an absolute nest of tangles, as always.

“Good morning, Ismay. Did you sleep okay?”

“I sleep in my clothes, Mummy.” She said, pulling on her twisted tights.

Harry laid her down on the bed, between his spread legs, and he tugged the stupid tights off, along with her skirt, frilly pink nappy cover and her top, leaving her in just a nappy and a white vest.

“Have you weed or pooed in the night?” He asked her.

“No, Mummy.” She answered promptly.
“Do you need to go?” He asked.

Ismay considered his question for a moment before she shook her head, sending her hair everywhere. “Not yet, Mummy.”

“Let me know when you want to go, love. We’ll use the big girl’s toilet.”

Harry looked around him at the room, but it was deserted. He pulled the covers off of himself and set his feet on the floor, recoiling a bit at how cold the hard floor was.


Harry smiled and hefted her up in to his arms, gave her a kiss before setting her down on the floor before standing up himself and stretching. He was wearing comfortable lounge trousers and a shirt and he didn’t care that he’d slept in them, he wasn’t taking them off. Ismay was running around the room in just her vest and nappy, very happy as she made her own fun with Cloppity. She’d never had any toys, only the horse that he’d made for her and even that she’d had to hide from the Perrots, so she had to play more with her imagination than anything physical. The Perrots didn’t believe in spoiling children. He snorted mentally, he’d eat his own legs if they hadn’t given Jefferus anything and everything that he’d ever wanted from the day that he was born, the filthy hypocrites. He knew too that it was only because Ismay was a girl, if she’d been a boy, then she would have had anything and everything that her heart had desired and then more, and it made him so fucking angry to think of the blatant mistreatment and sexism that he wanted to kill all of them, even their snobby, sexist human sons too.

A gentle knock on the door preceded a small whisper. “Harry?”

“You can come in.” Harry invited and Elder Midate entered his room.

“Good morning. I’ve brought you some fresh clothes for Ismay and I wanted to know if you wanted anything for breakfast, but I didn’t know if you were awake yet.”

Harry was thankful to see the fresh nappy on a pile of clothes for Ismay and he darted an arm out and rolled his daughter into his arms after he’d caught her. She giggled all the way.

“I took the guards from you early this morning. I thought you’d need your privacy, but the guards
outside the door are still there.” Elder Midate told him as he watched Harry throw the nappy onto the pile on the floor and change his daughter. “I hope you like the clothes.”

Harry shook them out and he grinned in happiness as he got Ismay’s legs through the legs of the jeans.

“Love them.” He insisted. “You see that small pile of clothes there. Over two thousand galleons of tatty rubbish! I always hated how they dressed my girl like some sort of baby model, but I never had any say in it. These are much better. Ismay needs practical, not showy. She’s a child, a baby, not a show pet.”

Harry sat Ismay up and pulled the tee shirt over her head. The jeans were pale blue, made feminine with embroidered purple and pink flowers at the hips and hems and the tee shirt was a simple clean white. Harry loved it as he pulled a nice, simple pair of white socks onto Ismay’s feet.

“There. Is that better, love?”

“Yes, Mummy.” She said with a happy grin.

“Would you rather eat here, or in the kitchen?” Elder Midate asked.

Harry debated for a moment before he shook his head. “The kitchen I think. I can’t hide away forever.”

“It’s only your first day, you’ve been here for a mere five hours, Harry. You have no need to push yourself too hard.” Elder Midate assured him.

Harry nodded. “I know. But I feel…I feel like if I hide away then I’m admitting that there’s something wrong with me and there isn’t, or like I was somehow at fault for what happened to me.”

Elder Midate smiled at him.

“How many people?” Harry asked nervously, unable to help the soft waver of fear in his voice.
“Not that many. Just Elder Vipond and his mate, a couple of the mated guards, myself and Professor Dumbledore.”

Harry nodded and he picked up Ismay and settled her on his hip. It put a strain on his bump, but he didn’t care. It wouldn’t be there for much longer.

He followed Elder Midate out of the room and the two guards, older ones this time, kicked off from the wall and followed behind them like silent sentries. Harry was a bit wary around them, as it was a mated guard who had helped Elder Messana after all, and he stuck close to Elder Midate because of that small doubt, but he also knew that not all the mated guards were going to be the same as the one who’d agreed to abduct him for money. But still, it paid to be cautious, especially with his daughter.

They had to go up a grand staircase to reach the kitchen, as the entire ground floor was dedicated to the Dracken community as a whole, but the upper floor was just as rich and lavish. Warmer than the Perrots house had ever been, decorated in deep reds, earthy browns and leafy greens. It was beautiful up here and they walked for a little longer, passing more large white doors, until they reached one that Elder Midate stopped at. He knocked once and then opened the door and stepped through.

Harry followed with Ismay and he had to concentrate on regulating his breathing, on slowing his heartbeat so that he didn’t outright panic just because he was somewhere new with lots of strangers, even if there were friendly, familiar faces there too.

“Harry, my dear boy.” Dumbledore said genially with a smile and Harry smiled back, if a bit shyly.

He sat next to Dumbledore and he kept Ismay on his lap. Her hands had folded automatically into her own lap, as Penelope had taught her. Harry had flinched every single time that she’d hit his baby girl’s hand with a stinging spell if she’d reached out for something that she’d reached out for something that she’d wanted.

Elder Midate, aware that Harry probably hadn’t ever been allowed to serve himself, pushed several items practically under his nose for him to choose from and a quick peek around showed no one looking or paying attention to him or Ismay. Harry’s shoulder’s relaxed and he pulled Ismay further onto his lap and took her hand and pressed it into a piece of toast.

“Mummy, it’s not proper.” Ismay imitated her Grandmother and Harry swore that he’d erase every single mannerism that the Perrots had instilled in his daughter.

“It is now that we’re safe.” He said encouragingly, picking up some toast himself and chewing on it, watched by a curious two year old.

She giggled at him as he wiped a smear of butter off of his cheek before she took her own piece of toast and bit into it like he had. There would be no more eating toast with a knife and fork. Harry
petted her hair gently and smeared her next piece with strawberry jam, letting her make as much of a mess as she wanted. If anyone here had a problem with it, he’d clean it up himself, but no one was paying much attention to him or Ismay. He had a feeling that that was on purpose and he was grateful.

It felt amazing to be sat on his own chair instead of on Jefferus’ filthy lap, to have his daughter right with him and under no threat of being hit with a painful spell and he couldn’t describe the feeling of being able to eat what he wanted with his own hands for the first time in three and a half years.

He paced himself and he controlled how much he ate, but as soon as he was on his own, with his daughter, he was going to stuff himself until he was sick. He was going to stock as many treats as he could as he and Ismay hadn’t been allowed them at all at the Perrot’s. He was going to put on all the Muggle films that he’d promised her once they were free and he was going to bond with his little girl exactly how he’d always wanted to and this time, there was going to be no one to stop him or punish either of them.

“As soon as you’re better, Harry, there is always room for you and Ismay at Hogwarts.” Dumbledore told him.

Harry nodded, considering the offer, but the memory of the castle was now tarnished for him, because it had been his safe place, the place he’d always placed himself whenever Jefferus had raped him. He wouldn’t be able to go back there now, not when he had linked it to his torment and rape. He would never be able to go back there and it made him so very sad.

“I think I just… I don’t know. I don’t want to be near people and going back to Hogwarts is…it’s just too much I think after everything. I want to be alone with Ismay. I want my own space, my own home.” He replied hesitantly.

“If you need any help, please ask.” Dumbledore told him as he took a sip of his tea.

Harry smiled to the table top and extended his small piece of remaining trust. “Can you recommend any nice houses for me and Ismay?” He asked.

“I can start inquiring about it immediately.” Dumbledore said with a smile and he went back to his tea.

Harry could see that both of the Elders in the room did not like that idea at all, but they kept silent. Harry would be aware of it later, of them possibly trying to change his mind or to manoeuvre him into a position that he didn’t want to be in, but for now, they kept quiet and Harry firmly planned to go ahead with his idea. He would get his own home and he’d live there with his daughter until such a time as he could face the outside world again, even if it took him years until he had recovered.
enough to get over what had happened to him.

“Are we getting a house, Mummy?”

He nodded. “Yes, love.”

“Can I…can I have a blue room?” She asked him tentatively. “I don’t like pink or lace.”

Harry didn’t blame her for her hate of pink and lace after the monstrosity of a bedroom she’d had at the Perrots. There would be no more adult sized double beds, no more canopies or lace netting, no more vintage fucking night gowns with real seed pearls sewn into them.

“You can have whatever you want.” Harry promised, his heart breaking as his own daughter didn’t feel able to ask him for something that she wanted. “If you want a blue room and a live scale rocking horse, you can have it.”

“Can you get rocking horses?” Ismay asked excitedly.

“I don’t know, but if you can’t, then I’ll find someone and I’ll have it made especially for you.”

Ismay giggled and clapped her hands together.

Harry loved her little giggle and he wanted to hear it every single day from now on. There would be no more etiquette lessons, no more designer clothes, no more heeled shoes, no more being smacked with a stinging spell, no learning to walk with a book resting on her head or how to sit like a proper ‘lady’. There would be no more silverware lessons, no more piano or violin lessons, nothing of that sort ever again. His daughter would be free to be the little toddler that she was and she’d have days filled with endless fun and laughter, nothing more. He would make sure of it.

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It took a week for the abortion potion to be brewed and in that time a specially trained psychologist, Healer Kinnick, had sat down and spoken to him, making sure he knew what he was doing and ensuring that he was actually fit to make such a decision himself. He did so in such a condescending
manner that Harry felt belittled and insignificant. Which of course angered him. He shouted and raged, telling the psychologist that if he didn’t sign him off to have the abortion, that he, Harry, would find a way to kill him and the unborn baby himself.

He had been very reluctantly signed off, with a very unhappy psychologist who grumbled that it should be illegal for any Dracken to abort a perfectly healthy baby. Harry had reacted very childishly by throwing a chair at the door that the psychologist had left through. He had point blank refused to see him again, or any other psychologist for that matter. It had taken just ten minutes for his anger to turn to fear and it had taken Elder Midate and Elder Vipond over four hours to calm him down and stop him from crying and babbling incoherently in his fear of reprisal for his outburst and in his mindless fear that he would be stuck with a baby that he didn’t want. The Elders had only managed to calm him down when Ismay had crawled onto his lap for a short nap and he had quietened himself for her sake.

But he’d taken the first dose of the dissolvere pullus potion, a very acidic, acrid tasting potion that was very thin and watery. It was a muddy, dark greyish colour and left a very bitter taste on his tongue. He’d had to drink a quarter of a pint of it as a first dose and it had to be taken on an empty stomach, after a full twelve hours of fasting, and he hadn’t been allowed to drink anything for an hour after he’d taken the potion either, so he’d had the foul taste stuck in his mouth for what seemed like an age before he was finally allowed to eat and drink again.

He had been watched very carefully during his planned fasting by the Dracken Healers, who were being very careful of him because of his very slight weight to begin with. When he’d told them that he’d birthed Ismay at just twenty weeks and six days, about four and a half months gestation, they’d started treating him like he was made of glass, which Harry found amusing as his little girl was now two months away from turning three years old.

He was unhappy to learn that he needed to take another two doses of the abortion potion in order for it to work, but he was still determined to do so. He didn’t care how foul it tasted, how bitter it was, how much of it he had to drink or how long he had to starve himself before he could take it, he did not want another child. He would not have another of Jefferus’ children.

He was meeting with several other people today, he didn’t like it because not only were they going to question him, but he had to leave Ismay. He didn’t want to leave his daughter anywhere with anyone, but he’d at least insisted on having the meeting near her nap time, so at least it wouldn’t be as bad as if she were awake. She was currently running around the huge garden though, ripping up the flowers, but both Elder Vipond and his mate, Aeesha, had insisted that it was completely fine that Ismay was destroying all of their flowers and floral displays. They told him happily that they would repair it with magic easily as soon as she was done.

“Are you settled, Harry?” Elder Midate asked gently. “Do you need anything else to drink, some more chocolate maybe?”

Harry smiled and he took a moment to lean into Elder Midate’s side before sitting back up. He shook his head. “No. I’m okay. I just want this meeting to be over. I don’t understand why they won’t take your word for things.”

Elder Midate scoffed. “Because they’re fools. They don’t want to believe it and they won’t until we
“Is Elder Kirrian coming back?” Harry asked, he felt doubly safe with both Midate and Kirrian with him, sat sandwiched safely in between them.

“He’ll be back soon.” Elder Midate told him surely. “He’s only gone to complain some more about these people coming in the first place. He’s really fond of you, you know. He wants to protect you.”

Harry smiled and then he sighed, trying to settle himself. This wasn’t going to be anything serious. It had happened after all and he’d been found a prisoner in the Perrots’ home and he was still bonded to Jefferus. A simple genealogy potion would even prove that Ismay was Jefferus’ child, as much as the thought of that sickened him.

Elder Kirrian came storming back into the room and he sat on Harry’s other side. He petted his knee.

“Ismay is fine. She’s terrorising Aeesha in the garden.” Elder Kirrian told him, speaking of Elder Vipond’s Wife and mate fondly. Elder Kirrian approved of Aeesha Vipond and Harry had come to realise that that was a very high compliment indeed. Henry Kirrian did not like very many people at all, dominant or submissive.

Harry smiled. Ismay really liked Aeesha too and had taken to the elderly woman like a hot flame to dry kindling. It helped to settle Harry down that Anthanaric and Aeesha had had over forty children in their lifetime. Now well into their two hundreds, their youngest child was seventy and they had a massive horde of grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, that they loved running around after.

Harry’s smile was wiped clear when Elder Vipond led in several men and even though they greeted him softly and treated him like an injured, startled deer, he did not reply. He didn’t even smile at them. He didn’t want to be polite or sociable. He wanted to hide. There were far too many people around him and he felt trapped and unable to escape. His breathing picked up just enough that the Elders on either side of him, Midate and Kirrian, both heard the increase and both laid a comforting hand on a knee each.

“Mister Potter.” One of the new Elders greeted verbally. It had been a while since he’d heard his own last name, he almost didn’t recognise it.

He nodded silently, unable to look at the man talking to him.

“I understand that this might be stressful for you, so…”
“Might be stressful?” Elder Kirrian cut in with a growl. “You’re calling him a liar, of course this situation is stressful for him!”

“We have not called him a liar!” One of the younger looking Elder’s refuted hotly. “We are just here to establish what has happened.”

“What do you think has happened?!” Elder Kirrian demanded. He put an arm out in front of Harry, as if he could protect him from words.

“Henry, this isn’t helping.” Elder Vipond sighed. “Harry is our priority as a severely abused submissive.”

“You were kidnapped by the Perrot family?” The one Elder asked. The one with the scar over both of his lips. “I just find it difficult to imagine them kidnapping anyone.”

“They weren’t the ones to abduct me.” Harry said, lifting his head only slightly, so that he was speaking to a nose. He couldn’t even think of getting eye contact, the thought made him break out into a cold sweat. “They paid someone else to do it for them.”

“That does sound like them.” Another Elder said. “I know they were friends of yours, Litus, but your attitude is not helping. Anthanaric is right, Mister Potter should be our priority here, as the injured party.”

“Absolutely.” The younger Elder agreed immediately. Litus did not look like he agreed.

“He should offer proof of his claims.” Litus insisted.

“He was found beaten and bloody in their fucking house!” Elder Kirrian exploded. “What more proof do you want you thick headed, arse licker!”

Harry chuckled and Elder Kirrian’s other arm went around his back and squeezed his furthest shoulder gently.

“They could have found him and were in the process of…”
“No one here believes that.” Elder Vipond cut in sternly. “Not even you. He was found cowering in the attic with his child. If they had merely found him, why wasn’t he in a main room being looked after? Why hadn’t they given an immediate floo call to any of you or to a Healer? Harry was not there by choice, and those people were his captors.”

“We were told that there is a child involved.” The one Elder asked, his eyes automatically dropped to Harry’s belly.

Harry covered his belly with a scowl.

“Not this one.” Elder Kirrian growled. “Harry has a daughter. Ismay. She is two years old and she is Jefferus Perrot’s daughter.”

“His claimed daughter.” Litus growled and Harry sunk into Elder Kirrian and clenched both of his hands together in his lap.

“You have brought the genealogy potion?” Elder Kirrian snarled.

“Of course.” The most reasonable Elder insisted as he took a sealed potion vial from the bag that he was carrying.

Elder Vipond cast several spells on it to make sure that it wasn’t tampered with and then looked at Harry.

“Are you comfortable with this going ahead, Harry?”

Harry nodded simply.

“Syed, if you could bring Aeesha and Ismay here for a moment.” Elder Vipond asked one of the several guards in the room before turning back to the Australian Elders. “If any of you gentleman say anything or do anything to distress this little girl, you will be blacklisted from this country.”
“We wouldn’t dream of harming or distressing a child!” The younger Elder insisted.

“Be sure that you don’t, Elder Kelly.” Elder Vipond said sternly.

They sat stiffly and in silence as they waited for Ismay and when she arrived, it was holding Aeesha’s hand, singing softly. At least until she saw him.

“Mummy!” She cut off her own song and rushed to him, clambering up onto the settee and she snuggled into him.

“I need you to do something for me, okay sweetheart?”

“Okay, Mummy.”

Harry took the opened vial from Elder Vipond and he held it out to Ismay as the dozen or so people in the room watched them closely, critically, to make sure it wasn’t tampered with by him. “I need you to spit in here, love.”

Ismay recoiled back in horror. “Spitting isn’t proper! Ladies don’t spit.” She insisted, sounding so much like Penelope Perrot that Harry wanted to hunch down and scan the room for the formidable bitch, despite knowing that she wasn’t there.

“I know, but you aren’t spitting at a person, just into the bottle, like when we brush our teeth.” Harry said with a smile.

“I don’t want to.” She whimpered, her hazel eyes darting around the room fearfully, as if looking for a trap, and Harry’s heart constricted tight with pain.

“No one will hurt you for doing it, love. I promise you, it’s like brushing your teeth and spitting in the sink, I promise.”

“Perhaps a hair, Harry?” Aeesha said calmly as Ismay shook her head silently, refusing to spit.
“Would that be better, love?” He asked gently.

Ismay thought about it and then nodded. Harry reached up to her mane of dark, fire red hair and he found a single strand, slid his fingers down to the scalp and then twitched his fingers to pluck it at the root.

Ismay reached up and scratched at the spot, but she wasn’t acting like it had hurt, more irritated and that settled Harry back down.

“There, that wasn’t bad was it?” He smiled.

“No, Mummy. I go for my nap now?”

“Oh course, my love. Off you go with Aesha now.”

Harry kissed her puckered mouth and he didn’t ask anyone for permission to send her off. She was his daughter and she was getting tired. She was going for her nap regardless of what anyone else said.

Harry put the potion on the low table between him and the Australian Elders and he dipped the long, red hair into it carefully, poking it in fully without letting any part of himself touch the potion inside. An Elder from Australia stoppered the potion carefully and then shook it before he took out a circular piece of blinding white parchment from the bag he was carrying and then he tipped the potion onto the parchment.

Harry watched as the name Ethelana Perrot immediately took up the page and the Elders all looked at him.

“I hated what he named her. She’s always been Ismay to me and I will be changing her name officially and legally to Ismay Potter as soon as I can.” He said stiffly, stubbornly.

“Good, what sort of name is Ethelana for that sweet girl?” Elder Kirrian snorted.

Harry chuckled softly. “This boy was going to be called Bertrandus.”

Harry tried not to think of his unborn son with a name, as it humanised the foetus when he didn’t
want to, but it helped that he would never have called any child of his either Ethelana or Bertrandus.

Elder Kirrian mimed vomiting and Harry laughed louder, happier and he sunk back to snuggle back into the safety that the two Elders on either side of him offered.

The potion was sliding further over the parchment now and ‘Ethelana’s’ parents formed. His own name was listed under Mother. Jefferus Bernardus Perrot formed under Father.

“There you have it gentlemen, in black and white.” Elder Vipond said harshly. “Ismay is the daughter of Harry and Jefferus Perrot. Harry was abducted and forcibly mated against his will by use of the illegal Sanguinem Vinculo potion. He has been kept a prisoner for three years and four months and he was found in the accused’s house. The three of them will be executed.”

“We would ask that you spare Carterum and Penelope…”

“Out of the question.” Elder Kirrian jumped in immediately. “They were directly involved and they need to face justice. Their son lived in their manor house with Harry. They knew what was going on, for over three years they watched and did nothing as their son beat and tortured Harry. They are as guilty as he is.”

“They were the ones who set everything up for him to have me. They were the ones paying Messana and they…they…” Harry shook his head, cutting himself off and he moved into Elder Kirrian.

“They what, Harry?” Elder Vipond prodded gently.

“They watched every single day as he’d hit me harder and for longer and they did nothing, they watched him kicking my daughters from me, they knew he was…that he was…they didn’t do anything to stop him, they didn’t even say anything about it, they’d just stare and watch. It was like I wasn’t even alive, like I was a ragdoll. I didn’t feel human anymore. They did that to me.”

“But they never hit you?” A previously silent Elder asked intently.

“They did. Right from the very beginning they did.” Harry said softly. “I remember the first time I arrived there. I was scared, panicking, I didn’t know what was going on. As far as I knew, I’d been abducted from the Halls by an Elder and brought to that house. There I was held between two dominants that the Perrots had hired to stop me from using my claws mostly, as they were both human, so they didn’t want to take that chance, with themselves or with their son. I let out a distress call and the first thing Carter did was smack me across the face. Penelope did the same thing the very next morning, when I first met her. They liked hitting me and they hit Ismay too.”
“You allowed them to hit your child?” Litus asked in a way that clearly showed that he didn’t believe a word that Harry was saying and that made him angry.

“I didn’t have much of a say in anything.” He spat, looking at that twisted, sneered mouth. “Do you have any idea how powerless a feeling it is to watch your child being verbally abused and having her hands and bottom smacked in front of you when you know that you can’t do a damn thing to stop it? When I’ve been ordered by my ‘mate’ to sit and watch without reacting? Do you know how low and weak I felt, seeing her curled into a ball in the corner after she’d just witnessed her own Father beating me to a pulp? Do you know how useless a Mother I felt as she came crying to me with her hands or bottom or the backs of her thighs red from being hit? Or because she’d been told yet again that she wasn’t allowed to play or do something that she’d wanted to do, knowing that there was absolutely nothing that I could do or say to stop it from happening to her? That I had no voice, no opinion, no say in anything that was done to her or for her, no input in the way that she was raised at all! It’s the worst feeling in the world, being so utterly useless, feeling like there’s nothing I can do to save my own daughter from such abuses and horrors. You have absolutely no idea what those people did to me or to her and I will not allow you to sit there and call me a fucking liar after all that they’ve done to me and my daughter!”

“Calm yourself, dear one.” Elder Vipond soothed.

Harry took in a deep, shaky breath and he let it out again. He started to tremble as the reality of what he’d just done set in. He was so scared because he’d been shouting at someone that he felt sick and he had to close his eyes to control the urge to vomit. Elder Kirrian pulled him in tighter to his body and the soothing, calming pheromones that he emitted helped calm Harry right down, it made him feel safer.

“No one is going to harm you for shouting.” Henry said gruffly, verbally and physically reassuring him. “You were verbally attacked and you have every right to defend yourself without repercussions. You will get that fire back in your belly one day, the fire you had before this happened and it will be normal again, until then though, I will be there for you day and night. I will hold you like this until you stop shaking, until you stop thinking that answering back or raising your voice will lead to you being harmed. It won’t. Never again.”

“You have needlessly distressed an already injured, abused submissive.” Vipond told the other Elders in a deep, vibrating growl.

“So I see.” The Head Dracken sighed with a disapproving glance to his colleague. “That was not our intention. I see now that arguing is useless and we surrender all rights to Jefferus, Carterum and Penelope Perrot and to Braven Barret to you and to the British justice. Execute them as you feel suits, we in Australia sever all ties to them. We will not abide such vile creatures to set foot upon our
“Rest assured that they will not set foot on anyone’s territory again.” Kirrian growled over Harry’s head as he cradled the boy close. “They will all die for this, all of them involved and I will watch as it is done so that I can be assured that they’re dead and gone.”

“I want to watch too.” Harry said softly.

Immediately there was humming and harring as the Elders tried to convince him that that wasn’t a good idea.

“Enough!” Elder Kirrian shouted out. “Harry has expressed his wish to see the accused executed, as is his right! If he were a dominant you would not bat a fucking eyelash at him wanting to see justice done. We will not devolve back into the last century, Harry wants to see them executed, he will not be discounted before he’s even been given a chance to defend his wishes!”

“I want to see them die.” He said into the silence that followed, almost having to force himself to speak after being told no. “I want to see the light go out of their eyes after what they’ve done to me. I want to be one hundred percent sure that they’re dead and not coming back for me or Ismay and I will not take anyone else’s word on the matter. I want to see it happen, with my own eyes I want to see them executed.”

Elder Vipond swelled as he inhaled deeply and Harry could see in his eyes that he was warring with himself before he nodded once, sharply.

“Yes.” He said, releasing the pressure from his chest. “Yes, I will allow you to watch, but you will be disguised so that the condemned cannot see you or harm you anymore and you will remain by the side of a trusted guard throughout.”

Harry nodded his agreement and his hands clenched into fists. He was determined to do this.

“If that was all, can I go?” He asked quietly.

“Missing Ismay?” Henry Kirrian teased.
Harry forced a smile. “I don’t like being away from her.”

“Of course, Harry. You remember where your rooms are?” Elder Vipond said gently.

Harry nodded.

“Of you go then, sweetness.”

Harry stood and he left the Elders to do what they needed to do. He had two guards following him, but he didn’t mind. He’d actually sort of made friends with a few of them, so he felt a little more settled and secure here now.

He made his way quickly to his rooms in the Healing Halls, as his abortion still needed to be closely observed, and to where Aeesha was humming gently to a sleeping Ismay.

“Are you well, sweet one?” Aeesha asked him softly.

“I’m okay. That was…it wasn’t something that I would have chosen to do.” He said quietly as he stared at his daughter.

“I understand that it must have been difficult for you, but it’s over now.”

“No just yet.” Harry all but whispered, thinking of the three Perrots, of Braven, of the Perrots four older sons who had done nothing, despite all they’d seen.

Even if the Counsel weren’t going to execute the four remaining Perrots, Harry at least wanted them to know the sheer depravity of their parents and younger brother. He wanted them to know that he’d been abducted and held against his will, that what they had witnessed was not a normal, or healthy, Dracken mateship. He wanted them to know that Ismay, not Ethelana, was his daughter by rape and that he would be changing her name and taking her away. He didn’t want her to have any contact with them or their poisonous, snobby children.

He would get his life back on track now, he was getting a specialist Mind Healer named Sebastian Vasey, who was the very best in his field and he took a special interest in those of creature blood as he had several creatures in his bloodlines, including Dracken blood, though that hadn’t come through in a few decades. Harry hoped that his talks with Vasey went better than they had with the Dracken psychologists, because if they didn’t, then he would be living with the trauma of this for a very long time and that was unacceptable, especially as he considered the possibility that it would eventually
affect Ismay too. He couldn’t allow that to happen. After everything that had happened, he refused to allow those people to poison his relationship with his innocent daughter, or their future together.

Every single day was a challenge for him. There were little things that he did that he had never noticed or realised had been ingrained in him from his captivity. From waiting for permission to do certain things, or keeping silent when others were having a conversation around him. It had been Elder Kirrian who had noticed the latter and ever since he had been helping him and provoking him in equal measure to get a reaction from him. Furiously encouraging him to talk and to butt in, prodding him until he was so frustrated that he was goaded into conversing with other people. Despite the very unorthodox method, it was actually helping him get used to speaking up and actually talking, not just replying when he was spoken to.

His new Mind Healer, Sebastian Vasey, was very respectful and accommodating. Harry actually felt like he could talk endlessly to him, which was a truly fantastic experience as, on the fourth of their two hour long meetings, the flood gates opened and everything that he was feeling, everything that he’d been through, came pouring out. It felt like a massive weight had been removed from his very soul as he offloaded everything, absolutely everything, and Healer Vasey had sat there, quietly, just listening to him, letting him speak and offload without interrupting him, without comment or judgement. It had been amazingly freeing, liberating, for him to talk and talk and talk, getting everything off of his chest and out of his system and then afterwards, Healer Vasey had given him a bar of chocolate and a cup of tea and had spoken to him about how much progress he had made. They had focused only on the positive aspects of everything, how his understanding of what had happened to him had opened the door to his recovery and how his willingness to talk and get everything out in the open was him figuratively walking through that door. Healer Vasey told him, that with more talks and more healing, he would eventually be able to close that figurative door and be able to put all of this behind him and move on. Under Healer Vasey, he could perfectly envision a life where he was looking forward, to his and Ismay’s future, and not behind him to the pain and misery of his past that was chaining him down and preventing him from moving away from what had happened to him.

He’d also taken both of the remaining doses of the dissolver pullus potion and, after an afternoon of intense observation and numerous spells and wards, the Healers had confirmed that his son was officially dead and there was no longer a heartbeat. He’d been given another potion, a different one, to completely clean out his insides and flush away everything that wasn’t meant to be inside him. He’d felt so weak and delicate after that that he’d been unable to hold up his own head and he couldn’t even lift his arms to hold Ismay. A Healer had always been in the room with him afterwards, and none of them took their attention away from him for a moment as he was monitored constantly, having spells cast over him to check his heart rate, his blood pressure, the working rate of all of his organs. It had been very frightening, to just lie there and not being able to move a single muscle, knowing that even if he’d wanted to, or needed to, he could not get up to get away from anyone. It was utterly terrifying to him to know that if anything happened, then he couldn’t get himself or Ismay away to safety. He’d been forced to rely on other people, on the Healers to look after him and the Elders and the guards to protect him and Ismay if anything happened. He didn’t like the feeling, even if he did trust them all more to look after him and protect him than he had ever done at the Perrots, that wasn’t really the point. He needed to be able to do it himself.
While he was in this terribly weakened state, he was unable to sit up to even take a drink of water, he had to have water dribbled carefully into his mouth for him by the attentive Healers watching over him, and he had his lips moistened with a wet cloth too just to stop them from cracking, and he was fed with incredibly thick, lumpy potions that were carefully placed into his stomach via a very complicated spell. Despite being fed with these potions, he still felt hollow, utterly empty and so very weak.

He felt strange knowing that he was no longer pregnant. He had thought that he would feel bad about his loss of a child, that his Dracken side would feel something about it, but there was nothing. There was no distress, no emotion…there was nothing and he was more distressed about not having any thoughts or emotions on his lost son than he was about actually losing him. Healer Vasey had told him that that was actually a good sign. It meant that he didn’t regret his decision to terminate his pregnancy, not even subconsciously. It had been exactly the right thing to do and that went a long way to reassuring him and settling him down from his train wreck of emotions where he felt guilty for not feeling anything over his lost son and making himself more distressed over his lack of distress.

A few days after this hollow, weak feeling was gone and he could once again sit up and hold Ismay in his arms, Elder Midate had sat down next to him and, after distracting Ismay by placing a charm on Cloppity to make the wooden horse canter around the floor, Jacob had told him that the trial and the execution was to be later that day. Harry’s heart had skipped a beat, but not for any usual reason, it wasn’t fear, regret or nervousness…it was excitement, anticipation. It was the need to see them die for all that they had done to him. He wanted to watch them die and a small smile made its way onto his face.

Elder Midate chuckled and gently touched his healing face with just the barest brush of his fingertips.

“It will all be over soon, Harry. They’ll be dead and they will never be able to hurt you again.” Elder Midate told him softly. “Once you see justice done, your healing can start in earnest and then, whatever you want, you can have.”

Harry smiled again and looked down at the cover on the bed he was sat in.

“It…I don’t think it’s right that I…that I’m looking forward to seeing all these people killed, but I am. I really, really am and that’s something that I’ve never had to say before. Well, it’s something that I’ve never wanted to say before, and that’s a bit…conflicting, I suppose.”

“Harry, you’re a good person. These people have hurt you very badly and no one blames you for wanting to make sure that they can never hurt you or Ismay again.” Elder Midate told him firmly. “They are to be sentenced to death whether you want them to die or not. It is the law in our society and nothing you can say against it can change it. Those six monsters will face a public execution for what they dared do to you, regardless of how you feel about it. So it’s alright that you want to see them die, Harry, there’s nothing wrong with enjoying a little legal revenge.”
Harry had chuckled himself at that and he managed to look up from the duvet for a moment before dropping his head back down, but it felt good to be able to do as he pleased now. He had successfully aborted Jefferus’ son, he was still taking the suppression potion, though this would be his last day of it. As soon as Jefferus was executed, he would be freed from the unnatural bond that had been forced upon him via a potion and he would be free…truly free from Jefferus and his control.

He teared up a little and he sniffled, brushing the heels of his hands under his eyes.

“Harry? Are you alright?” Elder Midate asked him quietly. “Whatever is the matter?”

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m okay. I just…the thought of being truly freed from them forever, it’s the greatest feeling in the world to me, but it’s a little overwhelming too, especially after so long being his slave.”

Jacob smiled and pulled him, slowly, into a hug, giving him ample time to see it coming and to back out of it if he needed to. He didn’t. He snuggled in tightly, curling up nice and small to absorb as much comfort as he could. It felt wonderful.

Jacob held Harry to himself and just relished in having him back, after forty-one months since his abduction, to finally have him back, to be able to hold him and comfort him…Harry was right, it truly was the greatest feeling in the world.

They had consulted Harry’s Mind Healer, Sebastian Vasey, on Harry’s decision to watch the executions, asking his professional opinion of whether it would help or hinder Harry’s recovery. He had told them, the Elders, that Harry’s recovery was hampered by the Perrots still being alive. That Harry’s nightmares were about the Perrots somehow getting free and coming for him and Ismay. He had told them that if Harry felt the need to watch the executions personally, then he should be allowed to do so. Healer Vasey had insisted that it should be Harry’s choice and no one else’s, and watching the executions would not harm Harry’s recovery, but if it was what he wanted to do, then it might even help him in whatever way.

If he thought that it would do any good, Jacob would have taken Harry down to the holding cells, where the three Perrots, and everyone else involved in his abduction and torment, were being kept until their trial, and he would show Harry exactly how ridiculous the thought of them breaking free was.

There were a dozen guards on constant watch, under the eagle-eyed supervision of either Henry Kirrian or Captain Foss, they were armed with guns, the bars were magically reinforced and there were anti-Apparation and anti-Portkey wards covering the entire basement which held the cells. The six people inside were not getting out, even if they did have inside help like they had done to get Harry in the first place, it wasn’t possible to break free. Not that anyone was going to help them, no one was even feeling sympathetic to them if the cuts and bruises that littered their faces and bodies was anything to go by…the guards were certainly having a bit of fun with the six prisoners, Elder…ex-Elder Sesto Messana especially.

“Things will get better, Harry. They will.” Jacob told him gently. “You’ll get all the help and support
that you need and then some. We are always going to be here for you, I am always going to be here for you. We have never given up on you, we never stopped searching for you and now that we have you back, you’re not going anywhere ever again.”

“It has been so long.” Harry admitted quietly as he watched Ismay from under his lashes, running around in leggings and a jumper, chasing after the charmed Cloppity. He couldn’t wait to buy her some new toys, even if the crude, rough Cloppity was always going to hold a special place in her heart. “I’m twenty years old now. So much has changed, so many things I wanted have just vanished, my dreams have been shattered and I now have to pick up the pieces and try to make something with them. It’s difficult.”

“I know, Harry. But just remember that you don’t have to do any of this alone. You have help, you have people who care a great deal about you and only want you to be happy, like me and Henry. Then there’s Dumbledore, and Anthanaric and Aeesha too.”

“Don’t forget us.” A grinning Georgio teased as he came into the room and made himself immediately non-threatening by sitting in the chair beside Harry’s bed. “How are you feeling this morning, Harry? Any dizzy spells or sluggishness?”

Harry shook his head. “I’m still feeling tired and a little lazy, but I can sit and stand up fine by myself and that hollow feeling hasn’t come back.”

“Wonderful. Any toilet troubles?”

Ismay giggled. “Don’t be silly! Mummy uses the big boy’s toilet! He doesn’t have any trouble.”

Harry chuckled and waved Ismay off, back after Cloppity. “I’m still constipated, but Healer Grant said that it was normal after what I went through and the lack of food.”

“It is. We’re going to give you a potion with your lunch today to help sort you out. Having gone from such a terrible, lacking diet to the one that we now have you on was bound to have messed up your digestive system and the heavy potions you were taking wouldn’t have helped in that regard either. We’re just going to ease it all back into regularity now. Nice and easy. Can I take your weight please, Harry?”

Harry just nodded, very used to having his weight checked several times daily via a simple, non-invasive spell that he barely even felt, the novelty of being asked if someone could do something
with his body instead of just doing it still hadn’t worn off yet. He still got a heady thrill of delight, just knowing that he could actually refuse and have others listen to that refusal.

“You’ve put on a pound since yesterday, great job, Harry.” Georgio praised him and, as love starved as he was, Harry sucked it up like a sponge and preened a little, but thankfully no one commented on it or made him feel stupid for being proud of gaining a single, measly pound.

The Healers, as obsessed with his weight as they were, had started a chart that documented all of his gains and dips. He’d lost more weight than the Healers had wanted him to after the abortion and the after-potion had cleaned him out, as such they were keeping a very close eye on him and were checking his weight four times a day at the same time every day. They had made him a structured meal plan that he was following, though he was also encouraged to eat extras if he could, and ever since he had been gaining weight. It was only a quarter or half a pound or so every few days, which is why a full pound in a day had been celebrated as a big achievement, but it was still a gain and not a loss and every single ounce put on was an ounce that was making him healthier.

“Mummy, can I go and ask Aeesha for cookies?” Ismay asked.

“Of course, love. Take Syed with you, please. If you don’t mind?” He asked one of the guards shyly.

“Of course not.” The handsome dominant smiled, swinging the gun on its strap behind him and taking Ismay’s tiny hand.

“Syed, tell me more about Amina.” Ismay told him as she trotted beside him, speaking of the dominant’s youngest daughter, who was five. Ismay loved hearing about other children, Amina especially.

Harry watched her go with a wrench to the heart. He hated having her out of his sight, here particularly. But he calmed himself, Harry liked Syed, he trusted him. He would protect Ismay, he knew that. His Dracken wouldn’t shut up though, it was squawking and throwing a fit inside him about letting their daughter just walk off without them to protect her. Harry silenced it with a lot of effort and self-control. He would need more of the suppressant potion soon, if his Dracken was peeking up enough to ride him about letting Ismay out of the room.

He got a quick, general check-up from Georgio, then he was free to follow Ismay to the kitchen where she was sat at the table with a tall glass of milk and a plate of soft cookies in front of her.

Harry smiled at her as he took several nice, slow steps towards the table and eased himself down beside her.
“Mummy, cookies!” Ismay giggled as she prodded a half-eaten cookie at him before picking up a fresh one for herself. Harry smiled softly before finishing off the cookie that she’d given to him.

“I think cookies are my favourite.” Ismay told him conversationally.

“Really? I think we should try everything, just to be sure.” Harry said back with a smile.

Ismay grinned back at him, nodding her head and sending her dark red hair flying and he pulled a hairband from his pocket and he pulled her hair back and he plaited it carefully from the back of her head, tying it off securely so that it was out of her face. Ismay shook her head again, sending the plait to either side of herself and giggling. Harry chuckled at her antics, overjoyed to see her opening up a little more and becoming less afraid. It made him settle down more, this was how he’d always imagined raising a child. Cookies and milk, practical clothes that didn’t hinder play, a simple, messy braid to keep Ismay’s hair out of her face, a lovely smile on her face as she swung her feet under her chair and there was not a single threat of harm or punishment to worry about. It was perfect.

At lunch Harry was given the potion that the Healers said was going to help get his digestive system back on track and shortly afterwards he was handing Ismay over to Aeesha and drinking down Polyjuice Potion.

His Healers had been up in arms about the idea of him going to the trialling and execution of those who had imprisoned him, but surprisingly his Mind Healer, Sebastian Vasey, had calmed the waters by insisting that it would be a step in the right direction for his mental healing. After that everyone had just sort of sullenly accepted that he would be going to the trial and watching the three Perrots, Braven, Sesto Messana and the mated guard who’d been involved, all executed under Dracken justice. All for him.

Of course the Healers were worried about him taking Polyjuice Potion as well, but Elder Vipond had been insistent that Harry not be known to those on trial so that he couldn’t be harmed or verbally manipulated or attacked.

Polyjuice Potion would only last an hour, but it would be a complete, all over transformation instead of merely charming his hair and eyes different colours. Harry had a little coloured bottle, that was charmed to look like pumpkin juice, but was actually Polyjuice Potion so that he could stay for as long as the trial took with no issues.

The guard who had been chosen for him to turn in to was taller than Harry was himself, being a dominant Dracken. Harry had never felt so buff, nor quite as gangly as he did when the potion took effect and Harry realised that his body had stretched in all directions to make him taller, bigger and buffer.

He was hurried, with Elder Midate beside him, to the back side of the Counsel Halls, to a room that was nearly the same size as the meeting halls. There were stalls and benches, almost like an auditorium with differing tiers. They’d come out on the very top tier and then the tiers sunk into the floor until the very bottom tier looked like it went down an entire storey.
“The bottom tier links up to the holding cells.” Elder Midate told him. “For easier transport of the prisoners and no opportunity for them to escape in transit.”

Harry nodded and he slipped all the way down to the very front tier, the one above the lowest floor where everything was an empty space, with just a long, wooden podium that would sit eleven…the eleven Elders of Great Britain. There were six chairs down the front, of which Harry recognised from his hearing in his fifth year at the Ministry. Even down to the chains around the arms.

“You’re leaving me here?” Harry asked confusedly, as Elder Vipond had told him that Elder Midate would see to his protection.

“I am needed down the front as an Elder, Harry, but I have seen to your protection. There are five guards now sat around your position and I have an old friend who will be here shortly to offer you personal protection. Do you remember Alexander Maddison?”

Harry smiled without conscious control. He remembered the Maddisons, he’d barely been able to stop thinking of Max over the years.

“The cockroach Maddisons.” He chuckled, his voice a lot deeper than he’d ever heard it before, but then it wasn’t truly his voice.

Jacob chuckled with him. “You have been spending far too much time with Henry.”

Harry just grinned. Elder Midate turned to look around him and then he waved to somebody.

“Now Harry, Alexander knows exactly who you are, so he will be rather protective of you, but he will be able to protect you, after all he’s not even a hundred yet.” Jacob snorted.

“Jacob, so good to see you again.”

Harry smiled shyly at the man who came to stand at his back. A gentle hand at his back made Harry feel so secure and he wanted so badly to turn and burrow into Alexander Maddison. It was a strange feeling, but he remembered feeling the same way when he’d first met Alexander. The man just gave off such safe, soothing vibes that Harry knew instinctively that the man would never, ever harm him. Harry liked the feeling and he wanted to cling to him and never let go.
“I need to go now, Harry, the trial will be starting soon. Stay close to Alexander.” Jacob whispered to him.

Harry nodded and turned to sit in his seat, Alexander sitting right beside him.

“It’s wonderful to see you, sweet one.” Alexander told him softly.

Harry smiled. “Thank you. It is wonderful to be free again.”

“We never stopped looking for you. We knew that one day we would find you and bring you back to where you were safe. It was several of us who had the idea to search every single Dracken family for you, of course I wanted to use Veritaserum too…oh, Veritaserum is a very powerful…”

“Truth serum.” Harry smiled and nodded.

Alexander chuckled. “Of course I was denied such a thing.” He sighed, as if put upon. “I still say it would have been easier, not to mention much quicker, to find you if we had used it. We started with the disgraced guard who had been on the door that night, the one you told us had grabbed you, a few drops of Veritaserum and he would have led us straight to ex-Elder Messana, who would have led us to the Perrots and to you. It would have all been much easier and quicker.”

Harry smiled wanly. “I wish you’d been allowed to use Veritaserum. I might not have had to go through an abortion if you had.”

Alexander threw an arm around him then and pulled him into a comforting hug that felt like he was being held by an actual parent. Harry clung to him tightly and absorbed the presence that he gave off.

“Sorry, I don’t mean to be so clingy, I just…”

“You do exactly as you feel you need to.” Alexander told him. “I don’t mind in the slightest, sweet one.”
“Thank you.”

Alexander shushed him and hugged him tighter. It must have looked strange to the others who were filling up the tiers behind them, Alexander Maddison hugging a random guard of the Dracken Counsel, but then Harry didn’t really care.

“How…how’s Max?” Harry asked as casually as he could.

Alexander still gave him a knowing look.

“The Elders, they said that he hasn’t been the same since I was…was taken. I was just wondering if…if he was doing better.”

“He’s been doing much better now. Here.”

Harry had to smile as…like a typical grandfather, Alexander took out what Harry assumed was a notebook, but actually turned out to be a flip book of photographs, all of them moving.

“I update this every few months.” He chuckled as he saw Harry’s face as he flipped through numerous photos of different people. “You need to excuse me, I have a lot of sons and daughters and they have a lot of sons and daughters. I’m even a great-grandfather you know.”

Harry grinned as he saw pictures of strapping men and beautiful women and then young children and even babies. Harry loved that Alexander did this, as a way to always keep his family close. It made Harry like him even more.

“Ah, here we go. This is my youngest son, Myron.” Alexander said, showing him one photo. Harry remembered from the meeting that Myron, despite being the youngest, was also the tallest of Alexander’s children. “Those are his mates, his submissive Ashleigh and his subordinate dominant Richard.” Alexander flipped to the next page and Harry’s heart did a flip too, as he saw Max looking up at him from the photo. He looked so good, just as good as he’d been when Harry had first seen him, though his hair was longer, and a lot curlier.

Harry tried to giggle, but it came out strange in the gruff voice of the Dracken guard. “I never knew that he had curly hair.”
Alexander chuckled a little. “Oh yes. He hates keeping his hair curly. In fact I’d go so far as to insist that he detests it, but since you’ve been gone, he hasn’t been taking proper care of himself. The family and I did what we could, but he threw up a wall and refused all help. It has only really been in the last several months that we’ve gotten him to clean up his act and start taking care of himself, of course he’s on cloud nine now that you’ve been found again, safe and alive.”

Harry smiled at that. “I was wondering if I’d see him today.”

“We had to nearly tie him up to stop him from coming. His Fathers are watching over him.” Alexander said softly. “We heard that you have a bad reaction to unmated dominants. The last thing we wanted was for this day, of all days, to be made harder for you. Max understood in the end of course, he would always put your needs before his own, but we couldn’t trust that he’d change his mind or insist that he wanted just a peek of you or a quick word. The last thing any one of us wants is for you to be distressed or harmed in any way.”

“I wouldn’t have minded.” Harry said quickly. “Not if it was Max.”

“Do you still feel for him as you did before you were taken?” Alexander asked, visibly shocked.

Harry ducked his head and bit the lip of the man he was portraying. “I never stopped thinking about him, not once. I’ve spoken about it with my Mind Healer, because I was worried that I was focusing so much on him as a way to escape my reality, but after talking about it, Healer Vasey says no. That I was exhibiting such things before I was taken. He thinks that our Drackens wanted to be together, but because we never touched, we never bonded and then I was taken and we were pulled apart. He says that our Drackens still want to be together, that’s why I’m always thinking about him.”

Harry looked at the floor and frowned at the unfamiliar shoes he was wearing. Polyjuice Potion really did mess up the drinker mentally, he kept looking down, expecting to see bare feet as he’d been used to for the last three and a half years, or the new trainers that the Elders had given him recently that he was still getting used to wearing.

“Is it alright that I still like Max?” He asked unsurely.

He was pulled straight back into a comforting hug. “Perhaps you should both meet again face to face, once you are ready, and see how you feel about each other then. I do know that Max would like that very much, but the very last thing I want is to be accused of soliciting my unmated dominant grandson to an injured, recovering submissive. I’ve spent entirely too long campaigning for
submissive rights to turn around and break the very laws that I helped to create.”

“You’re not. I liked Max before all of this. He was so tall and handsome and so very kind. He respected me and didn’t touch me even though I could see that he wanted to bond to me. All it would have taken was a single touch, I knew that even back then. One touch and he could have had me for himself, but he respected me so much and he didn’t touch me because he knew that I wanted to finish school first…if he had ignored my wishes, if he had touched me, then none of this would have happened.” He said sadly. “I tried to control my life so much, I was so stubborn and I wanted so much, but it’s all gone now. I have nothing of that past me left. If I’d just been more confident, if I’d just let my Dracken have its way and bonded to Max when I first met him, then none of this would have happened.”

“You had no way of knowing what was going to happen, Harry. None of this is your fault. The fault lies with those who are to be sentenced here today. After today, and all is said and done, you can have your justice and your closure and then you’ll be able to move on.”

Harry smiled as he snuggled into Alexander further. “It’s already started. Elder Kirrian says that I’m getting my fire back. I don’t flinch away from people as often anymore and I can talk to people a little more normally too. Before I’d only speak if spoken to, but now I’m getting much better at initiating conversations. Though…butting in is still a bit difficult for me, but Elder Kirrian is helping me with that too.”

Alexander chuckled. “I just bet he is.”

Harry smiled and looked about him once more. He flinched harshly and his heart almost stopped when he saw four people that he would never have wanted to see again in his life.

“What is it?” Alexander asked him seriously.

Harry swallowed. “Those four, over the other side of this tier. That’s Edwardius, Josepticum, Theodorus and Arthurum. Jefferus’ older brothers.”

“They’re not being tried?” Alexander asked furiously.

“They’re humans.” Harry said softly. “They knew that he was abusing me, but that doesn’t warrant execution. They had no idea that I was abducted, that my name was even Harry, they thought my name was Erickian. They had no idea what a normal Dracken mateship looked like, having never
seen one before. Jeff was the only living Dracken in their family, so they believed him when they said that it was normal that I was kept beaten and barefoot, wearing no clothes and being ordered around like a pet.”

“I’m so sorry that you went through such a thing, Harry.”

He smiled half-heartedly. “At least they’ll get to watch, at least they’ll get to hear first-hand what their parents and brother did to me.”

Alexander nodded. “I am here with you. They won’t even get within five feet of you if they somehow see past your disguise before I rip out their throats.”

That made Harry chuckle. “Thank you, but it shouldn’t be needed. I’m disguised and Ismay is safely sleeping upstairs.”

“Oh, Claire did mention the wonderful, spritely Ismay.” Alexander said.

“Now that she’s safe and free, well she’s definitely making up for things. She’s been terrorising poor Aeesha and the guards too, tearing up all the flower beds and exhausting the Healing staff by demanding that they play with her. It should calm down soon, I was given a few owl order catalogues and I’ve bought every single toy from inside them. They never allowed her to have toys.”

“Why not?” Alexander demanded.

“They were a very male dominated family.” Harry explained. “Very sexist. They didn’t believe that girls born into the family held any value. She had the best clothes, her hair was always perfect, but she wasn’t allowed any toys, she wasn’t allowed to get dirty or to run around. They treated her like she was an adult when she was only eight months old. I hated it.”

Harry could tell that such a thing angered Alexander and he breathed deeply. Alexander was normal, it had been the Perrots who weren’t normal and now everyone would know it.

He sat back and straightened himself out when the ten remaining Elders entered the room and sat up on the wooden podium. He breathed in deeply and then blew it out softly, preparing himself for this trial.
“We would call all of those watching these proceedings to order.” Anthanaric Vipond called out authoritatively. “There will be no outbursts from the tiers or the perpetrator will be thrown from this room. We will start these proceedings by covering the back scene for context.”

Harry listened then as he was spoken of, his wants and wishes were made clear, and then the night of the meeting came about and he nervously reached out to grab Alexander’s hand. The man squeezed back comfortingly and murmured to him gently. Harry took strength from that.

“Harry was then slipped a laxative that forced him to hurry to the bathroom. On his way back, he was grabbed by one of the very guards who was being paid to protect him, and all submissives and children in the Counsel Halls that night. Bring forth the accused.”

Harry inhaled deeply, in anger this time, as the guard who’d snatched him was brought in. He was seated on the first chair and the chains sprang to life and wrapped themselves around the guard’s arms tightly, preventing him from moving.

“They’ve definitely used Veritaserum this time.” Alexander whispered to him. “They want the truth and nothing but the truth.”

Harry smiled at that and looked back to the guard who was locked into place. He looked terrified, and for a good reason, he would be dying today.

“You are Carlos Spatch?” Elder Vipond demanded.

“Yes.” The guard replied immediately.

“You are accused with knowingly aiding in the abduction of an unmated submissive, Harry James Potter, from the Counsel Halls on the night in question, the tenth of May, nineteen-ninety-seven. Did you, Carlos Spatch, aid in the abduction of the submissive in question, Harry James Potter?”

“Yes.” The guard answered easily, with no hesitation, the potion bringing forth the answer immediately.

“Tell us about that night.”
“I was approached early in the evening by Sesto Messana. He knew that I was having financial problems, that was why I was working as security at the meeting that night. He offered me six thousand Galleons if I would help him, no questions asked. I said that I would, I trusted him. I knew it would be bad, because of the amount he was offering and because he wouldn’t tell me what it was I was to do, but I never even considered that it would be abducting a submissive from the hall. As soon as I had agreed and accepted the gold, that was when he told me what I had to do.”

“Yet you still went through with it.” Elder Midate growled.

“I needed that gold! I needed it to help my family.”

“So you abducted an unmated submissive, even knowing what it would mean for you personally, for six thousand Galleons.”

“Yes.”

Harry swallowed, to know that to this man, he was only worth six thousand Galleons was sickening. To know that three years, four months and sixteen days’ worth of pain and suffering had been bargained away for just six thousand Galleons. Harry ducked his head and he felt hot tears on his cheeks.

“It’s alright, sweet one.” Alexander soothed. “Some people are evil right down to their cores, others can be bought for the merest sum. I’m sure that Messana knew that he was having money difficulties and found out exactly how much Spatch needed and offered him exactly that amount. It reflects nothing on your worth or value.”

Harry shivered and hunched himself in a little. This was more difficult than he’d originally imagined.

“Carlos Spatch, for knowingly abducting an unmated submissive, even knowing the penalty that you faced for doing so, and for accepting gold for your actions, we are convinced that this shows that you understood exactly what you were doing. You are hereby sentenced to death via execution.” Elder Vipond said easily.

“No! My mate, my children!” Carlos Spatch wailed.

“Your mate has been informed of your actions and she was disgusted and horrified by what you had
done. She has denounced you and is currently under the suppression potion until your death and she is freed of you.” Henry Kirrian said firmly. “Did you truly expect your mate, or any submissive for that matter, to stay with you after what you’d done to a newly inherited submissive in these very halls? While you were in a position of extreme trust with all the expectations of a guard of this Counsel? The submissives in this hall that night trusted you, they were depending on you for protection, and you betrayed young Harry in the worst way possible. For that you will be executed.”

“Will they do it now?” Harry asked Alexander urgently.

“No, Harry. Calm yourself. The executions will take place after the trial, you do not need to stay for such things.” Alexander assured him.

“I…I wanted to. At least, I thought I did.”

“Do not distress yourself over such things, you need to do what is best for yourself now, Harry. You don’t need to watch them die to have closure, just knowing that justice has been done and done properly will help you through your recovery. Forcing yourself to watch these people being executed because you think that is what is expected, then you could damage your recovery or put yourself back. However if you want to see it done, then I will stand by your side. If it gets too much, you can always hide your face in my robes. I wouldn’t mind.”

Harry smiled his thanks and looked back to the trial when there was another scuffle and Elder Messana was brought in. Harry blinked when he saw the bruises and blood covering him. He looked to Alexander curiously.

“The guards have been showing their displeasure.” Was all Alexander said.

“They’ve beaten him up?” Harry asked.

“It is not done officially and no one is told to do as such, but it still happens. You must have made quite a few friends since being here, Harry.”

Harry chuckled a little, looking back to the man that he’d last seen leaving him suspended between those two goons in front of the Perrots after dragging him through the floo. It was nothing that the filth didn’t deserve.
“You are Sesto Messana.” Anthanaric questioned, barely able to keep the fury from his face.

“Yes.” The man replied easily without hesitancy.

“You are accused with abducting an unmated submissive, Harry James Potter, from the Counsel Halls on the night in question, the tenth of May, nineteen-ninety-seven. Did you, Sesto Messana, orchestrate the abduction of the unmated submissive in question, Harry James Potter?”

“Yes.” The man was forced to say.

“Tell us your reasons for doing as such.” Vipond all but growled out.

“I never believed that I would have to follow through with what was promised.”

“What do you mean by such?” Elder Trintus asked sharply.

“I was offered gold and powerful connections to keep watch on the newly inherited submissives.”

Harry shivered again as he realised that, once again, he had been forced to suffer merely for other people’s greed.

“You were to keep watch for a male submissive in particular.” Elder Vipond said firmly.

“Yes.”

“What were you to do when a male submissive became known to you?”

“I was to tell Carterum Perrot.”

“Who then told you to get the submissive in question, Harry James Potter, to his home in Australia?”
“Yes.”

“What did you mean that you never believed that you’d have to follow through with what was promised?”

“The Perrots had spies like me in every country, the first male submissive found would be the one to be taken to them.”

“It is a coincidence that the first to be known after that was the submissive in question, Harry James Potter?”

“Yes.”

Harry was almost sick as he realised the true depravity of the Perrots and their scheme to get a male submissive for Jefferus.

“Disgusting, cruel beasts.” Alexander hissed from beside him.

“How long were you accepting payment from Carterum Perrot before Harry became known to you?”

“Seven and a half years.”

Harry couldn’t help gasping in shock, and he wasn’t the only one either.

“You disgusting bastard!” Someone screamed from the watching audience.

“If I hadn’t been stopped and restrained I would have killed you with my bare hands!” A woman shrieked at him, her face twisted with fury, her hands were clawed and she flexed them, as if thinking of leaping down to the bottom tier and finishing what she had obviously started.
“That is Fiammetta, Messana’s submissive mate.” Alexander whispered to him as they watched the woman’s chest heave with exertion, her hands still flexing as if debating the pros and cons of clawing her mate to shreds. “She has campaigned tirelessly, for decades even, for submissive rights and protection, alongside myself. I know her very well. Messana is very, very lucky that Fia was stopped, because she would most assuredly have killed him herself for this. She didn’t even need a suppression potion, she’s here under her own free will, she and her Dracken are in complete agreement and so are her children. They refused to come, as Messana’s one request was that he be allowed to see his children one last time, to comfort him. They have denied him his last request out of spite.”

Harry didn’t know how to feel about that. About a submissive losing her mate and children losing their Father.

“I can see what you’re thinking, but this was their choice, Harry.” Alexander said gently. “Fia would never, never, have remained with a dominant who had done anything to a submissive. She’s a very strong, independent woman, her Father raised her to be strong and to think for herself and to control her Dracken instincts so that they wouldn’t interfere with her logic. She knows exactly what he’s done and hearing that he did it for gold and for political connections, such trivial reasons to her, she’s disgusted with him, Harry. If he had any chance of walking free from here, he would have to go into hiding, because Fia would never stop hunting for him."

“How does the Dracken take that? I couldn’t even kill Jeff when he was hurting me and neglecting Ismay.”

“It is likely made easier for Fia because she’s over one hundred and fifty years old, Harry, she’s had a lot of time to practice and exercise her control and you are still so young, you were only very recently inherited when this happened, you cannot reasonably expect to have such control at such a young age. Our control of the Dracken side of ourselves comes with time, Harry, the older we get, the easier it is. It also helps Fiammetta’s control that nearly half of her children are submissives.”

Harry’s eyes widened. “He…he did this to me, when he has submissive children of his own?”

“He did.” Alexander told him. “Fia has rationalised this to her Dracken side, in a way that it can understand. She has convinced her Dracken that he is a threat to their submissive daughters, that he could have shopped them too, as he did to you. The Dracken doesn’t understand such complex reasoning, but it understands that their children are being threatened by their mate, thus their mate must die. Unfortunately it was because of Fia, and his numerous submissive daughters, that we…I’m afraid we just never considered Sesto a suspect and for that grave error, we can never apologise enough, Harry. What he did to you, how he did it, we would never have judged him capable and he would never have been found out if you hadn’t have been found and rescued.”
Harry bit his lip and nibbled on it.

“How could anyone have done such a thing?” He asked.

“Such greedy, immoral people are always out there, skulking in the shadows, Harry. There are always going to be bad people in the world.” Alexander explained softly. “It was a coincidence that it was you who was chosen, but from our understanding now from this trial, if it hadn’t been you, then it would have only been someone else, because the Perrots were spying worldwide for a male submissive. I am sorry that it was you, sweet one, but please know that you have those who care deeply for you and that we are now going to do our all to help you and support you through this. It won’t be for a small, consolatory amount of time either, but for the rest of your life now.”

Harry smiled at that and he snuggled back into Alexander.

“Sesto Messana, for knowingly abducting an unmated submissive from these very Halls, knowing the penalty that you faced for doing so being an Elder of this Counsel, charged with the protection of the very submissive that you sold for your own selfish gain, we are convinced that this clearly displays that you understood exactly what you were doing. You are hereby sentenced to death via execution.” Elder Vipond said easily.

Several people cheered from the tiers and that made Harry smile, more so as Fiammetta was one of them. She even started heckling her own dominant about his impending death, exclaiming shrilly that death was too good for him. Harry took so much strength from her actions, knowing that this man who had abducted him and shopped him was her own dominant, that she had children with him, and that she wanted him dead about as much as he did, perhaps even more so judging by her venomous look and the snarl on her lips. It couldn’t have been easy for her, knowing that her own dominant mate, whom she must have loved deeply before this, had taken money in return for abducting him and all but selling him into a life of abuse and servitude when she had dedicated her life to making sure that such things didn’t happen.

Braven was brought in next and he did not look well. His face and arms were bruised and he seemed to be sporting a broken nose.

“You are Braven Olvera Barret.” Elder Vipond demanded with disgust once the chains on the chair had finished wrapping around Braven’s arms.

“Yes.” Braven answered.

“You are accused of knowingly raping the submissive in question, Harry James Potter, known to
you as Erickian. Did you, Braven Olvera Barret, willingly rape the submissive in question, known to you as Erickian?”

“Yes.” Braven answered, the Veritaserum pulling the truth from him.

“You raped him, knowing that he was not there of his own volition, that he was being beaten, abused and violated, and that you were brought into the situation purely to get the submissive in question pregnant for your friend, Jefferus Perrot, while you yourself were placed under a temporary sterilisation charm?”

“Yes.” Braven answered.

“Tell me why you agreed to such a thing, knowing that you would be willingly raping a young, scared boy who had been abducted and was being kept prisoner.”

“I did it because Jeff asked me to.”

“Did you always do as your friend asked you to do, even when it meant committing such heinous crimes?”

“Yes. He was very rich and powerful. You didn’t say no to Jefferus.”

“So you repeatedly raped a young submissive over the ten days of his forced heat period, just to remain friends with Jefferus Perrot?” Elder Midate demanded, his face almost twisted in his fury.

“Yes.”

“Did you have any regrets about what you had done?” Elder Trintus asked when it seemed that his colleagues were left speechless.

“No. The submissive was very beautiful.”

“So because he was beautiful, you felt absolutely no regret about raping him?”
“None.”

Harry saw the flash of anger and horror run across the faces of the ten Elders at the podium and it helped to calm him down a little.

“For knowingly raping the submissive in question and for showing no remorse or regret over your actions, you, Braven Olvera Barret, are sentenced to death via execution.”

Harry breathed out and tried to control his shaking as he turned more into Alexander as Braven was placed under a silencing charm alongside Carlos and Sesto. He took a swig from the bottle of disguised Polyjuice Potion before Carter and Penny were brought out to carry on the trial. They were being charged with the same crimes, minus the rape, though Carter was getting the additional charge of being the money behind the search for him, or any other male submissive.

When they came in, Harry took vicious pleasure in seeing the bruises and dried blood on them. It made him feel slightly better, to know that ordinary people saw them as monsters, that they saw what they’d done to him as a heinous crime and that they felt so strongly about it, that they wanted a piece of these people too, for what they’d done to him.

“You are Carterum Patricum Perrot?” Elder Vipond actually sneered.

“Yes.” The man replied meekly. Harry had never seen him so disquieted and small seeming. It felt good to see that arrogant, stiff man brought down so low by his own heinous actions.

“You are Penelope Perrot?”

“Yes.” Penny almost whispered, being forced to answer because of the Veritaserum, but looking more like she was physically incapable of even opening her mouth.

“You are both accused of paying for information on newly inherited submissives and for paying to have the submissive in question, Harry James Potter, abducted from these Halls for your own son, Jefferus Bernardus Perrot. Did you, Carterum, pay to have Harry James Potter abducted from these Halls?”

“Yes.” Carter was forced to admit.
“Did you, Penelope, have full knowledge and shared agreement of this plot?”

“Yes.” Penny was forced to admit.

“So you both plotted and paid to have the submissive in question, Harry James Potter, abducted and brought to your home by ex-Elder Sesto Messana, where he would then be forcibly mated to your son, Jefferus Bernardus Perrot by means of the Sanguinem Vinculo potion, which I might add is illegal to brew, to administer upon any submissive and illegal to even possess under the seventeen-ninety-four law reform in the same year the potion was first created. Did you do this with full knowledge of what it would mean for the submissive in question, Harry James Potter?”

“Yes.” The two hateful, cruel people said together.

“You monsters!” Someone called out from the tiers. “I hope you suffer before you die!”

Safely clutched in Alexander’s arms, Harry watched the proceedings as Carter and Penny were both sentenced to execution as well. He swallowed, hard. It was no less than they deserved for what they’d done to him.

Harry couldn’t help hunching down and burying further into Alexander when Jefferus was brought out. He was the worst of them all, his face a mass of black and purple, one eye was puffy and his lips were still bleeding, as if he had been freshly punched just before he was brought out…Harry hoped that he had been.

“A lot of people took exception to him harming you, especially while pregnant.” Alexander whispered.

“It became normal. It was so normal to me that I expected it to happen.” Harry admitted quietly. “I still expect it to happen, you know.”

“I would imagine that it wasn’t something to get over lightly.” Alexander nodded understandingly. “Such behaviour has been normal to you now for over three years, it will take a bit of time for such habitual reactions to stop, but the longer you go now without such things happening, the easier it will become. There will come a time when such things are once again abnormal and completely unacceptable, you’ll see.”
Harry smiled then, softly, so grateful to have Alexander there with him.

“You are Jefferus Bernardus Perrot?” Elder Vipond asked venomously. Harry half expected his fangs to be bared at any moment.

“Yes.” Jeff answered.

“You are accused with forcibly bonding to a submissive against their will, of multiple counts of rape, with four counts of wilful child destruction and with imprisoning, beating and abusing the submissive in question, Harry James Potter. Did you, Jefferus Bernardus Perrot, do as you have been accused?”

“Yes.” Jeff answered and immediately there were titters and hisses from those watching and Harry snuck a peek at the four older Perrot brothers, also watching in the crowd. They looked shell shocked, they were pale and stunned. Like they couldn’t believe that three of their family members could have actually done all that they’d been accused of, or perhaps because they had obviously had no clue as to what was actually going on, and that they had believed the vague, weak excuse that all Dracken mateships were as rough and primal as the one that Jeff and ‘Erickian’ had been displaying. Or maybe it was hearing that he wasn’t actually the awfully named Erickian, but actually Harry James Potter, a boy they all knew because of his defeat of Voldemort.

“Why did you beat your own children out of the submissive that you’d claimed as your own?” Elder Kirrian asked.

“They were all girls.” Jeff said. “I didn’t want any girls.”

“You wilfully, gleefully, physically terminated four pregnancies, five babies, merely because they were girls?”

“Yes.”

“How did you feel about Ismay Potter, known to you as Ethelana Perrot, your daughter?”

“Disappointed.” Jeff answered shortly and Harry felt his heart ache for his sweet daughter, who’s Father had never loved her.
“We assume that you only kept her because she was the first child born between you and you needed her to keep control over the submissive in question, Harry James Potter. Are we correct in this assumption?”

“We needed her to keep control over him, but we never knew her gender until after she was born.”

“Unlike your five other daughters, who were all killed by your hands shortly after you found out their undesired gender.”

“He killed one too!” Jeff growled.

“You are alluding to the fifth pregnancy that Harry lost at eight weeks pregnant.”

“Yes. He did that.”

“Harry slipped on a pool of blood on the bathroom floor and had a miscarriage. That pool of blood came from a beating that you’d given him. You beat and raped him on the bathroom floor, despite him being eight weeks pregnant, and you left him there. He stood up to clean himself up and he slipped on his own blood and he fell.” Elder Octavian Thorne growled. “He is not at fault for such an accident, but that blood would not have been there for him to slip on if it weren’t for you. We can’t legally charge you with the destruction of that one child, but there are no doubts as to who is to blame for such and it is not Harry.”

Alexander held him closer and Harry felt a kiss to the top of his head and it made him want to tear up. He pulled his arms in and tucked himself up to Alexander’s chin, which considering the fact that he was in the body of a six foot dominant, who was taller than Alexander, it was rather difficult to accomplish, but Harry was used to his own small, slight body and he was treating this larger one as he would his real body.

“You have used the illegal Sanguinem Vinculo potion to forcibly mate yourself to Harry James Potter. You have raped him, beaten him and abused him over three years, four months and sixteen days. You have knowingly and forcibly terminated four pregnancies of five babies with your own hands, and you have kept Harry a prisoner via various containment wards and spells, as well as the severe abuse of your power over him as a dominant Dracken. For such heinous crimes you are sentenced to death via execution.” Elder Vipond told Jeff.

“You can’t execute me, I am Jefferus Perrot!”
“The Southern Hemisphere Counsel of Drackens has renounced all claim to you and those involved in the abduction and abuse of Harry James Potter. All six of you here will be executed one hour hence. This court is taking a short break until then.”

Alexander stood and he pulled Harry up with him and they left the tiered room. Harry took Alexander up the stairs and to Anthanaric’s living room, where his mate Aeesha was entertaining Ismay.

“Ismay.” Harry said softly.

“Are you my Mummy?” She asked, scrutinising him.

“Yes, love. The potion will only last for five more minutes.” He insisted as he sat down, looking quickly at the clock ticking on the mantel piece, and Ismay immediately came to crawl all over him.

“Alexander, it’s lovely to see you.”

“Aeesha, it’s a pleasure.” Alexander greeted warmly. “I hope that you are well.”

“I am, thank you.” Aeesha replied happily.

“Mummy, whose he?”

“This is Alexander Maddison, Ismay. He’s been looking after me.”

Ismay made an ‘O’ with her mouth. “Thank you for looking after my Mummy.” She told Alexander and then she turned back to him. “You look strange like this, Mummy. You’re tall.”

Harry chuckled. “Remember I told you that it was just a potion.”

Ismay nodded.
“Run along and play then.” Harry encouraged, his voice deep and gruff as it belonged to the dominant he was impersonating. His daughter did as he’d asked and she went running around, playing with Cloppity.

Harry grimaced as he felt the change take him over as the potion wore off and he shrunk back into his own body. He shook his head and grunted. He rolled his shoulders and his neck to get used to being back to himself, but the clothes he was wearing were drowning him and he could see the look on Alexander’s face as some of the black and purple bruises of his upper chest were revealed by a gaping neck hole.

“I’m still healing from what they did to me.” Harry said softly, pulling the sleeve until it covered his neck.

“After all this time?” Alexander asked worriedly, his face crumpled into a concerned frown.

Harry nodded. “Bruise salve only goes so far, and I was in such bad health, and so bruised and broken that…well, it’s just taking a bit of time to heal all of the damage that was done to me.”

“Fia was right, death is too good for all of them.” Alexander growled. “You never deserved any of this, sweet one. I was stood almost right beside you, I can’t tell you how guilty I feel knowing that you were stood right there just before you were taken.”

“How is Max now?” Aeesha asked. “He was a shell of himself the last I saw him, the poor lamb.”

“He’s doing much better, Aeesha. We were working to get him back to himself and then Harry was found. Ever since then he’s been doing so much better. He even let me cut his hair back to how he likes it.”

Harry giggled. “I liked his curly hair.” He said, remembering the picture.

Alexander pulled his flip album back out and turned it to the picture of Max. He pulled it out and handed it to Harry.

“Here, you can have this, to always tease him with his curly hair.” Alexander chuckled.
“But…you won’t have a picture of Max in your album.” Harry fretted.

“Harry, sweet one, I have a million photos filling my home of all my kids, my grandkids, and my little great-grandkids. I’ll just take a new one of Max to put in this old thing.”

Harry nodded, but his attention was taken up by staring at the moving photo of Max in his hands. Max in the photo kept trying to smile, but it was more of a grimace. One hand rose awkwardly to almost wave, but it dropped again. This wasn’t the self-assured, confident man who had charmed him so much in just several minutes at the Dracken meeting in May. Max had changed, all because he’d been abducted.

“I’d like to see him again, even if it is to tell him not to worry anymore, that I’m alright.”

“If that’s what you’d like, sweet one. I’m sure we can rustle up enough protection for you, and Max will leave the moment that you ask him to, I can assure you of that.”

“Max was very kind to me when I met him.” Harry smiled.

“Mummy!”

He turned automatically to his charging daughter who had caught sight of him and he smiled as she clambered up onto the settee and then dumped herself in his lap. He cuddled her tightly and he kissed her upturned face.

“I would like to see Max.” Harry carried on as he held the giggling Ismay. “We have unfinished business.”

“Do you think that such a thing would be best for you, darling?” Aeesha asked him, her dark eyes soft with worry.

Harry nibbled on his lip. “I’m not sure, I just know that we need to finish that last conversation that we were having, before I was taken. Healer Vasey said that it would help give me closure on what happened that night.”
“Well, in that case I’m sure that Max will be happy to accommodate your healing.” Aeesha said happily.

“He will be, he’s been very anxious to come and see you, but the poor boy is torn between the need to see you safe and well once more and leaving you alone for your own recovery.” Alexander told him.

“I always saw Max as safe.” Harry admitted. “I thought about him often when I was…when I was…” Harry trailed off, unable to say that as he was curled up around his own beaten, broken body he would think of Max, of how gentle he’d been, how comforting and safe. It almost brought tears to his eyes.

“Max was worried that you might have forgotten about him.” Alexander told him.

Harry chuckled at that. “There’s no forgetting Max, easily or otherwise. He’s just not someone that can be forgotten.”

“He is a one of a kind, I’ll certainly give him that.” Alexander teased.

Harry grinned widely as he understood what was being implied there. Four men entered the room and Harry automatically tightened his grip on Ismay before relaxing again as Anthanaric, Jacob, Henry and Quintalus came into the room.

“Harry, how are you holding up, boy?” Henry asked him, coming immediately to him and ruffling his hair before ruffling Ismay’s, much to her delight. They’d both found that she loved such affectionate attention from others.

“I’m okay. A little calmer now that it’s over and it’s just the executions left to do.”

“Are you sure that you want to go as yourself, and not as the guard?” Jacob asked him worriedly.

Harry nodded. “I’m sure. I want them to know, as they’re being killed, that I’m there. That I’m going to get over what they did to me, that I will get to carry on my life as theirs comes to an end. I don’t know why, but it’s important to me that I do this as myself, and not as someone else. I need them to
see me, not someone else.”

Henry nodded and cupped his face for a moment before standing back.

“If that’s what you need, boy, we’ll give it to you.” Henry told him. “The both of you.”

Harry was given his own clothes back and a quick trip to the bathroom down the hall, escorted by two guards, saw him out of the clothes that had fit him when he was Polyjuiced and back into clothes that fit him. He made sure everything sat right on his body and that no bruises showed, before he went back to Elder Vipond’s living room.

Ismay was the very happy centre of attention as she went from person to person, playing her own little game. She included Alexander, who smiled so adoringly at her as he played along with her game that she kept going back to him often. She would grin up at him and he would make a huge fuss over her and he would go quiet when she hid from his line of sight, only to make a bigger fuss when she popped up again. Ismay was enjoying herself with this little game and Alexander seemed to be enjoying himself too.

All too soon it was time to go back to the tiered court room and Harry kissed Ismay goodbye and told her gently to stay with Aeesha.

“But I want to stay with you, Mummy.” She insisted.

Harry bit his lip. He would never subject her to watching live executions, especially not of her family members, no matter how vile they’d been to the both of them, so the only option was for him to stay here with her and he automatically sat back down.

“Oh no you don’t, boy. Up.” Henry insisted, stepping forward and holding his arm gently before pulling him back to his feet. “Mummy has to come with us, Ismay. He’ll be back soon.”

“Can I come too?” She asked.

“No, you need to stay here.” Alexander told her with a gentle touch to her dark red hair. “Your Mother just has to do something really quick and then he’ll be back, okay?”

“Okay.” Ismay said, almost shrinking into herself and Harry automatically went to go to her, but Henry had hold of him still and he pulled him towards the door, still being very gentle and careful with him, looking critically at his face for any hint of distress, but he was firm and he would not
allow Harry to pull away.

“You can have cookies when Mummy comes back, if you’re good.” Jacob told her with a smile and that perked her right up.

“Really?” She asked excitedly.

“Yes, really.” Jacob answered with a smile. “Just a little longer, Princess.”

“I can wait.” She said and she waved goodbye to them.

More settled now, Harry stopped wriggling in Elder Kirrian’s hold and he let himself be pulled out of the room, assured now that Ismay was happy again.

He was almost passed over physically to Alexander’s hold as the four Elders separated from them and went down the staircase and then presumably towards the holding cells and to the bottom tier, where the podium that sat eleven was situated. Harry linked his fingers with Alexander’s, almost like a child, as he allowed the older man to take him back into the tiered room. The six prisoners were chained to the floor this time, the six chairs had vanished, but Harry noticed quickly that all six of them had full mobility. They could move in a full circle, though they were far enough apart that they couldn’t touch one another, and he swallowed.

“Do you want to stay up here, sweet one, near the door?” Alexander asked him quietly.

Harry nibbled on his lip, uncertain as to what he should do. Then he realised that these people couldn’t hurt him any longer. They were going to die very shortly and he would be free of them forever. He sucked in a huge breath, shook his head in answer to Alexander’s question, and then he made his way back to where he’d been sat, right at the front in the centre, facing the podium.

His heart was hammering in his chest, but he refused to be afraid any longer. His body wasn’t really listening to him, as the fear crept in regardless, but he didn’t let it show as he stood with Alexander by his side. He slipped his shaking hand into Alexander’s and once he felt the quivering, the older man slipped an arm around him, holding him, supporting him.

The three condemned Perrots were speaking quietly to the four Perrots in the tiers. Sesto Messana seemed to be trying his best to ignore the taunts coming from his own submissive, Fiammetta, and Braven was still and silent. The guard who’d been involved, Carlos, seemed to be in a state of panic as he was trying to break the manacles on his wrists with no success.

“He…he can’t get out, can he?” Harry asked Alexander uncertainly.
“Of course not, sweet one. Those chains are magical.” Alexander assured him immediately and surely. “Even if he did get free, by some off chance miracle, he can’t get up to these tiers and there are armed guards down there who would shoot him immediately.”

Harry took a wavering breath and nodded.

“Erickian!”

Harry stiffened immediately at that hated name and he looked up as he heard Edwardius shout. He was now the centre of attention as everyone, even the other spectators, turned to look at him as Edwardius spotted him in the crowd and yelled out for everyone to hear.

“My name is Harry.” He said back as evenly as he could manage. “It was always Harry and it always will be.”

“You stop this immediately!” Jeff snarled at him and Harry had to lock every single joint of his body to keep from recoiling in fear and panic.

“I don’t have to listen to you anymore. I’m no longer under your control.” Harry snapped, glaring at the man who had tried to break everything that made him himself and had enslaved him for over three years. “I’m going to enjoy watching you die.” He said as he realised that this man and his family would not have batted an eyelid if he’d been the one to die, or even worse, if Ismay had died. That made him absolutely furious. “I am going to stand here and I’m going to watch every single one of you die in turn for what you’ve all done to me. I have three years, four months and sixteen days’ worth of hurt and enslavement to repay you for and this, watching as you all die before me, is going to make up for a lot of it.” He forced a grin onto his face while he took a deep breath and held himself upright and straight, his hand was still shaking in Alexander’s grip. “My daughter and I are going to be just fine. We will carry on our lives, happy and free, while your lives are going to end today for what you did to us and I can think of nothing that you deserve more than this.”

“I order you to stop this!” Jeff shouted and Harry jerked.

Harry’s hand groped for Alexander’s again, having dropped it in his fear, and he laced their fingers back together, so that he couldn’t jerk and lose it again as he had.

“You can’t order me to do anything. Don’t you understand? I’m free.” Harry took delight in saying.
“I was never your submissive, my wings never took your colours, you used a potion to bond me to yourself and now that I’ve been liberated of your control, I’m myself again. You tried so hard to break me irreparably, but you failed. I was always stronger than you were. I’ve been through so much in my life, did you really think a spoilt, pampered prick like yourself could have ever compared to what I’d already been through? If it wasn’t for that potion you would never have been able to control me, without that potion, you would have been dead much sooner.”

“Sweetheart.” Fiammetta called out from the crowd. “I am so very sorry that my so-called mate did such a thing to you, please accept my apologies, I had no idea that he was even capable of such a horrendous crime, let alone that he’d actually done as such.”

“You have nothing to apologise for.” Harry told her firmly, lifting his head to give her eye contact for as long as he could stand it, one of only a handful of occasions that he’d been able to meet, and hold, someone else’s gaze, even if it was fleetingly. “You are a great, wonderful woman from what I have heard of you, how could you have possibly known what he was doing or what he planned to do? The fault lies with him and his greed, not with you. You have campaigned endlessly for many years for submissives, for your own mate to turn around and do this to one…no, the fault is his alone for his greed and heartless cruelty. You do not share his blame just for being mated to him. His actions do not reflect your own. His guilt is not to be shared or passed on to you or your children.”

Harry could see Fiammetta sag with relief and he felt so much better for unburdening her of the blame she had felt that she was owed because of the actions of her dominant. In Harry’s eyes, she had done nothing wrong and she was not to blame for what had happened to him, whether her mate was involved or not.

“What have you done with my son?!” Jefferus brought the attention back onto himself, as Harry turning to face Fiammetta showed off a much smaller belly than he should have had for being over halfway through his pregnancy.

Harry turned back to him and he smiled nastily. “I aborted it as soon as I arrived here. I told you that you would never get a son from me if I couldn’t have my daughters. You still owe me five, but I will be content to take them out of you via your death.” Harry said.

“You…you have aborted my son. My son!”

“And now you are going to die with the knowledge that you’ll never get a son either.” Harry delighted in saying. “I am no longer pregnant, your son is dead, as you will be soon enough. Your only child is a beautiful little girl who you never bothered with. She is going to be three soon enough, she is still very young and I will commit my life to ensuring that she remembers absolutely nothing of you. You have nothing to carry on your line, your name or your memory. This is my last gift to you, that you will be entirely forgotten, by Ismay Potter first and foremost among them.”
Jefferus was pale when Harry finished speaking, perhaps now it was sinking in what was happening. He was going to die today, his son had been aborted and his only child, a daughter he had never wanted, was all that was going to remain of him, but she was no longer Ethelana Perrot, but Ismay Potter. She was going to grow up healthy and happy and safe, with nothing to remember her vile, cruel Father with. She was going to forget him over time, much sooner with all the love and fun that Harry was going to lavish her with. Even after all that Jefferus had done, after over three years, he had never gotten what he’d truly wanted from him, a son.

“We will call you to order.”

Harry looked up at the wooden podium, to the ten men sat behind it, all smiling at him. He hadn’t realised that the Elders were all witness to his words, but they didn’t seem to mind. He smiled and snuggled more into Alexander, who was still holding his hand comfortably. He felt better, lighter, as if he had untied several knots that were tying him down. He took a deep breath and steeled himself to watch as these six people were executed for his justice. It would be difficult to watch, he already knew that, but he would do his best and if needed, he’d been given permission to use Alexander as a security blanket.

“If the condemned could be silenced once more.” Anthanaric started simply, as if nothing more exciting than a fine was going to be administered today. “If anyone wishes to leave, then now is the time to do so, as we will begin the executions in order of severity.”

No one moved, not even when a masked dominant Dracken, in full Dracken form, though his wings were tucked up, the scale colour of them hidden, strode from further under the bottom tier, having obviously come from where the holding cells were kept.

Harry was breathing deeply, erratically, but he forced himself to watch, his hand tight on Alexander’s, as the executioner got a nod from Anthanaric. Carlos Spatch was held in place by the chains, two guards to either side of him, pulling on the chains of his arms to hold him still and steady as the executioner advanced on him.

Harry hadn’t known what to expect. He hadn’t asked how the execution would be performed, but it seemed somehow, right, that it was via Dracken claws. It would have been better if it was his own, but he understood why the Counsel used a specially trained Dracken for this as the masked dominant gripped Carlos’ hair and forced his head back to expose the throat. One swipe and it was over. Blood spurted absolutely everywhere and Carlos was dropped to the floor in a crumpled heap and the two guards and the executioner moved over to Sesto Messana.

“I hope you suffer!” Fiammetta screamed out. “I hope you feel as much pain as you’ve caused others!”
Messana’s head was pulled back by the dominant Dracken and without any preamble or hesitancy, those claws went straight through the neck and throat and Messana joined Carlos Spatch in a blooded, thrashing heap on the floor.

Braven was next and belying his name, he was quivering in terror. Harry could see his knees shaking and his hands clenched tightly together below the manacles that were holding him in place. No one had come to see him off, his family had disowned him as soon as he’d been arrested and charged with the knowing and willing rape of a captive submissive.

He actually tried to recoil when the executioner gripped his hair and pulled his head back and Harry could see him hyperventilating. He steeled himself as he remembered what Braven had admitted to under Veritaserum. He had raped him to stay in Jefferus’ favour and because he’d thought that Harry was good-looking. He felt no remorse for what he’d done and Harry refused to feel any remorse now over his death.

A swipe of the claws and it was all over for Braven, who dropped to the floor, choking on his own blood, his body writhing as it tried desperately to draw in air through the ruined neck and windpipe. It must have been terrifying for those to go through such a thing, to know that they were slowly suffocating to death, with the pain of having their necks torn open. Harry wondered if they bled out first or if they truly did suffocate. He wondered if it was different depending on each victim, perhaps some bled out first and others suffocated first…he just hoped that it was painful and slow either way.

Penelope was crying as she tugged on her tautened chains, she even screamed silently as the executioner approached her. She started sobbing and Harry could lip read her words as she apologised over and over, but the executioner was unmoved as he gripped her hair and pulled her head back. One swipe, as easy as cutting butter with a hot knife, and Penelope was dropped to the floor to die with the previous three condemned.

“How are you holding up, sweet one?” Alexander bent to whisper in his ear.

“How the mighty and arrogant fall.” Harry whispered as he saw, and could almost hear, Jefferus whimper and almost wail as the executioner gripped his hair and pulled his head further back than he’d done for any of the others, making it extra painful.

“Such people are always cowards.” Alexander told him. “It was fine for them to hurt and bring down a lovely, sweet boy like you, but when it comes to justice, they are the first to cry and beg for
Harry watched with rapt fascination as the dominant’s claws parted the flesh of Jefferus neck, spraying out a torrent of dark blood. The executioner had gone deeper than needed. Jefferus was dropped to writhe on the floor with the others, struggling to breathe through his cut throat, gurgling as he tried to speak, tried to breathe. Carlos, Messana and Penelope were already dead. Braven’s foot was still twitching and Carter was writhing along with Jeff. Harry stood there, he stood there and he watched as their bodies, one by one, laid still…Jefferus was the very last one to die and only once he was assuredly dead did Harry suck in a huge, deep breath. His first as a truly free man.

He wouldn’t need any more of that suppression potion, he had been truly freed with Jefferus’ death. He was free and it had never felt so good. He felt almost like he could dance on the spot he was so happy. He didn’t realise that he was crying until Alexander pulled him into such a tight hug and started playing with his hair.

“What is wrong, sweet one?” He asked, his own face crumpled in worry.

Harry managed a tenuous smile. “I’ve just never felt so happy.” He said. “I’m free.”

Alexander hugged him even tighter and Harry felt another kiss to his forehead.

“It is all behind you now, sweet one, you are truly free and now he can never harm you or that sweet girl of yours ever again.”

Harry clung to Alexander and he allowed himself to be pulled away from the grisly sight of the six dead bodies and the blood coated floor, up the steps that ran from all tiers to the doors and out of that room.

“Erickian! Harry! Harry!” Someone shouted from behind him. The use of the name Erickian clued him in that it was one of the four surviving Perrots.

Once out of the tiered room, he stopped and turned, standing with Alexander, waiting for this confrontation. It was Arthurum who had come after him, why did it have to be him? With his pale brown hair and pale blue eyes, he looked so much like Jefferus. Arthurum, Josepticum and Jefferus all had the same hair and eyes and it made Harry feel sick to see him now. They stood there, staring at one another. Arthurum seemed to have lost his tongue during the chase after him.

“Was there something that you wanted?” Harry prompted stiffly.
“I…we…we had no idea what they were doing.”

“Oh, you did.” Harry corrected savagely. “You saw the cuts and bruises. You saw the way he treated me, how I never had clothes or shoes or even underwear. You all thought that was oh so hilarious too! You knew that I never left the house, how I was never present for any of the numerous trips to restaurants or parties outside of that manor. You all saw it and said nothing. You saw how he treated his own daughter, you knew I’d had several miscarriages, could you not have guessed that he’d beaten them from me from all the bruises? You, knowing your younger brother as you did.”

Arthurum breathed deeply and looked at the floor. “You’re right, we did notice. We went to Jeff and he brushed us off, so we went to Mother and Father and they assured us that this was a Dracken mateship and that it was normal. We believed them, we didn’t want to see what was right in front of us.”

“Because of that I suffered as a prisoner for over three years.” Harry told him. “My daughter has suffered for almost three years. Because you didn’t care enough to question the treatment that you saw us go through, then I shouldn’t be surprised, after all, you treat your poor daughter, Eudoxia, the same.”

“What?” Alexander cut in. “Harry, are you accusing him of child neglect?”

“I am and I’d be willing to testify it if needed.” Harry said. “Your daughter will not suffer at your hands as mine did at Jefferus’. Thank Merlin she has Willow to turn to, as Ismay had me.”

Arthurum’s face tightened and his jaw locked. “I have never treated Eudoxia as Jeff treated Ethel… Ismay.”

“But you don’t treat her the same as your sons, do you?” Harry challenged. “Dottie should be just as loved, just as treasured. She should be treated the same regardless of her gender because she is a living, breathing, feeling person! You should love her just as much because she’s still yours!”

“I will pass these concerns over to the Australian Counsel, they will investigate the allegation of child neglect.” Alexander said. “Come along, Harry. Ismay will be wishing to see you.”

Harry stared at Arthurum for a moment longer before turning and going back to Anthanaric’s living room, and to Ismay. He’d gotten his daughter out of her living hell of neglect, he now hoped that
he’d saved her cousin, Eudoxia, from a similar fate.

His baby girl charged him as he entered the room, the four Elders were already in the room. Ismay already had a half-eaten cookie in her hand and crumbs all around her mouth. Harry went to his knees and he picked her up and held her tightly.

“Mummy, cookie!” She said excitedly.

He smiled at her. “I can see, are you enjoying that?”

Ismay nodded, even as she took another bite.

“How are you feeling?” Anthanaric asked him gently.

Harry actually considered the question instead of shooting off an automatic ‘I’m fine’.

“I’m not too bad.” He said truthfully. “I’m not upset by what I saw and knowing that I’m now truly free, it’s amazing, but I think it’ll still take me some time to get over everything that was done to me.”

“You are still truly amazing.” Alexander told him. “You’re still a very intelligent, beautiful young man. To think that you’re mature enough to admit when you need help instead of brushing everyone off.”

“Harry always was a wonderful young man.” Jacob said proudly.

He ducked his head embarrassedly and focused instead on Ismay in his lap. He held her and watched as she savoured her cookie, she truly did love them.

He felt…well, really no different to how he had felt earlier, but just the knowledge that he was free of those people, that justice had been served, that they were now dead and could never come after him or Ismay ever again, it helped to centre him. He felt calmer, less stressed and less scared. He felt more secure in himself now that he was free and safe.

He took another deep breath and he sat back in the seat, curling up with Ismay clutched to his chest. No one said a word, he didn’t have any part of his body on show because he was slouching and no one threatened to harm him or Ismay. He was being allowed to do as he wanted. It was still a novel experience to him and sometimes he still expected a beating for some of the things he did or said.
He smiled as he stayed sat back and comfortable, as he played with Ismay’s soft hair. Very soon he would have his own home and he’d be able to look after her exactly as he’d always wanted to. He was going to spoil her for a time, as well as himself too, then with any luck this experience wouldn’t be quite so novel to him and he could level off the spoiling to just the occasional treats. He only wanted to make up for what she had lacked for in the last three years after all, he didn’t want to ruin her, he didn’t want his daughter to be his own created version of Dudley.

He sighed, moving on from Ismay’s hair to draw patterns on her back. He’d done this up in the attic too. He would draw pictures on her back with his fingers and have her guess what he’d drawn, she had liked that game.

She giggled as his drawing took his finger near to her sides, as Ismay was rather ticklish, and she squirmed around. Harry just smiled and kissed her gently when she turned to look up at him. She giggled again and it made Harry smile. Seeing her so free and so lively, it eased some pain from him, unburdening his shoulders and he felt like he could relax for the first time in years. He breathed in deeply again, for reasons unknown to him it made him feel better.

“Mummy, when can I have my blue room?” Ismay whispered to him, but it was a childish whisper that everyone in the room could hear, but it just made Harry smile.

“Soon, love.” He promised. “You can even help me get everything ready. You can pick out your own colour and curtains and bed covers, you can even pick out the bed you want. It’ll be your room, you can have whatever you want.”

Ismay grinned at him. “We…we can watch Disney too?”

“We can watch Disney films together.” He said. “With hot chocolate and cookies.”

Ismay shrieked and clutched at him tightly.

“I love you, Mummy.” She told him. Harry held her tighter.

“I love you too, Ismay. Always.” He insisted.

Ismay took out Cloppity then, from one of the pockets in her jeans, and she squirmed down to the floor and started playing with it, neighing and making clip-clop noises. Those toys he’d bought for her couldn’t come soon enough.
“Is this the toy that you mentioned? The only one that she has?” Alexander asked him.

Harry nodded. “I have a mountain of toys on owl order for her, but they have yet to come.”

“I have some old toys if you’d like something for now.” Alexander insisted firmly.

“I…well if you don’t mind.” Harry waffled, a little uncertain as to the social allowances that were expected. He had no idea if Alexander was just being polite and he was supposed to refuse his offer or if he was serious and was truly offering a toy for Ismay and it was alright for him to accept. He was so clueless about social norms after three and a half years of enslavement, but Ismay did need some more toys, even if it was just one other toy to play with besides Cloppity in the meantime, before his owl order came through.

“I will see to it immediately.”

“Can I…?” Harry ducked his head and shut his mouth.

“Whatever it is that you want to ask, do so.” Alexander smiled encouragingly at him.

Harry shook his head, still looking at the floor.

“Harry, remember our talk?” Henry told him. “You can ask for whatever you want now and the worst you’ll get is a refusal. No one is going to hit you or hurt you for asking anything that you want to ask.”

“I was just…just wondering if…you know, if I could see Max.”

Everything was silent and Harry grew curious enough to look up. There were some stern looks being thrown around, some shocked, stunned looks, but no one had blown up yet, that had to be a good sign.

“Why do you want to see Max, sweetness, has anyone said anything to you?” Anthanaric asked.
Harry frowned then. “Like who? I haven’t been near anyone since I…ah, you think Alexander has said something? He hasn’t. I wanted to see Max the moment I was rescued. I haven’t been able to stop thinking of him and I told Healer Vasey about it and he thinks that we need to sit down and finish our last conversation, so that I can put everything from that day firmly behind me.”

“He’s still unmated, Harry.” Jacob told him. “He has been obsessed with you and your abduction and I can’t promise you that he won’t try to bond to you.”

“In that case I can’t promise that I won’t gouge out his eyes.” Harry said back. “I’m not some shy sixteen year old anymore. I’m twenty now and I’ve been through so much, even before I was abducted. If anyone tries anything now, then I’m not going to meekly accept such treatment. I know now what it might lead to and trust me when I say that I’m never going to allow myself to be put into such a position ever again. I just want to see Max and I want to talk to him, as my Mind Healer has suggested that I do.”

“I will see to it now, Harry. If the Elders agree, I could bring Max back with me, after making sure that he’s had a shower first, of course.”

That made Harry chuckle and duck his head as he grinned.

Elder Vipond sighed heavily. “Bring him back, Alexander. At least this way we can keep a close, controlled eye upon things.”

Harry smiled happily as Alexander nodded and left the room. He was so happy and he then fretted about how he looked. He still had a bit of a belly on him after his recent abortion, but that swelling was reducing steadily, if he sat right then he could hide that easily enough. His hair was a lost cause, even after the recent cut that one of the Healers, a young trainee named Aelia, had happily given to him after he’d shyly asked if she would. Jefferus had liked it a certain length, longer than Harry had ever had it before, and it had been kept in that same style ever since, it had felt amazing to have it cut back to the length that he wanted it to be. It would be just as amazing to finally let his body hair grow in again…Jefferus had liked him completely smooth and Harry had hated it.

He was dressed alright, just jeans and a jumper, but that was all he’d been wearing ever since he’d happily stripped off the hated tunic for the first time. He was likely worrying about nothing, Max likely wouldn’t care what he looked like or what he was wearing, but for some inexplicable reason, Harry wanted to look good for Max. It was a strange feeling after so long.

Ismay came back to him and she clambered onto his lap. He held her close and he smiled as he listened to her babbling to Cloppity. No matter what happened with Max now, he had Ismay. He would be a little hurt if Max no longer liked him, but after all that he’d been through, and with Ismay to think about now, it just didn’t seem quite so important to him now as it had done when he was sixteen.
After all that he’d been through, just to be free was enough now. He had his beautiful daughter who was entirely dependent upon him and she would be his priority now for the rest of his life. If Max didn’t like her, he would be the one gone, not Ismay. Never his sweet, intelligent girl. They were both free now and they were going to stay free. He was going to get her the blue bedroom that she wanted, he was going to treat her to every single sweet, cake and chocolate the Muggle and magical worlds had to offer while they watched Disney films for the first time in their lives. He was going to take the time to enjoy her now that he had the chance to do so, he was going to play with her, bake with her, watch films with her and do everything that he’d always promised now that he actually could keep his promises to her.

It felt amazing to be free, to do as he wanted, to be in actual clothes, to have Ismay with him and under no threat of harm and now that he and Ismay had been liberated, and truly freed with the death of Jefferus, he was going to do his utmost to always love and protect her. She meant the world to him and no one was ever going to come before her, never. If anyone had a problem with her, then they could go through him first and foremost.

He sighed and he cuddled her back into him tighter as he waited for Alexander to come back with Max. He hoped that Max was near the same as he’d been when Harry had first met him, he’d liked that Max very much, but that was why Healer Vasey had suggested that he talk to Max first, because it had been over three years since he’d last seen and spoken to Max, and they had both obviously changed. They might not even like one another any longer, or Max might not like Harry now that he wasn’t a virgin, or because he had Ismay, or because the things he’d gone through had changed him, but at least if they talked a little they’d be able to be sure and as Healer Vasey said, he’d then be able to move on fully from the past.

He breathed deeply and waited, listening to the Elders and Aeesha talking quietly, holding Ismay on his lap as she played with Cloppity in her hands. He was trying to keep himself calm as he waited, or to at least look calm, but he wasn’t sure how successful he was. Instead he focused on Ismay, that seemed like a good bet, she always took his mind off of everything and now that they had been liberated, he was going to do what he wanted for once, if that meant talking to Max, it meant talking to Max and Merlin help anyone who tried to stop him or tell him what he could or couldn’t do. He had had more than enough of that over the last three years, it was time for him to take charge of his life and do what he thought was best, regardless of the opinions of others.

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Alexander left the large room to get Ismay some toys to play with and to collect up Max. His grandson was going to be so excited and he couldn’t wait to tell him the news that he could finally see Harry again, but of course he would make sure to stress that Max was to be calm at all times and to not crowd Harry and he would prove Max’s reputation as false too. Max would respect Harry just as much as he had done previously. He might have been caught up on Harry, but he was not a danger to him, not at all, Alexander could stake his life on it.

He reached the main floo point in the halls and he took a pinch of floo powder from the container on the mantel, throwing it into the flames and calling out his home address. His family knew that he had been called in as personal protection to Harry while the trial proceedings were going on, so he had a house full of people waiting for news. He was almost mobbed as soon as he arrived.
He chuckled. “Calm down! I haven’t been this popular in months.”

“How is he, Granddad?” Max all but begged him.

“Have you showered today?”

“What?” Max asked, a frown creasing his forehead at the very rapid change of topic.

“You can’t blackmail him into showering with news on Harry.” Richard defended his son fiercely.

“I’m not. I asked a simple question.” Alexander replied mildly.

“I…no.” Max admitted. “I was worried for Harry.”

“Go and shower now. Harry’s fine.”

“But…I wanted to hear how the trials went and how Harry was afterwards.”

“And you will.” Alexander told his Grandson gently. “Go and shower, I haven’t come home just to turn around and go back right away, I’d like some tea first.”

“I’ve got that sorted, Granddad.” His Granddaughter, Shae, insisted. She was already rounding out with her fifteenth child, or at least it would be at least her fifteenth child, she didn’t know if she was having a singleton or a multiple pregnancy just yet.

“How are you feeling, Shae?” He asked, even as he watched Max leave for the bathroom and for a much needed shower. A bit of grooming would make him feel much better, it always did.

“As sick as a dog!” She laughed. “The morning sickness for this one is really hitting me hard. I’ve eaten nothing but dry toast and peppermint tea for the last week and even that doesn’t help!”
Shae’s dominant mate, Daniel, shifted himself on reflex, but he was well aware that he couldn’t do a damn thing to help his beloved submissive. There was nothing that could be done, but that he’d moved to try made Alexander smile. His lovely Shae had chosen right with that one, Alexander approved of Daniel.

“Why did you insist that Max take a shower? You know he’s been getting better since Harry was found, but pushing him will make him relapse.” Myron told him.

“I wanted him to take a shower because Harry has asked to see him and I’m to take him back with me as soon as he’s done in the shower and I will not have that poor boy knocked unconscious by any offensive smells coming from my unwashed Grandson.”

That shut them all up and Alexander went looking for several toys for Ismay.

“What are you doing, Granddad?” Alayla, Myron’s youngest, asked him curiously. “Do you want some help?”

“Harry’s little girl Ismay has no toys to play with. She has a little wooden horse that Harry carved for her himself as those neglectful beasts refused to allow her to have any toys. I was just collecting a few up for her until Harry’s owl order arrives, it’s a rather impressive order too from what Henry was telling me.” He chuckled.

“She’s nearly three isn’t she?” Shae asked as she came back into the room with a tea tray that her mate rushed to take from her. “I have a few suitable toys that won’t be missed. Dan, you know the ones, can you get them for me please? I would, but I don’t want to use the floo at the moment with my stomach so upset and out of sorts.”

Daniel leapt to do Shae’s bidding and Alexander had to hide a laugh. Shae definitely had that dominant wrapped around her finger, and after fourteen children with more on the way, he was certainly not surprised in the least.

“I have toys for her too.” His youngest daughter, Lydia, insisted as she hurried to the floo after Daniel.

“I’m sure I could find some.” His daughter, Ellien, said, looking thoughtful.
“We don’t want to overwhelm the poor girl.” Alexander chuckled, though he was immensely proud that his family were so giving and generous. “Harry has toys for her on order, it’s just a few things to play with for now, until that order arrives.”

Max came back into the room, his hair still damp, but he was wearing jeans and a shirt that didn’t look like he’d slept in them, not like the grubby lounge trousers and stained shirt that he’d taken off.

“There, you look much better, do you feel better?” He asked his Grandson.

Max gave a bashful smile. “Yes, I do feel better now that I’m clean.”

“Good. It’s all about making yourself feel better, Maxie.” Alexander told him. “Looking good will make you feel good.”

Alexander sat down with a cup of tea and rested for a moment. He knew that Harry would be anxious, but he was waiting on the toys now. Max joined him, grabbing the last cup with his name scrawled over it. Alexander had made his Grandson do as such when he was six and he had treasured that mug, the one that Max always used when he was here at this house. He had made all of his Grandchildren do the same over the years and they were all drinking from the mugs that they’d made as toddlers. It made him rather nostalgic.

Daniel came back first with a box full of toys. He put it down and swiped a hand over his head.

“There, that’s all of them.” He said proudly.

“Thank you, I’m sure Ismay will love them.”

“Ismay? Harry’s daughter?” Max immediately sat up straighter at the slightest hint of anything to do with Harry. “Is she alright?”

“Calm yourself, Maxie.” Alexander insisted. “She’s fine, more than fine, she’s wonderful, but she has no toys. Harry has some on order for her, but she has nothing until they come. I said that I could get a few rounded up for her.”

“I could buy some.” Max insisted and Alexander took his hand and patted it.
“It’s a wonderful, generous thought, Max, but it’s not needed. Harry has already bought her a toy shop, she just needs a few things for now.”

Max nodded his understanding, but Alexander could see that not helping was killing him.

“Don’t you still have that child’s potions kit lying around?” Richard asked him. “Maybe you could gift that to Ismay.”

Max’s eyes lit up and Alexander looked to his son-in-law proudly. Then Richard always was a quick thinker, he had to be in his line of work, but it was easy to forget as such when he was so childish and immature when he wanted to be.

Max leapt up and went to fetch the child’s potions kit that one of his friends, Sixten, had given him as a gag gift. Alexander was sure that Max would thank Sixten for the gift properly now that it had actually come in handy.

“When are you going to tell him that he’s going with you?” Myron asked with a smirk.

Alexander chuckled. “Give it until I have to leave. He’ll only start jumping down my throat and insisting that we leave immediately while I’m trying to enjoy my lovely cup of tea.”

Myron’s smirk grew, as he knew that that was exactly what his son would do.

Lydia came back first and she had several toys in her arms, including a beautiful doll that looked to be brand new.

“We bought it for our Aimee, but she never played with it. I don’t think she ever touched it.” Lydia said when she saw the looks being sent at the doll, that had several changes of clothes and a play pushchair. “Alice loved her doll, but Aimee much preferred playing with Lila’s old dolls instead of having a new one of her own.”

Max came barrelling back into the room, almost falling over the lip of the fireplace as he did so in his haste, the potions kit in his hands.

“You’ll let me know if she likes it?” He insisted breathlessly.
“You’ll be able to see for yourself. Harry wants to see you, you’re coming with me.” Alexander said calmly.

Max’s eyes went wide and he immediately started checking himself out. “How do I look?” He asked, smoothing down his shirt self-consciously.

“Sexy as hell.” Shae told her cousin.

“You look drop-dead gorgeous!” Richard added.

“No, really, how do I look? Is my hair too long?” He fretted, reaching up to pull on a clump, checking if there was any curl to it with his fingers.

“You look fine.” Myron said. “Stop fretting over how you look and focus more on Harry.”

“Just don’t crowd him, Maxie. He wants to see you, but he’s still anxious around unmated dominants. He’s only agreed to see you because his Mind Healer has told him that it’ll help him to get over his past if he finishes his last conversation with you, this is for Harry’s benefit, for his healing, do you understand?”

Alexander watched as Max set his jaw and nodded his head. “I understand. Nothing will get in the way of Harry’s recovery. I won’t let myself get in the way of his recovery.”

Alexander smiled at his Maxie, everyone on the outside could only see the obsession with Harry and classed Max as a danger, but those closest to Max could see how much he was dedicated to protecting Harry, not harming him. Alexander knew that Max would not do anything to harm Harry or to hamper his recovery.

“Come along then, grab that box and let us go and give Ismay a proper gift.” Alexander insisted, picking up his mug and draining the last mouthfuls of tea before taking the other box and heading to the fireplace, Max so close to his heels that had he stopped, Max would have walked into the back of him.

Arriving at the Counsel Halls, Max went to veer off to the Healing Halls, but Alexander touched his
“He’s upstairs now.” Alexander informed Max. “In Anthanaric’s living room.”

“He’s well enough to leave the Healing Halls?” Max asked excitedly.

Alexander nodded as he took Max up the stairs. “Yes, he is. He’s so strong and he’s coming on so well. Just remember to be calm, keep your voice quiet and mild and don’t crowd him, okay Maxie? No sudden movements either.”

Max nodded firmly. “I won’t hurt him or scare him or Ismay.”

“Good boy.” Alexander told him before he stopped and knocked on the door. He saw Max nervously fluffing the front of his hair and it almost made him laugh out loud. He opened the door when he was told to enter and he smiled at Harry, as the first person that he saw, who had a playing Ismay on his lap.

The reaction that Max and Harry had to one another was very reminiscent of when they had first met. Max smiled and Harry went beetroot red and shyly ducked his head, sending little peeks up at Max through his eyelashes, who at least seemed to feel better about his appearance due to Harry’s automatic reaction to him.

Alexander gave them a bit of respite as he showed off the boxes of toys. Harry’s face showed his surprise and then his beautiful eyes filled with tears. He gathered up his daughter and directed her attention to the boxes of toys. Alexander noticed that she had the hand-carved wooden horse in her hands.

“Ismay, look what Alexander and Max have for you.”

Ismay looked up and Alexander’s heart broke as her mouth dropped in shock and her own eyes filled with tears, only hers fell smoothly down her rounded cheeks.

“Toys? For me?” She asked softly.

“All for you.” Max told her as he hunched down and placed the box with the doll in it on the floor.
Ismay shot from Harry’s lap and she toddled right over to the box, not caring that Max was still there and she just touched everything, as if unsure how to play. Alexander reasoned that that wasn’t too far from the truth and it just about broke his heart.

Max helped out immediately by picking up the doll and making it dance, much to Ismay’s utter delight as she started giggling. This hadn’t been part of the plan, Max was supposed to be helping Harry after all, but as Harry was smiling happily, his body still relaxed with not a hint of tension, stress or fear visible, he and the Elders left them to it as they went down the other end of the room, with Aeesha, to have their own conversation while leaving Max and Harry in relative peace with Ismay.

Harry slowly and a little insecurely slipped himself from the settee and he approached Max, sitting behind Ismay as he taught her how to play with toys for the first time in her life.

“Hi.” Max greeted him quietly.

Harry smiled at him, feeling just like the naïve sixteen year old that he’d been the last time he’d spoken to Max. It was a priceless feeling to him, feeling as he did back then and not as a broken, used animal.

“Oh, Max.” He answered softly.

“It’s so good to see you again.” Max told him, even as he showed Ismay how to change the doll’s clothes, she’d immediately wanted to change the dress for trousers and a top.

Harry set up the pushchair for her and Max helped her strap the doll in. She placed Cloppity in the doll’s lap, making sure it was safe, and then she was gone, running around the living room with the doll in the pushchair. It made Harry so happy to see her playing like any normal two year old.

“I didn’t stop thinking about you.” Harry admitted softly. “It might come off as a bit creepy, but I think it’s fair to say that you made a good impression on me that night.”

“It’s not creepy, Harry. I… I’m not sure what people have been telling you, but I sort of lost my head a bit after you were…”

“Abducted.” Harry answered softly once Max stopped dead and looked awkward. “You can say it, Max. I’m not sensitive to the word, I know what happened to me and avoiding it isn’t going to help me get over it.”
“How is your therapy going?” Max asked him and Harry was pleased that it wasn’t being avoided like some dirty secret. He did need therapy, anyone who had gone through what he had would need therapy, so he didn’t want to hide the fact that he needed it.

“Really well. I like Healer Vasey. He makes me feel comfortable and I’m able to talk to him about anything. He’s helping a lot. I see him twice a week, or three if I feel like I need to offload. I’ve had a few nightmares.” Harry said when he saw Max looking puzzled by his comment about needing to offload. “Ismay sees him too.”

“I’m glad that you’ve both found someone that you’re able to speak to about what happened.” Max said as he watched Ismay racing around the room, pointing things out to the doll and speaking to it.

Harry smiled at him. “It took me a while too, you know that one of the Mind Healers here…well, you…you know that I had an abortion?”

Max nodded. “Yes. Please don’t say that one of the Mind Healers said anything about you choosing to abort the baby.” Max demanded, looking furious.

Harry nodded. “He even tried to say that I wasn’t in my right mind, thus I couldn’t legally make my own decision on the matter.”

Max bared his teeth, but the display of aggression didn’t worry Harry at all, which he found odd, but he felt calm and comforted that Max thought that it was alright for him to have had an abortion.

“That that fucker even dared try to say that to you!” Max growled.

Harry beamed at him, he was so happy that Max understood.

“I needed that abortion, Max. I can’t even tell you how awful it felt to be pregnant with his baby. It was destroying me.”

“No, I do understand. You need to do anything and everything that makes you feel better, that makes you safe and keeps you healthy. Anyone who tries to stop you or hinder you needs to go sooner rather than later!”
“Exactly!” Harry agreed. “Anyway, I threw a chair at him and…”

“You threw a chair at him?” Max asked with a laugh.

“He was trying to tell me that I wasn’t capable of making my own decisions! It could have led to Ismay being taken from me, of course I threw a chair at him…I didn’t judge myself able to throw the table. It seemed too heavy and I’d only just been rescued, so I wasn’t as fit and healthy as I am now.”

“Well I think that shows perfectly that you were able to make your own sound decisions.” Max told him with a grin.

It took Harry a moment and then he laughed. “You’re right, it does. See! He should have seen that if he was any sort of proper therapist!”

“He should have! I bet Healer Vasey saw that.”

Harry chuckled. “I did tell him about it. He called the other Healer a dick.”

“I really like this Healer Vasey.”

Ismay interrupted them when she almost ran over Max’s foot with the pushchair and he had to pull it back quickly.

“Careful, Ismay. Go more slowly.” Harry said gently. “I don’t want you to hurt yourself or anyone else with your new pushchair, okay?”

“Yes, Mummy.” Ismay answered.

“Say that you’re sorry to Max.”

“Sorry, Max.” She said shyly.
“That’s okay, cutie.” Max smiled.

Ismay giggled and then she was gone, walking the doll this time instead of running.

“How have you been?” Harry asked as the silence stretched on a bit.

“Better now than I was.” Max replied carefully, aware that Harry had been the one to suffer through endless horrors. “As I said, I did sort of lose my head for a bit after you were abducted. As ridiculous as it sounds, I missed you. I know we only met that night and that we only talked for an hour, but I did really miss you.”

“It’s not strange, because I missed you too.” Harry said quietly. “I think that we had a real connection, Max. I know that I’ve changed a lot, but I do still like you. You seem the same to me.”

“We did have a connection, didn’t we?” Max smiled. “I felt it too. I feel it now, but I don’t want to scare you off.”

Harry chuckled. “After all I’ve been through, I’ve known real terror, Max. The kind that makes your heart stop with fear. You’re not going to scare me by telling me that you feel that we still have a connection like we once did. It makes me feel…happy, glad, that you can see past what happened to me.”

“Of course I can, Harry. You’re not limited to what you went through. You’re so much more than that. You’re so strong and vibrant still. You still have the fight and fire in you.”

Harry looked down at his lap. “It is difficult at times.” He admitted.

“Of course it is, it’s going to be, but you’re such a wonderful person. Your personality is always going to be stronger than what that filth tried to make you into. You’re stronger than he was.”

Harry bit his lip. “How can you say I’m wonderful still after I…?” Harry cut himself off, but his hands hovered over the slight bump he still had, cluing Max into what he meant.
“You are not a bad person for having an abortion, Harry.” Max told him gently. “An abortion isn’t a bad thing to have if you feel that you need it. Your body is your own and you need to do for yourself what you feel is best for you. After all, you’re the one who has to live with the decision you made and you’re the one that would have had to have had the baby if you’d been bullied into keeping it, no one else. It was your decision and yours alone and you did as you saw best.”

Harry let out a soft sob and before he knew what he was doing, he’d wrapped his arms around Max and buried his face into that strong neck.

“Harry!” Jacob cried out in alarm.

Harry was pulled from Max and he flinched, throwing an arm over his head and face. He found himself sat on the settee and Quintalus was there to soothe him, to make soft noises at him that calmed him down, even as he heard Jacob asking Max if they’d touched skin-to-skin. Too late Harry remembered that Jefferus was dead, which meant that he was unmated and a simple touch of skin with an unmated dominant could bond them together.

“Max, I’m so sorry!” He sobbed. “I never meant to…I just forgot that skin contact could bond us…I never meant…never…” Harry trailed off as he started crying in great wracking sobs.

“Why Mummy sad?” He heard Ismay asking.

“He’s had a bit of a fright, dear.” He heard Aeesha soothe. “He’ll be okay.”

“It’s alright, Harry.” Max told him. “This isn’t your fault. It’s okay.”

“It’s not!” Harry cried. “It’s not alright, you don’t deserve to be stuck with me because of an accident!”

“Get off me.” Max growled before he was hunching down in front of him, his hands touching his arms making sure to touch his jumper. “Look at me.”

Harry sniffled and forced himself to raise his eyes. It was so difficult to get eye contact, he wavered a little at the nose, but he took in a huge breath and then looked up further. He looked into those compassionate, bright blue eyes and he swallowed hard, trying to calm himself down.
“I would not be stuck with you just because we touched. It takes compatibility on both sides and to both Drackens to bond via skin-to-skin, that’s why it’s so rare.” Max explained gently. “If I didn’t want to be with you, or you didn’t want to be with me then the bond would never take hold, Harry. Otherwise anyone who had touched you would have been able to bond with you and they didn’t. Do you understand?”

Harry nodded. He did understand too.

“I would love to bond with you, to mate to you, but only once you are happy and healthy.” Max told him, raising his voice after the word ‘but’ when the Elders tried to cut in. “Your happiness means more to me than anything. You need time to heal first, that doesn’t mean that I’m going anywhere, we can be friends and start off how we were supposed to have done before you were abducted. It just means that you need to take some time for yourself first and get you and Ismay settled and happy before you even think of trying to mate to anyone.”

“But…but the bond.”

Max smiled at him. “We’re both wearing jumpers, Harry, and mine’s a turtle neck, we never touched skin-to-skin. No harm, no foul.”

Harry smiled then and took one hand and brushed away his tears.

“If you still want me as a mate once you’re better and happier, then we can have this talk again, but if you go through all of this and feel that we’re better off as friends, that’s fine too.” Max said. “But you need to put yourself first for once.”

Harry nodded. “But we can still talk?”

“Of course. I’d be offended if we still didn’t talk.”

Harry laughed, brushing his eyes again.

“Do you feel better?” Max asked him and Harry nodded.
“I do. I just forgot that when he died that I would be considered unmated.”

“That’s okay.” Max told him. “A lot has happened for you today. No one blames you, especially not me.”

“It wasn’t your fault either, I was the one who jumped you.”

Max snorted. “You hardly jumped me, Harry.”

“So we’re okay?”

“More than okay, we’re great.” Max told him and it made Harry smile. Max could have done a fist pump for that achievement, but he controlled himself.

“Mummy, okay?” Ismay called out.

“I’m alright, love.” Harry told her immediately. “I just got a little upset.”

“Cuddle?”

“I could use a cuddle.” Harry told her and she darted to him, used Max’s leg as a step and his shoulder as a hand hold and she wriggled onto Harry’s lap where she threw her arms around him and squeezed him tight.

“No one hit you, Mummy?” Ismay asked him, in the loud, clearly audible stage whisper that all children seemed to have.

“No. No one has hit me, Ismay.” Harry said seriously. “No one will hit me ever again.”

“Good.” Ismay said, cuddling in tighter.
“Are you alright, Harry?” Elder Midate asked seriously. From where he was standing, it seemed that he had been the one to wrestle Max to the floor.

Harry nodded. The Elders’ all hovered around for a while longer, before reluctantly going back to the other end of the room. Alexander stayed for a moment.

“I am alright.” Harry said.

“I’m glad. Just remember, sweet one, it is not just Max that you would be mating to.” Alexander said seriously. “You need at least three mates to keep you healthy, if you bond to Max and offset your heat, you’d need to find two or more additional dominants to mate to and you are not in the right position for such just yet. You may want to bond to Max and mate to him, but you are by no means ready to go through two or more further mate meetings to find however many more dominants that you need. Do not rush yourself.”

Harry hadn’t thought of that and he was wide eyed and a bit panicked. Then Alexander touched him, cupping his face and he kissed his forehead gently.

“You know now.” He told him, making Harry think that he could read minds, but it did make him feel better. “We will keep you safe, sweet one. You just focus on you and this precious girl.” He said giving Ismay’s hair a light ruffle. She giggled into Harry’s neck and that made him smile.

“Thank you.” Harry said softly.

Alexander nodded and he moved off to the Elders, leaving him with Max and Ismay, the silence was awkward again.

“It is alright, Harry.” Max said, touching his knee hesitantly. Almost as if he were looking for Harry to flinch to give him an indication that his touch wasn’t welcome.

“I just, I forgot what it would mean.” He said with a sort of pained grimace. “Alexander is right, I’m in no state to go through all of those mate meetings, not by a long stretch. It’s going to take me months of therapy before I can even be in the same room as other unmated dominants. I know the Elders think that it is progress that I’m sat here with you, especially after the reaction I had to that other unmated dominant when I first arrived, but…but that’s not me getting calmer or more settled with unmated dominants. Max, it’s you. Just you.” He admitted.
“Take all the time that you need, Harry. No one is going to press you or force you, not after what you’ve been through. Just stick with your therapy, stay with your Mind Healer, look after this gorgeous girl and do whatever feels right for you, no matter what anyone else says.”

Harry smiled and he hugged Ismay tighter.

“She’ll be three in November.” Harry said softly, almost to himself.

“What day?” Max asked.

“The twenty-ninth.” Harry said.

Max stroked Harry’s knee with his thumb and Harry smiled. More so when Ismay peeked out of his neck and turned to face Max, looking at him curiously.

“Hey there. Where did you go?” Max asked her, his voice teasingly high and light.

“Nowhere.” Ismay giggled.

“But I couldn’t see you!” Max insisted.

Ismay laughed and turned her head back into Harry’s neck.

“See! She’s gone again!” Max said, keeping his voice nice and light, reminding himself not to raise his voice at all, so that the two wonderful people in front of him didn’t feel that he was shouting. “Right when I was talking to her too!”

Ismay spun around to look at Max with a big grin.

“There you are! I was just saying to your Mummy that I was speaking to you and then you were…gone!” Ismay had turned around mid-sentence and Max once again played along. It was
making Ismay giggle and laugh and Harry was smiling as he watched them. “She did it again! Where does she vanish to? How does she just vanish…hello again.”

Ismay giggled, but she slipped from Harry’s lap and went to Max, hugging him this time.

“She’s not at all shy is she?” Max said with a smile, hugging her back tight.

Harry smiled wryly. “She’s never had any reason to fear strangers.” He said sadly. “It was the people closest to her who always upset and hurt her.”

Harry watched as Max’s face hardened. “They hurt her too?” He whispered urgently.

“No like me.” Harry insisted. “It was mostly neglect and stinging spells, but it was enough.”

Max’s arms held the little two year old tighter, one huge hand stroking through her fire red hair. “Never again.” He said.

Harry nodded in agreement. No one would ever hurt his daughter ever again.

“Mummy threw my violin.” Ismay said, loudly, to Max.

“Did he?” Max asked, a smile he couldn’t quite hide on his lips as he looked up at Harry, who had ducked his head and was blushing.

“Yes, I never liked the violin. It hurt my fingies.” She said, holding out her left hand towards Max and wiggling them. He caught her gently by the wrist and brought her fingers to his mouth to kiss them, smiling as she giggled. “Mummy came to watch my practice, he never liked me playing the violin. He laughed with me all through my practice, though grandmother and teacher weren’t happy. Then I snapped my bow and I got scared, so I went to Mummy. He told me that it was a good practice and then threw my violin at the music stand! It was very funny.”

“You never have to touch a violin or a piano again, Ismay.” Harry said quietly, avoiding eye contact and hunching his shoulders.
Max touched his knee, then he closed his eyes and removed it again quickly when Harry flinched.

“It sounded like it was very funny.” Max tried.

“It was.” Ismay told him, oblivious to how withdrawn her Mother had gone. “Scary too, because grandmother usually told grandfather and he’d shout a lot, but they were scared of Mummy too.”

“They were human so they were always afraid that one touch from my claws would end their miserable lives.” Harry said quietly. “I don’t think being mated to Jeff was as absolute as they believed it would have been. My Dracken loved him for Ismay, but for no other reason. When I was human, the blind devotion to our dominant mate never truly transferred over with it. I had my memories, my emotions to draw on, and I was never as willing or obedient as they had expected me to be. I think, in the end, certainly within the last several months, they were terrified of me because I was getting worse. I think they regretted what they’d done in the end because I was such a huge disturbance in their nice, orderly lives.”

Ismay slipped off of Max’s lap and she happily went to the box of toys, she glanced around to see if anyone was looking, so Harry tugged on Max’s jumper and he swallowed, holding eye contact with those beautiful, dark blue eyes for a moment before dropping his gaze back to his lap.

“She won’t play with them if she thinks anyone’s looking.” He explained. “She’s still afraid that if she touches them then she’ll be shouted at or punished.”

Max nodded and he placed his hands back on Harry’s knees, this time there was no flinch and he smiled.

“If you want to keep speaking…” Max offered.

Harry looked up, then back down, very quickly.

“I…he…” Harry took a deep breath. “He never wanted daughters. The whole family were so sexist and male dominated that to have a daughter was seen as a sign of inferiority. I was so scared of him, Max.” He choked out.
Max shushed him gently. “He’s dead now. He can never, ever lay his filthy hands on you ever again.”

Harry nodded and took another deep breath. “He told me that it was my fault that we kept having daughters, that the fault lied with me and thus it was my fault that he had to keep…keep kicking them out of me.”

“Oh, Harry.” Max said, never wishing more in his life that he could hold someone tight in his arms. “Of course it wasn’t your fault. He was the one who chose to do such a vile, heinous thing. It was always his fault, everything.”

“With every miscarryage…no. It wasn’t even miscarriage.” Harry said, glaring at his own lap. “Everyone kept saying they were miscarriages so that I was the one blamed, not him. After every termination, my Dracken got more unstable. We blamed him, of course I knew it was his fault, but my Dracken didn’t understand. But with every pregnancy, with no baby to show for it, we blamed him more and more. With that, I could act out more, I could stop being the mindless drone that he’d tried to make me into. His parents were easier targets to go after, because they couldn’t order me around, only he could, and even then I could force the issue a little. They were afraid of me, because I threatened their lives at every opportunity I got. In the end they were living with that constant threat over their heads as I got more control of my Dracken and I was able to act out a little more, growling at them, flashing them my bared teeth, all very animalistic, very primitive, but it worked and they got more and more terrified of me.”

“You did nothing wrong.” Max told him. “After what they did to you, a taste of their own medicine was in order.”

Harry nodded, taking in deep, slow breaths. “I hate that this happened to me.”

“Of course you do.” Max said easily. “We all hate that this happened to you. It should never have happened, to you or to anyone else.”

Harry started crying and Max was at a loss as to what to do. He shifted his hands a little higher, so he
could duck down a little more to see Harry’s face.

“It’s alright.” He soothed gently. “You’re safe here, you’re safe now.”

Harry nodded, but lifted an arm to cover his eyes as he cried. Max felt powerless, useless, and all he wanted to do was hold Harry tight to him, but he couldn’t even do that.

“I’m sorry, I don’t even know why I’m crying.” Harry said, rubbing his eyes.

Max aborted a move to touch Harry’s hair...he couldn’t touch him there. Instead he took a breath and he lightly squeezed the skinny legs under his hands.

“You’ve been through a lot. Of course you’re going to cry at times. You might feel like screaming, or shouting, or just curling up in bed and feeling like you never want to get out. That’s fine, Harry. No one has the right to tell you how to feel or how to act or react to anything. Only you know how you’re feeling and if you want to scream or shout or cry, then you need to do so. Let it all out and you’ll feel better for it than if you try to keep it inside.”

“You sound like Healer Vasey.” Harry gave a soft, wet chuckle, but to Max it was the greatest sound in the world.

“I had to have my own therapy, so I guess I did pick up a few things along the way.” He said with a grin.

“I’m so glad that you agreed to come and see me, Max.” Harry told him, giving him a hint of wide, green eyes for a moment before they dropped again. That would have to stop too, but he wouldn’t push today. He’d let Harry get more comfortable with him again first.

“Of course I did. I wasn’t going to pass up an opportunity to come and see you again, and to help in whatever way I could, even if it was just talking to you and playing games with Ismay.”

At the mention of his daughter, Harry looked around for her automatically, settling when he saw her on Alexander’s lap. She was sleeping, the new doll was clutched tightly in her arms.
“We’re both recovering from this. I’m going to undo everything they did to her. Everything they did to me. It might take a while, but I’ll get myself back on track. I know I will.”

“There’s the fire and stubbornness I remember.” Max chuckled. “You will get better, Harry. This time we’re going to do everything right. The offer of sending owls to one another is still on the table if you want it.”

“Really?” Harry asked, a hint of something happy and excited to his voice, accompanied with a longer glance up to show shining emerald eyes that caught his for a handful of seconds before dropping again.

“Yes, Harry. Really. I want to get to know you still.”

“I…I’ve changed a lot, Max.” Harry said worriedly.

“Of course you have. We both have, but sometimes change isn’t a bad thing.” Max said gently. “You went through something truly horrific, Harry. There is no way that you could have gone through it and not changed, they took everything from you, stripped it away without care and tore you down and then kicked you for good measure. I know that you’ve suffered and been hurt, but I want to help you overcome what they did, to help build you back up, nice and slowly. You are never going to forget what happened, there’s no way that you could, but with therapy and help and a good support system around you, you’re going to get so much better, I promise.”

Harry swallowed hard and he nodded, unable to speak. He swallowed again and then let out a small croak. “I…I want to be better, but everything is so hard.” He whispered. “I wait for permission for things and when no one gives it to me, I just don’t do anything. I’m so used to my life being micro-managed that I can’t really function normally.”

Max smiled at the admission. “You will get better. I’m going to help you and you’re going to be fine. You may not be the same, because you can’t go back to how things were before this happened, but you’ll be completely fine with our help.”

Harry smiled. “Thank you, Max.”

“No problem.” Max said with a wider smile. “I want to help you and I want to keep in contact with you. If you, and your Elder guard dogs, don’t feel comfortable with actual visits like this one, then we can just keep on talking via letters until you are comfortable again, or your guard dogs ease off.”
That made Harry laugh and Max wanted to leap up and fist pump he felt so accomplished, but he remembered the no sudden movement rule and he stayed hunched down in front of Harry. Deciding to make him laugh a bit more, he groaned and sat himself on the floor, stretching out his legs. It did make Harry laugh and Max shot him a grin.

“I’m getting old.” He complained.

That made Harry laugh more and it drew the attention of the Elders and his Grandfather, who held up his hand. It took a moment for him to understand the meaning, but he nodded his agreement. He would have five more minutes with Harry and he settled his Dracken, who screamed over the thought of leaving Harry alone again. He reasoned with his Dracken, Harry was not their submissive. Not yet and he might never be. They had to be careful and patient, but of course his Dracken didn’t understand patience, only that a compatible, unmated submissive was sat in front of him and they weren’t immediately bonding to him. That made his Dracken side angry, but Max was a dab hand at staving off his Dracken side. It was a perk to being an older dominant.

“My…my owl is a snowy white one, a female. Her name is Hedwig.” Harry said gently. “Dumbledore kept her safe for me when I was a prisoner.”

“I have two, Jasmine and Esmeralda.” Max said. “Jasmine is older, I got her when I was eleven, she’s brown with black flecks to her feathers. Esmeralda was a graduation present when I was eighteen.”

“Disney much?” Harry teased.

Max actually blushed. “I do like Disney films, Aladdin was always my favourite as a child, hence naming my owl Jasmine. How did you name Hedwig?”

“I was reading a book, learning all about magic having never known I was a wizard, and I found Hedwig’s name in the book, A History of Magic. I liked it. But don’t change the subject, you’re a Disney buff.” Harry laughed.

“I have three younger sisters, of course I was always going to be a Disney buff.” Max grinned.

“Ismay and I are going to marathon all of the videos.” Harry said. “I was only ever allowed to listen to them and she’s never even gotten to see the covers or the books, so we’re going to catch up
“I… I have all of them if you wanted to borrow them.” Max admitted, colour rising on his cheeks.

Harry chuckled. “There’s no shame in liking Disney.” Harry said. “We would like to borrow them, if that’s okay. Perhaps soon you can come and watch them with us, if you’d like.”

“I would like that, but only once you’re both settled and ready. And of course if your guard dogs let me.” He added.

Harry chuckled. “They’re not so bad. I think they’re overreacting a little to everything at the moment, but they should calm down soon.”

“Max, it’s time that we left.” Alexander called out. “Ismay is sleeping and Harry is due for a check-up.”

Harry looked at the clock over the fireplace mantelpiece and grimaced. “I am due a check-up.” He sighed. “Thank you for coming, Max. I’ll see you soon?”

“Of course.” Max sat forward and squeezed Harry’s elbows lightly, in place of a hug which might have brushed skin against skin. “I’ll start writing you a letter too, I don’t mind being the first to send one, that way there’s no pressure on you.”

Harry smile, but he ducked his head too. “Thank you.”

“It was wonderful to see you again, sweet one.” Alexander told him, bending down and easing Ismay into his arms.

“Thank you for looking after me and for holding onto Ismay.” He said quietly.

Alexander dropped a kiss to his forehead. “I didn’t mind. She’s an absolute angel and of course I was willing to protect you.”
Max forced himself to leave the room. Alexander left with him and once the door was closed, he held Max’s shoulder tightly.

“I’m very proud of you.” Alexander told him quietly. “You behaved yourself so well and hearing that young boy laughing was the highlight of my day.”

“He’s still so beautiful.” Max said. “Ismay is just adorable. That red hair is gorgeous too. I can’t believe anyone could say a mean word to her. Then I don’t understand how anyone could have hurt Harry so badly. I’m going to get right on writing him that letter. I need to dig out my Disney videos too.”

“You told him about your little secret collection that you think you’re hiding but everyone knows about?” Alexander teased as they reached the bottom of the stairs.

Max blushed. “Yes. He and Ismay want to marathon them all, because neither of them ever had the chance to watch them.”

“How did your little stash even come about in conversation?” Alexander laughed.

“He guessed I was a Disney fan when we were talking about our owls.” Max admitted.

“Ah, the fabled Jasmine and Esmeralda.” Alexander chuckled. “You should have known people would guess your little secret from your owls.”

“It’s not really a secret, Granddad. As you said, everyone already knows. Even Nasta and Sixten know, though only because Sixten really doesn’t understand boundaries. He went digging through all of my stuff and through my wardrobe and he found the box.”

Alexander laughed. “What did he think he was going to find?” He smirked as Max went red in the cheeks and lifted a hand to the back of his neck in an embarrassed gesture.

“Merlin only knows with him.” Max said as evenly as he could, thankful that the main fireplace came into view and he hastily took a handful and threw it into the flames before stepping back, letting his Grandfather go first.
He was mobbed as soon as he arrived back to his Granddad’s home.

“How was he?”

“Did Ismay like the toys?”

“Is Harry okay? What does he look like?”

“Calm yourselves down.” Alexander coached. “Harry and Ismay are both fine. Ismay loved the toys and especially the doll that you gave her, Lydia. Harry is very thankful for your generosity.”

“He looks the same as he did at the meeting in May. He’s just older. There are some faint bruises on him still, but he’s healing. He’s very skittish and emotional, as could be expected, but he’s still so strong. He’s determined to get over this and after speaking to him, I’m sure of it.” Max added.

“Are you happier now?” Myron asked softly as everyone started ambushing Alexander for details, particularly on the trial and the executions.

Max sat next to his Father, smiling at his Dad Richard on the other side of Myron.

“Yeah. Now that I’ve seen him, spoken to him, I feel much happier. Ismay is gorgeous too.”

“Be patient with them both, they’ve been through a lot, they’re going to be shy for a while.”

Max laughed. “Ismay isn’t a bit shy, she played a game with me on my lap and then fell asleep on Granddad.” Max’s smile fell into a frown. “Harry said it was because it was the people she knew who always hurt her, so she felt no fear or shyness with strangers.”

“But Harry really is alright?”

“Not really.” Max said. “He’s not the same boy, as Granddad said, but then I think I knew not to expect him to be. He won’t make eye contact anymore. I got the feeling that if anyone shouted near him that he’d panic as well. He’s showing a lot more emotion too, he kept crying randomly, but
again I expected that. It has to be overwhelming for him and he’d just seen the trials and the executions. I do believe that he’ll be fine though, given that he keeps up with his therapy. He wants to get better and he likes his Healer, so I think that he will. I need to write him a letter though. He wants to keep in contact.”

“That’s great news, Max.” Richard told him.

“What about how you feel about him?” Myron questioned. “Has that changed?”

“Not in the slightest. In fact, this has probably only made my feelings stronger.” Max said. “I walked in to the room and he was the first thing I saw and my heart sort of flipped in my chest and I felt like an awkward schoolboy approaching my crush. I was so tongue tied that all I could say at first was ‘hi’.” He laughed.

“How does he feel?” Richard asked.

“The same. He went beetroot red, like the first time we met in the hall and he said he still felt the same for me. I’m so happy that he does still like me, but we’re going to go slow. I know he needs to recover and he needs to settle and get through his therapy, I’m just glad that he’s alright, that he was found and rescued. I need to go tell Nasta and Sixten the good news too.”

Myron snorted. “Go on then. And Max…”

“Yeah?” He asked, even as he stood up, ready to go out the front door and Apparate to his own home.

“I’m really glad that you’re happy again.”

Max smiled and he reached down to hug both his Dads, one after the other. “Me too. I wasn’t ever meant to be a miserable person, I just couldn’t help it.”

He all but ran out of his Granddad’s house and he made it safe back to his own. He floo called Nasta’s little hovel, but no one was home. He floo called Sixten’s home next and he found them both sitting on the settee. They’d been alerted to a call coming through and they were both looking at him.
“Can you come over, please?”

“What happened?” Nasta asked.

“Are you okay?” Sixten said at almost the same time.

“Yeah, but can you come over?”

“Sure, get your big head out of the way and we can.” Sixten teased.

Max pulled back and he paced in front of the fireplace, waiting for them both to come through. Nasta was first, then Sixten, but Max had already squashed Nasta into a big hug.

“What is it?” Sixten asked, but he was grinning, even as Nasta hugged Max back.

“I got to see him today!”

“They let you see Harry?” Sixten asked in shock.

“He asked to see me. The Elders had to agree so they didn’t upset him. Of course I didn’t touch him skin on skin, but he let me touch his knees and elbows and he didn’t flinch!”

“That’s a good sign, right?” Sixten asked.

“The best!” Max said, collapsing back down onto the settee happily. Both his friends laughed at him, but took up a seat on either side of him.

“So how is he really?” Nasta asked.

“Hurting still, as you’d well imagine, but he’s doing so much better. He wouldn’t keep eye contact, though he was talking well enough. He’s come on great so far though he still has further to go to
recover, naturally. He was smiling and laughing, that has to be a good sign, right?”

“I’m so happy to see you like this.” Sixten said, moving to lounge on Max. “All excited and happy. You’re like the Max from before…with curly hair.”

Max’s hand self-consciously rose to his head and tugged on the overlong, curly strands.

“I didn’t know I was going to get to see him, otherwise I would have sorted myself out more and obviously gotten a haircut. I don’t think he minded though, he barely looked up at me, or at least never any higher than my nose.”

“It’s a learned behaviour, Max.” Nasta said. “It can be unlearned, with a little help, of course. It’s more important now that people are calm around him, that they show him that he won’t be shouted at, or even hit, just for making eye contact. He will stop doing it with a bit of time and support from those dedicated to helping him and getting him back to where he was meant to be.”

Max nodded at that and then he sighed. “I’m so glad he was found.”

“Are the Elders saying anything about who tipped them off?” Sixten asked curiously.

Max shook his head. “They won’t say, though apparently they questioned whoever it was shortly after Harry was rescued and secured and as soon as the person realised who Harry actually was, the lies that had been told about him, this person immediately contacted Elder Vipond and that was how Harry was found. I want to thank whoever it was personally, but I don’t even know who it is and the Elders won’t say. Without them, Harry wouldn’t be here. He wouldn’t have been found and he’d still be at that place, suffering, in pain, forced to go through with another pregnancy that he didn’t want.”

“How is his daughter?” Nasta queried.

“Ismay is going to be fine.” Max said with a smile. “She’s bubbly and bright and she can light up the entire room she’s in if she has a mind to. She’s gorgeous, though sometimes, the things she says are really painful to hear. She was abused too, or rather neglected. They never even let her have any toys, she only had one, Cloppity, a little crude horse made out of a floorboard that Harry carved for her himself with his claws. He even cut his own hair to make a mane and tail for it. Of course Granddad came straight home and gathered up a few boxes of toys for her. That potions kit you gave me really came in handy, Sixten. Thank you.”
Sixten’s grin widened and he turned, still lounging on Max, so that he could cuddle him properly. “Anything for you, my dearest Max.”

Max smiled and he turned to kiss Sixten’s head and then to the other side to kiss Nasta.

“I’m so happy that he’s been found and that I was allowed to see him. I was going out of my mind knowing that he’d been found but no one was allowed to see him, that no one knew for definite how he was. Now I know for myself.”

“From what you said, he was a strong, stubborn boy. He’s been beaten down and hurt terribly, but if he can laugh and smile already, after such a short period of recovery, then he can come back from what was done to him.” Nasta said gently.

Max nodded. He believed it. He truly did. He smiled and held both of his friends tighter and closer to himself. He would help to get Harry back to the fierce boy that he’d once been, even if it started with a letter and a box of old Disney videos. He would personally walk Harry down every single step of the hard road to come, his hand outstretched in an offer of help if it was needed. He took in a deep breath and rested back with Nasta and Sixten. As soon as he felt calmer and a bit less keyed up, he would start writing the letter to Harry…at least he already knew where the box of Disney videos were, that was thanks to Sixten too, who had already dug them out of the depths of the wardrobe for him.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: There’s just one more chapter left, lovelies. We’re almost at the end of this fic. The next chapter is absolutely huge, it’s 118,000 words, so that one might have to be taken a bit at a time, depending on your reading schedules, but I found it incredibly difficult to curb my inspiration with this final chapter, so there is still plenty to come despite it being the last, and our update is set for two days’ time, on the 1st of February. I’ll see you then, lovelies,

StarLight Massacre. X
Max nodded. He believed it. He truly did. He smiled and held both of his friends tighter and closer to himself. He would help to get Harry back to the fierce boy that he’d once been, even if it started with a letter and a box of old Disney videos. He would personally walk Harry down every single step of the hard road to come, his hand outstretched in an offer of help if it was needed. He took in a deep breath and rested back with Nasta and Sixten. As soon as he felt calmer and a bit less keyed up, he would start writing the letter to Harry…at least he already knew where the box of Disney videos were, that was thanks to Sixten too, who had already dug them out of the depths of the wardrobe for him.
Dumbledore had done that for him.

Ismay had picked out the room that she wanted and Harry had used his wand, that Dumbledore had been keeping safe for him, to turn the walls and carpet blue. She had been so happy that he had started crying to see it. He was doing that a lot lately.

Taking another armful of bathroom products up the stairs to the bathroom, Harry passed Ismay as she darted from room to room, giggling and narrating to Cloppity and Cecelia.

Harry did wonder if he had done this too soon, if he had left the Counsel Halls too soon. He was physically as recovered as he could be, he just needed to eat and maintain his new diet to help him in the long run. His bruises were all faded, the cuts had been healed, and he no longer had anything to remind him of his unborn son. It hadn’t felt right to remain at the Counsel Halls once he was recovered and everyone was so nice to him, was so soft and quiet around him. It was too much, he felt that he needed to be on his own. Only now that he was here, on his own with Ismay, he was afraid.

He hated that he was so conflicted about everything, though he’d been assured that an Elder would pop in three times a day to check on him and how he was doing. Once in the morning, at midday, and then in the evening. He bit his lip, it wasn’t long until the evening, when Elder Midate would come to visit him. He could wait that long and see if he still felt as frightened as he did now. He took another deep breath and he went to the front door, making sure that it was still locked. He went right to the back door and he checked that it was locked too. It was.

Harry swallowed and he stayed in the kitchen, looking at all the shiny appliances. He hadn’t cooked in so long. Not since he was at the Dursleys. He really was in way over his head. He really was in way over his head. He really was in way over his head. He really was in way over his head. He sunk down to the floor, his back to the counter and he buried his face in his knees. He hadn’t been ready for this step. He should have taken things slowly, done it gradually. He had tried to be stubborn though, he’d tried to push too hard. He had wanted this so much, but it was too much too soon. He swallowed hard and then flinched as a hand touched his face.

“Mummy, are you okay?” Ismay asked him.

He swallowed and lifted his head, his daughter’s small hands wiping the tears away for him.

“What is it, Mummy?” She asked, all her excitement gone to be replaced by fear as she looked around for someone who could have hurt him. He saw her looking at his face, as if to check for cuts or bruises.

“It’s alright, Ismay. No one is here.” He said softly. “I’m just having a silly moment.”

“It’s okay, Mummy. They’re gone now. We have our own house and we can bake and watch Disney.”
Harry smiled. “Do…do you want to bake now?” He asked.

Ismay cheered and nodded her head empathetically.

“Go and put Cloppity and Cecelia in your room then, so they don’t get dirty while I set everything up.”

Ismay rushed off and Harry forced himself to stand up, rubbing his face with his sleeve. This was supposed to be a happy time for him, where he could feel safe, but he didn’t. He was scared, he was on edge, he couldn’t even relax in what was supposed to be his own home. The worst part was, he didn’t even know what he was afraid of. The Perrots were all dead, or at least those who had harmed him were dead, no one else he knew of was after him. He was living in a house that was as secure as any residential house could be, he just didn’t know what was wrong with him or why one minute he wanted to be alone and the next he wanted someone to protect him from a threat that wasn’t even there.

“I’m ready, Mummy.” Ismay called out as she came charging back into the kitchen and Harry forced himself to smile, to act normally. Hopefully an hour or so of baking fairy cakes with Ismay and he’d feel more relaxed, a little more secure.

“Okay then, first things first, we need to tie your hair back and then wash our hands.” He said as he pulled a hairband from his jeans pocket and scraped her thick, red hair back from her face before he started braiding it tightly to keep it in place, all the while listening to Ismay as she described how she was going to decorate her first ever cakes.

After tying back her hair and washing both of their hands, Harry went to the back of the kitchen door, where another of the numerous gifts waited, matching aprons for him and Ismay. He looped his around his neck and then did the same for Ismay, tying them both up at the back.

Ismay was almost giddy with her excitement and Harry grabbed a chair and pulled it right up to the counter, getting Ismay up onto it and then getting down everything they needed. A set of mixing bowls, weighing scales, a wooden spoon, a cake tin, the cake cases and then margarine from the fridge, and flour, sugar and eggs.

“What we do first, Mummy?” Ismay asked excitedly.

“First we need sugar and margarine. Can you tell me when this shows one hundred?” Harry asked, pointing to the monitor on the scales as he slowly tipped in the sugar.
“Stop, Mummy!” Ismay shouted and Harry stopped. “No, a bit more.”

Harry chuckled and he tipped a bit more into the bowl, watching with Ismay as the scales went from ninety-eight grams to one hundred.

“Stop! That’s enough, Mummy.”

Harry picked up a tablespoon next and he scooped out a hundred grams of margarine, then he started beating them both together with the wooden spoon while he let Ismay pour out a hundred grams of flour into a clean bowl.

“Here, baby, have a beat of this.” Harry said, passing the bowl to Ismay and then picking up a sieve and pouring the flour from one bowl to another through the sieve.

“What next?” Ismay asked, almost bouncing in place.

“Two eggs, baby, into this jug.” Harry said, watching with a grin and a startled giggle as she smashed the whole egg into the jug. He laughed loudly. “We don’t need the shell, try again.” He said, tipping out the ruined egg.

“It’s all shell, Mummy.” Ismay said, frowning at the egg in her hand, turning it around as if looking for any differences.

“Like this.” Harry said, taking her hand with the egg and helping her to crack it and peel it open.

“Again?”

“Yes again.” Harry said, helping her to crack the second egg.

He made sure that there wasn’t any shell in the jug, then he tipped out one of the eggs into his bowl and added some flour. He mixed it well and then got Ismay to tip in the remaining egg and he beat the mixture again, when it got looser and less taxing, he passed over the bowl to Ismay and he let her
mix it as he added in the flour bit by bit.

“That was all of it, Mummy, is that it?” Ismay asked excitedly.

“It was, just mix this a bit more, then it can go into the cases.” Harry said happily as he got out two tablespoons and helped Ismay fill up the cases.

“In the oven now, but I mustn’t touch it.” Ismay said.

“That’s right, let me do this bit.” Harry told her, getting her to stand back and popping the tin in the oven and setting the timer. “Now you can take off your apron and go and play with all of your new toys for twenty minutes.”

Ismay grinned and did just that, leaving Harry to clean up everything they’d used, but even that was easy as all he had to do was load up the dishwasher. He found the wire cooling rack and set it on the counter top.

He smiled and set up the counter with icing and decorations, thankful that someone had been thoughtful enough to stock their cupboards with cake decorating things. It had likely been Dumbledore, who had only left him while he was at the Counsel Halls when he had to, and knew of Ismay’s desire to bake cakes and biscuits with him.

“Are they ready?” Ismay asked coming back into the kitchen. “I can smell them.”

Harry chuckled and pointed to the cooling cakes on the counter. Ismay let out a soft shriek and went to look at them, fingers digging into the counter, up on her tiptoes, but still she couldn’t see. She turned to him, arms raised.

“Mummy, up.”

Harry laughed and did as asked, moving the chair over in front of the cakes and he settled Ismay on it.

“I can’t wait to taste cakies for the first time.” She said, just looking at the twelve golden cakes.
“Do you want one now, or do you want to wait until after we’ve decorated them?”

“After.” Ismay said.

Harry made the icing up, adding a drop of blue food colouring, and then he took the bowl over to Ismay.

“Now, we need to grab this little teaspoon and add a little blob to each cake.” Harry instructed, doing two cakes to show Ismay then stepping back to watch her make a mess, but he didn’t care. Unlike at the Perrots, he wasn’t going to scrutinise her attempts as if she were a paid professional. He was going to praise her just for the attempt, it didn’t matter what it looked like, it was going to taste delicious either way.

“Sprinkles?” Ismay questioned.

Harry handed her the plate of sprinkles and he directed her hand to smash the top of the cake, complete with icing, into the plate of rainbow sprinkles.

Ismay giggled and inspected the top of the cake. “Pretty.” She said, putting the cake aside before doing the same to the next cake.

Harry handed her over several other decorations, all in their own little pots, including little silver balls, large wafer flowers and little candy horses.

“They look like Cloppity!” She said excitedly. “Mummy, these have to go on every cakie.” She said seriously.

“Whatever you want, Ismay.” He said, a wide smile on his face as he watched her push the little edible horses into the blobs of sprinkled icing.

He stood back and marvelled at her handiwork, even as she added flowers and things to the cakes. They were going to be so sweet, but he didn’t care. He would find some cartoons or something for her to watch as they ate the cakes.

Harry heard the floo chime and immediately all the tension that had leech out of him came flooding back and he swallowed hard, trying to remind himself that only those who had been keyed
into his floo by himself personally could even contact him. He tried to remind himself that it would only be Elder Midate coming to check on him, but his fear didn’t lessen as he trembled with terror, his mind refusing to listen to reason.

“Harry, dear one, it’s Jacob.” A voice called out soothingly. “I’ve just come to see how you and Ismay are.”

“Jacob!” Ismay called out happily. “We in the kitchen. Come look at my cakies.”

Jacob came slowly and carefully into the kitchen. He was smiling, but forcing his body lower, rounding his back and hunching his shoulders in an effort to seem as nonthreatening as possible. Harry, only just relearning how to breathe, appreciated the effort as his Dracken gently eased off with the absence of any immediate, perceivable threat.

“Still a little out of sorts?” Jacob asked quietly.

“I’m just getting used to it all still.” Harry said with a quick look to Ismay, who was back to finishing off the last of the cakes.

“It’s bound to be a shock, but we’re all very proud of how well you’ve come on. It hasn’t been all that long, Harry.” Jacob told him. “You’re doing so well, but don’t expect too much from yourself. You’re going to have bad days, but just remember, there is no shame in asking for help when you need it and all of us are here to help you.”

“I…” Harry frowned and bit his lip. “Do you have five minutes?” He asked shyly.

Jacob smiled and approached him slowly, laying one arm around his shoulders and bending to kiss his head.

“Yes, I have as much time as you need.” Jacob told him.

“I’ll put the kettle on.” Harry said.

“Can I have tea too please, Mummy?” Ismay asked him.
“Of course, Ismay. We’ll eat some of these lovely cakes too, why don’t you give one to Jacob?”

He watched her like a hawk as she stepped down from the chair with a cake in her hand.

“We made them blue.” Ismay said happily. “I like blue the best and look, we had Cloppity sweets to put on them.”

“They look wonderful, Ismay. Did you decorate these all by yourself?”

“This one, yes.” Ismay said. “Mummy did some too, but I did this one for you.”

“You’re so clever!” Jacob praised as Ismay all but beamed under the positive attention before she quickly slipped up onto the chair beside the Elder, the one that Harry had clipped a booster seat to so that she could actually see the table top.

Jacob’s hand hovered over her back as she climbed the chair, but he didn’t touch, he didn’t take away from her burst of independence. If Ismay was tired or didn’t feel like climbing, she would ask Harry to lift her, only ever Harry of course, but she would ask if it was needed. Perhaps he needed to take a leaf out of his daughter’s book and ask for a bit of help for himself.

Harry gave Jacob a cup of tea and he placed one in front of Ismay too. She had refused point blank to drink from a plastic beaker. It had to be china, like everyone else’s. That was Penelope’s influence too, but Harry had to pick his battles. Ismay could eat ‘daintily’ with a knife and fork, dabbing the corners of her mouth every other bite with a linen napkin, she could drink from a teacup, she was getting better at going to the toilet by herself. He couldn’t take all of that from her, he would need to slowly remove certain things, like the napkin dabbing and the use of saucers, but everything else was an achievement and it had to be celebrated as a step of independence, even if he did think that it was too soon.

He brought over several of the little, overly decorated, cakes on a plate, and he sat opposite Jacob and Ismay.

“What was it you wanted to say, Harry, or did you just want the company?” Jacob asked, once Ismay was absorbed with playing with the edible Cloppity from her cake.

“A little of both.” He said, chewing on his lip for a moment. “I was…I think I had a bad day.” He said quietly. “I was so scared being on my own today, I kept checking the doors to make sure that they were still locked, even knowing that I had already locked them. I was fine yesterday, and the
day before, but today…today has been hard.” He said quietly.

Jacob put his hands out on the table, and Harry slowly reached out to hold onto those hands, grounding himself.

“You are going to have days like this, Harry. You are going to have bad days where you wake up feeling scared or frightened. You need to know that it’s normal.” Jacob said softly.

“I’m seeing Healer Vasey tomorrow.” Harry said while looking at the table top. “I’ll let him know I had this bad day. Everything was going so well, but today was a bit of a wakeup call. I didn’t even…I don’t even know what set me off or why I was so scared.”

“Can you pinpoint when you started feeling scared? Did you have a nightmare and wake up scared?”

Harry shook his head. “No, I did have a bad dream and I did wake up at four in the morning, but I fell back to sleep and I woke up fine. Maybe the nightmare did start playing on my mind in the afternoon without me realising, but I didn’t start feeling scared and start checking the doors until after lunch. I was fine this morning.”

“It might have been the nightmare, but it also might be unrelated, as I said, you are going to have random bad days.” Jacob said. “Don’t expect so much from yourself, dearest, you are still recovering.”

Harry nodded. “I just…I’m so tired of feeling frightened. I really am. I want to feel safe.” He said, fighting back tears. “I just want to be safe.”

“Oh, Harry.” Jacob cooed, before he stood slowly, so as not to startle Harry or Ismay, and he went around the table to hold that small young man to his chest, stroking the tufty hair gently. “You are safe now, dear one. You are so safe here, but I know it will take you some time to settle and truly believe it. No one, absolutely no one, can get into this house. It is warded to alert the on duty Elders, and Albus, the moment they are forced, tampered with or breached, so even if anyone tried to get in, we would be here in moments to protect you. We aren’t going to let anyone hurt you or Ismay ever again. This house is warded with every protective, defensive measure that the eleven of us can think of, with input from, Albus, Alexander and Captain Foss too.”

A gentle touch to the head and a soft kiss to the forehead and Harry felt better. He felt stupid for
being scared all afternoon when Jacob was right. He knew that no one could get in, he knew that he
had locked the doors even before he’d checked them the first time, let alone the seventh, he knew
that it was warded and that any attempt to get past those wards would have a dozen people
scrambling to get here within minutes. Whoever had tried to get in wouldn’t even get through the
front door before the Elders and the armed task force were here protect him and Ismay. He knew all
of that, yet his fear had still been real. It was uncontrollable and though he felt stupid for it now, he
knew that it would happen again.

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The house was perfect, spotless, but most of all, it was his. Harry smiled as he put away the last of
the ‘gifts’ that he had received several days ago and he felt very spoilt and that was likely the
intention.

He’d had a talk with Healer Vasey and he had agreed with Elder Midate. He was going to have
rough days where he felt afraid for no reason, or because he’d heard a noise outside, but there were
going to be good days too, he’d insisted. Days where he did nothing but laugh, days where not a
drop of fear touched him, where it was just him and Ismay and Harry wanted that so badly. He
wanted it all the time, forever, but he was still having trouble feeling safe and he’d only been moved
in to his new house for less than a fortnight and already he’d had to call the Counsel Halls twice and
ask if someone could come and sit with him. The first time it had been Anthanaric Vipond himself,
the second time had been Healer Georgio Alessandri, who had just finished his shift and had been
heading home. He had brushed aside Harry’s humiliation and how badly he felt at being the cause
for keeping Georgio from his mate, but Georgio had insisted that his mate, Clara, knew all about his
circumstances, as did everyone else in the Dracken community by now, and she would not hold it
against him.

He had just sat with the mated dominants, Ismay fast asleep in her plain, single bed with a duvet
set that she had picked out herself from a catalogue. He always apologised profusely for what he
perceived as his weakness, his inability to control his own fear, but he got what he wanted too, to just
sit and feel safe with a mated dominant, sometimes cuddled right into their bodies as he calmed down
and let the safety of their presence seep into him.

“Come on, Mummy, we need to get our shoes on.” Ismay said.

Harry nodded and he tried to ease down his breathing, to control his heart rate as he got Ismay’s
shoes onto her feet and then got on his own.

‘We’re only going to the supermarket.’ He rebuked himself mentally. ‘We just need milk and a few
other bits. We’ll be in and out.’

“Have we got everything?” He asked brightly, sounding much happier than he was.
“Yes, Mummy.” Ismay said as she clutched her doll, Cecelia, under her arm.

Unable to put it off any longer, Harry made sure that he had his house keys and wallet in his pocket, his wand was up his sleeve just in case, and he moved to the front door. The safe front door that kept all the badness outside. The badness that he was about to step out into. Once he was outside, he couldn’t control what happened, he wouldn’t be safe, he wouldn’t be able to keep Ismay safe. He swallowed hard and he almost choked because his mouth and throat were so dry.

His hand immediately slipped from the doorknob when he gripped it, and it was only then that he realised that his hand was almost dripping it was that sweaty. He wiped his hands on his jeans and then tried again, the door giving a soft click as it opened and he had to close his eyes to force himself to take that first step outside.

He closed the door behind himself and tested to check that it was locked. His heart was racing, his head was pounding, he felt like he couldn’t breathe. He held Ismay’s hand tighter and he followed her insistent tugging. He forced his feet to move, to take one step after another.

He wanted to go back to the house, back where it was safe and he wouldn’t have to be around anyone else, where there was no danger of being beaten, of being raped or abducted. He could feel his whole body shaking, quivering, and he was breathing much too fast.

“Hold on a moment, Ismay.” He said, stopping and resting against a garden wall.

“Are you okay, Mummy?” She asked, concern in her young voice.

“I’m okay, I just need a rest.” He said, trying to get a hold of himself. He cursed himself for a coward, a fool, they were going to the supermarket, nothing would happen to them on the way. His mental pep talk did not calm him down in the slightest.

He stood again and he took several deep breaths. He hadn’t thought that the local supermarket had been that far away from his home when he’d checked, but actually walking the distance he realised his mistake, he realised just how very far this short walk was when he was being battered mentally by his fear and insecurity.

Harry wanted to go back home. He wanted to go back to being locked in his safe house. He wanted to call this whole trip off and turn tail and flee back to safety. He wanted to cry at the very thought that he was so abnormal that he couldn’t even go to the shops for milk and a few essentials.

The walk took them half an hour, when truthfully it should have taken maybe fifteen to twenty minutes at the most.
“Do you want to put the things in the trolley?” He asked Ismay, his voice only wavering slightly.

Ismay nodded, her red hair bouncing.

“Okay, can you remember milk, bread, cereal, biscuits, carrots and apples for me?”

“Yes, Mummy.” Ismay said.

Harry clamped his hands around the bar of the trolley, made sure that Ismay was holding onto the trolley, and then he forced himself to walk, trying to ignore the bustling people around him. Trying not to hunch his shoulders…or curl up in a ball on the floor and cry.

“Mummy, I see apples.” Ismay said as they walked onto the produce aisle.

“Can you get me two red apples, Ismay, and put them in this bag here.” He said, handing her one of the small, clear bags the supermarket provided.

Ismay nodded and rushed off, just a few feet from him, but still he had to control the panic that rose in him. He distracted himself by picking out two firm, crisp green apples and putting them into the trolley. He collected more fruit, including the grapes that Ismay liked before she came hurrying back to him, two bright red apples in the bag in her hands.

“Thank you.” He said as he took the bag from her.

“What next, Mummy?” Ismay asked excitedly.

“What can you see, Ismay?” He asked as they walked to another aisle.

“Carrots!” Ismay said, pointing them out.

“We need six of them, in this bag here.” He said handing her another of the bags.
Harry got several other vegetables, keeping his eyes on Ismay as she giggled and hunted through the carrots for the biggest ones to put in her bag, counting and recounting them and then hurrying back to him with six carrots.

“Thank you.” He said again as he took the bag and placed it in the trolley.

“I like shopping.” Ismay told him with a grin.

“Just hold Cecelia tight.” Harry told her, watching as Ismay looked to her doll and nodded.

“Milk, Mummy!” Ismay said as they walked down the next aisle.

“We need that one there, Ismay.” He said, pointing to the four pints of whole milk.

“The blue one?”

“That’s right.”

Ismay struggled a little with the four pints of milk and Harry took it from her quickly. He almost had a panic attack when someone brushed against the back of him and he stood stock still and he shook in fear.

“Where next, Mummy?” Ismay asked, her bright, happy voice breaking through his mental panic attack.

He swallowed and tried to remember why he was here, what he was doing.

“I…uh…” He swallowed again and licked his lips. “Bread, we need bread.” He said, his voice high and thin with panic.

He didn’t know the layout of this store, he didn’t know where he was or where the nearest exit was. The urge to abandon the trolley, grab Ismay and flee grew stronger. He clenched his hands on the bar tighter. He stepped forward, he moved the trolley and he breathed through the tight, heavy
feeling in his chest. He grabbed a few things on automatic, cheese, a packet of sandwich ham, butter.

“I see bread, Mummy.” Ismay pointed.

Harry nodded, trying to stop his jaw from wobbling as he pushed the trolley to where Ismay was pointing. He felt drained already.

“There’s cereal too.” Ismay interrupted.

“Let’s get the bread first and then come back.” He forced himself to say.

They did just that and Harry noticed that there were desserts too. He picked up a few packets of angel delight and a few tins of custard.

“Ismay, do you want to try jelly?” He asked, his voice a bit too high to intone the excitement that he wanted to. He sounded rather strangled to his own ears.

“Yes, Mummy!”

“Which flavour do you want? There’s strawberry, raspberry, orange, lime, blackcurrant…see them all here?”

“Orange!” Ismay cheered.

“That packet there, sweetheart.” He pointed out.

Ismay got the orange box and popped it into the trolley, grinning happily.

They finished their shopping and Harry paid, trying to ignore the cashier as much as he could. Not to be rude, he didn’t want to seem rude, but because he just couldn’t handle any interaction with anyone at the moment. Today had been too much already, anymore and he was likely to have a complete breakdown, but he was polite and he smiled, which was likely more of a pained grimace. He reminded himself that he was fine, that he was safe, he had his wand up his sleeve.

He put the bread, biscuits and cereal in one bag, then the box of jelly when Ismay said she wanted to
carry it. He tried the bag and then handed it to her. It was very light. He picked up the other bags, struggling with the weight, but it was only to the door. In a show of adjusting everything, he slipped his wand out of his sleeve and charmed all the bags, even Ismay’s, then picked up the featherweight bags.

The walk home seemed easier, knowing that soon he would be back in his safely warded house, behind closed doors once more. It helped that there were no people about too.

It was such a relief to finally see his house, to get his key in the front door and he got Ismay inside and then he closed that door and locked it tight. He could finally breathe.

“Hi, Henry!” Ismay called out and Harry calmed down completely. He looked at his watch, they had been gone longer than he’d wanted to be. Almost twice as long as he’d planned.

“Where have you been, princess?” Harry heard Elder Henry Kirrian ask.

“Shopping! We ran out of milk, so Mummy said we had to go to the shops to buy more. I’ve never shopped before, but I really liked it!”

“Looks like you’ll have a shopaholic on your hands.” Henry told him teasingly as Harry entered the kitchen. Harry saw the critical look and he knew that Henry could see the tension, the ebbing panic.

“Ismay, let me unload this, why don’t you go and play in your room?” He said brightly.

Ismay nodded and she bounced off easily and happily, Cecelia still tucked under her arm.

“What happened?” Henry asked once she was gone.

Harry didn’t answer, instead he let go of all his emotions and he burst into tears, all but launching himself across the kitchen and burrowing into Elder Kirrian’s chest.

He was aware of stroking hands, of soft, soothing noises. It took him several long minutes of sobbing and crying messily for him to calm down and then become aware that he was being cradled in those strong arms. They were in the living room, on the settee and Harry clutched at Elder Kirrian tightly.

“Are you feeling better?”
Harry nodded, using the heel of his hand to wipe his face.

“Did you push yourself too hard?”

Harry nodded again. “I didn’t realise it would…would be so difficult to just go…to…to the shops.” He said, rubbing his face again.

“What happened?”

“Nothing!” Harry almost screeched. “Nothing happened and I’m not sure if that’s what made it worse.”

“Oh, sweet boy.” Henry held him tighter and Harry burrowed tighter into that warm comfort, the strong arms squeezing him, making him feel so safe.

“I felt like I couldn’t breathe, as if with every step I was going to be attacked or snatched and I couldn’t stop myself from panicking, from freaking out. I wanted to just grab Ismay and run.”

“You’re safe, you’re here now.” Henry told him, cuddling Harry more.

Harry nodded, fully calm now and he sucked in a deep breath, absorbing the comfort and safety like a sponge, and then he slipped out of Elder Kirrian’s arms, off of his lap, and he stood.

“Feeling better?”

Harry nodded his head. “Yes, I need to go put away the shopping.”

“You did really well, Harry. You went out today, you went shopping and you got back safely. You’re taking steps forward, and true I think this step was a little too big, but you still took it and you’re safe and fine. Well done.”

Harry smiled and nodded. He felt better, so much better and he happily went to the kitchen, boiling the kettle and then putting away the things that he’d bought. He told Elder Kirrian how he’d been
since the morning, when he’d seen Elder Trintus, and he just chatted a bit as he made tea and sat down for a nice, calming natter. He did feel a whole lot better now that he was home and safe. He didn’t think he’d be going shopping again for a while though, he did not want a repeat of today anytime soon.

Max’s first letter had been eagerly awaited and Harry had wasted no time in responding, and shyly agreeing to accept a gift from Max. The next letter had arrived with said gift attached and Harry had opened it eagerly, as the letter hadn’t said what it was, but that he and Ismay could borrow them for as long as they wished. When he opened the box, not really sure what to expect, he could only gape as he was sure that he was looking at every single Disney film that had ever been made. He remembered that Max had said that he could borrow his tapes, but he’d had no idea that Max had every single one of them.

“Ismay!” He called out excitedly. “Come look at what Max has lent to us!”

Ismay looked up from the doll house that she was playing with and she ran over, hearing the excitement in his voice. She looked into the box and she gaped, as he had.

“Is this Disney?” She asked, her tone reverent.

Harry nodded. “Yes. Max likes Disney too, so he’s given us all of his videos to watch.”

“We should invite Max around for tea and Disney.” Ismay told him.

“We should, let me floo Alexander and see if he’ll agree.”

“I like Alexander.” Ismay said as she looked at the little thumbnail pictures on the spines of the videos, all neatly lined up in the box.

“I do too.” Harry smiled. He took a pinch of floo powder and he called out Alexander’s address, already feeling his heart beat harder, faster, at the thought of asking someone for something. He was still working on being able to do as such, but it helped that Alexander felt safe to him. Alexander was safe, he wouldn’t harm him or Ismay. He wouldn’t shout at him for asking, the worst that could happen was that his request was denied, and Alexander would even do that kindly. Somehow that
“Harry! Dearest, are you alright?” Alexander’s mate and wife, Kimberly, asked him, getting herself up and coming to kneel down on the little pad in front of the fire.

Harry nodded, a little jerkily. “Max sent Ismay and me all of his Disney videos, Ismay wants to invite him around to watch them with us. I know it’ll likely be frowned on, but Max wouldn’t hurt either of us. I don’t see why he can’t come around.”

“Are you wearing long sleeves?” Kimberly asked him seriously, but not unkindly.

Harry nodded. “I can’t be…I don’t like being uncovered.” He admitted softly.

“I’ll run it past Alexander and then send Max over. He’s actually out in the garden, I would ask if you and Ismay would like to come over, but I already know that meeting my whole family will be far too much, I just don’t want you to think me rude.”

Harry smiled gently. “Thank you for thinking of us. I do think so many people gathered together would be a bad idea, I…I had a bit of a breakdown going to the shops the other day, so I think it best to skip the invitation, but thank you for asking. We just want to sit down and watch some films, but Ismay wants Max there because he likes Disney too.” Harry managed a small, weak chuckle at that.

“Go on sweetie, go back to Ismay and I’ll send Alexander over.”

“I didn’t mean to crash your party.” He said.

Kimberly scoffed. “It’s less of a party and more of a disaster. My twins, Nico and Ceph, have taken to terrorising Max’s brother, Caesar, who has involved the quadruplets, Enrique, Edward, Keanu and Oliver by throwing the twins’ shoes at them. I came in here for some peace.” She laughed. “We have these little get-togethers every few months, sweetie, don’t fret over it. I’m sure Max will be happier to get away before he’s involved in the madness too.”

Harry nodded and he pulled back, immediately checking on Ismay, who had reverently laid out the videos and she was looking at them all.
“Which one first, Mummy?” She asked.

“I don’t think they go in any particular order, baby. Just pick which one you like the best.”

Ismay nodded. “Is Max coming?”

“We’re just sorting that out.” He smiled, trying not to let on how nervous he was as he straightened out the cushions on the settee.

Alexander flooed through and Harry’s heart stopped for a moment before Alexander smiled and slowly approached him.

“Hello, Alexander!” Ismay chirped out from the floor.

“Hello, sweetness. How are you?”

“We’re going to watch Disney when Max comes.”

“Ismay, I told you that Max might not be able to come.” Harry reminded gently.

“Oh.” She said, her face falling.

“I’m sure he’ll be able to come.” Alexander said gently and Ismay brightened right back up.

“Really?” Harry asked.

Alexander nodded. “I’ve had to inform the Elders, I think Elder Midate is going to come and sit in with you, just in case, but Max about lost his head when Kimberly told me that you’d floo called.”

“I didn’t mean to ruin your party.” He said softly.
Alexander chuckled and hugged him, a kiss pressed to his temple. “Think nothing of it. I know that Max would rather be here with you than being terrorised by his brother and Uncles. It was only a matter of time before it devolved into an argument.”

The floo chimed again and Elder Midate landed on the rug.

“Jacob! Look at Disney!” Ismay said happily. “Max borrowed them to us and he’s going to watch them with us. Are you staying to watch too?”

“Of course, princess. I wouldn’t miss a Disney film.”

Ismay cheered happily.

“I know that Ismay wanted Max here, but are you comfortable with that, Harry?” Elder Midate asked.

Harry nodded. “Max was always different.” He insisted. “He won’t touch me skin to skin. I know it.”

Jacob and Alexander shared a look, then Alexander turned to smile at him. “I’ll go and tell him to get his backside over here then.” He grinned.

Harry smiled nervously, watching worriedly as Alexander flooed out again.

“Are you sure this is what you want, Harry?” Jacob asked him.

He nodded. “Yes. I’m just a little nervous still. What if he’s had more time to think about it and he doesn’t like me as much as he thought he did?”

Jacob scoffed. “Everyone loves you, including Max. I bet he’s just as nervous as you are, tripping over his own feet and hurriedly brushing his hair and getting a quick change of outfit.”
That made Harry grin, feeling a little better. “I’ll go and make some tea then.”

“May I have tea too, Mummy?” Ismay asked from the floor.

“You can have whatever you want.” Harry insisted. “How about we try popcorn with the films too?”

Ismay’s hazel eyes widened and she grinned. “Yes, Mummy!”

“Do you remember where we put the big bowl?” He asked. Ismay nodded. “Go and grab that for me and place it on this table.” He said, indicating the coffee table.

Ismay ran into the kitchen, Harry following to make the tea, calling back over his shoulder for Jacob to make himself at home. Ismay went digging in the cupboard with all the saucepans and the baking mixing bowls, she found the big one and she ran back into the living room with it.

The floo chimed again and Harry busied himself nervously with making tea. He knew who had arrived, even before Ismay’s shouted greeting of ‘Hi, Max!’ which was answered by a familiar rumbling laugh that made Harry’s knees weak.

“Hey, Ismay. I see you like my gift.”

Harry could almost picture Ismay nodding her head empathetically. “I’ve waited so long to see Disney for the first time.” She told him. “Which one should we watch first, me and Mummy aren’t sure.”

“Well my favourites were always Aladdin and the Hunchback of Notre Dame.” Harry heard Max say. “I have two owls and I named them after the princesses in them.”

“You have two owls!” Ismay asked and Harry smiled as he pictured her astonished face and her little hand, which would be holding up two little fingers.

“Yes, Jasmine and Esmeralda.” Max said, a hint of laughter in his voice.

“Can we watch Esmeralda?” Ismay asked. “It sounds like emerald and that’s the colour of Mummy’s
“I’m sure you’re not really two.” Max said.

“I’m three in a few weeks.” Ismay insisted.


“Mummy says I’ll actually get presents this year!” Ismay said excitedly and Harry’s heart shattered into a thousand pieces. He’d been ordering from catalogues since before he’d been released from the Healing Halls. He was going to give her the biggest, bestest birthday ever, even if it was just the two of them and a few of the Elders.

“I’m sure you will, Ismay.” Max said quietly and he sounded as upset as Harry was. Harry thought that he liked Max even more now because of it.

He had stalled long enough and he carried the tray of tea into the room. The large bag of popcorn he’d gotten from the cupboard was on the tray too and Harry smiled shyly at Max, unable to prevent his cheeks heating up at the sight of that big, fit body and his handsome face with his sparkling, dark blue eyes.

“Hey there, Harry.” Max greeted, his voice noticeably a bit deeper.

“Hi. I’m sorry we’ve hijacked you from a family party to watch your own videos, but…”

“But you like Disney too, so you have to be here.” Ismay finished with a stubborn nod.

Harry could only smile at his precocious daughter.

“I really don’t mind. My younger brother, Caesar, was doing my nut in anyway. He kept throwing shoes he’d stolen from our Uncles at me.”

Harry chuckled, but Ismay cocked her head. “But shoes go on your feet.” She said confusedly.
“How did he get them off?”

“He wrestled them to the floor and took them off.” Max told her and Harry chuckled again as he set up the first film. He had noticed that Max was wearing a thick, almost fluffy, turtleneck jumper. They would both be alright for any accidental touches.

“Popcorn, Mummy!” Ismay reminded him urgently.

“It’s okay, Ismay, I’m just setting it up. It won’t come on right away.” Harry said.

“Do you want it in this bowl?” Max asked.

“Yes.” Ismay said, picking up the bowl and holding it out to Max as he picked up the bag and tore it open. He poured the popcorn into the bowl, watched by a mesmerised Ismay. “It smells nice.” She said.

“Try one, Ismay.” Harry encouraged. “Then offer the bowl to Max and Jacob.”

Ismay bit into a piece and her face lit up. “It’s sweet!” She said with a smile, taking another one before offering the bowl to Max, who took a handful, and then over to Jacob, who took a handful with a grin.

Harry set up the film, poured the tea for everyone, including Ismay, before he got Max to sort out the remote for the video that he didn’t really have the hang of yet.

It was easy when the film was on to forget everything, as he watched his first ever Disney film with a gasping, empathetic Ismay sat between him and Max. She gasped at all the right places, tried speaking to the TV, spoke to him and to Max and she just made his enjoyment of the film double with all of her reactions and little additions. Several times he’d shared a grin with Max and they’d both had to hide laughs into their sleeves.

After The Hunchback of Notre Dame they watched Max’s other favourite, Aladdin. After two films, Ismay was ready for a nap and Harry carried her up to her bedroom, laid her in her bed and he covered her over with a smile and a soft kiss.

He went back downstairs and he shyly stood in front of Max and Jacob like a naughty boy. Suddenly he just had no idea what to say, even though he’d planned it out word for word upstairs, all the words had just fled from his mind.
“Today was really nice, thank you for inviting me, Harry.” Max said genuinely, tipping his head and searching for eye contact that wasn’t given.

“Thank you for coming, even though you were at a party.” Harry said, barely above a whisper.

“I don’t want to touch you, but I want to tip your head up to look at me.” Max admitted. “Can you look at me? I’m not that ugly.” He joked.

Harry’s head snapped up, green eyes meeting blue. “You’re not ugly!” Harry insisted firmly. “You’re not!”

Max smiled at him. “Fuck, I wish I was allowed to touch you.”

“Don’t tempt yourself, Max.” Jacob warned sternly. “Harry is not in a position to be mated again yet.”

Max took a visible deep breath, and a half step back, exercising control over himself and his rampaging Dracken, who wanted them to snap up the compatible, unmated submissive in front of him.

“If we just hug…” Harry trailed off unsurely and Max had to clench his jaw to silence his Dracken’s cry of triumph. “No skin on skin.”

“You’re pushing things, Harry, yourself and the situation.” Jacob warned him, not unkindly. “No Dracken’s control is perfect, certain things will be a push too far and I think physical contact with Max will be a push too far for you both.”

“It’s okay.” Max insisted. “I’m in control.”

He stepped forward again, and he opened his arms. He had to smile as Harry tentatively burrowed into him, thin, skinny arms wrapping around his waist as he laid his hands on Harry’s back, feeling that tufty hair tickle his arms. He squeezed gently and he felt Harry’s arms tighten around him. It might have been his own fervent wishes and desires, but it just felt right to have Harry here, in his arms, where he could protect him and look after him. Harry should be theirs, should belong to them…Max took a deep breath at that thought and he slowly pulled away, the act feeling like he was tearing his own heart in half, especially when Harry let out a soft sound of disappointment, but his
control was slipping to his Dracken. He couldn’t maintain contact for much longer without breaking Harry’s small, tentative bit of trust. He would not touch Harry and potentially bond to him when he wasn’t ready. He reminded himself that Harry would need another one, two, or maybe even three more mates and he just wasn’t ready. Nowhere near ready. He’d heard about his little freak out going to the supermarket and if he really couldn’t be near that many people just shopping, then there was no way that he could handle a mate meeting, or two, or more with several hundred dominants all focused solely on him, touching him, groping him, lying to him and all trying to impress him or wheedle a mateship from him. He wasn’t ready.

Max calmed his Dracken down as they separated, Harry wasn’t ready and they’d hurt him if they rushed him. He got a sense of loss from his Dracken, but he consoled himself, nothing had been lost. Harry wasn’t ready to mate to anyone yet, not just them.

“Thank you, Max.” Harry whispered softly.

“I’ll see you soon. If you want I could bake Ismay a birthday cake and get her a present too. I know you won’t be holding much of party for her, but if I could just drop those off, or even get my Granddad to do it for me if you don’t feel up to having an unmated dominant here.”

Harry smiled and Max felt accomplished just for that, no matter the cause.

“I’d like you here for her birthday, and I suspect she’ll want you here too. If we do have a party, it will be very small, calm and quiet. She’s not used to children’s parties, all of hers were for adults and were always just family, so she won’t know how to react to any of it. I’m already going to overwhelm her with giving her presents, she is used to only getting cards, so I don’t want to push her too much, you know.”

“We know and understand.” Max said. “If you and Ismay want me to come, of course I will. If you change your mind too, I’ll understand and I won’t hold it against you, I know you’re still finding your feet.”

Harry smiled. “Thank you.”

Max flexed towards him, but he pulled back again almost as quickly and he breathed in deeply. “I’ll see you soon, Harry. I recommend your next film be Snow White, I think Ismay will like that one.”

Harry’s smile was blinding, but still those emerald eyes evaded his own. Harry was staring at his nose. “Thank you, I’ll keep that in mind.”
“Come on then, Max. Get back to your grandfather and gush about the afternoon you’ve had.” Jacob chided, likely noticing their waning control.

“I don’t gush.” Max grumbled, but he was still smiling.

“Bye, Max. I’ll see you soon?”

Harry had meant it as a statement, but it had ended up coming out more as a question, his insecurities coming into play.

“Of course you will, whenever you want to, Harry. I’m working freelance at the moment, so I can pick and choose what days and what hours I work.”

“I don’t want to interrupt you at work.” Harry insisted.

“You can contact me at any time, as I said, I work freelance. I tell them when I’m working, Harry, not the other way around. I can be here at a moment’s notice if you want me to be.”

Harry smiled then, still not meeting his eyes, and though he nodded, Max could see that he wasn’t yet convinced. He would work on that slowly.

He flooed back to his grandfather’s and he breathed through the spike of pain that hurt his heart. He swallowed. It would be alright, he would see Harry again.

“You look all dreamy and happy.” His Uncle, Alaric, teased him. “I take it the submissive was receptive to you?”

“His name is Harry.” Max growled. “We watched two films, nothing more.”

“Leave him be, Al.” Alexander warned. “How are Harry and Ismay?”

“They’re both fine. You should have seen her reactions to watching those films.” He said with a reminiscent grin. “She tried telling off the tele.” He laughed.
“She is a little darling.” Alexander smiled. “And Harry is okay?”

“He was fine. We...we had a hug when I left, we were very careful not to touch skin to skin, but it was nice.”

“I’m happy for you, Maxie. Just don’t expect too much from him.” Alexander said, but Max was already nodding.

“I know. I remember what you said about him freaking out at the supermarket, granddad. He’s not ready for too much. It was a small hug. Ismay sat between us through both films and we ate popcorn and drank tea. Her reactions were priceless though, Harry went all gooey eyed and it was adorable. I’ve been invited to her birthday by both of them.”

“That’s fantastic, Max.” Richard said, coming to give him a big hug. Max could still smell Harry and he hugged his Dad tight.

“I want to find her a present and bake her a cake, Harry said it was alright if I did as Ismay isn’t having much of a party, if she has one at all. She’s going to be really overwhelmed already and he doesn’t want to add a party on top of that.”

“Understandable.” Myron nodded. “That poor girl hasn’t had any sort of life thus far. She needs to be eased into normality now, not thrust into it all at once.”

“I’m sure Harry knows this, after all it was his decision not to throw Ismay a complete all-out party.” Alexander said soothingly. “He knows better than anyone what she can handle or what might overwhelm her.”

“He’s really good with her, despite everything.” Max nodded. “She is always his main concern, as she should be. I just really hope that he can get back to a version of normality, if anyone deserves it after the life he’s had, it’s Harry.”

His family members nodded and Max said his goodbyes and he went back to his own home. Esmeralda and Jasmine were squawking, and with a confused frown, he went to go and see what had upset them. Harry’s big, beautiful snowy owl, Hedwig, was strutting around as if she owned the place and Max grinned. Harry hadn’t mentioned that he’d sent a letter out. He petted Hedwig with gentle, yet firm fingers and she preened under his touch. His two girls screeched in protest and he
laughed gently.

“Thank you, Hedwig. Go and look after them both.” He said gently.

She hooted softly and then she was taking flight, stretching out her beautiful wings. He smiled as he watched her go before he turned his attention to the letter in his hands. He was so eager to tear it open and read Harry’s words, but he controlled himself.

Instead he made himself a cup of tea, topped up Esmeralda and Jasmine’s water and treat tray, and then he opened the letter, drinking his tea and he all but absorbed Harry’s words, imagining him speaking them aloud. He missed Harry already.

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Some days were still harder than others. He had days where he was having so much fun, where he was so busy exploring new foods, new experiences, new games with Ismay that he didn’t even think of what he had gone through.

Then there were days when he didn’t want to get out of bed. Where he couldn’t stop his mind running through everything that had ever happened to him, the memory of his agonising heat periods, his six lost babies, his six murdered daughters. The Elder who came to check on him on those days usually took Ismay to visit Aeesha at the Counsel Halls and then left him to himself for a little while, but they would come to visit him every hour and the next day he would always have an immediate session with Healer Vasey.

He was doing so well with his sessions and he was feeling…lighter, he supposed was the word, though it didn’t really fit. He just felt better to share his memories and feelings, it helped him to handle the weight on his shoulders and he always felt lighter after he’d shared another terrible, horrifying memory that was crushing his mind and trying to force him into the ground.

Today was a stay in bed and wallow day, he had had several nightmares about his murdered daughters, trying to imagine their faces, working out how old they’d have been now, ranging from two to under a year old.

He couldn’t wallow today though, as the reason he’d had those nightmares was because today was Ismay’s third birthday and he was focusing too much on how old his other daughters would be, his unknown baby, how Ismay’s birthday would have gone if they hadn’t been rescued. He couldn’t stop and he was so upset, and only getting more upset at the thought of ruining Ismay’s first birthday away from those people.

He’d invited all the Elder’s and their mates, Max and Alexander, as well as Max’s one Father, the calmer more level-headed one, Myron. Max had made Ismay a cake and he’d bought her a child sized, soft armchair, so she could watch Disney in comfort, but still reach the table for her cup of tea instead of getting Harry to pass it to her every several minutes. Harry loved Max’s gift idea, as he had mostly bought her toys, he hadn’t thought to get her something practical like her own little chair, so he definitely liked that Max had thought of such.
But he hated himself for waking up today not wanting to leave his bed. He had to force himself up and he forced himself into the shower, he forced himself to get dressed and he forced himself to go downstairs. He started crying as he made himself tea and he sunk down by the cupboards and curled up in a ball. He hated himself so much for doing this now, today of all days, it made him feel worse and it made him cry harder.

He thought of the six babies that he’d lost, the seventh one that he had willingly terminated, all of them lost over just two years, and he cried harder. If only those babies had been Max’s, he could have kept all of them if they had been Max’s. He wanted Max, he needed him.

He thought to the address that Max had given him so that they could exchange letters. He sniffled and huffed and he looked to the clock. It was coming up to seven in the morning. Would Max even be awake?

He crawled to the living room, still feeling crushed by his thoughts, his memories. He had to stand to get the floo powder and he wiped his face clean…not that it mattered as he was still crying fresh tears. He set a ward on Ismay and he flooed over to Max’s. He did not expect Max to be up and dressed, nor did he expect him to have company.

He froze where he was, staring at the unknown, unmated dominant, his heart now hammering a tattoo against his chest in his immediate wash of utter panic and fear.

“Harry? Are you alright, what happened? Where’s Ismay?” Max asked, standing up in alarm. It made Harry flinch at the sudden movement, but between Max and the new dominant, he chose Max and he darted to him and held on tight.

“I think I’m causing trouble.” The unknown dominant said gently. “I’ll leave you be.”

“N…no.” Harry stammered out. “It’s okay. I shouldn’t have interrupted or come uninvited.” He said in one long sentence, not stopping for breath.

“You have an open invitation to come when you like, Harry, though I don’t think the Elders would be too pleased to find that you’d come here without a chaperone.” Max said softly, speaking slowly, not moving at all. “Are you alright? Where is Ismay?”

“Slee…sleeping still.” He huffed, brushing his eyes. “I…I had a bad night. I don’t know why I thought…I just came here. I should have gone to the Counsel Halls, I don’t want you to be in trouble.”

“Sit down for a moment.” Max encouraged. “Nas, can you get him some water?”
“Sure thing.” Max’s friend, Nas, said, moving slowly, and going the longer way to the kitchen, so he didn’t come closer to Harry as Max settled him on the settee.

“I put a ward on Ismay.” Harry said. “I know when she’ll wake up.”

“Let’s just focus on you for a moment.” Max said, getting to his knees in front of him. “Are you hurt?”

Harry shook his head. “No. I… I had nightmares all night. I kept… I kept thinking of the seven babies I should have had with Ismay.” He said, more tears forming as he started crying again.

Max was at a loss and he turned a desperate look to Nasta, who went to his knees behind Max, keeping the bigger man between himself and Harry.

“It wasn’t your fault.” He said, watching as Harry recognised a new, unfamiliar voice and snapped his head up to look at him, they made eye contact for a single split moment, then Harry flinched and dropped his head to look back at the floor.

“This is my friend Nasta Delericey.” Max introduced softly. “He’s not going to hurt you, Harry.”

“I would never do such a thing.” Nasta agreed. “I’ve been one of those helping Max, being his support system. I’m willing to be the same to you if needed and I’m telling you that losing those seven babies was not your fault.”

Harry’s lower lip trembled and Max wanted nothing more than to grab hold of him and crush him in a tight hug, but he couldn’t for fear of accidentally touching him skin to skin.

“But I…” Harry started.

“No.” Nasta said firmly, in that amazing authoritative voice of his that had dragons stopping and taking note of him. “It was not your fault.”

Harry actually lifted his head and Max watched as emerald green met the strange hazel-green-gold of Nasta. Harry actually looked like he was taking note of what Nasta was saying, he had even stopped
crying, though there were still damp tear tracks cutting down his cheeks. Max wanted to reach out and wipe them away so badly, but he couldn’t touch Harry skin to skin…it was killing him.

“I terminated my son.” Harry said, almost challenging Nasta. “That was my choice.”

Nasta’s gaze didn’t even waver. “He wasn’t your son.” He said simply. “You were a victim of horrendous crimes, you never asked to get pregnant, you didn’t want to be pregnant. You never asked to have your children taken from you in such a way, you never asked for any of what happened to you. That the beast who hurt you decided, by his own choice, to do those things to you without your permission, does not make it your fault too.”

Harry blinked in surprise and Max could have snogged Nasta as he all but saw Nasta’s words sinking into Harry, truly sinking in. Nasta just had a voice that you couldn’t ignore. You heard every word he spoke and woe betide you if you ignored him or didn’t do as he’d asked or advised. Nasta was a true authoritarian…he had to be in order to get those wild, dangerous dragons that he worked with to listen to him. He just had the sort of voice that was soft and hard all at once, he could speak softly, kindly, but you heard every word and you listened to him.

“Ismay’s mine.” Harry said, almost petulantly, dropping his gaze again.

“Of course she is.” Nasta agreed. “You’ve raised her, loved her, and perhaps if you’d been given the chance then you would have felt the same way to the little ones that you lost, but you never asked for them, and you never asked for them to be terminated in the manner that they were. It was not your fault and no one can blame you for terminating the son that you didn’t want and never asked for. It’s different with Ismay, I’m sure, purely because she has been born, you’ve raised her yourself. It is not the same situation.”

Harry chewed on his lip, thinking over those words, the words that everyone, he and the Elders, had been trying to explain to Harry for weeks, but only now did it seem to be sinking in…because of Nasta’s voice. He was almost jealous of his friend, but he cut that off quickly. Harry was not his. He did not own Harry and he never would, Harry was not his mate, and might never choose him to be as such. He would be content to be Harry’s friend, regardless of anything else.

“Thank you.” Harry said, a beautiful pink tint coming to his cheeks. “I actually feel better.”

Nasta smiled and that pink flush to Harry’s cheeks darkened as they watched. “That’s alright, I’ve been told before that I’m the world’s agony aunt. I’m full of surprising wisdom and good advice.”
“Do...do you want to come to Ismay’s birthday party later” Harry asked, a hopeful note to his voice.

“This is a big step, Harry.” Nasta said worriedly. “You’ve only just met me.”

“The Elders will be there.” Max pointed out.

“If you don’t want to, I’ll understand.” Harry said seriously, frowning at the floor.

“I’ll come.” Nasta said easily.

“Just don’t offer him cake, chocolate, ice cream or any sweets at all...or anything with sugar.” Max said with a grin. “No coffee either.”

Nasta bumped Max gently and Harry chuckled happily as he watched them both.

“Do you not like sweet things?” Harry asked quietly. “There will be a lot of cake and sugar, I’m spoiling Ismay a little, because she was never allowed any of those sorts of things before.”

“I like them in moderation.” Nasta told him. “I’m a bit of a health nut.”

Max scoffed. “A bit?” He laughed, then turned to Harry. “More like a complete health nut, don’t try and eat a nice, juicy burger in front of him, or binge on several chocolate bars and don’t you even try to drink a cup of coffee.”

“I don’t like coffee.” Harry said. “I’ve never had it before, but the smell, especially when I was pregnant, was repugnant.”

“You see, that’s what I like to hear.” Nasta said brightly. “Someone who has never touched that toxic swill to their lips.”

Harry actually laughed at that.
“Sixten drinks coffee daily.” Max said with his own laugh.

“I nag his ear off about it daily too.” Nasta smiled. “He never listens. It seems I’m only ever an agony aunt when I’m asked for my opinion. If I offer advice freely, no one ever listens. At least he only curbs himself to one cup in the morning and one at lunch.”

“Oh…Ismay’s awake.” Harry said urgently, standing and hurrying to the fireplace. “You’ll both come later? Won’t you?” He said, looking at the floor

“Of course, we wouldn’t miss it, now go back home before Ismay misses you.”

Harry nodded and then he was gone, leaving two men to look at one another and then laugh.

“You’re right, he is entirely adorable.” Nasta said. “Skittish and shy, but adorable.”

“Wait until later, when you meet Ismay. She is just as adorable as he is, but without the skittish shyness. She lights up every room and she’s so funny! You’ll love her.”

“You light up when you see him.” Nasta said. “After meeting him for less than half an hour, I understand. I know now how you fell in love with him in less than two hours. He certainly is something…different. Different is good.”

“He likes you too. He reacted to you as he did to me, that little pink blush makes me feel hot.”

“Aren’t you jealous or threatened?”

“By you?” Max scoffed in teasing comradery. “No. Though I think we might actually end up as mates. Who would have ever thought us two with the same submissive?”

“I think you’re getting ahead of yourself a little bit, Max. Harry still isn’t ready to be mated. Besides, just because someone likes a physical appearance does not mean that he’ll see me, or either of us, as mate material.”
Max nodded seriously, he already knew this, that Harry might see him, and now Nasta, as just good-looking friends.

“I know, Nas. Trust me, I really do know. I know not to pressure him or push him, I don’t even want to push him, but I also know when people like me and he does.”

“I just don’t want you to get your hopes up and set your heart on him when he might never be ready for a mateship. He’s one submissive that I don’t think the Elders will force or push into it, not after what he went through. If his Mind Healer doesn’t sign him off either, he might never be healed enough for a mateship.”

“I hope he does heal from this.” Max said softly. “Not because I want him as a mate either, but because he deserves to be happy, he deserves a chance at being truly happy. I want to protect him and take care of him, whether as a mate or a friend, I don’t care, as long as he is happy and healthy and Ismay is happy and safe.”

Nasta wrapped his arms around him from behind and laid his chin on his shoulder. They were still on his floor, on their knees as they hadn’t wanted to get up to see Harry off so they didn’t startle or frighten him. Nasta turned his head and kissed his cheek before nuzzling his neck. Nasta had a biting fetish, and any piece of flesh he could get between his lips or teeth turned him on, particularly the neck.

“If we do both get so lucky as to be chosen by him, we will both do our utmost to keep him and Ismay safe and happy for the rest of our lives. He will be worth it, and if I ever had to share a submissive with anyone, I’m not disappointed that it’s you.” Nasta whispered almost into his ear. A light bite of teeth after had Max shivering in arousal.

“Stop that, we have a kid’s party to go to in a few hours. I need to sort out an outfit that Harry will like.”

“I think he’d like you the best without anything on. I would too.” Nasta breathed into his ear, flicking his tongue out and Max gave a soft moan. “You have so much tension, so much sexual energy…you need to let it all out, before you keel over, Max.”

“You’re a demon.” Max said throatily, his voice deep and gruff with lust. “Can’t you go a week without sex?”
“I likely could, but why should I?” Nasta challenged. “Not when I have you, handsome and willing in my arms. Or Sixten, who all but begs me, tugging and grasping, his sensual mouth pouted and parted for me. Why should I ignore the both of you, when you are both willing, and right in front of me?”

Max couldn’t help laughing, but he fell willingly into Nasta’s arms. “I’m not disappointed either. If I had to share a submissive, you are the bestest of friends, the greatest of lovers and it would be an honour to call you mate. Though we are getting ahead of ourselves again. Harry might not be ready for years, until then…why don’t you relieve some of my pent up tension?”

“It would be my genuine pleasure.” Nasta replied happily.

Max allowed himself to be laid back on his own carpet, he gave himself over to Nasta’s hands and mouth willingly. His friend was right, it would help to calm him down if some of his tension was relieved, and that would sate his Dracken and he’d be in more control for later, when he’d have to remember to watch his every movement, in case he accidentally touched Harry’s skin. He couldn’t. He could not touch Harry and force their Dracken’s to bond, thus off setting Harry’s heat cycle. Harry wasn’t ready, not by a long shot.

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Harry was naturally apprehensive as he laid the kitchen table with bowls of nibbles and treats. He didn’t know what he had been thinking, inviting that unknown, unmated dominant to Ismay’s party. He had been blindsided by how kind seeming the man was, the good advice he had given that had made him feel so much better. He bit hard into his lip as he remembered the handsome face, the strange gold-green hazel shade of his eyes. He had blushed like a schoolboy with his first crush. It reminded him of his disastrous attempt at dating Cho. What had he been thinking?

He pulled out two jugs from the fridge, one water, the other pumpkin juice. He’d have a steady stream of tea made up too, because Ismay wanted a proper tea party…Harry wondered how the Elders would handle that, indulging a three year old girl who was insisting that Cloppity and Cecelia had their own places set, in a proper tea party with small cakes, finger sandwiches, and scones.

Ismay was setting up the ‘tea party’ table in the living room. Harry had enlarged the coffee table to fit the dozen people who would be coming, but they’d all have to sit on the floor. He was torn between being amused and being worried that someone would refuse to participate and break Ismay’s heart. He knew that Dumbledore would be up for the tea party, Max and Alexander would too, as would Elder Midate, but everyone else, especially Max’s ridiculously large Father, Myron, and the new dominant, Nasta, were unknown entities. They could react in any way they chose and Harry didn’t like it. He didn’t like that something like that was so far out of his own control, but Ismay had woken up that morning, had had breakfast, then insisted that she wanted a tea party for her birthday, like they’d seen on Disney.

He had spent all morning, after his little melt down, making Disney themed treats for Ismay,
including cutting the sandwiches into tiny, little tiaras with a cookie cutter, skewering grapes and raspberries to make magic wands, topping them with a watermelon star that he’d made with another cookie cutter. He’d gotten a bag of popcorn, that was now one of Ismay’s favourite snacks, added just a drop of purple food colouring and some glittery sprinkles to give them a party feel and he’d been sandwiching biscuits shaped like shells together with blue buttercream and a sugar pearl… Ismay had loved the Little Mermaid and Harry had gotten the idea to make the biscuits yesterday, before she’d even decided that she had wanted a tea party theme. He had gotten her to help him make them and she had adored them before they were even finished.

“Harry, sweet one?”

“Jacob!” Ismay cheered as she presumably ran to him. “It’s my birthday today!”

“I can see that. Is your Mummy spoiling you?”

“Yes.” Ismay said. Harry could picture her nodding her head fervently and he smiled.

“Where is your Mummy?” Jacob asked then, a note of worry to his voice.

“In the kitchen. He’s setting up things out there and I’m doing my tea party table.”

“Oh, are we having a tea party?” A female voice asked with exuberant enthusiasm. “I love tea parties.”

Ismay giggled. “Yes, Mummy said that I could have one because it’s what happens in Disney to the Princesses.”

“Of course, you have to have a tea party if you’re a Princess.” The woman said again. Harry recognised her voice and he went to the living room to give Bertha, Elder Midate’s mate, a tight hug.

She had been so kind to him and had been willing to adopt him as a son back before he’d been abducted. Back when he’d still had his entire life ahead of him and plans for his future. It all seemed so very long ago now.

He forced back his tears with a stubborn will that had been born of survivalism back at the Perrots. He would not ruin Ismay’s big day. It was her first birthday away from those people, the first
birthday that they could celebrate properly, he wouldn’t ruin it for her.

“How are you, darling?” Bertha asked him gently, holding him tightly in her arms.

“I’m doing better.” He said truthfully. “I had a bit of a wobble this morning, but after some friendly advice, I’m doing better.”

“That’s wonderful to hear.” Bertha said.

“Who did you get the advice from?” Elder Midate asked, almost as if he already knew the answer… he probably did, as Harry blushed pink. “You went to see Max.” He said with a sigh.

“We didn’t touch.” Harry insisted. “But…I wasn’t expecting him to have company.”

“Company?” Jacob’s voice was almost shrill in his alarm. “Were you harmed or upset?”

Harry shook his head. “No, Max wouldn’t allow it in any case, but I was a little wary at first, I didn’t know him. But he was really nice, very kind and he had such good advice that he got me to feel much better in no time.”

“Did you get a name?” Jacob asked him.


Jacob’s shoulders all but slumped in relief. Bertha let out a relieved chuckle too. “Nasta Delericey is an absolute darling.” She said with a smile. “He’s a rare man in this world. Just when I was starting to think that chivalry and gentlemanly courtesy was a dead trait for certain, he came along. Then Aneirin, that’s Nasta’s Father, was always a strong, stern man, yet he knew how to balance that with playful fun and adventure. Oh the places that family have been to over the years, it’s no wonder that that boy can speak a dozen languages.”

“He can?”
Jacob and Bertha both nodded. “He’s a very intelligent young man.” Bertha added. “Very intelligent, it’s no wonder that he gave you the right advice at the right time.”

“I…I actually invited him to come today, he said that he would.” Harry said, nibbling his lip.

Jacob gave him a knowing look. “If I didn’t know better, I would insist that you were shopping for mates.”

“No, Mummy shops for food.” Ismay said confusedly from where she was laying out another china teacup close by them.

Harry smiled at her adoringly. “You can shop for other things too, Ismay, like clothes, toys, and books. Though I think Jacob was joking.”

“Oh.” Her face crumpled in thought. “Can we go buy books soon, Mummy?”

“Of course.” He agreed easily.

“I want to finish my reading.” She explained.

“You are doing much better in learning to read.” Harry praised.

“She can read?” Jacob asked in astonishment.

Harry shook his head. “No, she can read single words if they’re easy enough, though it’s better if there is a picture to help her.” He explained. “But she can copy a short sentence that I read first. We will pick out a book, I will read the sentence and then she will read it back to me, but she wouldn’t be able to read it on her own. She is excellent at creating her own stories from picture books though. Those are her favourite.”

“She is an absolute wonder.” Bertha praised and Harry smiled proudly, his Dracken almost crooning in pleasure as their baby was admired. They were so very proud of her.
The floo chimed again and Harry smiled to see Dumbledore step out in the brightest blue robes he’d ever seen…they were twinkling with yellow stars and silver moons. Ismay was infatuated on sight as she went to greet her guest, as Penelope had drummed into her, and then admired the robes.

From then on more people started to arrive, as Harry had told them that the party was at ten in the morning. At quarter past, the house was busy and loud and though Ismay was the star of the show, the looks and gentle touches he got let him know that he was being watched just as closely, doubly so when Max and Nasta arrived. Jacob had already rounded up his Elder counterparts and told them of Harry’s rather rash, sudden invite to Nasta Delericey.

Harry also got to spend some time with Max’s Father, Myron Maddison, who was ridiculously huge and dwarfed everyone else in the room. He smiled as he remembered Ismay’s innocent reaction to him and her whispered (rather loud) inquiry into whether he was a real giant or not.

He had hunched down in front of Ismay, still a head taller than she was even on his haunches, and he’d explained that he was a very friendly giant. Max had scoffed and shot a cheeky grin at his Father’s unimpressed face. Ismay had spent a lot of time up on Myron’s shoulders, the utter delight evident on her young, open face. Harry adored that expression on her.

At eleven, they had all sat down to ‘Princess High Tea’ and Harry had the joy of watching Ismay pour all her guests a perfect cup of tea, offering them milk and sugar, before pouring her own tea into her own china cup and nibbling delicately on sandwiches and cakes, sat right beside him.

Of course Elder Kirrian was the funniest to watch attempt this, as he grimaced with every swallow of tea, but he said nothing, not even as his mate poked and prodded at him with what could only be described as a shit eating grin on her face. Evidently Henry wouldn’t drink tea for just anyone, but a neglected three year old girl on her birthday was an exception.

Ismay was happily speaking to everyone, proving just how much of a social butterfly she was when given the chance and the right care. She had barely missed a beat when being introduced to Nasta. She had given Harry a quick, wary look but when he had smiled and nodded encouragingly to her, she had turned back to Nasta and struck up a conversation with him. Nasta had taken control of the conversation by changing the topic to tea, after hearing how much Ismay liked it. He had told her about all the different kinds of tea there were and she had nodded, telling him that she had chamomile tea before bed and green tea when she was poorly. Nasta had looked very impressed and that had made Harry’s belly flutter. He frowned and thought back to Elder Midate’s words…was he, in actual fact, looking for mates? Was his Dracken doing so without him even being aware? First Max, now Nasta too? Was it a coincidence that he liked Max’s best friend? Was it a coincidence that he liked the only two unmated dominants that he’d met since he’d been unmated himself? Or was his Dracken so desperate for a mate that he was reacting compatibly to the first unmated dominants that they’d been exposed to.

He sighed, he just didn’t know.

“Are you okay?” A deep, gruff voice asked.

Harry smiled at Myron Maddison who was sat on his other side. He nodded.
“I’m okay. Just very conflicted about everything, I suppose.” He sighed even heavier and looked at the table top.

“You are doing wonderfully well.” Myron told him gently, quietly. “Just don’t expect so much from yourself. You are entitled to a couple of self-love days.”

Harry smiled at that. He looked up at Myron’s nose, avoiding eye contact with those curious, jet black eyes.

“I’ve had more than a few of those already.” His smile dropped. “I’ve had days where I just can’t get out of bed.” He admitted softly. “This morning was almost one of them, but I couldn’t ruin Ismay’s birthday. I just couldn’t.”

“You seem to be alright now.” Myron told him.

“Max helped.” Harry said, dropping his head back to the carpet and smiling. “Nasta was also very nice to me and he knew what I needed to hear without pandering to my fears. He was very firm with his advice, but it worked. I’m sure they are the only reason I could actually carry on with today without ruining it for Ismay.”

He looked down at the small girl by his side, eating her tiara sandwich and the fruit wand while delicately sipping her tea. She was telling Nasta that she liked black grapes better than the green or purple varieties. Harry remembered that Max had called Nasta a health nut… it didn’t surprise him, but it did amuse him, that Nasta was eating the fruit wands happily enough, but unlike everyone else, who were sliding the fruit from the skewers before eating them, he was taking his cues from Ismay, who was bringing the wand to her mouth to bite the fruit off. He was copying her, which made her oh so happy as she spoke more enthusiastically to him, and to Max, the former about fruit and tea, the latter about Disney.

After her tea party, Harry encouraged her to open her presents. She did so nervously, darting her gaze to everyone watching her, having never done as such before, so she sat on the floor, between Harry’s legs for security as he gently encouraged her to open the gifts given to her.

She got clothes, more toys, a little tiara of her own, which she asked to be opened so that she could wear it, but her definite favourite was the little armchair from Max. Even as she wore the tiara from Elder Midate and the costume Cinderella dress that Elder Kirrian had given her. She sat herself in the armchair and she wiggled around happily and grinned.

Even Nasta had given her a present, a stack of Disney books that were aimed at younger children, as they were more pictures than words.
“Mummy, we have to read this one tonight.” Ismay told him, holding The Jungle Book in her hands, gazing at it curiously.

“Whatever you want, Ismay.” He said with a smile. “Say thank you to Nasta for his gift.”

“Thank you, Nasta, for my books. I will read all of them.” She told him.

He grinned at her, hunching down so he could be level with her in her armchair. He made sure to stay an arm length apart from her though, aware that she was a bit wary around him as he was new.

“I’m glad you like them. Max told me you loved Disney, so I thought you’d like the books too.” He told her gently.

Ismay nodded. “I love reading with my Mummy. He does all of the voices funny.” She giggled.

Nasta shot him a grin and Harry felt his cheeks heat up. Not entirely from embarrassment either, but those sparkling gold-green hazel eyes caught his for a moment before Harry broke the contact to look at the floor...his stomach was doing flips.

Their guests didn’t push either of them too hard and not long after Ismay had opened her presents, had thanked everyone graciously for giving them to her, and eaten a slice of the amazing Disney themed cake that Max had made for her, people started saying their goodbyes and trickling off until, at approaching midday, Harry and Ismay were left alone in their house once more.

He gave her a quick, very small lunch and then got her into her bed for a quick nap while he cleaned up. He hung up the Cinderella dress and the tiara with the promise that Ismay could put them back on once she woke up. She now wanted to watch Cinderella and Harry had promised that she could once she was awake. He was promising her a lot these days. He’d give her the world if she asked for it.

He waved his wand and got everything cleaned up and put away, putting leftover sandwiches in the fridge and left over cakes in airtight tubs. Ismay had loved the purple popcorn, she would likely ask to eat the rest of it when they watched Cinderella together that afternoon.

Max had handed him a letter as soon as he had arrived, after putting down Ismay’s present and the Disney cake. Harry remembered it now and he made himself some honey tea, as he’d liked it when he was a teenager...back before he’d been abducted and he’d no longer had any say in what he ate or drank. It had been difficult at first to reclaim his taste for the very sweet tea, but he had persisted and that small change had led to a measure of comfort for him. A small taste of his innocent youth given back to him. It couldn’t change what had happened to him, it couldn’t remove the memories or the ingrained muscle reflex to flinch away from sudden movement. But it gave him a bit of warm comfort and it helped him to relax and it helped him to sleep some nights, when it was the middle of the night and the nightmares were too much or too frequent for him to rest or even to stay in his
bedroom, despite the nightlight that he had. He would get up, come downstairs and he’d have a cup of honey tea to calm and relax himself. Of course sometimes it didn’t work and he needed to floo the Counsel Halls to ask if someone could please come and sit with him. It was usually one of the Healers, or one of the on duty Elders, and a few times it had even been Captain Foss, who liked to sit and play with Harry’s hair, running his fingers through it, lightly scratching at his scalp, massaging his head. It gave Harry goosebumps just to think of it. It felt so nice. Of course he remembered that Captain Foss had been the one to carry him from that place, that it had been Captain Foss who had been the first person who had ever protected him from the Perrots, and Harry believed that that gave them a special bond, even if that bond was only one way, from him to the Captain of the task force. The man who had carried him from that house of horror and to safety.

Harry finished his tea, placed all of Ismay’s gifts into a neat pile, except her amazing little armchair, which he left beside the coffee table. He made sure that he hadn’t missed any of the cleaning while she was up in bed and then he made another cup of tea and he opened Max’s letter.

It was full of the usual excitement and happiness that Max’s usual letters were, he spoke of work, of his family, the two owls Jasmine and Esmeralda, he carried on his slagging report of his newest apprentices, who were all lousy at potions, one of whom was actually dangerous, and it made Harry smile. He could imagine them both, sat at a bustling dinner table, loud children around them, eating and laughing, as Max whined and complained about work to him. Harry sighed heavily. He wanted that, he wanted it so much. That was what a normal mateship was going to be like, but he also knew that he wasn’t ready for it just yet. It would take a while yet before he was comfortable with any sort of touch or usual interactions, for now he was very happy to just look at and speak to Max. Maybe Nasta too, if the other was willing, as he had been very nice to him and he’d been really good with Ismay today. He’d even bought her a gift, despite the fact that he hadn’t been invited until the morning of the party, just a few hours before it had started even. His gift had obviously been influenced by Max, but it was still a very nice, well thought out gift despite the limited time in which Nasta had had to get it.

Harry started writing his reply, carefully considering his words so that Max didn’t think him stupid or anything. It was only a short time later when there were steps on the stairs and Harry looked around confusedly. Ismay should have napped for at least another hour.

“Mummy?” She called out timidly from the hall.

“Ismay, love. Are you okay?” He asked worriedly.

Ismay came into the room, still in her nappy and vest.

“Are you okay, Mummy?” She asked urgently, and Harry knew then exactly what had happened. She’d had a bad dream where he was being beaten and hurt again. This was not the first time that it had happened, though each time he prayed that it was the last.

He made an effort to smile. “Of course, sweetheart. I’m writing a letter to Max. Are you alright?
She hurried to him and he pulled her up onto his lap, cradling her. She stared at him, checking him for the marks and bruises that she’d seen in her sleep.

“I had a bad dream.” She told him.

He immediately fussed over her, hugging her tight and nuzzling into her flame red hair. “It was just a dream.” He soothed her. “Remember I told you that dreams aren’t real?”

Ismay nodded and settled against him, assured that he really was alright and unhurt. Harry hated that she was so affected by what had happened to them, that she was having bad dreams about the beatings that her own Father had given to him, the ones that she had been witness to. He would take all of that from her in a heartbeat if he could.

They stayed there for several minutes, just absorbing the safety and presence of one another, then Ismay squirmed.

“I need to use the big girl’s toilet, Mummy.” She told him.

Harry nodded and he stood her up and he took her to the bathroom upstairs, encouraging her and praising her as she used the toilet by herself. He taught her repeatedly how to wipe herself, from front to back, and then he got her to wash her hands with soap.

“Well done, Ismay. I’m so proud of you for using the big girl’s toilet.” He said happily. “Very soon you’ll be in big girl’s briefs and you won’t need to wear nappies anymore.”

“Do they make Disney knickers, Mummy?” Ismay asked.

“They actually do. You got some for your birthday.”

Her eyes lit up. “I did? I didn’t see them.”

“Do you want to wear some now?” He asked, trying not to pressure her, but he was as excited as she
Ismay nodded.

“Okay, go into your bedroom and I’ll go and get them.” He said as he took her down the hall and into her own bedroom before he hurried down the stairs and got the pack of five Disney Princess pants that he’d bought for her.

“These are knickers?” Ismay asked, looking at the packet curiously.

Harry grinned and opened the package and pulled out the little briefs, unfolding them for Ismay to see. She squealed.

“Can I have Cinderella ones?” She asked.

Harry showed her the little blue briefs with the blonde Princess in her gown and he helped her strip off her nappy and got her into her briefs. He was so happy and so proud that he could have cried.

“When you want to get back into your costume dress? Or do you just want to slouch in pyjamas?”

“Will you be in jammies too?” She asked.

Harry smiled. “If you put yours on, I’ll get mine on too. We can watch Cinderella and eat your party food and purple popcorn together.”

Ismay nodded and turned to her dresser to find some pyjamas. Harry left her to it and he went and stripped off, getting into his own clean pyjamas. After the socialising he had done today, he felt he could use some relaxation. He dragged the double duvet from his bed, now determined to have a proper duvet day.

Ismay sat on the duvet as he dragged it and he smiled at her. She started giggling and though he was careful to pull smoothly, he still dragged her on the duvet, down the hallway and then down the stairs, Ismay laughing with every bumpy step.

He got her on the settee, he covered her over with the duvet, noticing that Cloppity had come along for the ride, before he went to get them drinks and snacks. He left the tea for now and got two bottles
of juice instead.

He settled next to Ismay after setting up the TV and video player for Cinderella. He vaguely remembered this one, likely as it sort of loosely related to his own childhood, thus it had stuck in his mind more as he was forced to listen to it from his cupboard.

He threw an arm around Ismay and he cuddled her in tight, his duvet covering the both of them and kept them warm in the late November day. In two days it would be December, he was hoping for snow, so that they could make snowmen and snow angels in the garden. But in less than four weeks it would be Christmas...he could really spoil Ismay then.

The New Year saw Harry taking strides to become a better person...or at least a less timid one. Christmas had been fantastic, Ismay had been so happy and so excited. Harry had gotten several presents too and it made him smile. Ismay had never gotten any presents at the Perrots, but she’d gotten a family gathering and several cards, Harry hadn’t even gotten an acknowledgement. His birthday had passed as if he’d never had one, it was like being back at the Dursleys. It really upset him, why did these awful things keep happening to him? What had he ever done to deserve such suffering in his life?

He hoped that it was all behind him now, and everyone kept telling him that it was a New Year, a chance for a new start. He was in his own home with Ismay, he was free and safe, the three Perrots who had made his life a living misery were all dead and he was being very well looked after. He had to go to the Counsel Halls weekly, to have a check-up and to log his weight. He was gaining steadily now that he was in his own home and binging on what could only be called junk. He was still sticking to his diet plan, of course, but it was all the added extras that were putting on the pounds. All the cakes and biscuits, the lounging on the settee watching Disney with popcorn, it was all adding up and the Healers were very impressed with him, now four months after he’d been rescued and looking a lot less gaunt and skeletal.

He was coming on wonderfully well with Healer Vasey too, as was Ismay. He went to all of his sessions and he made sure that Ismay was always on time for her own sessions. He and Healer Vasey were talking easier now about some of the most deepest, darkest moments that he’d gone through. He’d recently confided in the feeling of utter hopelessness that he had felt in that house, how he believed that he had been running out of time for rescue, about the time that he had tried to take his own life in his desperation to not be mated against his will. Healer Vasey had been so calm, so reassuring, asking how he had survived his attempted suicide. Harry had told him about the two dominants hired and kept on a suppressant potion, how he had just caught the one with his claws and his venom had killed him so quickly. He confided that he’d hoped that his venom would kill himself just as quickly, how he hadn’t known that a submissive was immune to their own venom and how that was the only reason he was still alive. Healer Vasey hadn’t judged him for his decision to take his own life, nor that he’d failed to do so through ignorance, and he’d felt much better about everything after talking to him about it, a man he was coming to see as a friend and a life saver, and he felt a little better about the haunting memory of his attempted suicide, and the fact that he’d ultimately failed and survived.

Despite his large steps forward, however, there were even larger setbacks. He still couldn’t go out shopping. He’d almost passed out just yesterday, when he’d gone out to put the rubbish in the outside bin and his one neighbour had tried to speak to him. It was disheartening, especially when he
had believed that he was getting better, only for something to happen and prove him so very wrong.

He was calmed and soothed, it was only four months since he’d been rescued, it was going to take a lot longer than that for him to get back to any sense of normalcy. Truthfully he shouldn’t have been out of the Healing Halls yet, or at least not out of the Counsel Halls, but he had insisted. Again he fretted that perhaps he had done as much too soon. He was so conflicted, he wanted to be alone with Ismay, but he was terrified to be alone. He jumped at sudden noises, he flinched at shadows, he couldn’t sleep through the nightmares that sometimes, most of the time, passed over into the day to plague him there too.

He’d made two more trips to the supermarket with Ismay and the second had gone a touch better than the first, but the third trip had been disastrous and he didn’t understand why. He had all but cried onto Healer Vasey, who had once again calmed him and explained why he had seemingly lapsed. Some days were going to be more difficult than others, he was assured, for perhaps the hundredth time, but it didn’t make him feel any better.

Today, Harry was content to stay inside, away from other people, away from the neighbours who tried to ambush him as he put rubbish in the bin outside. He had left Ismay watching Sleeping Beauty as he made them both a quick, healthy lunch from the diet sheet that the Healers had given to him. Today was whole wheat pasta, peas and green beans with a piece of steamed salmon.

Harry had timed it perfectly to the end of Sleeping Beauty and he was just putting the plates on the table, about to turn back to get him and Ismay a glass of water each, when his daughter came into the kitchen.

“Did you enjoy Sleeping Beauty?” He asked with a smile.

Ismay nodded. “They had a happily ever after.”

Harry smiled and he bent to kiss Ismay, turning to get the glasses of water as she climbed up to her booster seat and started eating.

He sat beside her, as always, and he started eating too, listening to Ismay as she chattered on about the ending that he’d missed.

Once they were done, he gave her a bowl of ice cream, and despite the pink colour of it strawberry was her favourite flavour, while he loaded up the dishwasher with their dirty plates and everything he’d used to make their lunch. He added Ismay’s bowl when she was done and then he set it off.

“Do you want to nap now, Ismay, or have a cup of tea first?” Harry asked her.

Ismay considered the question. “I think I’ll nap now, Mummy.”
“Okay, baby. Come on then.”

Harry took her hand and he walked them up the stairs to her room. He undressed Ismay and got her into her bed and he kissed her forehead.

“Will you be okay, Mummy?” She asked him. “The man from next door won’t try to frighten you again?”

Harry took a deep breath. “He won’t, Ismay. He never meant to frighten me, he was just being nice. I’m going to be fine, my love, we both are. No one can hurt us ever again.”

Ismay smiled at that and she snuggled down with Cloppity in her hands and Cecelia in the bed. Harry sung a soft, light song until she fell asleep and he gave her a last, lingering look and he left the room, sighing heavily as he closed her door, but left it slightly ajar.

He didn’t want his little fear filled moments to play so heavily on her mind. He wanted her to forget about everything that had happened, to fill her days with fun, laughter and adventure, but he couldn’t do that until he’d gotten over what he’d gone through himself. How was he ever to expect Ismay to forget what they had both gone through when he reminded her almost every day about it? When they couldn’t do normal things like go to the supermarket or the park, where he couldn’t even take the rubbish out without having a panic attack. He hated it and he felt like a terrible parent because he’d worried Ismay over his welfare when it should be the other way around.

She shouldn’t have even known to worry over him, but unfortunately spending almost three years of her life with the Perrots had made her hyperaware of everything, including him. Harry couldn’t count the amount of times she had been witness to her Father beating him or kicking him about, to her grandparents giving him a slap to the face, and her love for him had her so worried about him being hurt that she had her own nightmares about it. He hated that he was the cause for her worry, that her nightmares were all about him being hurt, but then the monsters in Ismay’s life had always been people, and not the strange, imaginative kind of other children that lived in their wardrobes or under their beds. She had learnt that so young, when she’d still been in a cot even, that monsters were real, but not only that, she had learnt that she was living with them.

He would have given anything, even his own life, for her to never have known any of that. To take the worry from her young face, to take the painful memories from her. He felt like a failure as a parent to have his own three year old daughter suffering in such a way. He wished he could wipe it out, just take it all away, but Healer Vasey had told him that it wasn’t that easy and that it would take time…Harry scoffed, nothing was ever that easy.

He cleaned up his modest house and he took a short walk through his back garden, just to get a bit of air, even if it was freezing cold. He was never more thankful that both sides of the garden had very high, private partition fences. He was outside, but he still felt safe and it was wonderful to just breathe the fresh air once in a while. He had already made plans with Ismay to buy bedding plants and all sorts of flowers in the spring, so they could have a nice, beautiful garden to play in, even if it wasn’t that large.
He went back inside and he bit his lip. For some reason the silence was putting him on edge. He boiled the kettle and made himself some tea, he went into the living room and put the TV on low, hoping that a bit of noise would help calm him down.

He watched two game shows, even though they mostly just bored him to tears, but the feeling did not go away. He did the only thing he could think of. He flooed Max.

“Harry? What is it?” Max asked, coming from the direction of the kitchen and kneeling down in front of him.

Harry shook his head. “I don’t know. The silence is getting to me I think.” He said quickly. “Ismay is napping.”

“Alright, stand back. I’ll come through now.”

“I don’t want to be a bother.” Harry said softly, even though he already, technically, was bothering Max.

“Don’t be daft, I’d love to come talk to you.” Max insisted, looking so happy that Harry had no choice but to believe him.

Harry pulled back, wringing his hands and pacing a little. Max came through and he sighed when he saw him.

“Come here.”

Harry noticed that Max had pulled on a jumper to come and see him. He’d been in a tee-shirt when Harry had called him. How anyone could be in a tee-shirt in the middle of winter was beyond him, but he smiled that Max would put on a jumper, just so that they could have a small cuddle. Max’s cuddles were great and made him feel so safe and secure. He held on tight to that muscled waist, feeling large hands stroke over his back. Then they separated and took seats on the settee, they were next to one another, but there was a little bit of space between them.

“So tell me what happened.” Max said gently.

“It…it was Ismay.”
“Is she alright?” Max asked seriously.

Harry nodded quickly. “Physically yes, but mentally, she’s still as tortured as I am about what happened. She’s worried that…she’s worried that someone will hurt me when she’s sleeping, she has nightmares about what he used to do to me and she’s worried that someone else will hurt me when she’s asleep. I can’t reassure her enough, I can’t stop her thinking about it. I just want her to be happy.” He confided.

Max sighed and laid a hand on his knee. “You can’t make her forget, Harry. But the best thing about this now is that she’s so young. She is not going to remember any of what happened when she’s older.” He soothed. “She will forget and with the love and care that you give to her, the fun and laughter you bring, it’s going to be sooner than you think. She might still have a couple of nightmares, but I’ll bet that they have decreased while you’ve been living here, haven’t they?”

Harry actually thought about that and he was shocked to realise that Max was actually right. He nodded. “Yes. Yes they have.”

“You see.” Max said with a smile. “You’re doing great with her, Harry. She’s amazing and she will get better and there will come a time when she won’t even remember, as hard as that is to actually believe right now. There are always going to be bad feelings associated with her biological Father and his family, she might ask questions when she’s older, but it will likely cause her to feel uncomfortable or distressed to cast her mind back to that time. I wouldn’t worry about it though, she’s going to grow up fine, she’s going to be happy, and fierce! Don’t get me started on how ferocious she is and how much more so she’s going to be once she grows a bit. She’s a good kid, Harry, you have nothing to worry about.”

Harry sniffed and nodded, feeling so much more reassured now that Ismay was going to get over what had happened. Deep down he’d already known, he just needed for someone else to agree with him, to reassure him. He breathed easier.

“I just. I don’t like it when she tells me that she doesn’t want to go to sleep in case someone hurts me while she’s not there. She should never have been exposed to any of that, Max. He…he used to hit me in front of her, what sort of person even does that?”

“A slug.” Max said seriously. “A lowly, scummy slug who isn’t worth your attention.”

Harry managed a small, weak smile, but it fell almost as soon as it appeared. “I tried to protect her
from it all, Max. But I was limited in what I could do. I felt useless, powerless.”

That hand was back on his covered knee, squeezing gently, comfortingly.

“It wasn’t your fault, Harry.”

Harry licked his lips and shook his head. “I just can’t help feeling that it was my fault. I feel like I’m to blame for it all, Max. I lie awake at night, thinking of all the things I could have done differently, all the things I should have done…why did I go with Elder Messana when Jacob was right there in front of me? I trusted Jacob, he was the only one that I really knew and…and I just walked off with that snake.”

“He was an Elder, Harry. You’re supposed to be able to trust the Elders.” Max said gently. “We all are. Don’t go feeling bad because you trusted someone who was in a position of esteem, respect and was supposed to be trusted. His own submissive didn’t know what he was doing, Harry, and Fiammetta is not a woman who would have ever accepted or covered for her mate if she’d known what he was planning.”

Harry nodded at that. “I know that, I met her. She was really nice. She gave Ismay the most beautiful little outfit. It’s definitely an occasion dress, she just hasn’t had a chance to wear it yet. She will though. I’m certain of that. I will get better.”

“Your courage and determination is admirable, Harry. Just do what feels right for you.” Max encouraged.

“I know I’m pushing myself, perhaps too hard given all the reactions and setbacks I have from doing so, I just…I can’t help it, Max.” He said softly, looking at his hands. “I want to be better, I want to have a proper life now, with Ismay. How can I have that when I can’t go shopping? When I can’t take her to the park?”

Max looked thoughtful. “Feel free to say no, Harry, but what if I came with you a couple of times? So that you’d feel more relaxed and safer? So you could look around and get your bearings and a feel for your surroundings, that way, if ever I’m not there, or you feel threatened, you have an escape route planned.”

Harry’s eyes widened. “That…that might actually help! Most of the problem is that I feel trapped and closed in. If I knew where I was, where all the exits were, that could really help, Max! Are you sure
“You wouldn’t mind?” He added unsurely.

“Of course not, Harry.” Max said happily, overjoyed that he’d actually suggested something that could help Harry’s recovery. Nasta would be proud of his thinking. “I wouldn’t have suggested it otherwise.”

“I’ve been wanting to take Ismay to the park, but I’ve never gotten up the nerve. I had to go shopping, because we need food, but if there wasn’t a reason, I couldn’t justify going.”

“Well, get into some walking shoes and we’ll go when she’s awake. We can try this out and if at any point you feel scared or unsure, I’ll be there for you.”

“Do you want some tea while we wait?” Harry asked, pecking up at him, gaining eye contact for a fraction of a second before ducking his head back down, his cheeks markedly pinker.

Max had to smile. “I’d love some.” He said. “How are you both getting on with the films?”

“We’re taking really good care of them.” Harry insisted.

Max laughed. “That wasn’t what I meant, how are you enjoying them?”

“Ismay watched Sleeping Beauty today, she loved that one. I’m thinking Beauty and the Beast next.”

“She’ll like that one.” Max said. “Belle is so much like Ismay. Strong, beautiful and intelligent.”

Harry smiled and then stood, moving to his kitchen. Max followed him and took a seat at the kitchen table. Harry knew all about Max’s love of cooking and Myron had told him at Ismay’s birthday party that he’d once thought that Max would become a chef, before Max had decided to apprentice as a Potions Master instead.

He made them both tea and he settled the cup in front of Max and then sat opposite him. He didn’t want to tempt himself too much by sitting right beside Max. He knew that, though he liked Max a lot, he was not ready to have any mate meetings, to be around so many strangers with all their attention solely focused on him. Just the thought of it brought his breath faster, made him feel sweaty and panicky. He calmed himself by taking a sip of tea, and though it almost choked him, he managed to swallow it. No matter how much he liked Max and could easily accept his company, he was not
ready to bond to him and offset his breeding cycle, because it would mean that two months from their bonding he would have a heat period, and that thought terrified him enough, but two months after that, he would need to bond to someone else, another mate, and offset his breeding cycle all over again. He wasn’t ready, he couldn’t do it. He needed to wait. He was very happy to wait.

“Mummy?” Ismay called from upstairs. “Are you okay, Mummy?”

Harry sighed. “She’s had another nightmare.” He said to Max, before raising his voice for Ismay to hear him. “I’m in the kitchen, Ismay. I’m fine.”

Ismay came hurrying in, her young, tiny face was urgent and ardent, looking for him, scanning for injuries as soon as she laid eyes on him. She stopped short when she saw Max however.

“Max! You came to visit.” She said happily.

Max grinned at her. “I did, yes. How are you, titch?”

“I’m okay, thank you, Max. Mummy, can I have tea too?” She asked when she noticed the two cups in front of them.

“Of course, sweetie.” He said, moving to make her a cup of tea. “Me and Max have some news for you.”

“What is it?” She asked curiously, as she climbed up her chair to her booster seat. She was sat next to Max, looking at him curiously, a budding excitement growing in her hazel eyes, her nightmare apparently forgotten.

“Go on, Max. Tell her.” Harry said with a smile as he put a cup of tea in front of her.

“How would you like to go to the park to play?” Max asked her.

“Really?” She asked excitedly. “I’ve heard about the park and I want to go!”
“Drink your tea then.” Max said. “It’ll be cold out, so you need a hat, gloves and a big coat.”

Ismay nodded happily, excitedly and Harry watched her gulp her tea down. He smiled. This was a good idea. He could keep Ismay happy and active, while still feeling safe and secure with Max with them.

It was strange, that he trusted Max, that he felt so safe with Max. He’d thought as such before, but it had to have been because he’d known that Max would respect him before he’d been abducted. Max was a good, decent person and he’d had precious little contact with anyone like that for the last four years. He sighed, then smiled as the two people opposite him looked up at the noise.

“I’m sorry. I am alright, I’m just thinking too hard.” He explained.

“I’ve finished my tea, Mummy, can we go and see the park now?” Ismay asked, a little hesitantly, obviously wondering if Harry even wanted to go. He hated that she was so aware of such things.

He smiled wider, for her sake. “Of course!” He replied as brightly as he could. “I’m looking forward to our little walk. Go and grab your new coat and wellies.”

She perked up at the mention of the wellies that she’d had little reason to wear since she’d gotten them and then she was climbing down the chair from her booster seat and hurrying to her bedroom, to get ready.

“Are you sure this is alright?” Max asked him quietly.

Harry nodded. “Yes, Max. I meant it, I’m just thinking too hard about things I perhaps shouldn’t be. I’m sorry, I’ll stop now.” He said, worried about upsetting Max now. It was kind of him to even offer to take him and Ismay to the park when he’d literally just dropped in on him unannounced… again.

Max smiled at him. “Come on then. I meant it, it’s cold, you need to wrap up warm too…at least if we both have gloves on I could maybe hold your hand.” Max offered.

Harry had to smile, as he was witness to Max actually blushing for the first time.

“I’d like that very much.” He said, his own cheeks heating up.
“I’m sorry, I have to say this, but I feel like a proper little school girl right now.” Max laughed, then his hands rose to cup his own cheeks. “I can’t believe I’m actually blushing, I can feel the heat in my cheeks, but there’s nothing I can do about it.”

Harry had to laugh. “It’s sweet.” He said.

“I’m not supposed to be sweet. I’m supposed to be big and manly and sexy.”

“If it helps you’re all of those things too.” Harry said shyly.

Max grinned. “Alright, enough softness, let’s get Ismay to the park, all sweaty and dirty in the snow.”

“She’ll like that.”

“Go and get your own hat, coat and gloves, a scarf too if you need it. It is cold. I’ll nip back to mine and get my own stuff. I’ll be five minutes.”

Harry smiled and nodded and he did just that. Popping in on Ismay to help her finish up. He found her wrestling her feet into her wellies. He laughed a little then hunched down to help her get them in order. She’d been trying to pull the one wellie onto the wrong foot.

She grabbed Cloppity and Cecelia, then ran down the hall and stepped carefully down each step. Harry heard her greet Max and he relaxed a little. She would be fine down the stairs now, Max was with her.

He changed himself, as quickly as he could, layering up because he felt the cold more because of his very thin frame. The Healers were right, he would feel much better once he had gained some decent weight.

He hurried back down the stairs, to see Max puttering around in his kitchen. Harry smiled and cocked his head.

“Sorry, I should have asked. I was looking for things to make warm snacks for when we get back.”

“I need to go to the store.” Harry replied shyly.
“Sure, we’ll go there after we’ve been to the park.” Max said easily, just like that. “I’ll make us all some hot chocolate and some chicken soup. That’ll warm us right up.”

“Are we going now?” Ismay asked, her little face flushed from being all dressed up in a warm house.

“Of course, let me just get my keys and my wallet.” Harry said with a smile, going to the counter and picking up said items. His wand was already tucked safely up his sleeve, just in case.

Harry walked with Max, Ismay striding through the inch of snow in front of them talking to Cecelia, Cloppity safe in her pocket. Harry had made sure to ward it heavily once Dumbledore had given him his wand back. It had a tether charm on it when she left the house. If she dropped it, it would tug gently at her until she picked it up. It was a lot gentler than the tether ward the Perrots had used on him to keep him in the grounds of their estate. He pushed those thoughts away quickly.

He slipped his hand into Max’s shyly, smiling when he felt Max squeeze it gently in reassurance. He felt happier like this. Hand in hand with Max, strolling along the snow covered pavements, taking Ismay to the park. His Dracken insisted that this could all be forever, all he had to do was touch Max skin to skin. It was almost a surety that they would bond, Max could be theirs if they touched, just once, a little brush of skin was all it would take.

Harry shut those thoughts down quick. He wasn’t ready. He wasn’t! He repeated that like a mantra until his Dracken fell silent. That part of himself might want a mate and more babies, but the human side of him couldn’t have that just yet. He wasn’t ready. He needed to recover more first. He needed more time.

“You’re very quiet. You’re not having a panic attack are you?” Max asked seriously. “Because I actually do know first aid if you are.”

“Is there anything that you can’t do?” Harry asked with a smile. “I’m not having a panic attack I’m just…I’m thinking again. I’m sorry.”

“You’re not regretting inviting me to come?” Max asked worriedly.

Harry shook his head. “No, nothing like that. The only reason I’m even able to think at the moment is because you’re here. I’d still be back on my street if I were alone. I…I don’t walk very fast when…when I…”

“I understand.” Max said soothingly. “Take some nice, deep breaths, Harry. Ismay’s having a blast.”
The distraction worked, as it was intended to do so. Harry looked up at Ismay, who was still talking to Cecelia, tromping through the snow, making footprints with her new wellies and lifting her feet to examine them. Harry focused on her intently, letting Ismay fill his mind. It worked wonderfully well and he was able to carry on the short walk to the frosty park, hand in hand with Max, just talking lightly, mostly about how Hedwig was always posturing to poor Jasmine and Esmeralda.

They arrived at the park and Harry set Ismay free to run and play. They were the only ones there, as expected for the end of January when it was this cold with an inch of fresh snow on the ground.

“When is your birthday, Max?” Harry asked suddenly, having just realised that he’d never asked before.

“September nineteenth.” Max told him as he used his arm to swipe snow from a bench. “I’m thirty-five this year.”

“Why…why do you still like me?” Harry asked, his head looking down to the snow covered ground.

Harry heard Max sigh, then two large, glove covered hands cupped both his cheeks and gently lifted his head.

“There is nothing wrong with you, Harry.” Max said firmly, those bright blue eyes shining with conviction. “I know it will take time for you to believe that, I know that you see yourself differently to how I see you, but to me, you’re still perfect. You are as perfect to me as you were on that night almost four years ago now. Nothing has changed. What you went through doesn’t change that, what those people put you through doesn’t change that, Ismay certainly doesn’t change that. You’re still perfect, Harry, you just need some help to realise that again, some support so that you can once again see yourself how we see you. How I see you.”

Harry just stared, he couldn’t help it. He was speechless, his mind curiously blank. He didn’t know what to say. He didn’t know what to do.

“I’ve been spending as much time with you as possible. I have never wanted to overwhelm you, or upset you or make you feel uncomfortable, so I won’t push you. Never. But, Harry, I do love you.” Max said gently, smiling at him. “I want you to be happy, I want you to have everything you’ve ever wanted, I want you to start chasing after the dreams that you once had. I want to see you smiling again. I want to hear your laughter. I know it seems daunting right now, but we’re all committed to helping and supporting you. Me, my family, the Elders, the Healers, hell you even have the task force clamouring over you and they’re some of the most stoic prima donnas I’ve ever known, especially their Captain, old Fossy. You know he’s nicknamed the fossil? Because he’s old, hard and
“He was really nice to me.” Was all Harry could think to say, the words had tumbled from his mouth before he could stop them.

“You see!” Max cried happily. “You cracked the fossil. You’re special.”

Harry gave a quick look to Ismay, watching her run and play in the snowy playground, before he looked back to Max.

“I don’t see myself as anything special, Max.” He said softly.

“Oh course you don’t.” Max agreed. “We’ve already established that you don’t see yourself how others see you, Harry. There’s nothing wrong with that, but you underestimate your own self-worth and that’s not okay. It’ll take time, I already know that, but I will get you back to seeing yourself as the amazing, strong person you are.”

“If I was so strong then I wouldn’t be affected by any of what happened to me. I wouldn’t be having nightmares or panic attacks!”

“Do you really believe that that’s true?” Max asked him seriously. “What you went through was a truly horrific ordeal, Harry, that lasted for almost four years. Anyone…anyone would have nightmares after what you suffered through, panic attacks are to be expected, not being able to go out in public is to be expected and not liking people touching you is to be expected. Surely Healer Vasey has told you this before?”

Harry nodded miserably.

“Ah, you’re making sure that he was telling the truth.” Max said.

“N…no!” Harry said quickly. “I was…I just…”

“You didn’t believe him?”

set in stone.”
Harry gave a quick shake of the head.

“I can see that you don’t really believe me either.” Max told him. “Maybe I should tell Nasta and get him to tell you the same. He seemed to be able to get you to believe what he says, not that I blame you, Nasta has that voice down to a tee. You can’t help but believe him when he tells you something in that voice.”

Harry laughed. “Did he learn that voice? Because I just…he makes you sit up and take notice. Not…not that you don’t of course! I’ve always noticed you, it’s just the way he says things, the look he gives you when he’s talking…”

“Harry, I know.” Max said with a smile. “Calm yourself. I more than know of Nasta’s innate power to get people to listen to him, even the most stubborn and unwilling of people, like me. He’s good like that.”

Harry nodded, his cheeks flushed. He looked back to Ismay, who had forced a path of her own making through the snow on the slide with her body. Her trousers were soaked, but she was so happy as she ran back around to the ladder, climbed it, ran over the snow covered bridge and made it back to the slide. She pushed Cecelia down first and then followed afterwards. He had to smile at her, she looked adorable.

“How do you really think I’ll be alright?” Harry asked quietly.

“Only you can answer that question, Harry. If you want to get better and you’re willing to do everything necessary to get better, then absolutely. I know that you have it in you to do it. I know that you want to get better, but it won’t happen overnight. It has only been four months, Harry, give yourself a little more time than that to heal, okay?”

Harry nodded, a mite happier now. He shivered though as a harsh gust of wind ripped through his coat. Max clocked it immediately.

“I think we’ve been out here long enough. Time to go to the store and get some warm goodies to chase away the chill.”

Harry nodded and he stood up, stretching his frozen body. “Ismay, come on, sweetie. We’re going to the store now.”
“I’m not finished playing, Mummy!” She protested.

Harry nodded easily and he sat back down. Max stayed on his feet and he sighed.

“Ismay. Your Mother said we’re going to the store now. Come here.” Max called out. Ismay listened to him immediately, hurrying to stand in front of him. Max nodded to her then turned back to Harry. “You too, come on. It’s too cold to stay out in this weather and you’re not healthy enough for it.”

“I was warm.” Ismay sulked.

“Ah, you think you are, but look at these cheeks.” Max gently cupped her cherry red face. “You’re freezing, Ismay, but because you’ve been running around, your body is warm. We will come back to the park another day, but for today, an hour is enough, especially with snow on the ground.”

Ismay nodded, listening to Max, who took her hand, took Harry’s hand and started walking. Harry directed the way, because he knew the way, and he sunk into his skin when they reached the store. It was lovely and warm inside as Max got a large trolley and hefted Ismay into the child seat.

“But I want to help.” Ismay cried, struggling in the seat and trying to stand up.

“It’s very busy here, Ismay.” Harry tried to explain.

“I don’t want to sit here!”

“You’re going to.” Max told her as he pushed the trolley into the store.

“Mummy, I want come out!” She cried.

Max held Harry’s hand and squeezed it gently. “If there’s anything you need to get while I’m here with you, feel free to add it. You said that you needed to come here anyway.”
Harry nodded and he tried to ignore Ismay arguing with Max about coming out of the trolley and helping.

“You are three years old, you’re not coming out while it’s so busy here.” Max told her firmly. “You’ll get lost.”

Max was right, which was likely the only reason his Dracken wasn’t kicking off. Harry stayed close to Max’s side as the amount of people increased as they made it to the produce section. The throng of people was so intense that they had to wait to get the trolley down the aisle. His Dracken would have gone ballistic if Ismay had been on the floor. Max was right, it was just too busy and Harry usually came in the early morning, at eight, or late afternoon, at four, when there was less people, it was two in the afternoon, and it was heaving over here.

Harry collected a few apples, trying to ignore his daughter having a tantrum in the trolley. Ismay rarely, if ever, showed such behaviour, because back at the Perrots it wouldn’t have been tolerated and she would have been hit and hurt with a stinging hex and then shouted at for good measure for such ‘undignified’ displays. Harry didn’t know if it was a good sign or a bad one that she felt comfortable enough with him, and with Max too, to show off in such a way in public.

Harry saw the looks of other shoppers and he ducked his head, feeling very embarrassed, but Max carried on as if nothing was wrong and he couldn’t hear Ismay screaming and kicking in the trolley that he was pushing. He spoke over her shouting and screaming, talked to him about what was needed and which aisle was next and eventually Ismay calmed down as she realised that she was not going to get anywhere with Max there.

As soon as she calmed down, Max rewarded her by speaking to her, asking her which carrots to get, involving her as much as possible, which perked her right back up.

“No, not that one!” Ismay said to Max. “The other one. Yes, that one!”

Harry hid a smile as Max put down one parsnip and picked up the one next to it, apparently the one Ismay wanted. He handed the bag to her and she turned in her seat as much as she could and dropped it in. It made Harry melt inside to see them getting on so well, especially after the meltdown earlier.

“Can I have gapefoot?” Ismay asked.

“Gapefoot?” Max questioned. “Grapefruit?”

Ismay nodded, sending her dark red hair flying.
“She likes red grapefruit for breakfast. It’s what they gave her.” Harry said softly, as he, bravely in his opinion, went back around to the other aisle and picked out the smoothest, plumpest red grapefruit he could find and took it back to Max.

He showed it to Ismay, who nodded happily, approving of the one that he had picked. Max set them off again, pushing the trolley one handed as the other one took Harry’s and squeezed. Harry looked up for a moment, into blue, blue eyes that were shining with pride at his little walk to get the grapefruit by himself. Ridiculously, Harry felt proud of himself for it under the gaze of Max and he ducked his head away and smiled stupidly.

They finished up their shopping, Max putting several things into the trolley too, then embarrassingly, he paid for everything.

“You don’t have to do that.” Harry found the courage to say.

“I want to.” Max told him calmly. “You rarely let me spoil you, and though I don’t count buying food as proper spoiling, it’s a start.”

Harry said nothing, he didn’t want to start an argument, but he’d find a way to repay Max, even if he had to slip the money in his jacket pocket as he left. He followed as Max pushed the trolley to the lobby, where he subtly waved his wand down by his hip, using Harry’s body to block the view, as he cast a featherweight charm on all the bags.

“Can I come down now?” Ismay asked. “I want to carry a bag.”

“Alright, hold on.” Max settled his wand back in his sleeve and he lifted Ismay by her underarms, settling her safely on her feet.

She had Cecelia under one arm and Max handed her a feather light bag which she held happily as Max picked up all but three bags, leaving those for Harry to carry.

The walk home was rather quiet, Ismay chattered the most, as she walked between them, but all too soon they made it home and Harry collapsed into a kitchen chair and relearnt how to breathe. It was cold and he wasn’t all that fit after his years of captivity.

Max chuckled at him. “I’ll make us some hot chocolate first, to warm us up, then I’ll make some chicken soup, how my Grandmother taught me.”
“Can I help?” Ismay asked.

“I’d love a little helper!” Max said happily. “Have you helped in the kitchen before?”

Ismay nodded. “I help Mummy make cakes and biskies!”

“I bet they were lovely too.” Max said enthusiastically.

Ismay nodded.

“You know not to touch the oven?” He added seriously

Ismay nodded seriously, her face suddenly set. “Or any of the sharp knives.” She said. “I only touch what Mummy tells me I can.”

“That’s good. Let me get the hot chocolate sorted while you warm up a bit then you can help me with the soup, deal?”

Ismay nodded happily and Harry helped her to remove her hat, gloves, thick coat and her wellies as Max broke up a bar of chocolate, heated up milk and then heated up a small amount of double cream. The finished products looked almost artisan as Max added a dollop of freshly whipped cream and shaved some extra chocolate onto the top. Max handed Ismay one of the hot chocolates in a mug and she took one sip and her face lit up.

“This is wonderful!” She said happily, lifting her arms up to Harry.

Harry picked her up and settled her in her booster seat as Max placed a mug in front of him. Harry took his own sip and he smiled.

“This really is good.” Harry said shyly.
“I’m amazing at making all sorts of treats.” Max grinned, drinking his own hot chocolate.

“The bestest treat ever.” Ismay insisted, a line of cream across her top lip and a small dot of it on the tip of her nose.

Harry chuckled. He went to the side drawer and took out one of his more extravagant house warming gifts, a camera. “Smile for me, Ismay.” He encouraged.

Ismay gave a great big smile and Harry snapped the photo.

“You are too adorable.” Max told her, even as he used his thumb to wipe her nose and mouth clean. Harry took a quick snap of that too with his own smile.

“Can we make soup now?” Ismay asked excitedly.

“Are you all done?” Harry asked her, picking up his own mug and draining the last drops of thick, chocolatey heaven.

Ismay nodded and showed him the empty mug.

“I’m done too, so let’s get making some nice chicken soup.” Max said happily.

Harry fished the whole chicken from the fridge and he took it from its packaging. He placed it in the oven even as Max washed Ismay’s hands before hefting her, and a chair, over to the counter, one in each hand. Harry bit his lip at the display, Max was so big and so strong.

“Right, we need the carrots and parsnips that you picked out for us, Ismay.” Max said and Ismay all but leapt onto the counter to grab both vegetables from the back, where Max had lined them up ready.

Harry watched with a smile as Max directed Ismay in peeling the vegetables and he laughed at some of the jokes that Max was coming out with, feeling peaceful as he heard Ismay’s giggling laughter. This was what he wanted, this was what he needed, this amazing sense of peace as Max and Ismay stood together at the counter peeling and dicing vegetables to go in a warming winter soup.
Harry was roped in to distract Ismay when Max hacked apart a swede with the largest knife Harry owned. He got Ismay to pick up all the peelings and move them to the little bin they were using for compost. Max was done with the swede by the time Ismay was finished running back and forth and he then got her to help throw all of the vegetables into the largest saucepan to boil them.

“There, and we’re done for now, why don’t you go and watch TV, sweetie? I’ll call you when I need my helper back.” Max asked.

Ismay nodded and she hurried into the living room to watch some cartoons. Harry went up to Max and he hugged him tight, unable to express how grateful he was that he was taking such time and care with Ismay.

“Are you okay?” Max asked, holding him tight with those big arms.

Harry nodded. “Yes. I just…thank you, for all of this.”

“It’s not a problem, Harry. You and Ismay are important to me, I want to look after you both in any way that I can and if that means walking you to the park and making you hot chocolate and chicken soup, then so be it. I’m just so happy, so glad, that you’re here now, that you’re away from those monsters and that you and Ismay are safe, even if sometimes it doesn’t feel like it.”

Harry smiled and snuggled in tighter to Max, enjoying his cuddle. They soon separated and Harry swallowed hard.

“Would you like some tea?” Harry asked.

“I’d love some. Shall I ask Ismay?”

Harry nodded as he turned to set up three cups, knowing that Ismay would automatically agree. Penelope had truly beaten it into her that she had to like tea, as all ladies did, and she had to drink it properly, from a teacup with a saucer, as it was only polite.

He sighed and he poured boiling water in the cups with teabags, as he refused to use tealeaves. Divination and Trelawney had truly spoilt that for him.

“She said yes.” Max came to tell him. “But you already knew that she would.” He laughed, noticing
the three steaming cups.

“She always says yes to a cup of tea, but she still has to be asked. If you give her tea without asking her if she wants one first, or without her asking for one, then she won’t drink it, even if she wants it. Some sort of etiquette bullshit that they forced on her.”

Max sighed. “She’ll get better over time, Harry. I said before, she’s so young that all of this will be forgotten when she grows up. Don’t sweat the small stuff, just focus on the bigger, more important things for now, like your mental health and hers, focus on making her laugh and encourage her to play. The little stuff like drinking tea and all the posh toff stuff that they taught her can wait, if it doesn’t drop off on its own after all. It’s not like she has anyone role modelling that stuff for her anymore, she might not feel comfortable doing it if no one else around her is. Give it some more time.”

Harry smiled and handed Max his cup. He nodded his agreement. “I know, but it is hard to see her acting like them. I want all traces of them gone, but my own daughter was raised in that environment from birth, it’s all she knows, so how can I get rid of them, how can I actually heal, when she constantly reminds me of them?”

“No one ever said it would be easy.” Max told him. “But you’re doing so well, better than anyone ever expected of you this soon. Just relax and love yourself a little more. You’re doing great, Harry, and we’re all so proud of you. Instead of looking back at where you were, or what reminds you of where you used to be, instead look at how far you’ve come, look at what you’ve done since then. You’re an amazing, wonderful, strong man, Harry, and if you only opened yourself to accepting that, you’d see exactly what others see in you.”

That made Harry smile a little. “Thank you.” He said gratefully, even as he picked up the remaining two cups and took them into the living room, Max following with his own.

Ismay was in her new favourite place, the armchair that Max had bought for her birthday. She was watching cartoons with Cecelia in her lap, talking to the TV and to the doll.

“Here you go, sweetie.” He said, placing the cup down beside her hand, on the coffee table that she could now reach easily from her chair.

“Thank you very much, Mummy.” Ismay said, reaching for her cup and taking a delicate sip.
Max chuckled under his breath and Harry shot him a smile. Ismay could be a bit too much sometimes, especially with her manners and politeness, and most especially for a three year old, but that was the Perrots’ abuse. As Harry refused to call such brainwashing and painful tutelage as anything other than the abuse of a toddler. Anyone who used pain and fear as an incentive to create specific behaviour in another was being abusive. Harry had suffered through it twice, with the Dursleys and the Perrots, and now his own daughter had suffered in a very similar way. It made him sick.

He hung back as Max sorted out the cooked chicken, stripping it of all its meat while Ismay watched in fascination. Max then set the bones to boiling in water and he encouraged Ismay to tear into a chicken leg.

“Mummy, you do it first.” Ismay insisted.

Harry, who was still feeling sick thanks in most part to his own thoughts, shook his head, thinking that he might actually be sick if he had to eat anything. “I’m on a strict diet, Ismay, remember the Healer said that I had to follow the sheet?”

Ismay looked crestfallen for a moment as she remembered that, then she turned to Max. “You do it first!” She demanded.

Max took it all in his stride and he took the other chicken leg and tore a chunk from it with his teeth. There were no plates, no napkins, no knives and forks. Ismay laughed as if Max had told the funniest joke imaginable and she watched him closely, curiously, as if he were some new species that she was documenting, as he tore more meat from the bone with just his teeth.

“Try it, Issy.” He encouraged after he’d swallowed the most recent bite. “It’s really good while it’s still warm.”

Ismay did as told, taking a small, delicate bite and then pulling with her teeth as Max had. She made a surprised sound, but she chewed and swallowed and then laughed, her mouth shining with grease. It made Harry so happy.

“It’s good, right?” Max asked, before taking another strip of chicken from the bone.

“Yes, really good!” Ismay agreed, copying Max and taking more chunks of her own chicken leg.

“This is like a snack now, before the actual soup.” Max told her. “We have to boil the bones now for
about three hours, but it’ll be worth it, proper chicken soup is always worth it and if you’re sick, it helps you feel so much better, especially in winter.”

“Are the vegetables done?” Harry asked.

“Almost. We’ll put them aside now and wait for the chicken carcass to boil and then add them both together.”

Harry smiled. He was truly enjoying himself and if the Elders had a problem with him spending time with Max then he’d show them exactly how stubborn he could be. They kept telling him that now was his time to recover, that now was the time to do whatever he wanted to help himself, well Max helped him. Max made him feel better and though he was still wary of his own Dracken side, which he believed was latching on to the first unmated dominants presented to him, it was not enough to get him to ban Max, or Nasta for that matter, from coming near him. They were both nice to him, they were respectful of him and his needs and his recovery, and they made him feel better. Max more so, because Harry was spending more time with him, but Nasta was nice too.

When the soup was finally done, after Max had made a lifelong friend of Ismay by playing several games with her, including Princesses, the three of them sat down to eat the warming soup with fresh bread. If the way that Ismay was eating so quickly, not caring about her manners for the first time, then she really liked the soup.

“It’s amazing to see her like that.” Harry said to Max opposite him, smiling as he watched Ismay eat.

“I told you it wouldn’t take long, a few more days like today and she won’t even care about manners. As long as those around her lead by example.” Here Max winked at him and Harry’s cheeks pinked up with a hot, happy flush of warming desire.

He let out a nervous little chuckle and ducked his head, avoiding looking up at Max.

“You’re cute when you go all shy on me.” Max told him lightly, before giving him a moment to collect himself by turning to Ismay and asking her if she was happy with her soup.

Harry pulled himself together and he ate the rest of his soup, trying to ignore the butterflies in his belly that was making it difficult. This felt almost like an actual date and it made him more nervous than he would usually have been. He was more nervous now than when he’d gone to the park with Max, as somehow this felt more intimate, even when he’d been walking hand in hand with Max before.
Of course Harry invited Max to dinner, Max took over and actually cooked dinner, while Harry took
turns distracting Ismay when Max was doing a dangerous part of the meal by getting her to help him
make a simple raspberry and coconut sponge dessert.

The three of them sat down at the table to eat, Max had already cut up Ismay’s chicken and
vegetables into bite sized pieces so that Harry could eat his own meal without spending ten minutes
cutting up Ismay’s food first and conversation was loud, bright and happy as Max and Ismay riled
each other up with talk about toys, dolls, dresses and Disney. Max didn’t even skip a beat as Ismay
insisted that he needed to wear a Disney dress-up dress the next time they had a Disney marathon, he
just immediately agreed. Harry hoped that Max knew that Ismay wasn’t joking and that she would
remember his promise and force him to keep it.

Harry bathed Ismay while Max did the dishes and then the both of them took turns reading one of
Nasta’s books to Ismay, a page each, while she mouthed the words, staring hard at the letters to
memorise them. They put her to bed and then Harry made them both more tea, so that he could say
thank you properly.

“I never meant to take up your whole day.” He insisted.

Max smiled at him in a cheeky, boyish way. “Harry, this has been one of the greatest days of my life,
and I actually mean it. Spending today with you and Ismay, cooking and going to the park, reading
to her and putting her to bed, it’s been amazing. I’m a good Uncle, I have two nieces, Eleonora and
Beatrice, but all of my cousins’ kids call me Uncle Max too and I play with them a lot. I love kids.”

That made Harry’s Dracken side very happy. Max was turning out to be a perfect mate for them and
Harry had to duck his head to try to hide the blush on his cheeks, no matter how fruitless it was.

“Dracken instincts?” Max guessed.

Harry nodded, thankful that Max understood.

“I can’t really control my Dracken at times. They messed me up so much, making me think that I had
a mate, all those pregnancies with no new baby to show for it. The confusion, the pain, the fear. I…I
tried to tell my Dracken what was going on, but…but…”

“He didn’t understand such complex reasoning.” Max supplied for him when Harry’s words failed.

Harry nodded. “I even tried to force my Dracken to see that he was a danger to us, to our children,
but it was only with the actual verbal threat to Ismay that my Dracken side finally understood what
I’d been trying to say. The moment he threatened Ismay, even in a vague, roundabout way, that was when my Dracken stood up and took notice and I was able to wrestle just the slightest bit more control for myself, away from my Dracken, away from him.”

“Any threat to a child would have brought up your protective instincts.” Max nodded.

“It was so awful there, Max.” Harry said sadly.

“You’re not there anymore, Harry. You’re free of that place, you’re free of them.”

Harry shook his head. He swallowed heavily. “That’s the worst part. I’m not free of that place, I’m not free of them. I constantly think of them, I have nightmares, I imagine scenarios of how things might have happened. I’m…I’m not free of them at all, they’re dead and I’m not free.” He said, tears welling up in his eyes.

Max hurried around the kitchen table to sit beside Harry, pulling him into his arms, making sure to avoid skin-on-skin contact at all times. He shushed Harry and he wanted desperately to stroke his hair, but he couldn’t, so he made do with stroking Harry’s back instead.

“It’s going to take time.” He said, once Harry had stopped crying so hard and was just sniffling against his chest. “Your Mind Healer is going to help you to get over everything. He really will. You’re already doing so very well, you’ve overcome so much already and you’re helping Ismay to overcome it too. Look how far she’s come. You are going to have the odd nightmare, maybe for years to come and maybe even out of the blue, but you have people around you who care, Harry, people you can go to whenever anything like that happens, even if it’s a decade from now. I swear to always be here for you, in whatever capacity that you need, even if, like now, it’s just a shoulder to cry on…or a willing pair of hands to make you hot chocolate and chicken soup.”

That got him a quiet, wet chuckle from Harry, who was still buried in his chest, but his grip wasn’t quite so tight now. He smiled and he wanted to bend down to kiss that tufty, messy hair, but he took a deep breath and pushed away that urge. Instead he continued stroking Harry’s back, over and over, trying to comfort him through this moment of pain and fear.

Max heard the floo sound, and immediately Harry’s spine stiffened and he was overwhelmingly filled with tension.

“I’m here.” He soothed. “I will protect you and Ismay.” He said softly. “But you know that it’s only going to be an Elder come to talk to you. You can tell him that you’ve been out to the park today, that you went shopping and it’s all going to be fine, Harry.”
“Harry, dear one?” A concerned voice called out.

“See, it’s only old Quintalus Trintus.” Max said soothingly. “We’re in the kitchen, Elder.” He called out a little louder.

“Maximilius, I had not thought to see you here.” The Elder replied, giving him an almost venomous look.

“I’ve been here all day.” He said almost challengingly, in response to that unwarranted look. The Elders knew that he would never hurt Harry. That he would in no way bond to him while he was in his recovery period, nor without express permission. He believed that he’d more than proved that since Harry’s rescue, thus the distrust wasn’t warranted in his opinion.

“Elders Midate and Kirrian did not mention that you were here.” Elder Trintus replied.

Max took a deep breath, this arguing wasn’t helping Harry.

“I came over in the afternoon.” He said. “Do you have a problem with that?” He asked as politely as he could manage.

“I don’t care if anyone has a problem with it.” Harry spoke up, his voice much stronger and fiercer. “I wanted you here, that’s all that should matter.”

“It is only because he is an unmated dominant.”

“I don’t care if he’s mated or unmated.” Harry said stubbornly. “He respects me, he makes me feel better, he looks after me and Ismay! He’s good for us.”

Max almost swelled with pride as he heard that. He held Harry just a fraction tighter. The urge to kiss Harry’s head grew, but he shoved it back. He calmed his Dracken side down and carried on soothing Harry by stroking his back.
“You shouldn’t be having unsupervised contact with him, Harry.” Elder Trintus tried.

“Who’s going to stop me?” Harry said with a lot more fire than Max had seen from him yet. “If I wanted to see Max all day, every day, who would stand up and say anything about it?” He demanded.

The effect of his words would have been stronger if he wasn’t steadfastly staring at the floor, but Max considered this progress and he stroked Harry’s back faster in wordless support.

“I am merely worried, Harry,” Elder Trintus insisted calmly. “Any sort of accidental brush of skin could bond you both together. To limit the chance of this happening, it is best to avoid such situations where accidental touch might occur.”

“We’re being careful.” Harry said.

“It only takes one accident, Harry. If you knocked that mug from the table and the both of you tried to grab it, for example.” Elder Trintus pointed out. “You are not yet ready for such bondings, we just want to help you.”

Harry lifted his head a fraction. He still wasn’t getting eye contact, but he was looking at the chest again, instead of at the floor.

“How would a chaperone even help in that situation?” He asked, still fiery, but quieter now, as if he was expecting to be reprimanded. “Just like back in Elder Vipond’s sitting room when I jumped on Max, if I knocked this mug off and we both reached for it, an Elder chaperone wouldn’t be able to stop whatever happened from happening.”

Max was very proud of Harry for sticking up for himself, but most of all for how clever he was being.

“The only way to prevent me from bonding to Max would be to stop us from being around one another, and I will not let that happen.” Harry said. “If we accidentally bond, despite not being ready for such things, there would be nothing that could be done, we’ll just have to deal with the consequences. Max is one of the only good things to happen in my life recently, I want him around, Ismay adores him, I won’t let anyone take him away from us.”
“I’m not going anywhere.” Max soothed. “I like you and Ismay too. We will carry on being very
careful and I promise, if you knock a mug off, I won’t reach for it. A wave of a wand, a quick
reparo, and it’ll be as good as new anyway.”

Harry laughed at that and he clenched his hands into Max’s jumper a little tighter for a moment
before releasing his grip.

“Please, if you insist on meeting with Maximilius without a chaperone present, just please, be more
careful, Harry.” Elder Trintus sighed.

“We are being careful, Elder.” Max said as respectfully as he could still manage while his Dracken
was raging with the very thought of being kept away from Harry.

“I suppose I am being a bit heavy handed.” Elder Trintus sighed. “I just wish for Harry to be safe
and protected and I do not see you as safe, Maximilius. I wouldn’t see any unmated dominant around
him as safe, not with him as he is. You are not ready to be mated right at this moment, Harry.”

“I know.” Harry said softly. “I don’t want to be mated, but I don’t want to stop seeing Max. I like
seeing Max, I like spending time with him, and he helps me. I was able to go to the park with Ismay
today, and to the supermarket, because of Max. He makes me feel safe.”

Elder Trintus looked torn, but ultimately all of the Elders wanted Harry to feel safe and they wanted
to surround him with those people who loved and cared for him and would help him to feel safe,
because that was the most important thing in all of this. That Harry was safe and protected at all
times.

“You managed to go to the park?” Elder Trintus asked happily. “Well done, sweet one.”

Harry chuckled weakly. “It was cold, but Ismay really enjoyed it, despite the snow. And then we
went to the supermarket and everything went fine. I didn’t have any panic attacks, there was no
anxiety, I was able to get what I needed and I didn’t spend the entire trip worrying. Then we came
home and Max made us hot chocolate and then Ismay helped him to make soup and dinner. We had
a wonderful afternoon, one of the best ones I’ve had so far since…well, since everything.” Harry
said quietly.

Elder Trintus could only give in. None of them wanted to refuse Harry anything, and Max was
helping him, it was just that…well, things would have been much easier if Max was mated. Though
as Harry was still romantically interested in Max, perhaps that might have thrown back his recovery before it had even started once he’d found out. None of them knew what might have happened if Maximilium had mated before Harry had been found, but they did know now that Harry would have been upset with the news.

Things hadn’t happened that way though, and all they could do was work with what they had. Max was very good for Harry, but he was an unmated dominant spending increasing amounts of time with a vulnerable, unmated submissive. It was a difficult situation for them to deal with, but now that Harry was contacting Max and asking him around on his own, without their knowledge, the situation was getting more dangerous, because Harry wasn’t in any position to be mated. It always came back to that one issue, and it always would. At least until Harry made some more progress in his recovery and became more comfortable with the idea of meeting other unmated dominants and possibly mating to them.

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It was the first week of May when Harry realised that it had been a whole week since he’d had his last nightmare. The thought had come to him randomly as he was making tea for himself and Ismay. She was chatting happily, about her new favourite Disney film, Mulan, and the thought had just suddenly struck him that it had been a full eight nights since his last nightmare.

He had made a floo call to Max almost immediately afterwards, once he’d made the tea and settled Ismay down safe, and he’d told Max his good news and after Max, he’d called his Mind Healer, Sebastian Vasey, then the Healers at the Counsel halls and then the Elders.

The last few months had been good, and they’d been bad. He still had anxiety attacks if anyone knocked on the front door. He still had a nervous breakdown if he went outside on his own. He’d almost killed a woman in his blind panic when she had approached Ismay to talk to her back in February, thankfully Max had been with him at the time and had grabbed a quick hold on him and calmed him down before he murdered an innocent woman, who had believed that Ismay was in the park on her own and was merely asking if she was lost and needed help.

But that was tempered with the good. Max, who was very good for him and his anxiety levels when leaving the house. Nasta too, who came around occasionally with Max for a visit was very nice to him.

He had been doing a little more in the last month or two. Meeting more people, trying his best to interact with them on the instruction of Healer Vasey, just to see how he dealt with it. So Harry had enlisted Max and Nasta’s help. He knew that they had family that he hadn’t met, and he had reasoned that he might feel a little safer if he met their family members, as opposed to complete strangers. That was how he had met Max’s little sisters, Julinda, Talia and Alayla, and his neurotic younger brother, Caesar. The one who had once wrestled his own Uncles to the floor, stolen their shoes, and thrown them at other people.

He and Ismay had gone for a visit to Max’s parents’ home, Harry had met Max’s Mother, Ashleigh, and his other Father, Richard, and they had been very nice to him and especially to Ismay, which had settled him and his Dracken down. Then Max had taken him to a living room with a man and four women inside, with two young girls.

Max had greeted his sisters and brother fondly, his brother’s mate, Amelle, a little more reserved and
calmer. Max had introduced Harry and Ismay, then he’d gone to greet his two nieces, Eleonora and Beatrice loudly and enthusiastically, bellowing like a beast and it made Harry smile, more so when he heard Ismay giggling.

Harry and Ismay had been introduced to Eleonora, who was just four months older than Ismay, and then to Beatrice, who was just shy of a year younger. Harry was convinced to allow the girls to play together as Max came to help him through the socialising that he was here for.

Julinda was very nice and welcoming to him, as was Alayla. Talia had been a little more reserved and preferred to take a backseat in everything and Caesar had been nice, but he was a hundred miles an hour and he poked and prodded and questioned him. Caesar was all the social interaction anyone ever needed in their lives, and his mate hadn’t been much better, in fact she had been a lot worse, as she questioned him about his abduction and captivity in such a way that Max had grown angry and he had almost started an argument with Caesar over Amelle. With the aggression hike, Ismay had come to him and Harry had removed her from the room.

Max’s parents had been in the kitchen and when asked why he was leaving, Harry had told them what was happening next door. Myron Maddison, Max’s biological Father, had immediately gone to deal with his sons and Harry had been invited for a cup of tea by the remaining two parents. He had agreed at the time because Ismay had perked up at the offer of tea. After that the rest of their visit had been calmer and less eventful. Caesar had apologised for himself and his mate, but had gone right back to poking and prodding him. It hadn’t been bad, but it was uncomfortable, but he supposed that that was what Healer Vasey had wanted in a way.

Meeting Nasta’s Father, Aneirin, had gone much more smoothly. He was as calm, as strong and as intelligent as his son. He spoke to Harry like he was a person, not like he was something easily broken, or like he would breakdown and cry just having a normal conversation.

Harry had had a very normal afternoon with Aneirin, who had doted on Ismay as she sat primly beside him, drinking tea from an actual cup and tried to join in the conversation. No one laughed at her, called her adorable in a condescending way, or patted her on the head when she did this, she was immediately included and her words were listened to and responded to, like she was an adult. Aneirin was now one of Ismay’s favourite people, after Harry, Max, Nasta, her favourite guard at the Counsel Halls, Syed, who would talk to Ismay about his daughter Amina, and Aeesha Vipond, who would look after Ismay for him whenever he had a check-up with the Dracken Healers, which he still had every week.

So things had been good and bad too and now eight months after his rescue, he was finally finding his feet. There were things he could do now, like laughing, having some fun and he could go a few days now without stressing over what he and Ismay had been through.

Ismay had come on wonderfully well too and her own sessions with Healer Vasey had been decreased so that she was only seeing him every fortnight. Now three and a half years old, she was bright, bubbly, precocious and fierce. Some of her little habits had dropped off over the last eight months, she no longer had a saucer with every cup of tea, she was able to eat certain things with her hands without any sort of pause or hesitancy, such as toast, sandwiches, cakes, biscuits and her favourite, hot chicken straight from the bone. Harry had Max to thank for that, as he came around once a week, always on a Sunday, and he would cook a full roast for the three of them, and he always, always, gave Ismay a chicken leg to chew on as a snack once he’d stripped the chicken carcass of meat.

Well, that actually sounded misleading. Max was here all the time, sometimes he was here all day, sometimes he popped in for an hour and a cup of tea, but very rarely did a day go by when Max
didn’t pay them a visit, even if it was just a quick chat and a cuppa before he went off to work. But Sundays were special, Sundays were an all-day event when Max came over for breakfast and left well after Ismay was put to bed.

They had been very, very good in regards to not touching skin-to-skin, but lately Harry’s Dracken had been driving him berserk. It was getting harder and harder to control that side of himself, and Harry was sure it was because his Dracken wanted to be mated again, he certainly wanted babies… Max’s babies, and it was getting harder and harder to control the urges.

Thankfully Harry had learnt to share these thoughts with the people around him…Sebastian Vasey, the Dracken Healers, the Elders, Max himself, so they all knew that his Dracken was riding him hard over the mate and baby issue. It hadn’t helped that Ismay had overheard him telling Elder Kirrian, and she had told him, in all her childish innocence, that he should mate and have a baby with Max, and in her words, Max could be with them all the time, and never have to leave.

Harry had laughed it off at the time, but the idea was very appealing. He had only gotten closer to Max over the last few months, but the problem was that he still didn’t think he could be in a normal relationship. The very thought of sex with anyone made him break out in a cold, clammy sweat and made him feel sick. He never, ever, wanted that to happen to him again, but it would happen again if he mated to anyone. He tried to convince himself that he could put up with it if it was Max, but the truth of the matter was that he just didn’t know. He didn’t know if he could put up with it, he didn’t know if he could be normal and accept such attentions after these last eight months without having to, and thus started a new series of nightmares to bother him at night. He just wanted to be normal, like everyone else.

“Alright, what is bothering you?” Sebastian Vasey asked him. “Your mind is a million miles away and your thoughts are playing across your face. Will you share them with me?”

“I…I just…” Harry bit his lip to silence himself and he debated whether he should share this, or if he could actually bring himself to say anything.

“Remember all I have taught you, Harry. I can’t help you if you don’t tell me what is bothering you. I want to help you overcome everything, but I can only do that if you tell me everything.”

“I don’t think you’ll be able to help with this.” Harry said. “I don’t think it’s something that I could ever overcome.”

“And you have kept this ‘something’ a secret from me for eight months?” Healer Vasey asked him, very unimpressed with the news.

“I…I don’t like thinking about it, it wasn’t a problem before, there was so much going on, I had other problems that needed to be sorted out first, so it wasn’t an issue for me, but now…”
“Now that you’ve cleared up some of those issues, this one is playing more at the forefront of your mind?”

Harry nodded. “I’ve been thinking more about mates and babies recently.”

“Yes, I remember you saying, of course.”

“I…I just…I really like Max and…” Harry trailed off with a sigh and he rubbed his head.

“Is your issue with Max himself?”

“Umm…sort of.” Harry said. “But not really, the issue is still mine, but…”

“But it concerns Max. Harry, are you still having doubts about mating to anyone?”

“I suppose so.”

“Then you aren’t ready to mate to anyone and you shouldn’t push yourself to do it for any reason. Not for other people, not for Max himself, not even for Ismay. You need to wait until you are ready yourself, steaming off ahead before you’re ready will cause more problems in the long run.”

Harry nodded. He already knew that.

“Is that not the issue you are thinking of?” Healer Vasey asked, watching Harry closely, looking for his reactions.

“No.” Harry admitted.

“Then please, what is the issue, Harry? You can tell me anything in confidence, you know this.”
“I don’t think I can ever be normal.” He admitted, brushing his eyes so the tears gathering there wouldn’t fall.

“You can be normal, Harry. Look how far you have come, the strides you have made. Help me to help you, what has brought on all of these thoughts?”

“I… I’ve been thinking of mates and babies lately.” Harry said again, and Healer Vasey just sat and listened, this time without interjecting, instead he allowed Harry to gather his thoughts. “I…it led to thoughts about… about sex. I just don’t think I could ever allow that to happen to me again. I thought that maybe if it was Max I could put up with it, but I just don’t know if I could.”

Healer Vasey looked at Harry, and he tried to hide his shock and amazement. He tried to compose himself with an iron will that he’d forged through years, decades, of hard work. He took a breath and he sat forward slightly.

“Harry, you do know the difference between sex and rape, don’t you?” He asked gently.

“Of course.” Harry said, wiping away more tears from his face.

“Sex isn’t like rape, Harry. They’re completely different. Of course you will be nervous and worried about sex when you’ve only ever been raped before, but sex is a willing act of self-pleasure and of pleasing others, whereas rape is a violation of the body, and of the mind too. They are not the same, and they don’t feel the same.”

“But I enjoyed it.” Harry said, now crying more tears than he could catch.

“I find that very difficult to believe after all that you’ve told me, Harry. Tell me why you think you enjoyed what he did to you?”

Harry was beyond words as he remembered all of the times he’d been forced to endure sex with Jefferus, how painful it was, all of the taunts spat at him, and he cried harder.

“No, Harry, come on, tell me about it so that I can help. Did you ever tell him to stop?”
Harry nodded. “Not…not near the end. At the beginning, but I…I knew that he’d never listen, so I stopped telling him I didn’t want sex, he knew I didn’t, he just didn’t care.”

“That’s rape, Harry.” Healer Vasey pointed out. “Did you ever try to push him away, to fight him off?”

Harry nodded again. “Yes, again in the beginning, but after, it just became easier to give in, I couldn’t physically fight him, he would just beat me until I was too hurt to fight back.”

“That’s rape, Harry.” Healer Vasey told him calmly. “After the forced bonding, did he ever use his dominancy over you to order you to have sex with him?”

Harry nodded. “Yes, I couldn’t refuse, even if I wanted to. I…I had to do what he asked.”

“That’s rape, Harry. So, why do you think you enjoyed it? If you told him no, that you didn’t want his attentions, and you physically tried to fight him off until you were force bonded, after which you had no option of refusing, why do you think it will be the same as normal, consensual sex?”

“He would…he’d…” Harry trailed off and tried to clear his throat of the lump that had risen there. “I’d get an erection, and sometimes I would reach orgasm.”

Healer Vasey understood all at once, and his heart broke for his young client.

“Harry, the body reacts to stimulus. The sex organs are especially sensitive to such things, even unwanted stimulus would cause a reaction. Just because you got erections and orgasmed under such conditions does not turn the actions from rape into consensual sex.”

“But…but he said that it was proof that I wanted it…that I was just pretending, and it did feel…it felt like I was being betrayed by my own body.”

“But you didn’t want it. So it felt like your head and body were of two separate minds.”

Harry nodded, sniffing hard to try and control himself.
“Harry, he was lying to you. He was going to say anything and everything to hurt you, he would even use your body’s natural reactions against you. Don’t think just because you reacted that what he did to you wasn’t rape. Let me show you with another example of body stimulation.”

Healer Vasey waved his wand and he conjured something before he knelt in front of Harry and showed him a small tool that looked like a little hammer.

“Now, let me show you the body’s natural reactions. Cross this leg over this one.”

Confused, yet curious, Harry did as he was told. Healer Vasey tapped his knee, and the crossed leg jerked without Harry’s permission.

“This is the body’s natural reaction to stimulus in this area, Harry. Try and stop it.” He was told.

Healer Vasey hit his knee again and Harry, knowing what was coming, tried to stop his foot from kicking out, but it didn’t work.

“Try to stop it again.” He was encouraged.

But again he couldn’t stop the reaction despite knowing what was happening.

“You see, Harry? Sometimes the body reacts to outside stimulus, and despite our best efforts, we can’t stop the body from reacting. That’s what happened when you were raped. Your body didn’t react because you liked it, or wanted it, it reacted because that’s what it does when outside stimulus is applied. It is a normal bodily reaction and it couldn’t be helped. He gave you that stimulus on purpose, to confuse you, to hurt you, because that was how truly sadistic he was. He wanted you broken and malleable, Harry and turning your mind against your body was one of the ways he used to achieve this. If you were too busy fighting yourself, you wouldn’t fight him, and a fight with yourself is draining and exhausting. It would take the fight right out of you because you would be too tired and too mentally drained to do anything, which is exactly what he wanted, Harry.”

“So…so it’s not going to be the same?” Harry asked, latching onto that with both hands and a sense of utter desperation.
“No. It will be completely different, Harry. One day, once you are better and feel ready, you’ll get to experience true sex, and you’ll finally understand the difference.”

“But…there’s no way they could be the same?”

“None whatsoever. Sex and rape, no matter how similar they might seem in theory, they’re as different as night and day when you actually, physically experience both.”

Harry’s mind was racing, as was his heart, as he thought again of mating to Max. The sex issue had been holding him back, but with one session with Healer Vasey, that was gone. Not completely gone, there was still a niggle of worry, of doubt, in the back of his mind, but it was calmed, he was no longer fretting over sex ruining any potential mateship he had with Max anymore.

“Has this talk help your issue?” Healer Vasey asked.

Harry nodded. “Yes. A million percent yes. I didn’t realise…he’d told me…but it never really made any sense.”

“We spoke about him months before, Harry. Anything he told you, it was for his personal gain, because it was something that he wanted you to hear. Whether it was to punish you, to hurt you, or to make you do something that he wanted you to do, to hold control over you, he told you these things to get a reaction from you, a desirable reaction that he wanted. Making you think that you wanted to be raped was another way he was controlling you, because while you thought that you were enjoying yourself, because of your body’s natural reaction to the stimulus, he had you right where he wanted you, unable to attack what he was doing to you, because you believed he was right and that your body reacting meant that you were enjoying yourself, and that isn’t the case.”

Harry felt lighter than air as he listened to something that actually made sense. He had never wanted sex with Jefferus, it was so painful, he’d usually bleed afterwards, there had always been a pit in his stomach, a feeling of utter dread, when he’d been ordered to…when he’d been ordered to just lie down and allow himself to be raped, despite the erection he’d get if his penis was touched, despite the rare occasions he’d been forced to orgasm, now he knew why…it had been done purposefully. Jefferus had done it as a way to hurt him, to turn him against himself, and now…now that he knew the truth, he could heal and move on from it. He felt great.

He said goodbye to Healer Vasey, flooed to the Dracken Counsel Halls and he all but skipped about the place to find Ismay, starting with the Dracken Healers. He didn’t even care that they had an unknown, unmated dominant in one of their rooms. He was much too happy to care.
“You certainly look good today, Harry.” Georgio Alessandri told him.

Harry shot him a wide grin. “I feel amazing today.” He said.

“Any particular reason?” Healer Grant asked him.

Harry nodded. “I just got back from a session with Healer Vasey. I think… I think that today I crested the hardest issue that I was still holding onto. It was the last obstacle still in my way and…and the moment I was led over it by Healer Vasey, I just felt better. I feel invincible today.”

“That’s amazing, Harry.” Georgio told him, pulling him into a tight hug.

Harry hugged him back just as tightly. “I can scent the unmated dominant here…”

“He’s no thre…” Healer Grant tried to interrupt.

“No. It’s not bothering me.” Harry explained, interrupting the Healer in turn. “It’s…I’m not on edge, I’m not wary or scared. It’s not bothering me that he’s here and for the first time since I was abducted, I feel like I could stay here. I don’t feel like running away and hiding, I don’t want to freak out over him being here. I don’t want to get away as quickly as possible, I’m not seeing him as a threat as he isn’t one. For the first time I can be in the same vicinity as an unmated dominant and not see him as an automatic threat that I need to either get away from, or eliminate.”

Harry seemed to realise what he’d said and his grin widened again, even as he accepted another hug from Georgio.

“I need to tell Healer Vasey! The Elders too. And Max!” Harry said excitedly. “Oh, I wonder if this means I’m finally ready to mate to him. I hope so. I need to tell everyone!”

Harry darted off before he could be stopped and the two remaining Healers shared a look and they laughed.

“I think he is finally ready.” Alfred Grant said to his younger colleague.
“I hope so, if anyone deserves a happily ever after, it’s that boy.” Georgio said. “I just hope the Elders don’t push him too much with this new revelation. I know they’re worried about how stable his Dracken is, especially with Harry now saying that it’s raging against him, wanting a mate and children, but pushing him is going to cause him to withdraw again.”

“They know this too, Georgio.” Alfred said calmly. “They aren’t going to push him too hard, but with this new revelation, and Harry himself thinking that he’s ready to start mating for the first time, they may just take him from his comfort zone and challenge him a little.”

Georgio lowered his eyebrows at hearing that, then his eyes widened. “No.” He said in shock. “You don’t think they’d force him to go to the meeting next week, do you?”

“They might very well do that.” Alfred nodded. “It would be the ultimate test of his recovery. Can he in fact go back to the place where all of this began, surrounded by Drackens of all ages and denominations, including unmated dominants, and maintain his calm and composure? Can he get over what was done to him, is he truly ready to be near so many unmated dominants at once, is he actually over what happened to him after all? These are all questions that need to be answered before he can start thinking of holding mate meetings. It will answer the ultimate question of if he is truly ready or not. Though I would imagine he would be surrounded for much of the night by all of the Elders, and perhaps the Maddison clan too. You know that Maximilius won’t leave him to struggle on his own.”

Georgio nodded, but he was worried too. He didn’t want that grin to fade from Harry’s face. He didn’t want the newfound self-confidence to be shaken, which is what would happen if Harry believed himself to be completely better, and he was tested and found out that actually, no, he wasn’t better and he couldn’t do the things that he thought that he could. It would be totally devastating to the young boy to have his confidence knocked in such a way. But then, what was the alternative? Harry did need to be tested, he couldn’t be sheltered for the rest of his life, because it wouldn’t allow him to live a normal life. It was a difficult decision, and Georgio was sure that the Elders would consult with Harry’s Mind Healer first to see if that was what Harry truly needed, but when you were on the edge of being completely freed from a past horror, it seemed better to push the boundaries a little, to test for the reaction and then treat any reaction that happened as needed. It seemed the only way to be sure if Harry was as ready as he believed he was, no matter the risk that he wasn’t and had his tenuous self-confidence knocked, but then he wasn’t a Mind Healer, so he didn’t know if his reasoning was actually anywhere near what Healer Vasey would recommend.

Georgio sighed and he went back to his work, time would tell. After all, the annual meeting was next weekend, and either Harry would be there, or he wouldn’t, depending on what Healer Vasey, and the Elders too, believed was best for him…and only then if Harry himself agreed to go. Despite it being what could potentially be the best thing for him, he could always refuse and no one, absolutely no one, would dare push him if he refused.
Harry was torn and conflicted, and he remembered feeling this way the last time that he’d been invited to the Dracken meeting. He’d known it was coming up, there was no way that he’d ever forget the date of the day that he’d been abducted, but he hadn’t actually believed that he’d be invited again, not after the first time.

He’d automatically refused when personally invited by the Elders. It had been a straight out, vehement no. He hadn’t even thought about it. He’d said no almost before Elder Vipond had stopped speaking.

Then had come the arguments…or rather calm, polite discussions, about why they thought it a good idea, why Healer Vasey thought it was a good idea for him to go. It was nerve wracking and painful and a million other emotions, mostly all negative, that he didn’t even have a name for.

It was the assurance that he wouldn’t be alone, that he could have an entourage if he wanted it, that he could keep the guards that he trusted the most with him at all times, that had mostly swayed him, but it had been Max, once Harry had told him what was happening, who had promised to not leave his side for a moment, even insisting that he’d come to the bathroom with him, despite what anyone else said or thought, that had made Harry agree to go.

Now it was the actual day though, he was regretting his agreement. Ismay was excited, as she was finally wearing the outfit that Fiammetta, Elder Messana’s ex-mate, had given to her for her birthday. It hadn’t fit her when she’d first put it on, but a few charms from Harry’s wand and it was perfect and Ismay loved it, because she felt like a real Princess in it.

Harry tried to control himself, he’d already needed to go to the bathroom twice because he felt the urge to piss, but nothing had come out. He felt sweaty, cold, it was almost like he was ill and he found himself wondering if he could get out of this meeting because of that, before realising that he was looking for an excuse not to go, which was apparently counterproductive to his recovery.

This meeting had almost been played out like his plans for his mate meeting four years before, all of the security had been pandered around him, the Elders were pandering around him, and truly it did make him feel a little better, that this meeting was being set up like a military operation because he’d eventually agreed to go, that he was included in some of the planning and security details, because it made him feel a little more in control of the situation, and that helped him to feel a little bit safer.

Like the first time, he’d steadfastly agreed to go on his own, without anyone coming to his house to get him, because he didn’t want to feel forced or rushed. He’d said that he was willing to go, and whether he turned up ten minutes late, or two hours late, he would go, but it would be in his own time, without anyone hovering over him or hurrying him.

He was dressed and ready, and he looked at himself in the mirror. Max had bought him the tie this time, and it was blue, a nice, sapphire blue that reminded Harry of Max’s eyes, which helped to calm him down. Harry suspected that this was why Max had chosen this colour. It made him smile, because of how thoughtful it was.

“Mummy, do I look okay?” Ismay asked him.
He turned and smiled to see her in her dress. The shoes were thankfully flat, and she wasn’t wearing any jewellery. Harry had even taken the earrings from her lobes as soon as he’d gotten her to himself. He had never agreed to have his daughter’s ears pierced, but she had gone out with Penelope one morning when she was only a few months old and she’d come back with little studs in her ears. Harry had thrown a fit and raged that he hadn’t been consulted, but as had been pointed out to him, that time and many other times before and after, it hadn’t been his decision to make.

He thought the idea of causing any unnecessary pain, no matter how slight, to a mere baby was abhorrent and cruel, and if Ismay wanted her ears pierced again when she was older, when she could make that decision for herself, then he would take her to get them done again, but Harry wouldn’t stand for any body modification to be performed without the person’s permission and while they were babies or toddlers, they couldn’t give that permission. Ismay certainly hadn’t been able to communicate her wishes on the matter at just a few months old, and at the end of the day it was something that had been done to her body, without her permission. So he had tried to reverse that as much as possible by taking out the stupid earrings and using a few dabs of potion to close up what he had believed would be permanent holes in her body, he did love magic sometimes, as there wasn’t even a mark on either of her earlobes to show where they had once been pierced.

“You look beautiful, Ismay. Are you ready to go?”

“Yes, I can bring Cloppity though, can’t I?”

“Do you feel as if you need the comfort?”

Ismay considered that and then nodded.

“Then yes, it’s perfectly fine for you to bring Cloppity.” Harry said. “Let me just make sure that I have everything too and then we can go.”

“Will they have cake at the party, Mummy?”

“I’m not sure, sweetie, but if they don’t we can bake some tomorrow.”

“Fairy cakes?” She asked excitedly, her eyes lighting up.

“Yes, absolutely. You can decorate them how you want then.”
“I hope they don’t have cake now.” Ismay giggled and Harry chuckled with her.

“If you want to make cakes tomorrow, Ismay, all you have to do is say and we can do it if they have cake here or not.”

“Really?” She asked, as she followed him to the kitchen.

“Absolutely.” He said with a smile. “I have everything, come on.”

“Max will be there, won’t he?”

“Yes, he promised that he would be.” Harry soothed her.

“And no one…they won’t be there, will they?”

Harry swallowed. “No, sweetie. You’ll never, ever see them again.” He said, in place of telling her that they were dead and couldn’t come back.

“Okay.” Ismay nodded and she straightened her shoulders and all but marched to the living room. Her determination gave him strength, and he followed her proudly.

“Jacob is on the other side?” She questioned, looking at the fireplace.

“Yes, he’s waiting for us.”

“So we won’t be alone for long?”

“Not at all.”

They were both stalling, and if this didn’t stop then Harry was going to end up backing out and it would damage not just his own recovery, but Ismay’s too. She had come on so well in just eight
months, he couldn’t allow himself to stand in her way, to hold her back and affect her own recovery when she was making leaps and bounds. He had to lead by example, so he took a handful of floo powder and threw it into the flames of the fire place. He stepped in once they were emerald green and he held his hand out to Ismay, who scurried to join him.

He’d been going back and forth to the Counsel Halls so often in the last several months that he knew the address by heart and he landed, very ungainly and inelegantly, even as he tried to keep Ismay from hitting the floor.

“You okay, sweetie?” He asked.

Ismay giggled and nodded. “Yes, Mummy.”

Harry got himself to his feet and he picked her up, holding her tight to his chest. He tried to be normal, but there were so many people about, so much conversation that it was hard to hear anything, but he saw Elder Midate almost immediately and he tried to hurry over to him, without it seeming like that was what he was doing, but it was difficult, because being back here, on this day of all days, was playing havoc with his mind.

“There you are.” Elder Midate said happily, looking at him proudly, before turning to Ismay and stroking her cheek with a finger. “And how are you, Ismay? You look wonderful.”

“Thank you very much, this is the dress that Fiamm…Fiammetetta got for me.”

“Fiammetta.” Harry corrected gently.

“She will be very pleased to see you wearing it.” Jacob said. “How are you doing, Harry?”

“Alright, I’m a little all over the place, but I’m not all out panicking yet.”

“Keep doing the breathing exercises that Healer Moore showed you.”

Harry nodded and he started doing just that as he was led into the actual hall, which was full and flowing with Drackens.
“It’s so big!” Ismay said in astonishment.

Harry focused on her and he nodded to her. “It is, but I want you to know that if you call for me, I will come running.” He said seriously. “If anything upsets you or scares you, you call for me, okay?”

“Yes, Mummy.” She said easily.

Harry was overall glad when he could dart forward and snuggle himself into Max the moment he caught sight of that hulking mass of muscle. Max startled, but he was smiling when he looked down at them, already knowing who it would be.

“Hel…”

“Hi, Max!” Ismay interrupted. “Do you like my dress? It has matching shoes!”

Max aborted his greeting and he smiled at Ismay. “I can see, it’s very pretty.”

“Mummy says we can make cakes tomorrow, will you come over too? I’ll make you a special cake, just for you.”

“Well, in that case I’ll have to come over, just for the cakes.” Max teased.

“Liar.” Ismay accused him. “You love Mummy, that’s why you come.”

“Ismay!” Harry said, shocked.

Max laughed, as did many of his family members. Harry even heard one man comment ‘smart girl’ to the man beside him.

“Well, she’s not wrong, Harry.” Max said gently.
“But just coming out with it like that.” Harry chuckled.

“Is that for little girls like me?” Ismay interrupted again.

Harry looked at her, then to where she was looking and he caught sight of the crèche in the corner. He swallowed and bit his lip, debating with himself what to say. He took a breath.

“Yes, it is. Do you want to go and play?” He asked, his voice a little strained.

“It looks like fun.” Ismay said, watching from afar.

Harry nodded. “Go and play then, there are guards all around it, they will help you over the fence, just ask.”

And just like that Harry placed her on the floor and she ran off towards the crèche. Harry had to consciously think about keeping his feet rooted to the floor so he didn’t follow her.

“I think that was the bravest thing I’ve ever seen you do.” Jacob told him proudly.

Harry nodded, but he made no attempt to hide the fact that he was watching her as best as he could as he watched her flame red hair bounce through group of people. He only relaxed when he saw someone lift her up and presumably over the fence to the crèche, because when he next saw her, she was with a group of other girls, on the padded second floor to the play area, right before she went down a slide. It was only then that he turned back to the group he was with, back to Max, and he breathed out a little shakily.

“You’re doing great.” Max told him, and Harry caught sight of Max’s tie, a dark green that almost matched Harry’s eyes, almost the same one that he’d worn to his first meeting, and it made Harry laugh.

“Anyone would think that you’d done this on purpose.” Harry teased, pulling a little on Max’s tie. “You know, a way to stake a claim without actually doing it.”

“He’s onto you already, Maxie.” One man in the group called out. “Told you he’d be too clever to
fall for your little ploys.”

“Is it still a ploy if I don’t care?” Harry asked, trying to ignore that the conversation with someone new was making his heart hammer faster.

“I don’t know.” The man said consideringly. “Maybe. Probably.”

“You live in a family of weirdos.” Harry said to Max.

The group laughed again. “Max is the biggest weirdo out of all of us!” The first man said.

“Yeah he is.” Harry agreed. “But it’s cute when he’s weird.”

That set off another round of laughter and Harry relaxed, just the slightest bit. He could do this.

“I thought Caesar was the biggest weirdo we had?” Richard asked, looking around curiously.

“I’m your son!” Caesar cried out.

“Exactly!” Max added, to much laughter.

It was very easy to ignore that he was in a room filled with people when he had Max’s arm around him and he was distracted by the Maddisons, all talking, laughing and joking. He greeted the Elders who came to see him, the Healers who came by to check on him, and before he knew it, a full hour had gone by and he had barely noticed the time passing.

Ismay came running back to him, asking for a wee, and it was only then that Harry was forcibly reminded that he was in the very same hall that he had been abducted from. He almost lost his head, his body visibly trembling, and if it wasn’t for Ismay and Max, maybe he would have completely panicked and ran from the hall with her, back to his nice, safe house to hide.

“I can take her.” Kimberly, Max’s grandmother, immediately offered as she watched him all but fall apart.
Harry sucked in such a deep breath that it was visible and audible, but he didn’t care. He shook his head.

He took Ismay’s hand and he grabbed Max’s robe sleeve and tugged at him. Max followed without much urging and he was like a huge protective sentry as he escorted him and Ismay out into the hall. Harry stared at the guards outside of the door, as unlike the last time he’d been here, there were two of them. It had been one of the new security measures brought in by the Elders immediately after his abduction. Bribing one guard was difficult enough, but two of them was almost impossible. Harry approved of the new measure, but he was still wary and very glad that he had Max with him as he went into the unisex children’s bathroom and helped Ismay use the toilet while Max waited by the sinks.

“It’s too big, Mummy, I’ll fall in!” Ismay fretted.

“You’re not going to fall in, I’m here to help you.” Harry insisted. “Look, hold my hand. That’s it. Good girl.”

“I’m not happy on this toilet, Mummy.”

“I know.” Harry soothed. “It’s only for one night, you have your training seat and your step back at home.”

“It’s cold too. My seat isn’t cold.”

Harry tried his best not to laugh, but it was difficult to keep a straight face.

“That’s because it’s made of foam.” He told her.

She nodded at him and Harry stayed still, her feet on his thigh, her hand holding his, as she did her business.

“Wipe from front to back.” Harry told her, watching as she pulled off two squares of paper.

“I remember.” She said, doing as instructed.
Harry helped her to her feet, using his thigh as she would her step, and she pulled up her little Disney knickers and made sure her dress was laying properly as Harry stood and flushed the toilet.

“Hands!” She cried as she hurried from the stall and went to the sinks. “Max, hands!”

“Come here then!” He said brightly as he lifted her easily up onto the counter and he helped her wash her hands while Harry washed his.

Ismay happily held his hand and Max’s, walking between them like they were on one of their outings, but Harry felt very exposed, very vulnerable, without Max on his other side.

A body moving to his other side startled him, until he realised that it was Nasta. He smiled softly and he breathed easier with someone on his other side.

“Hi, Nasta! Do you like my dress?” Ismay asked the moment she saw him.

“Thank you.” Harry whispered, distracting Nasta for all of a moment.

“I love your dress, annwyl.”

Ismay gave Nasta a funny look. “My name is Ismay, not Anne Will.”

Harry chuckled. “Nasta is a Welshman, Ismay. He’s speaking to you in Welsh.”

Ismay made a little ‘O’ with her mouth. “Okay, so is my name Anne Will in Welsh?” She asked.

Nasta chuckled and Harry tried to ignore the tingle that went through him as he heard it.

“No, annwyl means darling.” Nasta told gently. “It’s a pet name, like your Mummy calls you sweetie.”

“Anne Will.” Ismay said under her breath, she kept repeating it, memorising the word.
Harry gave a look to Nasta, who smiled at him and wrapped a covered arm around Harry’s back. It allowed Harry to breathe in deeply, to calm himself, and he felt much more secure now, walking through all of these people.

“Have you been alright?” Nasta asked him, as Ismay distracted Max’s attention.

Harry nodded. “There have been bumps.” He said softly. “Like taking Ismay to the bathroom, but… but it does help to have Max with me, and now you too. I trust you both, so it helps.”

“Mummy, can I have a drink in the tall glasses?” Ismay asked.

“You can have a drink, but I don’t think they’ll give you an actual champagne flute, Issy.” Harry said, after he automatically turned to move towards the bar.

“Do you want juice, Ismay?” Max asked her.

“Yes, please. I’d like tea, but Mummy said I can have tea before bed.”

“Chamomile only.” Harry reminded her.

Ismay nodded. “I remember.” She said.

“What juice do you want, squirt?” Max asked her.

“Ummm…pumpkin, please.” Ismay said, after a bit of deliberation.

“Harry, do you want anything?” Max asked.

He looked behind him when Harry remained silent and he saw the pale face and the too wide eyes. He remembered then that Harry had been given a laxative in his drink by Elder Messana, and that was why he had needed the bathroom so badly, which had led to his abduction and enslavement.
“Yes.” Harry said, sounding strangled. “But…but make sure that they…that they don’t put anything…”

“I’ll make sure no one adds anything to your drink.” Max swore, knowing exactly what the issue was.

He did make sure too, he watched Harry’s drink from the moment the bartender picked up the glass. He watched him pour the drink and bring it over and he took the glass as soon as it was on the bar top. He handed it straight to Harry.

“No one touched the drink.” He said surely. “Nothing was added to it, there was nothing in the glass before the juice was added and it wasn’t left alone.”

Harry ducked his head, Max knew he was embarrassed for his need to have his drink watched, but he understood, he really did.

“Thank you.” Harry said softly, very quietly.

“Here you go, Ismay.” Max said brightly, taking the attention from Harry as he handed her a small plastic beaker of pumpkin juice.

“Thank you very much.” She said, but her eyes were all for her juice as she all but drained the glass. All that running around in the crèche must have dehydrated her a little.

She handed the empty beaker back to him just a moment later.

“Do you want another one?” He asked her.

“No.” She said, shaking her head.

Max nodded and left the empty beaker on the bar top and he took her hand again, his own juice in his other hand. Nasta was boring, he’d gotten plain old water, but that was normal for Nasta.
Max led the way back to his family, and the anxious Elders, who only relaxed when Harry and Ismay reappeared safe and sound.

“Were there any problems?” Elder Vipond asked seriously.

“None, Elder.” Max said. “Everything was fine.”

Harry nodded his agreement, taking a shaky sip of juice. That had been very difficult, much more difficult than just standing here talking. He wouldn’t have been able to approach that bar without someone with him, he already knew that, even knowing that it hadn’t even been any of the bartenders who had spiked his drink, it had been Elder Messana himself who had done that to him.

Things got a little more livelier when Nasta’s Father and older brother, Sanex, came over to greet them. Sanex and Caesar were friends and they acted as stupid as one another, feeding off of one another. It made Harry smile to watch them.

As it approached near enough the same time that he’d been taken, Harry needed to burrow into Elder Midate, as he should have done all those years ago. He was held tightly, even as Max had Ismay on his shoulder. She was fast asleep, knackered from all the running around. She’d gone back to the crèche twice more during the night, and all that running and playing, with a hundred other children, she was exhausted and she had just dropped off to sleep, almost on her feet.

“Do you want to call it a night, Harry?” Jacob asked him. “You’ve done so very well so far, you don’t need to push too hard.”

“No, I need to do this.” Harry said softly. “I can do this.” He added. “I might need a bit of help, but I can do this.”

“How are you feeling?” Aneirin asked him gently.

Harry considered how he was feeling. “It’s hard to explain, but I’m rather unsettled. It’s not…I’m not afraid, but I’m not comfortable either. It’s not bad, not really, but…I’m far from happy.”

“You’re doing so well.” Jacob told him.

Harry nodded, but he had his hand laced with Elder Midate’s, so no one could take him…not that anyone standing around him would allow anyone near him.
“Harry, how are you?”

Harry turned and he smiled at Captain Tuathal Foss.

“I’m okay.”

“I wanted to check in with you, my men have reported that there is a small disturbance by the doors and I wanted to assure you that it was nothing to worry about on my way there. A dominant is drunk and accusing another of leering at his mate.” The Captain told him.

Harry nodded his understanding, but a moment later he could hear the disturbance.

“…looking at her legs!” He heard the drunken shout that cut nearly all conversations around them.

Captain Foss sighed. “I still say alcohol shouldn’t be served at these get-togethers, Anthanaric.”

“Idiots.” Henry Kirrian grumbled. “I’ve got this.”

Captain Foss left with Elder Kirrian to deal with the disturbance, but Harry wasn’t worried. He wouldn’t have been worried about it even if Captain Foss hadn’t come to warn him, it wasn’t drunken disturbances that he was worried about.

“Are you okay, Harry?” Max asked him, touching his elbow gently.

Harry nodded. “I won’t be scared by drunken idiots.”

“Aggression is usually worse with alcohol.” Max hinted.

Harry shook his head. “He rarely got drunk and though he was more violent when he was, he couldn’t get an erection. I’d rather take the beating.” He said in a blasé manner.
Everything was silent and Harry didn’t really notice that he was the cause as he tried to look to see what Elder Kirrian was doing.

“Do you feel uncomfortable around alcohol, or people drinking alcohol?” Elder Vipond asked, moving his hand holding his champagne flute so it wasn’t immediately in Harry’s view.

“No.” Harry said, looking back. “He was a violent bully with or without alcohol, it doesn’t bother me.”

Things were quiet again, until Elder Kirrian came back.

“Drunken morons.” He complained. “Tuathal is beside himself on his high horse. I keep telling him that we can’t ban decent folk from drinking just because there are idiots floating around that don’t know how to handle their spirits.”

“All handled, Henry?” Elder Vipond asked.

“Yes.” He grumped. “Every single year we get accusations of mate theft.”

Harry laughed at that. “Mate theft?” He asked with a smile.

Henry nodded. “One dominant accusing another of trying to steal his submissive from him. Or even a submissive accusing another of trying to steal her dominant. It happens every year.”

They settled again into soft conversations, and Harry turned slightly, away from Elder Midate, to talk more to Max and Nasta. He didn’t realise for half an hour that Elder Midate had taken a few steps away from him. He was stood, upright and on his own, talking to Max and Nasta without anyone holding him. He took a breath and he smiled. This wasn’t so bad.

The real proof that he was getting back to some semblance of normalcy came when an unmated dominant came up to him from behind. Max’s fist clenched, but he was holding Ismay so he didn’t step forward. It was Nasta who moved to protect him, but Harry, who had been talking to them, looking right at them, thus saw the change in them immediately, he turned to look behind him, his fists already coming up in a defensive position, just in time for a hand to stroke over his face.

He cried out, the Elders turned immediately, Myron, Max’s Father was already storming over, as was
Alexander, but Harry beat them all to it, and he jabbed an automatic punch to the man’s face…unlike four years ago, when he’d hit one of the twin Maddisons, he did not catch a lip, this time he got the man square in the nose, and he felt it break under his knuckles.

The dominant stumbled away from him, a hand rising automatically to his busted nose that was pouring blood, but that was the least of his problems as Myron finally reached him and started manhandling him, followed by Elder Kirrian, Elder Midate and Elder Vipond.

“Are you okay?” Nasta asked him, his arms holding Harry tight about the waist, but still being careful not to touch skin to skin.

“Fine…though my hand hurts.” He laughed, looking at it. Some of the skin had scraped away, leaving behind a small graze.

“Sweet one, let me see.” Alexander said gently.

Harry gave over his hand trustingy, a prod of a wand and the little scrapes were healed and the blood was cleaned away.

“Thank you.” He said gently, but he couldn’t keep the grin from his face.

“You are entirely too happy for having just been attacked.” Caesar pointed out.

“Caesar!” Max growled warningly.

“No, it’s great. The urge to hit him was automatic. I didn’t think about it, it was just a reaction. I’m really getting better! Before…before I would have just let anyone do anything they wanted to me, I was too afraid to act or lash out or move to protect myself, but today…today I proved that I’m getting closer to how I was before, I wasn’t afraid of hitting him, I’m not afraid of any punishment or reprisals for hitting him, and it feels amazing.”

Everyone looked rather shocked by his revelation, but they looked just as happy too, but Harry was too busy preening proudly. Funny how it took punching a dick in the face to make him feel more like normal, more like he used to be.

“Sweet one, were you harmed?” Elder Vipond came to ask him, cupping his face right over where
the dominant had touched.

“No.” Harry said, shaking his head. “I wouldn’t ever want to mate with anyone who disrespected me so much anyway, so there was never any hope of us bonding. At least this night has proven a point to me.”

“That you’re getting your fire back?” Elder Kirrian asked him.

Harry shook his head. “No. I was worried that my Dracken was so unstable that he was obsessing over the first unmated Drackens that I met, namely Max and Nasta. But tonight has proven that fear wrong. Once again I don’t have the slightest bit of attraction to any of these dicks. It’s just Max and Nasta.”

“Are you feeling happy about that?” Jacob asked, a little breathless, having just handed off the dick to two mated guards, who were dragging him from the hall, his nose still broken and bleeding.

Harry nodded. “It helps make me feel more settled, to know that I’m not focusing on Max or Nasta so much just because my Dracken was unstable and shopping for dominant mates. That isn’t true and it’s a relief to know that…that my interest in them is genuine, and not as a result of what happened to me.” He said with a pink blush to his cheeks.

Nasta and Max looked very pleased, but Harry had to avert his eyes and he giggled nervously.

“Sorry to blurt that out.” He said. “But tonight is turning out much better than I imagined, because it’s showing me just how far I’ve come. I know it has only been eight months, but it has been a very long eight months too, for me at least and I like to think that I’ve come a long way since I was first rescued.”

“You have.” Elder Midate said firmly. “Look where you are standing, Harry, on the fourth year anniversary of that day, no less. You have come so very far. How do you feel?”

Harry smiled then. “Amazing.” He said. “But if the cess pit dominants are crawling out of the wood work, then I think I will call it a night and bow out while I’m on top.”

“A good idea. Come along, I would see you home safe.” Elder Midate insisted.
“I’ll come too, to drop off Ismay.” Max said stubbornly.

Harry didn’t really mind that he used Ismay as an excuse, he could have passed Ismay to him, or to Elder Midate, and she would not have stirred, but Harry didn’t mind that Max wanted to spend some more time with him. It made him feel like he had butterflies fluttering in his stomach at the very thought that Max had spent all evening with him and still wasn’t tired of him.

Harry flooed to his own home and he took a great big breath and he smiled, flicking on the lights and going to boil the kettle. He heard the floo chime twice and he went to take Ismay from Max so that he could get her into her pyjamas and into bed.

“Go and make tea for us all, Max?” He part asked, part questioned.

“Of course. Elder, would you like tea?”

“No, as much as I think it’s a risk, I will go back to the hall and leave you two alone. Do not touch him, Max.” He said seriously as Harry carried Ismay up the stairs.

“It has been eight months, Elder. You’ve trusted me thus far, sort of, give me some credit to my control. I won’t bond to Harry before he is ready.”

“That’s the problem.” Elder Midate said with a heavy sigh. “He’s going to be flying high after his little revelation tonight, he’s going to be feeling good, really good, and he might try to press the issue.”

“Then I will tell him that we will wait until the morning and we will bond in front of all the Elders if that is what he still wants in the cold light of day.” Max said. “I’m not about to force him, or allow him to do anything hasty, without any witnesses. That way no one can possibly accuse me of taking advantage of him, but if it is what he wants, I am not going to risk him thinking that I don’t want him in return when I do.”

Jacob sighed heavily, but he’d known for a few weeks now that this was coming. Harry was having more good days than bad, he was feeling better, more secure, and tonight had just sealed it, for him and for Harry. He was as ready as he likely ever would be to be mated for the first time. If it wasn’t tomorrow, then it would be soon, of that he was certain. He almost wanted to forbid it, insist that Harry needed more time to recover, but he also wanted Harry to be normal, to have a normal life, and as he was a Dracken, that would include mating and having more children…and truthfully
speaking, he could have picked a lot worse than Maximilius Maddison and Nasta Delericey as dominant mates. A lot worse.

“Be gentle with him, Max. He’s feeling better, but he’s far from being where we’d like him.”

“I’ve been taking my cues from Harry himself, and I will continue to do so, but it might be that he doesn’t want to risk losing our friendship, Elder. He might mate to others, but keep me as a friend.”

Jacob snorted. “I know you are only trying to protect yourself in case he does pick someone else, but I can tell you that there is no need. He doesn’t see you as merely a friend, Max. You don’t look at your friends and think about them naked, spread on a bed. You don’t blush beetroot red when a friend compliments you, you don’t get tongue-tied when a friend talks to you. Your Drackens have always been yearning to be together, we saw it four years ago, when you could barely keep your eyes, and hands, off of one another. There isn’t any doubt in my mind, in any of our minds, that you will be his first chosen mate, Max, because truthfully, he has already chosen you. That is why his Dracken is riding him so very hard now, because he doesn’t understand why Harry won’t mate to you when they want it so very much. Just be calm and careful, Healer Vasey hinted to us that Harry was afraid of having sex, and having been a virgin and only ever experiencing rape, we should have realised sooner that that would have been a huge issue to him, of course he would be scared of sex after that, we just didn’t think about it, but clearly it has been holding him back.”

Max hadn’t thought of that issue either, and he was a little pale, being reminded that Harry had gone through all that he had as a young, sixteen year old virgin. He couldn’t imagine the pain that Harry must have gone through, the fear and uncertainty. It made a massive hand clench into a fist. He wanted to kill those filthy fuckers all over again.

“Did Healer Vasey resolve that issue?” He growled, his voice rumbling low.

“Yes. I believe so, which is why Harry has been so...*exuberant*, in this last week. He’s let go of the fear and pain surrounding that issue, as he said himself, it was the last, big obstacle still in his way and it’s gone now. He’s going to be fine and he is as ready as he’ll ever be, Max. Just use your common sense too, please.”

Max nodded understandingly.

“No funny business tonight, mind.” He warned seriously.
Max nodded again. “I know, Elder. I won’t stay long, I just want to settle him in.”

Elder Midate nodded and he took a breath and he left the boys to it. He had to trust them. He kept repeating in his mind that Harry could have chosen a lot worse. A lot worse.

Max sorted out the tea and he had brought it back into Harry’s living room and he was flicking through the TV channels when Harry finally came back in.

“That dress was a nightmare to get off!” Harry complained, collapsing down and grappling for his tea. Max had meticulously copied Harry several times in order to get it just how Harry liked it, with a good glob of honey stirred into it. He’d never known anyone to ever drink tea with honey in it. It was cute, quirky. He loved it.

“Did the little princess sleep through it?”

“Not even a grumble.” Harry smiled, taking a big gulp of tea and then relaxing back with a groan.

“She definitely enjoyed herself.” Max pointed out.

Harry nodded his agreement, taking another gulp of tea. He swallowed. “I’m going to have to see if there are any Muggle café’s that have an attached play crèche like that. I know she’ll love it.”

“I’ll look for you, see if there are any nearby.” Max offered with a smile.

“Thank you. Perhaps we could go for a cup of tea together while she runs riot.”

“I’d like that.” Max smiled happily.

“It would help me too, I still don’t really like crowds.”

“You did wonderfully well tonight.”
"Because you were there." Harry admitted quietly.

Max didn’t know what to say to that. Harry had been doing really well with going to the supermarket, to the park, and tonight during the meeting, but it was true that he had been there for all of those instances too.

“Maybe you should have a small trip to the supermarket without me.” Max said gently. “To see if you can do it. If you can’t, it doesn’t matter, I’ll come the next time, but you should try it every now and again, just to see.”

Harry nodded. “Okay, I need to get more milk and teabags anyway, we go through a lot in this house.”

“That’s because you and Ismay are little teapots.” Max laughed. “If you wanted, I could be here before you left and when you came back, just in case?”

Harry considered it, and he nodded. “It’s not fair to have you always ferrying me about. I’m a grown man, I should be able to go out on my own.”

“I don’t care about that, Harry. I would walk with you anywhere that you needed me too. I just want you to feel better. I want you to have the confidence to just get up and go where you want to, not be trapped in your own home because you’re too afraid to leave without someone with you.”

Harry looked down at the carpet, and Max wondered if he’d pressed too hard, but Harry nodded and he looked up, his emerald eyes burning with determination.

“I know. I want that too, I am trying, it’s just difficult. I keep telling myself to just get over it, but it’s never that easy.”

“That’s why we take it one step at a time. You’ve been a hundred times with me over the last few months, you’ve scoped it out, you know the exits, let’s see if you can brave the supermarket.”

Harry nodded, then his face firmed. “I’ll go tomorrow.” He said decisively.
“Get everything you need for our special Sunday dinner, and I’ll get started on the soup for when you get back.”

“That sounds wonderful.” Harry nodded with a smile and he blushed, then tried to hide it by taking another gulp of tea. It was adorable, but Max didn’t draw any attention to it.

“You have the chicken?” He asked instead.

“In the fridge ready for you.” Harry grinned. “Ismay will want her chicken leg.”

“I’ll be sure to save her one and keep it nice and warm for her.” Max smiled.

“You also promised to watch The Aristocats with her.”

“Absolutely.” Max nodded. “Our wonderful Sunday dinner, dessert, and then a few films afterwards snuggled on the settee.”

“With tea.” Harry grinned.

“Absolutely, with tea.” Max chuckled. “Right, I better get off. I’ll see you tomorrow, for breakfast.”

Harry looked down. “Can’t you stay the night?”

“The Elders would tear me apart and hang my wings on their wall.” Max said.

“But I…” Harry ducked his head and he curled up a little. Never had Max wanted to touch someone so badly, so that he could get eye contact and reassure Harry that he wasn’t abandoning him. “I really like you, Max. I think I love you. I’m feeling so much better now, I’m doing so well with my therapy and I don’t think I can get much better than I am now on my own. My Dracken is going ballistic too, I don’t know how much longer I could realistically hold it off. I…that’s not the only reason, of course. I really like you, Max, I always have, please just think about it?”

“Harry, I want to be your dominant mate, please, never doubt that. But the Elders will want to be
there when we bond, so tomorrow. We’ll call them over tomorrow, bond, and then start our lives together.”

Harry’s eyes widened. “We need to plan!” He said suddenly. “You shouldn’t have to give up your house, but I…this is…”

“Harry. Love, do you really think I care about that house when on the other hand is you and Ismay?” Max asked with a smile. “If you don’t want me encroaching on your space, I can stay at mine and…”

“What sort of mated live would that be?” Harry demanded. “No. I don’t care about the space, but this is…it represents my freedom. My independence. I’d want you here, but…would you want to be here?”

“What sort of question is that? Harry, I would never leave if I wasn’t forced out on my ear.”

“Maybe…maybe in the future we could sell up and then…then buy a house together? A bigger house.”

Max couldn’t help but smile. “That sounds good, love. We may have need of a bigger house, or at least a bigger bedroom, especially with how many dominants you need.”

Max was pressing. He wanted to be mated to Harry, but he knew that he wasn’t going to be alone. Harry would need more mates. He was reminding Harry of that fact too.

Harry just nodded, there was no hint of distress or worry on his face as it was mentioned, and Max knew then, that Elder Midate was right. Harry truly was ready for this, and he would be Harry’s first picked dominant. That way…that way he would always be there to protect Harry, even from other dominants if it was needed.

“I know. We might need to get a Caesar.” Harry giggled.

“I’ve already got one of those.” Max grinned.

Harry gave him a grin. “No, those really huge beds that are like, eight foot? I can’t imagine that you’d fit in regular beds, aren’t they just standard six foot?”
“Yeah, six foot six as standard. I usually need a custom made one, then a custom mattress too. I wonder if Caesar knows there’s a bed named after him.”

“I looked at the bed sizes when I was looking for all the furniture for this place. The super Caesar is the biggest you can get. Nine feet by nine feet if I remember right.”

“That one might be best.” Max grinned. “The biggest we can get.”

Harry giggled. “Lots of room to roll around.” He waggled his eyebrows and Max laughed happily.

“Oh, Merlin, I adore you.”

Harry looked pleased to hear that. “Monday.” He said.

“Monday?” Max questioned.

“When we call the Elders to witness us bond. I don’t want anything to interrupt our special Sundays.”

Max grinned. “Okay, love. If this is what you want, then we have a date on Monday. I’ll still be over for breakfast mind.”

Harry laughed. “It’ll be on the table for you like always.”

Max sighed and he stood up. Harry leapt up right after and burrowed in tight for a hug. Max held him tighter and his Dracken raged. Harry was right, he wasn’t sure how much more his Dracken could take either. He calmed it, they had been patient up until now, another day would be nothing.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, love.” Max said, separating them and moving towards the fireplace.

“And then to Monday.” Harry said softly. “If you still want to, of course.”
“Wild hippogriffs couldn’t keep me away, love. I will always want to be in your life.”

Harry smiled and then Max was gone. He sat back and he thought about what he’d just offered. Was he even ready? He was nervous, but he had realised that he always would be nervous until he went through with it. He was scared about having mate meetings and being surrounded by dominant Drackens, but now more than ever, if he asked for something then it would be done. If he wanted to conduct his meetings one on one from either end of a Quidditch pitch, he’d get it. If he wanted to be cordoned off from everyone else and speak to the dominants through bulletproof glass, that is what would happen, he knew it.

He was as ready as he’d ever be for any this and truthfully, he just really, really wanted Max. He loved the man, he wanted to be mated to him, and though the sex issue was going to make him feel nervous until he actually experienced real sex, after his talk with Healer Vasey it was no longer enough to hold him back like it was before.

He switched everything off and he took his and Max’s mugs into the kitchen to put them in the sink. He decided to have a bath, a nice relaxing soak in the hot water would help ease away his stress and he would be able to think better, but he was sure this was for the best. It was time for him to move on now, it was time for him to start living his life again. It wouldn’t be the life that he had envisioned when he had first found out that he was a Dracken, but it would be a life, and he could share that life with Ismay and with Max.

Monday hadn’t come soon enough for him and Harry hefted up Ismay and he flooed to the Counsel Halls a whole hour earlier than expected. He was nervous, but mostly he was excited. It felt great to be excited about this next step in his life as he made his way up the stairs and to Anthanaric’s living room.

“Harry, you’re early.” Elder Vipond told him.

“I’m excited.” He said with a shy smile to the floor.

“Is this truly what you want?” Elder Midate asked him, for perhaps the thousandth time since he’d found out yesterday about Harry’s intentions to bond to Max today.

“Yes.” He said. “I want this to happen. I’m excited for this new part of my life to begin. It’s taken a while to get myself this far, but I really am feeling better, I’m feeling stronger, and I’m excited for today.”
“Are you sure that you’re ready?” Elder Trintus tried.

“I’m as ready as I’m ever going to be.” Harry replied honestly.

“Max is going to be my Daddy.” Ismay piped up. “He’s a good Daddy, not like the other one.”

Harry breathed through the panic of having Jefferus brought up, but he had taken the time, with Max yesterday afternoon, to explain to Ismay what today meant, what was going to happen, and she was very excited about having Max as a Daddy. Max had said that he was just as excited to gain a daughter, which had made Ismay so very happy. In her own words, Max had already been acting like a Daddy over the last eight months, all this meant to her was that now Max was going to live with them and he wouldn’t have to leave.

Harry was offered tea, Ismay was terrorising the poor guards who were on duty and because he was so early, he got to watch Captain Tuathal Foss drilling his men via an open window that he could lean out of. He watched as the men were shouted and screamed at, had hexes thrown at them, all while trying to complete what seemed to be the world’s most aggressive assault course with a dummy made of sandbags slung over their backs. At one point Captain Foss barreled a poor young man off his feet, picked up the sandbag dummy and proceeded to show his men exactly how things should be done.

“He’s a bit high handed at times, but he’s one of the greatest Captains for the task force we’ve had in some years.” Elder Midate told him.

“He’s the best, period.” Henry cut in. “Not afraid to get his hands dirty, willing and able to show everyone up, he beats down those young, arrogant little shits who think they’re better than him just because they’re younger. Nev is a very physical man, a man after my own heart, but he can show exceptional kindness too, just not to those arrogant new recruits down there.”

“I really like him.” Harry said. “He was very kind to me, he still is, and he carried me and Ismay from that place himself. He never delegated our safety to anyone else. It was important to him to do it himself, I could see that about him immediately, and I admire it. Though he was very physical with me at first.”

“How do you mean?” Elder Vipond asked, a bit of alarm showing through.

“That night is a bit of a blur to me, because I went feral. I thought they were poachers, and I was
protecting Ismay, so as you can imagine I wasn’t very happy to be cornered in a room with no exit by a group of men and Captain Foss needed to get the suppressant potion into me before I inadvertently hurt or killed anyone. I was in Dracken form after all, and I was threatening to use my claws.”

“His report did say that he grabbed Harry’s wrist and restrained him as the potion was administered.” Elder Midate reminded quietly.

Harry nodded. “He and some of the others might be dead right about now if he hadn’t acted as he did. I was in no mood to be lenient, I couldn’t understand them, so there was no chance to try to talk me down. Not back then, not while I believed I was protecting my daughter. I don’t hold it against him that he had to restrain me, even briefly, he could have sat on me and I wouldn’t have cared, he freed me, and that is all that mattered.”

The Elders nodded, settling back down and Harry went back to watching Captain Foss tearing a new arsehole into several new recruits, while shouting out encouragement or patting the older, more experienced members of his team on their backs or shoulders as they passed him, not slowing, not tiring, just carrying on while the new recruits were all but crawling on their bellies from exhaustion under the supervision of their Captain. Harry chuckled as he watched.

“He’ll get them up to speed, don’t you worry.” Elder Kirrian told him. “He hand picks his new recruits from the dozens of applicants. He never fails to whip them into shape. Those that survive his training that is.”

Harry chuckled again at that. “So only two or three of them from every batch?”

Henry Kirrian winked at him. “Sounds about right.”

Harry laughed.

“Can we please talk about your bonding, Harry?” Eder Trintus asked.

“What about it?” Harry asked, taking his gaze from Captain Foss and the task force and giving his attention to Quintalus Trintus.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t want to wait a while longer?” The man actually looked upset, so Harry
made an effort not to huff, tut or groan.

“No. I’ve waited long enough. Max is the man I want. I’ve always wanted him, but now…now I’m actually in a position where I feel able to give in to those needs. It hasn’t been an easy eight months, I’ll grant that, but I feel like I’m at a crossroads now with my Dracken side. I am physically and mentally ready for this, there is still lingering nerves, but I assume that that is normal as I have some doubts about certain things, but those things can only ever be proven wrong if I actually experience them. If I hold myself back now, then those doubts are still going to be there, in ten years they’ll still be festering in the back of my mind and I can’t hold my Dracken side back any longer. We’re together in our agreement that we want Max. If I do not do this today, I will walk one road and my Dracken another, and I will be pulled apart by my own fear and I cannot allow that to happen. We’re ready, we are so ready for this.”

“I suppose that we’re just being overprotective of you, sweet one.” Elder Midate sighed. “Of course we want you to be happy and healthy, in a mateship of your choosing with dominants who will love you and protect you, but we don’t want to say goodbye to you.”

Harry laughed. “Who says that it has to be goodbye just because I’ve mated?” He asked cheekily. “I’m still going to be visiting, popping in for tea and terrorising you all with Ismay. Just because I’ve mated doesn’t mean I’ll never see you again.”

“Mummy!” Ismay called out just before she charged over and clambered into his lap. “Where is Max, is he late? Does he not want us as family anymore?”

“No, Ismay.” Harry soothed gently. “We were just very early. It’s not yet reached the time that we said that we would meet Max, he’s still coming.”

“Oh. He needs to hurry up! I want him to be my Daddy.”

Harry smiled at her and he bent to kiss her flame red hair. She was adorable and now that she was coming up to four years old she was getting much better with her conversations, though some of the things that she said had him laughing and fretting in equal measure. She’d been afraid of the vacuum cleaner when he’d first used it, because she’d never seen one before because all the cleaning at the Perrots had been handled by the house-elf. She had been terrified that it would suck her up and she would have to live inside it for the rest of her life. Several times of vacuuming with Ismay on his hip, three times vacuuming with Max there to ‘protect’ Ismay from being sucked up, showing her repeatedly that it could not, in fact, suck up large objects by rolling it over a cushion, and then several times of Ismay ‘helping’ him vacuum by touching the hoover while he pushed it around and she was more confident now that it would not suck her up, but that had definitely been an experience.
“He will be here, Ismay.” He said surely.

Ismay nodded, trusting him, and Harry went back to watching Captain Foss drilling the new recruits, his voice bellowing across the grounds. It was hard to see him like this when Harry remembered him cooing so gently to him, holding him tight and securely as he walked him free from the Perrots estate for the first time in three and a half years. He had come a long way since then.

At five past nine in the morning, five minutes past the time agreed to have this meeting with Max, Harry was feeling decidedly nervous. Max had never been late before, and a thousand doubts flooded his brain making Harry feel weak and dizzy. Had Max actually changed his mind? Had he gotten cold feet and decided not to mate to him after all? No…no he had to believe that Max wanted this, wanted them, and that he was just running late.

“Where’s Max?” Ismay demanded. “You said he’d be here when that hand reached here.” She said, pointing at the clock on the wall, where the minute hand was at five past, not dead on twelve. “He’s not here.”

“He’s just late, Ismay.” Harry told her gently. “He will be here.” He insisted with a certainty that he no longer felt.

“You’re sure?” Ismay frowned.

Harry kissed that frown away. “Absolutely.”

“…shouldn’t be late for meetings.” Ismay was grumbling under her breath. Of course the intolerance for lateness stemmed from the Perrots teachings.

It was almost ten past, with the Elders looking angry and shifty, when Max came crashing into the room with all the finesse of a category five hurricane.

“You’re late!” Ismay accused before he could even open his mouth.

“I know. I know and I’m so sorry. My family insisted on coming with me and none of them were ready and I kept telling them to hurry up, but it was getting later and later and they still weren’t ready and before I knew it, it was already gone nine. As soon as I realised I was late I rushed here immediately. Harry, are you okay?”
“I’m fine. I knew you’d come.” He said calmly.

“You were supposed to be here at this time!” Ismay said, unwilling to forgive Max just yet for being late as she jabbed a finger back at the clock.

“I know, Princess. I’m very sorry.” He said, hunching down in front of Harry, putting himself at eye level with Ismay on his lap. “Can you forgive me?”

“No! I don’t get to have a new Daddy every day! You were late for being my Daddy by this much.” She said, pointing back at the clock.

“You’ve had it when she actually learns how to tell the time.” Harry told Max with a smile.

Max managed a tentative smile, but he still looked very unsure, and it wasn’t a good look on Max, who was usually so laid back and confident.

“Ismay, it’s only polite to accept an apology.” Harry chided. “Max has said that he was sorry and he has a valid excuse.”

“No excuse for not wanting to be my Daddy!” Ismay pouted.

“I still want to be your Daddy, of course I do, Ismay, but only if you’ll let me.”

“Being late doesn’t mean you don’t want us?” She asked.

“Baby girl, of course not. I was just late.”

Ismay held out her arms and Max swept her into his own massive arms and clutched her in a tight hug. Harry watched them with a smile before movement had him looking up, over Max’s head, to where his three parents stood. Max’s brother and three sisters were there too, as were Max’s grandparents, Alexander and Kimberly.

“Well, now that you’ve actually bothered to turn up…” Henry Kirrian said gruffly, trailing his
sentence off with the hint of a threat in his voice.

Max didn’t rise to the taunt, instead he pulled back from Ismay and turned a blinding smile to Harry, who felt himself blushing.

“Will you do me the massive honour of bonding with me?” Max asked him, holding out his bare left hand…it actually sounded a little like a proposal, and with Max down on his knees in front of him, Ismay sitting in his right arm, it almost was like a wedding proposal, minus the engagement ring.

“You’re such a dope.” Harry chuckled. “Of course I will.”

Months and months of excessive control, of making sure not the barest hint of skin brushed against skin, and the first touch of their hands joining together almost brought tears to Harry’s eyes.

They didn’t stop, they held hands, skin on skin, but Harry pressed closer, right in against Max’s body, and then Max tipped his head up, Ismay being held off to the side, and they kissed for the first time, a sweet, gentle, chaste press of lips. Harry all but fell from his chair to slip onto Max’s lap, arms around his neck, seeking more and more contact.

“Is that all we have to do?” Ismay asked innocently. “Does Max become my Daddy with a kiss?”

Harry dropped his head from Max’s and he laughed.

“No, Ismay. Max and I are bonded now, which means that in two months he will be my mate forever. Which means he’ll be your Daddy forever.”

“But you can have a kiss if you want one.” Max added.

Ismay dived on him and gave him a big, smacking kiss to the mouth and Harry laughed harder, until she turned and did the same to him.

“There.” She said happily. “Disney always ends with a kiss too.”

“Only if you’re watching the Princess and the frog.” Max’s brother, Caesar, muttered just loudly
enough for them to hear. “Max obviously being the ugly little toad.”

“Does that make me the princess?” Harry asked with a smile.

“Of course.” Caesar grinned.

“So this is all just one big fairy tale?”

“Feels like it.” Max said while Harry nodded.

Max nuzzled his face into Harry’s neck, taking the time to feel as much of that gloriously soft skin as he could now that he was allowed to. Harry’s hands had yet to leave his hair, which was freshly cut, short and decidedly uncurly. The touch was sending shivers down his spine as Harry’s small hands caressed his scalp.

“Can we go home now, together?” Ismay asked.

Harry smiled at her and wrapped an arm around her back, so that she was included in a sort of three-way hug.

“Of course.” He said gently.

“How about we watch Disney together, and then for lunch we make pizzas?” Max asked her.

Ismay nodded fervently and Harry laughed. Max stood with one arm still holding Ismay and the other holding Harry.

“Well, sorry to love and leave you all so quickly, but I am taking my bonded mate and my daughter home for some domestic bliss.” Max said with a wide grin. Harry’s hand was still in his hair.

Harry barely had time to call out a goodbye, and Ismay just shouted out a short, loud ‘bye’ and that was that. Max hurried them down the stairs, through the floo and Harry found himself back in his home with his bonded dominant mate.
“Ismay, go and get Cloppity and Cecilia for Disney.” Harry said, his eyes all for Max.

“Okay!” Ismay agreed and when Max put her down, she was gone, clambering up the stairs noisily.

Harry’s mouth found Max’s and he was surprised by how easy this way, by how much he wanted it, how unafraid he felt. It was just so right, so wonderful, and he locked his arms around Max’s head and held him in place by his hair as they kissed for the first time in open mouthed passion.

They heard Ismay clattering back down the stairs and they pulled apart, the both of them breathing heavily, Harry panting hard, and they shared a grin.

“I’ll get us some tea, you put Disney on.” Harry said. “Ismay, do you want tea, sweetheart?”

“Yes, Mummy!”

Harry chuckled, dived forward to kiss Max again, before he was placed on his feet and he went to boil the kettle for tea while Max asked Ismay which film she wanted on. It was going to be very difficult to stop touching Max now that they were allowed to do so. Eight months of denying themselves, and their Drackens, and now they were bonded. He had been told not to expect flashing lights and fireworks when they touched, but Harry had felt something, a subtle shifting within his Dracken mentality. There were no fireworks or lights or anything, just as he’d been told, but he just knew that he was bonded to Max, properly, normally. It felt right, he was excited for the coming weeks and months. The sex issue would need to be addressed sooner rather than later, before it caused a blockade in their mateship, but Harry was surprised to find that he wasn’t too bothered by it anymore. He was nervous, a little apprehensive about it, but it wasn’t the all-consuming fear it had been before. His talk with Healer Vasey about it had eased that back. He wasn’t too terribly excited to have sex, but he was curious enough after his talk with his Mind Healer to know how it felt with Max versus what he’d already experienced. Now he just needed to gather the courage to ask Max about it and actually go through with it. His curiosity would help, that it was Max would help more, but until he plucked up enough courage to put himself in such a vulnerable position, the trepidation would always be there.

Harry took the three cups of tea back into the living room and this time, today, he was able to sit beside Max and snuggle into him, without needing to worry about where his hands were in relation to Max’s body, or needing Ismay to sit between them. She was happily down in the armchair that Max had bought her for her third birthday, her cup of tea by her hand, Cloppity and Cecilia in her lap, leaving Harry and Max free to cuddle and canoodle on the settee, stealing snogs and just touching one another. It was the first time in months that Harry’s Dracken wasn’t screeching in his ear or throwing a fit. It felt good. Oh so good.
It was three weeks later when Harry gathered the courage to try anything more than just kissing and cuddling. He had slept like a baby tucked up in Max’s arms every night since they had bonded, but that was all they did do while wrapped around one another in bed…sleep.

Harry could see the sexual frustration in Max, he felt it too, in the form of Max’s erection accidentally poking him in the night, and every single morning too. He felt the same tension, the same overwhelming need, but he knew now that Max would never broach the subject with him. He would never bring it up, even if Harry chose to wait for their heat period in five more weeks, Max would never mention it. It was down to him, and tonight, as he watched the six O’clock news without really hearing or seeing it while Max put Ismay to bed, he planned how to bring it up.

He sipped on his tea, Max’s getting colder on the table as Ismay likely messed him about upstairs, begging for just one more story when she had probably already had four, and he planned out word for word what he wanted to say.

“Oh, she’s being a terror tonight.” Max complained, falling onto the settee, his arm automatically wrapping around Harry’s shoulders. “Three stories, six rounds of goodnight kisses for her, Cloppity and Cecelia and a plea to get up and play games. She finally fell asleep with the last story.”

Harry chuckled. “I’m glad you got to deal with that one.” He teased.

Max snorted and turned to kiss him. Harry responded happily, eagerly. This they were used to, this kissing, teasing, even petting and clenching, as Max gripped Harry’s waist and squeezed gently, his fingers digging in and touching, but they never went any further.

“Max…” Harry breathed gently, turning his head and letting Max kiss down his neck and throat. His bonded mate hummed to show he was listening, but he did not remove his lips from Harry’s skin. “I’ve been thinking, well, I’ve been thinking a lot lately, since before we mated even, and…damn.”

Max did pull away from him then, those sapphire blue eyes looking at him intently.

“Are you okay? If you’re not comfortable with this then just say so, Harry, I can wait.”

Harry laughed at that. “I fucking can’t.” He insisted. “The frustration alone is trying to kill me, Max. I want…I want to go further tonight, but…but it’s not easy for me to…I don’t know what to do, I’ve never experienced real sex, and I want to, but I’m scared too.”

“Are you sure?” Max asked him.
Harry nodded. “Yes, I really am sure, but…but I need you to…I need you to…”

“Take control and show you how it’s done?” Max guessed.

Harry nodded gratefully, his heart beating in anticipation, his nerves and doubt eating away at him, but he wanted this, he needed it. They both did.

Max took the TV remote and shut the TV off and he scooped Harry up into his arms and walked towards the stairs, switching lights out as he went.

Harry didn’t realise he had been holding his breath until they reached the bedroom and Max switched on the light.

“I haven’t see you naked yet.” Max told him, setting him down on the bed.

Harry inhaled sharply as those words send a jag of…something, through his body.

“I haven’t see you naked either.” Harry pointed out, and suddenly he just really, really wanted to see Max with no clothes on. He wanted to see that hard, muscled body without anything obstructing his view.

“Well then, let’s do something about that.” Max smiled, his voice noticeably deeper.

He gripped the hem of his shirt and he pulled it up over his head and Harry got a glorious view of his six pack.

“Don’t limit yourself to just looking.” Max teased. “Feel free to touch.”

Harry laughed, but it came out more nervous than he would have liked. He shifted forward and he reached out a shaking hand to touch those hard muscles overlaid with soft skin. He stroked his hand over each of the little ridges of muscle that made up Max’s abs and then slid it up to just touch skin.

Max’s hands interrupted by reaching down and flicking open the button on his jeans and slowly lowering the zip. Harry watched him as if in a trance, just waiting for more skin to be revealed.
Max slipped out of his jeans, kicking them away, allowing Harry to reach out and just touch his legs, small fingers stroking over the silky soft little hairs on his thighs and Max tried not to jerk and move as that gentle touch caught a sensitive patch on his inside thigh. Harry’s hand just ghosted over the bulge in his boxers and Harry gasped and withdrew his hand quickly.

Max chuckled deeply. “It’s alright.” He encouraged.

“Take them off.” Harry said quietly.

Max did as Harry had asked and he pushed his boxers down and stood, silently and still, as Harry’s green eyes roved over every inch of him. The tip of his tongue just caught his top lip as Harry licked at it, seemingly unaware of what he was doing, or just what it was doing to Max to watch him and he had to swallow hard and root himself to the spot as that small hand reached out to touch his cock.

It was barely a touch, but Max felt it like a burn and he groaned low, in the back of his throat, he felt his cock twitch in Harry’s hand and when he next looked down at Harry, he had a strange look on his face…possessive, curious, self-satisfied, it tested Max’s control, but he forced himself to stand and endure Harry’s teasing touches and his scrutiny. Harry needed this.

It took long minutes, very long minutes enduring the touches and stroking, before Harry pulled back and after only a moment’s hesitation, gripped the hem of his shirt and pulled it off. He hunched his shoulders, wrapped his skinny arms around a thin chest and flat, smooth stomach, every inch of him screaming insecure and uncomfortable. Max took control, reaching out with just his fingers, stroking and touching lightly, how Harry had touched him.

“You’re very beautiful, Harry.” He said.

“He used to say that.” Harry said, shivering as if he were cold.

“I don’t care what he used to say. He’s dead, and he was never your mate. You’re my mate, and I am yours. Your wings will take my colours after your heat period, you will carry my children, and you are very beautiful.”

“I wonder what colours will go where.” Harry said in an effort to get things back on track.

“Pull out your wings.” Max encouraged.

Harry did as he’d been told and those gloriously white wings, with their pure white scales, stretched
out before automatically folding back to tuck into a more comfortable position.

“No, Harry, keep them stretched out for me.” Max insisted, slipping up onto the bed.

Harry stretched them back out and he watched curiously as Max reached out a hand to touch the nearest wing.

“I think they’ll look wonderful studded with blue and black.” Max said, stroking along the wings, touching the thin ridges, running his thumb pad over the scales all the while Harry moaned and shifted under his touches. Their wings were incredibly sensitive after all, to any and all touches.

“I want them to take your colours.” Harry moaned.

“Take off your jeans, Harry.”

Harry did as he’d been told and his hands fell to the button and the zip, undoing both. He pushed them down and kicked them off, Max helping by gabbing a leg and pulling. Harry’s socks followed, and then he was subjected to the same touches and strokes, the same scrutiny as he had given to Max.

Max stroked over the skinny legs and he swore to feed Harry more. Now that he was living here, and he had control of the kitchen (for the most part) he was going to insist on feeding Harry up a little. He was still much too skinny for an almost twenty-one year old man. It wasn’t Harry’s fault, of course not, but now that he was getting the chance to take care of his submissive mate, he was going to take it.

Max reached for the waistband of Harry’s boxers and he was encouraged when Harry helped him take them off, leaving himself bare, but once Harry noticed him looking, he went red and covered his face with both his hands. Again his insecurities were coming into play.

“You’re beautiful.” Max repeated, taking Harry’s hands from his face. “You are. Do not hide yourself, Harry.”

Max smoothed his hands over Harry’s body, starting from the hands he was holding, down his arms, over his shoulders and then down his body to his toes.

“If you tell me to stop, I will back off immediately.” Max said seriously. “I mean it, Harry, whenever you say stop, no matter what we’re doing, I will back off.”
“I trust you.” Harry said softly, and those three words were the greatest words he could ever hear coming from Harry’s mouth.

He had once believed that the best words he could ever hear from his submissive mate would be ‘I love you’, but going through this situation, knowing what Harry had been through, he knew now what a lie that was. He had had Harry’s love for months, perhaps even years, though Harry had been saying that he loved him for weeks now, but this was the first time that Harry had ever said explicitly that he trusted him with such a serious, intent look upon his face, like he truly meant the words. Compared to that, compared to having Harry’s trust, love was cheap.

“You’ll remember to stop me if you need to?” Max asked.

Harry nodded. Max nodded too and he bent down to kiss Harry.

“Lay down for me, love.” Max encouraged and he helped Harry to lie down on the bed, nestling his head in the pillow. “Comfortable?”

Harry chuckled at his fussing. “Yes.”

“Good, now I am going to touch and kiss every single inch of your body.” He said brightly.

“Okay.” Harry said, not knowing what else to say.

Max laid on his stomach next to Harry, not wanting to hover over him, not so soon. He balanced on his one arm and he touched with the other. He used his fingers, the palm of his hand, his nails and then he lowered his mouth to Harry’s body and he used his lips, his tongue and even his teeth to get reactions and sounds from Harry.

The sounds he made too, they tightened Max’s gut, it was better than he could have hoped for, Harry responding in such a way. He’d been ready for anything, fear, tears, pushing him away, he would do anything to help Harry, but he was glad that Harry could stand his touch.

Max went to grab the bottle of lube he’d squirreled away in the bedside table, he didn’t like the conjured lube, it didn’t work as well, nor did it last long enough. He’d rather pay for the bottle of lube and have better quality. Harry deserved only the best.

Max flipped open the top and he squeezed a glob onto his fingers, planning in advance exactly what he was going to do and how quickly. Or rather how slowly, because he was going to go slower than
slow. It was just after seven in the night, they had hours and hours before they usually went to sleep, and he planned on using all of them.

He gently touched Harry’s cock, but that one touch had those eyes snapping open and Harry automatically pulled away.

“Hey, it’s still me. Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Yeah.” Harry said softly. “You just surprised me, that’s all. It was cold.”

“It’s just lube, it helps.”

“Helps what?”

Max blinked. “Harry…” Max stopped and debated whether or not he wanted to bring this up, whether Harry would appreciate it being brought up. He decided that communication was the key here and he sat up. “Harry, did you ever get foreplay?”

Harry actually snorted out a laugh. “No.” He said, so simply, so easily.

“You’ve never gotten oral sex before?”

“Once, but I never liked it and it wasn’t him.”

“Then who…?” Max trailed off, not wanting to ask, but unsure what was being alluded to.

“I need two mates to get me pregnant. He brought in one of his vile friends for my heat period. He did it, just the once.”

“Did he ever prepare you?”

Harry did laugh at that. “He beat me, raped me and did everything he could to humiliate and hurt me, and you think he would take the care or the time to prepare me for sex? No, he thought that it was
beneath him to do those things.”

“You must have been in so much pain.” Max said sadly.

Harry swallowed, but he seemed calmer. He nodded. “It’s not really a pain you can get used to either, the horrible, throbbing, stabbing sensation low in your belly and through to your back. I would usually bleed for a time afterwards too.”

“If I could I would kill him all over again. Will you let me show you what it should be like?”

Harry sucked in a breath, but he nodded too.

“Tell me to stop if you need to.” Max reminded him.

He moved to lie between Harry’s legs, again trying to make himself seem smaller, less threatening, by lowering his body.

He started slowly, carefully, just letting his lips touch Harry’s cock, kissing it, getting Harry used to him touching him in that place. Some touches were too light and Harry would giggle or squirm, but Max didn’t mind, Harry was enjoying the touch, no matter if it was not quite the reaction he was going for, it was a positive reaction and at this point, that was what mattered the most.

He upped his game by bringing his tongue into play, licking at Harry and listening as the giggling changed into soft gasps and moans and the squirming turned into more sensual shifts of the body as pleasure started awakening.

Max went from licking to sucking suddenly, one moment licking from base to tip, the next sliding his mouth over Harry and sucking on him lightly, gently, nothing too bold or strong, but still Harry squirmed and moaned, hands fisting the sheets, the heels of his feet digging in and kicking out.

Max suspected that an orgasm was building in Harry, from the way he moved and was acting, to the noises he was making, Max knew the signals well, and he wanted to give Harry that orgasm so badly, but from one moment to the next, he was forced to pull back when Harry gasped out a sharp ‘stop’.

Max pulled back immediately, he removed all parts of his body from touching Harry’s and he watched as Harry wriggled and writhed on the duvet.

“Are you okay?” Max asked him softly.
“I don’t…I don’t understand.” Harry told him. “It’s so…it’s too powerful.”

“The feelings?” Max asked.

Harry nodded as he continued to shift restlessly.

“I’ve never felt like that before.”

“Because this time it’s consensual.” Max pointed out gently.

“Feels strange, it makes my body feel like it’s going to snap.”

“It’s just the pleasure building.” Max explained patiently. “Your body won’t snap, but you’ll release your pleasure. You were almost at the point of orgasm, Harry. A little bit more and in a way you would have snapped, your pleasure would have been released.”

“Can we try it again?” Harry asked quietly, almost as if he was expecting him to refuse.

“Of course.”

Max laid down on his belly again, between Harry’s legs, and he touched both hands to Harry’s inside thighs, letting him know where he was and what he was touching, building up to putting his mouth back on Harry’s cock.

He took Harry back into his mouth and he started off slowly, working his way up to giving stronger sucks, his thumbs rubbing circles into Harry’s inside thighs, but once again Harry shouted out a choked off ‘stop’ right before he reached orgasm and Max again backed off.

Harry wailed and he writhed this time, his hands going to touch himself, trying to give some relief, but unable to deal with the strong, powerful feeling of a building orgasm.

“Just ignore me and do it.” Harry complained.

“Absolutely not. I will not now, nor will I ever, carry on after you have told me to stop, Harry.” Max said firmly. “This is your choice, your decision, but if you tell me to ignore you telling me to stop,
and then you really don’t like something, how will I know to stop? You need to ride through these feelings, it needs to be your decision, and you need to do this.”

“I can’t, I automatically say stop when...when it reaches a certain point, I need to cum.”

Max smiled down at Harry. “Pick a safety word.”

Harry blinked up at him, uncomprehendingly.

“Pick a word that you won’t automatically say. Pick a word to tell me to stop, that isn’t stop, and we’ll see if that works.”

“Like what?” Harry said curiously.

“It can be anything you want. Something that you won’t normally say.”

Harry frowned and thought about it, his legs still shifting a little, still wound up and in need of release.

“Violin.” Harry said eventually. “I never wanted Ismay playing that horrid thing. It hurt her, I didn’t like it and I wanted her to stop playing it.”

Max nodded. “Now, if you really, really don’t like something, saying stop won’t stop me, okay? I will only stop if you say violin. Do you understand, Harry?”

Harry nodded.

“Are you comfortable with this?”

“Yes, I keep saying stop, but I just want you to carry on, but I can’t handle the feelings.”
“Try saying my name instead of stop.” Max said, giving him a wink.

Harry laughed, but he nodded. He swallowed and settled himself back against the pillows. “Third time lucky?” He giggled.

Max winked at him again and settled once more on his belly between Harry’s skinny legs. “Let’s find out, shall we?”

He once again started slowly, building up to sucking and bobbing on Harry and he listened as Harry wailed and wriggled. He watched as Harry threw his head back and rubbed it restlessly over the pillow, making his hair a million times worse than usual.

“Stop.” Harry burst out, and though it broke his heart, and it didn’t really sit well with him, he carried on sucking on Harry.

Harry wailed and twisted on the bed, his hips bucking and his feet kicking.

“Stop.” Harry said again, and this second command almost forced Max to ignore the wait for the word ‘violin’ and pull away, but he kept at it, sucking on Harry, bobbing on him, one hand rolling his balls gently and Harry mewled and twisted and Max had to use his other hand to hold Harry’s hips still.

“Max. Max. Max.” Harry called out and that made him smile around the cock in his mouth. “Max!”

Max swallowed and he gentled his touch, he stopped sucking, instead he licked gently to clean him as Harry wriggled and writhed, coming down from the high of his first consensual orgasm.

Max popped off of Harry and propped himself up on his elbows, he reached down and touched that fluffy hair, stroked Harry’s slack face, giving him affectionate touches.

“How are you feeling?” He asked.

“That…it was…I feel amazing.” Harry babbled with the most adorable, goofy grin on his face as his lidded green eyes gazed up at him.
“You didn’t say violin.” Max felt compelled to point out.

“I didn’t want to.” Harry said, his writhing calming down. “I just couldn’t stop myself from automatically saying stop.”

“You got your orgasm.” Max chuckled.

Harry nodded. “It felt strange, but good strange. I’ve…I’ve orgasmed before, but never like that.”

“I’m glad that it’s different for you.” Max said. “Do you want to carry on, or do you want to leave it here?”

“More.” Harry said with a shy blush.

Max shoved down the wave of relief that came with that one word, his own erection was painfully hard at the moment, but his own pleasure came secondary to Harry’s comfort. If Harry had wanted to leave things here, as they were, Max would have had absolutely no problem with it, but he couldn’t help being relieved that Harry wanted to carry on.

Max kissed his way up Harry’s body to his mouth. He reached for the bottle of lube again and he flipped the top off, squeezing another glob onto his fingers. This time he rubbed them together to spread the lube over his own fingers.

“Ready to try something else?”

Harry nodded trustingly, he looked up at Max with wide eyes and Max swallowed at the trust he was being given from Harry. His submissive mate.

It felt amazing to be able to think such things officially. Harry was his submissive mate, they were bonded, just five more weeks and it would be forever.

He touched Harry’s entrance with his fingers, just rubbing the lube into him, and though Harry squeaked a little, he didn’t move away, he didn’t say violin.

“Is that okay?” He asked softly. “Remember, if you don’t like it, just…”
“I like it.” Harry interrupted. “A little strange, but it’s not bad. Cold though.”

“That won’t last for much longer, I promise.” Max said softly, rubbing his fingers slowly and gently.

Harry wriggled a little, but Max could see that he was trying to lie still, to feel everything. He encouraged Harry’s natural movement and just followed his body with his fingers, this time lightly pressing one single finger into Harry’s body, slowly, carefully, watching Harry critically.

Harry didn’t react negatively, he stilled himself and Max watched as he considered what he was feeling.

“Alright?” Max asked him softly.

Harry nodded. “I was making sure it didn’t hurt. It doesn’t.”

Max bent over Harry to kiss him, smiling when Harry wrapped his arms around his neck and kept him in place for a deeper, more passionate kiss. Max took the time to slip his finger out before pressing in two. Harry stilled once more, his legs flexed, his hips rose a little, but he didn’t even break their kiss.

Max played around with Harry a little, probing and pressing, searching for internal spots that gave him one of Harry’s little wiggles, but it wasn’t until he touched Harry’s prostate gland that he got a full reaction, and Harry snapped his head away, breaking their kiss, and he gasped loudly, his hips jerked sharply.

“This is your prostate gland.” Max told Harry, just in case he didn’t actually know what it was. “It’s very sensitive as it’s full of little nerve endings that just love being poked and prodded, being played with and stroked. Let me show you.”

Max stroked a single fingertip over the little gland and Harry whined happily.

“More.” Harry begged and Max bent back over his little submissive and he nuzzled into Harry’s neck before moving to get a proper kiss.

“Are you ready to go all the way? Or do you want me to suck you off again?” Max asked. “Whatever you want, love.”
Harry looked a little indecisive, but Max could see him steeling himself. He nodded. “Yes, I want to try it, Max. I want to try real, consensual sex for the first time.”

Max nodded. “You can stop me at any time, Harry. At the beginning, in the middle, near the end, I don’t care. If you feel uncomfortable, any pain, like you don’t want to continue, or you just want to stop, tell me and I will. I will not be angry. I would be more angry if you tried to force yourself through it, okay?”

Harry nodded. “I will remember to say violin.” He said softly. “But I want to try, Max.”

“Alright, I just wanted to remind you to say violin if you needed to at any point of this.”

“Maybe…maybe if I can do this, then I won’t be so nervous, and I’ll never have to say it.” Harry said softly.

Max smiled at him and he kissed him softly. “I love you, Harry. I never want to hurt you, I never will if I have any control over it, but I’m so proud of you for being willing to try.”

Harry nodded. “Okay, show me real sex, Max.”

Max chuckled and he reached again for the bottle of lube. This time it went into the palm of his hand and he stroked himself. He used the excess to rub his fingers back over Harry’s entrance, just making sure that his actions would be smooth and painless.

Max guided himself to Harry’s entrance and he noticed Harry wriggling and shifting a little.

“Hey.” He said.

Harry looked up at him and Max dived down to kiss him. “It’s going to be fine.” He said.

Harry smiled and nodded. Max shuffled forward, planted his knees and he pushed into Harry’s body slowly, carefully, but in one long, smooth thrust.

“Oh.” Harry gasped breathlessly as he scrabbled to clench his hands into the duvet, even as his hips
flexed and his knees bent, pushing his heels into the duvet too.

“Okay?” Max asked him, forcing himself to speak through the indescribable pleasure that was assaulting him. He had locked his body, forcing himself to remain completely still within Harry’s body to give him a moment to get used to the sensations.

Harry just moaned, wriggling and squirming, unable to stay still and he was driving Max insane, because he was determined not to move until Harry had told him to, but fucking hell it was hard to hold himself still when Harry was moving on him in such a way, whining and babbling incoherently.

“Harry, are you okay?” Max asked a little louder.

Harry nodded hard. “Yes. Yes. Feels…it feels, I just…please move.”

Max positioned himself carefully, with excessive thought to Harry’s comfort and his pleasure, and he slipped an arm under Harry’s shoulders, his other hand pressed in at Harry’s waist. He merely flexed his thighs, pushing himself deeper into Harry for a moment, before he withdrew only slightly, leaving most of himself still nestled inside his mate.

He went slowly, carefully, just pushing and pulling minimally, letting Harry adjust, letting him just feel the sensations.

It was when Harry arched under him, gripping his shoulder blades tight, his short, blunt nails digging into skin that Max took them to the next level, pulling out a little further and then pushing back in. He listened obsessively to every sound Harry made, listening out for the word violin, but Harry was gasping and moaning, he would wail or say his name too, but he did not say violin, he didn’t even say stop.

“Max!” Harry almost shouted and Max dipped his head to nuzzle the top of Harry’s head. He cursed himself for being so tall.

He held Harry tighter and he started pushing them both towards orgasm. It wouldn’t take him much. He had been on the precipice for a while now, just the thought of being inside of Harry for the first time was doing terrible things to his stamina and self-control and watching Harry, listening to him, as he wriggled and writhed, moaned and mewled underneath him, clenching around him spasmodically, was driving him mad. He wouldn’t be able to keep this up for much longer.

He curled his hand around Harry and he gripped him just tight enough for Harry to feel the pressure, the friction, as Max stroked him as quickly as he could, his thrusts, in comparison, were rather slow and steady, but he truly didn’t want to hurt him. It would ruin this level of trust if he moved wrong and caused a tear, which would then cause Harry to bleed.
Harry’s wriggling picked up and he started kicking out with his feet, panting and choking out gasped moans of Max’s name until with one final, high pitched wail, Harry reached his orgasm and he clenched so tightly around Max that his vision whited out and he was dragged into his own orgasm.

His body clenched, his muscles shook, and he steadfastly held himself over Harry, unwilling to fall on him and hurt him. Once he was sure that he could control himself, he pulled out of Harry’s body slowly, carefully, and he laid down on his side beside Harry, tugging him into a cuddle.

“That was…was…” Harry panted, unable to speak a full sentence.

“How are you feeling?” Max asked, his voice noticeably deeper and gruffer.

“Amazing.” Harry said, his own voice deeper and rougher than usual. “Tired, blissful, very relaxed.”

Max chuckled and shifted himself down, so that his and Harry’s faces were level, and he kissed Harry deeply.

“I love you.” He said.

“I love you too, Max.” Harry replied, cuddling in closer than close. “Sex is amazing with you.”

Max smiled, but he didn’t offer any teasing comment to that. It wasn’t the time, this wasn’t the situation to joke about it, as Harry had been very nervous and scared about sex, and after what he’d been through, no one could blame him for that.

“It makes me happy to know that you enjoyed it.” He said instead. “I really did.”

Harry cracked open dark green eyes and shot a grin up at him. “Can we do it again tomorrow?”

“If we’re up early enough, we can have a bit of lazy morning sex before we have to get up.”

That made Harry laugh. “Okay, I’ll hold you to that.”
Harry yawned and Max snagged him into his arms and he shifted them both under the twisted, messy duvet. He laid Harry down before shaking out the duvet, fixing the cover and then laying it over his mate, slipping in beside him.

“The cover will need to be washed tomorrow.” Harry murmured sleepily.

Max hummed, settling next to Harry and wrapping him up tightly in his arms. “We can change it in the morning, after we’ve had some morning fun.”

That made Harry chuckle sleepily, and with another yawn, he fell silent. Max watched him for a short time, but he was tired too after their activities and he fell asleep much earlier than he usually did. It was only just gone nine at night, they would undoubtedly be up much earlier than usual the next morning. The thought made him grin sleepily to himself. He was glad that Harry had finally overcome his old fear of sex. Max had proven undeniably to Harry that sex and rape were completely different, and now that Harry had experienced real sex, Max could almost feel all of that fearful tension draining away from him. He was glad that Harry had allowed him to prove himself, to prove that sex and rape were different. He loved Harry so much, and now he wasn’t afraid to show it in any way. It felt great.

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Harry was very much on cloud nine as he spent his days loved up with Max and laughing and playing with Ismay. He was anxious about his heat period, but he had learnt to share such things now and one night, while cuddled up with Max in front of the TV when Ismay was safely tucked up in bed, Harry had shared his fears about the heat period coming up in just a few days.

“Oh, Harry, love, why didn’t you say sooner?” Max had said, pulling him up into his lap and squeezing him tight. “I could have eased these fears straight away.”

“Really? Is…is that not going to be the same either?”

“Harry, your Dracken believed that you were mated to him, but you weren’t. You were not mated, so he felt no compulsion to mate with you in return. You wouldn’t have had a normal heat period. It will be different, like having sex with me was different.”

“So…so I won’t feel like I’m being flayed alive?”
“No, we are mated together, well, bonded for the moment, but I am bonded to you in return, my love, I will be compelled to mate with you, the burning need will affect me too and we really will be like rutting animals. We will rarely stop, I will not leave you alone, you will not be left to deal with this alone and you are going to feel so satisfied and just so much better once it’s all over. You will sleep for several days after, usually four or five, but that’s just to catch up on sleep and to keep you lying still and flat to help encourage any conceived child to take root.”

Harry nodded and he relaxed a little more. Like with the sex issue, he would be a little nervous until he had experienced it for himself, properly, but he trusted Max, and he had been absolutely right about the sex being different, so Harry had absolutely no reason not to trust that Max would be right about this also.

“I’m not sure how I feel about needing a mate meeting in about three weeks’ time, but I’m no longer afraid either. I’m nervous, but not afraid. That’s a good sign, right?”

Max bent and kissed him. “Don’t forget that I will be there with you every step of the way.”

“And no one can take me either, because we’ll be mated. You would always be able to find me through our bond alone.”

“I would kill anyone who tried, love.” Max swore to him seriously and that settled Harry down again.

Harry was silent for a moment, but with his heat period in a few days, and needing to call a mate meeting shortly after it was over, it was always on his mind, and he couldn’t help focusing on it. He truly wasn’t scared, per se, but he was nervous, he was hesitant to break this amazing bubble he’d been locked up in with Max and Ismay.

That was another thing troubling him about his heat period… he would be separated from his daughter for two weeks, and while she was used to this, as he’d had heat periods with Jeff… if those abominations could even still be called heat periods, he still wasn’t sure how she would handle him being away from her now that they were out of the Perrots home.

He had sat her down and he’d explained, as he always had, about what was coming and what it would mean and how she would be going to stay with Aesha and Anthanaric while he was on his heat period and she had nodded understandingly, but he wasn’t sure that when it came time to drop her off and leave her that she wouldn’t be upset or distressed and he knew that his Dracken wouldn’t be able to handle it.

She had gotten used to him and Max being here, it had been ten months, almost a year since their rescue, and Max had been living here permanently now for two months. She had gotten used to her routine with them both, she loved playing with Max, she loved helping him in the kitchen while Harry sat at the table with a cup of honey tea watching and smiling at them. She had gotten used to
Max never having to leave in such a short amount of time, and now she would need to go two weeks without seeing either of them, it was going to upset her, put a strain on her and Harry hated the very thought of it.

“What is bothering you still, love?” Max asked, squeezing Harry’s waist gently.

Harry hummed. “The heat period and having to be separated from Ismay. It’ll pass like an instant for both of us, but she’s only three, I just don’t like the thought of being away from her for so long. I never did like it.”

“She will be very well cared for this time, Harry. You know that she will. She’s getting more used to my family too, Granddad with be dropping in on her, my parents too. My sisters all adore her and Caesar said he’d take Nora and Bea for play dates too, she won’t be abandoned. It’s more like a holiday, and you just know that if she asks she’ll get to have that massive play crèche all to herself, as if any of the Elders would deny her anything. Two weeks of playing on that every day from morning till evening and she won’t want to come home.”

Harry laughed, as he knew that it was true. Ismay loved the soft play crèches. Max had found one very close by, it had a café attached and they would walk there every weekend, have two cups of tea and a slice of cake each, while Ismay ran absolute riot with a multitude of different playmates that she’d met that day, having fun and socialising too.

It was a brilliant way for him and Max to have a sort of date with one another, while Ismay was included and having fun, but wasn’t sat listening to them or caught under their feet. They didn’t have to worry about her, which left them free to focus on one another.

“Have you thought more on what you want to do for your birthday?”

Harry grunted. He was turning twenty-one soon after he woke up from his heat period and he had scheduled his mate meetings for August, after his birthday.

“I’m still not sure if I actually want to do anything. It’s all such a shock, Max. I’m still getting used to being free again, even almost a year after. You saw how I reacted at Christmas and people gave me presents. It was the second week of January before I brought myself to finish opening them all. I just…I don’t think I could handle a fuss.”

Max hummed thoughtfully. “Perhaps just a birthday tea then. So you get to have a bit of cake, and a little bit of exposure to this sort of social aspect of normal life without throwing you in at the deep end. It’ll be good for Ismay too, you leading by example so that she can learn her behaviours off of
“You’re doing a good enough job of that for the both of us and your birthday isn’t until September.” Harry smiled. Max was going to have a huge birthday party, his whole family would be there, and he was insistent that he show Ismay a proper birthday bash.

“But she is always, always, going to look to you before she does me. You’re her Mother, and she adores you, and you’ve been in her life since it started. I know she sees me as a Dad, especially now that I’ve moved in, but, for now at least, she still looks to you more. I’m not saying go crazy and invite a hundred people, but a small get together to celebrate you turning twenty-one, just to show her that it’s normal, will help socialise her. And you know she just loves a reason to dress up and play hostess.”

Harry snorted at that. “As if she needs a reason.” He grinned. “I still remember a certain someone sat in a play dress, tiara on his head, as he pushed a tiny doll’s pushchair around ‘buying’ plastic groceries from a mermaid queen.”

Max actually blushed and put a hand to the back of his neck. He laughed off his embarrassment though.

“To be fair, I thought your Healer’s appointment at the Counsel Halls would take longer.” He grinned.

Harry grinned back. “The Elders were in a meeting, so I didn’t want to disturb them when usually I’d sit and talk to them for half an hour over tea.”

“Speaking of tea, when are you having another catch up with Dumbledore?”

“Soon, before my heat period hits.” Harry said with a small nod. “I really like talking to him, and he doesn’t heap any pressure on me like some people do, which is nice. Sometimes I want to talk about normal things, not just the abuse I suffered through.”

Max kissed the back of his head and nuzzled into his neck. “That’s more than understandable.” He said, propping his chin on Harry’s shoulder. He turned his head and kissed Harry’s cheek, bringing a smile to his mate’s face. It was amazing to see Harry smiling so much, he hear him laughing, to watch him playing. He’d come a very long way, but there was still a ways to go yet, only this time Max was able to walk that road with Harry, offering his support and love the whole way. It was
amazing.

“Want to go to bed?” Harry asked, grinning at him.

Max held back his laugh and he tried to play coy. “But it’s only eight, Harry, I’m not even tired.”

Harry’s playful side came out and he stood, stretching, showing off the slightest line of skin as his shirt rode up.

“I’m sure I could find a way to tire you out.” Harry said with such a lecherous look that it stopped Max’s breath short.

Max hummed, still playing. “I don’t know, it’ll take a lot to tire me out tonight.”

“Then we best get started.” Harry said, his grin now very wide and teasing as he turned the tele off and dumped the remote before reaching for Max’s hand and tugging.

Max gave up the coy act and he swept Harry up into his strong arms, carrying his beloved mate to their bedroom and to their shared bed. Harry really had come such a long way, he had recovered and healed a great deal, and for him to actually be asking for sex was a huge step in the right direction, but there was always room for improvement, and Max was going to dedicate his life to helping Harry, and Ismay too, improve and heal. He loved them both so much, he could do no less, he would not do any less. Not ever.

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Harry blinked open his eyes and made a soft noise in the back of his throat. Immediately large hands were touching him gently.

“Hey, Harry. It’s okay.” Max soothed. “Just take it easy and wake up slowly.”

Harry squinted up at Max and frowned, trying to remember anything, but it was all pleasure pain, his body felt like one giant ache and his skin felt chafed raw. An image in his mind, a memory, of him riding Max in abandon had his eyes widening and he let out a choked sounding laugh. He could feel
Max oh so deep inside of him, large hands gripping his arse to help him move, claws digging into him as he rocked back and forth, impossibly fast and feral, and he buried his face in the pillow.

“How long did I sleep for?” He asked to change the subject his mind was focusing on. He was far too sore for more sex.

“It’s been three days.” Max told him softly.

Harry nodded. “Think I need another week to recover from that.”

“How are you feeling?” Max asked him. Harry heard the undercurrent of worry and he rolled carefully, slowly, to his side so that he could peek up at Max and give him a smile.

“Sore, like we shouldn’t have sex for a month sore.” He chuckled, his voice very raw sounding. “I could murder a cup of tea, and I really need a fucking piss. But other than that, I’m doing okay. Better than I thought I’d be.”

“Better than it was before?” Max couldn’t help asking.

Harry smiled softly up at him. “A million times better.” He said quietly. “You were right. It doesn’t even come close to comparing.”

Max smiled then. “I’m glad you sort of enjoyed it. From what I remember you really did.”

Harry blushed and thumped his head back into the pillow, once again thinking of the memory of him riding Max. He’d have to pluck up the courage and do that again, off of a heat period, so they could both remember it fully. He doubted he could get that level of fervour though, that level of animalistic abandon as he rutted without any shame, without the aid of the heat period, but if he and his body could do it on a heat period, he could do it off of a heat period too, it would just take a bit of practice and a bit of patience and maybe quite a bit of blushing too.

“Come on, let’s get you up and sorted out. Do you feel like you could walk or do you want me to carry you?”
“I could walk, I think, but I want to be carried.” He said with a smile.

Max laughed happily and scooped his mate up into his arms. It was official now, they were mated together, he was Harry’s dominant, and Harry was his submissive. Only death would undo them now, and neither of them had any plans to die anytime soon.

“Are we getting Ismay today?”

“It’s eight in the night, love. She’ll already be asleep.” Max told him. “It might be better to let you recover some more now overnight and then pick her up bright and early tomorrow morning. If we went and got her now, there is no way she’d sleep through the journey home and then she’d be so fucking excited to see us that we’d never get her back to sleep again and we’d end up with a grumpy girl tomorrow because she’s overtired.”

Harry nodded at the logic of that and he pushed down his Dracken that wanted to grab their daughter and sniff every inch of her to make sure that she was alright. Max was right, Ismay would be asleep, she would wake up on the way home, and she would not go back to sleep. Plus he really could use the extra recovery time, just to come back into himself a little. It would take a day or two for his digestive system to come back too after the heat. His bladder was functioning, as it had been three days since his heat had ended and he had been sustaining himself on biting Max and taking his blood, as Max had done the same to him, but he hadn’t eaten anything solid for two weeks, it would take a while for the urge to eat to come back, and then a few more days still before normal function resumed.

Max placed him down in the bathroom and then with a kiss he left to give him a bit of space and privacy while he went and boiled the kettle to make tea. Harry smiled after him, Max truly was the greatest mate anyone could possibly have. Now he had to potentially ruin their easy dynamics by inviting another dominant, a complete stranger, to come and join them. It was a terrifying prospect and he was just so glad that he would be taking this next step with Max firmly beside him. He could not have done this without Max. He likely would never have mated to anyone again if it hadn’t been for his connection to Max before his abduction. He was incredibly thankful for that connection now, as Max helped him struggle through all of this fear and pain and nervousness. Max made him feel normal, and that was the greatest gift that Max could give to him.

Finishing up his business and washing his hands, Harry padded downstairs and to the kitchen, where Max had a cup of honey tea ready and waiting for him.

“I feel grungy.” Harry complained, plucking his pyjama top away from his body and looking down it at his naked skin as if expecting it to be covered in dirt.

“No you don’t.” Max told him. “Do you want a bath, love?” Max asked. “I brewed all those muscle relaxants and made those bath salts that you like in preparation.”
Harry smiled. “Citrus ones?”

“Absolutely, I love nothing more than scenting you out while you smell like a lime or a grapefruit or a bergamot.” Max teased.

“Or a lemon.” Harry added with a grin.

“That sharp tang paired with the healing benefits of grapefruits and the antibacterial properties of lemons, what could be better?”

Harry laughed at Max softly, his throat still a little raw and sore. He sipped more of his tea and he sighed in blissful appreciation.

“Missed it over the last two weeks?” Max grinned, drinking his own tea.

“You know it.” Harry laughed. “I do feel cold without your body heat wrapped around me though, is that normal? It’s never happened before.”

Max immediately came to sit beside him, tugging his chair closer to Harry’s and he wrapped an arm around him while he went into Dracken lecturer mode.

“Yeah, it’s pretty normal. It’s called a heat period for a reason and with so much activity, our core temperatures rise substantially. You know that your core temperature needs to be at roughly forty-five degrees to conceive?” Harry nodded when Max looked at him questioningly. “Well getting our bodies to that level of heat, with the level of activity we were doing, of course coming down from that is going to seem really cold in comparison. You’ve spent the last two weeks averaging forty-five degrees and now you’ve dropped back down to normal, but you can cuddle close to me if it helps.” Max added with a grin.

Harry snorted a laugh and gave Max a smile. “I think I will. It feels awful to be this cold. I’ve never liked being cold.”

“Want to grab another tea and relocate to the living room?” Max asked seriously, bending down to give him a subtle sniff to check for any illnesses.
Harry nodded and he stood, hating that the moment he was away from Max his skin erupted into tiny goosebumps. He tried to remember if he’d felt this cold off of his other heat periods, but he didn’t really want to think about that. He couldn’t remember ever being cold, but then he was always in an incredible amount of pain afterwards, which could have easily disguised any feelings of cold, or at least overshadowed them.

Max joined him quickly with a tea tray with a teapot on it, a bottle of honey and a little jug of milk. He picked up his wand from the coffee table and a simple wave and the fire roared to life, and despite it being July, Harry welcomed the wash of heat that hit him as he snuggled up into Max’s warmth.

“Maybe we should feed you a little more. Get some more meat on your bones, or even just a little bit more insulation.”

That made Harry laugh. “You already feed me incredibly well, Max. Anymore and I’m likely to explode.”

Max hummed. “It would be a good kind of explosion though.” He teased, making Harry laugh again.

“The very best.” Harry agreed.

They lapsed into comfortable silence and Harry sipped his tea while he cuddled into Max. He was surprisingly rather tired still, and he knew that he would not be up to fighting with Ismay while he felt like this. Max was right, he always seemed to be, and that helped Harry settle down, it helped him feel safe and secure and it helped him to trust in his dominant mate and the things he was told. It was a wonderfully freeing feeling.

“I think you need to go to bed, love.” Max chuckled, a large hand holding his hand on the tea cup, which was tipping ominously.

Harry grunted in confusion.

“You’re dropping off, love, come on.”

Max took the cup from his hands and with another wave of his wand he’d banked the fire. He
slipped the wand into his sleeve and he picked up the groggy Harry, carrying his official submissive mate back up to their bedroom.

He’d thought that it was too soon for Harry to be getting up when he’d felt him stirring, but then he had likely felt very threatened sleeping after his heat period, leaving Ismay on her own with those people for longer. Max would eat his own hand if, after having Ismay, his recovery period was any longer than a day or two, which was not nearly long enough. It would take a while to get rid of that habitual behaviour, but it would drop off eventually, once Harry’s Dracken started to feel safer on an instinctual level, and he would once again start having a more normal recovery period of at least four days.

Max placed Harry into the bed, making sure the pyjamas that he’d dressed Harry in when he had woken up yesterday, after giving him a quick, gentle wipe down with a warm cloth, weren’t twisted before he tucked Harry in lovingly, smiling down as Harry frowned in his sleep and squirmed a little.

Max’s wand came back out of his sleeve and he cast a heating charm on the sheets, watching with a soft smile as Harry immediately settled and sighed out a deep breath. He bent and he kissed Harry gently before leaving him to rest and recover.

He wasn’t going to leave the house while Harry was sleeping, his instincts were too haywire at the moment to even think of leaving him alone. Even with another dominant or two, it was unlikely that any of them would feel like leaving their sleeping, vulnerable submissive alone, but he did contact his parents.

“Max, how are you?” His Dad, Richard, asked him, kneeling down by the fire after hollering through the house for his mates to come and answer a floo call.

“Fine.” Max said with a smile. “Everything went really well.”

The study door, just off to the side of the room, opened and his Dad, Myron, stepped out, coming to kneel by the fire too.

“When did you wake up?”

“Yesterday, but I was busy taking care of Harry’s needs and my own. I was so tired yesterday, and for most of today too, that all I wanted to do was slouch around in the peace and quiet.”

“Is Harry awake?” Richard asked seriously.

Max nodded. “He woke up a few hours ago. It’s early, he barely stayed awake for an hour, and you could just see how exhausted he was still, but the last heat period he had was with him, and it was
the one that got him pregnant with his son. I’m hoping that in the next few months, because he needs more mates, he’ll get more used to it.”

“He could fall pregnant in another two months, couldn’t he?” His Mother, Ashleigh asked.

Max nodded. “He defaulted back to unmated with the death of that freak, so he needs two mates again before he’ll fall pregnant. That’s if he catches, of course. I’ll just be happy to keep Ismay for now.”

“Do you have her back or…?”

Max shook his head. “No. I’m going to get her tomorrow morning now that Harry is awake. He never woke up until gone eight, she would have already been asleep and there is no point in moving her from bed to bed, if she even stayed asleep in the first place.”

“Good idea.” Myron told him with an approving nod. “Is she more used to you now that you’re living there all the time?”

“Yeah, she’s great! Absolutely fucking gorgeous too. Harry would tell me some stories about her, and I just wouldn’t believe him, I was here practically all the time, how could I miss something so funny? Something so hilarious that Harry had almost wet himself in the scant time I was away? But now, living here, I realise that those stories are true. I have not stopped laughing at some of the things that she says. I was tucking her into bed before the heat period and she told me that I had to look in her doll’s house for fairies. When I asked her why, she told me that she’d put up a sign in the garden that fairies were welcome there after she watched Peter Pan. Not the actual garden now, but the doll house garden. It was a tiny little sign that she’d made on a lolly stick.” Max laughed.

“At least you can tell her that Faeries are actually real without having to lie.” Myron smiled at him.

“Yeah, wait until she hears that Delericey is a Faerie.” Richard pointed out.

“He’s not actually a Faerie.” Max laughed. “He just carries Faerie blood, and the chances of it even coming out while Nasta is a full Dracken is…well Nasta says the chances are astronomical, laughable.”

“But still possible.” Myron put in shrewdly.
“Do you think Nasta will be joining our mateship then?” Max queried gently, taking the warning for what it was.

“Max, don’t be dense now.” Myron chided. “You know that he will be.”

“I agree with your Father.” Richard said, laying a hand on Myron’s shoulder in silent support. “It is your third mate that you should be trying to puzzle out, because Nasta will definitely be Harry’s second.”

“Harry hasn’t said anything about it. He’s still very scared.”

“With you with him now, he may be holding this meeting just to scope out how it might go. To see if his wishes are upheld and his opinion respected, especially if he already has Nasta in mind as his second mate.” Myron pointed out. “It would be the smart thing to do, to get himself a little more used to the environment before he holds the meeting for his unknown third mate, but I would lay money on him picking Nasta next and he likely hasn’t discussed it with you because he’s unsure of your reaction. No man wants to hear his recently bonded mate talking so soon about getting another man, especially before you even had your first heat period together, but now that you are solidly mated to him, I would expect him to perhaps broach the subject with you, perhaps asking your opinion.”

“I don’t want him to ask for my opinion.” Max said sullenly. “These are his meetings, for his dominant mates, it’s not up to me to choose for him!”

His parents all gave him nearly identical looks, incredibly proud, yet amused.

“Then tell him so, Max, but if he needs your support, you need to know where the line is, because you need to give your support if he’s unsure or uncomfortable, but you are right, you cannot decide something like this for him, but be aware that he will likely ask you too, as he will not want to upset you in any way.”

Max sucked in a deep breath and he nodded. Now that he’d been told to look out for it, it was obvious that that was what Harry would do, he was still getting used to his freedom, he was still a little unsure over certain things and of course he wouldn’t want to upset the one dominant that he had by choosing a mate that Max either wouldn’t like or already didn’t like. He would work not to show obvious favouritism to certain people, namely to his friends, and likewise, he would not shoot down a dominant, or show as such, before Harry had had a chance to speak his own thoughts and opinions on the matter. Though if he deemed anyone particularly bad, or as an actual threat to Harry or Ismay,
then he would absolutely tell Harry so, if the Elders didn’t do so for him, of course.

“I need to go and think about this some more.” He said after a pregnant pause. “I’ll see you all tomorrow, likely after we’ve settled Ismay back in.”

His parents nodded and Max pulled his head back from the fire. A wave of his wand and the soot was gone and he was clean once more. He sighed to himself and ran a hand through his short hair. This was all such a mess, but he couldn’t hold the responsibility for choosing Harry’s mates for him, it wasn’t his place to do so, and he knew it.

He sighed again, much heavier this time, as he prepared himself for the coming weeks. Harry wanted to have his birthday first, which was understandable, but Max had been worried that this wouldn’t leave Harry a lot of time to find his second mate, but if his Father was right, and Harry already knew that he was going to choose Nasta, then it made more sense that he would want to have his birthday first, and have a shorter mate meeting just to see how things would play out. It would be the third, unknown mate who could potentially cause problems for them. If Harry was going to choose Nasta next then Max would be grateful for the company of a man he already knew, trusted and respected. Nasta would know how to handle the final mate meeting without controlling Harry’s decisions or allowing him to choose a bad mate who would hurt him. Max wasn’t entirely sure that he could toe the knife edge between giving Harry the freedom to choose his own mate, yet steering him away from the bad type of dominant. He couldn’t wait for this period of uncertainty and fear to be over, for himself, but most of all, for Harry.

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Chapter End Notes

A/N: I had to split this final chapter into three parts, lovelies. I had no idea that AO3 had an upper word limit on chapters and apparently 121,000 words is too big to be posted in one go, so I regretfully had to split it up just to post it, but I had planned for it to be posted as a whole, so it might read a little strange and the split might seem a bit choppy as a result and I can only apologise for this.

StarLight Massacre. X
Harry was nervous, but happy, sort of excited, but still mostly nervous. Max had surprised him with breakfast in bed with a giggling Ismay, who had thrust a small, haphazardly wrapped present at him with a screeched ‘happy birthday, Mummy!’ that was loud enough to make his ears ring. She had gotten him a mug that she had clearly decorated herself, if the amount of blue and purple glitter was anything to go by, and it was emblazoned with ‘World’s Best Mummy’ on it in her wonky handwriting. Harry already knew that Max had helped her and it made him smile, in fact it had almost brought him to tears. He made sure to tell her how much he loved it, thanking her profusely. He would use it a few times and then put it away safe, so that it never got broken.

After breakfast Max had pushed him into the bathroom, where a bath was already run for him and he heard Max and Ismay laughing and shrieking from the kitchen as he pampered himself in the bath, feeling rather relaxed and spoilt.

Ismay had ruined his ‘surprise’ birthday cake that she and Max had been making while he was in the bath by announcing that she had helped Max to make it for him and Harry had laughed and swept her up, needling at Max to give him a taste of the cake early. Max had thrown his hands up in jest and handed him one of the spoons he’d used to stir the cake mix and Harry felt so happy as he licked cake mix from the spoon, especially as Max didn’t take his eyes from his tongue as it came out to lick at the spoon.

But now, now it was time for his party and he was going to the Counsel Halls to have it, as it was big enough for all of his guests, but more familiar than Max’s parents’ home, or Alexander’s home. It was nerve-wracking, as he was trying to get more used to Max’s family, but there were so many of them.

He’d invited Dumbledore, and Nasta too, as he liked Nasta, who was kind and respectful to him, and Ismay liked him too. But mostly it would be Max’s whole family, their mates or spouses and their children, the Elders and their mates, the Healers and their mates, and some of the guards, including Captain Foss, who Harry also liked a lot.

“Are you ready, Issy?” Max asked, patting himself down to make sure that he had everything.

“Yes.” Ismay nodded, holding out Cecelia, who had been picked to come tonight.

“Harry?” Max asked him.

“As much as I’ll ever be.” He said quietly.
“Hey, don’t worry so much, I’m going to be standing right next to you, love.” He said, coming and clamping both hands to Harry’s narrow shoulders. “It’s only family and friends, and I know I have a mad family, but they would never hurt you. More to the point I’d never let anyone hurt you, and I promise, I’ll be stood right beside you.”

“If I need the bathroom, would you…”

“I will go with you.” Max interrupted firmly. “I will hold your hand if you need me too, I’ll stand guard, hell, I’d carry you there and back if you’d let me.”

That made Harry smile and he nodded. “I know I’m being stupid, but I can’t help it. I have an irrational fear of that bathroom, of that corridor, and that one room.”

“It’s not an irrational fear.” Max told him. “It’s an entirely rational, logical fear. You were taken from the bathroom, dragged down that hallway and that room is where the fireplace was. Harry, your fear is rational, you have a legitimate reason to be afraid of those rooms, but no one, absolutely no one, is getting you from me tonight, or any other night. You’re mine now, forever.”

Harry smiled up at him and Max snorted out a breath and he bent down and he kissed those soft lips.

“Come on, we’ll beat back those fears little by little, and we’ll do it together, as a family.”

Harry took a breath and he nodded. “Okay, let’s try this.”

Max went through the floo first with Ismay, and Harry followed after him, counting to ten first, just to give Max time to move out of the way.

It was still difficult being in the Counsel Halls, but the worst was going around this first corner, going to the huge white double doors, knowing that the guard had grabbed him from right there, that very spot. He closed his eyes and breathed, but a huge hand grabbed his own, and it was all suddenly much easier, it was all suddenly bearable.

“Can I play in the ball pit, Mummy?”

“Of course, Ismay, let us just greet everyone first.”
Ismay nodded, her loose, flame coloured hair bouncing. She was wearing Fiammetta’s dress once more, enlarged a little so that it still fit her and Max had done a rather complicated spell that turned Cecelia’s dress into a matching version of Ismay’s.

“Happy birthday, sweet one.” Alexander greeted him, approaching carefully from the front of them. Harry was still a little leery of anyone who came at him from behind.

“Thank you.” Harry said, hugging Alexander tight, absorbing the peace and safety that surrounded the man.

“Hi, Alxander.” Ismay greeted.

“Hello, sweet girl, how are you?” He asked her, immediately hunching down to be on her eye level.

“I’m okay. Mummy really liked my present, and he doesn’t really like presents, so that makes mine extra special.”

Alexander smiled at her adoringly. “I’m sure that your present is going to be the most special of all, little love.”

Ismay smiled shyly and she giggled. Alexander didn’t pressure her and he turned back to greet his grandson.

“Can’t even believe you left me until last.” Max pouted exaggeratedly.

“You big baby.” Alexander teased, hugging that huge, broad body tightly.

“What has he done now?” Myron asked in exasperation.

Harry grinned, but he accepted the tight hug, and he snuggled into Myron’s solid bulk happily, feeling those huge arms band around his slim body tightly, completely, and he felt totally safe…until Myron let go and Harry had to step back.
“Hi, Myan!” Ismay greeted, coming to stand in front of him, barely reaching his thigh.

“Hey there, tiny girl. How are you?”

“I’m happy today.” Ismay said with a smile, holding her arms up for her hug.

Myron had to get fully on his knees to hug her properly, but she adored hugs from Myron Maddison and Harry lost sight of her for a moment as Myron’s arms completely hid her from view.

“My own Father!” Max faux sobbed.

“What are you going on about now?” Myron sighed, separating from Ismay, but picking her up when he stood back up as Ismay linked her arms around his neck, indicating to him that she wanted to be picked up.

“He’s complaining that I, and you too, left him until last to greet him.” Alexander chuckled.

“You’re my son, I had enough of you when you were a child.” Myron said, a smile on his lips that he tried to hide. “This little princess however, I could never tire of.”

Ismay giggled and snuggled in tight to Myron’s chest.

“I feel mortally offended.” Max said.

“You’re mortally brain dead.” Richard said, sneaking up and hugging his mate and husband, squashing a laughing Ismay between them.

“Aren’t you going to greet me too?” Max demanded.

“Nope.” Richard laughed as he turned and pulled Harry into a tight hug, giving his forehead a quick kiss. “Hello, Harry. Happy birthday, gorgeous.”
Harry chuckled and he held onto Richard tight for a moment, grinning as Max pouted, crossed his arms and pointedly turned away from them.

“You all suck.” He declared, which led to raucous laughter.

Harry chuckled, but he stepped forward and he wormed his way around Max, holding him tightly and nuzzling his chest, the highest part of Max he could reach without a step, or Max bending down for him.

Those arms wrapped around him and Max bent on automatic, kissing him happily, with a loud smacking noise and Harry chuckled and grinned. He really loved Max and the goofy, childlike side to him that made Harry feel all innocent and fun. He felt freer when he and Max were being total goofs together.

“There you are, sweet one. Happy birthday!”

Harry turned and he smiled at Elder Midate, moving immediately to embrace him.

“Are you ready for next week?” Harry asked a little nervously.

“Harry, love, you said that you didn’t want to talk about that tonight. Today is your birthday, for you to relax and enjoy yourself.” Max said gently.

Harry nodded. “I know, but is it ready?”

“Yes, Harry, everything is set up and Captain Foss has agreed to come personally to be your personal guard.”

“He didn’t have to do that, I just wanted his input on the security.” Harry said.

“He offered. He wanted to come personally for you, Harry. Everything is set up, we’re all ready for your meeting, and we’re all very proud of you, and of how far you’ve come.”
Harry smiled, but he ducked his head to look at the floor. He was still nervous, but he had a plan, and as long as the Elders, Max and now Captain Foss too stayed close to him, he was sure that he would be alright.

More people came up to him to wish him happy birthday, and Harry was feeling rather secure and settled. He was looking around a lot, but he couldn’t help that, but he wasn’t overly worried like he felt that he should have been. Max’s hand on his back likely had something to do with that.

“Harry, happy birthday.”

“Nasta!” Ismay cried out and she reached out from Myron’s arms to Nasta, who took her with no hesitation.

“Hello, annwyl.” Nasta greeted her with a smile. He didn’t even flinch when Ismay gave him a smacking kiss to the mouth, he just rolled with it and it made Harry smile, Nasta was very indulgent of Ismay and that made Harry, and his Draken, very happy. He would never, never, pick a dominant for a mate if they couldn’t get along with Ismay.

Max wrapped him back up in his big arms and effectively distracted his attention. Harry turned and he smiled up at Max, going on his tip toes and planting a kiss on Max’s chin.

Max grinned at his actions and he bent to get a proper kiss.

“I love you.” He declared.

“I love you too.” Harry said.

The party went on, but his guests all knew him and what he’d been through, so they were unwilling to push him too hard, and he opened his gifts as they came to him, without everyone’s eyes on him. He got clothes, books, sweets, chocolate, jars of honey, more videos that weren’t just the Disney ones from Max, more things for his home including a box of baking things for him to use with Ismay and he loved it all, and he thanked everyone happily, though shyly.

Not long after he cut the massive, professionally baked cake (that looked more like a wedding cake as it was on three tiers) people started saying goodbye to him, and near seven at night, an hour after Ismay’s usual bedtime, Harry begged off on his own party to go and put her to bed. He made sure to thank everyone so much for coming, for celebrating with him, and all through it he flushed pink.

“We’ve got cake and tea at home, too.” Max told him gently, as all of his gifts were placed into a box and shrunken down for easier transportation.
“The cake that you and Ismay baked that was supposed to be a surprise?” Harry chuckled.

“Yes, that one. Not that I mind that she ruined the surprise, but we have got to work on her sneakiness.”

Harry laughed again, holding a yawning Ismay close. He stroked her silky red hair and just held her, loving moments like these where he was at peace, his Dracken was at peace, and his daughter was at peace.

Nothing untoward had happened tonight, he’d mostly stayed with Max and his grandfather, Alexander. Though there was always an Elder stood with him and many more people came to talk to him too. Harry had burrowed right into Captain Tuathal Nevin Foss when he’d come to greet him and he’d witnessed a smile that Max said was rare…like the rarest thing ever in the world. Harry had just given him an offhand, backhanded slap and a roll of the eyes.

It was almost anticlimactic, the fact that nothing at all had happened, but it helped to settle Harry right down and he felt so much happier when he got home, so much more confident, and he almost skipped up the stairs to put Ismay in her pyjamas and put her to bed, making sure that he changed Cecelia too, and put the doll in pyjamas and tucked her up with Ismay.

He went to go and snuggle into Max, and he just laughed when he saw the cake. It was small. It would perhaps give four generous slices, but six smaller ones, if cut carefully. It had ‘Happy Birthday, Mummy Harry, love from Ismay and Max’ written on it in multicolour icing, but what made him smile was that Ismay had clearly done her own name and the mummy part of the cake.

“Did you take a picture of it?” Harry asked.

“Of course, lover. I had to document the first Daddy and daughter baked cake for Mummy’s birthday.” Max grinned. “You’re free to cut it and enjoy it with this nice, warm cup of honey tea.”

“You’re the best.” Harry declared, sitting down on the settee and snuggling into Max happily. “I love you.”

Max sat proudly next to him and threw an arm around him, kissing the side of his head with lips that lingered ever so slightly. It made Harry smile.

“Want to watch one of your new videos?” Max asked him.
Harry nodded and he went to go and dig in the box of his presents. He pulled out one of the videos and he set everything up. He was pleased that he knew how to do so now, when in the beginning he hadn’t known and he’d relied on Max to do it for him. He liked being able to do things for himself.

“This is the best birthday ever.” Harry declared with a smile.

“Come here.” Max said with a chuckle, holding his arms open, and Harry sat back on the settee and he snuggled in happily.

They spent two and a half hours like this, snuggled up together, watching the video, and it truly was the best birthday Harry could ever remember having. He was so very happy and he was so glad that he had taken the plunge and decided to mate to Max. Whatever happened now, in the next week when he held his first ever mate meeting, he would never be able to bring himself to regret this, he very much enjoyed being able to touch Max, to hug and hold him, to kiss him, and of course the sex was phenomenal. He’d never thought that he’d actually like sex, he had been willing to endure it just to be with Max…he smiled to himself as he realised exactly what sex should be, how wonderful and mind blowing it could be with the right person. No, he could never regret making the decision to bond with Max, to mate with him, even if the mate meetings were a complete and utter disaster, and he just had a gut feeling that some of the dominants he would come to meet would be doozies.

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It was nerve wracking, being here, in the Counsel Halls, surrounded by the scent of unmated dominants. Harry clutched at Max’s hand tightly, afraid to let him go.

“It’ll be alright, Harry.” Max soothed him. “I’m here and I’m not going anywhere.”

Harry nodded, but he was unable to speak through his fear. He did take comfort from Max being right beside him though. Being here now, feeling as he did, he knew that he would not have been able to do this without Max with him.

He had so many guards here, all of those who had looked after him during his recovery period were here, including as many members of the specially trained task force as could be spared, including their Captain, Tuathal Foss, who was stood on Harry’s other side, just waiting for Harry to gather enough courage to go out into that room to face the unmated dominants. Harry doubted that he would be able to gather enough courage by himself, he needed someone to poke him out of this little room and into the main hall, but he also knew that no one, absolutely no one, would force him into that room. It would have to be his decision.
“You’re just going to go and introduce yourself.” Max said gently. “No one will come close to you, you will come straight back in here afterwards, and then you can have your one-on-one meetings, as you planned. I will be sat right beside you, you’ll have the Elders, the guards and Captain Foss and his team members. You will be completely safe, love, and we can actually promise that.”

Harry nodded and he sucked in a huge, shaky breath and he squared his shoulders. He took a small step forward, but that first step had been the hardest and he kept moving, Max walking with him, their hands clasped tightly as they made it to the corridor and then across it, to the closed doors that led into the meeting hall.

“You’re so brave. I love you. Keep going, Harry.” Max told him and Harry took strength from his dominant and he reached out a hand to the door handle. He had to stop and take another breath, but once he felt more settled, he pushed on that handle and pushed open the door, walking through it.

There was a dais right beside the doors, where all eleven of the Elders waited, and Harry made his way up to them, Max beside him, Captain Foss just behind him, and several guards escorting him.

“Well done, sweet one.” Elder Trintus said quietly.

“We’re so proud of you.” Elder Midate said, all but beaming at him.

“You’re very brave.” Elder Kirrian praised and Harry let out a breath and he smiled shyly. This was okay. He was far from comfortable, but he was alright. He squeezed Max’s hand and he felt the squeeze back. He was going to be fine. “Jacob, let’s get this done with, so that Harry can go back into the safe room.”

Harry couldn’t help smiling. The nickname had stuck from when Max had first called his personal meeting room his ‘safe’ room, because between Max himself, the eleven Elders, the twenty guards, the five members of the task force and Captain Foss himself, it was the safest place in the entire building, and though it would be embarrassing conducting his meetings in front of so many people, he prioritised his safety more than he wanted to indulge his embarrassment.

“As you can all see, this is Harry.” Jacob called out loudly to the watching dominants. They had fallen so silent when he entered the hall that Jacob’s voice rang in a weird echo. “We are here today to conduct his first mate meeting, for his second dominant.”

“Who would want to be mated to that?” One dominant in the crowd yelled out and Harry tried not to
react, but his hand still clenched in Max’s, and Max’s hand squeezed his back comfortably.

“Get out.” Elder Kirrian demanded furiously. “Now!”

“Gladly. No one wants a submissive that’s been damaged and messed up.” The little dominant, who must have been recently inherited as he looked to be about sixteen, snapped petulantly, and he stalked off.

“Ignore him, love.” Max said, a low, threatening growl to his voice. “If these idiots can’t see beyond what you went through then they don’t fucking deserve to know the kind, wonderful man that you are.”

“Any other fuckwits in this crowd that feel the same?” Elder Kirrian snarled. “You can also fuck off, and I hope that none of you ever gain mates, for the horrendous slight that you are offering to Harry.”

Harry wasn’t too surprised to see a few more dominants try to slink out quietly, but their fellow dominants, perhaps feeling like they’d been given the green light by Elder Kirrian, heckled them and drew attention to them. That made Harry laugh, which had the dominants closest to the front of the podium, thus closest to him, turn and look at him. He gave them a winning smile, more to prove that he was normal and was still actually capable of smiling after his torment, than from any real amusement at the heckled dominants.

Max smiled down at him, Harry tipped his head to grin up at him, and Max chuckled before bending down and kissing him. Harry kissed back, before he separated them gently and decided to get this awful part of the meeting over with. He knew that he would have to speak, and after that little show, now was the perfect time to do so.

“Elder, while we’re on this little tangent of cutting loose the dominants before we even start, I would like to also send away any dominant who is currently married, in a willing relationship with anyone else and those who have a family with a partner of any kind and do not wish to be here.” He said in a loud, clear and carrying voice.

“You heard him, anyone who falls into such a bracket, you may also leave.” Elder Midate said.

The silent dominants followed the issued orders and a few other dominants left. Harry couldn’t help but notice that the first group who had left were all relatively young dominants, but those in the second bracket were older, much older, and they had obviously given up on getting a submissive mate and had instead decided to settle down with someone else, just to have a family. They would
have been brought here by the inescapable pull that all unmated dominants had to an unmated submissive, and not because they had any real wish to be here. They were likely glad that he had let them leave so early on, so that they could get back to their lives and families without being stuck here for half an hour or more until the pull lessened and they could leave on their own.

“I’m so proud of you.” Max whispered to him. “Well done, love. Keep going.”

Harry smiled and tipped his head back to look up at Max. He loved him so much. They had truly mated, properly mated, and Harry loved looking at his white wings, because for the first time since he’d found out that he had wings, they had gained bright blue and black scales…Max’s colours. Proof that they were mated together, properly, normally, and Harry loved bringing out his wings as often as he could to look at them, to touch them. Max had caught him doing this a few times now, and it always made him laugh, in a very smug, self-satisfied way, but Harry didn’t mind. He loved wearing Max’s colours, and he liked that Max enjoyed seeing his love for having the colour to his wing scales.

“Harry will be setting out his meetings in an interview-esque style, as he wishes to evaluate you all individually, by yourselves, with no interruptions or distractions. The first meeting will commence shortly, in a random order, if you could be patient in this time, and keep yourselves calm and dignified.” Elder Vipond said sternly, already looking angry at the way this first meet and greet had gone, likely because of that young dominant who could have ruined everything before Harry had even opened his mouth.

Harry was ushered from the room and he felt like he could relax again as his security team escorted him back to the room that he’d been in before, which Harry had set out how he had wanted earlier in the day.

He sat on the settee furthest from the door, a nice, wide coffee table in front of it, and another settee opposite. Max sat beside him and nuzzled into him.

“Well done, Harry, you did so well, despite those young idiots trying to hurt you.” Captain Foss told him.

“I expected it, it’s alright.” Harry said. “I wouldn’t have wanted a baby dominant anyway, they just wouldn’t understand. It’s not…” Harry shook his head. “I just think that older might be better for me now. Younger is not what I want.”

“Whatever you want, Harry. It is entirely your decision.” Max said gently, giving him a kiss. “Now, do you want some tea to help calm your nerves?”
Harry nodded. “Yes, please.”

Max made his tea exactly as he liked it and Harry curled into Max, sipping on his tea, which was held between both hands.

Elder Midate came in and he sat on the other side of Harry, boxing him in, as he’d wanted, and hopefully between Jacob and Max, he wouldn’t be grabbed from over the table, though that was only if Captain Foss, or one of his team, didn’t react in time and tackle the poor bastard who tried to lean over that extra wide coffee table to grab at him.

It was awkward, as Elder Trintus and Elder Kirrian came in to the room to sit on another settee adjacent to Harry’s, which would put them adjacent to the unmated dominant too, who, when he was eventually led in, looked about ready to turn tail and run anyway.

“I…I’m Ollie Southwell. Twenty-five.” He said, a little nervously, his eyes darting to the three Elders in the room, to Captain Foss, the guards, and then he snapped his gaze back to Harry.

“Sorry about the security overkill.” Harry said. “If it makes you feel any better, I’m a little uncomfortable with it too, but that doesn’t mean that it’s not needed, or even warranted.”

Ollie nodded. “I do understand, makes me feel a little like I’m under a microscope and my words are being analysed, though.”

“It’s not your words that they’re here for.” Harry said. “They’re here to stop you from touching me, grabbing at me, because it’s that which scares me. I don’t like being grabbed by people I don’t know.”

Ollie nodded, but he didn’t look any happier with the explanation. He kept glancing nervous looks at Max, and Harry looked at his dominant too, almost expecting Max to maybe be glaring at Ollie from the way Ollie was looking at him, but Max had a pleasantly bland expression on his face. He was doing as he’d said he would, not influencing anything and letting this decision remain as Harry’s. He wasn’t showing any outward signs of acceptance or rejection, he wasn’t making any noise, he wasn’t trying to show an inflection either way about Ollie Southwell.

“Is Ollie short for something?” Harry asked politely, when it seemed that Ollie wasn’t going to say anything. “Oliver maybe?”

The dominant went red and became even more flustered. He cleared his throat and wouldn’t look at him. “Orwell. It’s short for Orwell.”
Harry felt Max wiggle next to him and he had to try to avoid his lips twitching. This poor, twenty-
 something year old man had been saddled, by his parents, with the name Orwell Southwell. Harry
 felt a pang of sympathy for him.

“I like it.” Harry said kindly.

Ollie snorted. “I don’t even like it, it’s why I tell everyone my name is Ollie.”

A bit more pressing and forced talk, and Harry was forced to admit defeat and he said goodbye to
 Ollie before the time limit that he’d set previously had ran out, who left quickly.

Another dominant was seen in, after Harry had had a moment to assure Max, and the Elders, that he
 was alright and that it was fine to continue.

The dominant was tall, not as tall as Max, but then few would be able to reach the height of six foot
 eight. He was dark haired, with rather lovely lavender eyes. Those eyes had Harry completely
 entranced.

“Cyrano Theophilus Manetas. Thirty.” The man stated brusquely, like he had done so often before.
 Being thirty, he must have been to hundreds of these meetings, so Harry reasoned that that wasn’t
 too far from the truth.

Max stiffened only slightly beside him, but it was enough to clue him in that either Max was
 surprised, or he didn’t like Cyrano. It was enough for Harry to break eye contact with those lovely
 lavender eyes and look in askance to his mate.

Max’s face was blank and bland once again, but he gave a smile to Harry and a gentle touch.
 Regardless of Max’s initial thoughts on Cyrano they were hidden now and Max was making it clear
 that this was still his decision.

Harry turned back to the dominant before him and he was once again caught in those lavender eyes,
 at least until Elder Midate cleared his throat next to him and Harry blinked. He had lost a little time.

“Harry, Cyrano asked you how you were feeling.” Elder Midate told him.

“He did? Oh.” Harry frowned. “I’m sorry, I just…I really like your eyes.” He admitted with a self-
 conscious shrug. He could feel his cheeks heating up.
Cyrano laughed. “I get such comments a lot.” He said. “They are rather unusual, not unlike your own.”

Harry smiled happily at that.

“So, are you alright? I only asked because you were staring, but I know now that it was because you were infatuated with my eyes, as I was with yours.”

Harry almost wanted to squirm in joy, he wasn’t used to such comments. He’d thought that hearing such things daily from Max, from Max’s family, the Elders, the guards, the Healers, would desensitise him to such comments, to get him used to them, but that wasn’t the case, and it was almost like he was affection starved again, willing to absorb every little comment given to him.

“I’m okay, thank you. How are you?” He asked politely.

“All the better now for this meeting.”

Harry could feel his cheeks getting redder and he had to take a deep breath.

“Well, I can see that I am embarrassing you, that is not my intent. How about I give you a moment and take a self-indulgent moment and tell you about myself?”

Harry nodded, seizing the offer for a small moment to regain his bearings.

“Well, I have twelve brothers, most of them older than I am, and I have fifteen sisters, all of them are older than me. I was one of only three Drackens born of my parents, and both of my sisters were submissives, I was the only dominant. Of course they are already mated, which leaves just me. My Father is most insistent on me being mated, as he seems to think that a Dracken child has a better chance to come through an actual Dracken. I have told him that that is not how things work, but he does not listen to me.”

Harry nodded. “I have a daughter, Ismay. She’s coming up to four now, but she was from two Drackens and she’s human.”
“See, exactly my point. The Dracken genes choose the baby in the womb. It makes no matter if the parents are both Drackens or just Dracken carriers, the genes will choose the baby regardless of parentage.”

They had a very pleasant chat. Harry found out that Cyrano, like Max, just hadn’t liked any submissive he’d met thus far, despite some rather unsubtle attentions and insistences from some submissives. He found out that Cyrano had his own home in Heraklion, on Crete in his homeland of Greece and that he was an architect and a sculptor.

Harry jumped on the unusual career choice and started asking about it, not that Cyrano seemed to mind, he answered all his questions and seemed pleased that Harry even had any interest in his job, but all too soon the half hour limit he had set for each interview was over, and Elder Midate interrupted them with a reminder that Cyrano had had his half an hour and before Harry could think up an excuse to keep the dominant in the room, talking to him, Cyrano was shooed out of the room by his security team.

“Can we assume that you liked him?” Elder Kirrian asked.

Harry nodded. “I did like him.”

“Do you want a tick next to his name to remind you that, if it comes to it, you wouldn’t mind seeing him again?”

Harry nodded. “I wouldn’t mind talking to him again, but…Max, why didn’t you like him?”

“These meetings aren’t for me, love. They’re for you. It is nothing serious, or even bad, as I wouldn’t have kept silent if I had heard anything of the like about him, I was just surprised.”

“Why? If it’s nothing bad then you can tell me.”

Max sighed. “It was his middle name, Harry. Theophilus. I…I had an unborn brother who was killed, and he was named Theodric, it was just a little too close, that’s all. If I’d known his name beforehand, I wouldn’t so much as blinked over it, but hearing it out of the blue was a little shocking. That’s all.”

Harry nodded and he bent forward to kiss him softly, just a gentle press of lips, nothing passionate, or even lusty, just a small press of lips that was meant to comfort. It made Max smile.
“I remember you telling me that. I didn’t link the two names, I’m sorry.”

“It’s nothing bad, Harry, and you should absolutely consider Cyrano if you like him and get on with him. Not that you need my permission or anything, but don’t let this stop you from fully considering him, okay?”

Harry nodded thoughtfully, trying to figure out if Max meant his words or if he’d be upset if he chose Cyrano for a mate.

“Do you want another cup of tea?” Max asked him.

Harry smiled and then he nodded. “Yes, please.”

Max made him another cup of tea and Harry chewed on a biscuit as he sipped and took a moment.

“Are you ready for the next dominant, Harry?” Elder Kirrian asked.

Harry considered how he felt, and he nodded. “Yes.”

Harry hated the man that walked in on sight. He didn’t know what it was, but he reminded him so strongly of Jefferus that he latched onto Max and curled into him.

“No!” He said quickly, his voice shrill with panic. “Not him. Get rid of him.”

The dominant looked surprised, but also mortally offended. He looked arrogant, and maybe that was why Harry automatically associated him with Jefferus. He’d had that same arrogant sneer slashed over his mouth.

Captain Foss immediately moved forward and grappled the dominant back out of the door while Max surrounded him with his arms and sense of safety.

“Are you okay, love?” Max asked. “What happened?”
Harry just shook his head and burrowed deeper into Max, his fingers digging into flesh tightly, likely on the edge of pain, but Max didn’t make any sort of complaint and he didn’t make any move towards removing Harry’s grip, he just held him tighter, shushing him and smoothing big hands over his back.

Harry only relaxed when Captain Foss came back into the room and firmly shut the door. He immediately felt safer and he breathed a little easier.

He was left alone for a moment, before Max asked him again what had happened.

“It was that arrogant stance, the sneer on his face. He...he reminded me so much of him that...that...” Harry shook his head. “I could never have accepted him as a mate when he...”

“I understand, you don’t need to say it.” Max said gently, pressing another kiss to his head. “These are your meetings, and you can discount anyone that you want to, you don’t even need a reason, just say the word and they’re gone.”

Harry nodded his understanding. He was offered chocolate and he nibbled on it to make himself feel better. It did help as he snuggled into Max.

“I sort of knew that not all of them were going to be nice or kind, some might have stayed just for the chance to be cruel, because I know those sorts of people do exist, but it was still a shock to meet someone who...who reminded me so much of him. I’m glad Ismay isn’t here.”

“Just take a moment now, love.” Max soothed. “It’s alright and you’re safe, I’m right here. Anyone who wants to get to you, they’d have to go through me first.” He said seriously.

“And they’d have a job getting to Max through the rest of us.” Elder Kirrian said, trying to lighten the mood.

Harry smiled and he felt the remaining tension drain away with the next bite of chocolate. He breathed in deeply and he blew it out. He felt better, safer, and he tried to swallow back the urge to run to Ismay to check that she was alright, despite the fact that she hadn’t even come into contact with that dominant.

“Feeling better?” Max asked him.
Harry considered how he was feeling and he sighed. He nodded. “Yes. I’m feeling more settled. That…he did shake me up a little.”

“It’s okay, just sit quiet for a moment. It’ll be alright.”

Max kissed the side of his head and Harry smiled. He did feel better now and with every deep breath, he relaxed more.

“Okay, I’m feeling better.”

“You want to check out another dominant?” Max asked, a teasing tone to his voice that made Harry smile.

“Well, I came here to shop, after all.” He teased right back.

Max laughed and it loosened something in Harry’s chest. He felt better, more normal.

“Are you sure you don’t want to call it a day?” Elder Trintus fretted, more worried for Harry than he was about anything else.

“No, that was a bit shocking, but if it happens again, I’ll likely handle it better now. I feel alright, I want to carry on.”

Harry was taken at his word, which felt wonderful, as he still wasn’t completely used to people listening to him and doing as he asked. A few minutes later and another dominant was led in to the room. He was rather short for a dominant, maybe just scraping six foot, but he was handsome enough and though he wasn’t exactly smiling, he wasn’t sneering either. He looked terrified to have been chosen.

“My name is Peter Lindsay.” The dominant introduced. “Twenty-two.”

Immediately Harry’s smile became a little forced. It wasn’t anything the dominant had done, but he hadn’t liked the name Peter since he’d found out that it had been Pettigrew who had betrayed his parents. He was happy to sit and listen to the man talk, giving him a chance, but he would not be one
of his mates for the sheer reason that his name was Peter.

After Peter came Gordon, then Terrence, then Sarah, Ahmed, Austin, Gemma and then Evren. Harry couldn’t say that they were bad, as they weren’t, they just weren’t the right fit for him.

“Can I have a break, please?” He asked.

“Of course.” Elder Midate agreed immediately.

“Are you alright?” Elder Trintus asked him.

“I’m just tired…or rather I’m socially drained” Harry said. “I need a break.”

Max set him up with more tea and Harry took the quiet downtime to relax and cuddle with his mate.

“Did you like any of them?” Max asked him.

Harry hummed thoughtfully. “Not really. They were nice enough, just…not mate material for me. Did you like any of them?”

“The last one, Evren, was alright, but the others never really stood out to me. You’re right, they just never really fit in. None of them.”

Harry nodded and he was glad that Max was feeling, and thinking, the same way that he was. It made him feel better. It made him relax a little more.

They took an extended break this time, having time to eat a few sandwiches and raw vegetables cut into sticks. He felt much better once he’d eaten. He had a quick bathroom break, Max coming with him, more because he needed to use the toilet too rather than because Harry was afraid or felt unsafe. The bathroom was just beside the room he was conducting his meetings in, after all, and the corridor held several guards and Elder Thorne was patrolling it too.

After he was done and ready to start up once more, he had dominant after dominant brought in, but none of them fit. He didn’t like them enough to be able to imagine spending his life with them. The first day ended at two in the afternoon, as per Harry’s wishes, as he didn’t want to spend all day on these meetings when he wanted to be with Ismay, who would be waking up from her nap about now, if she had gone down for one at all. Lately she had been staying awake more, refusing to take any nap through the day, as unlike before, she would much rather be awake during the day than
spend any of it sleeping. She was learning that she was no longer going to be hurt or shouted at, and as she learnt, the habit of sleeping to mask the fear and the boredom was slipping away.

“Mummy!” She cried out happily, the moment that she saw him.

She came pelting towards him and he went to his knees in preparation. They shared a kiss and then she puckered her lips all the way up to Max. Harry laughed and he stood, holding her out to Max, who took her into his massive hands that almost swallowed her tiny body and he kissed her soundly, smacking his lips and making her giggle.

“Did you finish your shopping, Mummy?” She asked.

Max laughed in shock and Harry almost choked. “I wasn’t shopping, love. I told you that I need to find another mate for my Dracken.”

Ismay nodded. “Yeah, I know, but Jacob said that you would go shopping for those.”

“Jacob was joking, sweetie. I was just sat in a room, talking to people.” Harry said with a smile.

“Oh. Can we go home now?” She asked.

Harry nodded and he snuggled into Max’s side as his dominant carried Ismay. They said their goodbyes and then very shortly after they were home. Ismay kicked her feet gently to indicate that she wanted to go down and she went right to her little armchair and squished herself into it.

“Mummy, can I have cartoons and tea, please?”

Harry could only smile at her and he went to kiss her head as he swiped the remote to turn on the tele and change it to a kids channel while Max went into the kitchen to sort out drinks.

Harry collapsed onto the settee and he breathed deeply. He was home, he was safe, and he was out of the firing line. He could relax and do as he pleased now. It felt great.

Max came back in with a tea tray and he gave Ismay her cup first, leaning over to kiss her head,
before he handed Harry’s to him and then sat beside him with his own. He groaned as he sat down, putting an arm around Harry and snuggling him in.

“How are you feeling, love?”

“More relaxed now.” Harry said, before sipping on his tea. “I think I’m happier to be here than anywhere else.”

Max smiled at him and they took a quiet moment, watching the cartoons with Ismay, smiling at her as she laughed and giggled over the screen.

All too soon they got back to their afternoon routine and Max was busy making them all dinner while Harry played with his daughter. He had missed her today and he made himself feel much better by sitting on the floor and playing with a wooden animal set that Myron had bought for her. She really liked it as it included several horses that ‘Cloppity’ could play with, including a small herd of unicorns.

“Alright you two. Dinner’s ready.” Max said from the doorway, smiling at them both indulgently.

Harry looked up with a grin, unaware that Ismay had done the same thing, giving them both identical expressions of mischief. Max wouldn’t have either of them any other way as he clapped his hands together to chide them into moving faster and he caught Ismay up, exclaiming that she needed some help as he ran her to the kitchen, listening to her shrieks of laughter, and Harry’s behind them. Max grinned himself.

Family life was not what he’d always imagined it to be, it wasn’t all fun and games and cooking nice food for his family members, sometimes it was dealing with nightmares, having little arguments and then reassuring Harry that it was alright to sometimes answer back and disagree, or it was dealing with Ismay throwing tantrums. It was holding Harry as he cried himself sick because he’d thought that he was back at the Perrots’, it was rocking Ismay in his arms when she woke screaming in the middle of the night, it was soothing Harry, being a reassuring presence as they went out of the house that he was going to be fine, and not abducted from the street. It was holding two small hands in his own, one Ismay’s, one Harry’s, as he helped to guide them down a path of normalcy, as he helped them to regain their confidence and their footing in life, but moments like now, as he swung Ismay around gently and then sat her in her booster seat, before snagging Harry and doing the same, listening to the both of them laughing, these were the little moments that he lived for. He wouldn’t have any of it any other way.

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It had been two weeks since the start of these meetings, and Harry was no nearer to finding his
second mate than he’d been at the beginning. He’d been introduced to hundreds of dominants of all different sizes, shapes, ages, backgrounds and still he didn’t believe that he connected with any of them.

“This is impossible.” He complained as he slumped back on the settee and let himself bonelessly flop on it.

Max gave his belly a poke and it caused an automatic squirm and giggle from Harry.

“Don’t give up. There are more still, we have time.” Max told him.

“Barely. I have a week before I have another heat period.” Harry frowned.

He was still planning on mating to Nasta. These meetings were more so that he could scope out a prospective third mate, but he hadn’t met any that he truly connected with like he did Max and Nasta. Perhaps he should ask Max if he had any more Dracken friends lingering around. He giggled to himself and got a smile from Max for it, but his mate wasn’t privy to his thoughts, so he had no idea what had made Harry giggle, or why he was so amused.

“You liked Cyrano the most.” Elder Midate reminded him. “Back from your first day, do you remember?”

Harry did remember. He nodded. “Cyrano was nice.” He admitted. “I think I could forge a bond with him if we had some time to do so, I could see myself trusting him, and loving him in time, but it wasn’t like the instant connection that I had with Max.”

“Harry, are you going through these meetings looking for as strong a connection as you had with Max?” Elder Trintus asked him.

“Oh course.” Harry said, in slight confusion. “Should I not be?”

“The type of reaction that you and Max had to one another, the type of instant connection that you shared, is very rare.” Elder Midate told him. “Not every submissive gets that, or finds the one dominant that they connect to in such a way.”
“A lot of matings are the type you’ve just explained that you feel for Cyrano.” Elder Kirrian chipped in. “Not a connection of sorts, but the type where, with a little time, you could easily see yourself with him.”

“Oh.” Harry frowned. “I…I think I’ve done this all wrong then. I was looking for someone else who connected to me like Max did.”

“It’s not wrong, sweetness.” Elder Midate said gently. “Just scale it back a little and look for someone who makes you comfortable, makes you feel safe and cared for, someone that you’re attracted to. Instead of the instant connection that you shared with Max, where your feelings were all but boiling over, look for a more…**simmering** feeling. Someone who you think might be able to make you boil over like Max did given some time and more interaction.”

Harry nodded. “Okay. I can do that. Do I…do I need to see them all again?” He asked nervously.

“No.” Max said immediately, soothing him. “You’ve already seen them once, love, and you already know which ones you like, you’ve put a tick next to their names. They are the ones you need to focus on as, in a way, you’ve already chosen them, or at least separated them from the rest. You don’t need to start again.”


Max grinned at him, and it pulled a grin from Harry.

“You ready to meet some more simmering pots?” Max asked him.

“Only if you promise not to boil over on me.” Harry laughed.

“Ah, well I can’t make that promise, you’re too beautiful.” Max insisted as he glomped Harry, laying on top of him and he started nibbling on his neck, making Harry shriek in delight, laughing happily.

“Alright you two, you’re toeing a line here.” Elder Midate told them.

“Between what, Elder?” Harry asked innocently.
“Between decency and indecency.” Elder Trintus chuckled.

“I was going to say between heavy petting and outright sex.” Elder Kirrian put in and that made Harry laugh harder.

Max chuckled himself and sat back up, pulling Harry with him.

“Alright then. No boiling over on you until we’re home and Issy is in bed. Until then, at least you’re more relaxed for these other dominants.”

“Are you ready for the next one?” Elder Midate asked him.

“As I’ll ever be, let’s see if he’s a simmering pot.” Harry echoed Max’s joke and they both sniggered like kids in a classroom, but that was why Harry loved him so much.

The dominant who walked in was not a simmering pot. He wasn’t even a heated pot. He seemed stone cold and calculating and Harry treaded carefully as he tried to make the dominant misstep as he claimed to be very rich and that he had three of his own homes, and a beach house in France too.

Max bent down to Harry’s ear. “I think he’s lying, love.” He whispered softly. “I don’t want to influence you, or your decision, but I just really don’t trust this one.”

Harry turned and he nodded to Max. “Same.” He said softly. “I really don’t believe a single word that is coming from his mouth. I think it was the private helicopter that overdid it.”

“I think he’s going to tell you he’s a Prince next.”

“Really? I thought he was going to say he had bought and owned an entire country.”

Max snorted and then coughed to try and mask it.
“Is there a problem?” The dominant, Christophe, asked, looking very annoyed that they were whispering to one another.

“A problem?” Harry asked. “Yes, there is, Max and I were just discussing just how much more bullshit can fall from your mouth before you’re up to your neck in it.”

A strangled laugh from Elder Kirrian had Harry’s lips twitching.

“See, Max thinks you’re going to say that you’re a Prince next, I disagreed. With the list of things you owned getting longer and more expensive, I was truly expecting an entire country to be next. Or perhaps a gold or diamond mine…maybe both.”

“I…I’m not lying!” The dominant blustered.

“I don’t believe you.” Harry said. “Your time is over, I want you to leave.”

It was issued like a request, but it was acted upon like an order as Captain Foss took an immediate step forward and made to grapple the dominant out of the room. Harry watched with slight amusement as the dominant tried to escape Captain Foss, though he was briefly alarmed when the dominant made to come towards him, but the good old Captain immediately saw the danger and he grabbed the dominant by the leg and pulled him backwards, off of his feet, and then sent him flying towards the wall, where several guards set upon him and dragged him out of the room, shutting the door behind them for safety.

“Are you alright, sweet one?” Elder Trintus immediately asked, sitting back down from his protective stance.

Harry nodded. “I knew he wouldn’t reach me.” He said, though his pulse was racing a little faster than it had been.

“Do you want a tea break?” Max asked him.

Harry nodded. “I want an X by his name too. I want him gone, never to return. What an imbecile, as if anyone would have ever fallen for that massive load of bullshit.”
Max snorted, even as he made Harry his tea. “Some young, newly inherited submissives might have fallen for it, love. There are still some rather naïve submissives who will believe anything said to them going into their meetings. It’s why those dominants try their luck, just in case they find a gullible submissive to fool. It is usually dominants who haven’t put aside any provisions for a mate and children, or don’t want to work hard to ensure their family has enough that try such tactics, as they have nothing else to offer to a submissive.”

“I would hope that the Elders would be on the lookout for that, in place of a loving dominant to point out such lies to them.” Harry smiled up at Max.

The three Elders all nodded. “It’s our job to help root out such unworthy little creeps.” Elder Kirrian insisted. “It’s why we always tell our little submissive charges to pick at anything told to them and weed out the lies.”

Harry accepted the tea handed to him by Max, giving him a kiss for good measure, and he took a nice sip and relaxed back, sighing happily.

“I think I need a walk.” He said. “Get a bit of air, stretch my legs a little.”

“You can have a walk around the garden if you’d like.” Elder Midate told him.

Harry nodded. “I think I need it. It’s too hot in here.”

“Drink your tea and then we’ll go play in the garden.” Max said.

Harry gave him a grin and the naughty gleam in those eyes had Max grinning in anticipation of whatever Harry was going to say, he was getting much better with playful teasing lately.

“That won’t help cool me down, Max.” Harry said.

“You never know, a little removal of some layers might help dispel some excess heat.” He argued.

Harry almost spat out his tea and when he finally managed to swallow, he started laughing, his eyes leaking tears.
Max grinned and he cupped Harry’s face with his hands and used his thumbs to gently wipe away the laughter tears. He couldn’t help but bend down and peck those lips either.

They were ignored as they started passing banter back and forth, but Max could see the smiles on everyone’s faces. It was nice to see Harry like this, to hear him laughing so freely, to listen to him banter and trade teasing words with others, especially after what he’d been like when he had first been rescued, when he had been so very, very afraid of other people, and sat huddled and curled up in a little ball, when he wouldn’t speak out of turn or unless asked a direct question, when he never laughed, and would never have dreamed of bantering with anyone. It was nice to see him doing all of those things without hesitation, and without fearing about anyone’s reaction and if everyone around him indulged him in the extreme, well, it was nothing that Harry didn’t deserve for all that he’d been through in his life.

“Who is that?” Harry asked suddenly and Max looked down at him quickly, only to see him looking off into the distance.

Harry had, very bravely, decided to interact with more than one dominant at a time, just to test if he actually could do it, and so he was in the hall with the unmated dominants, wandering freely, though he was surrounded on all sides and Max had a firm grip on his hand, just in case.

“Who have you seen, love? Remember there are several hundred dominants in this room and I’m not on your level.” Max teased.

Harry chuckled. “He’s gone now, his wings caught my attention, I liked them, they were really colourful, but like sort of pastel colours, not bright like most others.”

Max could only stare down at Harry, who didn’t notice as he was trying to look for the dominant he’d seen. Max wondered if Harry had actually spotted Sixten in the crowd, as Sixten was one of the only ones he knew of who had those strange, rather lovely pastel coloured wings.

Max looked for him himself from his higher vantage point, but he couldn’t see anyone he remotely recognised in the crowd of faces. Sixten would likely be with Nasta though, if it had been Sixten that Harry had even seen in the first place, as though they were unusual, pastel coloured wings were not exclusive to Sixten.

“What colour were his wings, Harry?” Elder Midate asked. “We can try and narrow it down to find a name and then you can interview him and see what he’s like as a person.”
“Sort of bluey, pale green, pale purple.” Harry said. “All in pastel tones.”

Max wanted to laugh. “His name is Sixten Axelson.”

Harry turned to look at him. “You know him? Do you like him?” He asked.

“It’s not up to me to like him.” Max reminded for the millionth time since these meetings had begun. “But yes, I know him.”

“I already like his wings. They’re really different. I like it.”

“He’ll be thrilled to hear you say that. He hates his wings. He’s always saying they look like a cartoon sweetshop.”

“What’s wrong with cartoon sweetshops?” Harry asked with a smile.

Max didn’t answer, instead Harry found himself up in Max’s arms and turned quickly as one of the dominants around them tried to force his way past the guards to interact with him.

Harry wrapped his arms around Max’s neck for balance and he tried to remember that he had to breathe. He could hear Elder Kirrian giving the dominant a piece of his mind, and he could hear comments thrown around from other dominants too, heckling the one who had tried to launch himself at Harry.

“Why do they keep doing that? They’re hardly wild animals in a zoo.” He complained. “They can’t be that hungry, besides I think I’d make a rather poor meal with how skinny I am. Maybe he was after you?” He asked Max, who laughed and eased down.

More laughter to his left had Harry turning and then blushing when he saw that his comment had been overheard by a few nearby dominants.

“Well.” He said with a shy, rather bashful smile. “I’m hardly all that edible. I’d rather have a bear personally.”
“You ever take down a bear?” One of them asked him curiously.

“No, my overprotective caveman of a mate won’t even let me come and watch as he takes down a bear. The biggest I ever got was a deer, but that was before I was mated. Max hunts for me now, I haven’t felt the urge to do it for myself in a while.”

“Too busy?” Another asked.

Harry nodded. “Between my daughter, and now these meetings, I’d rather just let Max sort out dinner for me. He’s a good hunter, and I’d never dare try to take on a bear. How did you even get started on that?” He turned and asked Max. “They’re not exactly natural prey animals.”

“I wanted a challenge.” Max grinned at him.

“There is a challenge and then there is taking on a bear.” Harry said seriously. “More like suicidal than challenging.”

“If you say so, my love.”

Harry grinned. “I do say so.”

“Harry, dear one, are you alright?” Elder Midate came over to ask him.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I know I said I didn’t like people lunging at me, and I don’t, but that was rather comical. As if anyone could have gotten past all of those guards.”

“Apparently he was desperate to say hello.”

“Desperate to have my foot rammed up his arse.” Harry muttered.

Max sniggered and kissed the side of his head, before putting him back on his feet, now assured that the threat had been dealt with.
“Do you want to go back to your rooms?” Max asked him.

Harry shook his head. “No. I was doing well before that, I want to carry on.”

“Don’t feel like you have to push yourself, Harry. You have nothing to prove.”

“Not to anyone else, maybe, but I do to myself. I can do this. I know that I can.”

“Alright then, love. Where to next?”

“Follow the pastels.” Harry grinned and pointed off into the distance.

Max was surprised into laughing. He shook his head and he turned in the direction that Harry had supposedly seen Sixten and they started wading through the unmated dominants grouping around. Max knew that Nasta and Sixten would not be one of the ones hounding after Harry, trying to get his attention, trying to touch him, thus it was unlikely that Harry would find either of them like this, wading through the surging crowd, but he let Harry lead him around the hall, sometimes stopping to talk, but mostly just walking around, showing no fear, proving that he could stand to be in the same room as so many other dominants and not be petrified of any of them. Max was so proud of him.

They took a break, without finding Sixten, or the owner of those pastel wings, and Harry was staring off into space, thinking hard. Max didn’t distract him or disrupt him, he signalled to the Elders to keep their voices down and he sat in the peace and quiet, drinking his own tea, while letting Harry think.

“I think I want to end these meetings now.” Harry announced suddenly, startling them all.

“Harry, love? You need at least two more dominants to be healthy. I thought you liked Cyrano?” Max tried.

Harry turned and blinked at him. “Oh, no. I meant just this meeting for the second mate. I know who he’ll be. I think I always knew. I just…I wanted to see what these meetings would be like, without the pressure of actually liking someone enough to mate to them.”
“But, who have you chosen, sweet one?” Elder Trintus asked. “Cyrano?”

“No, my second mate was chosen before these meetings started. I…you’re not angry about that are you?” Harry turned to Max unsurely.

Max bent to nuzzle at Harry’s face, keeping his hands away, just in case Harry thought a strike was coming towards him.

“How could I possibly be angry?” He asked softly. “I’m so happy that you’ve discovered your second mate. One down, another one to go.” He laughed. “Who have you chosen?” He asked, though he knew, he just knew, that it would be Nasta. There was no other dominant that Harry had come into contact with before these meetings had started.

“Nasta.” Harry breathed out between them. “And at the moment Cyrano will be our third mate. I…I wanted to use this meeting to try and scope out my third mate, as…as I came into these meetings already thinking of Nasta as my second mate. Are you angry? I’m sorry, I just…”

“I’m not angry, Harry. I think that was a very clever thing to do, especially if you already knew that you wanted Nasta. That way instead of getting just one meeting to find your third mate, you get two. It’s very clever.”

Harry threw his arms around him and clutched tight and Max heard him stifling his cries. He held on tightly and he played his hands through that soft, tufty hair, just reassuring Harry with gentle touches.

“Hey, come on.” He chided. “As if I would ever be angry with you for choosing the mates you need to have a happy, healthy life.”

“I wanted so badly for it to just be you.”

“I know you did, but it doesn’t matter. If you want Nasta, he’ll be a good fit. If you want Cyrano too, he’ll fit right in. You already know Nasta loves Ismay, we can follow your plan and test Cyrano with her too, with us there to monitor him and we’ll see how he gets on with her too, okay? We have a plan, now, what do you want to do?”

“I want to see Nasta, officially. I want to speak to him, tell him that I’ve chosen him, and then I want to go home.”
“Fair enough.” Max said. “Elder, if you would?”

Max held Harry on his lap, clutching him tightly and just continuously reassuring him as Harry burrowed in and gripped fistfuls of his shirt. Harry hadn’t had an ‘episode’ of fear and self-doubt this bad in months, and Max didn’t like that these meetings, the huge decision that they represented, filled with such stress and anxiousness was the cause of Harry’s first meltdown in ages.

Nasta looked shocked when he came in and he hurried to sit beside them.

“What happened? Was it a dominant?” Nasta asked.

“No, Harry was just scared of telling me that he’d chosen a mate.”

Nasta’s strange hazel-green-gold eyes lighted with understanding. “I would hope that you’ve already told him that you’re not angry because of his needed mates.”

“Of course, but…” Max trailed off. He didn’t want to talk about Harry over his head, as if he wasn’t even there.

“I understand.” Nasta said, in such a way that Max just knew that he did.

“I want you to be my second mate. If…if you want to be.” Harry said quietly, his self-conscious doubts and fear coming through clearly.

“Of course I want to be, who wouldn’t want to be one of your mates, Harry?” Nasta said gently. “You’re a wonderful person and those that can see such things, we’re honoured to even be considered.”

Harry remained curled up to Max, clutching at him, and Max knew that the fear would be eating Harry alive.

“Want to go get Ismay and go home? I’ll find your favourite blanket, bring you tea and you can make a little fort.”
“S’not a fort, it’s a nest.” Harry complained.

“Okay, we can go home and put you in your nest, yes?”

Harry nodded. “Nasta comes too.”

“Yes, Nasta has to come too, he’s our mate now.” Max agreed, standing up, carrying Harry with him.

“We will handle everything now, sweet one.” Elder Midate said. “We’ll make the announcement and when you’re ready for your third meeting, we’ll announce that too. Just go home and calm yourself a little, enjoy the next two months with Nasta, and then after that, we’ll only ever have to do this once more, Harry. Just once.”

Harry nodded, but Max made the decision to leave, quickly. To get Harry back in a familiar, home setting and get him comfortable. Then he could reassure him continuously that he wasn’t angry, not in the slightest, that Harry had chosen Nasta for a mate, nor that he had apparently chosen Nasta weeks, if not months ago. He would have to tell his Dad that he’d been right all along, Myron Maddison was a shrewd fucker for a reason, after all.

“Where is Ismay?” Nasta asked quietly.

“With my brother at my Grandfather’s. She’s having a play day with Nora and Bea.”

“If I settle Harry, would you want to go and get her?” Nasta asked. “I know how to make his tea, especially after those extensive lessons I was given.”

Max was relieved when that pulled a smile out of Harry. Harry who had gotten fed up of not having his tea how he liked it, so he had instructed Nasta, and Max, in how to make it properly, how he liked it.

“That alright with you, love?” Max asked.
Harry nodded and his grip lessened slightly on Max’s shirt. Max kissed him first, happily, more playfully than anything else, as he exaggerated the smacking sound and got a weak chuckle from his mate as he was handed over trustingly to Nasta.

“I’ll go and get Issy, Nasta will get you tea, and when I get back I’ll get your blanket and we can make you a nest.”

“I don’t really need to make a nest.” Harry said quietly.

“Nope, you’re getting a nest and maybe, if Issy wants to, we’ll put on Disney too.”

“So…a duvet day?” Nasta asked with a smile.

“Exactly.” Max said. “Off you go now. No, actually I’ll go first. I need the extra time to at least say hello to my nieces while I’m there.”

Max took a breath and he did just that. Ignoring his Dracken that didn’t want to leave his distressed mate.

Nasta took the trust he was being given and he carefully carried Harry after Max, at a slower pace, and he flooed back to Harry’s home, settling him on the settee. He hunched in front of it, putting himself lower than Harry’s eye level, and he smiled.

“Thank you for choosing me, Harry.” He said sincerely. “I’m so very honoured to be one of your dominant mates and I have come to care a great deal about you and Ismay. Of course you already know that Max and I get along great.”

“He told me how you would look after him when…when I was gone. He told me that you also…that it was a sexual relationship too.”

Nasta smiled. “Max and I have always been close, for many years now. It wasn’t the first time we’d had sex, though I am glad that you understand. A lot of submissives maybe wouldn’t have understood our need for physical closeness after meeting upon meeting of being rejected. It does hurt to be rejected over and over again, and if a bit of sex with a friend helped to make us feel better about ourselves…” Nasta shrugged. “It wasn’t any sort of hardship.”
Harry grinned at that and he reached out a hand to touch Nasta skin on skin for the first time, as while he and Nasta didn’t have the ‘boiling pot’ effect on one another, at least not to the extent that he and Max had, the Elders had deemed it necessary to keep him away from all touch of all unmated dominants. Compatible ones, like Max and Nasta, especially.

Nasta stayed still as Harry’s small hand cupped his face and then Harry shifted forward suddenly, to press soft lips against his own.

“Hey! You had your instructions and I find that you haven’t even gotten any tea going!” Max’s laughter filled voice broke them apart.

“Nasta, why are you kissing my Mummy?” Ismay asked curiously.

“Remember we talked about Drackens needing mates, Ismay?” Harry asked her.

“You need three, so three will be coming to live with us.” Ismay nodded.

“Max is the first.” Harry nodded. “Nasta is the second.”

“Really?” Ismay asked excitedly. She hurried up to Nasta and clambered all over him until she could fist his hair and get eye contact. “Does that make you my Daddy too?”

“If that’s what you want, then of course, Annwyl.” Nasta answered immediately. “I’d be very happy to have you as a daughter.”

“So I get two Daddies?” She asked happily.

“Maybe even three.” Max asked and her eyes went huge. She giggled happily and squirmed.

“Is that right, Mummy?” She asked him.

Harry nodded.
Ismay shrieked happily and Harry had to smile at her.

“Nasta, I still don’t see any tea anywhere!” Max teased.

“Best go and get some then, Caru.” Nasta teased back. “I have a new daughter to cuddle.”

Max laughed, but he easily went to get the usual round of tea. Harry was feeling more settled and secure now that he was in his home environment and he uncurled himself little by little. Max and Nasta liked one another, they had a sexual relationship already, they were good friends. This wasn’t going to be bad, it was just adjusting to having two people in bed with him opposed to just one.

Max gave him tea, gave Nasta tea, gave Ismay tea and he had a cup for himself. He left the room again and a few minutes later he was back with Harry’s blanket from their bed, which he draped over Harry. Harry smiled at him as he snuggled his favourite blanket and sipped his tea.

“Mummy, are you tired?” Ismay asked him.

“No love, just a little cold.”

“It’s boiling!” She insisted, plucking at her shorts to emphasise that it was August.

“I know. I just need it a moment, while I drink my tea.”

Ismay nodded. “Okay. Nasta, come and see my room!”

Nasta was gone as soon as he’d come, being tugged out of the room leaving Harry and Max laughing at him and settling down on the settee.

“Are you feeling better, Harry?” Max asked.

Harry nodded. “I…I think I just needed to be back in my home space, and having something to cover my body always makes me feel more secure because…because I was never allowed to have such protection.”
Max leant over and kissed Harry’s forehead before smoothing the blanket over him more firmly.

“I know, love. I know why you needed to be back home and needed a blanket. It’s alright.”

“I am getting better.” Harry said, almost as if he needed to justify his own behaviour.

Max gave him a soft touch. “You’re so much better, Harry. You’ve come on so well, you’ve come so far. I love you and I’m so proud of you, but if you need a moment too, that’s fine.”

Harry relaxed and he smiled. “Thank you for putting up with me, Max.”

“There is no ‘putting up’ with you, Harry. I love you and I’m willing to do anything to make you happy and secure.”

“Thank you.” Harry said in a small voice.

Max shifted over and threw an arm around Harry’s shoulder, cuddling his little submissive in tightly.

“No need to thank me for doing what all dominants are supposed to for their beautiful, wonderful mates.”

“I fully agree.” Nasta said from behind them, popping over the top of the settee, Ismay giggling in his arms as he dangled her over the settee too.

Harry chuckled and he reached up to poke Ismay’s little nose.

“Mummy, no poking!” She insisted.

“Did you have fun showing Nasta your room?”

“I showed him where he was going to sleep too.”
“Now, Ismay, I know we told you that Nasta had Faerie blood, but you can’t expect him to sleep in your doll house.” Max said, trying to keep a straight face, but his lips twitched, his eyes crinkled and his voice warbled with laughter.

“No, Daddy Max, Nasta is sleeping in your bed, with Mummy.”

Harry couldn’t help but laugh at that.

“Is he not?” Ismay asked confusedly as Harry and Max both laughed.

“No, he is, well done, Ismay.” Harry said, wiping his eyes.

“Grown-ups are strange.” Ismay declared, before going off to play with her toys in the corner, leaving behind three laughing men.

Harry pulled Nasta down to sit on his other side and he considered how it felt to be sat between them. He wasn’t scared at all, he was actually feeling a combination of excited anticipation. It felt good. So good.

“Alright by there?” Max asked him. “You’re sort of looking between us as if you’re considering which one of us you want to eat first.”

“You’re not too far from the mark.” Harry teased with a smile, before laughing. “No, I was considering how I felt and…and this is good. It feels good. I like it.”

Max faux gasped. “Are you…are you imagining us all in bed together later? You’re so naughty.” Max teased.

Harry laughed. “I was actually. It’s not like it will be a first for you or Nasta to be in bed together…it’s my turn.”

Max laughed happily, but Nasta looked a little unsure. Maybe he was still expecting Harry to be
afraid or at least apprehensive of sex? Well Max had thoroughly obliterated that fear over the last (almost) four months that they had been mated together. For the first time Harry found himself not only enjoying sex, but wanting it, craving it, even initiating it on occasion.

“I’m sure between us we can accommodate that.” Max said, a sparkle in those blue eyes.

“Good, because between you is where I want to be.” Harry declared happily, looking from one mate to the other.

“It’s where you’re going to stay.” Max told him. “As soon as Ismay is in bed, you can take control and we’ll do what you want to do.”

Harry grinned rather naughtily at that, looking from Max to Nasta, and then back to Max. “I’m happy with that, I can’t wait.”

“Mummy, come and play with me.” Ismay called out to him from a pile of dolls and Harry stood and he wrapped himself in the blanket and he moved over to Ismay, letting the blanket pool in his lap to cover his legs. Covering his legs was always more important than any other part of his body, because it was his lower half that had always been uncovered and more often abused.

“Do both my special little guys want tea?”

“Daddy Max, I’m a lady!” Ismay protested.

“Alright, alright, do both my special ladies want tea?” Max asked with a shit eating grin.

Harry gave him an unimpressed look. A look that was mimicked by Ismay, and Nasta, who was watching, smiled to himself at the identical frowns.

“Mummy is a boy!” Ismay said firmly. “He isn’t a lady.”

Max just grinned. “So does this mean that neither of you want tea?” He asked.
“I never said that!” Ismay replied quickly.

Harry chuckled. “Go and get the tea, Max. You’ll pay for that comment later.” Harry winked and then turned back to playing with the dolls.

“Harry!” Max complained in a drawn out whine. “You can’t do that.”

“I can and I will.” Harry grinned, playing with a doll as if he wasn’t talking about bedroom activities.

It made Nasta smirk, and he was more reassured now that Harry was doing alright, he was bantering back with Max, he was obviously alright with sex if he could speak about it to blithely, if he could tease about it, and that made Nasta feel better about this too.

He watched mostly, it was sort of his thing, observing silently, picking up on body language and Harry was very happy, he could see it with Harry’s body language as he abandoned the blanket he had been using for comfort and protection to reach over to grab a little hair brush for the doll. He was smiling, he was laughing with his daughter, he was more relaxed now and he happily ribbed Max as the huge man came in carrying a tea tray and he served his submissive and his adopted daughter.

Nasta smiled as Max came over to him and offered him tea before sitting beside him.

“So, you look a bit outcast and uncomfortable.”

“I’m just learning my surroundings. Ismay is really good at breaking the tension.”

“That she is. Just enjoy this small, quiet moment, because very soon you’ll be on that floor playing dolls too. Or being shoved into a doll house.”

“What is that about?” Nasta asked.

“Peter Pan. Ismay loved it and she wants a Tinkerbelle of her own, so she put a sign in the garden of her doll house that any and all fairies were welcome to live there. Then we had to sit her down and explain about actual Faeries and that you had Faerie blood. She was so excited.”

“Is that why I was chosen?” Nasta asked quietly.
Max actually laughed. “No. I’m sure Harry liked you from the beginning, from the moment he first saw you, remember? Thinking about it, I should have realised, he wouldn’t have told Ismay about you, or even introduced you to her, if he wasn’t comfortable with you, if he hadn’t had a little bit of an inkling that you would have been one of his mates.”

Nasta nodded and he took a sip of green tea and he smiled. Max still knew him rather well, despite that the last few years of their relationship had been…rather painful, if he were truly honest. He hadn’t liked seeing Max in such pain and distress. Things were better now, they had been for almost a year now, ever since Harry had been rescued. Looking at the smiling young man on the floor, a doll in each hand as he played out a scene with his daughter, he couldn’t even imagine him still being a captive, still being abused and hurt. Some of the details that he knew made him feel queasy, just thinking about it now set his teeth on edge and he felt a tell-tale tingle in his gums and nailbeds. He held back the urge to shift and he sighed.

“Hard to stomach isn’t it?” Max asked from beside him, laying a hand on his shoulder, knowing exactly what he was thinking of from the expression on his face. “Thinking of him going through what he has when you see him like this.”

Nasta nodded as he watched Ismay and Harry laughing together, before they both took a drink of tea.

“They’re so alike.” Nasta observed.

Max nodded. “You’ll notice that a lot. He was all she had in that place, so she does look to him and copy him a lot. She does it to me sometimes too, and she will undoubtedly do it to you too. So be on your best behaviour.” Max teased.

Nasta grinned at him. “I’m always on my best behaviour. You on the other hand, you are terrible.”

Max grinned happily. “That I am. You’ll have to keep me in line, lover.”

Nasta turned and nuzzled into his neck, moving up to Max’s ear. “I would be happy to, lover. It might involve some biting though.”

Max actually shivered. “I can handle some teeth, you know I can. It’s that fucking torturous tongue of yours that unravels me.”
Nasta smirked. “I would be happy to unravel you tonight, both of you.” He added flicking his gaze to Harry.

“I haven’t tried rimming him yet. You’ll ruin him for anyone else.”

“You let him top yet?”

“No, not yet. We’re working our way up to it. At the moment he’s having incredible fun riding, if you catch my drift.”

“Perhaps tonight will be a night of discoveries.” Nasta mused.

Max gave him a wicked look, but he tempered himself. “Everything has to be on Harry’s terms. Okay?”

“Absolutely. I would never do anything he wouldn’t like, especially now that he’s shown such trust in me by choosing me as one of his dominant mates.”

Max nodded. “I know, I don’t mean to nag, or jump down your throat, I just, it has taken a lot to get him here. Do you know he’d never experienced a consensual orgasm before? He had no clue what it was or what the feelings building inside himself were. It took us several tries to get him to orgasm because he kept stopping me, and of course you know I would have backed off immediately.”

“Naturally.” Nasta agreed easily.

“But, he seems okay, he teases, he does like sex now, but most of it is bluster. Or it is until he gets used to you, Nas. He wants it, he wants to be normal, but go nice and easy with him, perhaps blow his mind a couple of times with phenomenal sex and he’ll be more reassured.”

“Well, you know I can do phenomenal, mind blowing sex.” Nasta winked.

Max smirked. “Oh I most certainly do.”
The two of them lapsed into silence, going back to watching Harry and Ismay laughing and playing on the floor. It was nice to see, them both laughing and having fun, when just a year ago Harry had still been lost to them and they hadn’t even known that the incredible little girl that was Ismay even existed.

“The year anniversary is coming up, how is he going to handle that?”

Max hummed. “I’m not sure. He might try to ignore it, but it’s not really something that can be ignored. On the other hand, I really wouldn’t want to hurt him or upset him, either of them, by bringing it up when we all know full well that that date is firmly etched into their minds.”

“Ismay knows when it is?” Nasta questioned.

“She can read a calendar. She knows when all important dates are, and if she needs to she can look to see how far away they are. She knows when that date is, she will be watching for it.”

“Maybe a distraction then?” Nasta asked. “A fun day out for all of us, not only to try and take their minds from it, but to try and create new memories. I know the date of their rescue is a happy memory in a way, but it’s not the sort of happy memories they should have, or celebrate.”

Max considered that, and he nodded. “I wouldn’t have thought of that, maybe you’re right. I know Issy wanted to learn to swim, maybe we could do that? I know there’s a swimming centre around here, I’ve seen the signs for it.”

“We’ll hash out the details later. For now, we need to settle them both, and then get Harry comfortable with us both. Are you okay to handle dinner? You know I’m hopeless at cooking, I just don’t understand where I go wrong. I follow the recipes to the damn letter, and still I end up messing it up. Maybe living here with you now, I might be able to actually learn.”

“Well, as our little lover is in his final week of his breeding cycle, you’re in luck. All he’s eating is fruit and vegetables. So we’re having salad every night. We’re having chicken too, but he won’t even stand to have it on his plate. If it wasn’t grown straight from the ground, it doesn’t go near his plate. I’m sure you have ample experience in cutting vegetables.”

Nasta grinned. “I can do that. Did you at least make it nice and colourful?”
“Absolutely. We have a veritable rainbow for dinner.” Max laughed. “Greens, reds, purples, oranges, yellows, whites. You’ll love it.”

Nasta snorted. “What time is dinner about?”

“Four-ish. Then half an hour of playtime, at about five Ismay has a bath, she’ll watch cartoons for a bit then several stories and she’ll be in bed for six.”

Nasta nodded.

“You two are incredibly cosy over here.” Harry teased.

“Just sorting out dinner plans, love.” Max said. “Nasta can’t cook, at all, seriously, don’t eat anything he’s made for you.”

Nasta gave Max an offhand smack with the back of his hand, but he was smiling.

“Then it’s a good thing Max and I can cook, or you’d starve.”

“I’m sure it’s why he had this health kick thing, it covers the fact he can’t actually cook anything more than a salad.”

“I can make simple things.” Nasta grinned. “Stir-fry, pasta, soups, omelettes, salads, I can just about manage to roast certain meats, but other than that, I’m hopeless.”

“He’s on training duties with Ismay.” Harry teased.

Max laughed. “I think she’s better at cooking than he is.”

“That wouldn’t surprise me.” Nasta laughed with them.
“Right, let’s migrate to the kitchen then, or we won’t be eating until late. Come on Issy, want to be my helper?”

“Yes, Daddy Max!” She cheered, immediately abandoning her game and jumping up and running to the kitchen ahead of them.

“Teach them young.” Max winked at Nasta, who snorted.

They found Ismay pulling a chair over to the sink and Max indicated for Nasta to go and help her as he went to the fridge to get what they needed out and Harry went to the back of the door and got a collection of aprons.

“Max, we need to get Nasta his own apron.” Harry said, as he handed an ancient, dark green apron to Max and handed a tiny little apron to Nasta for Ismay.

“Hopefully he won’t be in the kitchen often enough to need one.” Max joked.

“Daddy Max, he needs one! It’s tradition.” Ismay insisted.

“Tradition, love.” Harry corrected as he tied his own apron on. It matched Ismay’s Nasta noticed.

“Exactly.” Ismay nodded. “He needs one.”

Nasta just smiled at the little girl who he was helping to wash her hands. It was his first day being in this family and already he felt included. Just yesterday he would never have believed he would be having family cooking night with Harry, Max and Ismay.

It was actually a lot of fun as he danced around the other occupants, helping to get a meal together, and with Max supervising everything, it was all perfect, as could be expected from him.

Nasta did have a small heart attack when he saw Ismay with a small knife, slicing bell peppers. Harry was hovering over her, positioning her hands, her fingers, before he took her hand over the knife and sliced the vegetable slowly, but still his heart rate picked up a little and he couldn’t help going over to watch her. He joined in with the enthusiastic praise as she showed Max her perfectly sliced peppers.
“I can only touch this little knife.” Ismay told him. “And only when someone holds my hand with me.”

“It’s good that you’re learning knife safety.” Nasta said, smiling at the beaming girl.

“We told her she had to wait until she was five.” Max said.

“But I’m responsible enough now.” Ismay insisted.

“Responsible.” Harry corrected poking the little girl’s nose.

“I’m four soon anyway.” Ismay told them, carefully laying the knife down where she wouldn’t knock it off or accidentally cut herself on it. The cutting edge of the blade was facing away from her. Nasta noticed, his heart calming now the knife was out of her hand. He had the urge to smother Ismay and sniff every inch of her, just to be sure she was perfectly fine. He shoved those urges away.

Dinner was done as soon as Max declared that the grilled chicken breasts he’d been babysitting were done. He plated up five of them, two on two of the plates and the remainder on another, leaving one plate devoid of meat, but covered in a colourful salad that Nasta actually felt proud to have helped with. In a way it appeased his Dracken that he was providing for his mate and his mate’s child. A child who would become his the moment they mated, which was only a week away.

After dinner, Ismay helped to clear the table, which made Nasta happy, as she was helping to do some chores that were acceptable for her age, and then she hurried into the living room to watch some cartoons before her bath while Max made tea and Harry finished wiping down the table.

“So, how was your first family meal?” Harry asked him, aiming for nonchalance, but Nasta could see the uncertainty under the words, the fear that maybe he regretted this, that he no longer wanted to be Harry’s mate, which was absurd…to him, but to Harry it was a real fear bred from his abuse.

“It was wonderful. Only because I didn’t cook it.” He joked, but he pulled Harry into his arms, took the cloth from his hands and threw it at Max, and pulled that small body into his own, bending to get a kiss from Harry. It turned passionate very quickly. “I am very happy to be here, Harry, and I’m honoured that you even gave me a second glance, let alone chose me as one of your select mates. I am more watchful than Max, who tends to charge into everything…”
“Hey!” Max protested with a laugh.

Nasta laughed too. “I tend to observe more before I act, and if that makes me seem a little…aloof, I’m sorry. I want to be here, with you, Ismay and Max. I’m just finding my feet in your usual routine, that’s all. A few days of watching and I’ll slot myself in easily.”

Harry grinned then, that same wicked grin that Harry had given to Max earlier, and he sort of already knew what was coming, just not exactly what sort of context it would take.

“I certainly hope it doesn’t take a few days for you to slot yourself into me.” Harry teased.

Nasta actually felt himself blush, and heard Max’s sharp, surprised burst of laughter. Then Harry was gone, swaying into the living room with his daughter and Nasta sent a hopeless look to Max, who was still laughing.

“You said he was all bluster when it came to sex. That wasn’t bluster, Max!” He insisted.

Max wiped his eyes and let out a few more chuckles. “It sort of was, but he likes seeing peoples shocked reactions when he says things like that, but he needs to make a quick getaway in case you didn’t like it, so you really are going to have to slot into him now to make him feel better.” Max laughed.

Nasta felt his cheeks heating up again. Max kissed one of Nasta’s hot cheeks with a smile.

“He likes you, Nas. Now you need to show him that you like him too, because he doesn’t do subtle. You need to show him.”

“Later.” Nasta winked, feeling much more in control now.

He walked into the living room and he felt comfortable enough to sit beside Harry and wrap an arm around him, taking his cues from Harry and his body language, which was hard to miss, or misinterpret, as Harry turned and snuggled into him.

Not long after they’d drank their tea, Ismay climbed onto Harry’s lap with a book.
“I want this one today, Mummy.” She insisted, handing over one of the books that Nasta had given to her as a last minute birthday present when she had turned three. He could scarcely believe that it had been almost a year ago.

“Okay, are you comfortable?” Harry asked her, and she nodded, flame red hair flying everywhere.

“One book down here, Ismay, then you need to have your bath.” Max told her firmly.

“Can I have another book in bed?” She asked.

“Yes, of course, but only one now. You’ll be much more comfortable in your pyjamas.” Max answered.

Nasta was included in the story purely because of his close proximity, and he really enjoyed listening to Harry reading to his daughter, his voice changing with each character, making noises as special effects just for Ismay’s enjoyment. He truly was a wonderful Mother, and Nasta was all at once overwhelmingly glad that he had chosen to wait for the perfect mate for himself, because Harry was it. Harry was his perfect mate, and he had been well worth the waiting.

Nasta understood now why Harry and Max both insisted that Ismay’s bedtime routine was monstrous. The girl just did not want to go to sleep. All three of them had read her a story each, they had all kissed Cloppity and Cecelia, and Harry had even sung her a lullaby, and still she was awake and looking up at them through huge, hazel eyes.

“Why don’t you want to go to sleep, Ismay?” Harry asked then, quietly, and Nasta realised that perhaps the reason this tiny girl didn’t want to sleep was because of nightmares. That was understandable.

“I want to play.” She insisted, but there was an undertone of something else to her voice.

“It’s not playtime right now, Ismay.” Max told her, crouched beside her head. “You need to go to sleep.”
“What if…what if…?” She huffed.

“Nothing is going to happen.” Harry said gently. “You are going to wake up here, in this room, and I am going to be in bed right next door, as always.”

“Or down in the kitchen, depending on how well you sleep, little lady.” Max smiled, running gentle fingers through her flame red hair.

It hurt Nasta inside to see this little girl terrified to go to sleep because of what her abusive father had done to her and to her mother. He swallowed back a growl and he breathed deeply. He could handle this.

He eased down on her bed, behind Harry, and those hazel eyes looked at his own, almost expectantly. Ismay wanted so badly to believe them, to trust that she and her mother would be fine, but she knew too the true horrors of the world, of humanity, and she knew not to believe in fairy tales, and for a three year old, that huge loss of innocence was haunting and devastating in equal measure.

“The doors and windows are locked, Ismay.” He told her. “Every door, every window. The floo has been locked too. No one can get into this house until we wake up and unlock everything. You are safe here, with us. Your mother is always going to look after you, always and forever. Max and I, I know we’re new to you, but we’re mated to your mother, which makes us a family. We love him very much, and we will always protect him and keep him safe, and because you’re his, a little part of him running around, we are always going to love you too. You’re safe here, Ismay, you can go to sleep and you don’t even need to worry about anything, because Max and I are going to do everything we can to look after you, and your mother too.”

“What if he did get in?” Ismay asked in a small voice.

“He wouldn’t even be able to get up the stairs before I knew about it.” Nasta said seriously. “I would be downstairs, ready to protect you all before he even got his foot on the stairs, Ismay. He would be going straight back out of the house too, as I would throw him from a window first.”

That last bit delighted Ismay, as she gasped in shock and then giggled, obviously picturing the ‘he’ she was afraid of, who Nasta had absolutely no doubts was her vile father, being thrown from a window.

“You’re safe here.” Nasta said softly. “No one will ever hurt you, or your mother, ever again. You have Max and I to look after you now, to protect you, and absolutely nothing is getting past either of
“What if it did?” Ismay asked.

“It won’t.” Max joined in.

“But what if it did?” Ismay stressed, getting upset, which made Harry bend forward and cup her cheeks, stroking his thumbs over her face to soothe her.

“You would be long gone before whoever it was got past me and Max.” Nasta said calmly. “While we would be downstairs getting rid of the threat, your mother would be gone with you, to the Counsel Halls, to Elder Midate, or perhaps to Alexander’s. You would both be gone and safe and the one coming up the stairs would be too late to get either of you. But you need to look at me, and at Max too, look how big and strong we are, Ismay. No one is going to get past the both of us.” He smiled then.

Ismay smiled too and she nodded. She rolled onto her side and curled up under her duvet and Harry started singing again, a soft, sweet lullaby that actually worked this time now that her fears had been put to rest. Fears that no three year old should have had. The things that plagued Ismay’s nightmares were the kind of things that no child should ever know about, but Ismay had lived through it, and it was atrocious, despicable.

Harry stood slowly and carefully, and Nasta took his cue from Harry and stood slowly himself, taking his weight from the bed. Max bent forward to kiss Ismay before he stood and they all made their way from the room, making sure that the two dim nightlights, at either end of the room, were still working.

Max closed the door, but didn’t latch it, instead he left it only slightly ajar, before he walked next door to their bedroom, and Harry and Nasta just followed him. He did fully close the door this time, and Nasta felt the hum of a permanent silencing ward flare into activeness before he had his arms and chest full of Harry.

“Thank you.” Harry said softly. “We’ve never been able to properly soothe those sorts of fears, and usually she’d be up for half the night. It doesn’t happen too often anymore, not like in the beginning.” Harry was almost on the verge of sobbing and Nasta hefted him from his feet and cuddled him properly.

“It might seem a little adult to tell her that we would beat the shit out of anyone who got into the house, but if that is the reassurance that she needs to hear, that while Max and I were fighting with the intruder, that you would get her out and away, then it is always the best route to use. If nothing else has worked, and all the soothing hasn’t made her feel any better, then a bit of truth could go a
Harry nodded in understanding and Nasta just relished holding him close. He did go and sit on the bed when Max sat down and patted it and that allowed Max to touch and soothe Harry too.

It took several minutes before Harry breathed in deeply and sat himself back, though he was still in Nasta’s lap.

“I think that maybe telling her that you’d beat the shit out of anyone who got into the house would help a lot now in the future, if she has these fears again.”

“I want you to know that they’re true as well.” Nasta said firmly. “That wasn’t just for Ismay’s benefit. If anyone gets into this house, you grab Ismay and you fly to a safe place. Max and I will kill the threat and then join you.”

Harry smiled at him, feeling safer and more secure, and he bent forward and just pecked a sweet kiss to Nasta’s mouth.

“I’ve gotten more passionate kisses from my mother.” Max teased. “Though, Nas, it’s nice to actually hear your voice, I think that talk with Ismay is the most I’ve ever heard you speak in all of the years that we’ve been friends.”

“Shut up, goofball.” Nasta replied.

“I’m your loving mate, you shouldn’t speak to me in such a way.” Max whined.

Harry chuckled and he knelt up, over Nasta’s lap and he kissed Max, who took immediate control and turned it into a blisteringly passionate kiss.

Harry was robbed from his lap and Nasta watched with a smile as Max turned Harry to lay him down on his back on the bed and covered him over with his own body, kissing him and slipping hands under clothes. Harry didn’t make a single word, or sound, of protest. He truly was alright with sex, it gave Nasta the confidence to lay himself beside the two men and reach out to touch them both for himself.

Harry turned into his touch instead of away from it, and he broke his kiss with Max to stretch himself out to kiss him, and this time it wasn’t a simple peck of lip on lip, it was hot, heavy and passionate with a lot of tongue and Nasta fell straight into that kiss, getting lost in the sensations of a new partner.
“You two look amazing doing that.” Max said, kneeling above them.

“Shut up and get down here.” Harry ordered.

That made Max laugh, but he did as he’d been told. He immediately put more weight on top of Harry and kissed him. Max had been right, Nasta thought, the two of them looked amazing together.

Very quickly Harry started stripping himself off and Nasta watched him with burning eyes. Harry didn’t once hesitate or look at all uncomfortable and Nasta couldn’t take his eyes from him, a smirk forming, a feeling of possessiveness creeping up from his gut. This gorgeous, sexy young man was his submissive mate. Had chosen him to be his dominant. He felt so honoured and privileged.

He reached out to touch bare skin and Harry shot him a crooked grin, leaning into his touch and puckering those plump lips. Nasta gave him a proper kiss, flicking his tongue and stroking with it. Harry made a surprised noise and Nasta had to break the kiss to smile. This was going to be fun.

Harry was a little shy in showing his whole body, Nasta noticed, but only with him. Max had full reign to do as he pleased and Harry bared all to him, but Harry shied away from his gaze…that would have to change.

“You’re beautiful.” Nasta told him, reaching out to touch, removing those hands from where they were covering Harry’s most intimate areas, allowing him to look, to touch unhindered.

He moved his hands to touch all areas of skin, grazing his fingertips over every inch so that no part of Harry was untouched, or felt unloved.

Nasta set to work on learning every patch of skin that made Harry moan or sigh, or shift with pleasure. He watched where Max put his hands, where he touched to cause such noises, and he copied them, learning about Harry’s body and his pleasure and he truly wanted to give Harry so much pleasure, because it would bring him pleasure too.

“How are you doing, Caru?” He asked into one of those little ears.

Harry hummed back, his hands now safely up by his head, letting Nasta look and touch all he wanted.

“Feels nice.” He said, a small smile curving up his lips. Nasta had to bend over slightly to kiss them, it was almost a compulsion to kiss him with that look on his face.
“Nasta can do wicked things with his tongue…truly wicked things.” Max said, the grin on his face was unholy and Nasta had to smirk at him.

“Max knows all about that too.” Nasta insisted. “Do you want to learn it for yourself?”

Harry looked between them both, a little wide eyed, but he nodded.

“What sort of wicked things?” Harry asked them both, still looking between them for a hint.

“His tongue is only second to his hips.” Max said with a grin.

“Don’t itemise me.” Nasta smirked. “I’m a full package and should be taken as such.”

“Oh, you certainly are.” Max purred.

“I feel like I’m missing out now.” Harry declared, before sitting forward and shifting to straddle Nasta’s lap. “I think that you should get me caught up on all that I’m missing.”

Nasta looked past the cheeky grin that Harry was giving him, to the unsure, almost frightened look in those green eyes. He wanted to remove that fear immediately, so he wrapped his arms around Harry’s naked body and dipped his head to kiss him, to reassure him that this boldness was deeply appreciated and very much accepted.

He did not expect, however, Harry to start rocking in his lap, his hips circling, making little motions back and forth as Harry made little noises, grunts, sighs, gasps, into their kiss, while those hands behind the back of his neck tugged on his hair and pulled at him, trying to get closer. This boldness, the blatant sexuality, was not what he had been expecting at all. He liked it.

Max moved in behind Harry and he started kissing and touching, and Harry started rocking faster. Harry’s cock just caught a fold in Nasta’s jeans and he threw his head back against Max and a noise got stuck in his throat as the jag of pleasure ripped through him.

“I think we need to make this a little safer and remove zips and pockets.” Nasta told Max, having an image of Harry rubbing bare skin against his zipper, or getting something caught and injured. He really didn’t want that.
“Got it.” Max said and he moved back and as quick as that, he was tugging the remainder of his clothes off too.

Almost before either of them could miss him, Max was back, taking Harry from him and allowing Nasta the space he needed to take off his own clothes while Max kept Harry busy.

“Do you have lube and condoms here?” Nasta asked. “I remember that you hate the conjured lube.”

“Everyone hates the conjured stuff, it doesn’t bloody work as well.” Max complained before he went back to raining kisses over Harry’s skin. “Lube is in the bedside drawer.” He said distractedly, kissing Harry some more before breaking off once again to speak. “We don’t use condoms.”

Nasta took a moment to watch the two of them together before he moved over to the bedside table and rooted in the drawer to find the bottle of lube…it was almost empty and it made him grin.

“You’ve been very busy I see.” He laughed.

Max pulled away from Harry and looked over curiously. He laughed as Nasta waved the quarter inch of lube in the bottom of the bottle at him.

“This is not going to help.” Nasta insisted.

“We have a new one.” Max laughed, rolling over and digging in the drawer himself and coming out with a brand new, unopened bottle. “Here.”

“Max goes overboard on the lube.” Harry told him.

“There’s never such a thing as too much lube.” Max said.

“When it starts pooling under your arse and gluing your thighs together, that’s too much.” Harry insisted.

“Nope.” Max said, that cheeky grin on his face as he popped the ‘p’.
Harry just rolled his eyes. “That’s actually the third bottle in two months, that’s how much he uses.”

“Damn, Max.” Nasta laughed. “I think I’ll have to agree with Harry, unless you’re having sex ten times a day, that is too much.”

“There’s no such thing as too much lube!” Max huffed.

“We do have a lot of sex though.” Harry giggled. “Twice a day, three if we can manage a quickie when Ismay is down for her nap, though that’s getting rarer as she doesn’t like having naps much anymore.”

Max grinned in a very familiar way. It was all male pride and Nasta couldn’t help but swing him down onto his back where he kissed him…hard.

The two of them wrestled a little, they couldn’t really help themselves, they were both dominants, both big, muscly men, and a bit of rough housing was only to be expected, and enjoyed, by the both of them.

Max was bigger and heavier though and he managed to get Nasta onto his back, though Nasta was strong enough to prevent himself from being pinned and he and Max grappled together. Harry laughed from somewhere beside them and he knocked out Nasta’s elbow, allowing Max to pin him, but Harry climbed up onto Max’s back.

“I win.” He declared.

“How the hell do you win?” Max asked.

“I’m on the top of the pile!” Harry said, popping his head over Max’s shoulder, grinning down at them.

“I did all of the work!” Max said.

“Yeah, and I took advantage of that and got you under me when you were tired.”
“I’ll show you tired.” Max faux growled, grabbing a hold of Harry’s arm and rolling him back underneath him, Nasta took advantage of that and he rolled onto Max’s back.

“You lose again, Max.” Nasta purred.

“Damn, whatever shall I do stuck in the middle of two sexy men?” Max laughed.

“Suppose you’ll just have to endure it.” Harry giggled.

“I suppose I will.” Max grinned. “But first, you are getting some of Nasta’s tongue.”

“Is it really that good?” Harry asked.

“It really is. Let him show you?” Max asked, lilting his words to show it was a question.

Harry nodded, but he was beginning to look uncertain again, the fun and play of the last few minutes melting away.

“Move out of the way then, Cariad.” Nasta chided. “And find that lube again.”

Max did as he was told and rolled to the side. He reached up and over, towards the head of the bed, and he plucked the new bottle of lube up and broke the seal on it, ready for when it was needed, before he just sat back out of the way. He made sure that he was sat where he would be able to watch Nasta rim Harry for the first time, but also allowed him to see Harry’s face. He did not want to miss a single one of Harry’s expressions as he experienced this for the very first time.

Nasta didn’t dive immediately in, he took the time to stroke over Harry’s thighs, his knees, the crease of skin that formed where leg met body. He kissed and licked gently, tasting Harry, listening to the soft, happy noises he was making above him. He touched the entrance to Harry’s body with the tip of his thumb first, just holding it there, pressing lightly, just so that Harry knew it was there, he wasn’t trying to breach his body, not yet.

Nasta moved his mouth from Harry’s inside thigh, up to his groin, and he kissed and licked around the base of his cock and then popped one of his balls into his mouth and suckled lightly, teasingly, listening out for audial cues from Harry in place of not being able to see him or his expressions.

He moved lower, and the first flick of his tongue against Harry’s entrance had his submissive stilling immediately, almost as if he had been frozen.
“Are you okay, love?” Max asked immediately, noticing the change.

“It’s…different.” Harry said, before he squirmed a little. “Not bad, just weird.”

“I’ll soon change your mind about that.” Nasta purred from between Harry’s legs.

Nasta set back to his task and he licked a full swipe over Harry’s entrance, over his perineum and straight over his scrotum and up his cock, following the raphe that passed through them. Harry made a soft, happy sound and Nasta shot a smile to Max, who grinned back, but put his focus quickly back on Harry, just in case.

Nasta ran his finger down the raphe, testing Harry’s body for sensitivity and he watched happily as Harry squirmed. He was one of those men whose raphe was sensitive to stimulation. Nasta filed that away for later before he moved back down to start licking and flicking his tongue over Harry in earnest. He didn’t stop, he just kept going, using all his skill to turn Harry into a writhing mess…it wasn’t taking all that long either, already he had to hold Harry’s thighs lightly, to avoid getting a knee to the head, but still Harry was kicking his feet and bucking his hips into Nasta’s face. He loved it when he managed to drive a partner this wild. He still remembered the first time he’d done this to Max…and to Sixten. He remembered fondly the man who had taught him all the tricks one could perform with their tongue all those years ago, back when he’d been in his very early twenties.

Harry’s orgasm came on him so quickly, and so powerfully, that he didn’t have a chance to even shout out stop, or violin, though Harry didn’t want it to stop, he didn’t, but it was so powerful, so overwhelming, that he couldn’t handle it, but before he could do anything about it, he had surged over his limit and he screamed as his orgasm tore through him in a rolling wave…pulse after pulse of pleasure and it seemed never ending as he rode the high of it, every time thinking that it was calming down, or coming to a stop, only for another wave to crash through him as Nasta continued to lick at him, grazing his teeth ever so gently against him, sucking on him and it kept Harry’s orgasm going and going until he felt breathless and his screams tapered off to whimpers and occasional wriggles. It was then that Nasta slowed his movements and then came away from him, leaning up on his elbows and looking down at the wrung out, blissed up Harry.

“Told you Nasta’s tongue was wicked.” Max said. “I’ve been on the receiving end of that tongue, it’s amazing, isn’t it?”

Harry just nodded dumbly, his eyes still closed and a dopey smile on his face.

“Are you all blissed out, lover?” Max chuckled.
“Yeah.” Harry said, his voice strained from his screams and Nasta felt truly accomplished and rather smug.

“You ready for more?” He asked, holding his hand out to Max for the lube.

Harry nodded and managed to crack open his eyes to watch.

“I love this part.” Max said as he handed over the lube and sat back, a hand in his lap stroking himself slowly.

“What’s next?” Harry asked, looking between them. “I mean, I know what’s next, but how is that different?”

“Different people have different techniques.” Nasta said. “I favour a rather exotic rolling type of movement that is a completely learned skill and uses a lot of stomach muscles to accomplish. It takes a lot of energy, but it’s so worth it for the receiving partner, though if you find that you don’t like it, just say something, Harry and I will stop. Not everyone gets on with it or likes it.”

Harry nodded, but he was more curious now than anything, and Nasta was thankful for that. He had hated seeing any sort of hesitancy, the fear in his new submissive mate. He would do anything to wipe it away.

The touch of lube covered fingers made Harry flinch, but only because it was cold, Harry assured them. He squirmed happily when a single finger pushed into his body and he let out a happy sigh. He was slightly happy that Max was letting him and Nasta have this sort of solo moment. He wouldn’t mind if Max wanted to join in, but this first time, he was happy to have a moment with just Nasta, to bond with him, to learn about his body, while Nasta learned about his.

Harry was happy to squirm and just lie there on the bed and feel as Nasta added another finger, playing with him, teasing him, and he was happy to gasp and let his noises come out, safely knowing that the room was silenced and his sounds would not wake up his daughter.

Nasta slipped in a third finger, and he watched the play of expressions across Harry’s face. There was a ripple of discomfort, but it was gone as soon as Nasta spread his fingers and stroked the internal walls.

“You’re killing me here, let alone him.” Max groaned. “Get on with it, Nasta, you’ve been fingering him for like, twenty minutes now.”

Nasta snorted. “You’re so impatient, Max. Foreplay is most of the fun of sex.”
“Not when it lasts for several hours. Then it just gets frustrating, especially for me just sat here watching.” Max whinged.

Nasta chuckled, rather darkly with his fingers speared into Harry’s body, watching as Max stroked himself, trying to hold off the inevitable orgasm, but the delayed orgasm would be getting to him now, and that must have been torture.

He pulled his fingers from Harry’s body, delighting in the whine of anger from Harry, who slitted open dark green eyes to glare at him. It made Nasta grin.

“Only a moment, Cariad.” He said soothingly, grabbing the bottle of lube and opening it again, getting a good sized glob onto his hand which he slicked over himself.

Harry settled himself against the pillows, getting himself more comfortable and that made Nasta smile as he watched Harry shift the pillow a little, wriggled his hips and then finally laid still.

“Comfy?” Max teased him.

“Yeah.” Harry grinned back. “Do I need to prop up my hips?” He asked Nasta.

“If it’s more comfortable for you, you can do.”

Max shook his head. “He doesn’t like to prop his hips.”

“Then no, you don’t need to. I can lie lower and change the angle as needed, it’s alright.”

Harry nodded and he raised his arms above his head, and he just laid there, watching Nasta prepare himself.

“You look so happy and contented.” Max laughed, poking at Harry’s belly. It made Harry giggle and roll away.

“I’ve already had one orgasm…multiple orgasms? I don’t know what that was called, but it was
bloody amazing, everything else now is just a bonus.” He laughed as he moved back into his place in the pillows, settling himself once more.

“It will be another orgasm that will feel like a multiple orgasm.” Nasta said. “It will come in waves.”

“It’s amazing.” Harry declared. “Not that you’re not amazing.” He said quickly to Max. “It’s just different and I like both and…”

“Relax, Harry.” Max said soothingly. “I’ve had Nasta fuck me too and he is totally amazing. I know what you mean and I’m not offended. I don’t mind sharing, I never have.”

Harry nodded and he relaxed again. Nasta took his moment, before Harry could wind himself up again, and he slid both hands up opposite legs, moving himself in between them.

He settled himself into position and he bent forward to kiss Harry, smiling down at him. He got a goofy grin back and it made him smile. Harry was so adorably endearing.

“Are you ready, Harry?” He asked seriously.

Harry nodded and spread his legs more, all shyness and hesitancy from earlier was gone, replaced by a boldness that heated Nasta’s blood and made it surge. He felt too hot, he had wound himself up as well as Harry and Max, and now he needed a release of his own.

He bent forward, pressed himself up against Harry’s entrance, and then he settled his arms into position. Lying this low over Harry he could easily kiss him, for now, but he was a little too tall to be able to kiss him once he was inside of Harry. Max would have been even worse off in this position, Harry would barely come up to his chest and would be completely hidden underneath him.

The first push into Harry was…it was just indescribable pleasure. Nasta’s back bowed automatically, even as he felt small hands grip into his shoulders, short nails biting into his skin.

He stayed still within Harry, trying to regain some much needed control of himself, especially when Harry started shifting his hips, which only made Nasta want to grab a hold of him and just rut like some sort of wild animal. He breathed through the urge, and he controlled himself.

He grabbed a hold of Harry’s hips to keep him still, rising up a little. He would need the room to roll his hips.

Nasta looked down at Harry, at the blissed out expression on his face, the way he writhed and moved, trying to get what he wanted and making little frustrated noises when he didn’t get it.

“Put him out of his misery before he implodes from sexual frustration.” Max laughed. “Me too.”
Nasta looked over at him and found him panting, breathless, his hand moving a lot quicker on himself now.

“You’re not waiting your turn.” Nasta said, making his tone sound very unimpressed and disappointed.

“You’re taking too long.” Max answered back with a laugh.

Nasta scoffed, but he pressed a little harder into Harry, who moaned happily at the action. It was a waiting game, one of patience, as Nasta held himself back, just allowing Harry the time needed to adjust and fall into the needed mind set.

Nasta watched him carefully, more carefully than he usually was with a partner, purely because of what Harry had been through in his young life, but he saw nothing that concerned him. Harry was enthusiastic and he was moving himself onto Nasta happily. It reassured Nasta and he pulled himself upright a little more and he rolled his hips, just the once, watching Harry’s reaction. He was not disappointed as Harry’s eyes snapped open and up to him, wide and lust-blown and his hips moved, almost of their own accord, to snap up into Nasta’s.

Nasta smoothly thrusted for a moment, before he added a double roll and Harry’s back bowed from the bed and his legs jumped to lock around Nasta’s thighs, clutching, digging in and the noise he made was unlike anything Nasta had ever heard before. Max moved in closer too, as if he had never heard such a noise either and he checked on Harry himself. Harry who was beyond words and was shifting restlessly, his hips trying to recreate the roll of Nasta’s, trying to push onto him.

Nasta settled himself and he rolled his hips continuously. He fought through the ache that started from the movement, urging himself on, watching Harry’s expressions, watching his movement, hearing his noises. It gave him all the incentive he needed to keep going, to keep rolling his hips, and it paid off when Harry went wild, moaning and gasping, writhing and digging in his fingernails, clutching with his arms and legs and then he screamed, his muscles all contracting at once, his body going taut, as he orgasmed…hard.

Nasta stopped rolling as soon as Harry reached his orgasm and he started thrusting instead, quickly, chasing his own orgasm, and when he reached it he almost blacked out from the power behind it.

He blinked and he was on his belly still, on top of Harry, panting and breathing hard. Harry’s legs had slipped off in his post-coital bliss, but his arms were wrapped around his shoulders still, holding him tight. He was also breathing hard, his eyes were closed.

“You two alright? Or…you know, should I call an ambulance?” Max laughed at them both.

“I’ve died.” Harry groaned.
“Me too.” Nasta chuckled.

Max laughed at them both. “I think that’s enough for one night. Come on, move.”

Max shoved Nasta over onto his back and dug Harry out of the groove he’d made for himself in the mattress. He grabbed the duvet and laid Harry down, covering him over before manipulating Nasta under the duvet too.

He cleaned up, made sure everything was nice and safe, he went out into the hall and then peeked in on Ismay, before he went back to the bedroom and he switched off the light. He felt his way over to the bed and he slipped in on Harry’s other side, putting his submissive in the middle. He reached out to touch Nasta and he accepted the hand on his waist back, the two of them holding one another over Harry, who was already breathing heavily and deeply between them.

“He’s out of it.” Nasta said, and Max could hear the laughter.

“Yeah, after such a hard orgasm it’s only to be expected. You knocked him right out, Nas.” Max chuckled.

“I’m just glad that he allowed me to show him that I’d never hurt him.”

“Nah, he likes you. He trusts you, so he was willing to give you a chance. I think you passed with flying colours.”

Nasta snorted a laugh, but he ducked his head and snuggled up into Harry. He was pre-bonded to his submissive at the moment, and physical closeness helped with the urge to smother Harry until they were properly mated. That was only a few days away too, then Harry and Max would officially be his mates. He would need to talk to his Father and brother about this too. He needed to tell them both that he was now mated to one of the most amazing submissives he had ever met.

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Harry woke up from his heat feeling like his body had been beaten, but he felt better than he usually did. He grinned stupidly, before he even opened his eyes, as he remembered little bits and pieces from his heat period with Max and Nasta. Between the both of them they had kept him well satisfied and he felt wonderful, if he was a little sore and tired still.
No one was in the room with him, and he panicked a little and it automatically triggered a distress call. Two rumbles immediately came back to him and before he could sit himself up, both his mates were in the room, on the bed, and surrounding him from both sides, making soothing noises to him as they held him.

“You weren’t here when I woke up.” He said with a croak. “I thought you’d gone.”

“We were just downstairs, love.” Max said gently. “We were just making sure there was tea ready for you when you woke up and I was telling Nasta how to run you a bath with all the potions and bath salts that you like.”

Harry nodded, but he didn’t loosen his grip on Max or Nasta.

“How long was I asleep?”

“Four days, love. You’ve had a decent amount of sleep this time. I’m very proud of you.”

Harry smiled. “Need a piss.” He said.

Max laughed, but Nasta picked him up and took him straight into the bathroom. The bath was already run for him, a quick wave of a wand from Max had it heated back up and while Harry drained half his body weight into the toilet, Max and Nasta sorted out the bath for him, adding potions and salts. He didn’t even feel embarrassed to be using the toilet in front of them. He’d taken so much blood from both of his mates over the last ten days that the pressure in his bladder was unbearable. He would have wet himself easily if he’d tried to hold himself any longer. His mates didn’t care, he looked over his shoulder at them and they were completely unbothered by him using the bathroom while they were there. He grinned as he shook himself off and flushed.

“Right, straight in the bath, love.” Max said, holding out his hand.

Harry took Max’s hand and allowed him to help him into the warm, medicated water.

“Oh, that feels so good.” Harry moaned, sinking into the water and letting go of tension he hadn’t realised he had.
“You’re not going to fall asleep and drown?” Max teased.

“Maybe.”

That made Max and Nasta laugh.

“What time is it?”

“You’re up early today, it’s only just gone ten.”

“I want Ismay home.”

“Of course. Have a bath now, it’ll help your muscles as well as make you feel cleaner, have some tea and then I’ll go and get her while Nasta pampers you some more.”

Harry nodded, resting back in the bath, letting the warm water wash over him. He did drift in and out, his mates supporting him and washing him, as he felt too lazy to do it himself. He did complain in a wordless whine when he was removed from the warm water, but he was rubbed dry by his mates and put back into his nice, warm pyjamas.

“I could really get used to this.” He said with a grin.

“You deserve it, Caru.” Nasta told him.

“You’re going to have to sit down and tell me what these words mean.” Harry said. “But not now. I’m sleepy, I wouldn’t remember I don’t think.”

Nasta laughed, gave him a kiss, and then escorted him down the stairs to the living room. Harry sat on the settee and Nasta sat beside him and Harry was just so happy to revel in the new bond of mateship between him and Nasta. It felt amazing and Harry snuggled in closer.

Max came in with a tray of tea and there was a fourth cup, Ismay’s cup, and Harry smiled to see it.
“I can see you grinning.” Max teased. “I’ll go and get her now, that’s why her tea is here, and mine. You just slouch all over Nas and let him look after you. I’ll be back before you can finish that cup.”

Harry laughed. “You better get going then, this one will be gone very soon.”

Max gave him a salute and he took a pinch of floo powder and then he was gone.

“Is your Dad coming to visit us soon?” Harry flicked his eyes up to Nasta.

“You know he will. He said after your heat period. It won’t be in the next few days, he’ll give us time to settle and to recover first, but he likes you.”

“I like him too.” Harry said. “He makes me feel safe.”

“He’ll be pleased to hear that. As am I.”

Harry snuggled in tighter. “Your brother needs some work.” He joked. “Not as much as Max’s though. Caesar needs to be isolated from the rest of civilisation.”

Nasta laughed at that. “Sanex is okay, just a little excitable. Though I agree that Caesar needs to be kept in his own locked room.”

“With his horrible submissive, Amelle.”

“Not getting on with her?” Nasta asked.

“She’s mean to me.” Harry said, then he realised how pathetic that sounded and he felt the need to elaborate. “She brings up my captivity every time I see her. She asks awful questions about it and what I went through. I understand that she was attacked by poachers, but I wouldn’t even dream of asking her how she felt as her mate was murdered in front of her, as her unborn child was kicked out of her. I know that feels like, and I wouldn’t wish it on anyone, but she asks me about it, about how many times it happened, how many babies I lost even though she already knows the answers, and it makes me feel sick to be reminded of it so often. I never even thought of asking her anything like that, I wouldn’t taunt her with her dead child or murdered mate, but she doesn’t seem to feel the
same way.”

“Max complains of her now and then. She is a piece of work, I’m not really looking forward to meeting her at all of those Maddison get togethers.”

Harry smiled as he remembered the few ‘get togethers’ that he had been to. Max’s family were really nice, and crazy in equal measure.

The floo flared and Max was there with a jubilant Ismay safely in his arms.

“Mummy!” She cried out and she kicked her legs and flailed her arms until Max put her down with a laugh.

“Hi, Ismay. Welcome home, love.” He said, holding her tight as she clambered up onto the settee to hug him. “I missed you.” He lied. He didn’t remember enough of the last fortnight to have missed her, for all he knew he had said goodbye to her that morning, but he knew that if he had been in his right mind, and not a feral Dracken, two weeks without her would have been unbearable.

“I missed you too, Mummy, but I know you needed to make a bond with Nasta so that he can be a part of our family.”

“That’s right, and now Nasta is one of us.” Harry said happily, from where he had snuggled back into Nasta.

“Does that really make him my Daddy too?” She whispered to him, but of course, they were on top of Nasta, who heard everything, and Max had grabbed his tea and sat beside Nasta and he had heard too.

Harry, who had already had this talk with Nasta, was confident of his answer as he put his face to Ismay’s, and whispered back “Yes it does, but you can ask him yourself if you’d like to, as you did with Max.”

“Will Daddy Max be upset?” Ismay fretted.

“No. You’re always going to be his little girl, of course he wants to share you with everyone.” Harry answered. “But you can ask him that as well if you want.”
Ismay nodded and sat back.

“Daddy Max?” She asked, looking right at him.

“What is it, Princess?” Max asked, as if he hadn’t already heard the conversation.

“Do you mind sharing me as a daughter?”

“No, baby girl, but only ever with family, okay?”

“So because Nasta is family now…?”

“I don’t mind sharing with him.” Max finished.

Ismay nodded and there was a spark in her, a small bit of fire, as she turned to Nasta.

“Do you want to be my Daddy too?” She asked him boldly, but there was something just intrinsically insecure about the question, of the fact that Ismay needed to actually ask and receive an answer, that just tugged right on Nasta’s heart strings.

“I would be honoured, Annwyl.” He said sincerely. “Nothing would make me happier to have you as my own daughter.”

Ismay threw stick like arms around him and Nasta held her back tightly. Harry smiled to see it and he caught Max grinning too.

“Are you excited to maybe have a brother or sister?” Nasta asked her.

“I’m supposed to have lot of sisters, and a brother too. Will you hurt the new one?” Ismay asked and Harry felt his heart stop in his chest.
“No. No, of course not.” Nasta said seriously.

“We would never hurt you, your Mummy, or the new babies.” Max said. “Never.”

“Good.” Ismay said, but Harry needed some room, he needed a moment.

“I’ll be back in a moment.” He said, and even to his own ears his voice sounded high and squeaky.

He made it up the stairs and to the bathroom. He shut the door and he sat on the floor, leaning against the side of the bath. He breathed deeply, trying to calm himself, but Ismay’s words kept ringing through his head. She should have had sisters, she should have had a brother.

Nasta opened the bathroom door and he shut it again, coming to sit in the tiny space beside him and the wall.

“Max has Ismay.” Nasta said. “Want to tell me what you’re thinking, Caru?”

“I should have more than one child.” He said. “She was exposed to all of my losses. She was too young for the early ones, but the later ones, she knew I was having a baby, that she was going to get a brother, but she knew she would never get a sister. I…I tried to shield her from it, but he…he spoke of it so candidly. As if it were normal, just an everyday occurrence. When dealing with that, there was nothing I could do to stop her from being exposed to it.”

“He was the one in the wrong. He was the sick fucker who so easily beat you, even while pregnant. We will teach Ismay, and you if needed, that such things aren’t normal. We are not going to hurt you. We will never hurt your unborn children, we will never hurt any child, yours or others. We’re going to protect you, always, Harry, and if you are pregnant now, after the heat period, you can bet that me and Max will be over the moon, a new daughter or a son.”

“I’m the reason Ismay doesn’t have a brother. I aborted him…”

“Harry, you needed to abort him, your health needed to come first in that, mental and physical. Ismay will understand when she’s older. She isn’t going to blame you for it, not when she truly understands. It’s alright.”
Harry sniffled and turned himself into Nasta and cuddled into him.

“I was always rather fertile. Even when I didn’t want to be.” Harry said sadly. “I think that maybe I am pregnant.”

“If you are, we’re going to do what every dominant is meant to. We’re going to look after you and our unborn child and whatever you want to do, we’ll support you.”

“You mean about food and sleep and…?”

“And everything.” Nasta said firmly. “If you have aversions or cravings, we’ll support you, if you have morning sickness, we’ll look after you through that. If you want to sleep several times a day because the pregnancy is draining you, we’ll look after the house and Ismay too. If…and if you find that you don’t want to have a gender scan, or if you have one and don’t want to tell us, that’s fine too, okay?”

Harry swallowed, but he couldn’t put into words just how grateful he was to hear all those things spoken of aloud. He couldn’t say exactly how reassuring it was to have those fears, that were sat in the back of his mind, soothed, even slightly.

“I think after the first pregnancy, or two, then maybe I’ll be better and more reassured.” He said.

“However long it takes, however many pregnancies it takes, we’ll still support you, we’ll still love you. You mean everything to us both.”

Harry smiled then and snuggled into Nasta’s chest, feeling so safe with those big arms wrapped around him. Adding Nasta to his family, to his mateship, had been a good move. Now he only needed to hope that adding in his third and final mate went as well as adding Nasta into their little family had been.

Sitting between Max and Nasta this time, having both of his mates to either side of him as he conducted the interview style meetings was so reassuring that Harry was…well he wouldn’t say that he was enjoying them, because he really wasn’t, but they were a little less daunting than they had been when he had only had Max to cling onto. He was now doubly reassured with both of his
loving, adoring mates with him and he felt more able to deal with the unmated dominants who came to speak with him.

Some of them were just as horrendous as he remembered. Others were nice and kind, but spoke to him softly, as if he were easily startled, like a rabbit. A cornered, injured rabbit. He didn’t like them either, perhaps not as much as he disliked the snobby, arrogant ones who all but ordered him to pick them, but he did still dislike them for treating him like a victim, like there was still something wrong with him when he was trying to get himself back to normal. He didn’t want to go back to being afraid of people, he didn’t want to go back to jumping at shadows or perfectly ordinary noises. He’d gone beyond that now and with the support of his mates, and everyone else around him, he was moving forward and it felt amazing. He did not want to go back.

Harry could already tell that he wouldn’t like the dominant that walked in next. He was trying to show off, just from how he walked, his red, orange, brown and yellow-gold wings flared out a bit too much, as if he’d practiced the move, as if he knew the exact length his wings needed to be to show off his colours, without hitting the doorframe. He wasn’t even walking, not properly, he was strutting, and Harry automatically put him in the ‘too arrogant, how dare you not pick me’ pile.

“I’m Eden Amaranth Walker, I’m thirty-six.” He said.

That did surprise Harry, he was older than he looked, Harry would have put him at early twenties. He looked good for his age. Really good.

“How are you, Eden?” Max asked, and there was just something in his voice.

“Fine, Max. How are you?”

“Just perfect.” Max answered easily.

“You know one another?” Harry asked, looking from Max to Eden.

“Yes. We’re technically brothers-in-law. Caesar’s mate, Amelle, is Eden’s sister.”

Harry made a little O with his mouth, and now that he was looking, he could see the similarities.

“Amelle’s hair is more brown than yours, but I can see the resemblance.” Harry said, looking at the bright, brilliant red of Eden’s hair. It was even brighter than Ismay’s, which was a darker shade, and not quite so in your face.
“Would me being the brother of Amelle make you discount me out of hand?” Eden asked him.

“No.” Harry said. “My Dracken doesn’t see you as related to me, or to my mates, so that won’t be an issue.”

‘It’s your attitude that will be a problem, though.’ Harry thought to himself, looking at that soft seeming bottom lip and wondering how someone with such stunning features could seem so very ugly.

Harry indicated for Eden to sit down, but before he did, Harry realised that he wasn’t very tall, maybe five foot nine, five foot ten. Not that that would put Harry off, it wouldn’t, but a lot of the shorter dominants seemed to have a chip on their shoulders because of their lack of height compared to other dominant Drackens. Harry had seen some taller submissives that were the same height as Eden, including Max’s grandmother, Kimberly.

Those grey eyes stared at him and Harry wondered if he was the one who needed to get this conversation going. That would be a first.

“Amaranth is a rather strange name.” Was all he could think to say to break the silence.

“I was given it to name me after my Mother, whose name is Amara. I quite like it, it being rather different.”

That was a first too, a dominant actually liking their ‘odd’ names that their crazy parents had given to them, but then again Eden’s unique name was his middle one, not his first, and after some of the names he’d heard during these meetings, Eden was a rather normal and pleasant name.

The beginning of the meeting, where Harry was actually allowed to talk and ask questions, didn’t last. Eden it seemed allowed Harry have a token go at letting him talk and ask awkward questions for maybe all of three minutes, before he started talking about himself and how great he was. Harry had never heard the word ‘autumn’ so much in his life. Apparently someone had coined the epithet ‘the autumn dominant’ for Eden, because of his wing colouring, and now that Harry actually looked, they did look like a blanket of autumn leaves, but Harry’s first impression had been of fire, or maybe a volcano erupting.

He smiled and nodded, made noises of interest or agreement, but he was slowly getting bored. Eden was not the dominant for him. He really wasn’t the dominant for him as the term ‘autumn dominant’ made another appearance in their conversation.
“Your time is up.” Elder Midate broke in, rather snappishly. Harry jumped and had to blink at the sudden interruption. To him it had felt like he’d slipped into a stupor, he’d been convinced that time had been standing still and he had been frozen in place.

“Surely I can be allowed more time when we are getting on so well?” Eden tried.

That made Harry’s heart trip in horror… or was it revulsion? Maybe it was just panic that he might be forced to endure more conversation with Eden ‘the autumn dominant’ Walker.

“No one is allowed more time.” Elder Kirrian said firmly, at the same time Harry let out a horrified, curt ‘No!’

Harry blushed when everyone turned to look at him and he curled into Nasta and hid himself from everyone’s gaze.

“Harry?”

Harry just shook his head and burrowed further into Nasta, who adjusted himself to accommodate Harry more and wrapped his arms around him.

“Are you alright, Cariad?” He asked softly.

“Embarrassed.” Harry muttered back.

“It’s okay, these are your meetings.” Nasta told him. “You don’t have to entertain anyone that you don’t want to.”

“We were getting on!” Eden tried to bluster.

“Maybe not as well as you thought?” Max put in, trying to sound kind, but Harry could tell just from those words that Max didn’t like Eden and Harry felt better for not liking Eden either.

“You’re so boring!” Harry felt compelled to say. “I thought you were different when you let me talk,
but then you took over and didn’t even give me a chance to start speaking again. I couldn’t get a word in edgeways and all you did for twenty minutes was talk about yourself, you didn’t even stop for a breath, and I really don’t think you could have inserted ‘autumn dominant’ into your conversation one more time without making me want to leap from the window to escape.”

“You didn’t react, so I thought you hadn’t heard me.” Eden tried.

“Of course I heard the several dozen mentions of it and of course I didn’t react, I don’t give a damn about your colouring or what other submissives are calling you, I care about who you are as a person. I cared more about how nice you were, how you acted with me and my dominants, and you failed. You’re never going to be my mate, I don’t see any reason to continue to torture myself with your boring spiel.”

Out of respect for Caesar, Max didn’t laugh until Eden had stormed out, but once the door was shut, he laughed loudly.

“Was I too hard?” Harry fretted.

“No, Caru. You’re just honest and there is nothing wrong with that.” Nasta told him gently. “I almost fell asleep myself.”

That made Harry giggle and he stopped trying to merge into one body with Nasta and instead laid on him more comfortably.

“Are we almost done?” Harry asked. “I want to get back to Ismay.”

“We’re done whenever you say that we are, Harry.” Elder Midate told him.

Harry looked at Nasta’s watch and frowned.

“Maybe one or two more.” He said with a sigh. “Then I want to get back home to Ismay.”

“Whatever you want, love.” Max told him, kissing the side of his head.
Harry smiled at him and settled himself once more between both of his mates. The longest that these two final meetings would take was an hour, and that was only if Harry waited until the time ran out and didn’t just ask the dominant to leave five minutes in. He’d done that a few times today, to differing reactions from the dominants. One had even tried to attack him, Nasta had been the one to tackle that dominant, just a heartbeat before Captain Foss had gotten to him, and between them they had bundled the dominant over to the guards and then they had taken over and Nasta had come back to sit beside him. It made Harry feel doubly safe with his mate and his Dracken was so happy with Nasta. They had chosen perfectly, for both of his mates, now he just needed to do it a third time, for his final ever mate.

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The first week of his meetings for his third, and hopefully final mate, were not going very well. Harry wasn’t even remotely attracted to any of them, and with him being so very well satisfied in the bedroom by the mates that he already had, he wasn’t actually looking to add anyone to his mateship. It was a rather distressing dilemma, especially as the longer he drew out these meetings, the longer he was away from Ismay day by day, and he hated it.

“Out!” Harry snapped, rather evil-temperedly, interrupting the unmated dominant opposite him in mid-spiel.

“What?” He said dumbly…Harry couldn’t even remember his name. This was not going well at all.

“I said out! Now!” Harry demanded.

“It’s only been five minutes!” The dominant protested.

“And if I have to listen to five more minutes I’ll be on trial for murder!” Harry said. “Get out!”

The dominant huffed and puffed and stormed out without the need for Captain Foss to do it for him and Harry slumped between his two mates and he scowled, thinking hard.

“Harry?” Max tried.
Harry blew out a breath and shook himself off, as if he were a bird that was resettling his feathers.

“I hate it here.” He complained.

“We know.” Nasta said soothingly. “But you’ll only ever have to do this once more. You’ve been doing so well, just a little longer, Harry. Please.”

Harry blew out his breath and he nodded.

“Perhaps a short break first, just to settle you?” Max suggested and Harry nodded again.

“I think Drackens are backwards.” Harry said, which elicited a snort of surprised laughter from Max and a chuckle from Nasta.

“What makes you say that, sweet one?” Elder Midate asked him.

“I mean, I know the books said that vanity and pride is a huge part of Dracken mentality, but everyone seems to be using it more as an excuse to just become self-obsessed, self-indulgent tossers.” He said. “I know submissives are said to be worse, but from what I’ve seen, dominants are just as bloody bad! How about letting me talk? How about asking me how I am or what I’m up to? Or maybe that’s my own vanity and pride coming out, I don’t know, I just don’t like being forced to sit here in silence as I listen to some disillusioned prick bang on endlessly about himself. Aren’t conversations supposed to be two way?”

Both his mates murmured soothingly to him, touching him and calming him back down. Harry took a nice, deep breath and snuggled into them both. He made a soft little purring noise that made them both smile. He had only been making those sorts of noise for a few days, apparently it was a very good sign. It meant that his Dracken was so contented, so happy and relaxed and settled, that he felt safe enough to show it via those little purring noises. It had shocked him when he’d first done it, as it had never happened before, but both Max and Nasta had explained it to him and he could see how incredibly happy and proud it made them both to hear the noises, which only made Harry want to make them all the more.

“Sweet one, you’re purring!” Elder Midate said excitedly, his eyes wide, but his smile was wider.

Harry looked out shyly and he nodded with his own smile. “Yes, it started happening a few days
ago. I didn’t know what it was at first, but Max and Nasta explained it to me.”

“What were you doing when it first happened?” Elder Kirrian asked him. “Or don’t we want to know?”

Harry laughed. “No, it was nothing like that. It was stupid really, we were just cuddling on the settee, or cwtching as Nasta keeps saying. Ismay was asleep in my arms, the TV was on, I can’t even remember what was on, I wasn’t watching it, but…I felt…I felt so happy, so relaxed, that I just couldn’t stop myself from making that noise. Before I knew what was happening it was up and out of my throat and these two just snap their heads around to stare at me and the next thing I’m being killed by a hailstorm of kisses.” Harry laughed. “They were so happy and excited.”

“As any good dominant should be.” Elder Midate said approvingly. “It makes me feel so happy to hear that you’re comfortable enough to start purring, Harry. So very happy.”

“I think I’ve settled really well at home with Max and Nas, the only problem is, I don’t think we can stay in that house for much longer.”

“Why do you say that?” Max asked in shock.

“Max, think about it.” Nasta said gently. “Submissives like space, with four grown men, and Ismay running around, we’ll be a little pressed for space, and if Harry is pregnant…we live in a suburban neighbourhood, there is nowhere for him to nest.”

Harry nodded sadly. “I always knew I would need to move one day, that it was just a little house to get me and Ismay back on our feet, and if we’d had a huge mansion, I would have been creeping about, petrified of my own home, of unused rooms and shadows, but now…now I need to move into a bigger house. I think I’m ready for it.”

“Are you sure?” Nasta asked him seriously.

Harry nodded. “Yes. I…I never realised it, but I started packing this morning. I was putting away all the bathroom things.”

“You were?” Max asked.
Harry nodded again. “I think that now is the right time. It might actually be an early indication that I’m pregnant and want to move on soon, or it might be that I don’t want to live in a cramped house with three other men and my active terror of a daughter.”

“We’ll sort all of that out for you, love.” Max promised. “We’ll make it as easy for you and Ismay as possible.”

“All you need to tell her is that she can decorate her new room how she likes and she’ll be fine.” Harry said with a smile. “She loved helping me to decorate her room.”

“We’ll look after you both now.” Nasta told him, holding him tight.

“You’ve been very good to me, thank you both.” Harry said.

“No. Don’t thank us for doing as we’re supposed to.” Max said.

“We want to look after you, we love you.” Nasta added. “Just because you were abused by a vile little fucker that you should never have been near in the first place does not mean you should have to accept anyone treating you badly, even if it does pale in comparison to what you went through. Not ever.”

“You deserve our love and attention.” Max butted in again quickly, before anyone else could open their mouths. “You should have had it from the start, Harry, that doesn’t change just because of what you went through. Nasta’s right that you shouldn’t accept anyone treating you badly, even if you did have it worse with that insect. You should never believe that you deserve any less than our complete and utter devotion.”

Harry was speechless and all he could do was look from Nasta to Max, and then wrap an arm around both of them and pull them into a tight hug. He was still learning, and he did still thank people occasionally, just for not hurting him. He knew that that wasn’t all that normal, and that it upset his mates when he did it. He would just have to keep talking to them and talking to Healer Vasey. He would get better. He was sure now that there would come a day when he turned around and he would realise that he hadn’t done anything like that for weeks, if not months, and it would excite him so much that he would seek out his mates to point it out to them, but for the moment, he did still feel the need to thank them now and again, just for treating him like a person, for treating him so well and so kindly, so lovingly. It was still a novelty to him, even almost a year after his rescue, but he took comfort from the fact that he was improving, he was getting better slowly, and one day he would be
completely healed from all that he had been through. There would come a time in his life where such basic things as being loved and cared for would no longer be a novelty to him, but it would be normal, expected, and that day would be amazing to him. There would come a time when he was completely normal and Harry was very much looking forward to it.

After the disastrous first week of meetings, Harry took a day off. It was the nineteenth of September today, Max’s birthday, and he had declared it a family day and he refused to even think of his meetings or who would end up being his third mate.

Alexander had happily organised Max’s birthday, which was being held at his home to accommodate all of Max’s family. Harry’s house would only fit a quarter of them, if that.

Harry had woken himself up early, at five in the morning, so that he could assuredly beat Max to the kitchen and make him breakfast for once. He’d had two cups of tea while he set out the kitchen, getting Max’s hidden presents and cards from under the stairs while he debated what to do for breakfast. He decided on bacon and eggs. He knew Nasta wouldn’t like it, so he made a side dish of fruit salad to go with it, casting a simple charm on a knife to slice and dice everything.

All of Max’s presents were on the kitchen table, at least the ones from him, Nasta and Ismay were. His family presents would be given to him at his grandfather’s house.

Speaking of houses, Harry had told Ismay that they would be moving house, and she hadn’t taken it as well as he’d expected, not even with the promise of decorating her new room. She had yelled and screamed and thrown a tantrum, insisting that she liked the room she had now and didn’t want another one. He had almost promised her that they wouldn’t move at all, despite knowing that they would have to at some point, but Nasta had firmly taken control of the situation while Max had come to comfort him as Nasta knelt down and stopped the tantrum and actually punished Ismay by sitting her on the bottom step of the stairs for four minutes. That had shocked her, but she was calmer once Nasta allowed her to come off the step. He had sat her down on the settee and he had explained that they were moving with or without her cooperation, as she was just a three year old girl, and Nasta had gone on to explain that the house would be too small once they found her third Daddy and started giving her brothers and sisters. She still didn’t like it, Harry could see, and he was almost expecting her to seek him out on his own to beg for him to change his mind, but as of yet she hadn’t had the chance with him needing to keep having meetings for his third mate.

“You’re up early, Caru.” Nasta told him as he walked into the kitchen.

“I wanted to make Max breakfast on his birthday. It doesn’t seem right that he has to do it himself.” Harry explained. “There’s tea on the table for you.”

Nasta didn’t divert to the table, instead he came up to Harry and wrapped his arms around him and kissed his cheek. It made Harry smile.
“Do you need any help?” Nasta asked him.

Harry laughed. “From you? No, love.”

“Cheeky.” Nasta murmured into his ear. “I meant with anything easy that involves cutting or prepping.”

“No, I used a spell to cut everything up.” Harry said with a smile. “Just sit yourself down, this is almost done now.”

Nasta moved his head to kiss him properly, on the lips, before he did as told and he went to sit where his cup of green tea had been placed. He automatically served himself a bowl of fruit salad.

“Do you want a full breakfast, Nas, or just a bacon sandwich?” Harry asked him, very aware that Nasta didn’t like so much fried food at once.

“Just a sandwich, please, Harry.”

“Brown sauce or ketchup?”

“It has to be brown sauce with bacon.” Nasta said with a grin.

Harry laughed, even as he buttered brown bread before putting several bacon medallions onto two pieces of bread and then placing the other two slices over the top. He cut them into fourths and then handed them over to Nasta with the bottle of brown sauce.

Ismay came down next and Harry hugged her tightly, sat her in her chair and pushed her teacup closer to her as he set up a smaller plate for her, adding a piece of toast and serving her.

“Thank you very much, Mummy.” She told him, putting her teacup down and picking up her knife and fork.

“Don’t forget to eat some fruit too.” Harry reminded her, pointing to the bowl of fruit salad.
“Does it have pears?”

“No, I made sure not to put any in.” Harry said.

Ismay nodded. She had decided recently that she didn’t like the look of pears, despite eating and enjoying them previously, so they had to be kept away from her and her food.

Harry nursed a cup of tea while he looked after the food that was cooking on low. Max wouldn’t be too long, he didn’t like an empty bed and the smell of food would lure him up eventually...when his mind realised that the smell meant that someone other than him was in the kitchen.

Harry was right and very soon he heard stumbling on the stairs. He grinned to Ismay and winked and she sat up straighter, waiting, and as soon as Max entered, the both of them started singing happy birthday to a bleary eyed Max.

“You cooked.” Was all he could say.

Harry rolled his eyes. “Yes, I’ve taken your duties from you for one day, now park it and eat.”

Max did as he’d been told and sat next to Ismay. Harry placed a plate in front of him and kissed his cheek. Only after that did he make up a small plate for himself and sit down, next to Nasta, to eat his own breakfast.

“Are those mine?” Max asked, eyeing the cards and gifts.

“Is it your birthday?” Nasta asked him.

Max nodded with a grin.

“Then I suppose they are for you, yes.” Nasta said.

Ismay giggled at that and Harry hid a smile.
“Can I open them now?” Max asked.

“No, Daddy Max!” Ismay said sternly. “Breakfast first.”

“Aww, not even one?” Max pleaded.

“No.” Ismay said firmly.

Harry had to take a drink of tea to cover his laughter at that. He loved his little family so much, and he was more grateful than he could express in words that Max and Nasta both loved and treated Ismay as their own. If anyone deserved a Father, it was his daughter and he loved his mates even more, just because they had taken on his daughter as their own. He just hoped, fervently hoped, that when they had their own children, that Ismay wasn’t forgotten or treated any differently.

After breakfast, and after Max had opened his cards (the one from Ismay was handmade and drawn by her), and his presents, the four of them snuggled up to watch Max’s favourite film, which happened to be Aladdin, before they started to get ready for Max’s party at Alexander’s.

“Will Nora be there?” Ismay asked.

“She’s going to be there.” Max assured her as he made sure his jeans were smoothened out.

“Will she want to play with me?”

Max stopped what he was doing and he hunched down in front of her. “Issy, Nora likes playing with you, of course she’ll want to play with you.”

Ismay still looked a little unsure, so Max pulled her into a hug.

“There are going to be a lot of children at this party, Ismay, so even if Eleonora doesn’t want to play with you, there are plenty more who will want to.”

“Really?” Ismay asked hopefully.
“Really. Now, how about you hop up onto my shoulders and we go and have some fun and sneak some cake?”

Ismay giggled, but climbed around him like a monkey and sat herself up on his shoulders. Max stood carefully, aware that he was very, very tall and he didn’t want to hit her head on the ceiling.

He carefully treaded down the stairs and into the living room, where his two mates were talking and having a little cuddle together. He knew that Harry was a little nervous still about this party, Max had a lot of family, and he had quite a few friends too, and just to make Harry feel a little better, Max had invited the Elders to come too, and some of the Healers. He would do anything for Harry, but there were going to be a lot of people at the party, not as many as there were unmated dominants in his mate meetings, of course, but it would still be overwhelming for Harry to have that many people in one place, even if he wasn’t the sole focus of the gathering.

“There you two are, are you ready to go?” Nasta asked, smiling at them.

“Yes, Daddy Nasta.” Ismay chirped.

That made Harry smile and do the gooey eyed thing again. Max loved that look on his little mate.

“Come on then. Max, you go through first.”

Max nodded easily and followed the instructions. Nasta was the top dominant of their mateship, at least for now while it was just the two of them. He and Nasta had slipped out into the garden while Harry was busy with Ismay, with Elder Kirrian to watch over them both, and they had ‘fought’ out their dominancy battle. It wasn’t much of a fight, the instincts to fight just weren’t there, and had only come with force, which was very unusual. They had found out later, after a hushed conversation with Elder Kirrian while Harry had been distracted, that not every dominancy battle was a fight, that sometimes a Dracken would back down without a fight if he recognised that his mate was either better for the job, or that he was already outmatched. After talking together for a while, late at night, while Harry slept peacefully in Max’s arms, the both of them had realised that not only was Nasta a better candidate for top dominant as he was calmer and more level-headed, but his Dracken had immediately pulled rank as Max knew how to cook. It seemed ridiculous that such an important thing was decided purely on the fact that Max was a modern man who knew how to feed himself, and enjoyed cooking, but the fact remained that just a few decades before, it was ‘the submissive’ role to cook and clean the house and that was why Nasta’s dominant had immediately pulled rank…because Nasta burnt toast and made soup explode when he tried to heat it up by himself.

Max landed in his Grandfather’s living room, Ismay still on his shoulders, and he walked through the house and to the back garden. There really were a lot of people here and he felt Ismay withdraw slightly, curling up to put her head closer to his. He hated that too. Both Ismay and Harry did it and he really wanted to change the instinctual behaviour, but he knew that it would take time. He knew that it had to be proven over time, that they wouldn’t just believe the words told to them, but it
rankled him that his mate and daughter were still displaying such behaviours, as if they expected to be attacked still, even with him there. He would never allow it. Never.

“Maxie. Ismay, Princess. How are you both?” Alexander asked with a smile for his grandson and great-granddaughter.

“Hi.” Ismay replied shyly.

“Look at you all the way up there!” Alexander said cheerfully, noticing immediately that Ismay was unsure of herself purely from her one word answer. “We might lose you in the clouds.”

Ismay looked up into the sky and then giggled. “The clouds are way, way up there!” She denied. “I won’t get lost in them.”

“Well, just hold on tight to Max, just in case.”

“It’s Daddy Max’s birthday today, Alexander. He’s old now!”

That made everyone who was listening laugh, even Max himself.

“Thanks for that one, kid.”

“But you are old.” Ismay frowned. “You’re thirty-five! That’s dinosaur old.”

That brought more laughter.

“Am I old too?” Harry asked, appearing at Max’s side with Nasta.

“No, Mummy.” Ismay said immediately. “You’re young and beautiful.”

“This is a conspiracy.” Max said. “How is he young and beautiful at twenty-one, but I’m as old as
“There are years and years between you!” Ismay insisted.

“Fourteen!”

“I know fourteen and that’s so many!” Ismay insisted. “Daddy Nasta was teaching me numbers and fourteen is huge!”

“Nasta is forty-one, is he as old as the dinosaurs too?” Max demanded playfully.

“No.” Ismay replied easily. “He’s older than the dinosaurs.”

Harry joined the laughter. “I guess I’ll have to be extra careful with my fossilised mates.”

“Make sure you do, Mummy. Old things break easier.”

“Yeah, Max, watch you don’t break a hip!” His shit of a brother, Caesar, taunted with a grin.

“I didn’t come here, to my own party, to be taunted by my own relatives!” He huffed.

“Happy birthday, sweetheart.” His Grandmother, Kimberly, told him with a smile.

“Thank you, nana. You’re the first person to say that to me since I arrived! It’s my birthday, not bully me day.”

Harry reached up, pulled down on Max’s shoulder, and gave him a big kiss. Everyone was distracted after that by other people, and Harry found himself talking in a large group, standing pressed into Myron’s side. He liked Myron.

He could see Ismay, darting around in jeans and a top, playing with Eleonora and several other children all around the same age. He would have to make an effort to learn the names of the other children.
“Hello, Harry.”

At hearing his name Harry automatically turned and he smiled at Healer Alessandri. He was another big, tall, safe dominant that Harry liked.

“Hi, Georgio. How are you?”

“Better for this party, I’ve brought my five kids to run around a little.” He laughed. “That’s Renzo.” He turned and pointed out a boy of about seven who had joined in a game with some of the older kids. “That’s Georgia.” A little girl of five who had slipped in easily with the group around Ismay and Eleonora. “Clemence.” A four year old girl who had also slipped in with Ismay. “And those two are the twins, Terra and Tobiah, with my mate Clara.” Georgio finished off, pointing to a beautiful woman who was holding a twin boy and girl of maybe seven months old.

“You have very beautiful children.” Harry praised, and he immediately noticed Clara’s back straightening as she preened a little. There was no faster way to make friends with a submissive Dracken than to praise their children. “That’s my daughter there, Ismay.”

“She’s very beautiful too. I love her hair.”

Harry smiled at that. “My Mother had red hair too, so it makes me happy to look at her and remember. Ismay was worried that no one would play with her, but she’s always the life of a party.”

“Georgio has told me a bit about what you both went through, I’m so sorry.”

Harry smiled sadly. “I wouldn’t wish it on anyone, but we’re getting through it. Ismay is doing much better than I am, but she does still worry about things she shouldn’t.”

“You’re both getting much better.” Myron told him, giving his body a small squeeze.

Harry smiled up at him and snuggled in closer.
“How is the search for your third mate going? Or is that a forbidden topic?” Georgio smiled.

Harry snorted. “It’s going about as well as expected, I have a handful of them that I actually like and even less that I am actually fully considering. There is currently only one who I think could be mate material, but I haven’t finished ‘interviewing’ them all yet, there might be more hiding away somewhere.”

“I wish I’d thought to hold my meeting as an interview. I might not have gotten hurt that way, but then, if I hadn’t have gotten hurt then my amazing mate wouldn’t have swooped into action to heal me.” Clara said, giving Georgio gooey eyes.

“You were hurt at your meeting?” Harry asked, horrified.

“Not seriously and it was an accident.” Clara said soothingly. “Two dominants shoved at one another to try to get closer and it devolved into a fight between them, but they were a little too close to me and I did get hurt. But if that hadn’t have happened, I might not have noticed Georgio, and I can’t imagine my life without him.”

“Of course I was just going through my Healer training.” Georgio said. “I was just apprenticing under the Dracken Healers too, so the moment I saw Clara get hurt, I jumped into action without thinking about it. I wasn’t even thinking at that point that she was an unmated submissive and that I was vying for her attention, I just focused everything on trying to heal her as quickly and as adeptly as I could.”

“I never looked at another dominant after that, despite my Elder chaperone trying to do things fairly and trying to give me a chance. I didn’t want anyone else after that and it helped greatly that my parents approved of Georgio and how he had jumped in to heal me without hesitation and without any ulterior motives.”

Harry smiled at their story. “I just always knew it would be Max.” He said and several people listening around the circle just laughed. “I liked how he was respectful of me and my wishes, even though he didn’t know me and we had only just met, he was willing to put his own thoughts and feelings aside for my own. Of course he’s incredibly funny too, I don’t think a day has passed where he hasn’t made me laugh at least once. He’s really good with Ismay too, and that was what was most important to me after being…after everything. No one is even being considered if they show any aversion to Ismay. The one sole dominant who is currently tipped to be my third dominant is the only one who actually asked after her. I mean, it’s not as if everyone doesn’t know what happened to me, and they know I have a child from what happened, so why not ask me about her? It’s not like I keep her in a cupboard like I was as a child, she’s a huge part of my life and she isn’t going anywhere.”
“What do you mean?”

Harry looked up to see Alexander looking at him from across the circle of people that Harry was standing in.

“What?” He asked confusedly.

“You said that you didn’t keep her in a cupboard like you were as a child. What do you mean, Harry?”

Harry frowned. “I was abused as a child.” He said. “It’s why I don’t speak to any of my blood relatives.”

“You were abused as a child?” Elder Midate asked weakly from beside Alexander.

Harry nodded. “For as long as I can remember.”

“I didn’t even know you had living blood relatives.” Richard, Max’s other Father, said from Myron’s other side.

“My Mother’s sister and her family.” Harry said. “I never contacted them after I was rescued. I’m better off without any of them.”

“Why didn’t you ever mention it?”

Harry frowned again. “I… I don’t know, I guess it just never came up and everyone was so focused on what I went through after I was abducted that it just never came up.”

“Does Max know? He’s never said a thing about it!”

“I can’t remember if I ever told him about it.” Harry said. “It hasn’t really been at the forefront of my mind, it’s all in the past now.”
“So you went from being abused with one family, right into being abused by another?” Myron asked, breathing heavily, his fists and teeth clenched.

“I saw them last during the summer I turned sixteen, so there was a couple of months between them as I wasn’t abducted until May, but the Perrots were worse, much worse.”

“And these relatives would keep you in a cupboard?” Alexander asked him.

Harry nodded. “The cupboard under the stairs. I slept in there until I was eleven.”

“What happened when you were eleven?”

“I got my Hogwarts letter, they were worried that wizards were watching the house, so I was given my cousin’s second bedroom.”

“Your cousin’s second bedroom?” Elder Midate asked. “Your cousin had two bedrooms, and you were in a cupboard?”

“It was less about how much space was in the house, or how many bedrooms, and more about making me feel as unwelcome as possible.” Harry said.

“What else? What else would they do to you?”

Harry shrugged.

“Did they ever hit you?” Alexander asked him gently.

“Well, yeah.” Harry replied flippantly. “It started with the odd shove when I was really little and toddling about, getting under their feet, then hair pulling and slaps, then punches and kicks and then I was hit with objects when I was a teenager. It got progressively worse the older I got.”
“I think I’m going to be sick.” A very green looking Elder Trintus moaned weakly.

“It wasn’t as bad as the Perrots.” Harry insisted again.

“That isn’t the point.” An angry Elder Kirrian told him. “Why didn’t you ever say anything to us? Even before you were abducted you said nothing about this.”

“I guess I was just used to it. It had been happening for so long that it just became routine.”

“It would explain why you were so small and skinny when we first saw you when you came in with Elder Midate.” Georgio said quietly. “We told you then that you needed to eat more, we never clicked that it might have been linked to childhood abuse and we really should have.”

“Did they feed you?” Elder Midate asked him then.

Harry shook his head. “It was like what I went through at the Perrots. I was denied food, space, clothes, but it was worse with the Perrots, much, much worse. Everything was amplified with them.”

“Were you sexually abused there?” Elder Kirrian asked.

Harry stilled and he swallowed hard. He hated his sexual abuse being brought up, especially in public, and everyone knew it. The physical abuse he could handle, as he’d been going through that since he was a toddler, but the sexual abuse he couldn’t deal with.

“Harry?! Did they touch you inappropriately when you were a child?”

“No.” He bit out. “That particular horror was reserved for Jefferus alone.”

“You need to tell Max and Nasta.” Richard told him.

“No. Not today. It’s Max’s birthday, I won’t ruin it with this. It was years ago, it’s in the past and I don’t care about them anymore. The Perrots were worse and it’s them I need to get over, not the damn Dursleys.”
“You need to get over both.” Alexander told him gently. “And regardless of what day it is, you need to tell your mates, Harry.”

“No!” Harry shouted, but his inner feelings came out in the form of a shrill distress call that alerted his mates to something being seriously wrong more than anything else could have done.

Harry closed his eyes, angry with himself for losing control, but Max and Nasta were just there, holding him and surrounding him, looking for a threat or what might have upset him.

“What happened?” Nasta demanded of the others around him.

“Are you alright? Are you hurt?” Max asked him, hunching down and cupping Harry’s face gently between big hands.

“I’m fine.” Harry insisted.

“You wouldn’t let out a distress call if you were fine, what happened?” Max asked him quietly.

Harry just shook his head. “I just didn’t like the topic of conversation. This isn’t the place for it.”

Harry was squashed to Max’s chest and he held on tightly, burrowing in as those big arms held him securely.

“You were asking him about what he went through?” Max demanded. “Can’t he have one meeting with my family where it isn’t brought up? He doesn’t like discussing such private things in public!”

“We’re sorry, Max.” Alexander said calmly. “The topic did come up and we did question him about it, we should have realised that this wasn’t the place, it was just surprising, and horrifying.”

“Granddad, you know all the details, why would you need to question Harry?” Max asked.
Harry sighed. “I brought it up without realising, Max.” He said sadly. “It was an offhand comment, but…it made me realise that no one knows everything.”

“You’ve kept something back?” Max asked quietly.

“Not on purpose. I just think that what I went through recently was worse and I really don’t want to ruin your birthday by bringing this up now.”

“Harry, nothing is more important to me than you and Ismay. I don’t care if it’s my birthday, if you need to say something, then say it.” Max told him seriously.

“You’re more important to me!” Harry insisted. “I don’t care what I went through as long as I have you.”

“You already have me.” Max said. “I’m not going anywhere, not ever, so why not tell me what it is that you’ve just realised and take it from your mind.”

Harry breathed out heavily through his nose and turned away slightly.

“No, don’t withdraw into yourself.” Max chided him. “If everyone here knows about it, then Nasta and I, as your mates, should know about it too. Will it affect your recovery?”

“No. I don’t really think about it anymore.”

“Does Healer Vasey know about it?”

“Yes. He’s helping me with that too.”

“So you do think about it.”

“Not as often and I don’t see how it is affecting my daily life. I was fine before the Perrots. It wasn’t affecting me.”
“What do you mean?” Nasta asked him, and Harry had a sense of déjà vu. “What happened before the Perrots?”

Harry scowled and breathed deeply and calmly. “I was abused before them, as a child by my blood relatives.”

His mates made no sound, not a word, so Harry looked at them. Max looked like he’d been poleaxed, but Nasta looked furious.

“Where are they now?” Nasta asked calmly…too calmly.

“You can’t kill them.” Harry said immediately. “They’re Muggles.”

“I meant are they in prison?” Nasta asked him. “Did you ever report them?”

“No.” Harry replied. “They’re out of my life now, why would I want to go digging in the past and bring all of that back up again when what I went through with the Perrots was worse?”

“It doesn’t matter how much worse it was, that’s not the point, they still hurt and abused you.” Richard burst out. “They should be brought to justice over it.”

“No.” Harry said.

“You can’t let them get away with what they did to you. They shouldn’t get away with abusing a child.”

“I don’t even know where they are, I haven’t seen or spoken to them in five years. I don’t want to.”

Nasta knelt down and took his hands gently. “It has to be your decision, Harry, but everyone is just trying to help you. People who abuse children, regardless of how it compares to future abuse or even what others have gone through, deserve to be in prison for what they’ve done. It doesn’t matter that you suffered worse at the hands of the Perrots, they still abused you and they should be made to face
“I just want it all over and done with, Nas.” Harry replied softly. “I don’t want it all raked back up.”

“I know, Caru, but can you truly get over everything if those responsible for your suffering haven’t faced justice? The Perrots were executed, you got your justice for that, but you deserve to get justice from those who hurt you as a child too. Why should they walk free after what they’ve done to you? Why should they get to live their happy little lives when you’ve suffered through so much in your life? You deserve justice for what they did to you, Harry, but more than that, they deserve to be punished for what they did to you.”

“Will you help me?” Harry asked quietly, insecurely.

“Harry, we’re you’re mates, we would never, never, leave you to struggle through something like this on your own. We love you so much, and we’ll be beside you with every step.”

“What if it makes me worse?”

“Why do you think that it will?”

“Because it hasn’t been bothering me and bringing it all back up, making me think of it all, it might start interfering with my recovery.”

“Can you be fully recovered while this is still unresolved in the back of your mind?” Nasta asked him. “Perhaps once you were recovered from what you’ve gone through recently, then you’d start having nightmares and things about what you went through before that and you’d have to go back to square one and start all over again. It’s best to sort it all out now, and then have a bright, happy future without any of it holding you back.”

“Do you think that it’ll take very long?” Harry asked.

“I can have it set up and have the court proceedings going as early as next week.” Richard said. “I will represent you and handle everything so that you don’t have to. You don’t even need to be there.”
“You’d do that for me?” Harry asked.

“Sweetheart, I’d do just about anything for you at this point.” Richard answered seriously.

“What do you need from me?” Harry asked warily.

“I wish that I could say nothing, but we will need to have a few talks, Harry. I need to know everything that they did to you, everything that you went through, so that we can accurately accuse and charge them, but it can be done in private, just me and you if you wanted.”

Harry shook his head. “Max and Nasta need to be there too.”

Richard nodded. “That’s okay. After these little talks, you’ll need to see Healer Vasey again, but as for the court proceedings, you won’t need to be there.”

Harry nodded glumly. He turned to Max and cuddled back into him.

“I never wanted to ruin your birthday.” He stressed.

“You haven’t.” Max told him. “I’ve gotten to run around like an idiot already, I’ve gotten presents, I have cake, what more do I want? Besides, when you’re as old as the dinosaurs, you have to take things easier.”

That made Harry smile again, as Max had fervently hoped, and he darted forward, and down, to give Harry a smacking kiss.

“At least you’re not older than the dinosaurs.” Nasta complained. “I must have been a very good runner, and the best at hide and seek, to have survived all of that.”

Harry actually laughed at that, and the subject was dropped and things turned back into a birthday party again, but Harry was visibly distracted through a lot of it, and he was very, very quiet, which also didn’t go unnoticed.

Max made sure that he looked to be enjoying himself whenever Harry looked at him, because the last
thing he wanted was for Harry to think that he wasn’t enjoying his birthday party and blame himself for it. All Max wanted to do was go home and cuddle Harry on the settee and promise to protect him for the rest of his life…how could one boy go through all that he had and still come out the other side of it sane? He’d thought it was soul destroying to find out the details of what Harry had been through with the Perrots after he’d been abducted from under his nose, but to find that he’d been abused even before that, as a child even, it just wasn’t fair and the thought of a tiny, child Harry going through such abuse made Max want to cry.

“We’ll look after him.” Nasta’s voice said from behind him.

Max turned to look at him and he let his face fall for a moment, showing the inner turmoil he was feeling.

“It’s just not fair. What has Harry ever done to deserve such things happening to him? Abused as a child, as a baby, until he was sixteen, and then just a few months later he was abducted and abused for four more years by that filth. I just…why Harry?” Max demanded. “Why him?”

“It is a cruel coincidence, Cariad.” Nasta said softly. “It is not Harry at fault, but those around him.”

“He’s so sweet, and so kind and caring and everyone around him has just abused him. I can’t stand the thought of it, Nasta.”

Nasta pressed their lips together in a soft, chaste kiss. “We’re going to get him justice, we’re going to help him through this, we’ll help him to get over what happened and help him to recover. We’re going to love him forever and we’ll make sure that nothing like this ever happens to him again.”

“Not just once, but twice he’s had to go through this. Once is bad enough, those people need to be punished for what they did to him. I need to kill them.”

“No, that’s not the way, Max.” Nasta said firmly. “They need to be brought to legal justice, and for them, being Muggles, that means prison.”

“It’s too good for them. Muggle prisons aren’t even like Azkaban.” Max complained.

“I know, but it’s the best we can do with them being Muggles and we have to do this legally, Max. For Harry’s sake. He wouldn’t want you to go to Azkaban over this. He loves you so much, but
more than that, he depends on you to be there for him, you can’t take that away from him just because of your own feelings. Harry and his needs have to come first’

Max breathed deeply and calmed himself down. Sometimes he hated that Nasta made so much sense, especially when he just wanted to go and murder the people who had abused Harry when he was just a child.

“There you are.” Harry himself cut in. “Is everything okay? You’re not hiding from me?” He asked worriedly.

“Of course not.” Max said immediately, turning to hug Harry and he bent to give him a kiss.

“Ismay is getting tired, and with half of her little friends needing naps themselves, well, she wants to go home, so I’m going to go and settle her down, okay?”

“Hold on, I’ll come with…”

“No, this is your birthday party, stay for a while.” Harry insisted.

“We won’t be much longer, Caru.” Nasta said before Max could answer. “Go and put our little girl to bed for a nap.”

Harry nodded and though he looked a little unsurely between the two of them, he left, going back to where Ismay was saying goodbye to everyone.

“Why did you want us to stay? He shouldn’t be alone!” Max hissed to Nasta.

“Because he wants to be alone for a few minutes, Max. Ismay could have gone upstairs to sleep in a guest bedroom if she were really that tired, or she could have slept on someone’s shoulder, as she has done before. She doesn’t have to go home to take a nap. Harry needs a moment by himself to sort everything out. Then we can go home and comfort him.” Nasta said firmly. “But let him sort it out for himself first.”

Max exhaled loudly and he dropped his head to Nasta’s shoulder.
“Everything is so fucked up.”

Nasta just hummed in answer to that. “We’ll sort it.” He said soothingly.

“He has another meeting tomorrow too, he’s not going to be in any mood for that.”

“Now you’re just borrowing trouble, Cariad.” Nasta chastised him. “He’s going to be alright. He’s a lot stronger than anyone gives him credit for. He’s already lived through what happened to him, the memory of it isn’t going to make him crumble. He might have some new nightmares, we can expect that, but it isn’t going to ruin him. It is not going to make him retreat into himself again.”

“I just worry so much for him, Nasta.”

“You and me both, Max.” Nasta insisted. “But he’s going to get through this, and soon we will be welcoming a third dominant into our family, and we might be welcoming another child too. He’s making his own life now, just back off a little and allow him to live it.”

Max sighed, but he nodded. “How long before we can go home ourselves? I already miss him.”

Nasta chuckled. “Very soon. Have some more cake to cheer yourself up and then we can go and make sure that he’s alright, but I bet he’s got himself a cup of tea, maybe some chocolate too from the stash that you both have that you think I don’t know about, and he’s sat on the settee waiting for us.”

“How do you know about the stash?”

“What, you think I don’t hear you whispering and laughing together about it? Or see the wrappers in the bin? I’m a very observant person, Max, you should have known better.”

Max chuckled then. “I really should have. But you know Harry has a real sweet tooth after what he went through, those people controlled what he ate so much that he found it really difficult to stop himself from bingeing on junk when he was first rescued. He’s gotten better with it now, especially with me taking over the cooking, but every now and then he just wants chocolate, or cake, or a doughnut.”
“I understand, Max. I’m not a tyrant. I’m not going to stop Harry and Ismay from baking cakes together, I won’t shout or go on a rampage because either of you have had a bar of chocolate. It’s taking it to excess that I have a problem with, I don’t mind anything in moderation, you should know this after all the years you’ve known me.”

“I know.” Max said, moving his head to nuzzle at Nasta’s neck before he pulled his older mate into a kiss. “Can we go home now?” He asked.

Nasta snorted softly in amusement. “Go and say thank you to your family for hosting us and then we can grab your gifts and go.”

Max nodded and he left to do just that. Nasta sighed heavily and looked skyward. He prepared himself to comfort Harry when they got back home. Having all of this aired in public probably wasn’t Harry’s choice, and he wouldn’t be happy with everyone knowing as he couldn’t stand the pity aimed at him, but truly, finding out that Harry had suffered through abuse before the Perrots had paid for him to be abducted, it was a heinous blow. Harry had already suffered as a child, and then he had suffered even more, through all manner of abuses, and Max was right, it just wasn’t fair and if anyone did not deserve such treatment, it was Harry.

Nasta’s fist clenched momentarily, before he regained control. He really wasn’t looking forward to the talks Harry would need to have with Richard, but he resolved himself to being a calming, comforting rock for Harry to latch onto if he needed it. They would have to find the time for that to go ahead quickly, between the meetings they needed to hold as well for Harry’s third mate. They had a lot to do and they were on a time limit to get it done. This was not going to be an easy couple of months.

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Harry felt like he was being pulled in too many directions at once. He’d talked with Richard about some of the things that the Dursleys had done to him. Max had been stiff and silent throughout, but Nasta had comforted him and held his hand, being just as silent, but giving him support as well.

After that he’d needed to go to see Healer Vasey, who praised his courage to see through court proceedings to a conviction, but all of the Elders knew of his earlier abuse, the Dracken Healers knew of it now, and so did the guards and the task force…Drackens liked to gossip as much as humans did after all. Harry shouldn’t have been surprised though, nothing in his life had ever been private.

Worse yet was that he was on a time limit to find his third mate and he was so busy with everything else that he just didn’t want to think about it. He felt completely miserable, and he hadn’t once thought that his mated life would take him back to feeling such misery. He felt like he was at rock bottom again, and he didn’t like it.
“You haven’t been listening to me, have you?”

Harry blinked out of his thoughts to look at the unmated dominant opposite him. He looked angry. Harry had forgotten his name. It might have been Tate, or Thomas…had it even started with a T?

“No, I haven’t.” Harry admitted easily. He was bored with doing this now. He didn’t want to be here.

“Do you want to discount Kieran, Harry?” Elder Midate asked him.

“Who?” Harry asked stupidly.

“Me.” The dominant growled.

“Oh…yes, you can go.” Harry said. “I thought his name was Tate or something.” He whispered to Max and Nasta.

“You’re very distracted, love.” Max fretted.

Harry sighed and run a hand through his hair. He hadn’t even been bothered to comb it that morning, he wasn’t really feeling very well and he had an idea as to why and it was only going to add to his hectic schedule.

“I think I’m pregnant.” He said.

“Why do you think that?” Nasta asked him evenly, but his eyes were sparkling with joy. It made Harry feel marginally better.

“I don’t really feel very well.” He admitted. “All my other pregnancies started like this too. Just a general feeling of sickness and of not feeling well, then the morning sickness starts.”
“Do you want to see a Healer to confirm if you’re right, sweet one?” Elder Trintus asked him.

Harry nodded. “After a few more of these lousy dominants though, I wanted to check another couple off before I finish for today, but truly, if things carry on like this, it will be Cyrano.”

“It’s completely up to you.” Elder Midate said soothingly.

Harry sucked in a breath and curled up more on Max, who held him more tightly, more securely, as if suddenly the maybe baby needed to be protected at all costs. It made Harry smile. Jefferus wouldn’t have done that unless a boy had been confirmed, and even then he still smacked Harry about.

He cut those thoughts off abruptly, Max and Nasta were nothing like him. They never had been and they never would be.

The next two interviews carried on the same way, but the third was different, Harry recognised those pastel wings the moment the dominant walked through the door and Harry sat up straight.

“It’s you!” He said happily.

The dominant looked taken aback, but he smiled amusedly.

“Have Max and Nasta been talking about me?” He asked.

“Oh, no. I saw your wings a few weeks ago. I recognised them.”

The dominant grimaced. “They are rather noticeable in a room full of bright, normal colours. I’m Sixten Tage Axelson. I’m thirty-six.”

“Do you already know Max and Nasta?” Harry asked curiously.

“I wouldn’t want that to influence your decision.” Sixten said kindly.

Harry nodded his understanding. If he did choose Sixten as a mate, he wanted him to know that it was on his own merit, because Harry had wanted him, not because him knowing Max and Nasta
beforehand had influenced his decision. He could more than understand that.

“So, what do you do?” Harry asked.

Sixten gave a grin to Nasta. “I’m a Dragon Handler.” He said.

Harry looked between the two. “So that’s how you know one another. Do you work on the same Reserve?”

“No, unfortunately not. I work on the Arvidsjaur Reserve, in Sweden.” He said.

“Is it the same as Nasta’s Reserve? He has mostly Welsh Greens, so do you mostly have Swedish Short-Snouts?”

“That’s right.” Sixten said. “We have some of the other breeds there, mostly Ukrainian Ironbellies, but a lot of the more exotic dragons, the Peruvian Vipertooth, the Chinese Fireballs, they really don’t do so well in the Swedish climate. The temperatures drop much too low for them and they don’t like the snow or ice. Do you like dragons, then?”

Harry smiled at the floor. “I watched a dragon hatch when I was eleven.”

“You never told me that.” Nasta said. “I work on a reserve, I have since I was eighteen, and I’ve never seen a dragon hatching, Harry. Do you know how rare it is? How did you see it?”

“You won’t like the story, as it involves illegal dragon egg trading, but I know that she was a Norwegian Ridgeback. She ended up on the Romanian Reserve. My ex-best friend Ron, his brother Charlie works there and he came to collect her.”

“Trading in dragon eggs is seriously illegal, Harry.”

“Seeing as it was Voldemort possessing a man, I think trading in dragon eggs is one of the tamer things that he did. I just got to watch Norberta hatch.”
“Norberta?” Max laughed.

“Well, it was originally thought of as a he, so his name was Norbert, but Charlie told us that Norbert was actually a Norberta.”

“What did she look like?” Sixten asked eagerly. “Just after she’d hatched?”

Harry thought back to when he was eleven, it seemed so much longer ago because of what he’d gone through, but truly it was ten years ago now.

“Well, she wasn’t the most beautiful of creatures. I mean, you think of a cuddly puppy or kitten and how cute they are, but she just wasn’t. Honestly she looked like a wet, crumpled black umbrella.”

Max laughed loudly.

“Surely she was beautiful once she was cleaned up?” Sixten pleaded.

Harry shook his head. “She had bulging orange eyes, spiny wings and really large nostrils. She was so ill proportioned with her skinny body and massive snout and she was just so bony! She tried to bite the moment she was out of the egg.”

“Was she sparking after she hatched?” Nasta asked him interestedly.

Harry remembered Hagrid putting out his beard and he nodded. “Yeah, she wasn’t breathing fire, but she was hiccupping up sparks.”

Harry looked on as both Nasta and Sixten got gooey eyed, he laughed as it reminded him of Hagrid.

“Crazy, the both of them.” Max snorted.

“It’s cute.” Harry said. “Dragons need someone to care for them and it’s cute that they both care so much, though, Nas, you’d better have that look on your face when I hand you our newborn baby.” He threatened.
“Oh, are you pregnant?” Sixten asked. “Dipstick over here doesn’t tell me anything anymore.” He said, giving Nasta’s shoe a kick. “You’d think I no longer existed. Why haven’t you sent me an owl?”

“I’ve been busy!” Nasta defended. “You only ever gossip anyway.”

“I like gossiping to you!” Sixten insisted.

“You’re like a bunch of school kids.” Max laughed. “Harry might be pregnant, he feels that he is, don’t you, love? But it hasn’t been confirmed.”

Harry nodded and settled himself back on Max.

“You have a daughter too, how is she doing with dumb and dumber by here?” Sixten grinned.

“Who are you calling dumb?” Max demanded.

“Which one am I?” Nasta asked with a grin.

“You’re obviously dumb, he’s dumber.” Sixten grinned jabbing a finger at Max.

“You’re a little shit and I will flatten you like an insect.” Max threatened.

“Ismay is doing wonderful with them.” Harry cut in, pretending that three grown men weren’t acting like school yard friends, though it made him smile to see them acting this way, especially serious Nasta. “She’s coming on so well, Max even helped her make potions the other day with a children’s kit, even though it was a little old for her, she’ll be four now in November.”

“Ismay is such a nice name, how did you come up with it?” Sixten asked.

Harry shrugged. “She just looked like an Ismay Potter to me.” He said with a smile.
“Funny how kids can just look like a name, especially when they’re born. I remember my sister’s kid, I went to the hospital to see him the day after, hands down the ugliest little walrus I’ve ever seen.”

Harry was so surprised that he couldn’t help laughing.

“No, honestly, he took after his Father and he was completely round with this little squashed up, red face. I laughed when my Father said to my sister that she should name him Kare. It means tremendous and curvy.” Sixten grinned.

Harry laughed helplessly.

“My sister didn’t agree, she and her husband named him Einar, which means one who fights alone… my Father and I laughed about that too, joking that he was the size of a whole army and wouldn’t need anyone to fight with him.”

“Ismay means loved.” Harry said. “I loved her so much and I wanted to keep her, and shelter her, even though at times I couldn’t. I would say to her every day that I loved her, that my love was the only thing that I could give her, because it was all that I had. I spoil her now of course, and so do her two new Daddies, though they pretend that they don’t.”

Max wrapped an arm around him. “Of course we love her, so much. She’s so easy to love, Harry.”

“Her own Father never…”

“He was a vile shit and he didn’t deserve to have her.” Max cut in. “The only thing he deserved was death, and he got it in the end. Not soon enough, but he’s dead and Ismay can move on with me and Nasta as role models, and she can forget that her biological Father ever existed. We will wipe out what he and that poisonous family did to her, and to you too, and she will grow up so happy and so loved and we will love her every day, as you have, and one day in the future, she will not remember any of them.”

Harry nodded and buried himself into Max. He felt Nasta’s hand touch his back and he breathed in the scent of his mates, calming himself down.
“I hate what he’s done to me.” He said softly.

“You’re getting better day by day.” Nasta told him. “Ismay isn’t the only one who will not think of what happened in the future, you will too.”

“I can never forget.”

“No, you can’t, but you can have days where you don’t think about it. Where he doesn’t even cross your mind. You will move on with us, Harry. He will not ruin your future.”

That made Harry smile and he rubbed his cheek against Max’s shirt.

“It has almost been half an hour, Harry. Do you want to leave things here?” Elder Midate asked him.

Harry nodded. “Yes, please.” He said softly. “I just really want to go home and see Ismay.”

“I’ll get out of your hair,” Sixten said. “But I’ll be seeing you soon, okay? Even if you don’t pick me as a mate, I’ll be coming over to annoy dumb and dumber here.”

That made Harry smile, even though he didn’t really want to, and that made him feel better. Max was always able to make him smile when he didn’t want to as well, it was why Harry loved him so much.

“I’ll send you an owl soon, Sixten.”

“Make sure that you do. I’m dying for some juicy gossip, our Reserve is being boring at the moment! I’m thirsting for some decent gossip.”

Nasta chuckled. “Alright, I’ll write to you tonight.”

“Yes! I’ll see you next month too for the convention, okay?”
Nasta nodded, but Harry perked up. Sixten left happily, as Harry turned to Nasta.

“What convention?” He asked.

“Remember that work thing I mentioned I have to go on next month?”

“Ah!” Harry said and he nodded. “Some of the dragon breeding exchanges between Reserves are being updated, you said?”

“That’s right, Caru.” Nasta said, leaning over and giving him a kiss.

“Do you want to see a Healer today?” Elder Midate asked him.

Harry shook his head. “I just really want to go home now.”

“Come on then. I’ll carry you.” Max said, standing and picking Harry up. It made Harry laugh as he snuggled in and looped his arms around Max’s neck.

“Do you want some tea when we get in?”

Harry shook his head. “I’m not feeling too good. I think I’ll take a nap.”

Max said goodbye quickly and he hurried to the floo after hearing that. If Harry was feeling too unwell for tea, then something really was up with him. He hoped that it was nothing more than a bit of pregnancy sickness, as Harry seemed to believe.

He laid Harry on the settee and got the throw from the back of it to cover Harry over.

“Are you pampering me again?” Harry murmured.

“Always, love.” Max replied.
“Nas gone to get Ismay?”

“Yep, we’ll keep her occupied while you rest. I could always use a helping hand in the kitchen. Though, do you want an appointment with a Healer later today? Or perhaps tomorrow morning? I don’t like seeing you sick.”

“Maybe tomorrow now, Max.” Harry said. “I don’t want the bother today.”

Max nodded and he kissed Harry’s head.

“Are you going to watch me until I actually fall asleep?” Harry asked.

“Nah, I’m just admiring you and how gorgeous you are. I’m so lucky to have you.”

Harry smiled with his eyes still closed. “I love you.”

“I love you too, now sleep.”

Harry hummed. Max stood and Harry heard him pottering around in the kitchen. He heard the floo sound, he heard Nasta shushing a chattering Ismay and then the both of them were greeting Max in the kitchen.

“Does Mummy need a nap?” He heard Ismay asked.

“Yes, Princess. So you get to come and be my kitchen helper.” Max said. “Would you like that?”

“Yes!” Ismay cheered. “I need my apron. Daddy Nasta, can you help me put it on?”

“Of course, Ismay.” Nasta answered and Harry could almost hear the smile on his face. It made him smile and settle down more. Ismay was perfectly safe with Nasta and Max, but more to the point, she was loved and cared for and she would have a lot of fun with them both…the same couldn’t be said for Nasta, who was going to find assisting in the kitchen torturous. He still wasn’t any better at cooking, though he had been promoted to head knifeman of slicing and dicing. That made Harry grin
to himself. It wasn’t long after those thoughts that he fell asleep, only to be woken up an hour and a half later for dinner, he had really needed the sleep and he felt much better for it.

As his heat period approached, Harry grew more worried and fretful. It had been confirmed that he was pregnant, and it had been announced to the family too, and the Elders and the Healers. Literally everyone knew now that he was expecting and Max and Nasta barely left his side. At least Ismay was excited to be getting a brother or a sister.

He was being watched closely, so very closely, but Harry felt no bad feelings towards his unborn child. For the first time he felt excited to be pregnant. He was a little apprehensive about finding out the gender. He knew that Max and Nasta wouldn’t react like Jefferus had, but he still couldn’t quite get rid of that fear he felt. It helped that Nasta would lay his hand gently over his belly and murmur softly in Welsh, speaking just to the baby. It helped that Max would rub his belly for him when he was feeling a little queasy, trying to settle his belly, joking that the baby had to be his just because it was causing him such trouble.

He had always suffered with morning sickness, and this pregnancy was no different, what was different was having two loving, caring mates who leapt up when he did and joined him in the bathroom as he retched, rubbing his back, holding his messy hair out of his face, soothing and comforting him, encouraging him to breathe, and then cleaning him up afterwards and getting him some ginger tea and maybe some ginger newt biscuits too, if he felt up to eating.

It was so different to how his previous pregnancies had gone, but despite being rather bad with the morning sickness with this pregnancy, it was the best one that Harry had ever experienced, because for the first time he had loving mates to look after him. Real mates who cared about him and the baby, regardless of gender, and for the first time in Harry’s previous experience of pregnancy, he wasn’t black and blue and beaten to a pulp.

But everyone was hovering around him wherever he went. If he went to the Counsel Halls he had the Elders, the Healers and even the guards hovering, just to make sure that he was okay. If he took Ismay to visit Alexander or Myron or Aneirin, they hovered over him. He just really wanted to tell them to back off, that he was fine, he wasn’t going to break just because he was pregnant and his schedule was filling up. His mate meeting was the most important thing at the moment, because his heat period was getting closer and he needed his third mate before it hit him. Then there were his talks with Richard, about the Dursleys, and setting up the court case for that, which Richard was thankfully going to handle, but he was doing alright, he was calm and even happy. He was finally moving on with his life and just getting on with it, as he’d wanted. He just wished that everyone else could see that and stop hovering so much.

“How are you feeling, love?” Max asked him, breaking through Harry’s thoughts.

Harry looked at him and he smiled happily. “I’m feeling okay. I think that bad bout of sickness this morning wiped out everything for the rest of the day. I’m actually hungry.”
“That’s what I like to hear, do you want some soup?” Max asked him.

Harry nodded. “Butternut squash one?” He asked with big, pleading eyes.

“I knew you’d say that. I made some up this morning for you, with my star helper, of course.” Max grinned, though Ismay wasn’t there. She was with Nasta out in the garden, getting a bit of fresh air while Nasta swept the fallen leaves from the oak tree into piles. Could he have used magic and gotten the job done in five seconds? Absolutely. But he was teaching Ismay about chores and about physical exercise too, the latter of which had no magical equivalent. Not to mention he was keeping her busy so that Harry could get some rest and settle his very upset stomach, just as Max had done that morning by encouraging her to come into the kitchen to cook with him.

Max helped Harry up, supporting him out into the kitchen as Harry took small, slow steps. He sat in a chair gratefully and he slumped onto the table top.

“Damn morning sickness.” He complained miserably.

Max set some ginger tea down by his hand and bent all the way down just to kiss Harry’s head. It made Harry smile and he reached out a hand to snag the cup of tea, pulling it towards him and lifting his head just enough to sip at it. It was still a little hot, so he blew on it and then sipped again, praying fervently that it settled his belly, which had started roiling again with the movement of the small walk to the kitchen table.

“Sit still for a moment, let your belly settle and the tea cool a little, and then hopefully you’ll be able to sit up for a little while to eat your soup.”

Harry inclined his head ever so slightly to show that he’d heard, understood and agreed with his mate, without actually nodding, which would make him feel worse. He instead breathed as normally as he could, light and evenly, and then when he felt a little better, he slowly picked up his head and sipped some more tea. It was the perfect temperature, so he took a few larger swallows, watching Max as he heated up the soup on the hob.

“Do you want any bread, love, or just some soup?”

“Bread please.” Harry said. “I am hungry today, just queasy.”
Max nodded and he started preparing everything. A side plate of brown bread was given to Harry, before the bowl of steaming hot soup came over.

“Be careful, it is really hot.” Max cautioned.

“I’m not Ismay.” Harry said. He was actually reminding his mates of that several times a day now. It was as if that now he was pregnant he couldn’t be trusted with hot food, knives or scissors, or even bathing by himself.

“We know that, but we want to take care of you. Our instincts are telling us to take care of you and sometimes we can’t help it.”

He’d heard that excuse before, but he didn’t want an argument right now, so he just nodded and started eating, slowly.

He had cancelled his mate meetings for today, or rather Nasta had for him, after he’d woken up already retching in his sleep. He’d sat up to try and get to the bathroom, only to vomit in the bed, which had woken his mates who had then started to help him, Nasta carrying him to the bathroom and Max stripping the bed and putting on new sheets. He’d been mortified that he had practically thrown up on them both, but they soothed him and calmed him, neither of them cared they insisted stubbornly, they just wanted him to be alright. Jefferus would have beaten him unconscious if he’d dared vomit on him…not that Harry would have ever been in his bed overnight in the first place.

Harry sighed and pushed his soup away from him, his appetite had vanished very suddenly.

“Don’t you like it?” Max fretted. “I’m sure I made it the same as I did yesterday. Maybe I added too much thyme?”

“It’s perfect, Max. Exactly the same as yesterday. I’m…I’m just think too hard about things that I promised myself I wouldn’t.”

“Him?” Max asked.

Harry nodded sadly.

“Are you comparing me and Nasta to him again?”
“There is no comparison.” Harry answered immediately.

“Nah, because we’re real mates to you, Harry. We were chosen by you personally, he wasn’t. He drugged you and forced you to mate to him against your will, how can we possibly ever compare to him? He was nothing and nobody, so you keep repeating that to yourself. We are your mates, he was nothing.”

Harry picked his head up and he puckered his lips. Max smiled at him and bent to kiss him.

“Now, no more thinking, eat your soup, and then I’ll give you a foot massage to make you feel better.”

That made Harry grin and he even managed a small chuckle. Max pushed the bowl back to him and Harry dipped his spoon and he worked on finishing the soup and he steadfastly thought of Max. Of Nasta. They were his mates. Jefferus had been nothing.

October was almost over, a month had passed and Harry was done with his mate meetings, so done with them. He was so frustrated and so uncomfortable that he was a hair’s breadth from demanding every dominant in the building jumped from the roof.

“You know what, I’m done.” He said angrily. “I don’t want to see any more. Bring Cyrano here, please.”

“Harry, sweet one, is this what you really want?” Elder Midate asked.

“Yes. Max, please go and get Ismay. I want to see how they act together. Make sure that you bring her dolls too.”

Max nodded, bending to kiss his cheek and then hurrying out of the room, leaving Nasta to snuggle Harry up in his arms to try and calm him down, releasing his calming pheromones as Harry nuzzled his face into his neck.
“I’m sorry that they’ve all made you so angry.” Nasta said. “Truthfully the last four or five have made me want to dig a hole just to hide myself away in.”

That made Harry smile against Nasta’s neck.

“I’m not doing this anymore.” He said. “I’m choosing, today. It will be either Cyrano or Sixten. There is no one else and I’m not even going to give anyone else the time of day. My heat period is in a week, I can’t afford to wait much longer, I want Ismay to be happy with my choice and settled with her new parent and I want that to happen before my heat period.”

“Do you want Sixten called too?” Elder Kirrian asked him.

Harry shook his head. “I don’t want this turned into some sort of competition. It will be separate meetings, half an hour again, as always, to see how they interact with Ismay. Cyrano is going first purely because I met him and liked him first.”

“You can do this however you want to.” Elder Midate insisted.

Elder Trintus came in escorting Cyrano, who was just as handsome as always, though his pale lavender eyes seemed to be standing out a little more today.

“Harry, it is a pleasure to see you again.”

Harry couldn’t help smiling.

“It’s nice to see you too. Are you alright?”

“Of course. How are you now, I see that you’re pregnant. I hope that is progressing well for you.”

Harry moaned. “No, it’s been awful. I suffer with morning sickness quite badly, so these last few weeks have been hard and miserable.”
“I would hope that your mates were looking after you.”

“They are.” Harry said with a dopey smile aimed at Nasta.

“Where is your other mate, Max? Is he well?” Cyrano asked curiously.

“He has gone to get our daughter.” Nasta answered. “Harry dislikes being away from her for so long, especially now that he is pregnant, and you are trusted enough to having this meeting with her in the room.”

Cyrano nodded. “Very understandable.”

Max walked in without knocking and he had Ismay sat on his arm, three dolls held in his other hand. Ismay was clutching Cecelia.

“…so that we can have Princess high tea again!” Ismay was saying.

“We can do whatever you want for your birthday, Princess.” Max told her.

“Are we having high tea then?” Harry asked.

Ismay turned to look at him. “Mummy!” She screeched and held her arms out to him. Max put her on the settee and she crawled to him and flumped onto him, kissing him happily.

“High tea?” Harry questioned again.

“For my birthday, yes! I loved my Princess high tea last year and now I want it again, Mummy. Can I?”

“Of course, sweetheart.” Harry said. “Maybe you could make all your guests wear princess dresses.” He whispered with a shit eating grin. Both Max and Nasta looked horrified, yet resigned. The Elders just looked horrified.
“Could I?” Ismay asked him, giggling at the image.

“It’s your birthday, sweetie, you can have whatever you want.” Harry promised.

“I want them all in dresses and tiaras!”

“Tiaras too?” Harry asked with a smile.

Ismay nodded her head, her red hair bouncing. She was playing with Cecelia, but she happened to look up, and she caught sight of Cyrano.

“Mummy, who is that?” She whispered, staring at Cyrano warily.

“This is Cyrano. We’re just talking, sweetie.”

“Cy…Cyano.” Ismay tried to imitate.

“Cyrano.” Harry tried again patiently.

“Cyano.” Ismay repeated.

“I don’t mind being Cyano for you, Ismay.” Cyrano said kindly.

Ismay nodded, but she was wary of him and she stayed close to Harry and she was holding onto Max too, Harry noticed.

Nasta came to the rescue, as he usually did, when he struck up a casual conversation with Cyrano. Of course, with the focus off of her, Ismay started playing with Cecelia, Max had a doll too and they were playing together, it made Harry smile to see them. It made him smile to hear Max put on a high, false voice to play with her.

Half an hour passed quite quickly, but Ismay didn’t go near Cyrano. She was happy to speak to him, if he spoke to her, but she stayed sat by Harry, as she played with Max.
Harry said goodbye to Cyrano, but he confessed himself to be a little disappointed. He’d hoped that maybe Ismay and Cyrano would do a little better, he should have known not to expect too much from his daughter, she was always wary around strangers.

They took a ten minute break, while they all had some tea because Ismay had asked for a cup. Then Sixten was brought in and exactly the same thing happened. Ismay immediately clambered onto the settee next to Harry and she held onto Max’s hand for safety.

“Hi, Sixten. This is Ismay. Ismay, this is Sixten. He’s only here to talk.”

“Six ten.” Ismay said, breaking his name down into two words. Max noticed and tried to hide his snort of laughter.

“Hey, little girl. How are you?” Sixten asked, dropping himself into the settee opposite them.

Ismay buried her head in Harry’s shirt, but they all heard the little muffled ‘fine’ come from within.

“A little shy is she?” Sixten teased. “I would never have guessed with some of the stories I’ve heard. How are you all anyway? Harry, has the morning sickness passed yet? I asked my Mum and sister and they both swore by raspberry leaf tea for morning sickness.”

“I’ll have to try it.” Harry said. “I’ve been managing it with ginger tea and biscuits, but sometimes it’s just too bad and nothing helps. So I will definitely try that.”

“What’s raspberry tea?” Ismay asked, peaking out. Of course the merest hint of a tea she hadn’t tried yet would bring her out of her shell.

“If you’d like, sweet girl I’ll bring you and your mummy some to try.” Sixten said.

Ismay nodded. Harry watched as she went back to playing with Cecelia, with Max. He started up a conversation with Sixten, but this time Ismay interrupted the conversation, joining in, and she seemed much happier. It took her just a little longer than ten minutes before she offered one of her dolls to Sixten, inviting him to play with her and Max and Harry breathed deeply, turning to rest himself on Nasta.

“You’ve chosen.” Nasta said softly.
“It seems weird that I’ve chosen three best friends, do you think it was purposeful? Even if it was subconscious?”

“I’m really not sure, Harry. Only you can answer that. Do you feel that you only chose us because we knew one another? Because we’re friends?”

Harry really thought about it. “No.” He said, shaking his head. “Besides, Ismay chose Sixten. Or Sixten chose Ismay by including her more. I don’t know, but they’re getting on better than she and Cyrano did. It was important to me.”

“You know that Sixten and I…well, we were in a sexual relationship too.” Nasta admitted.

Harry craned his head back to look up at Nasta.


Nasta snorted. “No, only Max and Sixten. Sixten and I were friends with benefits for a long time, we know one another very well because of work and it became an intimate relationship rather quickly. Max joined us when you were abducted, he needed friends to help him through and we did use physical comfort to help him.”

“I feel left out.” Harry said with a grin. “You’ll have to give me all that I feel that I’ve missed out on.”

“I think having the three of us in your bed will be very...satisfying.” Nasta purred.

Harry shivered. “Okay, I want to end this meeting now, Nasta isn’t playing fair.”

“Nasta, what are you doing?” Sixten demanded. “Are you messing things up for me?”

Harry laughed. “No, he’s teasing me.”
“Daddy Nasta, are you making fun of Mummy?” Ismay asked.

“No, Princess. Mummy is being silly because he has a baby growing inside him.”

Harry snorted. “Blaming the baby for your actions, shame on you.”

“Sweet one, have you chosen?” Elder Midate asked him.

Harry nodded. “I want Sixten to be my third mate.”

Sixten dropped the doll in his hand. “Really?” He asked softly, as if he couldn’t actually believe it.

Harry nodded.

Sixten shuffled towards him and he reached out to touch Harry’s face. Harry sat himself up, wrapped his arms around Sixten’s neck and gave him a proper kiss.

“Kisses make Daddies.” Ismay said innocently.

Harry had to break apart from Sixten to laugh, though he was touched that Ismay seemed to understand that this meant that Sixten was going to be her ‘third’ Daddy, and that she didn’t seem upset that it was Sixten.

“Would you like Sixten to be your third Daddy?” Harry asked her.

“Don’t give her the choice, love.” Nasta said. “You’ve already chosen, what would you do if she said no now?”

Harry blinked and his heart flipped. His stomach knotted up as he realised his mistake. What would he do if Ismay said no? Nasta was right, he had already chosen. He and Sixten were compatible and they had touched, kissed, they were bonded together and when he went onto his heat period in just a week’s time he would call Sixten to him.
“Does he want to be my Daddy?” Ismay asked insecurely.

“I’d love to be.” Sixten told her happily.

“Then yes! You can be my third Daddy. You’re the last one too, isn’t that right, Mummy?”

“Yes, baby, that’s right.” Harry said, able to breathe now, able to calm himself down. Ismay liked Sixten too, everything was alright and he hadn’t ruined everything.

“It has been a pleasure to help you during your meetings, Harry.” Elder Midate said.

“Thank you for everything.” Harry said, his eyes filling up.

“You’re very welcome, sweet one.” Elder Trintus told him.

“Don’t think you’ll be getting rid of us so easily.” Elder Kirrian said gruffly. “We’ll still be keeping an eye on you, all of you.” He warned.

“I wouldn’t dream of trying to get rid of you.” Harry said seriously. “I care a great deal about all of you, especially after how you’ve helped me and been so patient and kind to me. It’s been over a year now, I couldn’t imagine trying to carry on without any of you in my life.”

“You’re going to make me cry.” Henry declared with not a tear in sight.

Harry laughed, but he had yet to let go of his new mate, Sixten. He was holding his hand and Sixten wasn’t trying to get away. He seemed rather stunned to have been chosen. Harry wondered why, he was a good looking man. He wasn’t as physically imposing as Max, he wasn’t as tall or bulky, he was rather slender, but he looked strong still. He was rather Nordic looking too, with his blond hair and blue eyes, he was very handsome, but Harry cared more for the inside of a person rather than the physical package, after all, Jefferus had been handsome too, when he didn’t have that cruel sneer slashed over his face. After him Harry wouldn’t have cared if none of his mates were handsome, or even slightly good looking, as long as they were nice and kind to him and to Ismay.
“Have we lost you?” Max teased, and Harry blinked as a hand was waved in front of his face.

“Sorry, I was just thinking.” He said.

“Not regretting me already, I hope.” Sixten teased, but there was a little bit of insecurity under those words too.

“Of course not.” Harry said strongly, seriously. He bent forward to kiss Sixten. “I was just thinking. It actually happens a lot.”

“Mummy thinks of things he shouldn’t.” Ismay told them.

Harry smiled sadly. “I do, yes. I’m very sorry. I’ll try not to.”

Sixten snagged him and pulled him from the settee and onto his lap, where he proceeded to snog him.

“Oi! Sixten, little kids present!” Max complained, though he was laughing too.

“I don’t think you count as a kid anymore.” Sixten replied happily, cuddling Harry tight.

“You’re funny.” Ismay told Sixten.

“I’m also a lot of fun.” He told her.

“Daddy Max is lot of fun too.”

“Oh, I already know that.” Sixten replied, with just enough undercurrent of suggestion that Harry felt like blushing a little. Of course it went completely over Ismay’s head.

“We are going to have to work on your suitability around children.” Nasta said seriously.
“Your Daddy Nasta is a lot of fun too.” Sixten said, lowering his voice to suggest a secret, but he was still speaking loudly enough to be heard. “He’s very, very fun. When he wants to be.”

“Alright, enough.” Elder Kirrian broke in. “You kids go home and settle in. Harry, sweetness, we will be around to see how you are after your heat period, okay?”

Harry smiled and he nodded. “I shouldn’t imagine that there would be any problems now. Everything is going to be just fine, I already know it.”

“We’re back to not being able to get rid of us so easily.” Elder Midate said with a smile. “We love you, sweet one. We’ll be around to see you after your heat period.”

Feeling a little choked up, Harry nodded. “Okay.” He managed to get out.

“Right, you boys get him home and you look after him, you hear me?” Elder Kirrian demanded. “You harm a hair on his head, if you so much as upset him, I will have your hides.”

“Understood, Elder.” Max said respectfully, even as he stood up, Ismay sat back on his arm, as he made sure that he had all of her dolls.

Sixten stood easily with Harry in his arms. Very easily. Proving that though he was slim and slender, he really was strong. Harry was a little embarrassed to be honest. He had chosen Sixten, but he was still new, but Sixten was acting more like they had been lovers for years. He was bold and not in the slightest bit apprehensive as he carried Harry through the Counsel Halls.

They all flooed home and Ismay went right to her doll house in the corner, leaving Sixten to sit down, keeping Harry in his lap.

“Are you going to hog him now?” Max demanded playfully.

“You’ve had this gorgeous man for several months now, let me have a cuddle, Max!” Sixten huffed.

“I’ll get us some tea then. Harry are you alright after the floo trip? Do you want honey or ginger?”
“Ginger please.” Harry replied a little weakly.

“I’ll go home in a bit to get some of that raspberry leaf tea my Mum has laying around.” Sixten said.

“Are you alright living here for the time being?” Harry asked softly.

“Of course, you’re my mate, my *pojkvän*, I want to be here with you. I want to protect you.”

“You’re not going to start saying words to me that I don’t understand are you? Nasta does it too. I have a little book where I’ve written them all down so I know what he’s saying. It’s my Nasictionary.”

Max laughed loudly from the kitchen, Nasta looked at him as if he was trying to figure out if he was joking or not, and Sixten was grinning down at him.

Harry got another kiss. “It means lover.” Sixten told him. “Or boyfriend, but I prefer lover. I might also call you *älskling* it means the same thing.”

“You might need to have your own page in the Nasictionary.” Harry sighed.

“Is that an actual thing?” Nasta asked him, unable to determine on his own if it was real or a joke.

Harry shot him a teasing grin. “You slip into so many different languages, Nasta. Sometimes I don’t even think that you realise that you’re doing it. You will sit there and speak in English to us, then you’ll start muttering in Taiwanese or something.”

“I don’t know Taiwanese.” Nasta pointed out.

“Well I only know English, so I’ll have to take your word for that.” Harry laughed. Sixten laughed with him. “You’re very touchy-feely, Sixten.”
“I can stop if you like, but you’re new and I like touching.” Sixten told him. “Is it making you uncomfortable?”

“A little.” Harry admitted truthfully. “I knew Max for a long time before he could touch me, even with Nasta it was several months because I wasn’t ready to mate. I only met you for the first time a week ago.”

Sixten sighed and he shifted himself, putting Harry down on the settee next to him, but he didn’t move away, which Harry was thankful for. He didn’t want to upset his new mate just an hour after choosing him.

“I probably am too much of a sex addict. Then Nasta is too, and we were in that friends with benefits kind of relationship and at one point we were practically living together and having sex six times a day. Do you remember that, Nassa? We were only young back then, we were what? Mid-twenties, you might have been touching thirty. Damn that seems like a long time ago now. Max keeps telling me to get help.”

“That’s not for your bedroom activities.” Max said as he came in with a tea tray. “Issy, would you like a cup of tea?”

Ismay looked up from her doll house and blinked. It took her a moment to process the question and then she nodded.

“Yes, please, Daddy Max.” She answered, abandoning the dolls and coming to sit in her little armchair. “Can I watch cartoons, please?”

Harry was already grappling with the remote before Max even agreed, because Max always agreed to such things with Ismay.

The conversation was kept quiet, so that Ismay could watch the cartoons, and light, so that she didn’t overhear anything she wasn’t supposed to. It took a while, but Harry eventually settled and with Max, Sixten and Nasta laughing and teasing one another like old friends, well, it just made him relax and smile as he sat between Sixten and Max, just listening to them. Sixten was a good fit, and now he had all the mates that he needed and he would never have to have another mate meeting in his life. This was it for him, he had his own little family, his own life ready to be lived. He was no longer under the thumb of anyone, he and Ismay were safe and happy and he had a new baby on the way. His hand automatically fell to his little bump and he rubbed soothingly. He was about to reach his third month of pregnancy, then his nightmares of all his terminated daughters would come back, it had already started, but he was hoping that his mates would help him through this. They were not going to be angry if he had a baby girl, or a boy for that matter, because they were normal people. That didn’t stop Harry from being nervous though, and it didn’t stop him from being scared.
Harry soaked in the bath happily. Very happily. He hadn’t felt comfortable enough with Sixten yet to immediately jump into bed with him, but it was the night before his heat period was expected to hit him, and he did want to have sex with Sixten before his heat period. He didn’t know why it was so important to him to do so, but it was. He wanted to have sex with Sixten tonight, which was why he was stalling in the bath.

He was trying to figure out what the issue was, as Healer Vasey had taught him, but he couldn’t find an obvious reason as to why he was so nervous. Perhaps this was the normal butterflies that people got when they did something new with someone new? There had to be some sort of anticipation, a bit of nervousness, related to such things, surely? He’d had butterflies when he had taken Cho to Hogsmeade, though they had swiftly vanished when she had taken him to Madam Puddifoot’s tea shop when he was fifteen, just the thought of that teashop still gave him shivers of revulsion. He’d also had butterflies before a Quidditch game. But for the life of him he couldn’t remember if they’d ever been this strong.

It had to be because Sixten was new. It was just anticipating what was going to happen, how his new mate might react, what he might do. He had known Max for almost a whole year before their relationship had included sex. With Nasta it had been at least several months. But Sixten was going to be a mere week. That had to be why he was fussing and fretting so much.

A knock on the bathroom door disturbed him. “Have you drowned in there?” Max asked gently.

“If I had I wouldn’t be able to hear you.” Harry chuckled.

“Ah, but you’re answering, so you couldn’t have drowned anyway.” Max pointed out teasingly, before he turned serious. “Are you okay? Have you been sick?”

“No, I’m just pampering.” Harry insisted. “You can come in though, the door is open.”

The door opened and Max slipped in and closed it again.

“When did you get comfortable enough to stop locking the door?” He asked happily, looking proud.

Harry looked down and shrugged one skinny shoulder. “I think shortly after you moved in. I’ve stopped constantly checking the front and back doors too and I no longer need a locked door to make me feel safe in my own home. It was always a flimsy security measure anyway. He could have
kicked the doors down easily…or just used his wand to unlock them, but I felt a keen sense of devastation when he ordered me to never lock another door. It was the only time I felt like I could have a moment to breathe and in the end he even took that away from me."

“I’m proud that you’ve come to trust us so much that you don’t feel the need to lock the door anymore.” Max said quietly, going onto his knees by the side of the bath.

Harry smiled at that and looked up into Max’s bright blue eyes. “I trust all of you.” He said seriously.

Max bent down to kiss Harry’s mouth and he sighed. “Your trust means the world to me.” He admitted.

“Not my love?” Harry teased.

“I treasure that too, but…I had your love months before I had your trust. The day that you finally said that you trusted me, when I believed that you actually meant it and weren’t just saying the words, it is one of the happiest memories I have, because you can love someone easily and be loved in return just as easily, but if they don’t trust you, that love means nothing. I value your trust in me and I swear to never break it, Harry.”

Harry smiled at hearing Max’s thoughts and he reached out to hug his mate, only to realise that he was dripping wet and he aborted the movement. Max however saw it and he reached out to crash Harry in a hug.

“I’m getting into my pyjamas now anyway. I’d rather hug you and get a bit wet.” Max grinned.

“Don’t get into your pyjamas just yet, I have plans for you tonight.”

Max pulled back to look at him. “Are you sure?”

“My heat period could hit me as early as tonight, I want to fully remember my first time with Sixten, not get bits and pieces as a fragmented memory later on.”

Max nodded. “In that case, are you done in here or do you want to fully turn into a shrivelled
prune?’

Harry looked at his fingers and he laughed. “I am a little pruney.” He admitted.

“A little pruney? Harry you’ve been in here for two hours. Nasta is about to lay an egg.”

“A dragon egg?” Harry giggled.

“Well, he is close to a couple of dragons in particular.”

Harry’s eyes widened and then he laughed hard.

“Are you two okay?” Nasta’s voice asked from the other side of the bathroom door.

“Yes.” Max answered.

“I think he heard you.” Harry giggled.

“ Heard what?” Nasta asked.

“Nothing!” Harry called out teasingly.

“You two are terrible together.” Nasta said and they heard him walking back down the hall to the bedroom.

Harry laughed again, but he stood from the bath and allowed Max to help him out. A simple wave of Harry’s wand and he was nice and dry.

“You’re not going to get dressed, are you?” Max asked with a grin.
“Nope.” Harry replied with an evil grin of his own.

Max lightly tapped Harry’s bum with an open hand. “Go get ‘em then.”

Harry laughed, but he straightened his back, threw back his shoulders and he opened the bathroom door and walked to the bedroom. The door was open, but inside, on the bed, he saw Nasta and Sixten locked around one another, snogging. Sixten was actually keening slightly, and when they broke apart for air, he was panting heavily.

Harry stood there, watching them for what felt like hours, before he felt Max move up behind him. One huge arm wrapped around his chest and they both stood and watched for a while.

“You’re killing me here.” Sixten whined as they parted from their kiss once again to get air, the both of them were panting heavily this time.

“Everything will work out, Sixten.” Nasta soothed. “Harry will be ready when he decides. It’s not fair to push him.”

“I know, but damn I don’t think I’ve had a dry spell this long since I was fourteen.” He laughed.

“Luckily it’s not going to last much longer then.” Harry said from the doorway.

Both Nasta and Sixten snapped their heads to look at him, they both wore guilty expressions and all but sprang apart from one another.

“Don’t do that, I was enjoying the show.” Harry complained.

“Some submissives don’t like the thought of their dominants being with one another.” Sixten said gently.

Harry snorted. “I’m not one of them. If any of you want sex with another, as long as you both agree, I’m fine with it. Just…if I am here, ask me if I want to watch first.” He laughed. “You looked good together, I couldn’t tear my eyes away.”
He stepped forward, completely naked and now fully erect too, and he watched his two mates on the bed as he moved towards them, watching as their eyes widened, as their gazes didn’t shift from him, and it actually made him feel powerful. He liked that they enjoyed him and his body, he wanted their attention and their touch. It was his choice here, and he wanted it.

“Are you sure you’re ready, Harry?” Sixten asked him almost breathlessly.

“I’ve already asked and confirmed that.” Max said, coming up behind Harry and wrapping him back up in his arms. His hands wandered and caressed and Harry arched his back, showing off a little, but he didn’t care.

A hand reached out to touch his belly and Harry looked to see Sixten gazing at the bump happily. It wasn’t even his baby, he had no chance of being the Father, yet he still looked at his bump in amazed pride, it made Harry feel slightly teary.

“Nas.” He said, but the name came out choked and garbled. He cleared his throat. “Nas, why don’t you entertain Max for me.”

Nasta grinned and his eyes gleamed. “Oh, Caru, it would be my pleasure.”

“Not if I pin you first.” Max play growled and he leapt onto the bed and he and Nasta started up a faux wrestling match, kissing and touching still, but in the end Nasta won. Harry suspected that Max had let him win…Nasta’s tongue was devilish after all, and if Max got that tongue just by forfeiting a little play match, it was a sacrifice worth taking.

Harry watched them for a little bit, but he soon shivered with pleasure, getting too worked up, and he turned his burning gaze to Sixten, who had been watching Max and Nasta together, but also him too.

“So, how are you as a lover, I wonder?” Harry purred. “I’ve heard tales of you bottoming to Max, and most definitely to Nasta. Who wouldn’t submit themselves to that tongue? To those hips? But how are you at topping naughty little submissives?”

“I can’t say I’ve ever topped any naughty little submissives, but Nasta has never complained, and neither did Max.” Sixten purred right back, his hands coming to touch Harry’s skin, touching every inch of him and Harry relaxed and enjoyed the touch.
“Nasta says you don’t use condoms, but you must use lube.” Sixten said.

Harry nodded and he moved to the bedside table, hearing Sixten moan as Harry presented everything he had to his mate. He pulled out two bottles, both nearly new. The one had been a spare opened by accident, but it came in handy now as Harry handed it to Nasta and handed the other to Sixten with a grin.

“Why don’t you show me everything you have?” He teased.

“Get yourself comfortable, älskling.” Sixten told him.

Harry did just that, resting against the pillows and wriggling to make himself comfortable.

“I don’t like propping my hips, is that okay?” He asked.

“Of course.” Sixten agreed. “Whatever is more comfortable for you, especially now that you have a little one growing inside you, your comfort is priority.”

Harry smiled at that and wriggled a little more before he spread his legs open in invitation. At first, Sixten just looked at him. Harry could see his eyes move, tracking every inch, and just when Harry was getting a little impatient, a little self-conscious about being so uncovered and vulnerable, Sixten’s fingers touched his skin, then his whole hands, and Harry relaxed back and allowed himself to just feel the touches.

Of course he turned his head to watch Nasta and Max too. They were kissing so passionately that Harry’s cock twitched and he had the insane urge to join them.

“They look amazing together don’t they? I sat and watched them too, the first time Max came to our bed.” Sixten breathed into his ear. “At least for a little while. Max is more physically imposing, his body is a work of art, but Nasta…you can’t escape him. He winds around you, he holds you tight and close, and then he’ll put his tongue to use, and it completely undoes you. You forget any objection you had to being on the bottom, you forget any plans you made to turn the tables onto him. I once forgot where I was, he made me a babbling mess and I loved every moment of it.”

“Don’t forget the time you put through two of Nasta’s walls.” Max reminded, his voice gruff.
“Oh, now that was a night that I barely remember!” Sixten said happily, even as his hands played with Harry’s skin. “I think he gave me a concussion. He’d touched every inch of me, kissed and licked and nibbled and was just a complete, massive tease. I was wild with pleasure, and I kicked a hole in his wall with my foot and put my head through another. Then Nasta lived in a shoebox before he came here.”

“I lived in a flat.” Nasta argued.

“It was a shoebox.” Sixten whispered to Harry. “Max couldn’t fit in it.”

“Will you all stop talking?!” Max demanded. “I’m in need of attention here, stop waffling on about nothing!”

Harry laughed, Sixten chuckled, but Nasta went right back to teasing.

“For that little outburst, you can wait until Harry has had his orgasm before you get yours.” Nasta told Max.

Max whined wordlessly, but Sixten chuckled again, a lot darker this time, and he turned back to Harry. His hands, which hadn’t stopped moving, pressed more firmly, started to tease more and he started to search for sensitive patches.

Harry squirmed when Sixten run his hands over his hips and up his sides.

“Ticklish?”

“A little.” Harry said, smiling up at the man above him.

“My sides aren’t ticklish at all.” Sixten told him. “But my neck and the soles of my feet…I can’t even stand to have anyone touch them.”

“Not even like…” Harry sat up and he pressed the lightest of kisses to Sixten’s neck, and he watched as those blue eyes closed and Sixten shuddered happily. “…like that.” Harry finished.
“No, that’s fine.” Sixten said, but he sounded rather strangled.

Harry wrapped his arms around Sixten’s shoulders and he attached his mouth to his neck, kissing gently, laying dozens of little butterfly kisses all over his neck, but doing so slowly, letting his lips linger.

Sixten pulled him forward, moving back to sit down himself and Harry suddenly found himself sitting in Sixten’s lap.

“You’re wearing too many clothes.” Harry told Sixten.

“Hmm…I don’t want to let you go to remove them.”

“What should we do then?” Harry asked, his hand already slipping down to Sixten’s pyjama bottoms, pushing them down far enough to free his cock from inside. Sixten never wore underwear to bed and Harry was sure he only wore pyjama bottoms because of him…as he was wearing Nasta’s pyjamas. He had none of his own.

“I think you have everything already figured out.” Sixten murmured, hovering his mouth near Harry’s.

Harry kissed him, hard, and he rocked his hips slightly, grinding himself against Sixten, who gasped and swore.

His hands fell to Harry’s arse and helped him to rock faster. Harry gasped himself and he clung happily to Sixten’s shoulders, moving himself desperately.

Harry’s back hit the mattress as Sixten moved forward to lay him back down and he watched through slitted eyes as Sixten fumbled the bottle of lube. It was strange how all of his nervousness had vanished now that he was actually doing something, then he had always been a man of action. If he had to sit and wait for something, the butterflies crept up on him, but if he was moving, doing something, then he was fine.

“Hurry up, Sixten.” Harry complained. “The lid just pops off.”

“Damn thing.” Sixten cursed as he finally managed to get the top off. He squeezed a good glob onto his fingers and he rubbed them together.
Harry wriggled restlessly as Sixten prepared his fingers. He was watching Sixten’s every move, though a sharp noise from beside him had him momentarily distracted as he turned to look at what had caused it. Nasta was rolling, his stomach muscles clenching and his thighs bulging as he thrusted into Max.

A finger pressing into him had Harry refocusing back on Sixten.

“There you are, with your attention back on me.” Sixten teased.

“Sorry, but they are hot together.”

“Blisteringly hot, but so are you.” Sixten purred.

That unexpectedly made Harry feel much better, he hadn’t even realised that he was feeling a little insecure still, but he should have expected it, Sixten was new…really new to him. It felt good to know that Sixten liked him and found him attractive.

Sixten pressed his finger into Harry’s body further and Harry forced himself to relax and enjoy himself. He wanted to just feel the touches, experience it, and Sixten did not disappoint as he started playing with him, using different strokes and touches to see what Harry liked, experimenting and watching his reactions.

“Are you okay? Are you comfortable, you know, with baby?” Sixten asked him.

Harry flickered his eyes open and looked up at his new mate.

“Baby isn’t causing any problems.” He murmured softly. “I wouldn’t imagine it would cause any problems until I get a little further along. Now shut up and get on with it.”

That made Sixten laugh. He had a nice laugh, Harry liked it. Sixten removed his fingers and grabbed the lube again.

“At least it’s already open.” Harry joked.

“You’re cheeky.” Sixten told him, grinning down at him. “Those lids are hard to get off.”
“I’m not hard to get off, but still you’re struggling.” Harry chuckled.

“Damn, Max told me you were good at roasting people, but I never expected that he’d underestimated your abilities so much.”

Sixten bent over him and kissed him. Harry wrapped his arms around his neck and clung to him, raising his legs and wrapping them around Sixten’s back too, trying to urge him on.

Sixten, as impatient as Harry, grabbed hold of himself and shifted until he could press into his submissive mate. He made sure to go slowly, giving Harry plenty of time to say anything if he had changed his mind, but Harry’s legs clenched hard, pulling Sixten in tighter, even as his hips tilted, so that Sixten could slide into him easier. It felt amazing.

Harry let out a long sigh when Sixten had pressed in as far as he could, stilling and remaining inside him to give him a moment to assimilate to the sensations. It didn’t take very long, and when Harry felt that he was ready, he flexed his hips, moving slightly to indicate that he was alright and ready to continue...he was ready for the main event.

Sixten shifted a little to get comfortable, to keep his weight steady over Harry, and then he moved his hips, pulling back and then thrusting forward. He was keenly aware of Max and Nasta watching him, keeping an eye on him, and he was very aware of Harry too. It was impossible to ignore him with that look on his face, with the noises he was making. Harry really was perfect, and he was thankful for the opportunity to be one of Harry’s mates. Especially after he’d always insisted that male submissives were extinct. Of course there were stories of a male submissive meetings all over the world, but Sixten had never had the pleasure of meeting any of them in person, so in his opinion it had all been hearsay and rumours. But Harry was very real, and very male and very much a submissive.

Sixten put all of his weight onto his left arm and he used the freed right hand to wrap around Harry’s cock, stroking and watching as Harry went mad underneath him. It wasn’t enough.

He stilled and Harry’s eyes snapped open to glare at him, it made Sixten want to laugh, but instead he gathered Harry up in his arms, pulled him up and held him tight in his lap, giving Harry all the control, and his little submissive did not disappoint. Harry wrapped his arms tight around his neck and he used the hold to rock and grind on him.

A moment later and Harry shifted position, sinking down further and squeezing tight with his legs still wrapped around his back. Harry moaned loudly and Sixten sucked in a deep breath and let his head fall back. He pushed up into Harry minimally, following Harry’s lead, keeping to his rhythm, which seemed to be fast and desperate as he moved quicker, grinding hard, and the noises Harry started making tightened Sixten’s gut even more.

He wrapped a hand around Harry’s back, pulling him in tighter than tight, pushing up into him harder, faster, Harry grinding against him, rocking on him, and Sixten reached his orgasm just a heartbeat before Harry did.

Hands touched him, easing him down and away from Harry and he heard Harry whine a wordless complaint. It made him smile tiredly.
“You two definitely know how to put on a show.” Max said with a wide grin.

“We’ll have to put them together more often.” Nasta agreed as he settled Harry against the pillows and wiped him off with a wet wipe.

Harry complained wordlessly, swiping at Nasta as he ran the cold wet wipe over him.

“I’m just cleaning you up, Caru.” Nasta told him softly.

“Sleepy.” Harry murmured.

“I know, just give me a minute and I’ll be done and you can sleep off your orgasm in peace.”

Sixten accepted his own wet wipe from Max and cleaned himself up as he watched Nasta swipe the wipe over Harry, to much wordless complaint from their submissive, who, in the end, rolled onto his side away from Nasta, who merely followed.

“I’m clean!” Harry complained in frustration.

Nasta chuckled. “Alright, you’re clean. Come here.”

Harry rolled over onto his back and then onto his other side. He cuddled into a naked Nasta happily and threw a leg possessively over Nasta’s thigh.

Max snorted, but urged Sixten to lay down. He chose the spot right behind Harry, snuggling up to his back and draping his own possessive arm around his waist. Max covered them all with the duvet, after shaking it out, and he went to turn out the light and then slipped into the bed behind Sixten.

Warm and sandwiched between two burning bodies, Sixten finally relaxed and settled. These were his mates. He had finally been intimate with his submissive mate, the heat period that would cement him as Harry’s dominant mate was coming up tomorrow, everything was falling into place. He had a submissive, he had a home…he had a family.
Harry was aware that he was awake before he truly realised that he was awake. He shifted a little and swallowed around a bone dry throat.

“Hey, älskling. Are you waking up?” A soft voice whispered to him, gentle and calm.

He grunted, shifting some more as his brain woke back up. He forced his eyes open and blinked, the room was thankfully very dimly lit. He turned his head and Sixten was laying on the bed next to him, smiling at him. Harry automatically reached out for him.

Sixten smiled wider and allowed Harry to snuggle into his body. In his opinion Harry looked adorable all sleepy and tousled, barely awake in pyjamas that were slightly too big for him.

Harry cuddled into his mate and he woke up in stages, slowly, but that was alright as he took the time that he needed to properly adjust after ten days on a heat period and however many days it had taken after for him to recover. He slowly became aware of his body too and he whined as the soreness crept into his mind, poking at his sleepy brain.

“Shh, it’s okay. I’m here with you and Max and Nasta are downstairs, sorting out everything you need.”

“Sore.” Harry croaked.

“I know, we’ll get you into the bath now, that’ll help your soreness. You can have tea too, that’ll help your throat.”

“Thank you for being here when I wake up.” Harry said hoarsely.

“Oh, älskling, of course I’m here for you.” Sixten said softly. “Do you want the bathroom now?”

Harry nodded and he was grateful that Sixten was considerate enough to carry him there. Once again he was so desperate to relieve his bladder that he didn’t care that Sixten was there with him. Sixten who watched him, unlike Max and Nasta, who had busied themselves with the bath water. Harry found that he didn’t mind. After all he had been through in his life, he wasn’t embarrassed to take a piss in front of someone else. He had done the same in the Healing Halls, after he’d needed to take three doses of the potion to abort his unwanted pregnancy. He had been so weak afterwards that he had needed to be fed on a potion that was placed directly in his stomach via an incredibly complicated spell, and he had needed help going to the bathroom then as well. If he could piss in front of the Healers, he could do so in front of his mates too.
Harry was a little wobbly on his feet, he went to take a step and had to catch himself on the sink. Sixten wrapped a strong arm around his waist a moment later and supported his weight.

“My Mum said you might feel a little off kilter.” Sixten said. “You’re actually two weeks more pregnant than when you were last aware of yourself.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he looked down at himself, his hands moving to cup his belly. It was bigger too. He wobbled his way over to the mirror and he looked at himself critically.

“You look gorgeous like this.” Sixten told him softly, looking at Harry’s reflection.

“I’m sure you’ll get a baby soon.” Harry fretted.

“I already have two.” Sixten said, laying his hand over Harry’s belly.

Harry blinked and his slow mind realised something that had been bugging him. “Where is Ismay? Is she okay?”

“She’s with Anthanaric and Aeesha at the Counsel Halls. She’s fine. You’ve woken up late, like your first heat period. It’s nine at night.”

Harry grunted in frustration and nodded. He didn’t feel up to having his rambunctious daughter underfoot.

“Want Max and Nasta too.” Harry managed to say. “And tea.”

Sixten smiled adoringly at him and swept him up gently. Harry was carried down the stairs and Harry rested on him, not using any muscles or energy.

“There you are, hello, love.” Max greeted, coming over to touch Harry’s head and give his cheek a kiss. “You want some tea?”

Harry nodded sleepily. “Please.”
“Oh, listen to that croak. Okay, some tea to soothe your throat, then do you want a bath?”

Harry nodded mutely, clinging to Sixten tightly as his newest mate sat down and cradled Harry close to his chest. He helped Harry to drink the cup that Nasta placed down on the table. He was enjoying this, the knowledge that he had a mate now, that Harry was his mate, of course it was a total bonus that he also had Nasta as a mate, and Max too. He really was incredibly lucky, and he was willing to do anything for Harry, even cradle him in his arms and hold the mug to his mouth so that he could drink.

“I feel ridiculous like this, but I can’t help it.” Harry said. His voice sounded better at least, smoother.

“I’m enjoying myself, you’re not moving just yet.” Sixten joked, cuddling Harry closer.

“Your bond is new to one another, let yourselves get used to it for a while.” Nasta agreed.

“Yeah, luxuriate in your new bond.” Max couldn’t help teasing them. “Oh, Harry, I popped in on Ismay earlier today. She’s absolutely fine and she was running rings around poor Elder Kirrian. I had tea with her and told her that you were still sleeping and that she would be able to spend one more night with Aeesha before she got to come home. She was fine with that, though she told me she was missing her armchair…and you. In that order.”

That made Harry laugh. “She adores that armchair. Thank you for buying it for her. I would never have thought of it, but she loves it so much. She feels like an adult sitting in it.”

Max waved him off. “It was fine. I mostly got it for you anyway, remember before that chair when she’d sit between us because we weren’t allowed to touch and she’d get you to pass her cup of tea back and forth every other minute?”

Harry nodded. “I remember. That little chair gave her a little bit more independence too. I…I always used to have what I drank, when I drank and even how much I drank controlled, he would hold the cup for me and then take it away whether I’d had enough or not. I would never have wanted to do that to Ismay.”

“I’m so sorry.” Sixten said, rushing to put the mug down on the table. “I didn’t realise I was…”
“Stop.” Harry said quietly, shutting Sixten up immediately. “I don’t often compare the mates I have
now to him. I’ve gone past that. He controlled my every action, Sixten. He wasn’t holding the cup to
help me, he was doing it so that he would have absolute control over me. If I said I was thirsty, he’d
ignore me, if I reached for the glass myself, he’d hit me, and if I was drinking he’d take it away
before I was done. You aren’t doing any of that to me. You’re helping me, because I’m really tired
and a bit wobbly. That’s what a mate is supposed to do. Could I hold the cup myself? Probably, but
you’re willing to help me and I appreciate it. It’s not the same.”

“So it’s alright?” Sixten asked him.

Harry nodded. “I’m at the point in my recovery where I will say if something isn’t alright. I won’t
suffer it in silence.”

Sixten calmed himself and he nodded. He pressed a kiss to Harry’s head and picked up the cup
again, offering it back to Harry, letting him choose if he wanted it or not and he took his cues from
his mate, removing the cup when Harry tipped his head back and offering it to him when he tipped it
forward.

Of course Harry didn’t stay awake for very long, he started drifting in Sixten’s arms not long after
he’d finished his tea. He was vaguely aware of his three mates talking over the top of him, of Sixten
refusing to let him go when Max asked. The next time he stirred it was because his back hit
something soft and cold. He was shushed and a small growl reassured him that he was still safe and
protected as he was covered over by something soft and warm.

He stirred again from his warm cocoon after that only when his three mates joined him in the bed
sometime later. He rolled from his back to his side and he latched onto a burning hot body that
shifted to accommodate him and wrapped a large arm around him to cuddle him in tight. He slept the
entire night through and the next time he was aware of anything, the sun was shining and he could
hear Ismay downstairs laughing. Harry woke up smiling as he heard her. Everything in his life was
now complete and it felt wonderful.

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In late February of the New Year, Harry started nesting in the grounds of their new home. It was a
massive, renovated farmhouse on four storeys that Alexander had tracked down for them. Harry
didn’t think it was a coincidence that it was just a mile down the road from his own home, but Harry
wasn’t going to complain, in fact it made him feel all warm inside to think that Alexander wanted to
keep them all close to him.

Ismay had been upset to say goodbye to the old house, but once she actually saw the bedroom that
was going to be hers, which was the size of their old living room, she had perked right up and she
had ‘helped’ Max paint the walls blue and she had directed everything to where she wanted it.

Harry had had little to do with the move, having been four months pregnant at the time, and it being
right on top of Christmas too, it had been a rather stressful move, but they had wanted to have
Ismay’s fourth birthday in the old house, but Harry had wanted to be in the new house for the New Year.

Not that they had been short on helpers for the move, Alexander had been there with several sons and a dozen grandsons to help them move boxes and set up furniture, the Elders had come over to help, Aneirin had been there, and so had Sigur, Sixten’s rather jovial Father who enjoyed teasing his son mercilessly. Harry liked Sigur, he always asked Harry how he was feeling and laid a big hand on his bump gently and loudly proclaimed that it was about time that he got some grandchildren from his only son. The only thing Harry hadn’t liked about his third father-in-law had been if Harry had so much as lifted a box, even something light, like clothes or a box of cushions, Sigur would appear and take it straight off of him and insist that he sat down and took care of himself and left the ‘heavy lifting’ to others. Harry tried not to take it as an attack on his independence and instead saw it for what it was, a caring individual who wouldn’t stand to see him lift a finger while he was pregnant.

Of course it helped Harry like him even more, and put aside the overly helpful attitude, as Sigur absolutely adored Ismay and liked playing with her. He was always swinging her around and throwing her into the air and catching her, which made her scream in utter delight and beg for another go. He had chosen right, not just for his mates, but with his mates’ families too. They were all wonderful, caring people. It was just a shame that that didn’t really fully extend to their mates, who were sometimes really bitchy to him, or just downright rude and cruel.

Christmas had been spent in the new house, everything had been perfect and in its rightful place thanks to the army of helpers they’d had access to, and they had spoilt Ismay rotten while they all just enjoyed one another. It had been a new house, their first Christmas together as mates, as a family and Harry considered himself to have been very spoilt too.

Harry’s pregnancy had progressed throughout all of this, he had gone for several scans with all three of his mates, and a very excited Ismay who really wanted to be a big sister, and though he didn’t feel as much all-consuming fear over the gender of his child with the three mates he had now, he still had not been brave enough to ask the Healer what he was having and he had almost panicked when it had been offered to him. Nasta had taken charge and calmed him, he had said that it was fine if he wanted them to step out of the room for a minute so that he could know the gender, just him, but Harry hadn’t thought that that was fair, and he had shaken his head in denial…none of them would know the gender. His mates supported his decision not to know and they decorated the new baby nursery, that was connected to their new master suite, in all neutral colours. Harry loved it. He did feel bad that he was sending the message to his mates that he still didn’t trust them, but the loss of his unborn daughters, in the manner that he had lost them too, it had been very traumatic for him and the instinct to protect his child was so great that he just couldn’t bring himself to even know the gender himself. So he was having a little surprise.

Now that he was in his nest too, it was going to be soon as he relaxed himself, completely naked, in the nest that he had built himself from bits and pieces around the house, squirreled away from his mates, his in-laws, anyone and everyone and it was made with everything that had taken his fancy, including a pair of oven gloves that Max was still looking for and was convinced had been lost during the move.

His mates came to visit him daily, he scented them out and growled and hissed at them to warn them away, they didn’t come too close to his nest, but they did throw him fresh, warm meat, which was better than the period of starvation he had endured with his one and only other nesting period.

He spent his days with his wings flared out, catching the weak spring sun, warming himself and just enjoying this period without worry, knowing that his daughter would be taken care of and he was safe, even out here in his nest. He was much, much happier now.
It was the fourth of March, late in the afternoon, when Harry felt a twinge through his belly and into his back. He immediately flurried about his nest, looking for the items that he had put aside, preparing for his birth.

The pains got stronger by the minute, as he breathed through the waves, waiting for the inevitable, unmistakable pain that would tell him instinctually that it was time to make the first incision into himself to free his new baby.

He knew he was getting close when he couldn’t help but grunt and hiss with the pain he was feeling, that was building by the moment now. He didn’t know how much time had passed, he didn’t care as he rocked back and forth on his knees to try and alleviate the pain in anyway, he had to scream with the next wave of pain and three soothing rumbles came back to him immediately.

A tidal wave was unleashed with that one scream, and now he couldn’t stop screaming as the waves of pain came one after another and then the signal he had been waiting for, as the pain rippled out and he just knew that it was time.

His took a careful claw to his own soft skin and he tore through it, quickly, in one smooth, continuous movement. Blood and fluid gushed out of the self-made wound and he carefully curled his claws into his palm and he sought out his baby’s neck and slipped gentle, careful fingers around it to pull the baby out, pressing down on his bump with his other hand to ease the baby out and he screamed through all of it, loudly, uninhibitedly, as the pain was both terrible and unimaginable.

He was panting, almost on the verge of hyperventilating as he checked the baby over, looking at the bloodstained little body and face for any sign of distress, injury or illness, before he ripped out his own placenta and threw it from his nest to keep away predators.

He fumbled with the bottle of blood from all three of his mates and in the end he used his claws to cut off the top of the bottle. The blood was thick, cold, but it would save his life and he drank it down as quickly as he could as his newborn baby started wailing.

He threw the bottle from his nest too and he picked up his child, immediately placing the baby on his chest, ignoring the bloodstains that were smeared onto his skin.

He took one of the premade bottles of milk that he had brought with him and he offered it to his baby, it took him four attempts to get the baby to latch onto the bottle and suckle and then it was all over. He had birthed his new child. He finally, finally, had a new baby to hold and he crooned happily, petting the baby with tears in his eyes. He was so very happy to have another child after so long.

When the baby was done with the milk, he threw the empty bottle from his nest and snuggled down with his baby, laying one of the clean blankets he’d brought with him over his baby, over his own chest, and he just rested. He would take a few days to himself, to recover from the birth, to bond with his new baby, and then he would present him to his mates. Their brand new baby son.

Max was about ready to start climbing the walls. He wanted to go and see Harry, to make sure that he was alright. He tried not to think the worst, that Harry might be dead along with their child. He was so quiet. Oh so quiet, and he didn’t respond to any of their calls.
Nasta calmed both him and Sixten and he reminded them firmly that this was all very normal and routine, that a submissive would not call out with a newborn in their nest because of the threat of predators. He had also ordered the both of them not to go out to the nest, stipulating that Harry needed this peace to bond with the baby and recover from the birth.

Max knew all of this, but still, it was two days post birth now, their baby had been born on the fourth of March, and it was now the sixth.

“How much longer will Mummy be?” Ismay asked, as she despondently prodded at her lunch. She was missing her Mother terribly, he had been in his nest for over two weeks before he’d given birth, it was now two days after the birth and eighteen days was just too much for Ismay, who kept asking to go and see her Mother in his nest.

“It won’t be long, annwyl.” Nasta soothed immediately, giving the top of her head a kiss. “He just wants some time to bond with your new brother or sister. He’s going to be fine and he’s going to give you the biggest cwtch in the world when he comes back to us.”

“Can I have one now?” Ismay asked.

Nasta said nothing, he just swept Ismay up from her chair and into a massive bear hug, holding her tight and close, holding her for several minutes and murmuring to her softly as he stroked her hair.

“Does the new baby mean that you won’t want me anymore?” Ismay asked quietly. Max’s heart broke.

“Of course not.” He said immediately. “Ismay, we love you so much, you’re always going to be our oldest daughter.”

“Where has this come from, Ismay?” Nasta asked, sitting down at the table and sitting her on his thigh. “Why do you think this?”

“He…my real Daddy, he never wanted me and…and when the new baby was getting bigger in Mummy’s tummy, he…he told me he had no use for me anymore. That I would be sent away.”

This was news to Max and he was sure that if Harry had known that Ismay had harboured these thoughts then he would have not only told them about it, but spent the entire of his pregnancy reassuring Ismay that this didn’t mean that she wasn’t wanted. Harry hadn’t known, which meant that Ismay had been dealing with these horrendous thoughts all on her own.
“No one is going to send you away.” Sixten said as he sat at the table. Max followed suit and he took one of Ismay’s tiny hands.

“You are our daughter, Ismay.” He said seriously. “Your ‘real’ Father, wasn’t any sort of Dad to you. You shouldn’t call him your real Father at all. He’s your biological Father, which means you share his genetics, but you’re ours, more than you were ever his. We love you and care for you, and the new baby does not mean that you will be sent away. It doesn’t mean that you’ll get less love or less attention, it just means that our family is growing."

“And that you might have to occasionally share toys.” Nasta added.

“Exactly. You’ll have to share things with the new baby, including us and your Mother too, and I know that will take some getting used to as you’ve had us all to yourself until now, but despite all of that, you are just as loved now as you were before the baby. You will still be cared for, we’ll still play with you and read you stories, you’ll still get food and love and attention, it just means you’re the big sister of the house.”

“And no one, absolutely no one here, wants to send you away.” Sixten declared firmly.

“The baby can have all of my toys if I can stay.”

Max felt his eyes welling up and he had to bite hard on his lip to stop them from falling.

“The baby doesn’t want all of your toys, Ismay.” Nasta said calmly. “In fact that baby won’t even be able to move or play for months yet. We just ask that you’re kind to the baby and share some of your toys later. The baby is going to look up to you as the big sister of the family. The baby will want to play with you and copy you, you’re going to be a very big example to the baby.”

“The baby will want to play with me?” She asked excitedly. “None of my cousins ever wanted to play with me because I was a girl, and when Dottie and me tried to play together, because we were both girls, we were told off.”

“That isn’t going to happen here, in this house, sweetheart.” Max said, his voice a little gruff from supressing his tears.
“I hope Dottie is okay, her Daddy was mean to her too.”

“We’ll find out for you, annwyl, is that alright?”

Ismay nodded her head and cuddled into Nasta tighter, putting her face into his neck and holding on. Nasta stroked her back slowly and calmly. This talk had just hammered home just how damaged Ismay, and Harry too, really were and it highlighted just how much more recovery that they needed. It had been a year and a half since they had been liberated of their life of fear, pain and slavery, but still little things came through, a bit of fear or insecurity here or there, memories that were best left in the past, nightmares too still plagued the both of them occasionally. There was still more that they needed to do, and if there were still things that they didn’t know about, things kept hidden, like Ismay’s fear that the new baby would mean that she would be sent away, then it needed to be aired out in the open and dealt with, so that those fears and worries could be put to rest once and for all.

A soft, gentle trill came to all of them from outside, very sudden and stark after two days without a single noise, and Nasta’s wings vibrated against his spine.

“That was Mummy, is he okay?” Ismay fretted.

“He’s calling to let us know that we can go and collect him now, he and the baby want to come home.” Max said as calmly as he could when he wanted to spring out of his chair and race to Harry.

“Go get him then!” Ismay demanded. “Daddy Nasta, will you help me make tea for Mummy and the baby, ready? Mummy would like that.”

“The baby will want milk, Ismay. We can make that together now.” Nasta said, even as he stood and moved over to the counter. Max and Sixten had walked as calmly as they could to the door, so as not to give Ismay the wrong impression, but Nasta could see them racing over the back lawn to where Harry had built his nest and he settled himself. His subordinate mates would take care of Harry and the baby while he took care of their daughter…and made everyone a nice calming cup of tea.

He had the bottle ready on the table and Ismay perched in his lap, sipping on her own tea, when Max carried Harry through the back door.

“Nice and calm now, Ismay.” Nasta soothed. “Welcome home, love.”

“Issy.” Was Harry’s first word to them and Ismay visibly brightened up.
Max sat himself down quickly and Sixten stole the seat next to him. Harry was clutching the baby with his one arm, and he held the other out to Ismay. She reached over and they gave one another a big, though rather awkward hug.

“Mummy, you smell really bad.” Ismay said, wrinkling her nose.

Harry laughed, his voice scratchy with disuse. “I’ll have a bath soon.” He said softly.

“Daddy Nasta and I made you tea.” She said, pushing the cup a little closer.

“Thank you, sweetie. I really need a good cup of tea.” He said, but he didn’t reach for it. Instead he looked up at Max, who took the hint and lifted the cup and held it out for Harry to drink.

“Is your tummy very sore, Mummy?” Ismay asked, remembering that she had been told that the birth would make her Mother ‘sore’ as opposed to telling her that it would be agonisingly painful.

“A little, Ismay, so I have to take it easy for a while, but it’ll heal up nicely.” Harry assured her.

“How is baby?” She asked next, still a little unsure about the new presence in her life.

“Well baby is a…” Harry looked at them all, pausing and then he laughed, voice scratchy and rather rough sounding. “You have a new brother, Ismay.”

“I get a brother, really? Can I see him?”

Harry moved slowly, not teasing this time, but because he was still very sore, and he uncovered a tiny little face. Ismay gazed at her new brother in wonder.

“He’s so tiny! Cecelia is bigger than he is!” She exclaimed.

“He’ll grow quickly.” Max told her. “Very soon he’ll be very big and very heavy.”
“He’s already heavy.” Harry complained. “He was seven pounds four ounces born. That’s almost double what Ismay weighed.”

“Do you want to hand him over, or do you still want to cuddle him?” Sixten asked. “My arms are free if you need them.”

Harry smiled, but he instinctively pulled the baby closer to his chest.

“A bit soon.” Harry explained.

“That’s fine, but if he gets too heavy, or you need a break, my arms are free for my newborn son. Or my daughter if you want to let her go, Nas.”

“No.” Nasta said, wrapping one arm around Ismay’s waist and pulling her back and holding her tight. She laughed happily. “I’m never letting her go.”

“Does baby have a name, Mummy?”

“Not just yet, sweetie. I’ll think of one soon, though. It took me a bit of time to name you too.”

“Can I call him baby until he has a name?”

“Of course.” Harry nodded, before turning his head and sipping some more tea.

“We need to tell the family.” Max said, excitedly. “I can’t believe he’s finally here.”

“Leave it for a while more, Max.” Nasta said. “Harry needs to settle back home first, and he needs a bath.”

Harry nodded to that. “They know that I gave birth?”
The three of them nodded.

“Then it’s okay to leave it a few more hours, I do want that bath though.”

“Sixten, here.” Max said, passing Harry and the cup over. “I’ll go and run you that bath now, I’ll make sure to medicate it for you. I made more of those salts that you like and brewed some potions that should help.”

“Thank you, Max.” Harry said, giving him a smile.

It took Harry an hour more to be able to pass of his newborn son to anyone else, and only then it was because Ismay really found his smell offensive and kept wrinkling her little nose when she caught a whiff of him.

Harry had passed the baby to Sixten and got Nasta to help him to bathe, as Max was busy in the kitchen sterilising bottles and making dinner for everyone else…Harry’s body was still playing catch up, and just like when he had a heat period, it would take a while for normal function to resume, so he wouldn’t be eating much, if anything, for at least another day.

He felt so much better, so much more human, after the bath, the wonderful salts and potions added to the water not only stripping his body of grime and odour, but also relaxing tensed muscles, healing his skin and alleviating his pain and soreness.

He was bonelessly blissful as he allowed Nasta to pat him dry gently with a towel, just lying flat out on their soft, comfortable bed as his mate took care of him. It felt wonderful.

Nasta took his time and after Harry was nice and dry, he rubbed in a paste that Max had made that would help him heal faster. It was applied directly over the place where Harry had opened himself up, which was healed over and was nothing more than a faint white line now, but it would help to heal the inside incision as much as it was to make his skin feel better.

After that was applied Nasta diligently, and gently, manoeuvred Harry’s limbs into his pyjamas before carrying him back downstairs to lay him on the settee, propped slightly upright by a stack of cushions, and his newborn son was carefully laid back on his chest. Harry finally felt complete. His family was growing, he had a newborn son to love and hold after an endless string of terminations, all of that was behind him now, he had a new baby, with his new mates, in a new family, a new home and a new life. Everything was perfect.

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Harry shushed Ismay as she giggled a little too loudly at the baby and Harry made sure that he had
everything he needed on him. Keys, wallet, nappy bag, two bottles of milk and a carton of juice for Ismay, just in case.

He opened the front door and he pushed the pram out first and got Ismay to follow it, with her own pushchair with Cecelia strapped into it, before he stepped out and closed the front door.

He’d left a note for his mates on the kitchen table. They’d been so anxious in the last few days, after he’d given birth and before he’d come out of his nest, that they’d neglected the grocery shopping. Harry had woken up that morning and he’d used the last of the milk on Ismay’s cereal. He hadn’t even been able to have a cup of tea as they were completely out of tea bags too, and he really hated camomile or green tea, the only options in the house.

So he had gotten Ismay ready, gotten the baby ready, who still didn’t have a name, and he was taking them to the supermarket at seven in the morning to get essentials. He would give his mates a piece of his mind when he got back about letting their essential items get so low too.

“Mummy, does the baby like being outside?” Ismay asked.

Harry looked at the sleeping boy and smiled. He didn’t care one iota where he was, as long as he was clean, warm and fed.

“I’m sure he does, Issy.” He said happily.

He kept his daughter close, kept his hands on the bar of the pram, and he enjoyed his walk in the early March air. He ran through a list of everything he needed and he tried not to think that this might have been done a little rashly, as his body ached after such a long time with little activity. He was only three days post-birth too. He huffed at himself. He could do this, it was just a twenty-five minute walk to the supermarket from their new home. He’d be an hour, maybe a little more.

He picked up a basket when he reached the supermarket and he placed it across the pram, so it was held by the sides of it and didn’t rest on the baby inside. He quickly navigated the aisles with the other early morning shoppers and he involved Ismay by pointing at things and telling her to hand them to him. He had to stop halfway around, as the baby wanted his morning feed. He kept a close eye on Ismay during this time, and he smiled at the people, customers and staff alike, who cooed and commented on the baby to their companions, and on Ismay too. It made him stand straighter and he snorted a laugh at himself, he was being utterly ridiculous.

He put the baby carefully up on his shoulder and he burped him, before Harry laid him back in the pram gently and checked on him critically, even as he smoothed the pram blanket over his waist.

“Is baby okay?” Ismay asked.

“He’s fine, Princess.” Harry said. “He’s had his milk now and he can go straight back to sleep, like
always.”

Ismay nodded and Harry picked the basket up from the floor and placed it back over the pram.

“Right, we really need teabags, Ismay. We can have a nice big cup when we get home now.” He said to her and she smiled at him and pushed her pushchair as Harry pushed the pram.

The movement of the pram lulled the baby back into sleep very quickly and those blue eyes closed and a little hand wormed up to a little pouted mouth and Harry smiled with gooey eyes to see it.

Ismay interrupted the moment by charging back over and she handed him the biggest box of teabags on the shelf. Harry had to smile at her.

“Thank you, Ismay. You’re a wonderful shopper.” He said as he took the box and put them in the basket.

“Do we have everything now, Mummy?”

“No, we need milk and biscuits still, baby. Come on.”

Harry led her around to the biscuits first, and then he went to get the milk. The basket was bulging, he had bought more than he’d planned, as he usually did as he would pick up things that struck his fancy, like the couple bars of chocolate he’d picked up.

“We done now?” Ismay asked, looking up at him.

“Do you want tea that badly, or are you missing your morning cartoons?” He asked her with a grin.

“I miss my Daddies!” Ismay insisted.

Harry’s grin softened to a smile and he bent to kiss her, though he had to put a hand to his stomach to manage it. He was glad he’d taken one of the pain potions that Max had made for him before they’d left. He could do with a cup of tea and a nice long sit down.
“Look, Mummy, it’s a magazine!” Ismay said and darted off.

Harry was thankful that he could still see her, as he probably would have panicked otherwise, and he followed her to look at what had caught her attention. It was a magazine aimed at children, strategically placed on the bottom shelf where the kids could see and reach it, and there was a little lion teddy attached to the front.

“We can get it for the baby!” Ismay said excitedly. “His name is Leo the lion. We could call the baby Leo too.”

Harry smiled at her, but his Dracken perked up. Harry had three names in mind, only three, and Leo would be a good nickname for the one name he had shortlisted.

“I think we should call the baby Leo, what do you think?” He asked.

“Really?” Ismay asked, getting very excited.

Harry nodded. “Let’s get him a teddy named after himself too. Leo the baby can have a Leo the lion.”

Ismay couldn’t keep the grin from her face as Harry took the magazine from her and put it in the basket and set them off towards the checkouts. He looked down at the sleeping face of his son. Leonidas ‘Leo’ Potter-Maddison. Harry liked it and he stood up straighter, walked with more of a purpose. He couldn’t wait to get home and tell his mates that he’d finally decided between the three names that he’d been deliberating over. They hadn’t pushed him to name the baby, and they hadn’t tried to insert their own thoughts on the matter, knowing as they did how Harry hadn’t had a choice in naming Ismay, at least not at first, so they had left this entirely up to him, they didn’t even press him to know the three options. Harry hoped that they all liked the name that he’d picked.

Harry bagged up the items, allowing Ismay to carry the bag with the magazine inside it, and everything else he put in the basket underneath the pram. He thanked the cashier brightly and he manoeuvred the pram around and got them moving back towards their home.

He gave Ismay her juice carton on the way home, and the little bag of snack grapes he’d bought for her, anticipating this little rest stop as he drank from a bottle of water.

When he finally got home he’d been gone for just a little over an hour, just as he’d planned. He unlocked the front door and reminded Ismay to be quiet, just in case her Daddies were still in bed, but there was no need, as they weren’t still asleep at all. They were all sat around his note at the kitchen table and Ismay went to show them the magazine as Harry smiled and got the pram in the hallway and shut the door. It was a relief to kick off his shoes and curl his toes.
“Want a hand, love?” Max asked.

“Sure, take stinky by here and change him for me?” He asked. “Two minutes from home and he just had to dirty a nappy.”

Max chuckled and bent to kiss him and then picked up the baby and his blanket and took the nappy bag from Harry and went to sort out his son.

“I’m proud of you.” Nasta said as Harry took the bags from under the pram and carried them into the kitchen.

“Why?” Harry asked in confusion.

“Harry, älskling, you’ve been out with both kids by yourself.” Sixten pointed out with a smile.

Harry blinked, then he grinned. “Oh yeah, I did, didn’t I? You know I didn’t even think about it. I just saw that we had no teabags and no milk and I just packed up and went! Nothing bothered me.”

Nasta pulled him gently into a kiss. “I’m very proud of you, Caru. I will put this away now, you sit down and have a rest. I will get you tea too.”

Harry grinned and did as instructed, watching as Sixten took the plastic wrap from the magazine on Ismay’s insistence.

“…and this is Leo the lion, it’s for the baby. Mummy says we can call him Leo too.”

“Really?” Nasta asked, looking at him.

Harry all but beamed at his mates. “Yes. It fits with one of the names I picked out.”

“So you’ve chosen now?” Max asked, carrying the baby back into the kitchen. The baby looked
absolutely tiny in Max’s arms.

“He’s called Leo, Daddy Max.” Ismay said as she took the lion teddy and came hurrying over to him, holding it up. “This is Leo the lion. He’s for the baby.”

“Go and put Cecelia and her pushchair away safe, Ismay.” Max said gently. “I almost fell over her!” He joked.

Ismay giggled at him and went to do as he asked. Once she was out of the room, his three mates turned to him.

“She hasn’t named him and I haven’t caved to the name that she likes.” He said, cutting them off before they spoke up. “She just helped me to choose between the three I had already picked out.”

“Leo was one of the names you were considering?” Sixten asked.

Harry shook his head. “No. The baby is yours, Max.” He divulged, watching with delight as Max’s blue eyes widened and he looked down at the tiny baby in his arms. Max brought the baby up to his mouth to lay a kiss on his little head.

“So the name Leo?” Sixten questioned.

“A nickname for Leonidas. The name I’ve chosen for him.” Harry nodded. “I was originally thinking we could call him Leon as a nickname, but Leo goes better I think.”

“Are you sure you want to follow my family’s naming tradition?” Max asked him.

“Of course.” Harry said, giving him a smile. “I don’t want to be the one to break your family tradition. Now, where is my promised tea? Seeing as you big, burly men couldn’t do any shopping while I was nesting. How do you expect me to relax in my own home when I don’t have immediate access to tea?” He teased.

All three of them snorted, but Nasta went back to the counter and made him his tea, squeezing in a good glob of honey and he stirred it vigorously.
At almost half eight in the morning, two hours after he’d gotten up, he took his first sip of tea and he sighed so happily that his mates grinned at him.

“Right, we promise to never let the tea situation get so dire ever again.” Max swore with a laugh.

Harry grinned. “Thank you, dearest mates. I can’t go so long without a good cuppa, and think of poor Ismay, subjected to breakfast without her cup of tea! Barbaric.”

“We’re just so proud of you, going out by yourself, with the kids, and proving once and for all that you can do it, and that you are getting better. I love you.” Max said.

Harry smiled. “You know I just didn’t even think of being scared. It might have been a different story if it had been bustling over there, it was busy, but I could move around as I wanted and sometimes I had whole aisles to myself. But I just thought of what I needed, kept an eye on Ismay and Leonidas, and the fear never came. I feel amazing today!”

“Just take it easy now, you’ve had enough exercise with those healing muscles for one day.” Max said. “How are you feeling?”

“Good, I took a pain potion this morning, before I left.”

“Good, that would have helped. But rest for the rest of today, yes?”

Harry nodded. “I have my tea now. I have no need to do anything or any reason to move for that matter.” He laughed. “Only from here to the living room, and then from there to the bathroom when I need it.”

“You don’t even need to walk, love.” Sixten said, getting up and he came around the table to scoop him up. “Not when you have three willing mates who can carry you to wherever you want to go.”

Harry chuckled and held onto his teacup. “What more can I ask for, loving mates to ferry me around everywhere and tea on demand.”

“If you want it, love, just ask!” Max called out.
Harry was settled on the settee and he watched Ismay playing with her doll house. The magazine she’d asked for was open on a random page and she had already taken the animal stickers out… stickers that were now all over the doll house. It made him smile.

Max and Nasta came in and Ismay immediately noticed, she looked for her brother and watched as Max settled down, Leonidas still in the crook of his arm. He looked impossibly tiny next to the humongous, muscly Max.

“Is baby Leo okay, Daddy Max?” Ismay asked.

Max looked up at her, then down to the baby sleeping in his one arm.

“Yes, Princess. He’s alright.” Max said. “He’s all clean now and he’s sleeping again.”

Ismay nodded, but it took a moment before she turned back to the doll house. Harry frowned, but he let it go for now. He’d keep an eye on her over the next few days and see how she got on. He’d been told about what Jeff had told her, about sending her away once his son was born. He was absolutely furious and he had sat her down and he’d explained to her gently how he would have never allowed Jeff to send her away. Harry seriously would have killed Jeff, all of them, if they had tried to separate him and Ismay, but Harry believed that the only reason Jeff had said as such to Ismay, and not to him, was because he had been torturing Ismay with the thought that she would be sent away, because Harry would have immediately soothed her and assured her that it would never happen.

“Are you okay, Harry?” Nasta asked him softly.

Harry blinked from his thoughts and he nodded. “Yes, I’m okay. Maybe feeling a little tired from my morning walk.” He laughed. “But the fresh air did me good, and so did realising that I’m not actually agoraphobia, like the Healers were worried about. Or…I’m not any more at least.”

Sixten bent over and kissed him. “We are really proud of you, you know. Even if you did worry us half to death.”

Harry waved him away. “You all needed the sleep, and I was already awake.”

“You didn’t have a nightmare, did you?” Nasta asked him then.
Harry shook his head. “No. I needed a wee. You know I can’t hold myself as well at the moment because of the caesarean.”

His mates all nodded and Harry wriggled himself and got comfortable. He watched Ismay mostly, though he did find himself drifting in and out of sleep. It had been wonderful to go out and get a bit of freedom, but he needed some rest now after that walk, he was still only three days post-birth after all.

He carried on his day as normally as he could, he ate lunch and dinner with no fuss. He played with Ismay for a little bit, until his body started aching and he’d needed to go and rest himself, and he was taken care of so well by his mates, who fetched him tea, carried him or wrapped an arm around him to support him when he needed to go anywhere, and took care of Leonidas when he needed a feed or a nappy change, though Harry was very happy to hold onto his son while he was sleeping.

Sixten was on Ismay’s bedtime routine tonight and he had already bathed her and he had given her a cup of chamomile tea, while topping up Harry’s usual honey tea too. Harry had drunk it all in several swallows and with a smile, Nasta had gone to get him another one.

Harry was watching with a smile as Max sat on the floor and changed his son’s nappy, an enraptured Ismay watching on, her eyes tracking every move that Max made.

“Are you sure that you want to follow my family tradition, Harry?” Max asked him, for perhaps the dozenth time since they’d been told that Max was the biological Father of the baby boy that morning.

“Yes, Max.” Harry replied tiredly.

“And you’re absolutely sure that you want to call him Leonidas?” Sixten asked, for the dozenth time as well.

“It was either Leonidas, Perseus or Heracles. I liked Leonidas the best. Our little Leo. Though if you really don’t like it, Perseus isn’t so bad, we could call him Percy.” He said insecurely.

“His name is Leonidas and it’s staying as Leonidas.” Nasta cut in firmly as he brought in another cup of tea for Harry and a bottle for Leonidas. He put the bottle on the coffee table and looked at Ismay in her pyjamas in approval and he gave her damp hair, from her bath, a gentle tap with his wand. It dried instantly.

Everyone dropped the subject and Harry allowed Nasta to sit on the floor by him and hold his hand while offering him a cup of tea with the other.
“I like Leo.” Ismay said. “Babies look like their names and he looks like a Leo.” She said.

That made Harry smile. “You look like an Ismay too.”

Ismay nodded, her red hair bouncing.

“Can I feed him again, Daddy Max?”

“Do you want to?” He asked as he redid the poppers on the sleepsuit.

Ismay nodded fervently.

“Okay, let me get him sorted and dressed first. Do you want to do some poppers with me?”

Ismay grinned and reached over, helping Max with the poppers and giggling with each one.

“Up on the settee, Ismay. I’ll lay him over your lap again, okay?”

Ismay nodded. “He’s too heavy for me to hold by myself.” She agreed.

She sat on the settee and Max picked up Leonidas and placed him up on his shoulder before he picked up the bottle and handed that to Ismay.

“Now you remember what we told you about his head and neck?” Max asked her.

“His head is too heavy for him to lift by himself and his neck could be hurt.”

“Good girl, so we’re going to put this cushion here to support his head for you.” Max said, even as he moved the cushion into position.
He laid Leonidas over Ismay’s one leg and rested him on the cushion and he knelt in front of the settee, just in case, as Ismay prodded the bottle at little Leo’s mouth.

“Oops.” She said worriedly as she caught the teat on his one nostril, before she was able to prod it at his lips.

“That’s okay, Daddy Sixten has done that too.” Max soothed her, giving a grin to Sixten, who rolled his eyes. “You’re doing great, you’re the best big sister in the whole wide world!” He praised.

“Come on baby Leo, you need to drink to get bigger.” She told him, rubbing the teat back and forth over his lips. Their little boy finally got the message and opened his mouth to latch onto the bottle and suckle.

“There we go, Ismay. Now just hold the bottle still for him and he’ll do the rest.” Max said brightly.

“Grandpa Alxander said that he eats really well.” Ismay repeated. “That means he’s healthy.”

“It does, yes. He’s doing so well. How can he not when he has such a good big sister to look after him?”

Ismay shot Max a smile and Harry felt teary just listening to them together.

They had had a small gathering of visitors every couple of hours over the last few days until everyone had come over to meet little Leonidas. Of course they had started with parents and close family, then extended family, and then friends. Though the Elders had paid more attention to Harry than they had the baby, but he was fine, better than fine even. He was brilliant and everything had finally fallen into place for him.

“Do I have to go to bed?” Ismay asked. “What if baby Leo needs something in the night?”

“Then we’ll look after him, Ismay. You can be a good big sister and help again in the morning.” Max assured her. “Now go on with Sixten so he can tuck you in. He’s got more fairy tales to tell you.”
“He better not read her anymore of the Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales or he’s sleeping in the garden.” Harry complained.

“He did edit them for her.” Nasta allowed with a smile.

“She gets the children’s fairy tales or none at all.” Harry said.

“He went and got the children’s book this morning.”

Harry nodded and he kissed Ismay goodnight as she came over to him and then Nasta and then she was giving Leonidas one last kiss, again, before she hurried up the stairs to her bedroom, where Sixten would be waiting with a bedtime story, he’d gone up early to set up Ismay’s nightlights for her as she didn’t like walking into a dark room.

“Harry, we don’t want to upset you, and we’ve waited a few days to bring it up, but…”

Harry was sat up like a shot, uncaring of his healing body, and he gave wide, frightened eyes to his mates, looking between them both, his heart suddenly in his throat, pounding hard and fast as the fear of upsetting or disappointing them flooded into him.

“What is it?” He asked desperately. “What have I done wrong? Whatever it is I’m sorry, I’ll…”

Nasta covered his mouth gently with a hand, cutting off his words.

“We love you.” He said firmly, moving his hand to cup Harry’s cheek instead. “You haven’t done anything wrong, it’s something that Ismay brought up about those people, and we wanted to ask you something.”

Harry sagged back boneless with lingering fear, and no small amount of relief too. His heart calmed from its feverish beating…when he’d thought that he’d done something wrong, that his mates might be angry with him, or upset or disappointed. He closed his eyes and just breathed.

“What did she say?” He asked finally.
“Who’s Dottie?” Max asked.

“Her cousin, Eudoxia. The only other girl in the family. She was Arthurum’s daughter.”

“She said that he treated Dottie how her Father treated her, that he was mean to Dottie, was that ever sorted?”

Harry nodded. “I told the Elders about how Dottie was treated when I was rescued, he was put on an intensive course that would sort out his attitude to his own daughter. I think it even included a trip to see a Mind Healer. But Dottie’s Mother, Willow, loves her daughter, all of her children, very much, and she agreed to have her family watched in case Arthur’s behaviour slipped again. Neither of them were Drackens and I was told that she threatened to divorce him and take the kids if he didn’t improve, though I think watching his parents and brother being executed in front of him did wonders for him. An Elder from the Australian Counsel looks in on them all every month now I believe, where before it was every day, much like how I had an Elder come to check on me every day. They talk to Eudoxia too, they ask her questions to make sure she is being taken care of properly and isn’t being forced to behave in a certain way just because the Elders are there. She is no longer in any danger and from my understanding she is much happier.”

“Thank Merlin.” Max sighed. “When Ismay told us that her cousin was being abused too…what a family of fucking pigs.”

“It was Willow who sent the letter to Elder Vipond.” Harry told them, looking at the wall, but not really seeing it. “Elder Midate told me the full story of it a few months after I’d been released from the Healing Halls. If she hadn’t have sent that letter, I might still be in that house.” He said, a shiver running through his body.

“How did she find out? I thought you said that none of them knew who you were.”

“She was the only one.” Harry said. “Ismay had overheard Penny and Carter talking, they had mentioned my real name and she clicked on really quick that they were talking about me. I had been ordered to never mention my name to anyone, but there was a loophole in the order as I could confirm it if anyone asked me, so that’s what I did when Ismay asked me about it. Then Ismay blurted it out to Willow at a party. Willow who was horrified to realise a few home truths about the family she had married into. She must have worked out enough to realise that she and her little family would be suspects if she said nothing, so she sent that letter to Elder Vipond and asked for amnesty for herself, her husband and children. I’m more thankful than I can even say that she gathered the courage to send that letter, but she didn’t do it for me, she didn’t do it for the right reasons, she did it to cover herself and her family because this was the time that the family searches were going on and
she knew, as well as Ismay and I, that it was only a matter of time before I was found and she would be complicit in my captivity as she knew about it, and about who I was, from that moment. But still, I’m free and that’s all I care about, regardless of her reasons and backward stance on my captivity, Willow did send that letter and it led to me finally being found. Dottie is safe and being looked in on regularly, and Ismay never has to see any of them again.”

“We only even thought to bring it up because Ismay was worried about Dottie, if it had been anyone other than a child, we would never have upset you with this, Harry.” Max said.

“It’s alright, I should have thought to reassure Ismay that her cousins are alright, but I don’t like thinking of any of them, so it never crossed my mind.”

“We’ll do that for you, love.” Max told him.

“You just rest now, Cariad, and we’ll sort out everything.”

“Is Leo okay?”

“All clean, fed and burped, ready for his Mummy cuddles.” Max said as he stood and carried his son over to Harry and laid him on his chest. Harry smiled automatically and lifted an arm to hold Leonidas.

“I love you all so much, I’m sorry that I still jump to assumptions and that I get scared for no rea…”

“That is nothing you need to apologise for.” Max said firmly.

“Max is right, Harry. We know that your recovery is going to take a long time, that you will still have little moments where you’ll need extra support, just like Ismay will too. We understand and we don’t care. We’re willing to do anything and everything needed to help you and Ismay. Just give yourself some more time and what have you been told about taking some self-love days?”

That made Harry chuckle.

“Damn Nas, calm down!” Max said, a teasing lilt to his tone of voice. “I think you just exhausted
your word count for the rest of the night with that speech!"

That made Harry actually laugh, as intended.

“Oh shut up, Max, you goofball.” Nasta said, smiling. “Just for that you can get the tea.”

“What do you mean? I always get the tea anyway! I’m not letting your arse, as glorious as it is,
anywhere near my kitchen unsupervised. You’re as bad as Ismay…no, you’re worse than Ismay and
she’s a four year old little girl!”

“I don’t see any tea fetching going on.” Nasta pointed out calmly with a smirk.

Harry laughed again and grinned up at Max, who harrumphed, bent to kiss his forehead and then
exaggeratedly stomped into the kitchen.

“Are you truly okay, Caru?” Nasta asked him.

Harry nodded as he stroked Leo’s back. “I can’t help my little attacks of insecurity sometimes.” He
said.

“We know, but we still love you. We’re always going to love you.”

Harry smiled. “Is…is Leonidas okay?”

“He looks fine to me, Harry.” Nasta said.

“His name…is Leonidas okay? I know it’s unusual, what if other people think it’s funny? I don’t
want him to be teased or bullied.”

“He’s not anyone else’s baby, Harry, he’s ours. As long as we like it, who cares what anyone else
thinks?”
“I don’t think Max or Sixten like it.”

“Max does, but he wasn’t sure if you’d carry on his family tradition or not, so it came as a surprise and Sixten Tage Axelson can’t talk about anyone’s name being funny.”

Harry managed a weak smile, even as he stroked his son’s fluffy black hair.

“Everything is going to be fine, Caru, you’ll see.” Nasta promised.

(Of course it will, you have us here with you now.” Max said. “It’s another New Year, we’re in a brand new home that we all chose, we have a new son…this is forever, Harry. Us, this house, our family. All of it is forever.”

“I like the sound of that.” Harry said.

“I sure do.” Max said as he put the tray down and handed a cup to Nasta, who turned and offered it to Harry.

Harry tipped himself slightly so that he could sip on the tea without disturbing Leonidas. He sat up straighter and he took the cup from Nasta and curled his other arm under his son to hold him to his chest.

Sixten came down to join them and he sat next to Harry and gave him a kiss, before moving to kiss Leo.

“Love you both.” He said, even as he accepted a cup from Max.

“What about us?” Nasta demanded.

“I love you four.” Sixten amended. “Issy went straight off to sleep, she’s tuckered out from her day of hovering over Leonidas waiting for him to do something or need something. She’s such a good girl.”

Harry preened at that, all in sleepy pride, even as he made sure that Leo was safely tucked up and
that he wasn’t in danger of falling or slipping sideways.

“She really is, just like her Mother.” Max complimented. Harry shot him a look and opened his mouth to complain. “I mean, if you were a girl, which you’re totally not.” He added quickly.

Harry gave him a beady eyed stare and closed his mouth again, letting it go and turning back to his son.

“I had visions then of you being buried under the back patio.” Sixten told Max with a snigger.

“I was thinking maybe the woods behind the garden, Harry wouldn’t want my rotting corpse so close to the house and the kids.” Max chuckled. “I really didn’t mean you were a girl, love.”

“I know…” Harry said with a smile. “Which is why you’re still alive and not being buried in the woods behind the garden.”

“I knew it!” Max said happily.

Harry chuckled. “Only you would be happy to know where I would be burying your body if ever I killed you.”

“I’m happy to know that I was right.” Max corrected with a grin.

“What time does Leo need to be fed now?” Nasta asked with an exasperated look at them all.

“He’s roughly every three hours.” Harry said. “He’s just had a bottle, so about nine is his next feed. Then midnight, three and six in the morning.”

“And three dirty nappies in between it all.” Max said.

“It doesn’t last very long. A few weeks and he’ll be sleeping better and eating every several hours. In a few months he’ll be sleeping through the night.” Harry said.
“We can take it in shifts. It should be easier than all of us getting up every time he cries, we’re going to burn ourselves out if we carry on like this.” Nasta said. “I will do tonight, and we’ll take it from there.”

“He wakes us all up anyway.” Harry pointed out.

“I know, there’s no way to stop that, but if I’m the only one to get up, you three can go straight back to sleep.” Nasta explained. “It doesn’t take four of us to make a bottle, feed a baby, change him and put him back to bed.”

“We’ll lay out everything needed on the counter then.” Harry said. “To make it easier for one person to do it by themselves.”

“That’s a good idea, love.” Max said. “I’ll go sort that now.”

Harry smiled as Max followed his suggestion, but he shot an immediate look to Leonidas when he made a soft snuffle in his sleep. Harry assessed him critically with his eyes and deemed the noise to be normal and he went back to his tea. He missed the smile that Sixten and Nasta shared over his head.

“Mummy!” A fearful shout came from upstairs and Harry had jumped up, dropped his cup to spill over the carpet and he was up the stairs to where Ismay was standing on the landing quicker than even he had thought possible with his healing body and a three day old baby in his arms.

“What is it, Ismay?” He asked her. “Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

“I had a bad dream that my Daddies were hurting baby Leo.” She said, her face pale and her voice quiet.

Harry felt his mates, stood behind him, rear back from the accusation, but Harry understood Ismay’s fear.

“Ismay, come here.” He said, holding out his arm and she burrowed into him. “Have you ever been hurt by your new Daddies?” He asked her gently.
“No, but baby Leo is only a few days old, Mummy. He’s very delicate.”

“Your Daddies are all big men, and I understand that baby Leo is only tiny in comparison, Ismay, but they’re very gentle with him. They wouldn’t hurt him.”

“My biological Daddy hurt little babies too.” Ismay said, very upset.

“Your biological Father was a worm, Ismay.” Harry told her. “He isn’t what a real Daddy should be. You don’t have to worry about me, about yourself, or baby Leo, we’re very safe here and your new Daddies love all of us very much, they won’t hurt any of us. See, baby Leo is very happy and he’s not hurt.”

Harry showed Ismay a sleeping Leonidas and she touched his face with gentle fingers.

“I don’t ever want him to be hurt like us, Mummy.” She told him.

Harry had to swallow hard to clear the lump in his throat.

“He won’t be, Ismay.” Harry assured her. “What happened to us, in that house, it will never happen to Leonidas or to us ever again.”

“How do you know?” Ismay asked him.

“I know because Max, Nasta and Sixten are better men than your biological Father was, Ismay. They would never hurt you, me or baby Leo. We’re safe here, we’re always going to be safe here.”

“What if I’m naughty?”

“Oh, sweetie, all children are naughty sometimes. You will be punished appropriately, remember you have to sit on the bottom step of the stairs? Remember that Daddy Nasta punished you that way?”
Ismay nodded.

“He never hit you or hurt you, did he? He just sat you on the step.”

Ismay nodded again, calming down.

“I know your dreams can make you very scared, Ismay, but they’re just dreams and they can’t hurt you.”

“Can I see Sebby tomorrow?” She asked.

“If you want to see Healer Vasey I’ll make an appointment for you.” Harry said.

“I want to talk to him, he makes me feel better.”

Harry nodded and smiled. “He makes me feel better too. Now come on, into bed.”

Ismay stood up and Harry joined her. He gave a sad look to his mates and handed Nasta, the closest person to him, Leonidas.

“I’ll sort this out now, just…I’ll talk to you in a little while.” He said.

His mates nodded and Harry followed Ismay back into her bedroom to tuck her back in. Max felt poleaxed, he was very hurt that Ismay thought that he, or any of them, could hurt Leonidas or her or Harry.

“Don’t torture yourself with those thoughts.” Nasta told them both as he carried Leo back into the living room.

“She thought that we’d hurt Leonidas.” Sixten said in horror, falling into a seat and holding his head.
“It’s not her fault.” Nasta said. “She doesn’t know any different. She is comparing us to the only other family she had and she’s scared, maybe not of us, but of what happens when something goes wrong, like if she’s naughty, or maybe when Leonidas cries, because she remembers what would happen to her when she would do the same.”

“So how do we fix it, Nassa?” Sixten asked.

“We have to prove it to her. It’s the only way.” Nasta said. “It will take time, there is no quick fix to what they both went through, we might still be dealing with nightmares or little bouts of fear or insecurity for years to come, but we can reassure them absolutely that they won’t be hurt here, not by us. Healer Vasey works wonders with them both, just remain calm and prove it to them both that everything is going to be fine.”

Sixten nodded and Max run a hand through his hair. It was a blow, he wasn’t going to lie to anyone, not even himself, but he did sort of understand what Nasta was saying. The amount of abuse, torture, that Harry and Ismay had suffered through would take years and years to overcome and he knew that, but still, hearing that the little girl he saw as his own daughter thought that he might be capable of hurting his own son, or her or Harry, it crushed him a little inside.

He took in a deep breath. He would prove to Ismay that he loved her and Leonidas equally and that he would never hurt them. He would carry on as normal, he would play with them both, love them, protect them, and he would prove to his baby girl that he was worth the chance.

Harry came back down and he looked exhausted. He was still recovering from the birth, and all of them had been waking up through the night to tend to Leonidas, he needed a proper early night. This emotional barrage wouldn’t have helped either.

“Come here, love, you look exhausted.” Max said, opening his arms. He was more relieved than he should have been when Harry came to him and sat in his lap, allowing him to wrap his arms around Harry’s body.

“She doesn’t really think you’ll hurt us, it’s just, she expects it, and he used to tell her how he’d killed her sisters, so she was worried about anything happening to Leonidas. She knows that you won’t hurt us, but the dream made her worry.”

“It’s alright, love.” Max assured him, kissing Harry and pulling him in tighter. “We’ll prove it over the next several years. She is never going to be hurt and neither are you or Leo.”

Harry nodded, but he yawned and cuddled in tighter.
“I think you need an early night.”

“After the last few days, we all need an early night.” Sixten laughed.

“Let’s get upstairs then.” Nasta said. “We can stay in bed for a little longer in the morning too. Ismay shouldn’t be up any sooner than eight, especially with this nightmare disturbing her sleep.”

“You’ll need the sleep too, if you’re going to be the only one to get up with Leo during the night.”

Nasta nodded and he got them moving by standing up, a peacefully sleeping Leonidas in his arms. Max stood with Harry in his arms and he carried his submissive back up the stairs to their bedroom.

“I’ll go and check on Issy.” Sixten said quietly, leaving them at the bedroom door.

He walked further down the corridor to peek in on Ismay. He went to tuck the duvet up to her neck and he kissed her head. “I love you, min lilla älskling. Sleep peacefully.” He whispered, stroking her soft hair before leaving her room to go to his own.

“Is she still asleep?” Harry asked from the centre of the bed, pyjamas on and duvet already tucked around him. It made Sixten grin.

“Fast asleep and peaceful once again.” Sixten said, stripping quickly and crawling into the bed naked. That made Harry smile and Sixten felt much better as Harry gave him a blistering look, appraising him, and biting his bottom lip subconsciously.

Sixten kissed him deeply, pressing in his tongue when Harry gasped in surprise, before he pulled back and slipped under the duvet next to Harry, cuddling up to him.

Harry chuckled, his voice noticeably deeper, before he turned to snuggle into Sixten, nuzzling at his bare chest.

“You two are terrible, we’re up here to actually get an early night for once, go to sleep.” Max chided, but he was grinning just as widely as he slipped into the bed in just his boxers.
Nasta, who was standing by the bassinet just watching Leonidas sleeping, smoothening the blanket over his waist, shot them all a look.

“None of you can behave.” He told them.

“I’d like to remind you that you are a complete sexual deviant and the things you can do with your tongue and hips are illegal in some countries.” Sixten said.

That made Nasta laugh. He bent and gave Leonidas a bristly kiss before he made his way over to the bed. He took off his shirt and his jeans before he sat on the bed to peel off his socks. He actually put pyjama bottoms on, but Harry reasoned that if he was doing all the night feeds that it would be cold down in the kitchen in the middle of the night.

They had a bit of fun with one another, bumping and shoving, rearranging arms and legs, but they soon settled down, the last few days had been hectic and exhausting with a newborn baby in the house, and an active four year old.

Harry was still awake long after his mates had fallen still and silent, his mind racing. He looked to either side of himself, to his three loving mates who were asleep in the bed with him and his lips pulled into an automatic smile. He loved them so very much and they took great care of him and Ismay, and now Leonidas too.

He wondered if Ismay’s little bout of fear was the reason that he couldn’t sleep. He wished that he could reassure her more, he wished that he could take the fear and the worry from her completely, but he couldn’t.

Harry sighed and he looked back at his sleeping mates. He smiled again automatically. He thought of where he’d come from, when he’d hit rock bottom and could get no lower, where he was downtrodden and oppressed and controlled down to every little movement. Things were much better now, there was always room for improvement and he and Ismay had a long way to go yet in their recovery, Ismay’s nightmare tonight had only highlighted that fact, but Harry was absolutely sure that they would recover fully, especially with Max, Nasta and Sixten with them, helping them, soothing them, protecting them and offering them all their love and support. That was what they needed now after all they had suffered through. Love and patience and the both of them would be just fine. He hoped that his mates were up to the task, but he had chosen perfectly, and given a bit more time, a few more years, and Ismay wouldn’t remember any of what had happened to them and he would be in a much more positive mind set and though he would never be able to forget what had happened, there would come a time when he wouldn’t think of it anymore and he clung to that hope desperately.

He looked at his sleeping mates again, he smiled again, he thought of Ismay and little Leonidas and he closed his eyes. He was in a much better place now, he was happy, he was loved, and he was free. There was no better feeling that that in the world. He had been rescued and saved, he was being helped and supported and he had a normal life stretched out before him. It might take a little longer still until he no longer felt so insecure or scared, it might be a while still before the nightmares dropped off, but he could perfectly envision a life without the shadows of his past hanging over him. It would be a while yet, but that didn’t matter. The only thing that truly mattered now was that he and Ismay were safe. They were happy, they were loved and they were free.
Chapter End Notes

A/N: This is part two of what should have been just the one chapter, but we have just the epilogue left now, lovelies and then we're done.

StarLight Massacre. X
Epilogue

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sixteen Years Later – January 2018

Harry jumped and laughed as a small body crawled onto him. He lifted his head to see better and he held his son close to his chest.

“Hello, Valen.” He greeted the four year old.

“Mummy, Daddy Max won’t let me have a biscuit!” His son told him, his beautiful blue eyes damp with tears and with a pouted lower lip, Valen was doing a very good impression of a kicked puppy.

“It’s almost lunchtime, Valen, you need to wait.” Harry said gently.

“One biscuit, Mummy. Just one.”

“You are biscuit mad.” Harry laughed. “Come on, let’s see what Daddy Max is up to. If lunch is almost done though, you can have a biscuit after you’ve eaten, not before.”

Harry stood from the settee in front of the fire with his son in his arms and he went into the kitchen. Max was indeed sorting out lunch.

“How far are you from plating up, love?”

“Valen, I’ve already told you no biscuits!” Max said. “Lunch is literally in ten minutes, it’ll spoil his meal if he has a biscuit now, Harry.”

“Lunch first then, Valen.” Harry said to his four year old, who screwed up his face on the verge of crying.
“I’m putting croutons in your salad, Valen.” Max said, cutting off the tantrum before it started.

“The herby biscuits?” He asked, sniffling.

“Yes, the herby biscuits. Now, can you be a big boy and wait for your lunch?” Max asked.

Valen nodded and Harry gave him a kiss and sat him in his place at the table. Harry went and wrapped his arms around Max’s waist, resting against his back.

“You okay back there, gorgeous?” Max asked him, still moving around and sorting everything out.

“Yeah, just keeping you company.” Harry chuckled. “Need any help?”

“Not with the food, but can you wrangle everyone up, please? I’ll be plating up soon, now that the salmon is cooked.”

“Sure.” Harry gave Max a squeeze and he went further into the house to wrangle his kids from all over the house…and Sixten too, who was like a big kid himself. Putting him and Max together and adding anything silly or childish and they just fed from one another until Harry was laughing so hard that his sides hurt.

“Issy love, lunch!” He called out to his twenty year old daughter as he cracked open her bedroom door. The room was still blue even after all these years.

Hazel eyes turned to look at him and a pale hand brushed dark, fire red hair from her face as she smiled automatically.

“Okay, Mum. I’ll be right there.” She said, looking back to the papers spread over the table and presumably finishing off whatever sentence she had been writing.

Harry went up a floor to what was deemed the ‘playroom’ and here he found the majority of his kids, being supervised by Sixten, who was making more mess than any of them.
“Come on you lot, lunch is ready and Daddy Max doesn’t like to be kept waiting.” Harry called out.

“Mama!” A tiny little girl came toddling over to him and Harry smiled automatically.

“Hello, Tillie. Is Daddy Sixten looking after you?” He cooed.

“Of course I am.” Sixten said, coming over to him, wrapping an arm around his back and pulling him into a deep kiss, his blue eyes sparkling with mischief.

“That’s gross.” Their eight year old son, Rhett, declared with a disgusted frown.

“So gross.” A nine year old Hector agreed.

“I’ll remind you both of that when you have your own partners and can’t stop snogging them long enough to come up for air.” Sixten teased.

Harry snorted, but he got his kids, and Sixten, moving towards the kitchen.

“Sixten, where’s Nas?”

“Oh, he’s up in his office, you want me to call him?”

“If you don’t mind.” Harry said.

“No problem, älskling.” Sixten said, giving him another, quicker, kiss and then changing direction to go and get their mate from his work study.

Harry joined his family downstairs and he sat Tillie in her highchair, kissing her crown of blonde hair as he did so before catching and doing the same to her twin sister, Tyra, who had been crawling around underneath the table. He counted his children and named them off and he was pleased to see them all present. He moved around, helping Max to lay out plates of food, and then he went around helping his younger children to eat.
Nasta and Sixten finally showed up, a little rumpled, and Harry sent them a knowing grin…one of them had been snogged on Nasta’s desk. His money was on Nasta snogging Sixten on his desk. Nasta was a very, very dominant personality after all and Sixten just loved being bent over things.

He giggled to himself and his children gave him odd looks, but his three mates knew exactly what he was thinking.

“Mummy, what’s funny?” Their five year old son, Aeneas, asked him.

Harry walked past him and kissed his head. “Nothing, sweetie, eat your fish.”

He sat down himself, between his younger twin girls in their highchairs, and he started eating his own food, occasionally helping Tillie or Tyra to eat. They were his youngest children at two, but he had already had two heat periods, both unfertile, and he was due a third soon. He was glad that he’d been off his heat period in time for Christmas, and he was glad that he wouldn’t be on a heat period for Aeneas’ sixth birthday that was coming up at the end of this month.

“Addie, eat your broccoli.” Max encouraged.

Their eleven year old daughter, Adelaide, looked up from where she was ‘table duelling’ with her older sister Mavia. She unstuck her fork from Mavia’s and speared a broccoli floret and popped it into her mouth with an innocent smile to her Father.

“Yeah, don’t give me that look, I saw what you girls were doing.” Max said, wagging his own fork at them.

“Why is it only your daughters who fight with their forks at the dinner table?” Sixten teased Max.

“Why are they my daughters when they fight at the table, but your daughters when they get straight Os in school?” Max demanded.

“Because you obviously passed your weird genes over to them, as their biological Father, but I, as their brilliant and intelligent Father, tutored them to greatness and straight Os.” Sixten replied.

Harry couldn’t help or control how hard he laughed at that, the twin girls on either side of him gave him a look and then joined in, without knowing what they were even laughing at, and that made
Harry laugh harder.

“See, even Harry knows it’s true!” Sixten said happily.

“I think that’s more a laugh of scepticism, Dad.” Ismay pointed out with a smile.

“Nooo.” Sixten waved off. “Of course it’s not, Princess. He knows I’m right, he’s agreeing with me.”

Harry had to wipe laughter tears from his eyes and he grinned widely at Sixten, who winked at him and took a bite of food. Harry went back to eating his own salmon salad, thankful that Max had made warm vegetables, like broccoli, instead of leaving the salad at lettuce and tomatoes. It was too cold for that.

Of course he was always in tune with his children and he turned immediately to Tyra and rubbed her back when she coughed, checking to see if she was choking. She wasn’t, but she smiled at him with her little teeth and went back to eating her bite-sized bits of salmon and vegetables with her fingers.

He looked around the table, giving all his children a once over, starting with the younger ones, Tyra and Tillie, then up to his oldest, Leonidas and Ismay. They were all fine and he was able to go back to eating his own lunch.

After they had all finished eating, Harry being the last to finish, as usual, all the kids took their plates to the waste bin and scraped them off, before piling their dishes next to the sink, where Max had already started the washing up.

Then they were gone, back to the game room, back to their own rooms, or maybe to the living room to watch tele. Nasta had the two year old twins, who were both Sixten’s, and he was murmuring softly to them as he carried them up to their bedroom for an afternoon nap.

“Mummy, want cuddles.” His four year old son told him, holding up his skinny arms.

Harry smiled and swept Valen up and cuddled him tightly, carrying him through to the massive living room and sitting down in an armchair. He laid his son across his lap and snuggled him, or cwtched him, as Nasta would say.

Valen was Sixten’s youngest son, his oldest son, Lars, was now fourteen along with his twin sister Linnea. They were both Ravenclaws, which made Sixten inexplicitly proud.

“Mum, can I have a cuddle too?” His almost seven year old daughter, Saffir, asked him, looking up at him through her Father’s gold-hazel eyes.
“Of course, Saffie, come on up.” He encouraged as he made room for her, tucking Valen into his one side and squeezing Saffir in on the other side. It was a tight fit in the armchair, but Harry made it work. “I love you both very much.” He told them.

He made sure to tell his children, and his mates too, that he loved them several times a day. He never, ever, wanted any child of his to feel unloved in their own home and he wanted to remind his mates that he’d never been so deeply in love with anyone in his life as he was with the three of them.


Harry chuckled and he reached forward to snatch the remote from the coffee table. He turned on the cartoons and let Valen choose what he wanted to watch and he sat back, watching his children watch the cartoons, lovingly brushing their hair from their faces and giving them a kiss each.

“Here you go, love.” Max said, bringing in a tray and putting a cup of honey tea down on the table, along with two beakers of juice.

“Thank you, love.” Harry said, smiling at Max. “Come and sit down yourself.”

“I will in a moment, I’ve got another tea run to do upstairs first. Our Princess Ismay needs some tea and so does Nasta, locked away in his dragon tower.”

Harry snorted a laugh at that. “His dragon tower?”

“It might as well be.” Max insisted with a grin.

“Daddy, only Princesses get locked in dragon towers.” Saffir told Max sternly.

“I know.” Max said with a shit-eating grin and he left, exiting on his own joke.

Harry shook his head and directed the two kids back to the TV. He couldn’t wait to tell Nasta that Max had called him a Princess, it usually led to Nasta dominating Max in bed to ‘punish’ him, Harry
really enjoyed watching them together. Harry chuckled softly to himself, as if having Nasta’s mouth, tongue and hips pleasuring you could be called a punishment.

The sitting down nice and quietly didn’t last much longer than it took for Harry to drink his tea. Valen and Saffir soon slid away to go to the toy box to play and Harry was roped into playing with them. Not that he minded of course, he loved playing little games with his kids.

Hector came over and joined them and Harry tugged the nine year old over his shoulder and into his lap, giving him a little tickle before letting him go. Harry took the small matchbox cars that Hector pushed towards him and they started playing together.

“Mummy, can I have a biscuit now?” Valen asked pleadingly. “I had my lunch.”

Harry laughed and moved around to kiss his son. “Okay, you can have a biscuit.” He relented, getting up and going to the kitchen.

Max was in there still, wiping everything down with antibacterial wipes...becoming a Father had only made him more obsessed with making sure that his counters and chopping boards were all but sterilised, which Harry hadn’t actually thought possible as being a Potions Master had already made Max very clinical in cleanliness to avoid cross contamination between the potions that he was making. He wouldn’t even use the same knife to cut ingredients if those ingredients were meant for another potion, he’d always wash it first in a special solution that he made himself or he’d use a different knife entirely.

“You need to sit down, love.” Harry insisted as he crossed the kitchen and went to the cupboard.

Max looked to him and smiled, those sapphire blue eyes catching his own emerald before going back to watching what his hand was doing. “I’m fine, Harry. I just want this done and prepped for when I start dinner.”

“I feel like such a slob with you around.” Sixten said to Max as he came in with an empty tea cup. “I went up to check on Nasta and he’s only got a few bits of paperwork left and he said he’ll come down and socialise as soon as he’s owled it off, he’s going to use Esmeralda.”

“That’s fine.” Max waved off. “She’s up for a long trip and the dragons don’t bother her as much as they do Jasmine.”

“I’m just glad he’s finally done with that pile of paperwork and can spend some time with the kids.” Harry said as he finally found a pack of biscuits in the fully stocked cupboard that he’d been digging
“Are those for our Valen?” Sixten asked with a grin as he saw the biscuits.

Harry smiled back. “Of course, who else? Your son is biscuit mad!”

“Pass them here, I’ve got the little cookie monster in hand.”

Harry passed the pack over to Sixten and he went to snuggle back into Max. His mate abandoned the wipes he was using and turned to hug him properly. With a smile Harry pouted his lips and he got an immediate kiss.

“I love you.” He said happily.

“I love you too, Harry.” Max said, before he spotted the abandoned dirty mug on his clean counter. “Damn it, Sixten!” He hissed, going to move the mug to the sink and pulling out a clean wipe to scrub at the tea stained ring that the mug had left behind. “Sixteen years and he still isn’t housetrained!”

Harry laughed. “It’ll take another sixteen years I imagine!” He teased.

“Better not.” Max muttered darkly. “I’ll teach him to put dirty mugs on the clean counters, leaving tea stains everywhere, always tripping on his dirty clothes, finding his filthy socks in the bed, always peeing on the toilet seat…worse than the damn kids!”

Harry laughed and he left Max to grumble to himself as he went back to the living room.

“Mum, come colour with me!” A five year old Aeneas called out from the coffee table and Harry smiled at his son and he went to sit with Aeneas, folding his legs underneath him and accepting the picture that was given to him.

He used the pencils spread out and he relaxed with his children all around him, well, some of his children at least, and he coloured in his picture of a boat, adding in the background himself, but mostly he watched his other children, chatted with Aeneas, who was very excited for his sixth
birthday and the party he was going to have.

Sixten wandered past him, he didn’t say anything, but he placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder and gave his cheek a kiss, before ruffling Aeneas’ hair and walking off. It made Harry smile.

The tiny twin girls were carried into the room by Max, and he gave them both to Harry, who pushed away from the coffee table to cuddle his sleepy girls. Their hair was absolutely everywhere and he got Rhett to pass him a comb. He spent the next ten minutes carefully and gently untangling their hair and bringing it back off of their faces with little clips that would be gone, and possibly lost forever, within the hour.

He sat back, just watching everyone move and interact with one another and it made him smile. Very soon six of their fourteen children would be going back to Hogwarts for the start of the new term and he was determined to enjoy them before then.

Nasta walked into the room and before he could sit down, or even open his mouth, he was immediately pounced on by his son, Kelyn, with homework that he needed help with and Nasta didn’t even sigh or grumble, he just went right on over to the table and sat next to Kelyn and he started tutoring him, not just giving him the answers, but helping Kelyn to work out the answer by himself. His Dracken purred, a noise that came out of Harry’s mouth for a moment before he quashed it, but he, and his Dracken side, approved of Nasta being such a good Father to their children.

“Mama.”

He blinked and turned to look at Tyra, who had called out to him. She toddled over with a book and with a smile he settled her on his lap, right there on the floor, and he cracked open the book. He was unsurprised to see that it was her favourite book…the one that was read to her several times a day without fail.

Once finished, he kissed Tyra on the head and sent her off to play and he groaned, stretching and cracking his back. Arms encircled his chest and he tipped his head back to see Nasta, who had knelt down behind him.

“How long have you been there?” He asked with a grin.

“A while.” Nasta told him before giving him a kiss and nuzzling into him with his stubble.

“Did you sort out Kel?”

“Yes, all sorted and he understands it now. He only needed someone to explain it in a way he understood and he immediately grasped it. He’s a smart kid.”
“Hmm…he takes after you.” Harry said.

Nasta didn’t say anything, but he did start kissing Harry’s neck and then down to his shoulder.

“Later.” Harry said and gave him a wink.

He turned around on his knees and kissed his oldest mate once more before he stood and stretched properly. He got a hug around the hips this time by Nasta, who stayed on the floor and was then roped into colouring with Aeneas as their five year old tried to get his Father to say what his presents were going to be after having had no luck with Harry.

He went to check on Adelaide, who was reading in the corner, a blanket over her lap and a box of her Christmas chocolates open on the arm.

“You look all cosy and snuggly over here. I’m almost jealous.” He teased.

Adelaide blinked and looked at him slowly, as if he had woken her from a deep sleep.

“Wow, that’s a good book.” Harry laughed. “Is that one of the ones we got you for Christmas?”

“Yeah, it’s so good, Mum, you should definitely read it! Only once I’m done though.” She added quickly.

Harry laughed. “I might have to. Is it part of a series?”

“Yes, one of the new ones I found, I got the whole collection for Christmas. This is book one. I wanted to do my homework first, so I could get it out of the way before I sat down to enjoy reading it. That way I didn’t have to think of anything else, especially not homework. Unlike Kelyn.”

“Shut up, Addie.” Kelyn grumbled from the table close to her, his head resting miserably on his hand as his quill tapped against parchment.

“Do you need more help, Kelyn?” Harry asked, leaving Adelaide and going over to his son.
“No. Dad Nasta helped me a lot, I just have to think how to put this into my own words.” He said.

“You’ll do just fine, love. You’ve very clever.” Harry praised. “Just take your time and think it through and it’ll come to you.”

Kelyn nodded and Harry left him to it.

“Mum, you can cast a Patronus, can’t you?” His oldest son, Leonidas asked him.

Harry sat beside him on the settee. “Yes, it forms as a stag.” He answered the fifteen year old.

“Could you teach me?” Leonidas asked. “I want to be able to cast one too. I want to know what my Patronus would be. It’s linked to what animagus you’d be as well, isn’t it?”

“I don’t want you trying to become an animagus while you’re so young, Leo, okay?” Harry said sternly. “It’s dangerous. Wait until you’re an adult and out of school.”

Leo nodded. “Yes, but I want to learn my Patronus now, so I know what my animagus form would be…I don’t want to become an animagus if it’s going to be a toad or a beetle or something else that’s going to be so embarrassing.”

Harry laughed and he bumped his shoulder into his son. “Okay, I’ll teach you the Patronus charm in the summer, but it is an insanely difficult charm, love.”

“You could do it when you were thirteen.” Leonidas pointed out with a frown.

“Yes, I could, but I learned so quickly because I had need of it. The Dementors were at Hogwarts that year and I was very adversely affected by them, so I needed to learn the charm to protect myself and it did end up saving my life, and Sirius’ too.” Harry looked to the moving photo of Sirius that was on the mantelpiece, right beside the photos of his parents, before he looked back to his son. “I’m just saying that it might take you a little longer to learn, because you’re not under that sort of stress or pressure.”
“Okay, I’m willing to stick with it. I want to learn, no matter how long it takes.”

Harry nodded. “Read up on some theory then, love. For both the Patronus charm and the Animagus transformation. But do your schoolwork first, that’s more important…and it’s more likely to get you a stint in detention if you don’t do it.”

Leonidas nodded and Harry patted his son’s leg and he stood himself up and he went to get himself more tea. He was long overdue for another cup. He and Ismay were the only ones who could have continuous cups of tea, one after the other, so he made a cup for his daughter as well before he carried it up to her room.

“Hey, Issy, I made you some tea, love.” He said as he knocked once on her door and walked in, she was sat at her desk again.

“Thank you.” She said, but Harry could tell that she was distracted immediately.

He went to stand by her desk, putting the tea down in a spare bit of space on the parchment strewn surface and he brushed her red hair back from her face.

“What’s bothering you, love? Is it nerves over the apprenticeship?” He asked. “You’re going to do just fine, I know it.”

“I…no. Mum, can I ask you some questions?” She asked, looking a little hesitant, but determined. Harry knew immediately then what it was going to be about and his heart thudded in his chest.

“What about, love?” He asked nonchalantly, hoping that he was wrong.

“I don’t want to upset you, I love you, but I was trying to think of how to say this delicately…”

“You want to know about your biological Father.” Harry said feeling hollow, moving and sitting bonelessly on her bed. He hadn’t thought of them in a while.

“I…I just have a few questions, that’s all.” Ismay said, getting up and coming to sit next to him.
Harry steeled himself. He could do this, for Ismay.

“What do you remember of them, love?” He asked her softly.

“Not much, it’s mostly just a feeling of fear and hate.” She admitted. “I…I know he was a terrible person, that they all were, and that we were hurt there, that we had to be rescued. I remember my old bedroom, I think. It was a horrible pink colour covered in lace and frills. I think that room was the reason I hate the colour pink now.” She said, lilting her words at the end into a question.

Harry nodded. “You had a massive double bed and you were only a baby, the same age as Tillie and Tyra. I used to be so scared that you’d roll out and seriously hurt yourself because it was much too high. I hated it. You hated pink and frills ever since. You asked me, when we were rescued, if you could have a blue room, and I knew then that you would associate the colour pink with them.”

Ismay looked around at her blue room, at the blue curtains and carpet, the blue bedspread and she smiled slightly. “So I went to the opposite of pink.”

Harry nodded. “What were your questions, love?” He asked her.

“I…do I look like him? Like any of them?” She worried.

“No.” Harry answered immediately. “As I keep saying, your red hair comes from my Mother, and your eyes come from my Father. You look like me, and like my side of the family. You have nothing of them in you.” He said firmly.

“So, he never had red hair?”

Harry shook his head. “Brown hair and pale blue eyes. You look nothing like him, Ismay. Like any of them.”

Ismay let out a shuddering breath of relief.
“I…I keep hearing voices, if I cast my mind back far enough.” She said next. “In…in one of them I can hear a cruel voice telling me that I’d never have a sister. Is that him?”

Harry closed his eyes and sucked in a deep breath. “I…I hoped that you’d never remember any of that.”

“I’m old enough, Mum.” Ismay said. “I’m twenty years old, I’m starting a Healer’s apprenticeship in a few weeks, I’m making my own way in life. I can handle this.”

“You always were a very caring, loving person, Ismay.” Harry said. “I knew you’d be a Hufflepuff when you were seven and I knew that you’d go into Healing when you were fourteen.”

“That’s because you’re the best Mum in the world.”

That made Harry smile, but it dropped off and he sighed.

“I…I was their captive for four very long years, Ismay.”

Ismay nodded, she knew that, and it made her feel sick every time she thought of it.

“You…you were not my only child from that time. I…I fell pregnant seven times, with eight children. You were the first, but…they were a very sexist family. They needed me to have you, as you were the first child, in order to control me, but all the subsequent pregnancies, they…they…”

“They were all girls?” Ismay asked in horror, as she pieced together her memory and what Harry was telling her.

Harry nodded. “Only the last pregnancy was with a boy, but I was rescued before I gave birth and… I’m so sorry, Ismay, but I chose to abort him. I didn’t want him.”

Ismay nodded numbly. “I understand that, Mum.” She said and she fell silent. She looked almost tortured when she asked her next question and it almost broke Harry’s heart. “Does that mean you never wanted me either?”
Harry swallowed at the incredibly difficult question and he wrapped an arm around his daughter and he kissed her.

“I love you, never forget that, but…it is true that I never wanted you, not with him. I was a captive, abducted and kept imprisoned and enslaved, I didn’t chose him as my mate and I never wanted children with him, I wanted nothing from him. I used to imagine that you were your Dad Max’s, and that was before I even mated to him, before I was rescued. It was different with you, Ismay, because you were born, and I loved you so very much and I still do. If I could have had a choice, I never would have put myself through such a thing, nor you, but I did go through it and I could never, ever regret having you. You’re mine.”

Ismay smiled at the possessive note he took.

“I love you too, but…that’s what he meant, when he said that I’d never have a sister?”

Harry nodded. “He…when he found out the sex of the baby via my scans, he would kick them out of me the moment we got home. I’d beg him to stop, to let me keep the baby, but he was always stoic and unmoved and he did it anyway.”

“He’d kick them from you?” Ismay asked, her hazel eyes wide in horror.

Harry nodded. “I’d usually pass out and wake up in a pool of my own blood a few hours later and I’d just know that the baby was gone too. All because he was a sexist pig who didn’t want another daughter.”

“I’m so sorry that you went through that, Mum.” Ismay said.

Harry nodded. “You should have had five or six sisters and a brother or maybe two. I lost one of the pregnancies before I knew if I was having a girl or a boy, but in my mind, I’ve always thought of her as a girl.”

Ismay nodded her understanding and one of her small hands moved to hold Harry’s.

“I remember feeling very afraid and…well some of it is linked to certain objects.” She said.
“What sort of objects, love?” Harry asked her.

“A violin.” She said. “My friend in Hufflepuff played one in the school choir and she kept it in our dorm room, I couldn’t even look at it for so long and I didn’t know why. I didn’t want to ask about it.”

“You were forced to play the violin, you started very young and it would hurt your hands and your fingers and you would be shouted at and punished for not being able to play it. You were also forced to play the piano. Your instructor was a dried up old prune of a hag who would sneer and snark at you. I hated it, I never agreed to it in the first place and I stopped you playing both as soon as I had you free.”

“I…I don’t like hairbrushes. It has to be a comb.”

“Your grandmother used to rip a brush through your hair every morning and she’d hit the top of your head with it if you cried or squirmed.” Harry said. “I knew that you had had bad experiences with brushes, so I always used a comb after that when you were little.” Harry explained.

“What about heeled shoes?” Ismay asked. “I don’t really like them either.”

Harry grimaced. “Almost the same thing, love. They forced you to wear heeled shoes as a toddler. You couldn’t run in them, you couldn’t play, and I hated them. They went as soon as I had you free too, along with your designer wardrobe and stupid skirts and dresses.”

“I wasn’t allowed toys, was I? I still have Cloppity.” Ismay said softly. “My first ever present.”

“You still have Cloppity?” Harry asked in surprise. He hadn’t seen that thing in years and he’d just assumed that Ismay had thrown it away.

“Of course, Mum. Cloppity means a lot to me, even if I don’t really understand the connection I had to it when I was younger, but she’s important to me.”

Ismay stood up and she went to her wardrobe and pulled out a shoe box and brought it over to the bed. She took off the lid and there were a few bits and pieces in it, and there, off to the one corner,
was Cloppity, wrapped in a strip of fabric that Ismay unwrapped gently.

“This is my memory box, it’s the things that I want to keep forever, but Cloppity is getting a little ragged now, especially the mane and tail, so I put her away to protect her.”

Harry took the little horse reverently and he smiled tearfully to look at it.

“I carved this for you myself, from a snapped floorboard from the attic. I carefully peeled back the carpet in the one corner and I kicked out the floorboard and I made this for you myself. I smoothened it out with a discarded metal nail file that I’d found so that you wouldn’t get splinters.”

“Where did the hair come from?” Ismay asked curiously.

Harry laughed and he held the horse up to his head, showing that the hair on the horse matched his.

“You made it with your own hair?” Ismay asked in surprise.

“I cut off my own hair to make it for you, love. It was all I could get a hold of at the time. A floorboard and my own hair.” He said, bringing the horse back down to look at it. “This little horse was all I could get for you for almost three years and it devastated me that I couldn’t give you all that you wanted.”

“I think at that time that all I wanted was you. I remember being very attached to you, and I didn’t like being from your sight.”

Harry nodded. “It was because they wouldn’t dare hurt you in front of me, because I would have torn their heads from their necks if they’d tried. I was still a Dracken, and two of them were human.”

“Was he ever kind?” Ismay asked softly after another bout of silence.

“He never had it in him to be kind, love.” Harry said. “He didn’t know what true kindness was, and his version of it was twisted and wrong. Then he did pay to have me kidnapped to be his mate, if that doesn’t show how twisted and backward they were then I don’t know what does. He wasn’t even kind to his parents or his brothers, or any of his nephews or his niece. He ordered everyone around
like they were his personal servants and he’d sneer at his brothers and sisters-in-law and poke fun at his nephews…he ignored Eudoxia as if she wasn’t there.”

“Dad Max says that money makes people stupid and backward, is that what it was?”

“I always thought that they’d had more money than sense.” Harry agreed with a nod. “They were from ancient money. Your grandfather got his money from his Father, who got it from his Father, I don’t think any of them had worked a day in their damn lives. That’s where it came from. They’d always had money to throw around, it was utterly disposable to them, they didn’t know what it was to work or to earn their own wage, so they thought that people were just objects to be bought, that they were playthings for their entertainment, to do their bidding. They were never the sort of people I would have ever associated with, and I never wanted you exposed to any of them.”

“Is that why I don’t see any of my cousins?” Ismay asked softly.

Harry nodded. “The only one who was ever nice to you was Eudoxia, or Dottie, as she was known. Your male cousins treated you how their Fathers treated you, as they emulated them, so even they were very mean to you. I hated it, and I hated them. All of them.”

Ismay seemed to deliberate with herself for a moment, getting her thoughts back into order, and Harry wondered if she was going to ask him to try to get back into contact with Eudoxia. He had nothing against the little girl he’d known, he had helped as much as he could, even having just been rescued himself, and he had made sure that the Elders knew about how she was treated so that she could be protected, but he still didn’t want any of the remaining family members back in his life, or Ismay’s. He didn’t want a connection to them, he didn’t want to think of them, let alone actually meet them again. Arthurum and Josephicum both looked like Jefferus, they had his face, the same colour hair and eyes, and Harry never wanted to see that face ever again, not even on other people with slight differences.

“There was a girl, she was in my year, but she was a Ravenclaw. I never liked her and I don’t know why, she had never done anything to me. I liked her beforehand, we chatted a bit, smiled at one another as we sat next to one another, but I sort of shut down on her the moment I realised that her name was Ethel. I never considered myself to be the sort of person who is mean to another just because of their name, but I did it to her. Why was that?”

Harry swallowed at the reminder of that horrible name…he flinched involuntarily as he heard Penelope’s voice screeching ‘Ethelana’ in his memories.

“For the first two years of your life, your actual official name was Ethelana.” Harry told Ismay
gently. “I always called you Ismay, right from your birth, it was the name that I wanted for you, but they didn’t care what I wanted and they called you Ethelana without my consent and it was the name on your official birth certificate, after they’d forged my signature. It was only when I got you free and to myself that I was able to change it to Ismay Potter legally, like I’d wanted from the start.”

Ismay looked shocked to hear that. “Ethelana?” She whispered in horror.

Harry nodded. “It was an awful name. They all had awful names…or at least those who were born into the family did. Carterum, Jefferus, Josepticum, Arthurum, Edwardius, Theodorus, and their kids weren’t even spared, landed with names like Petrum, Benneitus and Tomican. I hated that they called you Ethelana, that I wasn’t consulted at all on your name when it is the submissive’s right to name their children. You were always my little Ismay.”

“I definitely like Ismay better.” She said with a wry smile.

“I did too, sweetie. You were always Princess Ismay to us, me and your real Dads’, because Max, Nasta and Sixten have raised you since you were three years old. They love you as their own, you are their own daughter and you have always been Ismay.”

“Do they know about all of this? About my name being Ethelana and about the violin and the hairbrush and…everything?” She asked.

Harry nodded. “You were so young, I didn’t want you even thinking about it, I wanted you to forget and have a normal life, so I did my best not to remind you of any of it so that in time you might forget, at least until you were older and more able to deal with revisiting the memories. I had to talk to someone however, so I turned to my mates. You used to have terrible nightmares, I even remember once, a few days after Leonidas was born, you woke up screaming because you had had a nightmare…you thought that your Dads might hurt Leo while you were asleep.”

Ismay looked shocked. “I thought that they’d hurt a baby?” She asked in a sort of soft horror. “Oh, they must have hated me.”

“No, Ismay, of course they didn’t. They understood, we all did. It was all you knew, and you’d known that your biological Father had beaten unborn babies from me because the vile worm had told you, a two year old, what he’d done. You were rightfully worried when a brand new baby came into the house, and Leonidas was very tiny, smaller than Cecelia, the doll you used to play with, and your Dads were all big, strong men who could throw you high into the air. You were worried for your little brother because of what you had gone through, and you told us that you never wanted Leonidas to be hurt like me and you had been. You cared so much, you loved him so much even when he was
just a few days old. We all understood that. Your Dads did tread a little more carefully around Leonidas after that, at least when you were in the room. They were excessively gentle, they let you help out whenever you wanted, with bathing, feeding, dressing him, making sure his scratch mittens stayed on and when he started moving about you hovered over him, fetched him anything he wanted and when he first started walking, his first steps were towards you.”

“Leo and I have always been close.” Ismay said with a smile.

“You helped me to name him. I don’t know if you’ll remember, but you wanted to get a magazine for him, it had a little lion teddy named Leo in it. I only had three names in mind and Leonidas was one of them, so when you pointed out that the baby could be called Leo, like the lion teddy, I decided on Leonidas. He still has that teddy too, you know.”

“That…I actually helped pick his name?”

Harry nodded with a smile. The two of them dropped back into silence and Harry sighed, but he squeezed Ismay’s hand to give her a silent go-ahead to ask more.

“How…how did you feel when you had Linnea? You know, after what you’d been through before?”

Harry grimaced as he remembered when he’d found out that his second pregnancy with his mates was twins, and that one of them was a girl.

“I was calmer then. I was absolutely manic when pregnant with Leonidas, he was my first pregnancy with my mates after…after everything. I even refused to have him gendered before his birth. I had calmed down enough to have a gender scan with my second pregnancy, mostly because your Dads were so good with you and Leonidas, but when I found out that one of the babies was a girl, I did start hiding from them a little more and spending more time with you and Leo, or if you were in bed, I’d go off by myself. I didn’t like them touching me, or moving too quickly next to me, because my ingrained reflexes told me that they were coming for the baby I was carrying because she was a girl. They were upset, but they understood and they adjusted their behaviour around me to help me feel more at ease. They were wonderful like that. Just small things, like showing me their hands before they touched me, putting objects on the table near me instead of handing it directly to me. I can’t even tell you how amazing they were and just how much they put up with from me, all because they loved me so much.”

“Was it easier because you were carrying Lars too?”
Harry sighed. “It was easier with that pregnancy, but it made it more difficult after, because I convinced myself that they let me keep Linnea because of Lars, so when I fell pregnant with Mavia it was worse, because she was a singleton, and she was a girl.”

“But they proved you wrong.”

Harry smiled then. “Of course they did. They weren’t like them, they were normal people. They loved every child I gave them, and they took exceptional care of me, you and all following babies.”

“When did you finally relax?”

“I was still a little anxious when I had Adelaide, but I finally relaxed with Kelyn and that was before we knew he was a boy too. I felt absolutely no stress or anxiety and I immediately agreed to have him gendered, in front of my mates too, without a single hint of hesitancy. I was so comfortable, and we, my Dracken and I that is, we felt calm and confident with our mates. I finally trusted them completely, and I believed in them and their abilities as Fathers, and that day is still one of our collective happy memories. The day that I finally trusted them enough, with myself and with my unborn children, after what I’d been through.”

Ismay was quiet for several minutes, and Harry stayed silent too, letting her think everything through and ask what she wanted. This was easier than he’d imagined that it might be. He was upset to be thinking of it again, especially after so long of living his life without thinking about such things, it had been at least five months since he’d last had any thoughts about the Perrots or what he’d suffered through, but he wasn’t panicking, he wasn’t ready to crawl into his bed, cover his head with his duvet and cry. He was doing alright and it felt sort of good to be getting all of this out in the open with Ismay.

“What happened to him, Mum?” She finally asked.

“Your biological Father?” He asked, just to be sure.

Ismay nodded. “Was he brought to justice for what he did to you? For what he did to us both?”

“Yes, my love. He was brought to justice, along with his parents for their part in what they did. All in all, six people were brought to justice for their part in my abduction and captivity.”
“Six?” Ismay queried.

Harry nodded. “Among those accused of abducting me was a Dracken Elder and a guard of the Counsel Halls. I’d been drugged with a laxative and when I went to use the bathroom, escorted by a man named Elder Sesto Messana, who had put the laxative in my drink in the first place, he and a guard that he’d bribed snatched me and abducted me and that was how I ended up with the Perrots.”

“Was that their last name?”

Harry nodded.

“But…are they in prison? Can they ever be freed, like if they get parole?”

“Ismay, sweetie, Dracken justice is a bit different to what you’re thinking. I…I don’t want to upset you, I would rather you didn’t know any of these details, but I do believe that you’re old enough to know now that you’re asking about it, but those accused of such things in our Dracken society are…well, love, they’re executed. The six people involved in what happened to us, they were all executed, including your biological Father, his parents, the Elder, the guard and one of your Father’s vile friends.”

Ismay looked a bit shocked, but she nodded slowly. Her face steeled in the next moment. “Good.” She said sharply. “Those people deserved it for what they did to you, Mum. Abducting you and selling you to a life of pain and misery like they did. I’m glad that they’re all dead and can never bother us again.”

Harry pulled her into a sideways hug and he kissed her temple.

“I have always loved you more than anything else, I only ever wanted to protect you.”

“You used to stand in front of me, didn’t you? Sometimes I have nightmares of…well, I’m very little, just below your hip and…I just…it’s hard to explain.” She said, frustrated. “It’s always fuzzy and vague and incomplete.”

“Take your time, love.” Harry encouraged.
“It’s more a sound, I can hear the thud as he hits you and you sort of curl up while still on your feet, but you have a hand on my shoulder and you keep pushing me back, keeping me away from him. Did that ever happen?”

“Quite a few times.” Harry admitted. “Once you even saw him hit me to the floor and you dived onto my chest to try and stop him from hurting me. Of course I rolled right over and curled up over you to keep you safe.”

“It was every day, wasn’t it?” She asked sadly.

“I used to dread waking up.” Harry nodded. “Before I had you…there were times when I wanted to die in my sleep. But if I had, then I would never have had you, or gotten to live my life. I wouldn’t have had any of the fourteen wonderful children that I have now, I wouldn’t have three amazing, loving mates. I would have had my life cut so very short, and I would never have realised that there was a light in that darkness, I wouldn’t have felt the all-consuming love that I do now, I would never have experienced a loving, meaningful relationship or the joy of raising children how I felt that they should be raised. Above all else, sweetie, we’re free now. We’re safe and loved and happy. If I had given in all those years ago, that would have been the true tragedy…remember, there is always a reason to keep on living. There is always a way out, even in such a bleak, dark place that seemed to have no end. I was trapped, I saw no way out, my only hope was of outside rescue and I didn’t know when that would be coming, if it ever would come, but after I had you…I refused to even think of leaving you alone with those people. I held out and held on for rescue, even though every day was torture, was a new day in a living hell, I wouldn’t have left you with them alone. The end finally came though, the light came so suddenly that it was almost blinding, it took just an hour and from one moment to the next, we went from captives, living in terror, to being free.”

Ismay turned her head and burrowed into Harry’s chest and he just held her and smoothed her flame red hair.

“Was there anything else that you wanted to ask?” He asked her.

Ismay was quiet for a moment, but Harry felt her shake her head.

“Not right now, but…can I ask again if I think of something else?”

“I’m your Mother, you can ask me anything that you want, whenever you want to.” Harry told her. “If you think of anything else, we can have another sit down like this one and go over it all.
Whatever you need, sweetie. I'm always here for you.”

Ismay swallowed and sat back. She nodded. “Thank you, Mum. Can I have some time alone to process this?”

Harry nodded and he stood immediately. He kissed his daughter’s head and looked into those sad, hazel eyes.

“Above all else, Ismay, remember that you are loved.” He said gently.

He left her room and he realised that he needed his own moment alone. So much for not needing to crawl into bed and cry, as that is exactly what he did. At least he didn’t cover himself over with the duvet.

“Here you are!” Max said. “Are you tired, love? I…are you crying?” Max demanded then and he hurried over to check on him. He sniffed him over for injuries immediately, but it was the mental scars that Harry would always have that were causing him injury.

Harry surged up and he latched onto Max and he cried and cried.

“Memories?” Max asked perceptively.

Harry nodded and clung to Max tighter. Those big arms wrapped around him securely and one large hand rubbed his back soothingly while the other cupped the back of his head, making him feel so safe and secure.

“What brought this on, love?” Max asked him gently. “You haven’t had an episode this bad in years. I don’t think you’ve had any sort of episode for several months now, not even a small one. You were fine at lunch, what happened?”

“Is…Ismay…she…she asked some questions about…about them.” Harry sobbed brokenly. “I always said that…that if she asked and she…she was old enough that I would…I would answer them honestly. I never knew it would be so hard to tell her about it!” He cried.
“Harry, love, you should have gotten one of us to sit with you, to help you. I know that what happened to you both is a very private thing that you share, but she doesn’t remember much, if anything of that time. She was too young to remember it. This would have been harder on you and you didn’t need to do it alone.”

Harry nodded. “I was fine until…until I left the room.” He said, sniffing hard.

Max nodded and he rocked him, as if he were one of the kids. Harry was surprised to find himself shaking.

“I always knew that she would ask questions. I knew that she would be curious. She knew a few things, but going over it again, it just raked it all back up. It feels like it happened just yesterday.”

“You’re going to be fine.” Max told him. “You’re a strong, wonderful man. Do you need an appointment with Healer Vasey? We still have his address if you need a talk.”

Harry shook his head and scrubbed at his face. “I’ll be fine, it was just a nasty shock. It was almost like I’d convinced myself that she’d never ask, because I’ve been waiting for it for all these years, and she’s twenty now, and suddenly she asks out of the blue.”

“It must have been building for some time.” Max said.

Harry nodded. “She said that she’d been thinking of it for a while.” Harry mumbled. “I hope this doesn’t change our relationship together.”

“Is that what you’re worried about?” Max asked, pulling back a little to look into his face. “Harry, Ismay loves you. This isn’t going to change her mind or make her stop loving you. She just wants to understand where she came from, what happened in her life, and that’s normal.”

Harry nodded again.

“I saw your abandoned tea…that’s why I came up to look for you, well, one of the reasons anyway. Do you want a fresh cup?”
Harry nodded, but he stayed clutching onto Max. His biggest mate chuckled.

“Okay, I get the hint, let me carry you down. It’s been a while since you let any of us pamper you like you deserve.”

That made Harry smile slightly.

“There we go, I knew I’d get a smile from you one way or another. Some pampering and some tea, a lot of baby cuddles too, because those kids are missing you, that’s the other reason that I came up to look for you. They’re driving the three of us crazy down there…oh no, wait, what’s that phrase I’ve been told I have to use? Cray cray.”

That made Harry laugh out loud, and Max smiled in accomplishment as he carried his mate down to the living room. He gave a look to Nasta and Sixten as he settled Harry down purposefully between them both before he left to get a fresh cup of tea for his mate.

“What happened, älskling?” Sixten asked him quietly, aware of the playing children on the floor.

Harry swallowed and shook his head, turning to put himself on Nasta, facing Sixten.

“It finally happened.” He said softly. “All these years waiting for it, and today is the day that Ismay asked about them.”

Nasta and Sixten understood immediately and strong hands touched him, soothed him.

“How did she handle it?” Sixten asked him.

“Well enough.” Harry said. “She wanted to be alone after, I understand that, I wanted to be alone too. It must be hard to hear that your Father and his family were cruel, abusive fucks.” He hissed. “She shouldn’t have to deal with that pressure.”

“She’s a good girl, with a strong head on her shoulders.” Nasta said. “She knows that we love her and that we will look after her. She has always been more ours than she was ever his. He conceived her, but we raised her, together, and that is what matters most in all of this.”
Harry nodded and he accepted the cup from Max as he came back into the room and handed it to him. It had a good glob of honey stirred through it and Harry smiled as he smelt the comforting scent of it and took his first sip. He felt better already.

He could do this, he could be strong for Ismay in all her curiosity, as awful as the answers would be to whatever questions she had, but Harry had an amazing support system, and Ismay was not the only one who was so loved, he was as well and he beamed up at his three mates, who looked at him in bemusement for his rapid mood change. They might not always understand, but they tried and they were always here for him, and he adored them for it. He was the luckiest person in the world and he had meant what he said to Ismay, it would have been devastating if he had died during his captivity and never known this level of love and care, without knowing that he could absolutely overcome what he had gone through.

There was always a way out, and there was always a light at the end of the tunnel, even if it wasn’t visible at the time. Sometimes all you needed was a different perspective, and now, on the other side of that tunnel, firmly in the light, it was almost impossible to see the dark, to imagine having never known this love and connection to other people. He had lived through it, and sometimes it was difficult for him to remember a time before Max, Nasta and Sixten, before their fourteen children. But he was on the other side now, he was safe, he was loved, but best of all, he was finally, finally, completely and utterly free.

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Nasta Tabrien Delericey – February 3 1960 – 57 years old
Sixten Tage Axelson – March 15 1965 – 52 years old
Maximilius Diadesen Maddison – September 19 1966 – 51 years old
Harry James Potter – July 31 1980 – 37 years old

Ismay Potter – November 29 1997 – 20 years old - Female - Hufflepuff
Leonidas Potter-Maddison - March 4 2002 – 15 years old - Male - Gryffindor
Linnea Potter-Axelson – July 10 2003 – 14 years old - Female - Ravenclaw
Lars Potter-Axelson – July 10 2003 – 14 years old - Male - Ravenclaw
Mavia Potter-Maddison – May 18 2004 – 13 years old – Female - Gryffindor – Dracken
Adelaide Potter-Maddison – April 11 2006 – 11 years old – Female - Gryffindor - Dracken
Kelyn Potter-Delericey – October 14 2006 – 11 years old – Male - Slytherin
Hector Potter-Maddison – August 1 2008 – 9 years old - Male - Dracken
Rhett Potter-Delericey – June 16 2009 – 8 years old - Male - Dracken
A/N: This is the end of the journey, lovelies. I truly hope that you’ve enjoyed the ride, as bumpy as it has been at times. I was going to make more of the epilogue, but I realised that I didn’t need to in the end, as the most important thing is showing that Harry and Ismay are completely freed of the shackles of their past. The thought of what he went through is always going to be upsetting to Harry, but it no longer controls his life or dictates what he does. He can leave the house by himself, he’s no longer anxious about his unborn babies being harmed, he no longer fears arguing or disagreeing, he’s normal and after this hellish fic, normal is absolutely wonderful.

I hope you liked the little insight into their future family, I decided it was a brilliant idea to set the epilogue in January 2018, but Harry and his mates do go on to have more children in the future and, though everything isn’t always sunshine and rainbows, Harry is always safe throughout it and after everything he went through, being safe and loved is the greatest thing in the world.

StarLight Massacre. X
chapters, but we do have a happily ever after waiting to finish with.

StarLight Massacre. X

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