You Are Home, Harry

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Summary

After the tragedy at the Ministry, Harry returns to Privet Drive for the summer. Can he survive Vernon? What happens when a mysterious letter shows up? Will Harry ever be able to move on from losing his best-friend and Godfather?

Notes

I started writing this story for my sister, but realized very quickly that I wanted to share it with everyone. I will end up taking a few liberties with magic, and canon hardly exists in my fic.

All characters and settings associated with Harry Potter rightfully belong to J.K. Rowling.
Prologue:

He had done his best to stop the bleeding, but he knew that he was in serious trouble. The headache, dizziness, and cold sweat that he was experiencing told him that, but he could do nothing except keep moving.

“Just a bit further,” he told himself.

He figured if he could just make it back to his house, he would be able to send word to his remaining friends that he needed help. That was what he was hoping, anyways. He wasn’t even sure of who would come, since the latest incident he was involved in resulted in his Godfather and best friend dead, with one of his other best friends permanently injured. God, he needed to stop that train of thought right there, he simply couldn’t think of Ron or Hermione, and especially not Sirius. Not now.

It was funny, with him being in Slytherin, you would think he would have hated Gryffindor’s on principle. But something about Hermione’s know-it-all attitude, and Ron’s inability to stop eating attracted him, and by his second year at school, he had a solid friendship with them. Now… Now Ron and Sirius were dead, and Hermione was most likely never going to recover. He couldn’t help the tears that started flowing down his face at the thought of them, the tears that threatened to overcome his body and cause painful sobs that he wouldn’t be able to stop. But there was a time and place for that, and if he didn’t get help soon, it wouldn’t matter that they died to save him, because he would be joining them.

It was with one of the greatest efforts of his life that he pulled himself together, and continued towards his home.
Harry Potter was NOT looking forward to going back to the Dursley’s. He hated them, he hated their stupid house, and he hated the stupid summer. This year was definitely going to be the worst. You see, during the school year, Harry had been lured into a trap set by Voldemort, a trap that lead to the death of 2 of the people closest to him, and left another of his friends in a coma, one from which anyone doubted she would ever wake.

No, Harry was definitely not looking forward to going “home” to the Dursley’s. The last thing he wanted was to have an abundance of time on his hands to think about everything that he had done wrong, and everything he wished he could go back and change. And so, when Harry made his way off the train, it was with great reluctance. Harry slowly picked his way through the crowd, trunk and bird cage in tow, looking for the people he least wanted to see. Unfortunately, his eyes landed all too soon on his Uncle Vernon, who had for some reason, chosen to come and get him by himself. As Harry made his way over to him, his uncle’s great, beady eyes locked on Harry in a way that made his skin prickle with discomfort.

“Boy!” His uncle said, as soon as Harry was within hearing distance.

“Hello, Uncle Vernon,” Harry replied, keeping his tone as neutral as possible.

“Don’t ‘hello’ me with that tone of voice, boy. You damn well better show me the respect I deserve,” His uncle snarled, turning slightly purple with rage.

Well, he tried to keep his tone neutral. Guess that’s hard to do when all you can think about is the ride home sitting next to someone who wished you dead.

“I got a letter, boy,” his uncle said, voice low and deadly, dripping with something that made Harry’s skin crawl. “It was from those freaks that you love so much. Professor Dumbledore. He informed me of the… unfortunate passing of your Godfather.” Uncle Vernon finished with a sound of delight in his voice, but said no more. Leaving his statement at that, he spun around on his heel, and started walking towards the lot.

Oh no, Harry was definitely not looking forward to this summer.

The car ride home was silent, save for Uncle Vernon talking very quietly to himself, something Harry had only heard him do when he nearly lost his mind trying to outrun very persistent owls, just weeks before Harry’s 11th birthday. When they arrived back at home, Uncle Vernon did nothing but glance at Harry once more, muttered something under his breath, and retreated inside. Harry sat there and tried to get his emotions under control while he had some peace, before getting out of the car and retrieving his trunk and empty owl cage.

After making the short walk from the car into the house, Harry quickly made his way up the stairs, hoping to avoid his relatives for as long as possible. Thankfully, no one tried to stop him, and he made it to the safety of his room without any interruption. After taking a look around his small room, Harry left his trunk by the door, moved the cage to its spot on his desk, and threw himself down on his bed. Something as menial as taking the train home and riding in the car to house shouldn’t have left him this tired, but all he could think about was sleeping. So, with that thought, Harry rolled over and drifted off into oblivion.

It started off the same as usual, Harry watching Hermione get hit by some mysterious curse that made his nerves tingle, fighting side by side with Neville while trying to find a way out. Eventually meeting up with Ron, Luna, and Ginny, only to end up seeing Ron get hit in the back by the killing curse, the remnants of his laughter still etched in his forehead, eyes hauntingly empty, his lips slightly
parted as he tried to say his last word, just before he hit the ground. The dream continued with Neville and himself dragging Hermione through the Department of Mysteries followed by a sobbing Ginny and a very sober Luna. He had no idea the direction they were going, just that they needed to go. When they made it back to the brain room, they were engaged by no less than 5 Death Eaters, which is when Harry saw his opening, and took off running towards the door the Death Eaters themselves had come through, making sure they saw he had the prophecy.

Noticing as he ran through the door that he was back in the room with the veil, he ran to the dais and climbed onto it. The Death Eaters that were in pursuit all stopped to look at him, wands pointed directly at him. One of the Death Eaters stepped forward, and pulled off their mask.

“Potter, you are such a foolish boy. You WILL hand over the prophecy, or we will kill him!” sneered Lucius Malfoy.

That was when Harry noticed that the biggest Death Eater held a gagged Neville closely to his chest. Feeling nothing but hopelessness, Harry held his hand out for Malfoy to take the prophecy from him, when suddenly, the doors all around them were blasted opened, followed by the people he most wanted to see: Sirius, Lupin, Tonks, Moody, and Kingsley. In the moment of chaos caused by the arriving Order members, Harry took his chance to dive off the dais, where he managed to catch a glimpse of Neville crawling along the floor. Dodging spells as he went, he made his way over to him.

“Neville?! Are you alright?” Harry asked, panicked.

Neville, having managed to get the gag out of his mouth, answered, “Yes, Harry, I’m alright.”

At that moment, there was an explosion on the wall above them, showering them with huge pieces of falling stone. One of the pieces, Harry saw, hit Neville in the head hard enough to knock him out cold. Malfoy seemed to notice that Harry and Neville were otherwise occupied, and took his chance to aim a curse at them. Fortunately, Lupin seemingly appeared out of thin air, and deflected the curse.

“Yes! Take the prophecy, round up the others, and GO!” Lupin shouted.

As Harry stood there, trying to decide whether or not he should follow the order, he caught movement in the corner of his eye, and saw a furious Dumbledore sweeping down the stairs toward the fray. All thought of following Lupin’s orders went out the window, and Harry could do nothing but watch in awe as Dumbledore easily ended the fighting all around the room, making it look effortless as he went along. Only Sirius and Bellatrix were left fighting, and Harry could plainly hear Sirius taunting Bellatrix as if their duel was something they did every day. That was when it happened. Sirius had miscalculated one of Bellatrix’s spells and the jet of green light hit him square in the chest...

Harry woke up, screaming and covered in a cold sweat, tears streaming down his face.

No, this summer was definitely not something he was looking forward to.
Chapter 2

Chapter by DracoXHarry

Chapter Notes

This chapter has potential triggers. You have been warned.

The next two weeks continued at about the same pace for Harry. When he wasn’t having the reoccurring nightmare featuring the deaths and injuries to the people closest to him, he was locked in his room and practically forgotten about until mealtimes, when he would get random bits of food and water pressed into his room via cat flap. It was on such a day, when Harry was getting one of his “meals,” that a manila envelope followed the food.

“Aunt Petunia? What is this?” Harry asked, sounding confused.

“I’ve no idea, Harry. It came in the mail a few days ago, but your uncle refused to let you have it. You will read it, and hide it. If he finds it, I will deny ever giving it to you.” Aunt Petunia said, sounding a little snippy.

Harry waited until he heard her retreating from his door before he opened the large envelope. What he saw made his heart stop. It was a letter from his mother, followed by some official looking documents with numbers and addresses on them. Could this even be possible? How? Why? Why now? He fumbled his way back to his bed and sat down to read the letter that couldn’t possibly exist, carefully placing the other documents on the bed beside him.

1 October, 1981

Dear Harry,

I’m so sorry that you have to read this, as it means that your father and I are no longer with you. It also means that you are in the last place I ever wanted you to end up, and I can only hope that they are taking proper care of you, though knowing my sister’s husband, I highly doubt that. I hope that you’ll forgive us, one day, for sending you there. It was the only option, Harry, as I’m sure by now you’ve heard about the blood protection offered to you by living with my sister. I will not go into specifics, but as long as you can call that place home, the protection will extend to you. You must not leave there until you are 17.

With that being said, your father and I have arranged a number of properties for you to choose from once you are ready to leave (I think you’ll quite like the house in Somerset). I’m sure that you’ve had a chance to check your vaults at Gringotts, and you’ve noticed we left you quite a bit of money. Your father figured that would be enough to carry you through school and take care of whatever you needed, so we set aside the rest in another vault that will become yours once you turn 17. I wish we could do more for you, baby, but I have the most horrible feeling that we aren’t going to make it through this war. While I do obviously hope that we do, and get to see you grow up, we have done everything in our power to ensure your continued survival in the event of our deaths. We love you, very, very much, Harry. Never forget that.
With all of my love,

Lily

P.S. Should the need ever arise, where you’ve no one else to turn to, look for a man named Severus Snape. You are able to trust him, and he will absolutely help you. Show him this letter, if you must.

By the time he was finished reading, Harry had tears streaming down his face. He quickly read through the letter, once, twice, three times. He couldn’t believe it. His mother’s hand writing was beautiful. And, though he was pretty sure he was imagining it, he could swear it smelled of a sweet perfume. Harry read the letter once again, this time not really taking in the words, just looking at his mother’s writing. He had to have been dreaming; a quick and angry pinch on his leg, which was sure to bruise, proved otherwise. Harry laid his head back against the wall, closed his eyes, and took a deep, shuddering breath.

When he got his emotions under control again, he read the last line of letter once again. “Look for Severus Snape” his mother had said. It would be a cold day in hell before he turned to his head of house ever again. Snape had failed him last year, failed Harry when he needed him most, and so many people had been hurt because of it. After carefully folding the letter back up and putting it carefully back in the envelope, Harry picked up the other documents to take a look at them. The first page was a list, in his mother’s writing, of about 6 different addresses, some of which were listed in the country, with 2 listed in America. Did he really have this many properties? The last address was listed in Somerset, which according to his mother, was the house he would enjoy.

The second group of papers was on official Gringotts letterhead. It listed just how much money his parents had left him, and Harry had to read it twice to make sure he hadn’t added a zero or two. It also listed all other items in the vault that he would inherit when he turned 17, and it seemed to go on forever. It appeared that this was everything that previous Potter’s had owned, and that, Gods willing, he would someday own. Harry blanched at the thought of Uncle Vernon finding out just how much money Harry truly had, and vowed that he would never find out.

When he was done looking over the list, Harry put all the papers, including his mother’s letter, back in the manila envelope, and stooped down to the floor to pull open the floorboard under his bed. After making sure the package was secure in there, Harry got up, walked to the door of his room, and retrieved his food. A can of tuna and some crackers… Wonderful. But even with the dismal lunch, Harry was feeling happier than he had since the incident at the ministry, and he was determined to ride this high for as long as he could. If only it could last…

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Harry wasn’t sure when he fell asleep; only that it was very late when he woke. It didn’t take him long to notice what it was that woke him up. Someone was standing in the doorway, and they had hit the tray of food and water that was sitting by the door, effectively knocking it over. Harry scrambled to get his glasses on, and only calmed down a fraction when he had them on and saw who was in the doorway.

“Uncle Vernon?” Harry asked tentatively.

“Keep your voice down, or you’ll regret it boy.” His uncle replied.

“What do you- What did I do wrong?” Harry said, hoping his voice wasn’t trembling like the rest of him was.

“For too long, boy, you have failed to show me the respect I deserve. We thought we could beat it
into you growing up, but apparently, that wasn’t enough. I couldn’t touch you when your Godfather was in the picture, but he’s not here anymore, is he? Now you’re going to learn the hard way what happens when you disrespect me.” Uncle Vernon nearly whispered, turning to close the door as he spoke to Harry.

Harry was paralyzed. His brain seemed to stop working, and he could do nothing but watch as his uncle turned the lock on the door handle, something Harry had never bothered to use, because it was always locked from the outside. His thoughts all came back in a rush as Uncle Vernon started to undo his belt, and unbutton his pants.

“Uncle Vernon, please. I’m sorry for disrespecting y-“ Harry started, only to be stopped when his uncle wrapped his meaty hand around his throat.

“One more word, boy, and I’ll be the last thing you ever see.” He said, still using the hoarse whisper, causing Harry’s skin to crawl.

Harry was helpless to do anything, and he was pretty sure his uncle was serious, so he only nodded. He would only have one chance to scream for help, and he needed Vernon to think that he was about to let this happen. When his uncle released his throat, Harry did nothing except lay there, hoping he would see his resignation. This seemed to placate Vernon, who moved his hand from Harry’s throat, down Harry’s chest, to his crotch, where he greedily rubbed his hands over his groin. Harry could see his other hand in his pants, furiously stroking himself, before his uncle had flipped him on to his stomach, and roughly started pulling his pants down.

Harry knew his moment was coming, so he started breathing deeply, trying to get as much breath into his lungs as he could, so that he could yell loud enough to wake someone. He waited until Vernon took his hand off of his back, most likely to get his pants completely off, when Harry knew this was it. He started to make a sound, when suddenly; he had a brilliant thought, and decided less than a second later that this would be more effective than trying to yell for help. With all of his might, he swung his left foot back, and up, aiming for what he hoped were his uncle’s balls. With a satisfying crunching sound, Harry knew he had made contact with something, and that was all he needed.

When not a moment later Vernon was screaming with pain, Harry started moving. By the time he was off his bed, he had his pants pulled up, ready for Vernon to try something else. It seemed, however, that all his attacker could do was flop around in pain. Giving a vindictive smile, Harry reached under his bed and ripped the floorboard loose, grabbing the envelope containing his mother’s letter, and documents pertaining to him. He quickly pulled out from underneath the bed, grabbed his trunk and bird cage, and strode towards his door, which blasted open of its own accord with little thought from Harry. In the hallway, he was greeted by his deathly white aunt, and for a second, he reconsidered what he was about to do.

Shaking his head to get rid of the guilt he was feeling because he was ignoring his mother’s letter by leaving, he said, “Aunt Petunia… I have to go. I don’t care what you do with that foul bastard, but I’m not staying here.” And with that, he lightly pushed past Petunia, dragging his trunk and the cage loudly behind him as he descended the stairs.
Harry knew that he should turn back, that he should trust that Aunt Petunia would throw Vernon to the wolves. But part of him, his darker half, believed that she would have done nothing to stop it, had she known it was happening. So with that thought in his mind, Harry quickly walked the length of the street, heading towards Magnolia Crescent, as he had just a few years before…

When he reached the wall at which he had previously been picked up by the Knight Bus, he took a few moments to gather his thoughts. Was he really about to disobey his mother’s final wishes and leave the protection offered by his aunt? Did he really want to go back to a house where his uncle had tried to do something so horrible and foul to him? Obviously, he knew the answer was no, but it was still with hesitation that he dutifully stuck his arm out, and waited for the deafening bang to announce the arrival of said bus.

Mere seconds later, the triple-decked, violently purple bus popped into existence; this time, though, Harry didn’t give Stan, the conductor he’d dealt with the last time, the chance to question him. After paying the Galleon fee that it would cost to get him from Surrey to Somerset, Harry quickly retreated to the upper floor of the bus. He chose the bed nearest the stairs, and had barely stuffed his trunk under the bed before the bus shot forward, nearly crushing his legs in the oncoming torrent of beds. He quickly jumped on the bed and leaned his head back on the pillows, silently praying that it wouldn’t take long to get there.

Harry must have fell into a light sleep, because the next thing he knew, Stan was hovering over him, gently shaking him.

“Nearly there, ‘Arry.” Stan said happily when Harry finally opened his eyes.

A nod of confirmation was all Harry gave, and quickly sat up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes as he did so. After a sharp turn sent a bed cascading into his, Harry decided to wait for the bus to come to a banging stop before he even thought about trying to retrieve his trunk, and instead allowed his mind to wander.

Harry was starting to grow worried the longer he thought about what he was doing. He was running away from the one place in the world where Voldemort couldn’t get to him, and not only that, but he was heading to a place that had most likely been abandoned for 15, nearly 16, years; a place he had only just found out about earlier that day. He was mental, and he knew it. He was starting to second-guess his decision, and was about to yell down to Stan to just take him back, when the bus came to a sudden stop, nearly tossing Harry from the bed.

“Well, I guess that takes care of that.” Harry thought to himself.
Honestly, if the place turned out to be run down, he could just take the Knight Bus back to his aunt and uncles, couldn’t he? He would take a look around and make his decision then. Harry quickly bent down to grab his trunk, grabbed Hedwig’s cage, and made his way down the stairs to the first floor of the bus.

“Thanks Stan, Ernie.” Harry said, nodding his head to driver as he left the bus.

“Bye, Harry. Good luck!” Stan replied with his good-natured attitude.

Harry took a sweeping look over his shoulder as the bus sped out of sight, wishing for a split second that he had stayed on and gone back to Privet Drive. As he stood there looking at where the bus disappeared, Harry noticed the smell of what he assumed was country-side England, which smelled of farms, and flowers, and unless he was mistaken, freshly mown grass.

Harry truly looked around at his surroundings for the first time, and noticed that he had been dropped off on a rather tight street, right in front of some rather impressive looking gates. He looked to the left and to the right, but all he could see was a mossy covered wall, maybe 5-6 feet tall, with huge, dense Alder trees thickly placed behind the wall, making it impossible to see what was behind them. He turned around and noted that there was nothing behind him, save for the solitary road he came in on, and huge open fields, which were occasionally dotted with more trees.

“Well, at least I’ll have some privacy here.” Harry thought, trying to keep his reservations about what he was doing in the back of his mind.

With a deep breath that he let slowly hiss out, Harry walked up to the gates and reached a hand out to try and open them. The gates, seemingly having a mind of their own, started opening the minute he raised his hand up. Shaking his head, Harry started walking down the tree lined drive, wondering how far off the house was. As he walked, he cast a Lumos so that he could avoid tripping over a pothole or other unseen hazard.

Harry was able to catch glimpses of a large building through the trees as he made his way along the long driveway, and after a few minutes of walking more, he had arrived at a large parking area in front of the house. If ‘house’ could be used to describe what he was looking at. ‘Manor’ was the first thing that came to mind, actually.

“Oh, Gods, what is this place?” Harry said aloud, his amazement getting the better of him.

The voice that spoke from next to him just seconds later did not cause him to almost drop his wand, and it most certainly DID NOT cause him to scream like a girl, thank you very much.

“Master Harry... That is the Manor of your ancestors, Potter Manor, sir.” Said a house-elf, who proceeded to sink into a low bow when Harry had turned his wand toward the elf.

“Bleeding hell, who are you?” Harry asked, heart beating quickly.

“I am Meemy, Master Harry, sir,” Meemy replied, once again sinking into a low bow, “I have been here since as long as I can remember. I come from a long line of house-elves who have served the Potter family for many generations.”

“How long were you next to me, then?” Harry said, asking the first thing that came to mind, trying to wrap his head around the fact that he owned a manor.

“Since Master Harry’s arrival, of course. It would be amiss for a house-elf to not provide any assistance Master might need.” Meemy said, a look of slight indignation crossing her face.
“Right, well, that’s all fine and good, but can you please let me know when you are there. I nearly stunned you!” Harry said, finally relaxing the grip on his wand and turning to look back at the ‘house’.

“As Master wishes, of course.” Meemy said, sinking into yet another bow, a slight smirk marring her features.

From what he could see in the moonlight, Harry was looking up at a 2 story manor. He wanted to explore the grounds, but he was honestly dead tired. He would wait until the morning and see what they had to offer when he could properly see.

“Meemy, would you mind showing me to an available room? I’d very much like to get some sleep. And I’m sure that I woke you with my arrival. What time is it, anyways?” Harry asked.

“Just after 2 in the morning, Master Harry.” Meemy replied.

Harry gave a great yawn that was cut short by Meemy grabbing his hand and pulling him into the house. Harry tried to protest that he had left his trunk, but when he turned to look, he noticed it was gone.

“I’ve already sent it to your room, Master Harry.” Meemy said, knowingly interpreting what Harry had been about to say.

Harry looked around the long hallway as Meemy brought him into the Manor, catching sight of what appeared to be a study, followed by a dining room to his left, before Meemy turned right and swept him up a set of stairs. They ended up on a galleried landing, with doors seeming to go in every direction. Meemy brought Harry almost directly across the landing, and opened the door into a large room.

The first thing Harry saw was straight across the room. It was a large 4 poster bed with a beautiful white canopy, beside which stood two nightstands that Harry walked over to inspect. He went to the nightstand on the right, which upon closer examination, Harry noticed had a picture of him and his mother on it, where he couldn’t have been more than a couple months old. Harry picked the picture up and sank down on the bed, noticing as he did that Meemy was quietly leaving.

“Good night, Meemy.” Harry said, noticing her nod once as she left.

Harry looked back down at the picture. He knew Lily was beautiful, but he had never seen a picture of her where she looked so carefree and relaxed. He leaned back on to the pillows, held the picture close, and closed his eyes.

Tonight, he wouldn’t have nightmares. Tonight, he would be comforted by the thoughts of his parents.

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Harry awoke some hours later; light shining wonderfully through the windows on the left side of the room. Harry slowly sat up and noticed that Meemy had obviously come back in the room at some hour of the night and covered him up, moving the picture back to its place on the nightstand beside him. Harry sat up, stretching his arms high above his head, feeling more rested than he had since the incident at the ministry. As he stretched, he took a moment to see how the room had been setup.

He noted that the room itself was painted in a deep red, maybe merlot or currant? There were two chairs sitting next to a large window to the left of the room, which Harry assumed overlooked part of the grounds. Continuing along the left wall led his eyes to a door, a few feet from the door that
Meemy had brought him through the night before. He continued to skim his eyes around the room, seeing that to the right of the room, there was a fireplace, with a loveseat and comfortable looking armchair, both set in shades of deep red, sitting directly in front of it. Further to the right of the room was another door, which led to who knew where. As he was sitting there looking around, Harry’s bladder made itself uncomfortably known, and he needed to know where the bathroom was.

“Meemy?” Harry called out.

*Pop*

“Yes, Master Harry?” Meemy replied.

“Would you mind telling me where things are around here? I need the loo.” Harry said, squirming slightly.

“Of course, Master Harry. If Master is wishing, he could use either door to relieve himself. Master James and Misses Lily had separate bathrooms and dressing rooms. Would you like to use Master James’?” Meemy questioned.

Harry nodded.

“That would be this one.” Meemy said, opening the door that Harry had first seen. “Will Master be needing anything else?”

“No, Meemy, thank you. Breakfast in a while, perhaps?” Harry asked.

“Yes, Master Harry. It’ll be ready whenever you are.” Meemy responded, disappearing with a loud crack.

Harry quickly bounded off the bed, heading for the loo. He stopped short when he walked into his father’s closet, noticing that it smelled faintly of dark, musky patchouli. He inhaled the slightly intoxicating scent for a moment before pressing through the wardrobe, locating the bathroom directly through the next door. He looked around, stunned at the massive bathroom. He observed the huge, detached bathtub, and a stone-tiled shower that could easily fit 6 people. The bathroom was set in a sharp white color, with ebony cabinets, and beautiful, grey ceramic tiles on the floor. Harry stood looking for a moment, stunned by how well designed it was.

After another sharp remind from his bladder, Harry located the toilet, which was sat at the end of a sizable single sink vanity. Quickly relieving himself, Harry washed up and headed back through the closet into the room in search of his trunk. He needed a good wash before he took on the day, and he would be damned if he wasn’t going to take advantage of that shower. After locating and extracting his clothes, he made his way back into the bathroom, turning the tap of the shower to hot before stripping out of clothes. Being naked suddenly reminded him of why he was there in the first place, and he viciously kicked his pants across the floor.

“Meemy?” Harry called, wrapping a towel around his waist.

*pop*

“Yes, Master Harry?” Meemy queried.

“I never want to see these clothes again, please. Vanish them, burn them, I don’t care.” Harry said turning his back to the elf as he did so. He couldn’t bring himself to look her in the face, knowing he was weak for not doing it himself, but Meemy didn’t ask questions.
A few seconds passed before he heard the loud crack, signaling her departure from the bathroom.

With a sigh, Harry turned around and swept the room with his eyes, making sure she had gotten everything.

“Of course she did, idiot.” Harry said, chastising himself.

Stripping the towel off and throwing it on the counter, Harry turned back around to step into the shower, which was billowing steamy clouds, practically begging him to enter. He stepped into the glorious stream of water, and immediately felt the tension he didn’t know he was holding in his shoulders start to flow out of him. He let the water wash over him for a few minutes, trying to calm his mind as he did so. He didn’t want to replay the memory of last night, knowing full well that he would break down if he did so.

When he was sure he had his memory and emotions under control, he stepped out of the spray of water. Reaching for the bottle of soap sitting on the ledge, he poured some into his hand and started scrubbing his body, beginning with his hair, slowly making his way down until he reached his feet. When he was satisfactorily clean, he stepped under the water again and finished his shower. He dried off quickly, hardly bothering to dry his messy hair, and pulled his clothes on. Confident that he was presentable now, he left the bathroom and exited the closet, intent on exploring the rest of the manor.

He took a moment to stop by the 2 chairs placed by the window and saw for the first time the full glory of the grounds.

It was acre after acre of gorgeous, sloping, green land. It appeared that just a few hundred yards from the house was a beautiful lake, being slow fed by a stream, with great, giant trees planted all around it. There were smaller buildings placed all around the property, and he was dying to know what everything was.

“Meemy!” Harry exclaimed.

“Yes, sir?” Meemy asked curiously.

“Can you tell me about the grounds? Better yet, can you tell me about everything? It’s absolutely beautiful here!” Harry said excitedly.

Meemy broke out into a wide grin and said, “Of course, Master Harry. Perhaps Meemy should start with the Potter Manor?”

“Of course!” Harry replied.

“Potter Manor is set on nearly 80 acres of land. It has two stories, ten bedrooms, eight bathrooms, five reception rooms, a garden, lake, and many out buildings. There is a stable courtyard, where you will find a coach house, stables, and garage. There is a former vineyard that fell out of use many years ago, but Meemy would love to help Master Harry make it work again. There are two other buildings on the grounds, sir, a cottage and a lodge. Master should be able to see a bit of the cottage just past the lake. There are two bedrooms there, and it is where Master James and Misses Lily spent their honeymoon.” Meemy seamlessly listed off, pausing only to take a breath.

Harry was once again shocked. He couldn’t believe this was his now.

“Master Harry passed the lodge on his arrival last night. It is near the main gate, but is hidden by many trees. Meemy does not think Master saw it, since it is nearly impossible to see in the dark. The lodge has three bedrooms, sir.” Meemy finished.

“You take care of all this by yourself, Meemy?” Harry asked, surprised.
“Meemy is only one of three house elves here, Master Harry. Would Master like to meet the others?” Meemy asked.

“Yes, yes, of course.” Harry said, bemused.

“Dizzy! Nipsy!” Meemy barked out.

*Pop* *Pop*

Harry was greeted with two deep bows, before the house elves introduced themselves.

“Dizzy is so happy to meet you, Master Harry!” Dizzy declared, bouncing slightly.

“Nipsy is equally happy.” Nipsy squeaked out.

“I’m truly glad to meet you two, as well. I am actually quite happy to be here.” Harry said, small smile breaking across his face. Harry was slightly perturbed, however. They all looked strikingly similar.

“Please, go back to whatever you were doing. I will only need Meemy for a moment longer.” Harry said.

With two more respectful bows, Dizzy and Nipsy disapparated.

“Meemy… Are you guys related?” Harry questioned sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Yes, Master Harry. We are siblings. Meemy is being the oldest, followed by Dizzy and Nipsy. We took care of your parents. You remind Meemy so much of Misses Lily.” Meemy said a little sadly.

Smiling softly, Harry said, “Thanks Meemy. You are free to go back to whatever you were doing. I’ll call you if I need anything.”

*Crack*
Chapter 4

Harry was pretty sure he’d never been this relaxed before, and he was truly enjoying life here. Nearly two weeks had passed since he’d arrived at the manor, and he had spent every minute he could exploring his ancestor’s home. The first couple of days he spent searching through all the rooms; he was blown away to find out just what it had to offer.

Meemy wasn’t kidding when she had listed things off. The first floor offered a study, drawing room, dining room, garden room, billiard room, kitchen with attached breakfast room, pantry, larder, utility room, and a bunch of smaller rooms, which Harry could only assume were used to greet people before moving them to another part of the house. The cellar was truly impressive, and it definitely held more wine than Harry would ever try to consume in his life time.

There were 9 of the bedrooms upstairs, most of them positioned so they could share an en suite. They all varied in size and décor, and it was easily noticeable that the rooms hadn’t been used in a very long time, well before his parents had lived there, simply because of how dated the furniture was. It had taken Harry nearly two days to realize that the manor had another level, past the one with all the rooms. When Harry tried to open the door that was located at the top of the stairs, he was met with a locked door that wouldn’t budge, magic or not.

“Meemy?” Harry called out.

*pop*

“Yes, Master Harry?” Meemy asked.

“I don’t want to sound like I’m accusing you, but… I thought you said there were only two floors? Why can’t I open this door?” Harry inquired, curiosity burning in his voice.

Meemy pulled on her ears before answering, obviously not comfortable with the question. “Meemy is sorry, sir, but that is Misses Lily’s brewing room. She and your father sealed it before they left. Meemy is not able to go in there, either, sir.”

Harry carefully pulled her hands away from her ears, smiling as he started to reassure her. “It’s okay,
Meemy. I was honestly just wondering why I couldn’t get in. If they locked it, I’m sure it was for some reason or another. I’m not cross with you.”

Meemy smiled brightly and nodded before disapparating with a loud crack.

As soon as she had gone, Harry let his face fall into a frown. Why would his parents put such a strong locking charm on the door? Surely there was nothing of great value in there, when all throughout the house there were priceless works of art. If that wasn’t locked up, he couldn’t think of anything that would require such a powerful spell; he decided not to dwell on it, and instead went back to exploring the manor.

Little did he know that that room would save his life.

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Harry’s birthday was fast approaching and he decided that he wanted to visit the neighboring town. He figured while he was there, he would be able to find himself a gift, and would be able to get out of the house for a bit. So with that thought in mind, Harry left on a bright and sunny morning in the middle of July, with nothing else but his muggle clothes, some money, and his wand.

Harry made his way to the gates of the property, stopping only to tell the anxious Meemy (who had followed him since he left the manor) that he would be back before nightfall. Upon seeing her nod, Harry marched through the gates, and turned left, following the road that The Knight Bus had left on just weeks prior.

It felt wonderful to be out of the house and walking down the beautiful countryside road, stopping to enjoy the random lakes and streams that seemed to dot the landscape. Harry truly felt happy; it was almost as if he could sense the echo’s of his parents walking down this same road, enjoying the same sights that he currently was, and it filled him with a true sense of peace. He continued down the road for almost an hour, passing an occasional house and giving a friendly wave when he saw someone out and about.

When he finally made it to town, he decided to have a late breakfast at the greasy spoon he found on the way in. As he made his way inside, he quickly noticed how cozy the little place was. Along the right side of the wall were windows that were in the perfect position to let the afternoon sun stream in, and on his left were a row of chairs along a bar, which he imagined were usually filled with a few people who were happily talking amongst themselves. After taking the scene in for a moment, he decided to sit towards the end of the bar, where he was swiftly greeted by an elderly lady of about seventy, who, after taking his order, promised to have his food out shortly.

True to her word, Harry had waited no longer than ten minutes before he was tucking into a plate of steaming meats and potatoes, and had just finished half his plate when he heard the cracks of apparition outside.

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Harry spun around to see three figures in dark robes walk passed the window closest to him. He hesitated only for a moment before pulling his wand out, and was about to cast a spell at the door when he remembered the little old lady, the one who was now intently looking at him.

“I’m sorry for what’s about to happen,” Harry said, sorrow leaking into his voice, before pointing his wand at the door and shouting, “BOMBARDA MAXIMA!”

“What do yo-,” The elderly lady started to say before throwing herself down to shield herself from
the incoming rubble. After a few seconds when it had stopped raining debris, she dared to peek over
the counter and saw a giant hole in the wall. With a squeak, she proceeded to faint on the spot.

Harry wasted no time in running out of the diner to face the death eaters, and was surprised to see
that his quick thinking had worked. One of the death eaters had been crushed under what used to be
the front of the establishment, and the other two were too stunned from the blast to instantly attack
him. Harry immediately capitalized on their disorientation, running for the end of the street, firing off
spells behind him.

“STUPEFY!” Harry yelled, wand pointed over his shoulder and aimed at the first death eater that had
started to rise. He didn’t wait to see if it made contact, but took satisfaction from the scream of
frustration of what he hoped was the only remaining death eater.

Harry went skidding around a corner into an alley way, hearing the footsteps of his pursuer get closer
and closer.

_I only need one chance_, Harry thought to himself, preparing to ambush the death eater as he ran by.

_Closer, closer, a little more, he’s so close you can hear him panting;_ Harry held his breath as the
death eater got closer.

“EXPPELLIARMUS!” Harry shouted.

“SECTUMSEMPRA” The death eater screamed before being blasted backwards into a shop front.

“I did it. I DID IT!” Harry all but yelled out loud, jumping into the air with joy. Only, when he did
so, he felt like something along his chest and side had torn, and he quickly fell to his knees. When
he looked down, he saw that his shirt had been ripped, and he had a deep wound from his left
collarbone down his side, ending somewhere right above his hip.

Harry took a few breaths, and slowly got up from his knees, doing his best not to jostle himself too
much as the pain in his side was almost blinding now. He pulled off the remains of his shirt and
started trying to stifle the bleeding.

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He had done his best to stop the bleeding, but he knew that he was in serious trouble. The headache,
dizziness, and cold sweat that he was experiencing told him that, but he could do nothing besides
keep moving.

“Just a bit further,” he told himself.

He figured if he could just make it back to his house, he would be able to send word to his remaining
friends that he needed help. That was what he was hoping, anyways. He wasn’t even sure of who
would come, since the latest incident he was involved in resulted in his Godfather and best friend
dead, with one of his other best friends permanently injured. Merlin, he needed to stop that train of
thought right there, he simply couldn’t think of Ron or Hermione, and especially not Sirius. Not
now.

It was funny, with him being in Slytherin, you would think he would have hated Gryffindor’s on
principle. But something about Hermione’s know-it-all attitude, and Ron’s inability to stop eating
attracted him, and by his second year at school, he had a solid friendship with them. Now… Now
Ron and Sirius were dead, and Hermione was most likely never going to recover. He couldn’t help
the tears that started flowing down his face at the thought of them, the tears that threatened to
overcome his body and cause painful sobs that he wouldn’t be able to stop. But there was a time and
place for that, and if he didn’t get help soon, it wouldn’t matter that they died to save him, because he would be joining them soon.

It was with one of the greatest efforts of his life that he pulled himself together, and continued towards his home.

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He finally reached the gates to the manor, and could feel the wards wrap around him as he went inside.

“MASTER HARRY, SIR, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!” Meemy cried out, making Harry jump and upset the flimsy bandage he had made for himself.

With a gasp, Harry went to his knees again.

“Meemy, I need help!” Harry said, tears in his eyes.

“Oh Master Harry, of course! Tell Meemy what to do!” Meemy squeaked out.

“I need to go inside. I need someone who can help me.” Harry said, breath coming in rasps.

Meemy said nothing, but instead answered by grabbing Harry’s shoulder and apparating him into the study, where she helped him settle into the chair. With a snap of her fingers, there was a roaring fire in the fireplace.

“Tell Meemy what to do, Master Harry.” Meemy said, eyes wide with fear.

“I- I need- Professor Snape. Can you- find him?” Harry struggled to get the words out. He was in serious trouble and he knew it. But rather than have Meemy call for someone else, he had made the decision to call for Snape. He didn’t know why, but something told him this was the right decision. Maybe his mother’s last wish had affected him more than he thought.

“Find him- for me- give him- the floo- address. Tell him- I’m dying. Lily said… Lily said…” Harry finally lost consciousness, mouth still trying to form the words.

Meemy took one last anguished look at Harry before she disapparated, hell-bent on finding the potions master.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Chapter 5 is here!!! So much quicker than the last one :O Truthfully, this chapter was very easy to write, and I hope to keep cranking them out. Fortunately/unfortunately, I start work Friday in a new position, so I'm probably going to be very busy these next few weeks. I'll try to keep posting, though!

ANYWAYYYYYYYS, I hope, as always, that you enjoy this chapter. Leave your thoughts in the comments below :)

Severus liked many things in life, though you wouldn’t know it by his attitude or looks. For example, Severus enjoyed it when someone understood a complex potion in his class and was able to recreate it with no help. He enjoyed it when he could spend all day in his potions room and brew until his back ached. He enjoyed being able to read the Prophet while he had a cup of tea before the sun was up. But he especially enjoyed tormenting Potter whenever the boy presented the opportunity.

It was unfortunate that the boy had seemingly inherited most of his traits from his father, and not his mother; so much wasted potential. From what he had seen of Potter, he was the exact opposite of what a Slytherin should be. He would often find him running headway into a situation without thinking things through properly, and the tragedy at the end of the school year was a prime example of that. If the boy had used his brain instead of letting his emotions run rampant, he would have seen that Severus had every intention of checking on the mutt staying at Grimmauld Place.

Regardless, that was old news. From what Severus had overheard from Dumbledore (intentionally, he was quite sure, that meddling old man) was Potter had gone and run away. No one was quite sure why, and that nasty Aunt of his was being tight lipped about it. Not that it was any of his concern what a hormonal teenager was doing with his summer, but… the boy would suffer his displeasure if he showed up in September with anything less than perfect health. He didn’t vow to keep him from harm just to have him go and throw that away because he couldn’t handle things at home.

It was with that thought in mind that he heard the subtle *pop* indicating a house-elf was about to intrude on his space. He continued slowly ladling the potion he was working with into the vials he had spread out in front of him, waiting for the inevitable voice of the irritating creature to ask him for some ungodly favor. A few silent moments later, the elf spoke from somewhere near his right elbow, and if Severus wasn’t expecting it, and wasn’t trained so well to not show surprise, he would have jumped.

“Professor Snape, sir?! You is needed urgently! My master is needing you!” Meemy rushed out, trying to grab Severus by the arm and drag him to the fireplace.

“What do you think you’re doing? Unhand me immediately!” Snape growled out, snatching his arm out of the elf’s grip.

“But Professor Snape, sir, my master is dying! He is needing your help. He asked me to bring you to him. He is not doing well, sir!” Meemy cried out, twisting her ears while tears swam in her eyes.
“Who is your master? Tell me!” Snape ground out.

“Harry Potter, sir.” Meemy said.

Minutes later, Severus was staring down in horror at the fifteen year old boy, who hardly looked like the boy he had known for five years. He had been tempted to sneer at the house elf that had come to fetch him… that was, until the elf had mentioned someone was dying and that that someone was (of course) Harry Potter. He had waited only long enough to ask the elf how bad it was, seeing the blood on the creature’s hands, before grabbing a few blood-replenishing potions, and then jumping into the floo.

Now he was looking down at the boy, who was pale and breathing quick, shallow breaths. He could see the damage to his left side - damage caused by a spell that he knew all too well. Severus bent down to check his pulse, and in doing so, noticed the blue tinge to Harry’s lips; after confirming how weak his pulse was, he knew he had to act fast.

Snape drew his wand and traced it over the deep wound that the curse had made, while muttering, “Vulnera Sanentur, Vulnera Sanentur, Vulnera Sanentur.”

When he was sure the spell had worked, he gently picked Harry up and carried him with experienced navigation throughout the manor, quickly but carefully, making his way to the third floor. When they reached the top of the stairs to the door that Harry had found weeks ago, Severus placed Harry’s bloody hand against the door, which unlocked with a loud *click*. He carried him past the threshold and carefully placed him in the chair that sat to the far left corner of the room. Spinning around, he was momentarily lost in the memories that this place held.

At the table closest to his left hand, he could almost see Lily bending over to drop something in a simmering cauldron. The table that sat directly on the right wall, he could see a shadow of himself prepping ingredients, smirking at something that Lily had said. With an almost tangible snap, Snape pulled himself out of his memories, and started looking around the room for the items which would save young Potter’s life. It was quite amazing, actually. Everything was in the spot that Severus had last seen it. It was meticulously organized, and it made finding the proper potions a breeze.

Severus quickly picked out bottle of dittany before sweeping back over to Harry.

“Potter! I need you conscious for this, at least for a moment. You need to drink this, and then you can sleep. Do you hear me? POTTER!” Snape lashed out at Harry.

With a groan, Harry did nothing except open his mouth, and Severus gingerly poured some of the potion into his awaiting mouth, waiting for the inevitable choking that he was sure would come. When nothing happened, Severus poured more and more until the bottle was empty. He wasn’t entirely sure that Harry was truly conscious, but as long as he drank the potion, he didn’t care. He would find out what happened later, and by Merlin, would there be hell to pay.

Snape carefully lifted the boy, half picking him up, half standing him up, long enough to flick his wand at the chair, transforming it into a bed, which he then placed Harry on to. With another flick of his wand, Harry’s mangled shirt was banished, and allowed Severus to see fully the extent to which Harry had been hit with his curse. He had been cut from his collarbone, down his chest, nearly avoided his nipple, down his ribs, and finally stopped in the lower left quadrant of his stomach. Truthfully, Severus was surprised; surprised, because the boy should have bled out far quicker than he did.

With a sigh, he grabbed the bottle of dittany and started dripping a few drops around the cursed skin. When the smoke cleared, all Severus could see was what appeared to be a years old scar that traveled
the length of Harry’s torso.

Satisfied with the results, Severus went to leave the room, only to find his way blocked by the house-elf that had summoned him, flanked by two other house-elves who were peering with wide-eyes over her shoulders.

“I- is Master… Is Master Harry okay?” Meemy asked, eyes swimming with tears.

“For now. If he isn’t awake in two hours, you are to come find me, as I will need to re-administer the blood-replenishing potion. If he wakes before then, you are to come find me all the same. We have much to discuss.” Snape said coldly, glancing over his shoulder at Harry as he did so.
Chapter 6

Harry groaned in his sleep, rolling to his side as he did so. His head was spinning, so he took a few sleepy breaths before slowly cracking his eyes open to try and figure out what the issue was. What he saw made his eyes fly open, and in his shock, he attempted to sit up quickly, regretting the action almost immediately as the left side of his body seemed to burn with the action. However, sitting in front of him was none other than his head of house, Severus Snape. What was he doing here?! How did Snape find him? Then, with sudden clarity, Harry remembered what had happened when he ventured out of the manor that morning. The Death Eaters, the duel, his subsequent injuries…

“Er… hi, Professor.” Harry stated rather lamely, absent-mindedly rubbing his sore ribs.

“You foolish, ignorant, dim-witted boy! Do you have any idea how close you came to dying? Has that brain of yours ever served a purpose other than to get you in trouble? You will explain to me exactly how you happened upon this place, and what happened this morning. Beware that you take care to leave nothing out.” Snape hissed out.

Harry could see the rage that was smoldering in his eyes and gulped. He knew Snape would be upset, angry even, about being disturbed in the middle of his summer, but nothing close to this mad. Taking a calming breath, wincing slightly as the move made his ribs expand painfully, Harry started off with “Well, Professor, I’ve been at the manor for a few weeks. I came here from my relative’s house following a… row, with my uncle. I had heard about this place in a letter from my mum- she mentioned she thought I’d like it here, so I figured I had nothing to lose. I took the Knight Bus, and when I got here, I was met by Meemy and her siblings, who’ve taken the most amazing care of me. I have spent the past few weeks exploring the manor, learning what the rooms are and have to offer, where things are located on the grounds…” Harry was saying, before being cut-off by Snape.

“Get to the point Potter. Stop wasting my time.” Snape snapped out.

“Anyways, it’s getting close to my birthday, and I hadn’t left the grounds since I arrived here, so I figured I would head into town and do a bit of light shopping. When I got in to town, I saw a greasy spoon, and decided to grab a late breakfast. I had only been there for fifteen-twenty minutes before three Death Eaters apparated outside the place, and- and I did what I had to, okay?” Harry finished, daring his Professor with his eyes to challenge him for fighting back.

Severus was silent for a moment, before saying “Tell me, how did you manage to escape?”

With a scowl on his face, Harry said “When I heard the apparition, I turned around and saw them coming to the front door. So I blew it open right as they were about to enter. The three of them were blasted backwards, and one of them definitely got caught by the rubble. One of them I stunned as I was running away, but the third one gave chase. I hid in an alleyway until I thought I could get the...
drop on him, but you see how well that worked… once I realized he had hit me, I made my way home as fast as I could.

“Meemy met me at the gate, and helped me inside. From there… well, obviously I needed help. I knew that any of the people I would normally call upon would force me into St. Mungo’s and then most likely back to the Dursley’s, but then I remembered what my mother said in her letter. She said I could come to you for help, that I could trust you. So, I sent Meemy for you.”

Though his face was smooth as stone, Severus was reluctantly impressed. Potter had managed to fight three Death Eater’s single handedly and had come out alive. But there were a number of things the boy had left out of his story, and he was determined to get to the bottom of it.

“Do you think before you act, or do you act on impulse? Did it never occur to you that the Dark Lord would have people watching the Knight Bus? You should be thankful that they didn’t send more than three here today, that they didn’t attack you the moment you left the wards of this manor, as I doubt your story would have the same outcome.

“Pray tell, Potter, why you didn’t call for your house-elves the moment the fighting was over? Tell me why you chose to walk, Merlin knows how long, back here. More so, why you didn’t call for them the moment you realized you were in trouble? I assure you they would have come, and they would have gotten you out. This is the same recklessness you displayed at the end of the school year, rushing off to save your godfather. What did that accomplish, Potter? Nothing! It got him and Weasley killed—“ Severus said angrily, before being cut off.

“SHUT UP! YOU KNOW NOTHING! I ASKED YOU FOR HELP BEFORE GOING TO THE MINISTRY, BUT YOU HATED SIRIUS, SO YOU DID NOTHING BUT SNEER AT ME! SIRIUS MEANT MORE TO ME THAN ANYTHING, AND I THOUGHT Voldemort WAS GOING TO MURDER HIM! OF COURSE I WENT TO SAVE HIM!” Harry screamed at Snape, not caring about the pain that was like fire in his side.

“I loved him! He was like a father to me, someone I could turn to when there was no one else, and now he’s gone. My best friends are gone. RON DIED BECAUSE OF ME! Hermione still hasn’t recovered from whatever she was hit with… you don’t get to tell me about what happened, because I know! I think about it all the time, and it doesn’t help!” Harry finished, tears streaming down his face.

Severus was leaning back in his chair. He had intended to provoke Potter into a reaction, one where he could press him for information, but he did not expect him to break down. Still, there were things he needed to get from the boy if he was going to be able to help him, and anger was apparently not the way to go. So, after making sure to rein his anger back in, he continued.

“Potter, I—… I obviously didn’t intend to imply that your love for Black was anything less than what it is. I simply wish for you to see the error of your more… Gryffindor traits. All I wish is for you to put that brain of yours to its full potential. I know you have the ability to think situations through, so start applying it to everything you do.

“Now, with that said, I think I told you not to leave anything out of your story. If we are to have any form of trust between us, you need to tell me the truth.” Snape said evenly, looking Harry square in the eyes. He could see his pupils dilate a second before he answered.

“I did.” Harry said simply.

“What of the argument with your uncle?” Snape asked, again watching Harry.
This time, the quick, small intake of breath was enough to reveal him.

“I- I- I can’t talk about that, Professor. I can’t.” Harry almost pleaded, breaking their eye contact and looking down at his feet. He had intended to lie again, to say that he simply couldn’t stand being treated like a prisoner anymore, but the way Snape was looking at him… well, he simply found he couldn’t lie to him.

Severus was quiet for a moment before asking, “If you will not- no, cannot say it, will you let me see it?”

Harry snapped his head up, locking eyes with Snape once again. Did he want him to see it? Did he want anyone to see it? No. He would taunt him with the knowledge, perhaps even tell someone else. No, he didn’t want anyone to ever see this. With his answer firmly in his head he answered Snape.

“Yes.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Hello again :) Chapter 7 is gonna be a bit crazy, Severus kinda goes off the deep end. Trigger warnings for violence? Idek if this warrants a warning, but you have it if you need it. Translation for the spell are in the end notes. I am adding them in, because google translate told me two different things. Soooooo yeah.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Severus was surprised, thinking he would have to talk the boy into letting him learn what happened. But he quickly hid his shock.

“Look at me, Potter.” Severus almost whispered.

Beautiful green eyes locked on his, and he wasted no time.

“Legilimens.” Severus cast and was immediately looking at the memory of the battle that morning.

Perhaps he could convince Potter to let him see that later, but right now he had more pressing information to get to. He sifted through weeks of memories until he found one containing Harry and his uncle. It appeared to be late at night, and Harry was scared by the hulking man in his doorway... five minutes later, he was pulling out of Harry’s mind, rage burning its way through his veins. He wanted to be sick, but more than that, he wanted to hurt Dursley for ever thinking about touching one of his students. Least of all Lily Potter’s son!

“Meemy?” Severus quietly called out.

*Pop*

“Yes, Professor Severus, sir? What can Meemy be doing for you?” questioned Meemy, throwing a look to Harry, only to be met with a faraway look from her master.

“I need you to watch over him until I return. I imagine I’ll be gone until late tonight, but I’ll return before morning. Send a message should anything happen.” Severus ordered.

“Meemy would be happy to, sir.” Meemy replied.

With a masterful swish of his cloak, he set off for the Dursley’s.

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The apparition was fast and hard, landing Severus squarely on the stoop of Number Four, Privet Drive. He didn’t bother stopping to knock, instead choosing to blast the door open with a flick of his wand. A scream and subsequent crash resulted from somewhere toward the back of the house and Severus allowed himself some small satisfaction before moving down the hall towards the scream.

When he banged the door open at the end, he saw Petunia Dursley in mid-reach for the phone on the
“Petrificus Totalus.” Severus said calmly.

“Well, well, Tuney, we meet again.” Severus sneered.

Petunia, who up until that moment had been trying to avoid looking at the intruder, immediately snapped her eyes to him. Realization dawned in her head, and Severus could see her pupil’s contract to tiny beads.

“Well, well, Tuney, we meet again.” Severus sneered.

Petunia, who up until that moment had been trying to avoid looking at the intruder, immediately snapped her eyes to him. Realization dawned in her head, and Severus could see her pupil’s contract to tiny beads.

“Really, Petunia. There is no reason to harbor such hatred for me. I am not the one abusing my nephew.” Severus spat out at her.

There were several pregnant seconds of thick silence while Severus chewed on the words he wanted to continue throwing at Petunia. He noticed his hand was shaking slightly with adrenalin, and took a deep, calming breath before continuing.

“You disgust me, Petunia. You couldn’t just stop at hating Lily, could you? No, you had to go and make sure her son suffered just as much as she did. More so, from the memories I’ve been witness to. Well, the secret is out, Petunia, and I fully intend on making you suffer for what you’ve done to Harry Potter. Would you like a taste or would you prefer to wait for your oaf of a husband to get home?” Severus finished quietly.

“Crucio.” Severus cried out, quickly deciding that Petunia deserved this.

He only held it for a few seconds, but it was enough to completely shatter the spell that held her in place. Petunia fell to the floor, shaking and screaming on her way down. Again, Severus felt nothing but satisfaction from her screams, and was about to cast it again when the front door crashed open and in rushed a wheezing Vernon Dursley.

“What is the meaning of this? Who are you? What have you done to my wife?!” Vernon bellowed.

“Silence, you impotent fool.” Severus said, turning his wand on the giant man.

Vernon’s eyes fell to his wand and he fell silent, casting worried glances from Petunia to Severus to the wand in a rapid cycle.

“I demand to know what you—“ Vernon started to say.

“I thought I told you to be silent? Silencio.” Severus said dangerously.

Vernon was caught mid-sentence, and though he tried and tried, getting angrier and angrier in the process, he couldn’t utter a single sound. Severus took a moment before speaking again, watching Vernon work himself into a rage over not being able to speak.

“I’ve been contemplating how to handle this situation since my learning of it only hours ago, from a beaten and battered nephew of yours, Dursley.” Severus sounded every bit as dangerous as he ever had.

Vernon froze, shock crossing his face for only a second before being marred with hatred. With a silenced scream of rage, Vernon charged at Severus, intent on causing him as much pain as Harry had caused him. He only made it a few steps, however, before being met with another spell from Severus.
“Crucio.” Severus said, simply.

Vernon fell to the ground under the affects of the curse and this time, Severus held the spell, ignoring the cries from Petunia to stop hurting him, ignoring the fact that Vernon’s eyes were bulging, looking almost ready to explode, and ignoring the fact that as unhealthy as the man was, this would likely cause his heart to fail. Severus cared about none of that, and was intent on making Vernon feel as horrible as Harry had on the night he dared lay his disgusting hands on him.

After what seemed like hours, but in reality was only minutes, Severus released the spells held on Vernon, leaving the man gasping for breath, with eyes streaming tears and nose dripping snot. He would not kill the obese man, but he would make sure he thought twice about ever laying his hands on another person.

Getting down on one knee, carefully avoiding the different types of body fluid pooling on the floor near Vernon, Severus lightly called his name. Vernon’s beady eyes locked on his, and that was all the opportunity Severus needed.

“Legimens.” Severus whispered.

He was instantly viewing Vernon’s memories and he took his time looking through them. Very close to the surface of his memories, he found Vernon mistreating young Harry Potter, in one way or another, and that led Severus to believe that this was something that Vernon thought of every day, something he took pride in. Severus willed himself not to lose his focus, not to snap inside this man’s head, and instead focus on what he was there to do.

Severus carefully isolated the memories where Harry was abused by his uncle and started quietly chanting, “in memoriam dolorum haec, in memoriam dolorum haec, in memoriam dolorum haec, in memoriam dolorum haec.” He watched as the memories Vernon valued most started to wither and turn to black, almost as if a cancer had spread to them. Only when Severus was satisfied that the curse had taken a hold did he end the spell that allowed him to view Vernon’s memories.

“The only peace you will ever know will be in death, Dursley. I’ve made sure of that. Try to enjoy the rest of your days, as I’m sure they are limited.” Severus said viciously to a still sobbing Vernon.

“As for you, Petunia,” Severus started to say as he stood up, “I rather think I’ll leave you just as you are. I doubt your husband will be able to endure the curse on his mind for long, but I think it’ll be long enough for you to get a good head start on thinking about what you’ve done to Harry. You were supposed to take care of him but you treated him as nothing more than a slave.”

This, apparently, was the last that Petunia could take, and she proceeded to faint on the spot. Severus said nothing more and brushed his robes off as he left the kitchen. He peeked his head into the cupboard under the stairs, something he had learned used to be Harry’s bedroom from Vernon’s memories, and sneered in disgust. Slamming the door when he was done, Severus made his way for the front door, only to be stopped by Vernon’s scream that tore through the air. He hesitated, but with one more smile of vindictive satisfaction, Severus apparated from Privet Drive.

Chapter End Notes

pain on these memories - in memoriam dolorum haec
It was late when Severus returned to Potter’s manor. He had stopped by Spinner’s End to pick up a few books he thought he might need in the coming days. Severus had made up his mind about a few things. One, Lily Potter’s son needed help. Two, he was in the prime position to offer that help and he would be damned if he stood by and did nothing. He was already regretting not offering the boy more help when he showed up at Hogwarts nearly 6 years ago. But, he wouldn’t dwell on past mistakes when there was so much work to be done.

As he made his way up the drive to the hulking manor, Severus took a moment to ready himself to what he would say to Potter. The boy would undoubtedly ask where he had been and he didn’t know how Potter would react to his… unconventional and unusual punishment. He came up with a few stories that he thought could stand up to the boys questions, and eventually settled on using the truth/ not truth that he had to return home to finish brewing a few potions and grab a few books. He was pulled out of his musings upon reaching the door by Meemy, who was wringing her hands around a towel she was holding.

“Meemy was starting to worry you would not be returning tonight. Master Potter has been asking for you since he realized you left, hours ago. Meemy did not know what to tell him.” Meemy rushed out.

“I told you I would be back, did I not? Do you think me a liar?” Severus asked, looking down his nose at the creature.

“Of course not! Meemy was only hoping you would be back sooner. Master Potter is refusing to rest until he is speaking to you.” Meemy said.

Severus sighed. Of course, Potter would be stubborn over absolutely nothing. With another small sigh, Severus went inside and made his way up the stairs, smoothing his facial features into one of cool impassiveness. When he reached the door, he gave a small knock before entering, not bothering to wait for a reply. He was met with a dark room, one where he could faintly see Potter’s face looking at him through the darkness.

It was silent for a few long moments before Harry spoke.

“Why did you leave, Professor?” Potter asked in a scratchy voice.

“I… had some things to attend to, though I doubt that is of any concern of yours.” Severus replied.
Again, the room fell to silence and Severus was tempted to speak, to offer further explanation to pacify Potter’s questions. The boy, however, spoke again.

“I thought… did you go to my relatives place?” Potter questioned.

Severus thought about telling him the half truth he thought of moments ago, but the boy had been honest with him when he asked him his questions, and he found himself compelled to answer.

“And if I did?” Severus asked, trying his best to make eye contact with Potter in the dark bedroom.

There was a brief silence broken by another question of Potter’s. “Are they still alive?”

“Yes, but I cannot say for how long your uncle will remain so. That, however, is entirely dependent on what type of man he is.” Severus answered.

“What do you mean, ‘what type of man he is’?” Potter asked, his voice sounding scratchy again.

Severus was quiet for a moment. He noticed the change in his voice, but couldn’t tell if Potter was angry or not. He decided he needed to change tactics.

“Is there some reason we are in the dark?” Severus asked, and without waiting for a response, flicked his wands at the lamps scattered around the room, immediately engulfing the room in light.

He quickly noticed Potter’s tear-stained face and red puffy eyes and was slightly shocked that he couldn’t tell the boy was crying sooner. He had been totally silent in doing so, his voice being the only thing that gave him away. Severus hesitantly moved from his spot near the door and ended up hovering near the foot of Potter’s bed. With another wave of his wand, he had conjured a black wingback chair, which he promptly sank into.

“Potter,” Severus started, “Look at me.”

“Why did you go there? Why did you attack them? I would have been fine never having to see them again. I didn’t allow you into my head so that you would go and take revenge on my behalf.” Potter croaked out.

“Surely-.” Severus tried to say.

“At the very least, I wish you would have told me, Professor. I thought you left b-because you were disgusted with m-me, disgusted with what you had seen in my m-memories.” Potter said, voice cracking with emotion.

“I was disgusted, Po- Harry. And I was absolutely enraged… but none of it at you. I will admit, I should have waited to make sure you were alright before leaving, but I will not stand by while that piece of filth roams about.” Severus said, a spark of anger flaring up at the end of his statement.

Harry was looking at him, slightly open-mouthed in shock. Severus took a deep breath as he leaned back into his chair and scrubbed his face, closing his eyes as he tried to find the right words.

“Look, Harry- I’ll assume it’s okay for me to call you by your given name?” Severus asked, cracking an eye open to look at the boy.

Harry was still looking at him incredulously, but gave him a small nod.

“Something inside me snapped upon seeing those memories, Harry. A rage that I have not felt for a long time flared up and I reacted as I saw fit. I doubt you will find anyone who would be saddened
to hear of what I did to Vernon Dursley and his wife. I will not apologize for my actions today, and I won’t have you shedding a single tear for them. They do not deserve your pity.

“However, I shouldn’t have left without making sure that you were stable. I should have realized that dragging one of your most horrible memories to the surface would leave you in a state of conflict, but I selfishly acted upon my anger, and it left you a mess. So, with my sincerest truth, I am sorry for putting you through that, Harry.” Severus finished.

By the time he was done, Harry was looking him in the eye.

“Thank you, Professor.” Harry said, teary-eyed.

There was a slightly uncomfortable silence followed by Harry’s words, and Severus was unsure of how to proceed.

“Perhaps we should retire for the evening? You are undoubtedly exhausted and we have much to discuss tomorrow.” Severus inquired.

Harry seemed to sag under his words and nodded his agreement.

With a curt nod, Severus stood up and walked to the door, waving his wand around the room and returning it to its darkened state. As he was about to leave, he heard a murmured “good night” come from across the room.

“Good night, Harry.” Severus said, before lightly snapping the door shut.

He turned from the door and slowly descended the stairs, thinking of how differently that had gone than he expected it to. Harry had surprised him, and in truth, he had surprised himself. He did not often apologize, especially to students, but this seemed like one of those great exceptions. It was obvious that Harry needed guidance, and Severus was sure that he would be able to help him, so long as they were able to put their differences aside.

“Meemy?” Severus called out.

*pop*

“What can Meemy be doing for Professor Snape?” Meemy asked.

“I think I will be staying here for a couple of days… well, tonight at the least, until I am able to talk to Harry. Is there an acceptable room, or should I retire elsewhere?” Snape questioned, gesturing to all of the doors on the landing.

“Of course Professor Snape, right this way. Please be following Meemy!” Meemy said, taking off down a short hallway.

They quickly reached the end, and Severus was met with a door to his left and an archway to the right that led off down another short corridor.

“Through the door, please, sir. If you is needing anything else, please call for Meemy.” Meemy requested, pushing him through the door as she spoke.

Severus nodded his understanding and she disappeared with a loud *crack*. 
Hello everyone :) I swear, I'm not dead! Just super busy in my day to day life. I forced myself to stay home and write this out (I feel like it's obvious to tell, I think it's kind of rushed and really, really short) but I wanted to kind of write about Severus before I moved on in the story, sooooo yeah. Please enjoy this and let me know if you do in the comments (or if you hate it) and I'll start working on chapter 10 in the meantime!

Severus found himself alone in a large bedroom. There was a sizable bed set directly across the room, raised up on a low platform, with grey washed pine night stands set on either side of the bed. To his left, there was a wardrobe that seemed to perfectly match the theme of the room. The walls were painted a peaceful ocean blue and it paired well with the pine furniture. The right wall of the room was dominated by a giant window, one that come morning, would offer an amazing view of the eastern part of the grounds. Severus was about to head for the bed when he noticed a door directly to his right and decided to pull it open. Inside was another room, an en suite, complete with a giant shower and separate tub, along with a massive double vanity.

Severus couldn’t help but derisively snort. Of course the Potter’s were wealthy. Not as wealthy as the Malfoy’s, for example, but this place gave him the feeling of discomfort that posh environments usually brought on. Sure, he had been to Potter manor in the past, but whenever he visited, he spent all of his time with Lily in the potions room, thus never really seeing what the manor truly had for accommodations. With a sigh, he stepped into the bathroom. The thought of just lying down in bed pulled at his tired brain, but Severus knew he would sleep better after a decent shower.

He reached in the stall and turned the taps on full blast, letting the sound of the splashing water drown out his thoughts for a moment. After briefly watching the water swirl down the drain, Severus reached into a pocket of his robes and pulled out the shrunken trunk that he had hastily put together earlier. He took it into the other room and set it near the end of the bed, using a lazy flick of his wand to bring it back to full size. He opened the lid and brought his out his shower bag. Severus never left Spinner’s End for prolonged periods of time without having basic cleaning supplies on hand. He found he preferred his own crafted soaps to those he was usually afforded outside his home. Bag in hand, he walked back to the bathroom, which was slowly billowing out wonderful clouds of steam.

He slowly started to undress, pulling off his robes and letting them fall to the floor. A casual glance at the mirror caused him to freeze; his undershirt was caked in dry blood, and caused Severus momentary panic before he realized that he had only spelled Harry’s blood off his outer layers before apparating to the Dursley’s earlier. He drew in a shaky breath and continued undressing, stepping in the shower when he had finished. He systemically started scrubbing his body, starting at the top of his head and going all the way down to his feet, watching the bloody water drain by his feet. As he started shampooing his hair, he let his mind wander…

If Severus was truthful with himself, he would admit that he was more shaken earlier than he seemed. Thinking of how close Harry had come to death caused Severus to give an involuntary...
shiver, a feat considering how hot the water was. The more he thought about it, the more he realized that Harry needed help, that he needed someone to guide him. By the time the scent of his earthy, deep-woods smelling soap hit his nose, Severus had resolved himself to fully helping the boy with whatever he needed.

He ended his shower after making sure that he had removed all traces of the day’s events. As he stepped out of the stall and reached for a towel, he was surprised to find that his soiled clothes had disappeared some time during his bathing. With an appreciative smile on his face, he wrapped the towel around his waist after quickly blotting it through his hair and exited the bathroom.

He finished drying himself off in his room and tossed the towel to a corner before sliding under the covers. He grabbed his wand from off the bedside table and with a small flick, the flames in the lamps died out. He lay on his side, staring out of the window at the night sky and waited for sleep to claim him. It had been such a tedious day, but Severus couldn’t help but feel this was meant to be.

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Severus woke up to the sound of rain lightly pattering on his window. From what he could tell through one cracked eye, it was still early morning, and a quick Tempus charm verified that it was barely half past six. He was tempted to roll over and go back to sleep, but he could faintly smell bacon being made and it was enough to rouse him from bed.

He pulled his slim, naked frame from under the sheets and stood up, twisting and cracking his back in the process, his arms pulled high over his head to stretch the muscles there.

After lightly padding into the restroom to relieve himself, he bent over his trunk and pulled out a set of everyday work robes and pulled them on, intent on going downstairs for breakfast. Severus grabbed his wand off the bedside table and left his room, trying to make as little sound as possible in case Harry was still sleeping. However, as he started making his way down the stairs, his left forearm burned so badly that he actually looked down expecting to see a fire.

“Meemy?” Severus called out.

*pop*

“Yes, Master Severus? What can Meemy be doing for you?” Meemy asked.

“I’ve got a… meeting to which I must attend. You will watch over Harry while I am gone. Let no one else on the property while I’m gone.” Severus quietly said.

Meemy was already bobbing her head in understanding by the time he was done. He took one hard look at her and then finished his descent down the stairs. He made his way out the front door just in time for his forearm to burn again. Grimacing, Severus apparated to his master.

Chapter End Notes

DUN DUN DUN!
Harry was dreaming of flying at school. It was something he dreamed about a lot, seeing as Quidditch was one of his favorite things in the world. He was seeker for the Slytherin team and he was damn good. It was something he inherited from his father, who was legendary in his time at Hogwarts.

In his dream, he was reaching out, about to grab the Golden Snitch, when a Bludger hit him in the head from behind. Harry slipped from his broom and started falling. He had a few seconds of pure panic, but just as he was about to hit the ground, his dream changed. Suddenly, Harry was staring at the bowing form of a black-robed Death Eater. He noticed there were a few more positioned around the room, some guarding the door, others standing like statues along the walls.

“Severus... So kind of you to finally arrive.” Harry rasped out.

Harry watched as Severus stayed bowed, not moving and seemingly not breathing.

“With school out for the summer, I thought I made it clear that you were to report to me as soon as I called? It took you nearly fifteen minutes to show up today, Severus. Where were you?” Harry asked in the raspy voice.

“I was dealing with a stubborn potion that required the most delicate of stasis charms. Had I not lingered to place those charms, I would have returned home to find it wrecked, destroyed by a volatile potion left unattended. I apologize for my absence, master.” Severus said.

“Look at me, Severus.” Harry commanded.

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He did as he was told; double checking his Occlumency shields were firmly in place, he made sure to vividly recreate the scene he was just talking about. Upon locking eyes with Voldemort, he immediately felt him probing his mind, looking for any inaccuracies.

Severus was focused on showing his master the false memory, and therefore didn’t hear the person that walked into the room.

“We have the fat Dursley, master. It would seem that the woman and boy left, but the man was sleeping in an upstairs bedroom at their house. Looks like Potter really did leave them.” The
newcomer announced.

Severus accidently let his concentration slip for a fraction of a second. He couldn’t help but feel satisfied that Vernon had been captured after what Harry had told him yesterday. When he realized what he was doing, he snapped back to the present, but it was too late. The Dark Lord had seen what he had been thinking and he was furious. Severus could see the rage burning in the red eyes and knew that he had less than a second to react.

His wand was in his hand before he even thought about needing it, and with a quick, complicated swirl, he blasted Voldemort across the room and into a wall.

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Harry woke up and immediately threw up over the side of the bed. The burning, stabbing pain in his scar was making him sick, and he couldn’t help but feel like he had just been thrown across the room. He knew he had just watched Severus attack Voldemort, but he wasn’t sure why. What had Voldemort seen in his memories to make him doubt Severus?

“Meemy!” Harry groaned out.

*crack*

“Good morning, m-Master Harry! What is wrong?!” Meemy cried out.

“Professor Snape is in trouble. I think he needs help. I need you to get someone for me’’ Harry said.


“Professor Dumbledore.”

---

Severus knew that his spell would only stun the dark lord, but he didn’t care. He needed to get out of there. The Death Eaters along the walls were shocked still, obviously not expecting Severus to attack their master. That was all the opening he needed. He whirled on the two guarding the door and hit them with two stunners, rushing them as he did so. Another wave of his wand and the door was blasted open. He had just made it past the threshold when the first few spells whizzed past him. The dark green curse that just missed his ear made him realize they were in it to kill, not to capture.

He noticed as he ran down the long, grand hallway that he was in Malfoy Manor.

Was Lucius one of the ones in that room? Severus couldn’t be sure, but he was rather hoping not. Lucius had proven himself a great ally and even greater lover since the Dark Lord had returned last year, and he needed his help if he was going to get out of the manor alive. He went straight to the private study where Lucius could often be found, using another spell when he arrived that turned the door into something akin to smoke. As he swept through the barrier, it returned to its solid form.

Severus stopped shortly after getting through door, actually leaning back against it once it had resolidified. He was breathing heavily and almost cursed Lucius when he spoke from the desk at which he was working.

“Severus? To what do I owe this great pleasure?” Lucius inquired.

“Lucius, I require your assistance. I doubt you’re going to like what I ask of you, but I’ve got a feeling you’re going to help me anyways.” Severus said breathily.
“What happened?” Lucius asked suspiciously.

“The Dark Lord knows that I helped heal Potter after the others failed to capture him yesterday. I chose to fight rather than die.” Severus stated.

Lucius slowly put down the quill he was holding and stood up. For a moment, Severus thought he was going to attempt to curse him, but that thought went away when Lucius rushed over to him and pulled him into a painful kiss.

When Lucius released him, Severus was breathing heavy again.

“Pipsy.” Lucius called out, wasting no time.

*pop*

“Yes, my master. What is you needing?” Pipsy squeaked out from her low bow.

“Find Narcissa and Draco. Take them to the kitchens with you and tell them to wait for our arrival. We should be shortly behind you.” Lucius commanded.

“As you wish, master.” Pipsy said before disapparating.

“Severus, the Dark Lord will surely know that we helped you escape. Will Dumbledore offer us protection?” Lucius asked.

“I doubt he will turn away anyone who wishes to help the light side. I think the real question, Lucius, is whether you will be able to hold your prejudices enough to help their cause.” Severus countered.

“I will do anything to keep Draco and Narcissa safe. And I refuse to stand by and do nothing to help you. I love my wife, Severus, and my son, but you have a place in my heart that has never been filled, and I won’t lose that.” Lucius said passionately.

“I understand. We must go then, to a place where we can safely wait until Dumbledore is able to meet with you. I know just the place, if the owner is willing to harbor fugitives of the Dark Lord.” Severus said, grinning by the time he was finished.

They left Lucius’ study, and crept along the wall until they reached a full-body portrait. Behind it lay a secret passage that headed towards the basement which would lead to the kitchens. Once they were safely inside the passage, they could hear Death Eaters all around the manor, searching rooms and crashing through the many hallways, but none knew where they were. It was slow work, moving in the thin space offered by the secret passage, but it was worth every discomfort to not be found, and after a few minutes of labored moving, they made it to the hallway that would lead down to the basement.

After a quick check to make sure no one was around, Lucius and Severus left the tunnel and bolted down the hallway, wrenching the solitary door open at the end. They started taking the steps two at a time until they reached the bottom, turning left to follow the stone corridor that would lead them to Draco and Narcissa. They had only been following their path for a few moments before they heard a scream, followed by yelling, followed by eerie silence.

Severus looked at Lucius for a brief second before both took off at a run towards the kitchen. Before they could even reach the door, it was blown to pieces, followed by shouts and yells of curses and spells. They finally reached the kitchen to see a battle taking place inside.

Draco and Narcissa had taken refuge behind an overturned table and were firing spells off at three
Death Eaters who all had similar positions around the kitchen. Lucius and Severus wasted no time entering the fight, both of them aiming to kill.

They both dove behind the thick wooden table that Draco and Narcissa were using for shelter, screaming the killing curse the whole way. Severus peeked over the top of the table and watched as the sickly green lights hit two of their opponents square in the chest. They both slumped down the ground, no longer able to fight.

Seconds later, there was a massive scream of rage followed by a spell that exploded the wooden table behind which they were all taking cover.

“YOU’VE KILLED HIM. YOU’VE KILLED MY BROTHER. I’M GOING TO FUCKING KILL YOU TRAITORS!” The female Death Eater screamed before firing off curse after curse.

“A lecto, is that you?! How nice to see you again! Shame about Amycus, but he never was too bright, was he? Maybe in his next life, he’ll remember to duck.” Severus taunted, slowly moving in a half circle while dueling her.

A lecto responded by unleashing another wave of rage induced curses and she seemed hell bent on killing anything that was near Severus. This divided the group in half, with Draco and Lucius close to the fireplace, while Severus and Narcissa were dueling A lecto.

“Lucius! Take Draco and go to Dumbledore! We will follow you, just go! Now!” Severus yelled.

Lucius nodded his head quickly, grabbing Draco and pulling him over to the massive fireplace.

“Go to Hogsmeade, my son. Floo there and I will be right behind you.” Lucius said, giving him a small, reassuring smile as he offered him the floo-powder.

In the meantime, Narcissa and Severus battled two versus one against the enraged A lecto.

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They had her, and she knew it. A lecto was a good duelist, but she was no match for both of them together. She looked desperately around for anything that could help her win, and saw Lucius with his back turned, helping Draco into the fireplace. She smiled viciously and turned her wand on him.

“AVADA KEDAVRA” A lecto screamed.

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“LUCIUS! LUCIUS, MOVE!!” Severus cried out.

Lucius turned around to the sound of his cries and saw too late the bolt of green that was headed straight for him. Lucius locked eyes with his lover and gave a small smile before the spell hit him. He dropped to the ground, smile still in place, looking every bit as elegant as he ever had.

“FATHER?! NOOOOOOO!” Draco screamed.

Narcissa stood staring at her husband, too shocked to move.

A lecto let out a cackle and Severus had had enough.

“Sectumsempra” Severus said viciously.
Alecto stopped laughing immediately and dropped to her knees. She reached for her throat, desperately trying to stop the blood from flowing. She let out an involuntary cough that sprayed blood all down her front and continued to struggle. It didn’t take long until she had fallen over and stopped moving.

Chapter End Notes

We’ll go back to Harry’s PoV soon... Sorry it switches so much!
They were out of time; Severus knew that that Dark Lord would discover their location in the manor shortly. But he couldn’t move, couldn’t accept the fact that Lucius had fallen. His eyes flicked from Lucius’ dead body to Alecto’s and almost laughed at how different the two scenes were. Whereas Lucius was being held in a sobbing Draco’s arms, Alecto was dead in a pool of her own blood, loved by no one, cared for by no one.

Narcissa startled him when she lightly pulled on his arm, and when he glanced down at her, he could see his own emotions reflected: pain, loss, anger, pity. Well, he didn’t want to be pitied, but this was not the time discuss it.

Severus smacked himself, hard, and shook his head to hopefully get rid of the shock he was in. It seemed to do the trick, and he looked at Narcissa long enough to give her a brief nod before proceeding to walk over to where Draco wept.

“Draco, we cannot stay. We can bring Lucius with us, but we must go now.” Severus whispered hurriedly.

Draco didn’t offer any signs of moving and Severus raised an eyebrow at Narcissa.

“Draco, my darling, come with me. Severus will bring your father with him, but he’s right, we have to leave.” Narcissa said.

Still, Draco did not move. It seemed he couldn’t hear them, too caught up in his own grief to listen.

“Draco!” Severus snapped and reached forward to pull Draco’s head up. He was successful and waited until the boy had focused on him before he spoke again.

“We need to move. The Dark Lord will soon discover where we are, if he hasn’t already, and I don’t wish to stick around for that reunion. Take yourself and your mother to my home in Spinner’s End and wait for me there. I will only be a few seconds behind you. Understood?” Severus asked.

Draco only nodded and reluctantly pulled himself away from Lucius. He took a few shaky breaths and stood up, hand held out for his mother to take.

Narcissa took one more look at Severus and Lucius before joining Draco. Together, they entered the fireplace and Flooed to Spinner’s End, Narcissa clutching tightly to Draco’s hand.

Severus cast a lightening charm on Lucius as soon as they had flashed away and carefully picked him up. A tear fell as he walked over to the Floo, but he angrily brushed it away with a swipe of his
shoulder. Someday he would have time to mourn, but today was not that day. He stepped into the fireplace and grabbed a handful of Floo powder, ready to leave this place behind.

“Spinner’s End.” Severus called out.

The last thing he saw as he was whipped out of the kitchen was Voldemort standing in the doorway, his look one of pure rage.

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“Harry? Harry, my boy, you must focus! Close your mind!” Dumbledore said, anguish leaking into his voice.

With a great effort, Harry pulled himself from Voldemort’s mind, gasping for air.

“I’m sorry, Professor. I-I was trying to see what happened. Voldemort is furious, and he is going after him.” Harry heaved out as soon as he could.

“Who is he going after, Harry?” Dumbledore asked, concerned.

“Professor Snape. I had another vision in my dreams this morning, sir. Voldemort was with Professor Snape and Voldemort was using Legilimency, and then, all of a sudden, Professor Snape attacked him. That’s why I had my house elf come and get you. You’ve got to help him!” Harry pleaded.

“Naturally, Harry, I will do my best. I have a great many questions for you, but I think most of them can wait. Did you learn any more information in your latest… trip to Voldemort’s mind?” Dumbledore asked, half-raising an eyebrow.

“Professor Snape Flooed to Spinner’s End. That’s the last thing I saw before I heard you calling me back.” Harry said sheepishly.

“Then I must rouse the Order, Harry. I am going to request that you wait here, in your own mind, until I return. Is that acceptable?” Dumbledore questioned, moving towards the door.

Harry nodded at the ground, finding himself unable to meet Dumbledore’s eyes.

“Err… one more thing, Professor?” Harry said.

Dumbledore stopped and looked back at Harry.

“I could be wrong, sir, but I’m pretty sure Professor Snape was carrying Malfoy.” Harry said softly.

Dumbledore said nothing and continued to leave. Harry waited until he couldn’t hear Dumbledore’s steps anymore before moving towards the bathroom. He wanted to scrub himself clean after having taken two trips into Voldemort’s mind.

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Severus stumbled out of his own fireplace, nearly falling in the process. He recovered at the last minute, maintaining his grip on Lucius all the while. He took a deep, steadying breath as he brought Lucius to the couch in front of the fireplace. He carefully set him down, removing the featherweight charm as he did so. It almost looked as if he had fallen asleep there, and once again, Severus had to fight tears of sorrow.

He quickly diverted his attention to the fireplace and re-set the Floo connection so that only a select few people could come through. He guessed that the Dark Lord had heard where he was going, and
he didn’t want to leave him an easy way in.

They would have to move as soon as possible, but Severus needed to reach out to the Headmaster. He was almost sure that Dumbledore would offer the remaining Malfoy’s refuge, but if he was wrong... well, he would go down that path later.

However, his train of thought was stopped when he felt his wards being viciously attacked; he grimaced. It seemed that the Dark Lord was very upset and would have no problem attacking Severus’ house in broad daylight.

Releasing a small sigh, Severus walked towards the kitchen with a scowl in place. When he arrived, he found Draco wrapped in his mother’s arms, two cups of tea steaming away on the table.

“We need to move. The Dark Lord is here and he has begun attacking my wards. They will keep him out for a short while, but nothing more. Finish your tea and meet me in the study. I will be right down.” Severus said, ignoring the worried looks that the Malfoy’s had, and headed out of the kitchen and up the stairs towards his potions room.

When he arrived, he quickly made his way through the room, packing only the rarest ingredients and easy to transport things into a chest. He had finished in minutes and he shrank the packed trunk and put it into a pocket of his robes; with a last sweeping look of the room, Severus spun around and went back down the stairs.

He walked quickly to his study, intent on moving the Malfoy’s as soon as he got a message to the headmaster. He froze when he walked through the door, however. His eyes were locked on Narcissa and Draco. Narcissa was sitting up so straight, Severus had to wonder how she did it; her face betrayed no sign that she was anything other than cool and passive. Draco was doing his best, and failing slightly, to imitate his mother.

Across his study sat Dumbledore, peering serenely over his half-moon spectacles, surveying Severus with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

“Headmaster? I was about to send my Patronus to alert you I was coming with… guests. What are you doing here?” Severus asked, unable to keep all of the demand out of his voice.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas!

Dumbledore sat quietly for a moment. He seemed to be making a decision, but Severus was impatient. His nerves were already on edge, and he could feel the layers of the wards being obliterated by the Death Eaters who were currently attacking his house. He didn’t have time or patience for the older man’s usual stoicism.

“Albus?!” Severus questioned, allowing some of his angst to leak into his voice.

“Harry.” Dumbledore finally spoke, eyes suddenly piercing.

Severus’ heart stopped for a fraction of a second before asking, “Is he okay?”

“Fine, fine, he is fine Severus. Doing quite well, considering he was missing until this morning.” Dumbledore said, another piercing look shot his way.

Severus was about to speak, but at that moment, there was a large bang, followed by what sounded like all of the air rushing from the room. He looked at Dumbledore and tried to express that his wards had only seconds before failing. It appeared that the headmaster didn’t need the warning, because he was already springing into action.

“I will apparate the Malfoy’s with me, Severus. We’ll meet you at Potter Manor. Do not delay.” Dumbledore commanded, his tone leaving no room for argument.

With that, he grabbed the terrified looking Draco and stern looking Narcissa by their arms and left with a slight *pop*.

Severus stared at the spot where they disappeared, trying to control his emotions. He knew that now was not the time to criticize the way Dumbledore handled things. He would go with the flow… for now.

He took a deep, calming breath, and with one last look around his study, Severus started concentrating on his destination. That was when he remembered, with heart-wrenching pain, that Lucius lying on the couch in his sitting room. He couldn’t leave him behind. It would destroy Draco and Narcissa, and if he was honest, probably himself, too.

He raced out of his study and down the hall to the room, wrenching the door open when he got there, intent on grabbing Lucius and leaving. But as he pulled the door open, he was blasted back by an explosion that destroyed the front of his house. Severus was hit with pieces of glass and debris, not having the time to react with any kind of charm that would shield the blast. He gasped out in pain as he forcefully slammed into the wall behind him, plaster and bits of wall showering him as he slid down to the floor.

It took him a few seconds to snap out of the daze he was in, but when he focused on the doorway, he
saw a line of black-clad figures standing in a line and advancing on his home. In the middle of them stood Voldemort, face alight with rage and fury. They were already casting spells towards him; red, green, purple, blue, and yellow colors flew towards him. They exploded around him, some blasting holes in the walls surrounding the doorway, some missing him and hitting the wall mere inches away from his head, starting small fires where they landed. Severus knew if he didn’t act immediately, he was dead.

“I’m sorry, Lucius.” He whispered.

He pointed his wand at the advancing line of black and simply said, “exscindo.”

He listened and watched for a moment as everything in his house seemed to explode, before he turned into his apparation.

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Harry felt the wards ring inside his head, and wondered what they meant. He had just finished his shower and was walking out of the bathroom with just his pants on, toweling off his hair when Meemy popped into his room. She looked worried, and Harry knew something was wrong.

“Master Harry, Professor Dumbledore is being at the edge of the property with two others. He is requesting you immediately, sir!” Meemy rushed out.

Harry nodded and tossed the towel to his bed. He quickly pulled on a shirt and trousers followed by his trainers, and grabbed Meemy’s outstretched hand so they could apparate to the edge of the wards.

After the brief feeling of being squeezed through a tube, he was indeed greeted by Dumbledore and two visitors. Narcissa and Draco stood regally behind Dumbledore, though Harry noticed the fresh tears in Draco’s eyes and slight cracks in his composure.

“Professor Dumbledore? What happened? Were you able to help Professor Snape?” Harry questioned.

His question was answered when Snape appeared a few feet behind the group of visitors, face and arm bloody, eyes swimming with emotion.

“Severus, what on Earth happened?” Dumbledore asked severely.

“I tried to go back for... for Lucius, but they blew up my house. They blew up my house and tried to kill me. I couldn’t reach him.” Severus said, his voice cracking towards the end.

“Severus, I thought I made it clear you were to follow imm-“ Dumbledore started.

“I don’t bloody well care. I couldn’t leave him there for them to do Merlin knows what to his body.” Severus snapped. “I’m sorry, Narcissa… I tried to grab him, but there were too many of them, and…”

Narcissa just shook her head and spoke softly. “Don’t you spend a second more thinking about it, Severus. I know in my heart that you did your best. It’s more than we could have asked for with the situation being what it is.”

Draco, however, truly broke down this time. He slumped to his knees, sobs wracking his lithe frame. In a flash Narcissa was down beside him, cradling him as best she could from her position.

Harry stood motionless, watching as the pillar of Slytherin house broke and crumbled. He never
imagined that Draco, the Ice Prince, the perfect embodiment of their house, someone who had a
mask that rivaled a brick wall, someone who could shut his emotions down without a second
thought, would ever be a sobbing heap on the ground. He felt his heart break as he turned and
walked to the headmaster.

“Professor… what can I do to help?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore stepped closer to Harry. “That’s simple enough, my boy. They need refuge; peace and
quiet while they mourn their loss. Your home would be the perfect place for that. I would offer them
a place at Hogwarts, but I don’t wish to subject them to the Aurors that would surely demand they be
released to them.” Dumbledore said.

“Certainly, Professor, but are you sure this is the safest place? The Death Eaters have to know I’m
around here somewhere. They found me in a small village not far from here. I... wasn’t as careful as I
should have been when I came here.” Harry said, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Potter Manor is somewhere I never knew existed, Harry. When it came to our attention that your
parents were being hunted by Voldemort, James strongly recommended that we use the cottage in
Godric’s Hollow.” Dumbledore said.

“Okay?” Harry questioned, confused.

“It would take some effort, but we could put the manor under a Fidelius Charm. I won’t pretend to
understand James’ reluctance to use these grounds in the past, but I see no reason why we couldn’t
make use of the spell now - if you’re agreeable, of course.” Dumbledore said, inclining his head
slightly.

Harry thought about this for a moment. He doubted he would ever know the reason for his parent’s
not wanting to use the manor, but he truly didn’t see the harm in adding another layer of protection
around himself.

“Of course, Professor.” Harry said.

“Excellent.” Dumbledore said, clapping his hands once. “We need to decide on a Secret Keeper,
Harry. You must understand that your parents would not put their trust in me, and instead chose to
do something that led to their downfall. I am strongly recommending that you do not make the same
mistake.”

Harry felt himself stiffen at Dumbledore’s words. So he thought them stupid for trusting someone
they thought to be their friend? He almost lashed out at Dumbledore before an idea occurred to him.

“Professor, could I not just be my own Secret Keeper?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore stood still, looking at Harry over his glasses.

“Yes. But I can’t allow it, not with Voldemort being able to penetrate your mind.”

Again, Harry felt the anger leaping in his chest, and this time, his mouth was open and ready to
strike.

Harry jumped when Snape spoke from behind him.

“I’ll make it my personal mission to teach the boy proper Occlumency. We’ll get started immediately
and this time, we won’t fail.” Snape said.
Dumbledore briefly flicked his gaze to Snape before turning it back to Harry.

“Do not make me regret this, Harry.” Dumbledore said quietly, before backing up and speaking loud enough to include Narcissa and Draco. “Please, allow us entry past your wards, Harry. We will get started on the Fidelius Charm as soon as we are through.”

“Sure Professor, but... how?” Harry asked sheepishly.

Dumbledore gave a small smile and replied, “It’s simple, Harry. Just reach your hand out and concentrate. Try to feel them in your mind. I’m sure they’ve already made their presence noticed.”

Harry did as he was told, closing his eyes as he reached forward and tried to feel something that was invisible.

It took only a couple seconds for him to feel the wards and they made him gasp in shock. In his mind he could see the wards, for the first time since he had arrived. They were like a giant, domed glass that covered the entire property. He stumbled forward and let his hand hover right above where they started. He could feel them pulsing as if they were alive, dancing as if they were happy. Concentrating harder, he realized he could locate everything that was currently alive and breathing on the grounds. He could see in his mind every inch of ground that the wards protected.

He let out a shaky laugh and breathlessly said, “This is amazing!”

“Very good, Harry. It sounds like you found them. Now, it should be as simple as adjusting them to what you want them to do.” Dumbledore said from somewhere behind him.

Harry complied, focusing again on the wards. He could swear they were practically humming with energy, waiting for a command from their master.

*I want to allow Severus Snape, Albus Dumbledore, Narcissa Malfoy, and Draco Malfoy through the wards.*

He knew it worked before he had even finished thinking it and couldn’t help but smile.

“It’s done.” Harry said, turning back to the group and opening his eyes.

“Well done, Harry. Very well done, indeed.” Dumbledore said, walking forward to stand next to Harry. He clapped one hand on his shoulder and then continued to step through the wards.

Snape went over to Narcissa and Draco, stooping down to help pick the distraught boy up and bring him into the safety of the manor. They crossed the wards effortlessly, and Harry was aware that he could now feel their presence in his head. It wasn’t invasive, it was just... there.

Allowing another small smile, Harry followed them.

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When the group had made it back to the house, Harry called on Dizzy to help Narcissa and Draco find suitable rooms.

“I think the two bedrooms down the hall from Severus’ share an en suite. Would that be okay, Mrs. Malfoy?” Harry asked.

“Yes, of course, Mr. Potter. I should think that would be perfect.” Narcissa said in her soft, elegant voice.
“Dizzy, please show them the way. See that you get them anything they need, whatever it is.” Harry said.

Dizzy bowed deeply and slowly made his way inside, making sure that the Malfoy’s were following him.

He watched them go, frowning slightly at Draco. He hadn’t said a single word since they arrived, and Harry was truly worried.

He realized that he being watched by Snape and Dumbledore, so he spoke.

“What do we need to do, Professors?”

Dumbledore spoke first. “First, you must understand that this is something that cannot be undone. Once something is protected under the Fidelius Charm, it will remain that way. If you were to die telling no one of its location, you would take the secret to the grave. No one would be able to find this place again. However, if you were to die having told two people of its location, then those two would become the new Secret Keepers, so it is imperative that you only tell those who you trust without a shadow of a doubt.

“Do you understand so far?” At Harry’s nod, he continued. “Good. Now, the incantation itself is fairly easy, though the power needed to cast such a spell is great. You must understand that this is extremely potent magic, Harry, and you might feel uneasy or even sick while I am casting the spell. This is normal, and it should settle quickly.”

Harry nodded again, bracing himself mentally for whatever was about to happen.

“Let us give it a try, then.”

“Fidelius Incantatio!” Dumbledore said firmly, wand pointed at the manor. A bright white light erupted from the house. It seemed like someone had turned on spotlights from every window of the house, except it was mid-day and it was impossibly bright.

“Fidelius Hoc Homine!” Dumbledore said, this time pointing his wand at Harry.

Harry gasped as all the light from the house suddenly swarmed and engulfed him. He shut his eyes, trying to escape the blinding, bright light. All of his muscles were tensed - somewhere deep inside him, he could feel the spell taking root. It felt like it was being latched onto his very being, his arms, his legs, his mind, and then suddenly, it stopped.

He cracked an eye open, trying to see if the blinding light had gone. It seemed to have stopped, so he relaxed his muscles and opened his eyes fully.

“How do you feel?” Dumbledore asked tentatively.

“I’m okay. That was just… unexpected. Did it work?” Harry questioned.

“We are unable to see the manor, Mr. Potter.” Snape said.

“Harry if you wouldn’t mind telling us the location of your home so that we could proceed inside? I’d rather like to sit down.” Dumbledore said.

Harry looked at him and noticed he did look a little wobbly on his feet.

“Of course. Potter Manor is located at 212 Sampford Arundel, Somerset, UK.” Harry offered.
“Thank you. Let us proceed inside.” Dumbledore said.

Harry led the way, followed by Snape and Dumbledore, to the study that was located on the first floor. When the three had made themselves comfortable, Dumbledore spoke.

“I’d like to know many things, Harry. The most pressing question is why you left your aunt’s protection, knowing it could cost you your life.”

“That’s simple, Professor. But I don’t think you’re going to like the answer.” Harry replied.

When Dumbledore didn’t say anything, Harry continued.

“My uncle tried to rape me. He spouted some crap about me failing to respect him, and now that Sirius was dead, he was going to show me what would happen if I continued to disrespect him. He had my pants off before I managed to incapacitate him and decided to leave. You see, my aunt had given me a letter from my mother earlier that day that listed this as one of the properties that I owned, so I came here. I didn’t expect to find the house or the house-elves still here. I made it my new home.” Harry finished.

Dumbledore, for his part, managed to look thoroughly appalled and disgusted. He looked Harry in the eyes, and Harry understood why people feared him. His eyes were absolutely dangerous.

“Words do not describe how I feel about this, Harry. You must know that I would never have thought Vernon Dursley capable of something like this.” Dumbledore said. “I wish you had thought to come to me, rather than leaving your safety up to chance.”

“I thought about it, Professor. But, I thought you would make me stay there anyways, due to the protection offered by my mother’s blood.” Harry said quietly.

“Then I have failed you once again, Harry. I care a great deal about you and your well being, but I would never force you to stay with a paedophile. I am disgusted by what Vernon tried to do to you and I am deeply sorry that I was unable to help you.” Dumbledore said.

Harry just nodded, not sure what to say.

“Now, you said when I arrived here with the Malfoy’s that the Death Eater’s had already found you here. What happened?” Dumbledore questioned.

Harry took a deep breath and recounted what happened the day he went to the small village nearby. By the time he had finished his story, Dumbledore was white as a ghost.

The man said nothing for a few moments before finally speaking. “Harry, I don’t want you leaving the safety of these grounds until September the first. I know it’s not fair, but the weight of the wizarding world rests on your shoulders, and we cannot risk you falling into Voldemort’s hands, and this was too close of a call. That is all I will say on the matter, and I want your word that you will follow this rule.”

“But, Professor, I-” Harry started to say, before he caught the slight shake of Snape’s head. He stopped speaking and let out a sigh before continuing again. “Fine. You have my word.”

“Excellent, my boy. Now, if you wouldn’t mind excusing me and Professor Snape? I’d like to have a quick word with him.” Dumbledore asked.

Harry only nodded as he left the room.
“Headmaster?” Severus queried.

“I’ll get straight to the point, Severus. I need to know what happened that made you attack Voldemort this morning.” Dumbledore said.

Severus had to think for a second. It seemed like a lifetime ago that it had happened.

“The Dark Lord had summoned me to his location early this morning. I went and he asked what took me so long to arrive, so I made up a scenario in my head that showed me brewing a difficult potion. My concentration slipped for a second, and he saw that I was lying to him, and that I had actually been with Potter.” Severus summarized.

“What caused your concentration to slip?” Dumbledore asked.

“A Death Eater came into the room and told the Dark Lord that they had captured Vernon Dursley.” Snape said.

Silence met his answer, and he decided to wait for Dumbledore to speak first.

“You will accompany me to Privet Drive. We must verify that Vernon has indeed been captured. Did they mention anything of Petunia or Dudley?” Dumbledore questioned.

“Just that it appeared they left.” Severus replied.

Dumbledore disapparated abruptly, and Severus had to spin quickly to keep up. Apparently, the headmaster was furious.

He arrived seconds after the old man, and noticed that Dumbledore was stiff with tension, wand by his side. Severus stopped in the middle of putting his wand away as he, too, noticed what Dumbledore had upon landing.

“Do you-“ Severus started to say.

“-sense the dark magic? Yes. Best to take it slow, Severus.” Dumbledore barely whispered.

He nodded his agreement and they advanced on the house, wands held stiffly at their sides.

They cautiously approached the house until they reached the front door. Dumbledore raised his wand and made a sweeping pass over it, checking for any kind of booby trap that might activate when someone tried to open it. He signaled to Severus that it was clear and opened the door with another small wave of his wand.

Dumbledore entered wand first into the house with Severus right on his heels. They were immediately greeted with blood that was smeared on the floor. It ran the length of the stairs, into the hallway, and passed the door that Severus knew would lead to the kitchen and living area.

“I’ll check upstairs, Severus. You stay down here and take the first floor – cautiously.” Dumbledore barely whispered.

Severus nodded his agreement and crept down the short hallway. He briefly checked the closet under the stairs where Harry used to be kept – nothing. He took a deep breath and continued on, using a spell to open the hallway door. On the other side, he found more smeared blood, which lead over to
the couch in the living area. He glanced around the room before making his way over to the couch. 
Here he found a large pool of congealing blood.

He found no sign of anything else, but the feel of dark magic still hung in the air. Whoever had captured Vernon had made him suffer; tortured him for who knows how long before taking him back to the Dark Lord. Severus shook his head and returned to the hallway where he met Dumbledore coming down the stairs.

“Anything?” Dumbledore asked.

“The smears lead to the living room couch, where I found a large pool of blood. There air is still heavy with dark magic, so I’m assuming they tortured him before taking him away. Did you find anything?” Severus replied.

“I believe the Death Eaters were correct in their assumption that Petunia and Dudley left. I couldn’t find anything that seemed to belong to them, and upon further inspection, I found this letter behind the bed where the blood trail seems to start.” Dumbledore said, handing the letter to Severus. He quickly unfolded and read it.

“Vernon-

I cannot remain here after finally realizing what’s been under my nose this whole time. For years, I have sat idly by while you punished Harry for his magical transgressions, because I truly believed that magic was evil; I believed that magic was what cost my sister her life. I see now that evil can take many shapes, and that I was married to it.

I thought we could give Harry a chance at a normal life, but you made sure that that was not the case. You always insisted on being the one to deal his punishments, to being the one with complete control over him. I should have realized that the punishments were some sick fantasy that you acted out on the poor boy. Sadly, I think I did realize towards the end, but I fooled myself into thinking that you only had his best interests at heart.

Regardless, I cannot risk you trying to do the same thing with my Dudley. I am sorry that I ever let it happen to my nephew, but that is something that I will now have to live with.

I can say with absolute certainty that you will never see me or my son again.

-Petunia Evans”

Severus was shocked. It seemed that Petunia had some common sense, after all. Perhaps it would do Harry some good to know that his aunt had left his uncle and appeared to show true remorse for what had happened. He folded the letter back up and tucked it into a pocket inside his robes. Dumbledore gave him a searching look but said nothing.

“Are you ready to go?” Severus questioned.

Dumbledore nodded, and they left the house.
Harry was turning the corner to go into the kitchen and suddenly found himself face to face with Narcissa Malfoy. They stared at each other for a moment until Harry felt the need to break the ice.

“Mrs. Malfoy… I’m sorry for what happened to your husband. Are you doing okay?” Harry asked tentatively.

“I would be lying if I said I wasn’t upset, Mr. Potter, but I am not concerned about myself. I am far more worried about Draco. He is taking this extremely hard. His father was everything he aspired to be, and to see him murdered in front of him was… upsetting, to say the least.” Mrs. Malfoy said.

“I can imagine.” Harry said. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Actually, there is. You are probably one of the few people who can say they know what it feels like to lose someone they care about. In fact, I imagine you can say that a few times over.” Mrs. Malfoy said.

Harry stared at her and then finally nodded.

“If you would be willing, I’d like for you to talk to my son. Maybe help him see that this isn’t the end of the world. I know he’s in pain, but he can’t let this break him.” She said.

Harry mulled this over for a few seconds. On one hand, he really didn’t want to stick his nose where it didn’t belong. He hadn’t dealt much with Draco over the years, and when he found out his father was a Death Eater, he had wanted even less to do with him. But on the other hand, he didn’t like the fact that someone in his house was suffering so terribly, and he potentially could do more good than harm.

“I can’t promise anything, but if you think it’ll help, I wouldn’t mind giving it a try.” Harry said.

“I can ask nothing more of you, Mr. Potter.” She said. “However, I do have one more thing to ask - I was hoping to employ the use of one of your house elves. I’ve already placed an order for some clothing and hygiene products in Diagon Alley, but they obviously can’t be delivered here, so I would need your elf to pick them up. Can this be accommodated?”

“Of course, Mrs. Malfoy.” He said. “Nipsy!”

*pop*

“Master Harry! What can Nipsy be doing for you?” Nipsy squeaked.
“Mrs. Malfoy will need some things picked up from a few shops in Diagon Alley. Would you mind grabbing them for her?” Harry asked.

“Nipsy would be delighted, Master!” Nipsy said, turning to Mrs. Malfoy. “Just be telling Nipsy where she needs to go.”

Harry listened as Mrs. Malfoy gave Nipsy directions and handed the elf an almost overflowing bag of gold. The elf took the bag and vanished it almost instantly. Nipsy then bowed deeply and disapparated.

The two stood in a slightly awkward silence before Mrs. Malfoy spoke again.

“Mr. Potter, would you mind if I explored your grounds? I had a look out the window and saw the most beautiful lake… I’d like to go and sit next to it for a while.” She asked.

“Please do, Mrs. Malfoy. I’d very much like you to treat this as your home for as long as you’re here. The lake is quite wonderful and is fed by a stream that even I haven’t fully explored yet. Let me know if there is anything I, or my house elves, can do for you.” Harry replied.

Mrs. Malfoy gave him a small smile and swept out of the kitchen, making her way down the hall and towards the garden room that would allow her access to the deck that sat at the back of the house.

“Oh, and one more thing Mrs. Malfoy, before I forget and you are unable to find the house again - Potter Manor is located at 212 Sampford Arundel, Somerset, UK.” Harry called after her.

She said her thanks and disappeared through a door. Harry wasn’t sure, but he thought he heard her voice crack.

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Harry decided to make himself a sandwich before he went to find Draco, so he continued on to the kitchen. It was nearly three in the afternoon, and dinner was only a couple hours away, but he was famished. With everything that had happened, he didn’t think he could be blamed for it.

He was going to make a BLT, something that was light, but would hold him over until dinner. He set about making it, using a simple household charm to clean and chop the lettuce and tomato while he cooked the bacon. He was about half way through the cooking process when he heard the door open behind him and heard someone shuffling their feet across the floor.

He assumed it was Mrs. Malfoy, coming back for something. He turned and had her name on his tongue when he realized that it was Draco. He stopped short; Draco wasn’t wearing a shirt and his face was flushed all the way down to his collar bone. His usually perfect hair was a slight mess, and his eyes were puffy. Harry had never seen Draco look so… wrecked.

“Merlin, Potter, it’s hot. Haven’t you heard of cooling charms?” Draco said.

Harry wasn’t listening, though, because his eyes had traveled to Draco’s upper body. He was fit.

Harry’s eyes raked up and down his chest. He had almost-pointy shoulders that led to pale white biceps and noticeably muscled forearms. His chest was well defined with pecks that had just started to form; his nipples almost translucent. He had a six-pack that was barely detailed, but still there; his belly button an outie that seemed to complete the whole package.

He was gob smacked and couldn’t seem to make his brain connect to his mouth.

Draco stood there for a moment before clearing his throat. Harry finally snapped out of it.
“Uh, sorry. What did you say?” Harry asked, shaking his head slightly.

“I said it’s bloody hot.” Draco replied. “And I don’t like being ogled.”

“Yeah, right, sorry. I’ll ask the house-elves if they can fix the heat.” Harry said. “Are you hungry?”

Draco looked like he was on the verge of saying no, so Harry spoke again. “I’m making BLT’s. We can split one?”

“Sure, why not.” Draco said, deciding after a second’s longer deliberation.

Harry grinned and turned back around to the bacon, pleased to see that it hadn’t burned while he had been distracted. He could feel Draco’s eyes on him, but didn’t feel he had much room to complain when he had practically buggered him with his eyes just a few moments ago. Instead, he focused on finishing the bacon and putting the sandwich together, which was done rather quickly.

He grabbed a knife and two plates, and proceeded to cut the sandwich, placing one half on each plate along with a handful of crisps. He handed Draco a plate and told him to dig in while he filled two glasses full of juice. He slid a glass to Draco when he had filled them and then sat down, tearing into his half with gusto.

They ate in silence for a few moments, with nothing more than a crunch or sound of swallowing between them. Harry was about to open his mouth to speak, but just then, Professor Snape walked in the kitchen. His eyes scanned the room before they landed on Draco, and Harry could swear that he saw a flash of concern before the professor switched his eyes to him. He walked over to the bar they were sitting at and leaned in close to Harry.

“Potter, when you have finished eating, we must get started on your lessons. And I’ve got some… information that I feel you should know.” He said, standing up straight.

Harry nodded and stuffed the last piece of his sandwich in his mouth. He chewed quickly and then drained the rest of his glass in one go.

“I’m ready, Professor. Where do you want to do this?” Harry asked.

“How would you feel about doing this outside? Perhaps the western lawn would suffice?” Professor Snape queried.

“Absolutely!” Harry replied.

Professor Snape spun on his heel and disappeared from the room, leaving Harry to follow at a quick pace.

“See you later, Draco.” Harry said, giving him a flash of his smile as he turned the corner.

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Harry arrived on the western part of the grounds just a few seconds after Professor Snape, but his teacher had already discarded his robes and rolled his sleeves up. He had his wand held casually by his side, looking every bit at peace as Harry had ever seen him. It was a stark contrast to the Professor Snape Harry knew at school and the Professor Snape that had previously tried to teach him Occlumency.

“Take out your wand.” Professor Snape said lightly as soon as Harry had arrived.
Harry complied and tried to mirror his Professors calm demeanor.

“Now, when I tried to teach you Occlumency at school last year, things did not go as planned. Would you agree?” Professor Snape questioned.

Harry nodded his head, but didn’t say anything.

“I will admit, I am partially to blame for this. Let’s say forty percent responsible. I did not try as hard as I should have to help you close your mind to the Dark Lord, and it led to the death of your Godfather. For that, I am sorry…” Professor Snape paused to let his words sink in before he spoke again. “However, with that being said, you must never allow him inside your head again. And now that your house is under the protection of a Fidelius Charm, you have to be doubly careful.

“So, what do we do about this?” Professor Snape continued. “We must have you master Occlumency. The shield in your mind must be strong enough to withstand the Dark Lord. And in order to accomplish that, I want you to first get a feel for what strong shields are like. On the count of three, I want you to use *Legilimens* on me.”

“Are you sure, Professor? The last time I saw…” Harry’s words died off.

“The last time, I was not expecting you to be able to peer into my mind. I assure you that you will see only what I want you to see this time. Now, on my count. Three, two, one…” Professor Snape said.

“Legilimens.” Harry said, making eye contact with his Professor as he raised his wand at him.

Harry was immediately transported into Snape’s head, but all he could see was Professor Snape pacing back and forth with his hands behind his back.

“You see, Potter, I am allowing you to see only what I want. If I wanted you to see a memory, it could be easily done.” Professor Snape said. “For example…”

Harry was suddenly looking down at a much younger Snape, and he realized with a shocking jolt, his mother. They were at Hogwarts, maybe first or second year, down by the banks of the lake. His mother was laughing at something Snape had just said.

“Or perhaps…” Snape said quietly.

The memory switched and Harry was now in a room with Voldemort and Snape. They were having a somewhat heated discussion, and then all of a sudden, Harry watched as Snape cast a *Crucio* at Voldemort, sneering as the noseless bastard screamed in pain.

Harry lost his concentration and his eyes broke contact with Snape’s.

“Professor, what was that?” Harry asked unbelievingly.

“That, Potter, was just what I wanted you to see. The first was a real memory, the second was not. However, you would never be able to tell the difference between the two.” He replied.

“But, how? How was that so… real?” Harry questioned.

“The secret of any good Occluder is the way they choose to hide their true memories and feelings, while providing a fictional train of memories. I personally choose a memory that has some truth to its base, and then twist that memory to suit my needs. For instance, the memory of me torturing the Dark Lord. Everything was real up to the point of me casting a curse at him. From there, I substituted
my own reality.

“When you first entered my mind, you saw me pacing back and forth. At the time, I wanted you to see nothing, so I put my memories behind a mental barrier, if you will. And for now, this is what we’ll start with. It should be fairly straightforward for you to understand, now that you’ve seen it in action. Now, I want you to focus on putting all your thoughts behind something. That something can be whatever you want it to be; a wall, a shield, etc - it’s your choice what your barrier looks like. When you think you’ve done that, nod your head, but make sure to keep your thoughts and memories locked away. Understood?” Snape finished.

“Yes, Professor. I’ll do my best.” Harry replied.

He closed his eyes and started doing what Snape told him, choosing to build a solid ball of steel around his memories. He ended up imagining that it surrounded his brain, sort of protecting it from people who wanted to do him harm. It took him some time, because he wanted to make sure that he was doing it correctly before he told Snape to check him. Finally, he opened his eyes and nodded, doing his best to hold the ball of steel in place.

“Three, two, one…” Snape counted down quietly. “Legilimens.”

Harry could sense Snape in his mind and redoubled his efforts to maintain the steel around his mind. He could feel the Professor poking around, trying to find a spot that he could attack, but after trying for a few moments, he gave up and broke contact.

“Very good, Potter. A ball of steel, yes?” Snape asked, eye brow raised.

“Yes, Professor. It’s the first thing that came to my mind. Will that work?” Harry replied.

“Yes, I should think that would suffice, as long as you can hold it in place. Concentrate for now, we’re going to continue.” Snape said, before casting again and again, trying over and over to find a weak point in Harry’s defense; he kept this up until Harry was panting from exertion, and parts of his thoughts were starting to leak through. Finally, Professor Snape seemed satisfied and relented.

“Well done, Mr. Potter. I’ve been trying to gain entry into your mind for nearly an hour now. If we continued at this pace, I imagine that your shield would totally fail and grant me access, but that is not my goal. It does, however, bring me to the next topic at hand. I want you to practice holding that ball around your mind until it becomes second nature. If you keep at it, it should only be a matter of time before I am unable to weaken and penetrate your mind, even when you’re sleeping. It will be mentally taxing, and I doubt you’ll be able to hold full length conversations with anyone, so perhaps for a few days you should retire to your personal quarters, or a private, quiet place and only come out when it’s absolutely necessary.” The Professor said.

“Yes, sir.” Harry said.

“Good. There are a couple of other things I’d like to speak to you about, while I’ve got you here. The first is your spell training.” Professor Snape said. “Though he tries, Dumbledore has yet to find a suitable teacher for the Defense Against Dark Arts position, and you’re seriously lacking in education for it. If you’re willing, I’d like to train you myself. And not just DADA, but real attack and defense spells.” Snape said.

“Seriously, Professor? That would be awe-… Uh, that would good, sir. Very good.” Harry rushed to say.

“Very well, then. We will start after I feel that your Occlumency shields are strong enough, so
“I have… news, if you’d like to call it that. It’s probably going to be upsetting, but I think you should know that the Dark Lord has captured your uncle. Dumbledore and I went to confirm this, earlier this afternoon. We found this when we searched the house.”

Harry watched as Snape pulled a folded piece of paper out from his robes and took it as it was handed to him.

“I’m going inside, Mr. Potter. I imagine dinner will be soon.” Snape stated, grabbing his robes and walking away.

Harry heard him, but didn’t reply. He was reading the note his aunt had left him for his uncle.

*Aunt Petunia had left uncle Vernon? For him?* Well, partly for him, he reasoned with himself. *She said she couldn’t risk the same thing happening to Dudley. I wonder where she went.* Harry thought idly.

Harry shook his head. He would think about this later. Right now, he needed to focus on keeping his thoughts and memories contained behind the barrier. He took a breath, securing his mind as he did so, and walked back to the house.

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Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! It's been (almost) 3 months since I uploaded, and for that, I'm terribly sorry. I was moving from Alaska to California, and I cannot even begin to describe how much of an adventure THAT was. Short chapter here, only about 2k words, but I should be able to keep these coming (I do start a new job on Wednesday, so we'll see) but I will not be abandoning this fic. Thanks for reading, and thanks even more for those of you who continue to leave comments and kudos. I love you all!!!

Harry did as Snape told him and spent the next 3 days in almost total solitude. Every waking moment he focused on keeping the ball of steel in place around his thoughts and memories. From an outsiders view, it would look like Harry was meditating; his legs crossed and back straight as he sat in the middle of his room; he wanted to keep this mutual respect that he had going between Snape and himself, so he was going to master this. He didn’t leave his self-imposed solitude and only allowed the house elves to bring him food, giving them warning that he wasn’t to be disturbed when they did so.

Around the middle of the second day, Harry started to let his thoughts roam free, feeling confident he could keep his focus on keeping his shields up while letting his mind wander. One of the first memories that drifted across his mind was about was the one that Snape had shown him of his mother as a child. He could see his mother’s eyes closed and face lightly bunched up as she laughed at what his professor had said to her. He realized Snape appeared amazed to have made her laugh so hard, while he also looked pleased with himself.

Harry felt something wet on his cheek and realized the memory had brought tears to his eyes. He wiped the tears away and readjusted his position. He grasped for something else to think about and latched on to the first thing that popped up.

“Ron.” His brain supplied.

He faltered for a second and felt his Occlusion slip. With a breath and slight shake of his head, he kept his shield up, and only when he was sure that it wouldn’t slip again did he allow himself a rare moment to remember his closest friend.

They were sitting close to each other in the common room. It was late, one of the nights where Harry had served a grueling detention with Delores and his hand was on fire. Hermione had gone to get him some Murtlap Essence, and he was left with Ron next to the fire. The two friends were laughing about something Ron had done that day, and Harry lightly bumped Ron with his shoulder as his mirth started to die away. The two looked at each other, grins still in place, but after a moment, things weren’t so funny. Ron was staring at Harry with an intensity that captivated the slightly younger boy.

Neither one seemed to be breathing, but then, slowly and cautiously, Ron leaned forward and pressed a kiss to his lips. It caught Harry by surprise, but it didn’t take long for his brain to catch up, and he was quickly kissing him back, tongues fighting for dominance. His right hand ran up Ron’s
back until it settled at the base of his neck. They kissed for what seemed like hours until Ron pulled away, drawing in a ragged gasp of air. He fell back onto the sofa, and Harry let his head fall to Ron’s shoulder.

It was silent for a moment as the two friends tried to compose themselves, and suddenly, things were funny again. Harry didn’t know if he started laughing, or if Ron did, but they soon found themselves in a fit of hystericis. It didn’t last long, but it did the job of breaking what would have been an otherwise awkward silence.

As they settled, Ron finally spoke. “I don’t know about you mate, but that was weird.”

“Agreed. Too weird.” Harry replied, a small chuckle escaping his lips.

They were saved from any potentially embarrassing conversation as Hermione came back through the portrait hole.

Harry stopped the memory from going any further. He was aware that he was almost sobbing, but it didn’t matter, there was no stopping what was coming. He checked his shield to make sure he hadn’t lost his focus, and openly wept for his lost friend.

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He wasn’t aware of falling asleep, but when he awoke, his head was resting on a pillow and a blanket had been pulled over him. Meemy, he surmised. It brought a small smile to his face when he thought about how well the house elf had treated him since arriving. He was aware of the steel ball that now surrounded his mind, but it was as his professor has said; he no longer had to consciously think about it being there for it to exist. After another small smile, this one of satisfaction, Harry sat up and stretched his arms over his head, feeling refreshed and renewed after finally allowing himself to mourn his friend.

Harry had a sense of determination that he hadn’t had since Sirius died, and it drove him to his feet. He needed a shower but would head downstairs when he was finished to see if Snape had arrived yet. He needed the man’s knowledge, now more than ever, if he was truly going to face the Dark Lord. He was more ready than ever to start training with the older man, and could only speculate on what he was about to learn.

Harry stripped his shirt off before he even started walking towards the bathroom, deep in thought about what today might bring. As he was working on the fly of his trousers, a small cough came from the chairs that sat by the windows. He whipped around, hand already going for the wand that was tucked in his back pocket. He relaxed considerably when he realized the person that had made the noise was none other than Snape, but he was still a little defensive when he asked, “Professor?! Bloody hell, I nearly hexed you. What are you doing in here?”

His professor said nothing, only turned to give him a slightly disapproving stare, and whether it was due to his choice of language, or the fact that he was half naked, Harry was unsure. Snape turned back towards the window and motioned to the other chair, clearly telling Harry to join him. He pulled his zipper back up and took the seat next to the older man, not caring that he still had his shirt off.

They sat in silence for a few moments before Snape broke the silence.

“Mr. Potter. I arrived early this morning, hoping to catch you while you were still sleeping. I wanted to see the results of your time alone, and I was not disappointed.” Snape said, turning to look at Harry with an unreadable expression in his eyes.
“Thank you, Professor. Since our training a few days ago, I have done nothing except eat, sleep and practice Occlumency. I was confident that I had it down yesterday afternoon. You see, about halfway through yesterday, I noticed I was able to keep a steady train of thought even while I had the shield up. After that, it became easier and easier to hold in place…” Harry trailed off, realizing he was rambling.

“You have exceeded my expectations, Mr. Potter, and thus, I find myself a little surprised. You’ve taken to Occlumency the way that few others ever have.” Snape said.

Harry waited, feeling that he wasn’t finished. He was proven right when the man started talking after a short pause.

“I feel that you are ready for the next step. However, do not take this lightly. What I will be showing and teaching you isn’t exactly ‘legal,’ and should Dumbledore, or anyone, for that matter, find out what you’ve been studying, we will both be going to Azkaban.” Snape stated, this time peering deep into Harry’s eyes.

He was about to speak when he suddenly felt his Professor attack his mind. He was momentarily stunned and was about to voice his shock before he realized he was being tested. He made sure the shield around his mind was still firmly in place before he spoke.

“I understand, of course, Professor. I’ve spent some time thinking about my understanding of spells, both offensive and defensive, and have noticed that I don’t know very much. I will take whatever knowledge you wish to give me.” Harry replied, still feeling the full force his professor was using to try and gain entry into his mind.

Snape seemed satisfied with what he did, or didn’t, see in Harry’s mind, because as quick as the attack came on, it stopped.

“We’ll start as soon as you’re presentable. Take a shower, eat some breakfast, and as soon as you meet me on the west lawn, we will begin.” Snape said, standing to leave.

Harry stood as well, watching as his teacher walked to the door and opened it. He thought the man was going to leave, but he turned around and spoke once more.

“And Potter… Call me Severus.”

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Harry sped through his shower and was dressed in record time. He chose simple muggle clothing for today, figuring that since he would be outside, having full wizard attire on would only become hot and bothersome. When he was finished pulling his trainers on, Harry grabbed his wand and left the room, rushing towards the stairs in a hurry to get some food and start on practice. It wasn’t until he collided with someone coming up the stairs that he attempted to slow down – only, it was too late.

With a shout and a few of his best swear words, Harry and the unsuspecting passenger took a ride down the stairs… backward. He noticed as he was falling that the person desperately clinging to him was Draco, but it didn’t register until they started bouncing off each stair on the way to the bottom. They landed in a heap at the bottom, with Draco managing to place his knee directly in Harry’s crotch. He groaned and shut his eyes, reflexively placing a cupped hand over the family jewels, and cursed the Gods for his luck. When the pain had subsided to a manageable level, Harry opened his eyes and saw Draco trying to stifle a laugh.

“What’s funny, you berk? You nearly ended the Potter line.” Harry snapped at him.
This only seemed to make it worse for Draco, who finally bust out into a laugh. Harry stared at him waspishly until he couldn’t suppress the soft laughs that wanted to escape.

They shared the laugh for a few moments before Draco carefully rolled off of Harry and stood up. When he did, he stuck his hand out for the other boy to use for help up.

Harry gratefully took the proffered hand and mumbled, “Thanks, Draco. Sorry for calling you a berk, and for crashing into you.”

“You're welcome, Potter. But please, the next time you fancy a ride down the stairs, leave me out of it.” Draco said with a small grin. He turned, clearly intent on going back up the stairs, when Harry reached out and grabbed his hand.

“Draco, wait. Potter Manor is located at 212 Sampford Arundel, Somerset, UK. I would appreciate it if you considered this your house as much as mine. I’m really sorry, I meant to tell you sooner, but Sna- Severus had me occupied for a few days. I hope we can catch up later?” Harry reeled off.

Draco looked down at their joined hands before looking back at Harry. “Sure.” He said, before lightly pulling his hand away and walking back up the stairs.
Chapter 15

Chapter by DracoXHarry

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Harry gave himself a mental kick for watching Draco as he walked away. He was obviously attracted to the young blonde, but it wouldn’t do him any good to pursue those feelings, especially when he had so many responsibilities. Besides, he highly doubted the other teen felt the same attraction, and even if he did, Harry was sure that Draco wouldn’t let it be known.

It was with these thoughts that Harry stumbled into the kitchen and prepared himself a simple breakfast. He had bacon and eggs cooking and juice poured before his brain caught up with what he was doing. Harry sighed, feeling slightly lonely, before he pushed the morose thoughts to the back of his mind and continued cooking.

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When Harry arrived on the western lawn, he found Severus staring at the lake, with his hands clasped behind his back. His robes had been discarded and were floating next to him as if there were an invisible coat-hanger on the lawn. His sleeves were pushed up, and Harry could see the Dark Mark, burned black and deep, on his teacher's forearm. He looked away as Severus turned to him.

“Mr. Potter. Before we begin, I have a few conditions.” Severus started.

“Throughout the course of this training, I will be pushing you to the limit, and in order for me to do that, I need to know that you are taking proper care of yourself. It would not do to have you flopped over or feeling weak due to lack of nourishment. Therefore, I have a potion brewing, one that once done, you will need to take every day until the brew is gone. This is not an option and I will know if you stop taking it. Is that agreeable?” He questioned.

Harry deliberated for only a few seconds before he said, “Yes.”

“Very well. Your first dose will start tonight and will take 8 weeks to complete. I warn you, its taste leaves something to be desired.” Severus said.

When Harry didn’t say anything, the man continued. “My next, and only other condition, is that the things I teach you are to stay between us. I do not want another soul, outside of those already under the protection of this property, knowing what I have taught you. Do I make myself clear?”

“Will Dumbledore know?” Harry asked.

“Not the true extent of what you will be learning, but he knows that I plan on ‘taking you under my wing’ as it were.” Severus replied.

Harry took longer than a few seconds to answer this time, but he finally replied, “If that’s what you require, Professor, then I vow to be silent.”

He watched as the older man relaxed his posture and seemingly pulled his wand from thin air.
“Then we begin.” Severus stated simply.

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Harry and Severus had spent the better part of two hours reviewing the spells that Harry knew and could perform with little-to-no difficulty.

Harry was unsure as to what his professor was thinking, as the man had said only a few words in the hours that they had spent together. Finally, though, his teacher spoke his thoughts.

“I think, Mr. Potter, that the first thing we should focus on is nonverbal casting. This should be relatively easy for you to master, as you already have a strong grip on your mind. Mastering this before your next meeting with the Dark Lord is essential.” Severus said.

“What is nonverbal casting?” Harry questioned.

“Nonverbal castings, or more specifically nonverbal spells, are spells which are performed without saying the incantation out loud. Students typically spend all of the sixth year learning how to cast nonverbally, but I believe that you should be able to achieve favorable results rather quickly. The only thing required to cast nonverbally is concentration and mental discipline, something that you have shown a great deal of the past week.” Severus explained.

Harry tried to come up with a response, but his mind was blank. He knew after the events at the ministry that it was possible to cast a spell without speaking, after all, hadn’t he seen Dolohov cast the curse that left Hermione in a near-death coma? And later that same night, the battle between Dumbledore and Voldemort, there was hardly a word said. Why had he never thought about how they were able to accomplish such a thing?

“Mr. Potter, I think it would be best if you were to simply try it. There are a hundred different ways for me to explain this, but I think that a more direct approach will work better.” Severus said.

“I’ll give it a try, Professor.” Harry replied, then cheekily added with a small grin, “And please, call me ‘Harry’ or ‘Potter’, no need for the Mr. anymore.”

“Close your eyes and empty your mind, Potter.” Severus said, adding a little extra emphasis on his last name.

Harry obeyed, a smile on his face until he truly emptied his mind. When he was finished, his face was perfectly calm and he was able to focus very clearly on the professor’s next words.

“When I say, I want you to raise your wand in front of you and cast, in your mind, the first spell that comes up. You will move your wand as you would normally, but do not open your eyes. Do not open your mouth to speak. Let your brain do all the work. Shout it in your mind as if you were shouting it from the rooftops if that helps you. But it must be internal. Understood?” Severus finished.

Harry nodded and waited for the man to continue. He heard him shuffle around for a moment, and then his voice came from somewhere in front of him.

“When you’re ready, cast.” Severus said.

Harry took a deep breath and shot his hand forward as his brain supplied the disarming charm. It took a bit of restraint to stop his mouth from shouting the words, but he managed to keep his mouth shut as the spell echoed in his mind. “EXPPELLIARMUS.”
“I expected nothing less from your first attempt. You may open your eyes.” Severus directed.

Harry did as he was told, and opened his eyes. Seemingly nothing had changed, so he asked, “Did anything happen?”

“You caused my wand to twitch in my hand, nothing more, and nothing less. An impressive start, truly, for someone who has never attempted that before.” Severus commented. “From now on, that’s how I want you to cast every spell you use. Even the simple ones. Understood?”

“Yes, sir.” Harry replied.

Severus scanned the area around him before his eyes settled on a rock. With a wave of his wand, the rock grew to a massive, man-sized boulder.

“When you have reduced this to dust, your real training will begin. However long it takes, make sure that you have a firm hold on nonverbal casting. I will be waiting.” Severus said.

Harry watched as he spun around and headed towards the house, his robes floating alongside him. When he was gone, Harry turned towards the rock and cleared his mind. When he was sure he was clearly focused, he started casting nonverbal spells at the rock.

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Harry was exhausted when he headed towards the manor for the night. He had spent all day trying to get his spells to have the required power behind them, but he had barely been managing wisps of light that either completely died out before they made contact, or hardly touched the rock and failed to have any effect.

It was probably around 8 pm, and Harry was dragging his feet through the grass, having abandoned his trainers and socks when the heat had spiked at 2 pm. Meemy, thankfully, had brought him a plate of food a few hours ago that he had all but inhaled, because all Harry wanted now was to crawl in bed and call it a day. He slowly made his way up the steps to the door that would lead him into the house, when a small noise from his left stopped him.

He raised his wand and opened his mouth to cast a “Lumos” when he remembered what Severus said about nonverbal spells. He sighed deeply but cast in his head, instead. His wand tip flared slightly, almost like he was holding a torch with near-dead batteries. Another sigh, but at least he wouldn’t trip over something he couldn’t see. He made his way across the stone landing but didn’t see anything that would have made the noise.

With a shrug, Harry started to turn back towards the house, scanning the bottom of the stairs as he did so. At the bottom, he saw a dark figure with the unmistakable blonde hair of a Malfoy. He paused, unsure if said figure wanted to be left alone. He deliberated for only a moment longer before taking the steps and sitting next to the person, who, now that he was closer, he could see had their arms wrapped around their knees with their head buried deep. Draco, then, as he could never see Mrs. Malfoy sitting in such a position.

“I don’t want to talk about it, mother.” Draco said sniffly from in between his legs.

“Well, if you don’t want to talk, that’s fine. But I’m definitely not your mother.” Harry replied, letting out a small chuckle as he did so.

Draco sighed. “Sorry, Potter. She has a way of knowing whenever I’m upset, so I assumed she had come to try and console me.”
“It’s no big deal. I understand, to be honest. Whenever I tried to grieve for Sirius and Ron, someone always popped up to make sure that I was ‘okay’. I usually replied with something along the lines of ‘obviously I’m not bloody okay, now fuck off’. Seemed to do the trick.”

Draco lifted his head, a small smile on his lips. “The Boy-Who-Lived telling his devoted supporters to fuck off? I’m truly shocked.”

“Well, you know me. I’m kind of a rebel.” Harry replied, bumping his shoulder against Draco’s.

The two sat in silence for a few minutes; Draco’s breathing evened out and his sniffing became more and more intermittent.

“You know, I’m sure you’ve heard it a thousand times from your mother by now, but if you want to talk, or rage, or swear, or anything, you can come to me. I’ve been there before. I’m actually still kind of there, honestly.” Harry said, looking over to Draco and meeting the gaze that was now directed at him.

They kept their eyes locked for a few moments before Draco turned his head forward and sighed.

“Believe it or not, Potter, my father was a good man. He made a mistake following the Dark Lord all those years ago, but he was trying to rectify that. He had plans to get us away from the manor, away from that crazy son of a bitch. He just needed a little more time to make sure that it was a clean break, and then we were leaving. It really sucks that he died when we were so close to getting away.

“I feel like I still had so much to learn from him. I wish I could have told him I loved him, one last time.” Draco said, placing his chin on his crossed arms.

“I’m sorry, Draco. Really, I am.” Harry said, not knowing what else he could say.

They lapsed into silence again, not uncomfortable, but having nothing else to say. They sat there for a while until Harry noticed that Draco had fallen asleep, if the light snores coming from his left were any indication. He looked over at Draco, taking a moment to look at how peaceful he looked – a stark difference to how he had looked just a few moments before. Harry pulled his wand out and almost cast a silencing spell out loud before once again remembering he was supposed to be casting nonverbal. He wasn’t sure he could cast strong enough nonverbally but decided to give a try.

“Taceo.” Harry cast. He was shocked when the noise around them disappeared.

“Pluma lucem.” He tried the feather-light charm; only one way to know if that one worked.

Harry stood up and pocketed his wand. He gingerly positioned himself to pick Draco up before bending over to grab him. The boy was weightless. Again, Harry was shocked. Had he gotten the hang of nonverbal casting in only a day, or was this a fluke? He was too tired to think about it right now.

Carefully shifting Draco so as not to jostle and wake him, Harry walked up the short flight of stairs and into the house, taking extra care not to bang the sleeping boys head on the frame as he crossed the threshold. He took him up the flight of stairs and to Draco’s bedroom, where he lay him down on top of the covers. As he turned to leave, however, a hand reached out and grabbed his arm.

“Potter, I… would you maybe… never mind. Thank you for bringing me up here.” Draco said with a sigh.

Harry looked down at him, but the other boy still had his eyes closed.
“What is it Draco?” Harry asked.

Draco sighed yet again.

“It’s just… I’ve been having trouble sleeping. I’m surprised that I fell asleep outside, exposed as I was. I was just wondering if, maybe, you wouldn’t mind staying here for a bit? Just until I fall asleep again. If it’s no trouble, of course.” He said quickly.

Harry didn’t even hesitate to answer. He knew what it felt like, being afraid of sleep.

“Of course, Draco. I’m going to go change into something a little less stiff than these jeans, and then I’ll be right back. Maybe you should change into some night clothes?” Harry suggested.

“Right.” Draco replied.

Harry nodded and left the room, quickly making his way to his parent’s old room. He stripped his jeans and shirt after making sure that he didn’t have another visitor waiting for him and threw them to the corner of the room; they vanished as soon as they hit the floor. Harry gave a brief smile – Merlin he loved magic. He walked towards the dressing room and looked around for a moment before finding a pair of jet black pyjamas. He pulled them on, noticing that they were a bit too big for him; definitely his father’s, then.

Walking back into the main room, Harry grabbed his wand and cast a shortening spell on the top and bottoms before he left and headed back towards Draco’s room. The door was closed, so he lightly knocked on the door.

“Come in.” Draco said.

“Sorry, took a bit longer than expected. Found some of my dad’s old pj’s and they needed to be shrunk a bit.” Harry explained.

“It’s alright. I just got finished myself.” Draco replied.

Harry could see the top of a bottle green, presumably silk, nightshirt. It fit him well, looking snug without being too tight. He let his eyes linger for just a moment before walking towards Draco. There were chairs placed on either side of the queen sized bed, and Harry plopped down into one of them. Draco turned to face him but didn’t say anything; things seemed awkward for a moment, as Harry didn’t speak, either. He was trying to think of what to do when an idea came to him.

“Let me see one of your hands.” Harry said.

“Excuse me?” Draco replied, raising an eyebrow at him.

“Just do it.” Harry replied with a roll of his eyes.

Draco hesitated for a moment before he held out his left hand.

Harry fished his wand out and cast a quick “Praelino” at his own left hand. Immediately, it was slick with oil. He set his wand down at his side before rubbing the oil between his hands, warming it a little as he did so. Draco had been watching him with interest, and Harry was soaking it up. Harry then took Draco’s hand in-between his own and started lightly massaging it. Draco seemed a little tense at first, but the longer Harry worked, and the deeper he started to knead the muscles and pressure points, the more he relaxed. Harry started at his fingertips and worked his way down Draco’s hand, continuing past his wrist and down his forearm. Here, he applied a little more pressure, working the tight muscles under his hand.
“Merlin, Potter. Where did you learn how to do this?” Draco squeaked out.

“Oh… um… my aunt and uncle used to have me do this for them. They always used to complain I never did it right, but I guess it’s not too bad?” Harry replied.

“It’s great, Potter. Please don’t stop.” Draco said.

Harry let out a small grin. He would do this all night if Draco let him.

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Harry woke up early the next morning, well before sunrise, with a crick in his neck. He had apparently fallen asleep in the chair last night, and his head was at a very awkward angle. Draco had switched positions at some point so that Harry could massage his other hand and arm. He, too, had fallen asleep, though a while before Harry had, and Harry was surprised to see that he still had one of his hands loosely wrapped around the other boys. He stayed that way for a while, watching the slow rise and fall of Draco’s chest before he decided to get up.

Carefully, so he didn’t jostle Draco and wake him, Harry placed the boy’s hand on the bed and stood up, stretching as he did so. He left the room shortly after, intent on going to his bed and possibly getting another couple of hours of sleep. As he was closing the door to Draco’s room, however, a figure behind him spoke and Harry jumped. He spun around, wand at the ready, before he realized that it was Mrs. Malfoy.

He hastily stowed his wand before he mumbled an apology. “Sorry. Really not used to having people around.”

“I didn’t mean to startle you, Mr. Potter. I simply wanted to ask if you’d join me for a cup of tea.” Mrs. Malfoy said.

Harry thought about his bed, knowing it was probably a lost cause at this point.

“Sure. I’ll be right down.” He said.

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Harry arrived in the kitchen and saw that Mrs. Malfoy had already poured the tea and was waiting with an air of patience that Harry could only hope to achieve someday. When she heard the door close, she turned her gaze to him and gestured to the cup on the opposite side of her.

“I didn’t know how you preferred your tea.” She said.

“Oh, uh, just a splash of milk and a lump of sugar. It’s no big deal.” Harry replied, feeling a bit uncomfortable.

“I will have to remember in the future.” She said. She seemed to be waiting for him to join her, and as soon as he sat down, she lifted her cup, taking a small sip.

They sat for a moment, no sounds other than the occasional sip from her, or the clink of a spoon as Harry stirred his tea.

“Mr. Potter-“ She began before Harry cut her off.

“Sorry, but please, just call me Harry.” He said.

She paused for a moment, nodded once, and continued.
“Harry… I came to check on Draco earlier this evening and was confronted by a sight I had truly not expected to see.” Mrs. Malfoy said.

Harry froze, his face immediately heating up.

“Mrs. Malfoy, I can assure you—” He tried to say.

She held up a hand, however, and Harry stopped speaking.

“What my son does and who he does it with is his own business. I would not deign to interfere with whatever was, or wasn’t, going on there. However, I do wish to caution you. He is struggling with the loss of his father, and I would truly hate to see you get hurt by the fallout of that.” She said.

Harry hesitated before speaking.

“He mentioned earlier that he was having trouble sleeping, so I offered to stay until he fell asleep. I didn’t intend on also falling asleep, but I guess I was more tired than I thought.” Harry said.

“Whatever the situation was, Harry, I truly don’t mind. I just wanted to give you forewarning. I appreciate you being there for him since… well, he hasn’t said anything to me about it.” She said.

He didn’t know what to say, so he sipped his drink in silence.

“You know, Lucius and I were never really a couple?” Mrs. Malfoy said.

Harry took a rather large gulp of scalding hot tea at that statement and almost choked trying to clear the offending liquid from his throat. He coughed a few times before he replied.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“We were married, but it was simply for him to fulfill the duty of continuing the Malfoy line. To the outside world, we were a happily married couple, but we were nothing more than close friends behind closed doors. Lucius’ heart did not belong to me.

“I doubt you’ll know this, but Lucius was attracts to men. In fact, he was devastated when our parents arranged for him to marry me, and it wasn’t until after we married that I told him I knew where his attraction truly lay. He, of course, was worried that I would cause an issue over it, but nothing could have been further from the truth. I told him to seek whomever he wanted, so long as he produced an heir first.

“It could have been a horrible marriage, but it worked rather well for both us. In fact, the only bump in the road we really had was when Draco found out. He had woken late one night, just a year before he was due to start Hogwarts. Lucius hadn’t been quite as careful as he usually was when he had another man over, and Draco walked in on them — clothed, thankfully — but he saw enough to know that Lucius wasn’t being faithful. I won’t bore you with the details, but it wasn’t easy getting Draco to accept that that was how things were.

“I don’t think Draco ever truly approved in what was going on, not until Lucius found Severus. Neither myself nor Draco had ever seen Lucius so happy in life. It was like he had gotten a second chance to be happy, something he thought himself undeserving of after the first war. It was hard not to approve of their relationship, not when it was doing so much good. Lucius was even making great strides in trying to get us out from under the Dark Lord, something I never imagined would happen.

“Now, though… I lost my best friend, Severus lost his lover, and Draco lost his father. The fact that you are doing your best to ease the pain, whether it be a distraction for Severus, a quiet place for me
to mourn, or companionship for my son, I will forever be in your debt. Harry. We will forever be in your debt.” She finished.

Harry didn’t know what to say, especially because he didn’t know why she had offered all that information. He watched, though, as she brought her wand to her head and suddenly everything in Harry screamed at him to stop her.

“Mrs. Malfoy?! What are you doing?!” Harry practically yelled.

She stopped momentarily before a soft laugh escaped her lips.

“Be calm, Harry. I would never harm myself, especially not when Draco is still alive in this world.” She said. “Finite Capillum.”

Harry watched as her hair turned from the platinum blonde that he was so used to seeing, to a deep, beautiful brown. His mouth was hanging open in shock.

“Do not look so surprised, Harry. Blonde hair is a trait of only blood Malfoy’s. My hair was kept blonde through a rather simple spell. I think, however, that it’s time to go back to my original color.” She said with a slight smile.

“Would you do me a favor, Harry? I’m going to make a trip to see a relative of mine, one I have not seen for many years. Would you inform Draco in the morning where I went? If things go well, I should be gone for a few days… If things don’t go well, well… let’s just hope for the best.” Mrs. Malfoy said.

“Of course, Mrs. Malfoy. I’ll be sure to tell him.” Harry replied.

She gave him a smile, a true one, and stood up. As she was leaving, she turned to him once more.

”Harry… No more Mrs. Malfoy. Call me Narcissa.”

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Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone :) I hope you're enjoying the fic so far. I know that my chapters are posted few and far between, and I can only hope that you are finding other fics to occupy your time. I've started a new job and have been working 12-16 hour days. It takes the joy out of life, to be honest, and all I want to do with my downtime is sleep. But, I have been spending the free time that I do get trying to write a couple of words here and there. So, I hope you enjoy this chapter, and the -eventual- others. As always, please leave comments/ suggestions/ constructive criticism in the comments. Happy June <3

P.S. The story is probably going to go a -little- quicker than I had originally intended. I feel terrible about taking months and months between each chapter, so to compensate, I've sped things up. I hope it doesn't come across too terribly.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!