The Master of Death

by Quine

Summary

"I can’t go back, can I?“ Harry asked after a while.

"Do you want to?“ Death asked instead of answering. Harry stayed quiet.

"I could choose to go on,“ he said after some time.

"You could,“ Death replied and paused for a moment. Then he started to talk again. “But there is something you want more than that, don’t you?”

“What do you mean?“ Harry asked as he let his hands wander over the back of a bench.

"A second chance,“ Death said. Harry stopped and turned around to look at the being. “I cannot simply bring back the dead. But If you were my Master, I could bring you back to the dead."
Twenty-four-year old Harry Potter feels like something is missing in his life. When Death offers him a second chance, he takes it. Accompanied by the being, Harry travels back to the summer before Sirius dies. Inside his younger body and the memories of an older self, Harry realizes, that being connected to Death may have twisted his morals a little more than expected. And while the Ministry could use a change; this time he won't let himself being used in this war. Neither by Dumbledore nor anyone else.

Notes

I love Time-Travel and Master of Death Harry Potter fic's, so I decided to write one myself. I tagged this thing Underage cause there will be some action between Death and Harry, when he is in his younger body, just to be sure. There is a slight Dumbledore bashing, but I didn't tag it, because it's really only Harry's opinion of him. I plan to write some bloody scenes later on, but it's gonna be a long story, so there is much build up. The updates are probably gonna be irregular, but I've already written about 100 pages, so the first few chapters are gonna be there soon. I don't know if I will edit some things while I post, but I will tell you about it in the descriptions of the following chapters, if I did.

See the end of the work for more notes
The Battle of Hogwarts

Chapter Summary

Harry faces Voldemort inside the Forbidden Forest and gets to meet Death

Chapter Notes

What happened in the books is considered the timeline Harry is going to change later on, thus I am going to mention some things like Remus/Tonks even if Remus/Sirius is the only thing I am really going to write. There will be scenes from the books that you may recognize, more so in the beginning and of course the first chapter which is kind of a Prolog but this story will deviate from canon over time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Death talking"

Also, other stuff is written in italics (You will know if it's Death or other things that need some kind of emphasis, same thing with Parseltongue and Articles, etc.)

"Parseltongue"

"Newspaper Articles/Letters/etc."

'Thoughts'

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Snape's memories. They had changed everything. One hour was left. One hour or Voldemort would kill everyone, he'd ever cared about.

Numbness and anger fought a battle inside Harry's mind. All these years Dumbledore had been a mentor to him, had helped him almost like a grandfather. The anger which had built up in the past months only increased. He had known all the time that Harry housed a part of Voldemort’s soul... Seventeen years. He wouldn’t have any more. A laugh bubbled up in Harry’s throat as he caught the irony of the situation. Dumbledore’s subtle manipulation had even lasted past the headmaster’s death.

By destroying Voldemort’s horcruxes, he didn’t only destroy the strings that kept the Dark Lord alive, no... With every destroyed horcrux he walked further towards his own death. Voldemort at least had the decency to be open about his intentions... Harry wouldn’t let another person die for him and Dumbledore had known that. Of course, because the headmaster had had the nerve to get to know him before he sent him towards his death. Fred was dead. Tonks and Remus... Little Teddy, an orphan like him.

Harry now laughed hysterically, tears streamed down his face. Dumbledore’s betrayal paled in comparison of what was to come. As he had gathered himself, Harry looked at the golden Watch
the Weasley’s had given him on his birthday. About thirty minutes were left. Harry felt the exhaustion taking over. With heavy limbs he stood up and left Dumbledore’s office.

The castle was ghostly silent. Here and there he could see the remains of a spell gone wrong and burned tapestries. He grabbed his invisibility cloak and barely evaded meeting his friends. They knew what they had to do. Harry felt strangely reminded of his first time seeing the school as he walked past the empty portraits and stairs. It had been such a beautiful sight. A part of him wanted to be stopped by someone, something. But the invisibility cloak was too good, too perfect. Harry didn’t meet a soul till he reached the entry hall. Neville and Oliver Wood were carrying someone. The corpse of Colin Creepy, pale and cold. Pictures flooded his mind. Of Colin walking through the halls of Hogwarts, following Harry like a puppy always with his camera. He would never take a photo again. Neville stayed back, while Oliver continued his way towards the great Hall, shouldering the cold body.

Neville seemed exhausted. He looked like an old man as he was leaning against the wall. A sudden thought caught Harry’s mind. Looking left and right, he pulled down his cloak. “Neville...”

“Harry! You don’t think about sacrificing yourself? We’ll fight, you know!”

“No...,” Harry lied. “Look Neville, Voldemort got this giant snake, Nagini.”

"Yes, I’ve heard about her.”

“She has to die Neville. Hermione and Ron know, but...,” The thought of them dying tightened his throat, “I’ve got to go now.”

Neville couldn’t even respond, before Harry pulled up the invisibility cloak again.

Outside, the air was thick with tension. Every step towards the forbidden forest felt like a lifetime. He saw Ginny, but he couldn’t bear talking to her. He feared that he wouldn’t be able to leave. Finally, after climbing over the remains of spiders, walking across giant weapons, corpses and pieces of the castle and burnt grass, he reached the edge of the forest. Between the tall trees the air got colder. Fog and darkness told about the horde of Dementors not far away. Harry turned around to look at the castle. From the distance it stood proudly and tall. This was the last time he would see the building, which had been a home to him for almost seven years. But this was the end. The game was over, the snitch had been caught.

The snitch...

‘I open at the close.’

He fumbled with the cord around his neck. Opening the pouch Harry pulled out the golden ball. “I am going to die...,” he whispered, lips brushing the cold metal. And just like this, it revealed the space within. “Lumos”

Harry’s breath caught for a moment, as he saw what the snitch revealed. It was the stone. The third Hallow.

When he touched it, something changed. Suddenly, he felt strangely detached from the people in the castle. It was, as if he was walking through fog and at the same time not. Now, that he was about to face his own demise, he saw the world in great detail. Everything seemed so clear. He didn’t feel a thing as he walked towards the man, who he had hated for a great deal of his life. Harry wasn’t afraid. Not anymore.

He would die. It was something, he had to do. There was something deep inside him, a piece of his
soul, that knew that he had to face death.

So, when he spotted Dolohow and Yaxley, he followed them. As they walked through the dark forest, Harry could hear them talk in hushed voices. They didn't believe that he would show up. They stopped where the trees got lesser and the opening revealed a dark night sky, dotted with stars. Harry recognized the place. It was where he and Ron had faced Aragog. There were no spiders, their den abandoned, but the place was unmistakable the same.

Giant spiderwebs were hanging in the trees above the Death Eaters on the ground. They moved ghostly in the wind.

A fire was burning in the middle of the clearing and it lightened up the faces of Voldemort’s followers.

Curiously Harry took another step forward to analyse the scene.

Some of them still wore their masks while others didn’t care to hide their faces anymore. Two giants sat not far away, throwing giant shadows over the scenery. Fenrir Greyback restlessly bit his nails, eager to fight again. Tall, blond Rowle had a split lip. Lucius Malfoy was surrounded by an aura of fear, so different than the man Harry remembered. Narcissa stood silently next to him her eyes carefully watching.

Almost otherworldly, over there was Voldemort. Pale and tall, his hands folded over his wand like he was praying. Every face was expectantly pointed at him. He oozed dark power and Harry found himself fascinated by the man, more so than he was afraid. The snake, Nagini was still floating inside her magical cage.

When Dolohow and Yaxley joined the crowd, Voldemort opened his eyes and he lifted his head to look at them. “No trace of him, Milord”, said Dolohow. Voldemort’s expression didn’t change. His eyes almost glowed in the dark. Slowly he pulled the wand out of his long fingers. Harry’s gaze was caught by the movement. His eyes were drawn to the wand as if it was calling out to him. The stone in his hand burned cold.

“My Lord...,” Bellatrix started but Voldemort stopped her with a gesture of his hand. He started to talk. It was almost a whisper.

“I thought he would come...” Voldemort looked into the flames. “I expected him to come”

Nobody said a word. Harry wanted to laugh at how they all seemed so afraid, whereas he had lost any fear from this man the moment he had accepted his death. Harry pulled the invisibility cloak from his shoulders and stuffed it beneath his shirt. His wand followed shortly after. “It seems, that I was... mistaken,” Voldemort added.

“You weren’t.” Harry said loudly, and he walked towards Voldemort. Nothing mattered, apart from them. Hagrid bound to a tree somewhere to his right started to shout. He hadn't noticed him before.

“NO... HARRY!” But Harry didn’t answer. He ignored the laughter and screams coming from the Death Eaters and stopped not far from Voldemort. The dark Lord tilted his head. Curiosity sparked in his eyes, but Harry knew it wouldn't save him.

“Harry Potter,” the dark Lord said, and his lips curled into a cold smile, “The boy who lived” Almost gentle, Voldemort lifted his hand and pointed the Elder wand at him. Harry saw his lips moving. Then nothing.
Harry opened his eyes. He found himself in a white room. It was very long, and the ceiling seemed to be made out of glass. The longer he looked around, the more things he found. Strangely enough it reminded him of Kings Cross. Just as Harry wanted to turn around, he heard a strange sound.

"Harryyyyy..."

Like a gust of wind, but wind didn't talk. It was a voice. It sounded hoarse and his name was stretched oddly by it. “Who is there?” Harry turned his head to find the source of the sound, but he didn’t see anybody.

Suddenly he felt as if there were hands touching his back, roaming up to stroke his shoulders, through his hair, his face, only to come down to his ribs again, hugging him from behind.

"Harryyyyy..."

It sounded like someone was whispering directly into his ear now. Harry almost felt hair tickling his cheek. Strangely he wasn’t afraid.

"My Harryy..... I’ve waited for a long time..."

“Who are you? Show yourself!” Harry demanded. Almost as if reluctant to let go he felt the presence leaving, but in front of him the air grew thick and foggy. The dark cloud grew, and he could make out a shape. Like the piece of Tom Riddle from the diary in Harry’s second year the fog started to resemble a human. When it was done forming itself, the being showed its too sharp teeth in a predatory grin. Harry gaped. Because in front of Harry stood... well, Harry. But not quite. The figure had the same slim face and slender built. The hair was as wild as Harry’s, but it’s seemed even darker. Pitch black, like a dark hole the hair floated as if they were underwater. The skin of the figure was waxen, too perfect to belong to a real human. The lightning shaped scar on its forehead was also missing. But the biggest difference were its eyes. They were white, like the eyes of a Thestral. No pupil or iris disturbed the glossy surface.

“My Masssterrr...,” it said.

“Your Master?” Harry asked bewildered.

“My Master” The being eyed him hungrily. “You collected the Hallows”

“The Hallow- You are Death?!” Harry said shocked and almost took a step back.

“Thatsss what some people might call me,” it said still grinning.

“Am I dead?” Harry asked.

“Yes and no. You have left the world of the living, but you haven’t reached the world of the dead
yet. You are in a place with no name, one could best describe it as ‘in-between’,” the figure said after a moment.

“What about the horcrux?”

The other Harry tilted its head, watching Harry intensely. “No longer with you... It’s waiting.”

“What?”

“For the other pieces to join. It suffers. The soul is damaged. It can’t go on without the others.”

The being wasn’t smiling anymore. It frowned. Harry was still struggling to accept that this creature was Death.

“But Voldemort is still alive?” he asked instead.

“Yesss.”

“I have to go back, don’t I?” Harry asked it.

“You could go on.” It didn’t seem very happy.

“What if I did go on. Where would I go?”

“On,” it simply said.

“But I could go back.”

“Yessss.” The being grinned again and leaned towards Harry.

“I could defeat Voldemort.”

“You could,” it said grinning.

The being claimed, that he could go back and defeat Voldemort. But how? And after all, Nagini was still alive. Then a thought invaded his mind. “You said I am your Master.”

“You are,” the being let out a strange vibrating noise. It sounded like a deep rumble and Harry suddenly realized that it was purring, which was very strange to hear, coming from a human. Or human looking being. The meaning of the words it had said hit him only now.

“Could you bring back Fred, Remus and Tonks?” Harry asked a spark of hope flaming up in his heart, “and Sirius?” His chest clenched painfully.

“No, I can’t.”

“Oh,” Harry said. He stayed silent, while Death seemed to be content just to be in his company, judging by the deep purring. “But what is the meaning of all of this?”

“You are my Master,” it purred.

“You said that already. And why would Death even need a Master?” Harry asked.

“Death doesn’t need a master. I created the Hallows because I wanted to. Not many would be able to collect all of them. Even if somebody united them before, I could simply choose to not follow them. But you...” It came close, its nose almost touching Harry’s. “You are mine. Mine to obey, mine to protect.”
Harry was confused. Apart from the strange fixation the being seemed to have on him, it really sounded like the being wanted to obey him. “What do you get out of this?”

“I was alone. I was bored. But now I am not....”

“If I go back, could you help me defeat Voldemort?”

“Yes,” The being seemed eager. “But I should warn you. If you accept to be my Master, I will be you and you will be me. A part of me will merge with you, just as a part of you will merge with me.”

“I won’t be killing people, will I? I won’t become Death?” Harry asked suddenly afraid. He remembered how Quirrel had died. What if he would kill Ron or Hermione just like this?

“You are still you, but if you choose to be my Master you command death. There will be a change. It already started when you picked up the stone.” Harry remembered the feeling of detachment and how Voldemort hadn’t frightened him anymore. “I am Death. If you are my Master, you are able to see the world like I do. At least to an extent.”

“But I am still me?”

“You are still you, you’ll have your memories, your feelings, but there will be a part inside of you that knows Death. That is Death. And Death doesn’t know good and bad.” Death smirked like a distorted reflection of Harry.

“Do I have to choose right now?” Harry asked. This was much to take in. What if he came back like Voldemort? Not able to love, not remembering what it was like to be friends or how it was to be in love? The being in front of him hesitated. Eventually it answered.

“I have waited for a long time. If you need time to think about it, I will give you time.”

“Will I be able to defeat Voldemort without you?” Harry asked uncertainly.

“You have always been strong Harry...”

“Are you able to bring me back, then?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” it said, its white eyes staring into Harry’s. Harry swore that he felt a hand touching his face, but his surroundings were already fading.

Chapter End Notes

For the people starting to read:

ATTENTION: I will EDIT this work so that there are less chapters. I won't delete anything just pull a few chapters at a time together so that the chapters are overall longer and what have once been 3 chapters are now one. So don't be surprised when there are suddenly about 18 chapters instead of 38. The new chapters that I will post are going to be the same length as always - about 7 pages each - but I will probably stick these together as well as we go.
About seven years had passed since that faithful night, that was now known as the “Battle of Hogwarts”.

After the war Harry had taken on the offer of Kingsley Shacklebolt and joined the Aurors together with Ron, while Hermione went back to Hogwarts to finish her education.
Ginny and he had been dating for some time, but after Ginny had started to play Quidditch and Harry had begun his training as an Auror, they slowly drifted away from each other. They decided to stay friends, and while there had been much crying on Mrs. Weasley’s side, both were glad that it was over.

Harry still didn’t know if his meeting with Death had really happened or if it had been a strange dream. The blurry memory had only increased his interest in the three Peverell brothers. What was true and what was legend? But like the being had predicted, he felt different for the living.

At first he hadn’t realized it. He pinned it on the war. It was like Harry was walking through fog, while everyone else continued their lives like before. Of course, the first years after the war had been hard for everybody. They needed time to rebuild their lives. Harry had done the same as the others. He tried to do what was the most logical thing to do. Joined the Aurors and dated Ginny. But after a while he realized that he felt stuck. Everybody seemed to move on while he was sleepwalking through his days.
Harry had thrown himself into work just to occupy himself. He had finished his training with brilliant grades and after three years of hard work finally joined the Aurors. It was a great shock to the public, when Harry announced that he would leave the Department. There was an article in the Daily Prophet - of course - even if it only scratched the surface of the truth.

The Headline had taken over half a page next to the other gossip and an ad for a reissue of Celestina Warbeck’s latest album.

**POTTER RETIRES!**
We are shocked to hear, that after only four years into the Auror corps, Harry J. Potter (Defeater of You-Know-Who) announced his retirement.

According to anonymous sources, Potter quit, after Auror colleague W. Hopkins was greatly injured.

“Nobody is allowed to talk about it in the Auror Departement, but I’ve heard, that the attacker was none other than Walden Macnair,” our source told us.

If the Rumors are true, this would mean that Walden Macnair (Known follower of He-Who-Must-not-be-Named) was sighted!

Macnair’s body had never been found, and he was supposedly on the run after You-Know-Who’s defeat. This would be the first big news after a series of smaller captures during the last months. (More to Macnair and the Auror Department on page 6)

Additionaly, Mr. Potter had been seen shopping with Ex-Girlfriend Ginevra Weasley (Chaser of the Holiday Harpies)

This of course raises the question, if there is a connection between Miss Weasley and Mr. Potters retirement? Is there a new fire burning under the cold kettle? Unfortunately, Mr. Potter was not available for an interview, nor was Miss Weasly.

That being said, we all can agree that Mr. Potter deserves some peace after these violent years of the war. Nonetheless, other questions are still left to be answered. Will he - now that he has retired - start to be active in politics, or does he simply want to spend more time with his friends and (Ex-)Lover?

Only thanks to Kingsley, Harry was able to keep everything under the wraps. Not that he really cared what people were thinking about him. It sometimes frightened him, how little he cared about anything nowadays.

He and Wayne had indeed encountered Macnair. Usually these traces were only rumours. Following them mostly meant a night out, observing the same place for hours and waiting. Usually they gained nothing from it but sore feet and a cold. Harry gladly left that to the younger Aurors who thought that being in the Department meant exciting cases and duelling.

But that time had passed.

Most of the Death Eaters had been caught by Harry and Ron - when he hadn’t worked in Weasley’s Wizards Wheezes yet - and a few others. Survivors of the battle, Aurors who still remembered the first war.

Even as a trainee, they had partaken in these hunts. Curse-to-kill had been common these first two years following the battle. Afterwards dark magic had been banned, but a well-placed diffindo could cut through skin just as easy as any illegal curse.

Harry had earned a few strange looks from his friends, when he hadn’t once hesitated as he’d
encountered Travers, or Rowle, or the older Lestrange brother, only to name a few examples. But these times were over. Not many of the captured Death Eaters were alive today and those who were could hardly be described as such. Empty shells rotting away in their cells in Azkaban. Better to have Dementors float around a single Island, than have them roam the country. It was an open secret in the Department that even Kingsley thought that way, despite all promises to the public that they were working on replacing the creatures with human guards.

And yet they hadn’t had a real case for ages. The Auror Department was mostly occupied with helping the Obliviators. Harry could count the weeks the statute of secrecy hadn’t been breached on one hand. Only last week, they’d had a case, when some Muggleborn wanted to brag and enchanted a table at a party while she’d been out with her Muggle friends.

It had been a massive thing, only barely they’d been able to hide everything from the public eye. Muggle and magical world. Despite most purebloods being shamed as Death Eaters nowadays, some of them still held influence in the Ministry. There was already pressure to tighten the laws regarding the breaches of the statute of secrecy. The only reason there hadn’t been too much of an impact yet was that no Wizard or Witch had been hurt after the recent breaches. But the girl had been victim to a violent beating thanks to her own stupidity. Because of that, each and everyone involved in the clean-up of the case had to sign a magical contract which ensured their secrecy. And of course, the Auror Department was responsible for it.

Glad to leave some of the monotony behind, Harry had offered Wayne his help. Hopkins had found the barest hint of a trace after weeks of researching, and even then, it was more of an accident that they found the Death Eater. They were checking out a warehouse which was known to regularly house black-markets where people could acquire various magical items as well as creatures and illegal potions. During the downtimes it was housing all kinds of filth living on the streets.

They entered through a backdoor, dust whirling up beneath their feet as they sneaked through the warehouse. The scent of piss and alcohol was permeating the air as they walked past a few wizards leaning against the wall. Harry gestured for them to disappear and they quickly complied as they were not too keen on being confronted by the Aurors.

As soon as they spotted Macnair amongst a group of people who would've given Mundungs a run for his money, Hopkins had immediately announced his presence, following the Auror protocol as he tried to arrest the wizard. While the other people scattered and disapparated, Macnair had ducked behind some boxes and started to throw some nasty curses as a response to Hopkins foolishness. The Death Eater didn't waste his time by insulting Harry like so many before him and instead focused more on actually killing them. Harry could see why he hadn't been captured yet.

Wooden boxes turned into dust and Harry ducked behind a pillar, but Wayne was soon enough hit by a very familiar cutting curse. He fell to the floor choking and coughing, bleeding from a vicious wound.

The Sectum Sempra.

Harry hadn’t seen the curse since the Battle. He stopped to defend himself and ignored the hexes thrown by Macnair, but instead watched the dying human. Because that was what was happening. Wayne died, and Harry stood there, drawn in by the sight of Waynes life force leaving his body. Red blood seeped into space between the rotting floorboards. For the first time in years, the chains keeping Harry in place seemed to loosen and he could breathe while Hopkins was choking on his own blood.

Only the sound of Macnairs disapparating pulled Harry out of his stupor.
After Harry had called for help, Hopkins had survived. Barely, but he had made a full recovery, even if he was scarred for the rest of his life.

Harry was able to pin his hesitation to act on shock, but he had quit shortly after. After all, there was more than enough money in his vaults to afford living without a proper income. He itched for something he couldn’t quite name and sitting in his office in the Ministry wouldn’t change that.

Harry started to go out in the evenings, but that quickly escalated. Every other week, another Article in the Prophet told about his newest adventure with a witch or a wizard. But the feeling that something was missing, the emptiness inside him couldn’t be filled with alcohol or sex.

One day he woke up and realized, that without meaning too, he had withdrawn from everyone who meant something to him.

Harry couldn’t shake off this feeling, that he was sleepwalking through his life. But he had built up a certain plan to make it work.

He reconnected with his friends. When Hermione asked him to help her with her new fundraiser for what-ever-it-was, he helped her. When Mrs. Weasley invited him over for dinner he came. He laughed smiled and made jokes. Harry visited Teddy once a week and tried to keep up with his friends on the weekends. There was even the occasional tea at Malfoy Manor, thanks to Narcissa's insistence.

But when he got home, he felt empty. Something was missing in his life and Harry didn't know what it was.

Salvation came in a strange way. When he walked through Diagon Alley Harry stopped abruptly as he felt somebody touching his cheek. Invisible hands cupped his face, so gentle, as if Harry was a long-lost lover. He gasped, when a cool breeze grazed his lips like someone was breathing against them. Harry’s eyelids fluttered shut - then the world faded away.

Harryyy...

When Harry opened his eyes, he knew exactly where he was. A long familiar room, the high glass ceiling and the empty train tracks. Everything so white. And a figure looming over him.

"Welcome back..."
"Hello Death," Harry said. The being looked just the same. White eyes, pale skin and the darker-than-black hair flowing around his head like the mockery of a halo.

"Harryyyyy....," the creature said. It was grinning widely, showing its sharp white teeth.

Harry stood up and looked at his surroundings. "It hasn’t changed."

"Apparently."

Harry started to walk around. Death followed him but didn’t make a sound.

"I can’t go back, can I?" Harry asked after a while.

"Do you want to?" Death asked instead of answering. Harry stayed quiet.

"I could choose to go on," he said after some time.

"You could,“ Death replied and paused for a moment. Then he started to talk again. “But there is something you want more than that, don’t you?"

“What do you mean?” Harry asked as he let his hands wander over the back of a bench.

"A second chance,“ Death said. Harry stopped and turned around to look at the being.

“I cannot simply bring back the dead. But If you were my Massster, I could bring you back to the dead.”

Harry looked at Death and his eyes widened. “Does that mean Fred, Remus... They would be alive?” The creature only grinned. „Do it,” Harry demanded after a moment of silence.
"Yess Massterrrr..."

Harry had the faint impression, that Death was laughing.
Harry woke to the feeling of an old sheet sticking to his sweaty cheek and a familiar scent that he hadn’t smelled for a long time. Startled he opened his eyes. And for the first time in seven years, he felt alive.

Harry sat up. Despite the darkness, he knew exactly where he was. The sickly moonlight falling through the only window illuminated enough of his surroundings to be sure of his location. A shabby wardrobe in the corner, the bookcase full of dusty books that Dudley never bothered to read and the familiar bedside table. He was back in his old bedroom. Back with the Dursleys in little Whinging. Harry wanted to laugh. Out of all places Death had to bring him here. His creepy twin was sitting on his desk on the other side of the room, letting his legs dangle from the edge. Harry swore it was darker where he sat.

Out of habit, Harry wanted to adjust his glasses but he realized that he wasn’t wearing them at all. He spotted them next to him on the bedside drawer. And his hands were different too. Smaller. Skinnier. Not by much, but noticeable for someone who saw them every day. And yet they appeared to be the same as always. Harry shook his head to rid himself from the confusion. He had the strange sensation of two opinions on this matter clashing in his mind.

“Harryyy...”

A whisper from the other side of the room caused him to turn his head.

“Death,” Harry replied with a raised eyebrow and the being purred. Harry smiled at the creature. He had lost all his fear from it. Harry weirdly felt like the owner of a pet. Well, a very dangerous pet that would probably kill if he asked it to.

He suddenly realized, that Death was wearing jeans and a shirt, which he remembered getting after Dudley had grown out of it. He couldn't help but smirk at the strange view. The being still seemed weirdly out of place, but more real. Its hair wasn't flowing in the air anymore and the clothes made it seem rather normal.

“Are you visible to other people too?” Harry wondered, as he looked at the Death, who stared at him unblinkingly.

“As long as you can see me, they can too. For now at least,” it answered, all attention on Harry. A creaking sound downstairs distracted him.
'My wand,’ was the first thought, that shot through Harry’s mind. He needed his wand. As soon as the thought was finished, a wand appeared on top of the ratty blanket on his lap. But it wasn’t his Holly wand with the phoenix feather core, no. This was the Elder wand. The one he’d put back in Dumbledore’s grave after the war.

He hesitated for a moment, but then he reached for it. As soon as Harry touched the smooth wood, the wand grew cold. It was so icy it almost felt like fire and yet Harry held on. He watched with widened eyes how the famous Death stick dissolved into dark fog. Like smoke it hung in the air for a moment and then slowly sank into his skin. Harry stared in shock. After he had finally comprehended what had just happened, he turned his hand to inspect it, his eyes searching for a trace that wasn't there.

Harry looked at the unblemished skin stretching over his palm. There were no burns nor a black stain of ...something, like he had expected. 'But... What would happen if-

A thought wormed its way into Harry’s head. 'The Elder wand was a Hallow after all.’

I didn't take much effort to make the invisibility cloak appear in a similar manner. Soon it was laying in front of him right next to the stone of resurrection. And when he touched the Hallows - just like the wand - they too melted into his body after his skin made contact. When Harry finally looked up, Death smirked.

“*Their power is now connected to you,*” the creature explained, Death's inhuman voice echoing through the room like wind.

Before Harry stood up he found his Holly wand beneath his pillow. A familiar warmth filled him when he grabbed it. Merlin, he had missed that. Only now, Harry noticed that his senses were - in lack of another word - incredible. It felt like he was aware of everything. His eyes pierced that darkness in a manner that should not be possible. The strange sensation of someone coming closer had his hairs standing up. Harry made a few steps and tried to open the door to the hallway. It didn’t move. The rattling of a lock on the other side explained the malfunction.

Harry sighed.

How could he forget his loving relatives? Three days ago he had been locked in by Vernon. His gnawing hunger reminded him that yesterday noon had been the last time he had eaten something. Petunia had pushed a little bit of soup through the cat flap...

But no. Harry frowned as he tried to separate the foggy memories. Hadn't he been eating at home in his flat this morning?

Everything was blurry, but eventually he pushed the confusing memories aside and focused on the door. Harry knew that he would be able to open the door with the smallest effort of magic, but he was in his younger body, wasn’t he? The room and the size of his hands had made that clear. What if he could be traced by the ministry once more? Harry turned around to look at Death. “Can you open the door for me?”

The being still sitting on the desk turned into dark fog - not unlike the Hallows - and reappeared right next to Harry. It put its left hand on the wood of the door and Harry could hear the clicking of a lock. When he tried to open the door again, it opened without resistance. “Thank you,” Harry
whispered before he walked out into the hallway. When he turned around, he was reminded that Death still looked like Harry's strange twin, with the addition of an eerie aura surrounding its whole body. Harry looked at him for a moment. He hesitated before he opened his mouth.

“Can you, I don’t know, make yourself look more ...inconspicuous?” Harry whispered and gestured at their bodies.

The creature tilted its head and then turned into foggy smoke once more. It swirled around till it settled on the form of a gigantic skinny dog, with short fur and impressive teeth. The exact copy of what Professor Trewlany would probably describe as a Grim. Harry snorted. Of course, Death looked like a Hound straight out of hell.

“Okay, maybe try another animal, something smaller?” Harry asked it, while he listened to the sounds coming from downstairs. Once more the creature reshaped itself, until it resembled a slim black snake with white eyes.

”Do you like this better?” it said, and Harry realized that the voice of the creature sounded very different than it had before. Almost like... Ah yes. Harry smirked. He was able to speak the language of the snakes again. Once more his memories seemed to clash in that manner. Had he ever not been able to understand snakes?

“Come on,” Harry hissed in Parseltongue and he knelt down while he extended his arm. Harry heard the sound of a door opening. Maybe someone had to use the toilet? But no. Harry knew it in his gut. His Auror training had him on the edge. The black snake slithered towards his hand and Harry lifted the creature up to his shoulders. He could swear that Death tried to strangle him the way its snake form slithered beneath his worn T-shirt.

The being settled with its head just over his collar bone, the other parts of its four feet long body firmly wrapped around Harry's torso and left arm.

There was shuffling coming from down the stairs, almost as if someone was walking through the house. Harry frowned. Was somebody trying to break in? The sound of voices echoed through the building. He tried to think about the way, the invisibility cloak had always hidden him and just like this, Harry could no longer see his hand that had been holding his wand. He was invisible. Even the snake on his shoulders could no longer being seen. Determined he raised his head.

Harry exhaled, then he slowly walked down the stairs, carefully avoiding the step that creaked, until he had reached the hallway downstairs. A beam of light was falling through a gap where the door stood ajar.

Someone was in the kitchen.

“What do you mean he is not here?” a deep voice said. Harry walked towards the half opened door at the end of the hallway. There was just enough space for him to squeeze through without having to move it.

“I don’t know ...goddamn thing, isn’t working right since the bastard wore it.”

Harry's breath hitched. He knew exactly who these people were. He entered the kitchen, and there they were. The Order. About nine people stood in Aunt Petunias Kitchen. Alive and breathing. He couldn’t believe it. Death had really sent him back in time. Harry suppressed a laugh and instead walked further into the room.

As it seemed, now that the cloak had merged with his skin, Moody was no longer able to look
trough it. On his left, Remus stood close enough for him to touch, but something was different. Harry frowned as he examined the crowd. There was no breath-taking relief to see Remus and Tonks alive like he had thought. There was just a mere curiosity as he looked at the people he hadn’t seen for a long time.

Harry knew these people, he remembered them, but there was no emotional attachment. If one of them would try to attack Harry, he wouldn’t hesitate to kill them.

It was as if all of his relationships had been reversed. Set to zero. There was no strong feeling at all. But this wasn’t the only change. The second he had laid eyes on the people Harry had noticed something else.

It was like he had gained a sixth sense. And the longer he looked, the clearer the image got. Harry could almost taste their aura, the magic surrounding the members of the Order. It was as if he was seeing it and then not. A feeling as well as something physical. It was a sensation that couldn’t be described and yet it was there. All of the people in the room were surrounded by their own individual energy.

Dedalus Diggel for example. His was light and bright and - what could only be his magic - surrounded him, curiously bubbling up and then retreating into his body. The greater part of people in here had magic like this. Light and glowing it swirled around them.
But Moody’s magic was darker. Harry had to think about an old oak, gnarled wood with its roots deep in the ground.

Tonks magic acted similar to Dedalus’. It was different from everybody else’s magic in the room though. Somehow more colourful, it swirled around her happily, ever changing, one time dark then light again. Harry guessed, that this had something to do with her abilities as a metamorphmagus. But even while Tonks’ magic was probably the most unique out of the group, Remus stood out the most.

Harry saw him like he never had before. First of all, he looked much younger, different than Harry remembered him. After all, the last time he had seen Lupin the man had been laying on the ground, dead and cold next to Tonks in the Great Hall.
But this Remus wasn’t worn down by the war. He hadn’t been undercover yet, investigating the alliances of the werewolf packs for month. He hadn’t lost his best friend yet. But that wasn’t what caught Harry’s attention.

Remus was surrounded by something, that was outright dark. His magic reminded Harry of blood and chocolate. And for the first time in his life, Harry could feel the wolf in Remus. Like a split personality, there was a second being under his skin. And although Remus was trying to ignore his wolf, the creature within knew something was wrong. Unconsciously, the beast felt that there was something else in the room, something that smelt of death. Harry could see the hair in Remus neck rising, his wolf twisting nervously.

Harry knew he had to reveal himself eventually, why not now? But could he risk it to act like his twenty-four-year-old self? Probably not. He had fought in a war, walked towards his death, he had used unforgivable curses. Harry had lived seven years without these people. And while his body and magical core might be the one of a fifteen-year-old boy, his mind was not. Harry was an adult, he had worked as an Auror! The others were more likely to believe that he was a Death Eater in disguise than his future self.
Harry tried to recall what he knew. For everyone else, this was the summer just after Voldemort had regained his body. He remembered how angry he had been at Ron and Hermione, because they hadn’t written one real letter all summer while he had been attacked by Dementors. Merlin, he
would have to endure Umbridge again. Harry groaned inwardly. That whole year, he had acted rash and thoughtlessly. Sirius had died because Harry had rushed into the ministry. Maybe some of the horrid things that had happened, could’ve been prevented if he’d been given more information. But the Order had their secret business going on and Harry wouldn’t be told a thing.

The only goal Harry really had when he had chosen to go back was to prevent the death's of Remus, Tonks, Sirius and Fred. But now that he was here, he wasn't so sure anymore. Harry didn't feel anything for the people, curiosity and confusion aside. He had gained a second chance to live his life. He could do what he wanted now. And maybe, while he was already here he would also prevent their deaths.

Surprised Harry also realized, that he didn’t really care what Voldemort was doing, as long as he did it without bothering him. The first time around he had been sent into a war by adults, who weren’t able to fight for themselves. Harry wouldn’t let himself being used again.

It was strangely fascinating to see everyone again as they were alive and talking, but the next few weeks would be more boring than Binns history lessons, if he was being treated like he was a kid. Even if he already knew most of the stuff the Order had done this year, being shoved aside and treated like he was too young to know about things wasn’t something he wanted to repeat.

Harry smirked. If he wanted to avoid being treated like a child for the next few weeks, he would have to establish that he wasn’t this naive boy anymore. His fifteen-year-old self had met Voldemort by now, had seen how Cedric died. Surely, he would be able to slip some changes into his personality without raising suspicion. Dumbledore hadn’t wanted to look into his eyes this year anyway, afraid of the connection with Voldemort in his mind. Now that he thought about it, it would be interesting to know if it was still there... the Horcrux.

“Somebody should go upstairs, and search Potter,” a black-haired witch said.

If Harry could overpower one of the order members... or at least take one by surprise - only to show that he was capable of fighting... Harry’s eyes wandered through the room. Moody would be the most impressive, but no. He was too far away. Kingsley on the other hand... Yes.

Remus turned around, when Harry walked past him, to get closer to the corner where the Minister stood. ‘No, not Minister. Auror’, Harry thought and smirked. He was the best target. There was only a wall behind him. Nobody would be able to attack Harry from behind and he could use Kingsley as a shield. Kingsley was taller than Harry, but he had the moment of surprise on his side. A hard kick aimed towards the knee and Harry would be able to grab him by his throat. Then he could easily point his wand at Kingsley. The shattered knee could be healed with a few spells afterwards anyway.

Harry had always liked Kingsley, but if he wanted to be included in the order meetings, he would have to prove that he was able to handle himself. When he was just about to go through with his plan, Harry abruptly stopped, wondering what he was actually planning to do. His former self would have never done something like that, nor would he have thought about it. While it was theoretically a good tactical move to prove that he had to be taken seriously, Harry hadn’t thought twice about hurting the Kingsley.

"You are my Massster. Good and Evil... these are human concerns. Your soul was marked as mine, you are no longer a mere mortal,“ Death hissed as if he had read Harry's mind.

Harry stopped, the words slowly sinking into his mind. His connection with Death did have a greater impact than he had anticipated. He may feel alive once more, but at the same time he didn’t care as much as he should have...
But even if he considered all his - apparently - missing morals, he had gained a new unique look on his life. Maybe it wasn’t all too bad?

His thoughts were interrupted by a loud shattering noise. Tonks had accidentally shoved a plate from the counter. Everybody’s head snapped around, all attention was directed at her. Harry used the opportunity to make himself visible. He quickly pointed his wand at Remus, who was standing closest to him. “Who are you people?” Harry asked, mostly to keep up appearances. The whole crowd turned around.

“It’s me, Remus. We are here to pick you up,” Lupin eventually said after the shock had worn off.

“Prove it,” Harry said, “What was the first memory I tried to use, when you taught me my Patronus?”


“Then It’s my turn. What is the shape of your Patronus?” Lupin asked him.

“It’s a stag,” Harry replied. Remus seemed so different now that Harry saw him again. Lupin nodded and an awkward silence followed.

“Why do I have the feeling, that you didn’t tell us everything about Harry, Remus,” Tonks said cheerfully. “Nice move by the way. Where did you learn to hide like that?”

“I didn’t do nothing all summer, you know. While I couldn’t practice magic, I thought it wouldn’t hurt to learn some other things,” Harry lied.

Moody hummed in agreement and then turned around and walked towards the kitchen table. Harry was sure, that Moody’s magical eye still looked at him. Some of the Order members followed the Ex-Auror, but everyone shot him quick glances then and now. Tonks had taken a few steps in Harry’s direction and now leaned forward to take a closer look at Death, whose form was protectively curled around Harry’s neck.

"Your snake is wicked;“ she said, "I’ve never seen one like that. Where’d you get it?“ Tonks asked and looked at Harry with curious eyes. Today they were blue.

“I was wondering the same thing,” Remus interfered.

"Well, I kind of found it,“ Harry said quickly.

"You found it?“ Remus asked with a raised eyebrow while he eyed Harry suspiciously.

"Um, yeah. At the playground,“ Harry said, vaguely gesturing out of the kitchen window.

"Would you mind, if I took a quick look at it, only to check, that it’s not an Animagus? You can’t be too careful these days," Remus said with a hint of bitterness streaking his voice.

"Sure,“ Harry replied, hoping that the spell wouldn’t have any effect on Death. "You don't mind, do you?“ he said, suddenly remembering to ask Death about the matter. The whole group flinched, Moody being the only exception, but his head had snapped towards Harry.

Death didn’t answer, but instead slithered down his arm into his hands. Harry offered Remus the snake, which was now partly wrapped around his forearms and resting in his palms. Remus pointed his wand at the black-scaled being that wasn’t a snake and murmured a spell. Harry could feel the
magic washing over him.

"Nothing," Remus muttered more to himself than Harry. Harry smirked and draped the snake around his shoulders once more. Not because Death was slipping from his grasp, but a normal snake would’ve never been able to hold this position. It was as if Death wasn’t bound to obey gravity at all.

"Where are your glasses?" Remus asked him and nodded towards his face.

Harry had almost forgotten about that. “Um, I forgot them upstairs.” Lupin seemed to accept it as an explanation.

“You are probably wondering where we are going,” Remus began, changing the topic and he directed Harry towards the kitchen table. Moody was already sitting there and taking big gulps out of his flask.

“If you could tell me, you would've already,” Harry replied, and he looked at Petunia’s kitchen. He hadn’t been in it for ages ...but at the same time he remembered talking to Vernon and Petunia in there just days ago.

“You are not wrong,” Remus said smiling kindly, but he eyed Death suspiciously. The snake lifted his head lazily to meet his gaze.

Harry raised an eyebrow at its behaviour.

“Well, but at least I can tell you the names of all these people,” Remus said after a short staring contest with the creature. “This-,” he pointed at Moody who just squeezed his magical eye out of its socket, “-is Alastor Moody”

“Ew, you know that this is gross Mad-Eye,” Tonks said, but her fascinated look betrayed her words.

“This is Nymphadora Tonks-,” she stared at Lupin, ”-who wants to be called Tonks rather than Nymphadora,” Remus continued. “Kingsley Shacklebolt; Dedalus Diggle-”

“We already know each other,” the wizard squeaked, and his purple hat fell from his head.
“Elphias Doge, Emmeline Vance, Sturgis Podmore and Hestia Jones,” Remus finished after every name had been called.

“About fifteen minutes and we are clear to go,” Moody said, “If you want to bring something, you better get it now. And Tonks could you get me a glass of water?” he asked, and Harry remembered that he had needed it for his eye. It would probably seem very suspicious if didn’t at least get some things, so he turned around and walked up the stairs. Remus followed him.

“Many things have changed over the summer, huh?” Remus asked. Harry nodded and looked at Moony.

"How are you Remus?“ Harry asked earnestly. He suddenly found himself curious about his old Professor.

The werewolf seemed to be taken aback, by the honest question. "I can’t complain," he said after a while. Finally inside his room, they collected Harry’s things in silence, but Harry watched him closely. With Remus' help, his stuff was quickly packed and they walked down the stairs to meet the others. Not even five minutes later, they were clear to leave. Broom in hand, he followed Mad-Eye outside. Harry took a last look at the house behind him and then they took off.
Moody had them turn and change their direction at random intervals. Unlike the last time Harry remembered, he didn’t freeze half to death till they reached London. Instead he mostly enjoyed the feeling of flying, cold wind tugging on his clothes as they made their way through the night. Not a word could be heard because of it. Moody had to shout, for everyone to understand the newest change of direction. Faint starlight breached through the clouds but more eyecatching than that were the small lights on the ground. Unknowing Muggles sitting in their own houses, unaware of the group of Wizards flying overhead. But eventually they rose to a height where clouds blocked the view and the last traces of civilisation gave way to the night.

This was the perfect opportunity to ask Death some questions, Harry mused. Its snake form was still wound tightly around his torso and neck and so Harry gave it a try. "Death?“ he asked in parseltongue. Even if somebody should be listening to him, they would only hear a strange hissing almost identical to the wind. And besides, no one besides Voldemort and Harry spoke the language of the snakes, at least to his knowledge, so this should be the perfect protection from spies.

"Massterrr ...“

Suddenly it was like, Harry sat in a bubble made of silence. He could still hear everything, but the noise of the wind had quieted down and Harry felt strangely out of time. He dismissed the sensation and instead focused on Death.

"What happened to my mind, my memories? In one moment, I know that I am twenty-four; I remember my whole training as an Auror, my life after the war - the life during the war... but in the next second I am thinking that I never lived past this day. A part of me is certain that I haven’t been in little Whinging for years and yet I know that I was staying in my room for the last few days and that Aunt Petunia pushed a tomato soup through the cat flap of my door just this noon."

"You wanted to save these people, that was your reason for returning, but I would only create another timeline if I put your older self in your younger body. To change the events, I merged your younger soul with your older one. The easiest would be to say, that your fifteen-year-old-self gained a few memories."
"But how is that even possible, wouldn’t my older self cease to exist if there is only one timeline?“, Harry asked after a moment. „I mean, I couldn’t know of things that never happened, right?“

"You are my Master. You can exist previous to your own birth and years after that, you could exist in a Universe where you are never even born. As my Master, you stand beyond time. You are bound to me, just as I am now bound to you."

It took a moment for Harry to let that sink in.

"And this is the reason for me feeling so disconnected? I mean, I feel no emotions towards Remus, Tonks, Moody - all of them, really. It's just like I've never met them before...“

"You have shed your old skin. You died the night you chose to accept the title as the Master of Death. By commanding Death, you have become Death in a way. And Death doesn’t judge. It is neutral in every way. But you are also still human. Therefor you can still feel like a human, but keep in mind, we are bound. I influence you just as you influence me. Two souls have merged, two souls of different times. You were remade by coming here. A clean slate. That is why you don’t feel like you thought you would. But only when the bond is really settled, you will feel more like your old self again," Death replied.

Death said he had died that night. Harry faintly remembered an evening in his third year in Hogwarts, after Trewlaney had predicted his soon-to-come death. Hermione had immediately began reading up different meanings of Death. Back then it hadn’t really reassured him, but she’d told him that Death usually also meant change, transformation and the need to start over. ‘It was true in a way,’ Harry mused and once again the noise of wind and flapping clothes surrounded him. He thought about Death's words for the rest of the flight, till finally, they could see lights shining in the distance. They had reached London.

Standing in front of the old dirty building, that was called Grimmauld place number 12, Harry wondered, why he was still able to see the house. At this point in his past, he hadn’t known the building. Was it because he had kept his future memories or that he now was the Master of Death?

“Both,” Death said. “You already knew, that the house was there, but even if you didn’t, you would see it. You can’t hide from Death,” the snake said. Harry quickly looked to his left, but the other members of the order hadn’t seemed to notice the snake talking.
Moody gave him a small piece of paper and Harry knew, what kind of words would be written on it.

"If you look at the words, you are bound by it’s magic. You already knew of the House. You will be able to enter anyway, even if you don’t read them."

Death was right. Harry sensed the magic upon the paper. He could enter the binding contract, but it was probably wise to evade such thing. So he quickly looked down to seem like he was reading the words written in Dumbledore’s narrow handwriting, but he simply inspected a dry weed, that had fought its way through a crack in the concrete. After a few seconds he raised his head and looked at the black door, with the snake handle again. Harry let his mouth gape and faked a surprised gasp.

"Come on,“ Remus said after Moody had burned the paper and he touched the door with the tip of his wand. The rattling and clicking of locks opening could be heard. The sound was familiar to Harry who had spent quite some time here over the last year.

They entered quickly and Remus reminded them to stay quiet. Tonks was carrying Harry's broom and Elphias Doge his suitcase and so Harry was free to step through the door without a hindrance.

As soon as he had entered, Harry looked at the long dark entrance hall. At the sight, two different kinds of memories surfaced. On the one hand, he had never even been here but at the same time, he remembered living here for a few months after the war. It hadn’t even been so bad, after he had learned to Deal with Mrs. Black and after Kreacher had started to clean out the building, but Harry had eventually moved out again. A certain heaviness had taken hold of him, a weight he couldn’t explain.

But even with all his memories - split or not - and considering all the time Harry had stayed in Grimmauldplace, never in his whole life had he seen the house like he did now.

He ignored the rotten smell, the dust and the cobwebs, which hung from the high ceiling. Instead he looked at the room and beyond.

Fascinated Harry touched the wall closest to him.

He could feel the magic pulsing behind the moldy wallpaper almost like a hidden heart. There were wards over wards woven into the bricks - old like the blood they were made to protect. Ancestor after ancestor having added what they knew. Some weaker some stronger and yet they supported each other like the roots of a tree.

The longer Harry focused the more he could distinguish the different parts of it.

The most noticeable spells pulsed heavily with magic. Powerful and bright they were the first layer of defense, but they felt like they didn't really fit. New in their age, too light and too close to the surface to be casted by someone connected to the house of Black. These protections were not deeply rooted like the others, but they were still strong. Dumbledore, Harry guessed.

Apart from Dumbledores protection, there were other light spells too, but the oldest magic of the house was all dark. Some wards felt like tar. Similar to a swamp, they would consume everything
that would dare to cross through. There were some that were sharp like blades and others that were
only here to hide. Harry noticed the fidelius charm. It was a sensation similar to a thin veil coating
the building, running through the outer walls.
And while the old wards were still there - combined even more powerful than the Headmasters
protection - they were weakened.

The blacking portraits on the walls were surrounded by a faint aura of magic and even the old
carpet on the floor had probably once been enchanted. Harry could almost see the sticking charm,
behind Mrs. Black's portrait. Everywhere in this house there was potent magic. Dark and
promising, it may have called out once, but now it was tainted and foul, black and hungry,
devouring everything it could reach. It was really that the magic was still intact despite its
weakened state and considering its age.

He got distracted by Moody who crossed the distance between them. Harry let his hand slide from
the wall and turned to face Mad-Eye, who lifted the Desillusionement charm with a tap of his
wand against Harry's head. Some of the portraits shot him curious glances.

Hasty steps could be heard from the other end of the entrance Hall, and Mrs. Weasley appeared in
the door, that led down to the kitchen. „Oh Harry, it's nice to see you!“, she whispered and tried to
pull him into one of her bone-crushing hugs. But Death hissed threateningly. Harry couldn’t say,
that he was disappointed when she pulled back immediately. As much as he had liked Mrs.
Weasley, that woman was sometimes just exhausting to be around. Strange, that he only now
realized that.

"Oh, you’ve got a new pet Harry?“ Mrs. Weasley looked like she didn’t know if she should
immediately throw the snake out of the house, or if she should smile for Harry’s sake.

Eventually she settled on a topic, she knew exactly what to say on. "You are so skinny,“ she fussed
and patted Harry's cheek, "You need to eat more, but I'm afraid that you’ll have to wait until
dinner." Turning to the group of wizards behind Harry, she added, "He’s just arrived, the meeting
has started."

‘Dumbledore...‘ Harry thought, while the people behind him started to whisper. He may not have
been fond of Dumbledore, when he had been fifteen and arrived at Grimmauld place, but now he
was even less in the mood of being a pawn in the Headmasters game. Harry had sometimes spoken
to the portrait of the Headmaster in the times after the war. And he had realized some things.
‘Dumbledore was just like Slughorn in a way. Both collected people, but unlike Slughorn,
Dumbledore didn’t focus on the famous and influential people, he focused on the outcasts. He was
the one to forgive them and offer them protection, a second chance, demanding nothing more than
their loyalty. And who was there to deny the great Dumbledore something - being a spy in
Voldemort’s ranks, persuading giants to choose the right side or infiltrating the werewolves - after
all, he had been the one to help when no one else was there.’ Harry snorted at the irony of it. ‘Even
he had believed in Dumbledore. Harry didn’t doubt that it had hurt Dumbledore greatly to send him
towards his death, but that hadn’t stopped him from going through with it.
The headmaster had always been someone he trusted. First hearing of him from Hagrid, the one to
show him a wonderful world, beyond Petunias kitchen. Only when he had walked towards the
forbidden forest, a snitch in his hand, he had really seen through the facade, that was his life, but then it hadn’t mattered anymore.

Harry had forgiven Dumbledore a long time ago. It didn’t do well to hate the dead. But Dumbledore was alive this time and that changed things. Knowing, that the old man already suspected the horcrux in Harry, and thus planned his death - even if it was for the supposedly, "greater good“- he would try to rely on the headmaster as little as possible. Harry had once dealt with Voldemort, and he would do it again, if he himself choose to do so, not because a stupid Prophecy!

Right now, he wouldn’t be allowed at the order meeting anyway. Harry turned around and asked Mrs. Weasley where Ron and Hermione were.

"Of course," Mrs. Weasley nodded, "Come on dear, I’ll show you."

Harry followed Mrs. Weasley, upstairs, the cut-off heads of the former house-elves throwing eerie shadows on the wall. "There look, the right door is yours. I really have to go now, but Ron and Hermione will explain everything. I’ll call you when dinner’s ready," and then she turned around and quickly walked downstairs.

"Masterrrr....,“ Death hissed, when Harry didn’t move

"Death."

"You wanted to know about the Horcrux...“

"Is it still there?“

"Yess, but I can remove it if you want."

"You can remove it anytime?"

"Yess."

Harry thought about it. On the one hand he would be able to spy on Voldemort if he wanted too, but on the other hand, he didn’t want to be this vulnerable. What if Voldemort used legilimency on him? Or Dumbledore...
“Your mindscape is different now. I’ll protect your thoughts if someone should try to invade it. As soon as you access your power as the Master of Death, you will be able to protect your mind on your own,” Death answered the unspoken question.

"Then I’ll keep it, for now," Harry decided.

Chapter End Notes

How Harry refers to Death changes throughout the story. In the beginning he mostly referst to Death as a being or creature but later on he sees Death more as a person so Harry refers to Death with him/he.

While they are influencing each other - with time they both change a little bit - there is no mental manipulation between Death and Harry and they are still fully able to make their own decisions.
Harry faces Ron and Hermione and accesses his powers as the Master of Death.

Harry hadn’t made a move, to open the door to the room in front of him. He took a deep breath, sooner or later he would have to face Ron and Hermione anyway, so he turned the doorknob, formed like a snake and opened the door.

"HARRY! Ron he’s here."

"Let him breath, Hermione," Ron said grinning, to the girl, who tried to hug him with such force, that Harry could barely evade her. Hermione started to Bombard him with questions.

"And shit Harry, is that a snake?" Ron interrupted.

Harry used the moment of peace to look at Ron and Hermione. While they technically still were the same people, these people weren’t his friends anymore. Even if Harry, had no opinion on them, they had been the friends of his fifteen-year-old self. Harry had seen so much more, than these innocent versions of Ron and Hermione. They were children, teenagers and Harry had aged past them.

His relationship with everyone had shifted now that he had returned here. It was better to be honest than to pretend, he decided. Harry wouldn’t hide any of his abilities, at least the ones that could be explained. But he wouldn’t dumb himself down. The order would ask questions, but what would they do if he acted differently? Try and test if he really was Harry Potter? He grinned inwardly.

Just as he opened his mouth something white flew down from the wardrobe and landed on his free shoulder.

Harry’s eyes widened. He had almost forgotten about her...

"Hedwig!" Harry petted the white owl, who just ignored the snake wrapped around him and graciously turned her head. Harry smiled at her behaviour.

"She was acting really odd. Almost picked us dead, when she brought your last letters. Here look-," Ron said and extended a hand and showed him a deep cut in his finger.
"I’m sorry, but I am also not,“ Harry said after a moment as he watched Ron’s teenage self. Harry didn’t feel the same connection to them than he had a few weeks ago, or back when he was older. Even shortly before he was brought here, he and Ron hadn’t met this often. Hermione had worked most of the time. Harry had been good friends with Ginny even after they had broken up. A part inside of him found it strange to think of Ginny and him as a couple. After all he hadn’t even kissed anyone yet, but at the same time he remembered countless encounters with various witches and wizards, which involved way more than kissing. Harry blushed. He hadn’t even known he liked men too. This whole thing was confusing. When he had been older, he often had talked with George. He too had felt disconnected from the world, after his twin had died.

Harry remembered the summer and Voldemort’s resurrection vividly, and how much he hated the past few weeks. He wouldn’t pretend that this hadn’t happened and while his anger at Ron and Hermione had been erased like any other bias against various persons it was the best excuse he could come up with, to avoid Hermione and Ron for now. Harry didn’t have the patience, to deal with two fifteen-year-old’s all the time.

"I was left, rotting at Privet for weeks,“ he said coldly. Hermione and Ron paled. This seemed to scare them even more, than if he had been screaming. "I didn’t expect much from Dumbledore. Did he really think, that I wouldn’t notice being followed?“ Nobody said a word. "But you guys... I expected more of you-“

"Harry we are sorry, we wanted to tell you something, really... but Dumbledore let us swear-,“ Hermione interrupted him.

"Dumbledore yes... I get kidnapped in a supposedly safe environment, which leads to Voldemort’s resurrection, see how Cedric gets killed and he simply parks me at Privet drive without saying a word of what is going on. You can’t tell me, that there isn’t a safe way tell me at least something, or do you think Voldemort monitors my phone calls now?“ Harry asked sarcastically. Calmly, he sent Hedwig back on the wardrobe, "I understand why you did what you did... but that doesn’t mean, that I am no longer angry with you and Dumbledore. “ Harry turned around and left a speechless Ron and Hermione behind.

"Harry!“ Hermione said when she realized that he was walking out of the room, but Ron held her back.

"Give him some space, Mione..."

Harry walked down the stairs. It was better this way. He was twenty-four, okay, at least partly, but pretending to be this teenager again... Harry wouldn’t waste his time by checking everything he wanted to say twice. Ron and Hermione had certainly not expected him to talk this calmly. He almost wanted to laugh because of the faces they had made.
Harry was just reaching the hallway of the first floor, when Kreacher walked past him. The Elf stopped and looked at Harry strangely. When Harry stared back the House-elf turned and walked away. "Huh what was that about?“ Harry wondered out loud.

"You once owned this house. The magic inside these walls still recognizes you as a Black, so does his," Death said.

"Do you think he would obey me?" Harry asked curiously.

"Perhaps, but he is bound to another Masster."

"Sirius...," Harry said, while he had reached the entrance Hall. He suddenly realized, that the Portraits on the Walls had started to whisper.

"A parselmouth-"

"-old line of Slytherin-"

"-here in the Black house-"

"-honored, dark Wizard-"

"-a Black?"

Harry could only hear bits and pieces. The portraits ogled him curiously.

All of a sudden, he didn’t know what he should do. Harry didn’t want to go back to see Ron and Hermione, nor was he able to walk down to the kitchen, where the members of the order held their meeting. Harry sat down on the lower steps of the staircase.

He started to pet the scales of Deaths snake form, when suddenly the weight turned into dark fog and the snake vanished from his shoulders. Harry watched it materialize again and Death appeared in his familiar form as Harry’s twin. He sat next to Harry, and Harry swore, that Death had made himself a little bit taller, or it was just the fact, that he sat on a step a little higher than Harry’s.
Maybe both, Harry decided.

"What are you going to do, now that you are here?" Death asked after a while.

"I don’t know. Prevent the deaths of Remus, Tonks, Fred and Sirius, I think. ....probably." Harry answered. It was a good question, because otherwise, he hadn’t thought about what he wanted to do. "You don’t have to stick with me all the time," Harry said after a few moments of silence, when Death had started to comb through Harry’s hair with his fingers, which was quite relaxing, actually.

"Maybe not as a snake," Death said and smiled. Harry chuckled.

Harry heard steps in the distance and Death vanished. Then the door to at the other side of the room opened. Apparently the meeting was over, and people started to enter the room. Many of them stared at him, as they walked past Harry. A few of them nodded towards him and left, others remained for a few moments and talked in hushed voices. Then, Harry spotted Snape.

The man had died at the battle and it was a shock to see him alive. He may have been an asshole the time Harry had known him, but Harry owed the man his life. How Snape had been able to survive as long as he had was impressive. Snape had managed to walk the narrow line between life and death as a spy. Even Voldemort had not known of Severus’ betrayal.

Sometimes Harry had thought, that not even Dumbledore knew where the loyalties of the man laid. Was it Harry’s dead mother? What was his motivation? Love, a wish for revenge or simply his own sense of good and bad. If there had been another alternative than Dumbledore, would Snape have still chosen the path he was walking now?

His former Professor snorted derogatory, when he spotted Harry on the stairs and rushed past him, black robe billowing, as if this whole thing was beneath him.

The corners of Harry’s mouth twitched with amusement. At least, he wouldn’t have problems with potions anymore. The studying his twenty-four-year-old self had done was certainly an advantage.

In the end only Remus, Tonks and Mrs. Weasley remained in the Entrance Hall. Tonks and Remus locked the door magically, while Mrs. Weasley approached Harry.

"Harry, Dear. Would you mind calling the others? The meeting is over and dinner is ready," Mrs. Weasley whispered, "Fred and George should be a floor above your and Ron’s room." Harry nodded and was about to turn around when he heard a loud clonk.

Tonks had knocked over the umbrella stand.
With a bang, the curtains of Mrs. Blacks portraits opened, and the screaming began.

Tonks apologized over and over again, but the curses of Mrs. Black were just too loud, for her to be heard. „I’m so sorry-“

"MUDBLOODS! SCUM!“

"-the second time I fall over this-“

“FILTH-“

"-so sorry"

"-SULLYING THE HOUSE OF MY ANCESTORS!"

When Harry had moved to live in Grimmauld Place, Mrs. Black had been the same screaming bitch she had always been. Even when Kreacher obeyed him, she would still scream and shout, like she was tortured when some „Mudblood“ dared to cross the Hall.

Harry had looked for a way to remove the portrait. He had searched the Black Library for weeks. There were curses over curses, but not one could have helped him with this task. He had even read the dry tomes, that told about Pureblood education, and behaviour, only because there were notes written inside by some Family member of the Blacks.

But apart from a few spells for sealing marriages, binding contracts and some curses to ‘properly discipline’ a misbehaving child, he found nothing. He had given up after reading "Lord’s and Ladies of noble blood - the proper representation of the family“ for the third time.

Harry didn’t trust himself with using Fiendfire to just destroy the damn thing, so he begrudgingly accepted that he had to live with it.

But one day -during one of her screaming sessions- Harry remembered, that Kreacher had talked to the Portrait, even received some orders. She had to be able to act normal. Maybe he would be able to persuade Mrs. Black to stop, by simply talking to her.

To his immense surprise, it had worked. Maybe not in the way he had imagined, but after that very incident, her screaming was reduced to occasionally quiet grumbling and well-chosen insults. But right now, she was still shouting and very loudly so.
"WORTHLESS BASTARDS! HALFBLOODS! FREAKS-" Surprised she shut up, when Harry turned to do the very same thing, he had done last time to get the Portraits to listen. He shouted back.

"PATHETIC! SHAME ON YOU! YOU ARE A DISGRACE FOR THE HOUSE OF BLACK! SCREAMING LIKE SOME WITCH WHO DOESN’T KNOW HOW TO BEHAVE HERSELF! YOU COULD AS WELL BE THE SPAWN OF A MUGGLE!"

"HOW DARE YOU-“, she started, but Harry didn’t even let her finish.

"I?! HOW DARE I?! HOW DARE YOU DISRESPECT THE HEIR OF BLACK BY EMBARRASSING HIM IN FRONT OF HIS GUESTS! HOW FAR THE HOUSE OF BLACK HAS FALLEN BY CALLING YOU ONE OF THEIR OWN! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR EDUCATION JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE NOW A PORTRAIT?! YOU ARE NO LONGER THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE! IT IS NOT YOUR BUSINESS WHO ENTERS ANYMORE! KNOW YOUR PLACE WOMAN!" he finished. Everyone stared at him. Harrys panting was the only sound disturbing the silence. Walburga Black had left her Frame empty behind and the other Portraits seemed embarrassed enough. She would probably return, but right now it should be enough.

Remus looked at Harry, seemingly in shock and Tonks mouth stood wide open.

A movement in the corner of his eye caught Harry’s attention. He turned around and he stood in front of a baffled Sirius Black. "I- I don’t know what to say, really," Sirius said, half shocked half grinning. ,,No one ever got her to shut up like that."

Harry’s mind was blank. He didn’t know how to react. Sirius stood in front of him! It was so surreal. He hadn’t seen his Godfather in almost ten years. Harry had known that sooner or later he would meet him, but it was still a shock to see him... and he was different than Harry remembered. Just like Remus, he seemed younger to Harry, but Sirius, he was -well- really handsome. He was still kind of skinny and unhealthy looking, probably because of Azkaban, but Harry remembered that even when he had seen a younger Sirius in Snapes memories he had found him attractive. And that incident would only happen in a few month from now...

Harry found that his mind had adjusted very well to the confusion by now. He almost felt like his older self, except for the vividness of his memories previous to this summer. Snapping out of his thoughts Harry turned his attention back to his Godfather.

"How about ‘Hi’," Harry said, grinning widely. Sirius threw his head back with laughter and his dark hair fell graciously on his shoulders.
"Yes, that would certainly be a start," Sirius chuckled, his dark eyes shining with mirth, "Hello Harry."

Sirius magic was dark, just like Remus’. But where Remus was subtly lurking, perfectly controlled, Sirius’ magic had a crazy edge to it. It was wild and untamed like a storm. Its swirls were moving in unpredictable patterns and curiously seemed to poke everything in its reach.

But there wasn’t as much as should have been there. Harry frowned. Something was draining it away...

Harry watched the magic closely. The strands were bleeding into the surroundings, as if it was just leaking out. And then, he found the source. The whole room seemed to absorb the magic. But why?

Sirius still smirked at him. "Come on, let’s go downstairs, before she comes back," he said and nodded towards the painting. Harry followed after his godfather and the others behind. While they walked towards the door at the other side of the Hall, Harry watched Sirius’ magic closely. It was interacting with the house in such a strange way...

"Sirius“, he asked, „is your magic connected to the house?“ Sirius stopped surprised.

„Yes, I am holding the wards“

"Mhh," Harry hummed. "I can feel it," Harry muttered absentmindedly, still eyeing the dark walls.

You can feel it?!“ Remus spluttered. Harry's head snapped up. He hadn't realized that he had said it out loud. "Since when?" Remus asked.

"Um, it's just a feeling“, Harry replied, waving him off. He suppressed a smile. After all, it was only the truth. "But," Harry pointed at the wall and turned back to Sirius, "it feels like it’s feeding off your magic, but I don’t know why...“ Harry ignored the shocked looks and turned to the wall.

He closed his eyes, and let his fingers run over the surface again. The magic sang beneath his fingertips. Harry felt the same as before. The wards, Dumbledore’s protection... The wards!

Harry opened his eyes. "The wards, they are connected to the owner of the house, you said you
"Yeah," Sirius answered, still looking disturbed. He eyed the wall suspiciously.

"They are weak-"

"But Dumbledore himself put wards in place," Molly interrupted him.

"I’m not talking about Dumbledore’s wards," Harry said. "They are powerful, but not connected to the house in this manner. I’m talking about the ones, that protected it for decades." Harry looked at the wall. "Nobody lived in this house for years and now that you-," Harry looked at Sirius, "- returned, they are strengthening again, but they need magic to empower their stronger wards" Harry said in sudden realization. It was so logical, how had he not been able to see this? „I think they absorb some of your magic too Remus."

"What?!", the werewolf asked shocked.

"I think they only take dark magic"

„I’ve got dark magic?!“, the werewolf almost squeaked.

„Yeah, Sirius too, nothing to worry about," Harry reassured him.

„What magic do I have?“, Tonks asked curiously. "Can you feel it too?" Harry turned his attention towards her. Molly, who stood behind her had a hand pressed on her chest, concern in her eyes. But Harry focused on Tonks.

„It’s difficult to say. Unlike the others, it changes all the time. One time it’s light, and then it’s darker again. Your magic is very," Harry searched for a word to describe it. "...colourful," he settled, "I guessing it’s because you are a metamorphmagus, but I don’t really know." He shrugged.

Tonks had absorbed every word. She smiled widely. "Uhh that is really cool."
Harry once more reached out for the wards. He felt a little tugging. Curiously he let his magic brush against them.

On an instant, they responded to his presence. Tendrils of it reached out, pushed against his finger tips and all of a sudden, they pulled.

It was as if the house started to consume his magic, but strangely Harry wasn’t afraid.

Mesmerized he watched how his magical force was sucked out of him. The wards pulsed. Even the others seemed to sense something. Harry grew weaker and weaker. The wards, seemed to have no restraints taking from him. He wasn’t protected like the holder of the wards.

But suddenly power flooded his senses. Harry’s vision was sharper than ever, and a cold fire burned inside of him. The light flickered.

It was like the house had demanded more than he could give, but a floodgate inside of Harry had opened. And Harry could for the first time see his own magic. It was an exhilarating feeling. Harry panted. He knew, he would be able to tear down this house with a thought, if he wanted too.

"Harryyyy... Do you feel it?"

Death’s hoarse voice whispered inside his head. Harry had the absurd feeling, that the being smirked. Invisible, Harry felt Death pressing against him from behind, pushing his hand into the wall. He opened his eyes and observed with wide eyes, how the wall cracked beneath his fingers and how his hand sank into it a few inches, as if the wall was made of quicksand. His whole hand was surrounded by his magic, it expanded under his fingers and the wall sounded dangerously close to collapsing.

And then Harry felt it and he knew.

The weakened wards had pulled on his magic, sensing something not quite dark but good enough to feed on, to gain some strength. Only after his magical core had been drained, he must’ve accessed, the part in him, that was Death. And now that the passageway was open, it had merged with his magical core.

The wards consumed the overflowing magic, feeding it into the walls.

Harry’s once neutral magic had vanished and was replaced by something much darker, much more powerful. And was it dark, or was it not? Harry didn’t know. Ice could burn like fire too, if it just got cold enough. His magic might be dark, but it wasn’t a foul black hole, like the house had been, instead the magic was like Death itself. Pure and alluring, promising sweet sleep and peace, caressing, and strangely beautiful, while at the same time horrific and inconceivable, able to slowly drain away your life force. Like a blade, so sharp, you didn’t even feel it enter till it was to late.
Just like death, his magic had the potential to be a blessing or a curse.

Harry slowly came down from his high, when his magic started to settle. He hadn’t even noticed, that his hand had left the wall. His magic slithered lazily, coating him like a new layer of skin.
The Order

Sirius was white as a wall, Remus trembled and Molly had gripped Tonks shoulder for support.

"Harry, are you alright?" she asked, panic in her voice.

"Yeah, yeah...," Harry said, also a bit confused.

"Come sit down“, Remus guided him to a chair not far away. „Do you feel dizzy, or tired?“ Lupin knelt down and took his face in both his hands and looked into his eyes.

Harry was suddenly reminded, that Lupin had been the most competent teacher in Defence against the arts, he’d ever had in his school years. "Maybe we should call Severus," Remus said turning to Sirius, while he tilted Harry’s head to have better light.

It meant something, that Sirius didn’t complain. He only nodded, pale faced and concern in his eyes.

Harry brushed Remus hands aside. "I’m fine, really," he said.

"If you are sure....," Sirius said and Remus stood up.

"I still think, that we should call Severus. Just to be sure," Molly said.

"I’ve never seen something like that," Tonks said, while Remus turned to Sirius.

"Should we call Severus, what do you think?" the Werewolf asked. Sirius looked at Harry.

"It could be possible that Harry is right. The wards do feel stronger, and he doesn’t seem to be hurt."

"You know this house the best...," Remus said uncertainly.
"That doesn’t mean, that there was some nasty curse hidden in these walls. If it means to call Snivellus—"

"Sirius!"

"-Snape“, he corrected himself, „it would be safer," Sirius said reluctantly. Tonks whispered two words and swished her wand. A Patronus in form of a bunny appeared. Harry remembered that it had changed to match Remus Patronus, when he was in his sixth year in Hogwarts. It was a wolf as Remus had later told him. Harry wondered if it would turn out the same way this time too. The bunny hopped through the air and disappeared through a wall.

"Hey Harry, we thought that this could only be your—," George said, walking down the stairs, but he stopped when he saw, that everyone stood around Harry, pale and concerned.

"What’s going on?" Fred asked. Harry looked at the two. Harry had almost forgotten; how different George had been when Fred had still been alive. He grinned at the twins.

"Nothing," Harry said, while he was trying to spot Death. The being had only been gone for a few moments but Harry already found himself missing him.

"The wall tried to eat him," Tonks added.

"The wall tried to eat you?" Fred asked interested.

"Why?" George added, looking at Harry curiously. Then the locks at the door clicked and the chain rattled.

"This must be Severus," Molly said, looking at the door. Then she turned to the twins. "Go, tell the others that Dinner is ready." She obviously wanted to have as little people in here as were possible right now. The twins were happy to oblige, because Snape just entered with all the dramatics that came with wearing a black cloak in the way he did. Harry didn't doubt that they would try to listen in though. Snape spared the empty portrait of Mrs. Black a surprised look. Only then turned to the others.
"I leave for five minutes and you already got yourself in trouble, Potter!" the professor stated after a moment.

"Nice to see you too," Harry replied sarcastically. Snape ignored his comment, but Sirius mouth twitched with amusement.

"Out of the way Black. Now, what happened?" Snape said and pushed past Sirius who grimaced.

"Harry’s hand was on the wall, and suddenly it started to give in and something black crept up his arm," Molly uttered her voice almost hysterical. Harry was more surprised at the mentioning of something black moving into his arm. Could that have been his magic?

Meanwhile Snape listened to Mrs. Weasley with a raised eyebrow, but otherwise showed no reaction. Harry was sure, that he had seen the hint of an expandable ear dangling from above.

"The wards in here were weak," Harry said.

"I wonder how you noticed Potter," Snape sneered.

"Don’t you-," Sirius started, but a look of Remus let him shut up.

"Well, they pulled on Sirius’ magic and when I brushed against it, they started to consume my magic. Then it stopped," Harry explained. Snape looked at him strangely.

"Potter, to reinstate the wards like this, your magical core would be drained. You would be dead or at least unconscious."

Harry shrugged. "I’m just guessing." Snape raised his wand and made a some complicated movements. Harry felt a wave of dark soothing magic wash over him. Snape frowned and made another movement.

"I said I’m fine."

"Your magic is incredible difficult to read," Snape said now with furrowed eyebrows. He seemed
very focused.

"Difficult to read?" Sirius said, while Tonks walked over to the wall to inspect it. It had cracked like a spiderweb.

"Yes Black, difficult to read," Snape hissed between clenched teeth. Then Harry felt a sudden weight on his shoulder. A black was slithering up there from behind, like it had never been away.

"Death," Harry greeted the snake, with a smile on his face. Snape flinched away. He had paled noticeably. Mrs. Weasley squeaked. The snake settled happily upon Harry’s shoulders, and he felt much more at ease, dealing with all these people.

"Have you experienced recent memory losses? Strange thoughts invading your mind-," Snape eventually started, but Remus interrupted him.

"Do you want to say, that Harry is possessed?" he asked.

"It is indeed a possibility."

"Just because I got a snake, I am now Voldemort incarnated?" Harry asked and he saw how Molly gasped. But then she spotted Tonks who was just about to run into the umbrella stand for a second time. The quickly walked over to prevent another disaster. One couldn't be sure that Mrs. Black wouldn't return. Snape’s eyes meanwhile snapped to Harry’s.

"Stupidity seems to run the family I see. No Potter-," Harry’s eyes flashed dangerously. He was suddenly aware, that his magic had caused the chair he was sitting on to rot. Never had he lost his control like this. Luckily Snape was interrupted by a noise, that almost was a growl. Sirius was about to leap at Snape and not even Lupin would be able to hold him back now, but Harry stood up and thus stepped between them. He hadn’t felt this way for a long time, but Snape comparing him to his father had hit a nerve. And it bugged him. Harry shot Sirius a look and the Animagus stopped reluctantly. Something in Harry’s expression seemed to have told him, that this wasn’t his fight.

Harry turned to look at Snape and he stayed quiet for some time. Death slithered around his neck. "I am not my father," Harry said quietly, so quiet, that probably only Snape, Lupin and Sirius heard what he was saying. "Actually I’m quite sick of being compared to my parents. The first thing I get to hear, when I meet new people is, that I look like James except for the eyes, which look like Lily’s. It was nice to hear that, when I was eleven. Mostly, because nobody ever told me about them. Surely not Petunia or anybody else I met before Sirius or Remus."
Hearing about them made them real. But they are dead, nothing will change that," Harry looked into Snape’s eyes and beneath his expressionless mask, there was a spark of fear. While it should be impossible for Harry to know that he had been in love with his mother, Snape had never been stupid. "If you hate me, do so because of me and not because of my father," Harry ended.

Snape’s eyes lingered for a few moments, but he turned away from Harry and looked at Mrs. Weasley instead, who - when she noticed that she was being looked at - crossed the distance and came towards them.

"I couldn’t find anything out of the ordinary," Snape said. "But I would keep a close eye on him. If he shows signs of being cursed, call me immediately,” he said to everyone.

"We will," Molly said breaching the awkwardness after the conversation she didn’t hear. "Thank you Severus." The wizard nodded sharply and then left.

Just after Snape had closed the door, the twins came down the stairs, followed by Ron, Hermione and Ginny. Harry didn’t doubt, that they’d listened to every word that was spoken.

"We’ve heard that dinner’s ready," Ron said and Hermione shot Harry a concerned look, that told him, that she wanted to talk later.

"Yes, let’s go downstairs," Molly said with a last look at Harry.

Harry followed his godfather. He was awfully quiet. They walked through the door, down a narrow staircase and then through another door. They reached the big kitchen and smoke was hanging in the air. Bill and Mr. Weasley sat on the other side of the table and Mundungus was sleeping in his chair.

"Harry! Nice to see you," Mr. Weasley said after he had jumped up and shook Harry’s hand. "Did something happen, Molly?" he asked, when he saw how pale everyone was.

"The house tried to eat me, as Tonks would say," Harry answered smiling, "But I’m fine"

"The house?" he asked. Sirius just shook his head and walked over to the table. He let himself fall onto a chair, Remus and Harry followed. Mrs. Weasley stayed behind and talked to her husband, the other teenagers listening too.
"Sit down Harry," Sirius said and pointed to the empty chair next to him. "You know Mundungus?"

"Somebody said my name? Fully agree with Sirius," the other wizard said groggily lifting a hand, as if he wanted to vote for something.

"The meeting is over Dung, Harry's here," Sirius said while everyone sat around the table.

"Huh," Mundungus said gazing through his red brownish hair. "Merlins pants, is he? Yeaahhh...everything’s ‘lright with ya ‘Arry?" He pulled out a black pipe and soon he sat in the middle of a smoky cloud. "I owe you an apology."

"For the last time Mundungus!" shouted Mrs. Weasley, "stop smoking that herb in the kitchen!"

"Sorry Molly," he said sheepishly. "Listen, I wouldn’t have left you know, but there was this one-time deal."

"It’s okay," Harry said side-eyeing Sirius. He seemed deep in thought. Turning to Mundungus Harry smirked. For him, the incident with the Dementors had happened ages ago, but Mundungus owed him something. And he was useful. After a moment Harry leaned forward. "But, let’s say I wanted to purchase something, that wasn’t exactly legal..."

"Only Hypothetically spoken..."

"Of course," Harry said grinning.

Mundungus also leaned closer and lowered his voice. "It depends on what you want... I may know some people who sell these kind of things." Sirius who had listened to their conversation looked at Harry with a raised eyebrow, but he didn’t say anything. Death slithered from Harry’s shoulders down to his arm until he was half resting on the table and his hand.

"Good," Harry said and leaned back grinning.

"And how was your summer Harry?" Sirius asked after a while eyeing Death.
"Miserable," Harry replied.

"Well I don’t know why you are complaining," Sirius said. "Personally, a Dementor Attack would have been a welcome disturbance of the boring life in here. I haven’t left the house in months. Thanks to Wormtail, Voldemort knows that I’m an Animagus. I’m not much use to the order right now, at least that’s what Dumbledore thinks and if I get captured again...," Sirius said and a shadow fell over his face.

"Well, than fuck that," Harry said and he meant it.

"Harry!" Molly said horrified as he overheard him cursing.

"Well, it’s true," Harry said and turned to Sirius again. Mrs. Weasley had started to prepare the food again. "He can’t keep you from leaving the house from time to time. Go get some cigarettes, walk around as a dog, hell go to a bar. This is your house! You choose if you leave it and you choose who you want to stay here," Sirius watched him, as if he never had seen him in his life. Remus, who was also listening seemed torn.

"It’s not like I tell you to walk through Diagon Ally. Visit a muggle club for all I care. Change the way you look, that will help you not to get recognized. And take Remus with you, he looks like he could use some fun!" The werewolf also gaped at Harry now. "Kingsley leads the division against you, he can easily continue to lead everyone in the wrong direction. And if you are spotted, well that’s bad luck. You can always start to hide again, but I think if you are holed up in this house for another four months, you’ll probably do something that is easily more reckless than going out on the weekends," Harry finished.

"Knowing Sirius, you may be right," Remus said eventually.

"And you could really use some fun," Sirius added, barking a laugh and he patted Remus back. The Werewolf blushed.

Harry raised an eyebrow, but he was interrupted by Fred and George who had charmed the giant pot filled with stew, a chug of butter-beer and some knives, that now flew directly towards them. Sirius and Remus ducked under the table, but Harry stopped. Panic flooded his senses when he saw, where one of the knives was going.

In the blink of an eye Harry, plucked it out of the air. It would have landed right where Death was curled up in his snake form.

Thankfully nobody seemed to have noticed, because Mrs. Weasley had instantly started to shout. "JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE ALLOWED TO USE MAGIC, DOESN’T MEAN THAT YOU
Harry saw a faint red line that was soon dripping with blood, but he didn’t care. He let go of the knife and picked up Death. Relieved he let out a shaky breath. His fingers trailed over the scaly surface of Death’s skin. The black snake darted its equally black tongue in and out and licked once against Harry’s bloody palm. After the first few calm breaths, Harry’s look fell upon the bloody blade. ‘How could he catch that so easily? Even with his seeker reflexes, Harry would’ve never been able to.’ Harry shot Death a suspicious look and the snake slithered closer to him.

"Merlin- Harry!” Sirius said after he showed up from under the table and saw the blood.

"I must’ve cut myself, when I pulled it out of the table," Harry quickly lied.

"Here, let me take a look at your hand," Remus said and he touched the wound with the tip of his wand, and after a murmured Episkey, the cut closed itself.

In the meantime, Mrs. Weasley hadn’t stopped shouting. "-DIDN’T HEX EVERYTHING IN REACH; PERCY...," she stopped dead in her speech. Oh yes Harry recalled that the relationship between him and the Weasley’s had been strained at that time.

Awkwardly they began to eat. Eventually the tension bled away, and conversations on the table started to take place. Bill was talking to Mr. Weasley and Lupin about the relationship with the Goblins, Tonks entertained Ginny and Hermione by changing her appearance and Mundungus told a story to the twins and Ron.

Harry turned his head, when Death slithered up his arm and settled around his neck and beneath his shirt. „I’m glad you’re alright“, he whispered and asked himself if it was strange to want to hug a snake.

"You don’t have to be worried. I can’t be hurt or killed," Death said and Harry felt a invisible hand carding trough his hair.

"I know, it’s just-," Harry stopped, when he noticed Sirius watching him curiously. Fortunately, just this moment, someone else said his name.

"Sirius," Mrs. Weasley said with a strained voice, after she looked away from Mundungus and then shot Sirius an equally dark look, "there might be a Boggart in the desk in the drawing room. Maybe we should let Mad-Eye take a look at it. And the curtains in there are full of Doxy’s, you know. I
thought we could start cleaning it tomorrow."

"Looking forward to it," Sirius said sarcastically and pushed his empty plate away. "Actually Harry, you surprise me. I expected you to ask thousands of questions about Voldemort as soon as you got here." The mood in the room turned icy. Harry looked at Sirius. He would have to wonder later over his shock at seeing a knife flying towards Death, because this conversation should be interesting.

"Harry is too young for that," Mrs. Weasley said her hands clenched, knuckles white.

"Since when do you have to be in the order to ask questions?" Sirius said, "He has every right to-"

"Hey how is it, that Harry gets to ask questions and we don’t?!" Fred asked angrily.

"You are too young, you aren’t members of the order!" George imitated Mrs. Weasley, "Harry isn’t even seventeen yet!"

"It isn’t my fault, that nobody told you, what the order is doing. That was the decision of your parents. Harry on the other hand-," Sirius started.

"It isn’t your choice to decide what is good for Harry," said Mrs. Weasley, a dangerous glint to her eyes as he stared at Sirius. Harry’s eyes narrowed. He started to get annoyed by Mrs. Weasley’s behaviour. He began to pet Death, who slithered over his palms, but he listened attentively. "You didn’t forget what Dumbledore said, I suppose?" Mrs. Weasley said.

"What exactly do you mean Molly?" Sirius asked and Harry found himself siding with him. He wasn’t too fond of the woman right now.

"That Harry only hears, what he has to hear," she said.

Ginny, her brothers and Hermione looked from Mrs. Weasley to Sirius and back again. Remus looked at Sirius.

"I don’t intend to tell him more than he has to know, Molly," replied Sirius. "But as the one witnessing Voldemort’s return, he has the right, more than most-"

"He is not a member of the Order of the Phoenix!" said Mrs. Weasley. "He is only fifteen and-"

"And he managed to go through more than most of the members of the order. And with more than some of them can claim about themselves."

"Nobody doubts what he has done!" Mrs. Weasley said her hands clenched into fists. Death was curled around Harry’s arm now. "But he is still-"
"He isn’t a child anymore," Sirius said roughly.

"But his isn’t an adult yet!" Mrs. Weasley said her voice raised, "He isn’t James, Sirius!" Mrs. Weasley said. This seemed to have hit a certain spot and Harry was now more than aware, why Sirius had been this thoughtful earlier.

"I am very aware of who he is, Molly. Thank you," Sirius said coldly, and Harry couldn’t help but compare him to an older Draco Malfoy. He had also been able to stare someone down this coldly. His mother had been a Black after all. Harry had even managed to start a loose friendship with him after the war, but right now, the Malfoy Heir would probably still be a spoiled brat.

"I am not so sure about that. Sometimes you talk about him, as if you were thinking, that you’ve got your best friend back! Harry is not his father, as similar as they may are," Molly said with a glance at Harry. The twins shared a look. Harry was sure that they thought of his conversation with Snape earlier. Harry frowned. Lupin shifted uncomfortably in his seat and shot him a glance. "He still goes to school," Mrs. Weasley continued, "and the adults who are responsible for him, should not forget that!"

"Are you saying, that I am an irresponsible Godfather?" Sirius’ magic twisted angrily and developed sharp spikes all over.

"I am saying, that you are known to act rash, Sirius, which is why Dumbledore always tells you to stay at home and-" 

"Dumbledore’s orders for me have nothing to do with this, if I may say so!" Sirius replied. Harry watched the conversation and he felt increasingly angered. Death seemed to notice how he was feeling, because the snake slithered tensely on the table, ready to attack any minute. But Harry wanted to listen first. He petted Death and the snake relaxed and curled in on itself.

"Arthur!" Mrs. Weasley said turning to her husband. "Arthur, say something!" Mr. Weasley stayed quiet at first, and Harry was impressed by his calmness. He took off his glasses, cleaned them with his robes and then put them back on. Only then he began to speak. "Dumbledore knows, that the situation has changed, Molly. He wants, that Harry, now that he is at the headquarters, gets told some things, to a certain point."

"But that doesn’t mean, that one invites him, to ask everything he wants to know!"
"Me personally," Remus said quietly while Mrs. Weasley turned to look at him in hopes of finding a supporter. "I think that it is the best, that Harry hears about the facts - not all of them - by us and not some twisted versions from others." He glanced at Fred and George.

"Well," Mrs. Weasley said heavily panting, "Well... I see, that I get outvoted. I just want to say something: When Dumbledore didn’t want Harry to know to much, he has to have his reasons, and as someone, who only wants the best for Harry-"

"He is not your son," Sirius said quietly.

"But as good as!" she replied. "Who else does he have?" Mrs. Weasley said.

"He has me!" Sirius said outraged and Harry could see that not only he was angered by that statement, judging by the inwardly growling of Remus wolf.

"Yes," Mrs. Weasley said, "the thing is, that it was very hard for you to care for him, while you were sitting in Azkaban, wasn’t it?" Sirius jumped up.

"That’s enough," Harry said coldly. He was fed up with this and he must’ve looked frightening, because Sirius sank back into his chair and Mrs. Weasley paled. Everyone now looked at him. "With all due to respect Mrs. Weasley. It isn’t your decision either to decide what I get to hear, just as much as it isn’t Dumbledore’s." Everybody was listening now. "I find myself siding with Sirius here, and not because of the reasons you all may be thinking," Harry said and looked at Rons mother. "Mrs. Weasley, you have only known me about two more years than Sirius. You let me stay with you at the holidays, fed me and even given me presents for Christmas, but that doesn’t give you the right to choose over my life. Sirius knows that I am not my father. I don’t judge him, if he confuses me with him or he acts rash. Because he lived in Azkaban for twelve years, which would make everyone a little bit crazy!" Mrs. Weasley paled even more and the others stared at Harry. He turned to talk to everyone now. "But most of all, I won’t sit here, while you talk like I’m not even here. You are supposed to be the adults here and until you have decided what you are actually willing to tell me, I am going to bed."

Harry stood up. He extended his hand and mostly to see everyone flinch once more he said "Come on," Harry had the feeling that Death was amused. Its snake form slithered into his hands and Harry lifted it up until it was once again settled on his shoulders and walked away from the table. He turned around once more when he had reached the door. Everybody stared at him. "You know, it is bold of you to assume, that I don’t know anything about Voldemort’s plans. After all, I have a vault full of money and an owl, that is able to deliver letters," Harry said smirking a sharp smile. "I already see the headline. 'Lovely family reunion of the Black's." The grin on Harry’s face vanished. "Watch out for your cousin Sirius..."
Most of the people on the table looked confused, not everybody on the table seemed to have caught on. But Sirius paled even more. "I don’t think Voldemort will be blamed for her escape and she won’t be the only one," Harry said, hoping that his godfather took his warning seriously. With that he left the room.
Moony & Padfoot

Chapter Summary

Harry learns how to spy on people and listens to some conversations.

Chapter Notes

This is mostly fluff and a lot of Sirius and Remus talking.

The door behind Harry fell shut and he was surrounded by darkness. Walking up the narrow steps he mused, if he shouldn’t have told them about this. But the order members probably already knew, that Voldemort would try to break his followers out of Azkaban. They wouldn’t be able to prevent that anyway. The portraits shot Harry some glances, but the didn’t say a thing. He continued to walk upstairs, until he had reached the room he shared with Ron. The Dementors would change sides, Harry was sure. Dumbledore knew that, but the ministry certainly wouldn’t remove them from Azkaban. That was equal to admitting, that they didn’t have them under control anymore and the attack on Harry would only support this statement.

Just when Harry had stepped through the door-frame, the door behind him slammed shut on its own and Death materialized just behind him.

Death had indeed made itself taller, because the way he was looming over Harry’s left shoulder should not be possible if he was the same height. Long fingers carded through Harry’s hair once again and caused him to turn around. Harry felt a blush creeping up his collar, when Death didn’t stop, but instead pushed some strands out of his face. "Why do you look like me?” Harry blurted out.

"I like this form. I can look different if you want."

"Oh, no. You can look like you want too," Harry said, inwardly cursing the part that was his fifteen-year old self. Death smirked.

"You don’t have to worry about me. No mortal weapon can harm me. I am Death. I can’t be killed."

"I know, it was silly, but I only saw the knife flying towards you-," Harry bit his lip and restrained himself, "Well I’m glad nothing’s happened to you"
Death smiled.

Just in this moment Harry remembered something he hadn’t even thought about until now. He turned around and started to pace through the room. Death watched him curiously. ‘He would have a trial! His younger self had used a Patronus charm to defend himself and Dudley. Harry had almost forgotten about it until now.’ He frowned as he recalled the events of this time. Pigwidgeon chirped loudly and fluttered excitedly through the room. Hedwig on the other hand gracefully turned her head and ruffled her feathers on top of the wardrobe. When Death extended an arm, more elegant, than Harry ever could have managed, the little owl happily settled inside its palm. Harry shook his head at the gesture but he smiled. Then he focused on the more urgent matters once more.

‘Okay, last time when he had his trial, they had started much earlier and the ministry had changed the location. At least that wouldn’t be a problem anymore. As someone who had fought in the battle of Hogwarts, Harry had witnessed many trials and thanks to his training as an Auror, he did know some things about the law. While he had never really cared about politics, he should be doing fairly well. After years working in the ministry and visiting many of their official events, he knew exactly how he had to handle these people.’

In the meantime Death had even started to pet the small owl. Harry watched amused for a moment, but he didn’t doubt that a part of Death’s attention was still focused on him.

‘Back then, Dumbledore had acted in his favour, by naming Arabella Figgs as a witness. The headmaster would certainly do this a second time. But Harry would be damned if he would let Dumbledore take on the wheel in this.’ Harry smirked. Death raised his head to look at him and all of a sudden he knew, that the others were coming up the stairs.

Harry switched off the light and slipped under the covers of his bed.

And really - shortly after, Harry could hear them approaching.

The muffled voices of Ginny, the twins, Ron and Hermione reached him through the wall. He pretended to be asleep, when Ron entered. Harry heard a bit of shifting and he knew that he was being stared at. Ron locked the door and Harry remembered, that Kreacher used to walk into your room if you weren’t too careful. Finally, Ron went to bed, quite loudly, probably hoping that Harry would wake up, but he didn’t move.

Soon Ron’s even breathing could be heard, telling Harry, that the redhead was asleep.

Harry laid in the dark, eyes open and not tired at all. Death materialized and appeared sitting on Harry’s stomach. He grinned at him, his black hair blurring with the darkness of the room.

"And how was your day?“ Death asked leaning forward. Harry was reminded once more, that Death really didn’t seem to know the concept of personal space. Harry strangely he found, that he didn’t mind it as much as he should have.

"Well, it was strange to see everyone again. They are so much younger than they used to be and they are different,” Harry said, trusting Death, that Ron wouldn’t wake up.

"They are still the same as they were then,” Death stated.
"Probably..." Harry said, "It’s me who is older now, but I can’t really tell them, can I?"

"It’s your decision. We could always kill them afterwards," the creature said grinning. Despite the macabre offer Harry laughed.

"That’s true I suppose. But wouldn’t it be a bit suspicious if I just started to kill people?" Harry said smirking. Strange enough he even considered it for a moment.

"What are they going to do about it?" Death replied, "They cannot harm you and I won’t let them if you don’t want them to, Master." Death came even closer and bared his teeth protectively. Harry wondered if he ever blinked. Although there was no visible pupil, Harry always knew when Death looked at him. "Besides, I could always do it for you...," he said in his strange voice, not quite a whisper but also never too loud.

"That... is nice of you to offer," Harry replied not knowing if he should be disturbed or flattered. But he couldn’t find it in him, to think of killing people as sick anymore. And when Death let out a deep rumble, almost purr, Harry couldn’t help but smile at Death. ‘Huh, he could close his eyes,’ was all Harry could think. Ron groaned in his sleep and turned to the other side.

"Harrryy...,“ Death said, when Harry stayed silent. He pressed a pale palm with fingers to long and to slender to really match Harry’s against Harry’s ribcage. "Can you feel it now? Your soul has accepted us."

Death almost sounded excited and then Harry could sense something. A warmth inside him surfaced, reacting to Death’s touch. A strange feeling rose in his chest and he felt a tugging towards the being in front of him. It wasn’t unpleasant, and Harry gasped when he felt the magic he shared with Death. It swirled over and through them in pleasant waves. Death smiled and the air surrounding seemed to darken even more. Harry noticed fascinated the pulsing of life, that surrounded the two owls and Ron, who was still sleeping. Even the portrait on the wall had a similar glow to it. The longer he looked at it, the more things he noticed. It was as if the glow grew even brighter.

Harry blinked a few times and the magic surrounding them faded away. It was still there, and Harry was sure, that he was able to see it like this again if he wanted, but it was a bit much for him.

"Why don’t I feel tired?" Harry asked eventually.

"You can sleep if you want to," Death said.
"But I don’t need to, that’s what you are saying?“ Harry replied.

"Death doesn’t need to sleep, to eat or rest."

"And that includes me?" Harry asked.

"Yessss," Death replied, the longest strands of his hair tickling Harry’s forehead. Harry saw Ron at the other side of the room sitting up in his bed.

"Did you say somethin’ ‘arry?“ he asked groggily. Death smirked at him. It was probably too dark for Ron to see the being, but still...

"Nothing, i was just dreaming. Go back to sleep Ron," Harry said and the red-head laid back down again.

"If you say so...,“ Ron yawned, "G’night“ Harry glared at Death who only grinned.

“Why didn’t you warn me?!“ Harry whispered, when Ron’s breathing started to even out once more.

"I was going to show you something...,“ Death said and he intertwined his pale fingers with Harry’s next to his head, and just like this, Harry felt a strange pulling, it was like he was melting away. Harry knew, that he was turning into the same fog as Death always did, when he disappeared. But it wasn’t dark fog, Harry realized. It was like he had melted away into shadows. Harry thought, that it felt like he was floating for a moment and then he could suddenly feel his body again.

Harry found himself at the foot of narrow stairs, in front of the door, that led to the Kitchen.

He could sense Mrs. Weasley’s magic on the door. A imperturbable charm, nothing would pass through it. Death stood next to him.

"Make yourself invisible...“

Harry curiously did as he was told, calling upon the power of a familiar cloak. "Watch.,“ Death said, and he intertwined their fingers once more, his other hand was pressing against the solid wood of the door... Nothing should have been able to touch it, or even pass through, but once again, Harry saw, how Death turned into fog, but not the the extend, he normally would. Only the parts of Death’s body, that touched the door and it disappeared. First the fingertips and the palm of the hand. And then Harry was pulled with him. Death guided him through the door, as if it was made out of air. Standing on the other side, Harry could still see Death, and he wondered why the others people in the room didn’t say anything.
"Now that you've accessed your power as my Massterrr, you can see me when they cannot," Death answered his unspoken question.

The adults were still seated on the table. Mrs. Weasley was still very pale and Mr. Weasley cleaned his glasses once more, but he listened attentively. Mundungus was nowhere to be seen. Harry guessed, that Mrs. Weasley had thrown him out, when the kids had gone to bed. But Tonks was still there, absentmindedly letting a sickle wander over her knuckles. Remus seemed deep in thought, the parallel scars in his face prominent in the dim lightening of the fire, which now had almost burned down. He sat next to Sirius who was leaning forward, his dark hair falling into his face. His godfather was listening to Bill who sat opposite to him. "-could he write to? There aren’t many people who know what Voldemort is planning to do. Even Dumbledore is mostly guessing."

"It is fairly obvious, that Voldemort would free his followers. Harry could’ve thought of it too," Tonks said.

"But it’s still impressive, even if he only guessed it," Bill said turning to her and she hummed in agreement.

"He has changed over the summer," Remus said.

"Of course, he’s changed. He saw how a schoolmate of him was killed and Voldemort came back," Sirius replied turning to Lupin.

"I know, but I don’t mean that. Have you seen the way he walks? He takes all of his surroundings in, in a different way."

"Now that you mention it...," Bill said.

"He kinda reminds me of Mad-Eye," Tonks added.

"Mad-Eye?" Mr. Weasley asked and he put his glasses back on.

"Yes-“, Tonks started but Sirius' muttering had her stop.

"...ror.."
"What did you say?" Bill asked, leaning over the table.

"He acts like someone, who has fought in a battle. Like an Auror would“, Sirius said, "He has adapted to the same guarded walk Aurors have.“

"But that is ridiculous!" Molly Weasley said, breaking her silence. "He is just a boy."

"I don’t know Molly, is it?" Mr. Weasley turned to her.

"He is just as old as Ron. He shouldn’t -," Mrs. Weasley sobbed, "He shouldn’t have to live like that." Mr. Weasley patted her back reassuringly. Sirius looked at her, as if he wanted to say something, but he restrained himself, when another sob shook her.

"But do you really think, that he knows something or that he’s bluffing?" Tonks asked curiously.

"We’ve already been over this," Remus said.

"Yeah, but I don’t know. It seemed, that he was very informed. Who could have told him, that you are related to Bellatrix?" she said turning to Sirius.

"Well it is not really common knowledge anymore, but it isn’t a secret either," Sirius said.

"Wasn’t it mentioned, when they caught her after the incidents with the Longbottom’s?" Bill intervened. Remus nodded, a shadow falling over his face. Harry remembered, that he had been the only Marauder left then, thinking that Sirius was a traitor for all these years. He probably had followed every news regarding the Death eaters and something like this would’ve certainly caught his eye.

Sirius suddenly looked like he had just realized something, but he didn’t say it. Instead he shot Remus a look. Tonks watched their exchange curiously and Harry was once more reminded, that despite her clumsiness, she was an Auror.

Lupin seemed to have gotten the hint, because he turned to Mrs. Weasley. "Molly, don’t you think it’s better to go to bed? We’ve all had a long day and I’m sure you must be exhausted after this."
"Yes Molly, I think Remus is right.\textquotedbl", Mr. Weasley added. Mrs. Weasley nodded and her husband helped her up.

"Let me just...,\textquotedbl" she started when her eyes fell onto the dirty dishes on the table.

"No, Molly. It’s alright. Sirius and I can tidy everything up," Lupin said.

"Thank you, Remus. Goodnight Tonks; Sirius. Don’t stay up too long Bill. You need your sleep," she said and after Mr. Weasley had wished everyone a good night, they headed for the door. Harry took a step aside to let them pass.

"Finite," Mr. Weasley murmured and swished his wand to end the charm Mrs. Weasley had put on the door earlier this evening.

Remus looked at the place where Harry had been standing just a second before, but he shook his head and turned away.

"I think, I’ll head home too," Tonks said and yawned. She stood up. "Goodnight Remus. And Sirius I look what I can do. I’m sure that Mum kept some of your old records," she nodded towards the long haired Weasley, "’night Bill"

"I’ve a meeting with the Goblins tomorrow morning," Bill said. "It’s probably better if I head out too."

"Goblins... right\textquotedbl“, Remus said not looking up, but smiling.

"Are you sure Bill, that it is only the Goblins? I thought Miss Delacour was working with them tomorrow," Sirius added grinning.

"Shut up," Bill said and a faint blush spread on his cheeks. He made a gesture towards Sirius and Remus, that would’ve caused Mrs. Weasley to pale. "Fuck both of you," Bill said, but he was grinning.

He followed Tonks through the door and left. Sirius smirked and Remus laughed. Then Sirius looked at the ceiling for a moment, as if to detect if Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had already reached the ground floor.

All of a sudden, they could hear a familiar ‘clonk’. Harry grinned at the way Sirius flinched and
Remus sighed. Tonks had once more met the umbrella stand. But the expected shouting didn’t start. Sirius shook his head with a grin.

"I’ll have to thank Harry for that. Never had I thought that simply doing the same thing that she always does would have been the solution," he said silently laughing.

"Well, what is it, that you wanted to tell me?" Remus eventually said. His Godfather turned to him. He seemed serious now.

"Kingsley. Harry mentioned Kingsley earlier. That he is the one responsible for my capture. You didn’t tell him, did you?"

Remus frowned. "No, and I don’t think I heard somebody else mention it to him. The children don’t know either. So, Ron and Hermione couldn’t have told him. Only the order and people working in the ministry could’ve known."

"So he really wasn’t bluffing that he knows some things," Sirius said, "Tonks was right after all."

"We know that he knows something. That doesn’t mean, that he knows things about Voldemort or about his plans in the ministry," Remus said.

"But he knows something...," Sirius replied and then suddenly he smiled. "You know, Harry was right. We both could use some fun."

"You don’t think about leaving right now, do you?" Remus asked, his eyes widening.

"No. At least not now. I’m not stupid," Sirius answered and stood up.

"I never said that," Remus said.

"Well you thought it often enough," Sirius shot back, as he walked over to a shelf. He pulled out one of the dusty bottles filled with a golden liquid and two magnificently decorated glasses.
"Not without my reasons," Remus said, "You remember the one time in our sixth year, James dared you to swim in the lake butt-naked?“

"I did it, didn’t I?" Sirius replied grinning.

"It was January Padfoot!"

"Well yes. All it took was a blasting spell and the ice was gone," Sirius said and he sat down. Remus was laughing quietly and shook his head, while Sirius put the glasses in front of them.

"At least he didn’t specify that you had to do it as a human. If you hadn't been able to change when McGonnagol arrived...“

"I would’ve done it for less than the five Galleons he bet me," Sirius said and he leaned back in his chair. Harry was quite fascinated by their behaviour. He had never really seen how they had acted, when they were on their own. "And after all, I warmed up quite nicely afterwards," Sirius said. To Harry’s interest Remus stayed suspiciously quiet and his eyes didn't meet Sirius’. Padfoot side-eyed his friend but he didn’t push the topic.

"My father would turn in his grave, when he knew that I drank his good Whiskey," Sirius said instead and poured some of the liquid in the glasses. "He complained often enough about Muggles, but he always liked their taste in alcohol. It’s already open, but it should still be good."

"Well...," Remus said and downed his in one go. Sirius followed but he pulled a face.

"You could always hold your liquor better than me or James," Sirius said, but he filled their glasses once again. They sat in silence for some time, sipping on their drinks.

"It was wrong of Molly to say these things to you," Remus said. Sirius only grumbled. "You know, I thought Harry was James the first time I saw him after, well...," Lupin didn't finish the sentence, "It was the year you escaped from Azkaban. Dumbledore was kind enough to let me teach defence against the dark arts in Hogwarts. It just seemed right to me, to take the train. I fell asleep, the moon had just passed, and I didn’t notice when they entered. Dementors caused the train to stop and I woke up and the first thing I see, is a boy with wild black hair and glasses.”

"I know," Sirius began, "I know Harry is his own person, really. But there are these days, when I forget, that they are dead. That I was in Azkaban. And then, just for a second he looks like James. The way he turns his head, or how he laughs. It only ever lasts a few seconds and it’s gotten less,
the more that I get to know him,” Sirius said, "Harry is very different from James. He reminds me of my brother sometimes…” Harry frowned. He hadn’t known that.

Death had let go of his hand for some time by now, but Harry had the suspicious feeling, that he was resting his chin on Harry’s shoulder, but he didn’t want to look away from Remus and Sirius. "In a way, Regulus was very similar to him, I think,” Sirius said and took big sip of his Whiskey. "But we decided to have fun, didn’t we? And now were sitting here and sulking."

"Well, that’s true, but there isn’t much to talk about besides Voldemort and this house," Remus said and also took a sip.

"I think little Nymphadora might came to like you," Sirius said wriggling his eyebrows.

"What, Tonks?" Remus spluttered. "She is at least ten years younger than me!"

"And?" Sirius said, "I don’t think, that’s age is a problem," Sirius looked at his glass and then at Remus again, "Do you like her?" he asked casually, but Harry saw that his magic pulsed tensely.

"You don’t really think she has a crush on me?” Remus asked instead of answering.

"Well, why wouldn’t she?" Sirius replied in a strange voice and he finished his glass before he filled it again. Remus ogled him curiously.

"Does she know that...," the werewolf asked but he didn’t finish.

"What? That we were a thing back then?" Sirius snapped, "I certainly didn’t tell her. I don’t even think that anyone here knows. Dumbledore probably. The man seems to know everything and Minnie. Hell, we didn’t even tell James officially until seventh year."

This was something Harry really hadn’t expected. Harry had always thought that Remus had gotten together with Tonks this late, because Lupin thought that he was way to old for her and because he was a Werewolf. But it seemed that he maybe had other reasons too.

"Hmm," Remus hummed and looked at Sirius, who didn’t meet his eye and instead nursed his glass of whiskey. "I do like her, but not in this way," Remus said and watched Sirius closely.
"But you could," Sirius added. He licked over his lips, but didn't look up.

"Perhaps. Under different circumstances...", Remus replied.

"Ah," Sirius said, his eyes still fixed on his glass, but Harry could see how his magic had settled and lost a bit of it's tension.

"But what exactly did she say, to let you think this way?" Remus asked, honestly curiosity in his voice. He sipped on his drink.

"Well, she thinks the beard makes you look handsome," Sirius said.

"But Sirius...," Remus laughed, "that doesn’t mean that she has a crush on me."

"And the likes your laugh," Sirius added and Remus blushed, if only faintly. Sirius raised his head and stared at his friend when there was no answer. Suddenly he spoke up, "I think it looks kind of ridiculous. The moustache."

Lupin almost seemed offended, but Harry could tell that he was amused too. "You rather fancied Freddie Mercury if I remember correctly. And you thought he looked good."

Sirius finally met Remus gaze. His eyebrows were raised. "That was Freddy Mercury! And the thing, that you call beard-"

"Are you sure you want to finish that sentence?" Remus asked, but he smiled.

Sirius raised his hands in defeat. "Well if you insist on that choice of fashion, I won’t stop you," he said grinning.

"I think, I’ll need more alcohol," Remus said and he filled his almost empty glass. "Fashion tips from Sirius Black. I didn’t have to put up with this since our last year in Hogwarts." Now it was Sirius’ time to look offended.

"Put up with?!" Sirius said. "You should feel honoured to get to know my admirable sense of
"Sense of style?" Remus eyed Sirius’ outfit. "If that isn’t the same shirt you’ve worn for the past week, I am a Puffskein."

"Hey you don’t have room to talk, Mr. I-wear-a-sweater every day."

"At least I change my clothes," Remus said grinning, "And wash them," he added after a look at Sirius' shirt.

"Ever heard of a cleaning charm?" Sirius replied leaning forward. By doing so, he spilled most of his whiskey.

"And have you ever used one on this shirt?" Remus asked, "I doubt that." Sirius grabbed his wand and made a quick movement. A few stains on the shirt disappeared.

"I have now," he said smugly.

"You are unbelievable," Remus laughed. Sirius grinned and wanted to take a sip of his glass. As he noticed that half its contents had vanished, he turned to the bottle to refill it. But it was empty.

"Well, I think that was the sign for us to head upstairs," Remus said and with a swish of his wand, the plates and goblets floated towards the sink.

"We could always open another one," Sirius said, "And you didn’t even finish yours."

"Molly is going to wake us early enough tomorrow."

"Don’t remind me," Sirius groaned.

"Come on," Remus said smiling and he pulled Sirius up.

"Carry meee," Sirius said and let himself fall against Remus dramatically.
"Sure," Remus said, "Your crown - should I carry it too, or can you manage oh mighty king?"

"Well," Sirius said brushing imaginary dust from his clothes, "I may walk on my own tonight, but only because you asked so nicely, my handmaiden." Remus laughed when Sirius winked at him grinning. They put out the few burning candles. The dishes in the sink stopped to clean themselves and floated back into the shelves. Remus let the empty bottle vanish and then they left the room, leaving Harry alone with Death.
A lesson in souls

Death turned to Harry, after they had closed the door. The fire had burned down, but Harry could still see perfectly fine, despite the darkness.

So, Sirius and Remus had been together once. That was something, he hadn’t known. Harry wondered, if they had the same conversation, in his first life here.

And Tonks said, that he reminded her of Moody. Harry hadn’t thought that people would notice these things. After all, he barely did.

He had always been observant in his own way. Well, and oblivious to other things. The war had changed him greatly. It was probably true, that he acted like Moody in a way. Being on the run for a year, when they hunted horcruxes had left him paranoid. And the years after that, he was still trying to run from various so-called fans of his. It had turned into a second nature of him to scan his surroundings. And the walk of an Auror was drilled into Harry from the first day of his training. Not that the people who had lived through the years of Voldemort’s reign had needed much help. Always keeping one’s wand close, ready to deflect a curse was everyday life for them. But Harry had to admit, that he had probably started to waver a bit in his demeanour, after he had quit his job as an Auror. Coming here had let him fall into his old habit like it was the easiest thing in the world. Harry guessed that Death had also something to do with it. Harry turned to the being, who watched him in silence.

"I thought, you might want to know, how to use some of your powers," Death said after a while.

"I can do that myself?" Harry asked and remembered the feeling of moving through a solid wall.

"Yesss. It is probably easier if I guide you the first few times."

An Idea formed in Harry’s head. He needed to find a strategy for his trial and if he was practicing moving like this anyway, then this was the perfect opportunity. Death smirked as if he knew what Harry was planning. Harry grinned back and Death closed his fingers over Harry’s wrist.

“Come on. Try it."

Harry focused and tried to remember the feeling, when a slight pulse and a tugging in his chest reminded him of Death. He let himself being pulled into the dark embrace and then, he felt himself melting away and turning into shadows and darkness again.

He reappeared in a dark room three floors above the basement. It may have been a study once, or a personal library. Harry hadn’t really explored this room, until he had moved to Grimmauld Place. He here he had searched for a solution for the problem with Mrs. Blacks portrait. There were cobwebs on the ceiling, the walls and shelves. Dust was literally everywhere. The room would be cleaned out by the order, in the time between the summer holidays and Christmas, but this time had yet to come. Death let go of his arm, and Harry strode through the room. He spotted some books, that were long gone when he had lived inside Grimmauld Place. Books - if Mrs. Weasley had already known about them - would have been removed weeks ago, before curious children could have found them. Thank Merlin, Fred and George were probably too busy trying to listen in to the order,
to have given this room more attention. Death followed Harry silently, but unlike him, the being didn’t leave any footprints on the dusty ground.

Harry walked past the first two shelves. He knew exactly which book he was searching. If he was lucky, it was still at the same place. He stopped in front of the third shelf and looked at the books close to the floor. Harry brushed some dust off the old tomes. There it was. Printed in old silver letters on black leather was the title of the book. "Lords and Ladies of noble blood - the proper representation of the family"
Harry grinned at his luck, but the next one would be trickier.

There was another book he would need. Last time he had found it on a stack of books in a corner, but right now everything was still in the shelves. Harry had probably read all of the books in here, thanks to Mrs. Blacks screeching, and his boredom, but where was it? Suddenly Harry heard steps outside. He looked at the door, when he could hear a grumbling voice. "...is sneaking around...the old... only the master. Kreacher can hear- ...filthy twins, blood-traitors and bastards they- ...
Kreacher is going to look-“
Harry turned around when he heard Death’s hoarse voice.

"You are searching for this one," he said and pulled out a book from a shelf on the opposite side of the room.

"Let’s go," Harry whispered. He could hear the doorknob being turned and Harry tried to reach for the bond between him and Death. A familiar feeling connected them and all of a sudden, it was the easiest thing to disappear into the shadows.

Harry saw how Death was fading away too and then he found himself back on his bed, just next to the being, with two books on his lap. Harry looked at Death, who was grinning.

"You did well," the being said and the echo of a warm feeling, that wasn’t his own filled him.

Harry smiled and he leaned down, to hide the books under his bed. "I think I’ll try to sleep now," Harry said. Death looked at him with an expression he couldn’t quite read, but then the being turned into a snake again and Harry couldn’t wonder about it much longer. Death settled on his chest and Harry smiled. A fuzzy feeling at Death’s protectiveness showed up and warmed him, just where the bond was connecting him with the being settled on his chest. “Goodnight," Harry whispered petting the snake.

It turned out, that even if you didn’t need to sleep, being woken up was still as unpleasant as always.
When George had apparated into their room, Harry had almost cursed him. He had already pointed his wand at him before he realized who it was. After Georges announcement, that breakfast was ready, and that Mrs. Weasley wanted to start cleaning the drawing room afterwards, he vanished with a crack.

Ron groaned. "This is going to be hell. The drawing room is the biggest room in here! You won’t believe how filthy this house is. You might think you know it, but this dust isn’t even half of it," Ron said. Then he looked at Harry, as if he wasn’t quite sure if he could talk to him like that and if he was still angry.

"I know," Harry replied, and Ron seemed to be reassured.

"You can use the bathroom first, I’ll just stay here- “, Ron yawned. "Only five more minutes...“

Harry thought that it wouldn’t be such a bad idea to brush his teeth and headed towards the bathroom. While he was walking there, he remembered something.

The Drawing Room... Right now, Slytherins Locket should still be in there. Harry wasn’t sure what to do about the Horcrux. He hadn’t really thought about it. Should he just let it be? Harry locked the door and walked over to the sink. Even the tap looked like a snake, he noticed, while he brushed his teeth. In the mirror Harry spotted Death in his human form as he sat on the edge of the bathtub.

"What are you thinking about?“ he asked. It was odd that Death asked him something.

"Can’t you just read my mind?“ Harry answered after he had rinsed his mouth and put his toothbrush away.

"I can. But I prefer talking to you...“

"I’m thinking about the Horcrux. I don’t know what to do about it... Should I just grab it? But with everybody in the room, it will be hard to stay unnoticed," Harry said, but Death only grinned. The creature graciously extended his arm and opened its closed fist. And on Death’s palm was the locket. He twisted his hand and when his palm was facing downwards and the locked had vanished.
"You can summon it too."

"But isn’t it warded against every summoning? At least human summoning, after all, it’s a horcrux...,“ Harry asked.

"It should be even making it easier for you to locate it, because of the piece of soul inside", Death said, "And as I said, you are no longer only human. You are able to summon every object you desire, as long as you know where it’s located. The horcruxes do contain a piece of soul. As you are connected to this very soul, you should be able to locate it quite easily."

"The horcrux inside me...,“ Harry said baffled. So, he was able to summon every horcrux, whenever he wanted. It didn’t even matter under which protection or wards a certain object was. A thought formed in his mind, and Harry grinned. But he would focus on the horcruxes for now. Harry closed his eyes, because it was easier this way. He thought about the horcrux he wanted to retrieve.

"You have to know, that every soul wants to be whole...,“ Death whispered. And Harry searched in his mind for the bond between him and Voldemort. And in the depth of his mind Harry found it.

He had indeed shielded his mind from the influence of Voldemort’s soul piece, even without realizing it. As he opened his walls of occlumency, he felt it. Strange and familiar at the same time. In his previous life he had never been that aware of the piece of soul intertwined with his. Harry focused on it. There was a pull... more than one and then he found the one he was searching. When he opened his eyes, Harry knew exactly where the locket was. Harry focused his magic and then it appeared in his hand. Harry smirked, but then he frowned.

"Hey Death, what happened to the other Horcrux, to the one in the ring?"

"It has merged with its other part," Death extended his hand once again but didn’t open his fist this time. An unearthly glow emerged from it. Harry gasped at its beauty.

"...that is a soul?" Harry remembered stabbing the diary and how different it seemed now.

"A piece of it," The glow vanished, when Death opened his hand. It was gone. He looked at Harry, and then at the locket. "Nothing really vanishes, but not many can retrieve what is lost."
"Sometimes you are really cryptic," Harry said, and he rolled his eyes. Death only grinned, but Harry thought that he understood what Death wanted him to know. Harry looked at the locket and gathered a bit of his magic. The horcrux popped out of existence. Then Harry focused again, and it reappeared, as if nothing had happened to it.

He repeated it a few times, until he was sure, that he was able to do that in his sleep, and let it vanish for a last time.

Then, all of a sudden, Harry could hear Ron’s voice from the other side of the door. "You done yet?"

"Yeah, coming," Harry answered. While Ron was using the bathroom, Harry walked back into their room. Death followed without a sound. A plan formed in Harry’s mind. Three days, and he would have his hearing. Harry was sure of the outcome, but in all his years working as an Auror and drinking tea with the Malfoy’s Harry had come to the conclusion, that the Wizarding world indeed needed a change. Harry didn’t care about dark magic or light magic. But in the years after the war there had been more breaches of the Statute of Secrecy than even in the time Voldemort had sent his Death Eaters on raids. And it was dangerous. Of course, Muggles were not particularly evil, but Harry had lived long enough with Petunia and Vernon Dursley to know, that it was better not something that he wanted to find out.

Voldemort knew of the danger, but he wouldn’t spread anything but fear if he continued acting like he did. Tom Riddle on the other hand did have potential...

Harry would need to write some letters. Today was Saturday. His hearing was on Thursday. He just needed a few more days. Harry smirked. Being bored most of the time had the advantage of having much time. And thankfully Hermione wasn’t the only one who could read. Harry would need to consult the dry books from the Black library again, but it would be worth it. Harry absentmindedly filled Hedwig’s and Pigwidgeon’s bowl with water when Ron came back into the room.

"Come on, let’s head down, or mom is going to get us on her own."

They dressed themselves quickly, well Ron did. Harry had slept in his clothes. He put on a fresh shirt and then they headed down, Death once more in his snake form hiding half beneath his shirt. Ron eyed the black snake suspiciously.

"When did you even get it?" he asked.

"A few weeks ago," Harry said while petting Death. A normal snake would probably hate being
carried all the time, but Death seemed to enjoy it.

"What’s its name?" Ron asked curiously.

"Um," Harry almost stopped. Nobody had asked him that yet. He couldn’t really say that he’d called his snake ‘Death’, could he? "Grim," Harry said after a moment. It was probably fitting. Death being named after an omen of death. He smirked.

"You called your snake Grim?! Isn’t that a bit... over the top?" Ron asked, as they walked down the stairs.

"Probably," Harry replied, but he couldn’t care less.

"Is it venomous?" Ron asked curiously.

"Actually, I don’t know."

"You don’t know? And then you just brought it with you?!" Ron said shocked, "You kept it in a room with me! All night!"

"Well, I could always ask him, I suppose," Harry said, and he noticed that Mrs. Black had returned to her frame, but she didn’t meet his eye.

"Please," Ron said. Harry looked at Death.

"Well?"

"I can be if you want," Death said, bared his fangs and hissed.

"I take that as a yes," Ron said, and he paled.
"Well yeah, but he won’t do anything," Harry said. Walking down the stairs to the kitchen, they met Ginny.

"Won't do anything...," Ron muttered absentmindedly and shook his head.

"You better hurry up, mum is already stressing around," Ginny said as she walked past them to get upstairs. Ron opened the door to the kitchen with a creaking sound.

Sirius sat at the table, in front of a cup of coffee, but he seemed to be in a bad mood.

"Morning. Where’s Remus?" Harry asked. Sirius raised his head and Ron walked over to the shelf to get some plates.

"Order Business. Dumbledore called him in the middle of the night, something to do with the werewolves."

"He will never be able to keep them from following Voldemort," Harry said and sat down next to his Godfather.

"Why’s that?" Sirius asked Harry, mildly interested.

"Well, there are probably some packs and a few other people, who don’t want to be involved. They will stay neutral as long as they are able to. They won’t follow Voldemort and certainly not the ministry. But most of them will consider supporting the dark side. Because unlike the ministry, Voldemort can give them something they always wanted, and he hasn’t misused their trust yet."

"What, could they possibly want....," Ron said, and he sat down next to Harry shoving a plate with scrambled eggs and some toast over to him. Sirius stared at Ron.

"He promises them acceptance. A place among wizards and witches without hiding or being afraid of being hunted down. Of course, he doesn’t think to highly of werewolves, and they are not stupid. Not all of them are like Greyback. He and his pack are the only one actively supporting Voldemort on his raids, but there is the chance, that Voldemort keeps what he promises," Harry continued.
Ron’s eyes widened. "But there haven’t been any raids," he said.

"Yet," Harry replied smirking sharply. "Nobody really thinks Voldemort is back. This factor has a good and a bad side. On the one hand, nobody will be prepared if he decides to attack, but on the other hand, there haven’t been many deaths. He has power over his Death Eaters and their actions. But should it be common knowledge, that he has returned-"

"...he has no reason to keep them from killing everyone in his way." Sirius finished, a dark look on his face. In silence, they began to eat, and Sirius continued to drink his coffee.
After the breakfast the walked up the staircase to help the others cleaning the drawing room. Death had slipped away unnoticed and was now following Harry in his human form. It was still strange for Harry, that nobody was able to see Death, beside him.

When they entered the drawing room, Ginny, Fred, George, Hermione and Mrs. Weasley were already fighting against the Doxy’s in the green curtains.

"Ah good that you are here," Mrs. Weasley muffled voice said. Half her face was hidden behind a piece of cloth, "Grab a spray and if you got them, then throw them in one of the buckets." It took at least an hour until the crowd of Doxy’s grew lesser, and even then it was still hard work. But to Harry’s pleasure he didn’t feel exhausted at all. Death had been right. He looked over to the creature, who stood not far away from him. Harry grinned, when Death touched one of the black fairy-like creatures. It dropped to the floor, as if it had been hit with a spray, but Harry saw that there was no life force in the little body left. He smiled a sharp smile and looked at Harry. At least one of them had fun. Maybe it was thanks to Death, but they had cleaned out the curtains way faster than they had last time.

The time passed quickly and after an incident involving Munduns trying to hide stolen kettles in Grimmauld Place and a shouting Mrs. Weasley, Harry stood in front of a showcase and looked curiously at the artefacts inside. When he had lived in Grimmauld Place, these things had all been long gone. But Draco had been Curse breaker and Harry had sometimes watched him work on old heirlooms of various dark families. It had been very fascinating. Death said, he was no longer human, so most of the curses would probably not hurt him for long.

There were a few rusty blades, a curled in snake skin, claws, a few silver cases with interesting warding runes on them and a crystal bottle filled with blood. Vampire if Harry was correct.
In this moment the door opened and Kreacher came inside. He walked into the room, side eyeing Harry, but he mostly ignored him. The House-Elf shuffled through the room and murmured insults and indistinguishable words, „...smells like shit and is a criminal, just like the rest of the pack blood-traitors, werewolves and their bastards. Oh poor Kreacher, if his Mistress knew...“

"Hello Kreacher," Fred snapped with a loud voice and shut the door.

"Kreacher didn’t see the young Master," he said and bowed before Fred, "Filthy little Bastard of a Blood-Traitor that he is," he said while facing the carpet.

"Sorry, what?" George said, "I couldn’t hear the last part.“

"Kreacher didn’t say anything," the House-Elf said and bowed in front of George, "...and there is his twin, strange Freaks altogether," Kreacher murmured, "...and there is the mudblood, disrespectful she stands, oh when my poor Mistress only knew... and there is a new boy, Kreacher."

"Kreacher," Harry said, who had watched the whole scene. Kreacher’s eyes widened and Harry saw the slightest bond between House-elf and wizard connecting them.

"This is Harry, Kreacher," Hermione said.

"The mudblood talks to Kreacher, if Kreacher’s Mistress saw him in such company, oh what would she say-“

"Don’t call her mudblood!“ Ginny and Ron said at the same time and very angry.

"It’s okay," whispered Hermione, "He doesn’t know what he-“

"Don’t lie to you self Hermione, he knows exactly what he does," Fred said and watched Kreacher with a disgusted look.

„Is that true, is that Harry Potter?“, Kreacher murmured looking at Harry. „Kreacher can see the scar-“

"Kreacher," Harry said sharp.
"What can Kreacher do for the young Master?" Kreacher said begrudgingly and bowed down. The others looked at Harry strangely. Not one time Kreacher had asked them, if he could help them. Harry looked at the House-Elf. It was better to gain the loyalty of Kreacher. He was after all the one talking to Bellatrix and Narcissa, which had at least partly attributed to Sirius’ Death. And Harry had to admit, that he took a liking to his godfather.

"Kreacher, I will help you finish, what Regulus asked you to do," Harry said. The others gaped at him and Kreachers eyes widened comically. They didn’t understand what he was talking about, but they all saw how Kreacher suddenly threw himself on the floor and grabbed Harry’s legs and that the old Elf started to cry.

"Kreacher, couldn’t, Kreacher couldn’t, Kreacher tried but-," he said between his sobs. Then he started to bash his head against the floor.

"What- how?" Fred uttered.

"Harry make him stop!“ Hermione said, "This is barbaric."

Sirius entered the room looking at Harry strangely and somewhat pale. He didn’t doubt that his godfather had heard what he said. "Kreacher, stop that!“ Sirius snapped, but he was still fixated on Harry. Kreacher stood up and wiped his eyes, but he glared at Sirius.

"Kreacher," Harry said and the Elf looked at him, "I will keep it safe until then. I think tomorrow evening will be fine," Harry said, "But in exchange for this, I want, that you treat the people in this house with respect."

"Of course Master Harry," Kreacher said and bowed down ridiculously deep pressing his nose against the floor. Harry glanced at Sirius. He didn’t know if he would approve of what he would do next, but it was probably for the best.

"I want you to pick three items you want to keep from this room, but you won’t disturb us, if we throw out the rest. Then you can go."

"Thank you Master Harry," Kreacher said and he hurried through the room, seeming much livelier that a few minutes earlier. He walked back to the door, carrying two moving pictures, and signet ring. Kreacher stopped looking at Harry, as if he waited for approval.
"I might need the ring," Harry said after a second.

"Of course Master," Kreacher said and brought it to Harry, who pocketed it under curious glances. Kreacher seemed happy enough, that it wasn’t thrown away and wanted to go, but Harry interrupted him.

"You may take another thing, because you lost the ring.“ The House-Elf almost started to cry again and he bowed down deeply and then picked a golden pocket watch. Then he walked out of the door, happy with his small treasures.

"How the hell did you manage to do that?" Ron asked him.

"Turns out the Portraits actually talk to you, if you are a parselmouth," Harry lied smoothly. The others seemed to take it as an explanation, but Harry looked at Sirius and he knew, that his godfather didn’t believe him.

Under Mrs. Weasley’s attentive eyes, they cleaned out the shelves. Nonetheless, Fred and George managed to sneak some of the artefacts out of the garbage bag, and Harry made a list in his mind of things he might wanted to take a look at later. Harry noticed, that Sirius approached him, when everyone’s attention was directed at Mrs. Weasley. ".-PUT THIS BACK ON AN INSTANT, GEORGE!“

"You didn’t really talk to the portraits, did you?" Sirius asked watching the contents of the showcase with the knives and the snakeskin.

"No," Harry answered and then paused for a moment, watching Ginny shiver violently, when she walked past Death. Strangely everyone seemed to avoid going where Death stood, even if they couldn’t see him, "I will tell you tonight," he said, when he spotted Mrs. Weasley, who walked over to them, her lips still tense.

"Everything in this shelf will have to go to," she demanded and gestured at the wall, "The more we get out today, the less we’ll have to do tomorrow." Sirius tensed at her tone. Harry was once more reminded, that Sirius had left this house to escape a demanding mother and was now treated like he didn’t even had a say in this.

"Mrs. Weasley," Harry said, "Maybe Sirius wants to keep what’s inside that showcase. You should probably ask him first." Harry of course knew, that Sirius had been happy to leave all of this
behind, but Mrs. Weasley’s tone had ignited a spark of anger within him and Harry had only added fuel.

"Yes Molly, I actually just thought about keeping this... bottle," Sirius said coldly, pointing at the first thing that came into his view.

"But, that looks like blood...," Mrs. Weasley said her eyes widening, "You really want to keep that?“ Even Sirius didn’t know what to answer, but Harry interrupted them.

"It’s worth at least forty galleons," Harry said truthfully. Mrs. Weasley stared at him and so did Sirius.

"Forty Galleons...," Mrs. Weasley uttered. Harry felt almost sorry for her. The Weasley’s never had much money but they had always been nice. But since Harry had met Death, his empathy wasn’t really a thing he could be proud of. It was a miracle, that he even defended Sirius. But Harry could understand him. He wouldn’t want to live in the house of the Dursley’s either. Not able to leave and only Dudley’s countless photos as constant reminder, that he had no place there.

"Of course. Sirius just told me, that the dark almost blackish tendency of the liquid and the fact, that it’s still red, indicate, that this is the blood of a Vampire. Depending on the amount on the market right now, it is worth from 40 to 100 galleons,” Harry ended. Sirius stared at the blood and seemed surprised, but he quickly lost the expression and looked at Harry.

"As I just wanted to tell you, before we got interrupted-," he stared at Mrs. Weasley, who blushed, "Vampire hunts are illegal nowadays, which doesn’t keep people from trying though, but that should make the blood very rare at the moment. Dung could probably sell it, but I don’t think, we would get the full price for it, if we let him do the selling.“ Harry hummed in agreement.

"What about the other stuff?" Mrs. Weasley asked snappish.

"It’s after all family heirloom of centuries. Maybe I should ask Andromeda if she wants some things. What do you think Harry?“ Harry nodded and hid a smirk.

"Well, do you mind the tapestry on the other side then?“ Mrs. Weasley said.

"Oh no. You can rip it down if you want," Sirius said and Mrs. Weasley turned around, "I would be surprised, if it got off the wall," Sirius muttered. They turned around to watch Mrs. Weasley’s fruitless attempts to get rid of the old family tree, but nothing could really harm it. The following hours passed quickly as they cleaned the room. Death had reappeared as a snake after some time
and Harry was pretty sure, that he was napping upon his shoulders.

They had dinner, and on insistence of Mrs. Weasley they went to bed immediately. The others didn’t complain. They were all tired. The day had been exhausting, but Harry didn’t feel in need of a rest at all.

Sirius shot him some glances, but there was no chance at all to speak without raising suspicion.

Harry still heard Mrs. Weasley’s demanding voice in his head, when he was laying in his bed, waiting for Ron to fall asleep.

Eventually Ron’s breathing evened out. But Mrs. Weasley might still be downstairs. Harry could always catch Sirius in his room. It was better to wait some more time, but there was something he could do.

Harry stood up and flinched when the floor beneath his bare feet creaked loudly. He shot a glance at Ron, but he was still asleep. Harry walked over to his suitcase and pulled out a quill and some parchment and began to write, Death looming over his shoulder. The letter was short, barely more than a few sentences, but this was the first significant part of his plan.

Hedwig silently flew on his shoulder, when he called her. "Good girl," Harry said smiling and petted her moonlit wings, "Bring that to Gringotts, will you?" Harry opened the window and with an affectionate nip of her beak she took off. "Well," Harry said as he closed the window and around to face Death, "Now we wait."

Half an hour later, Mrs. Weasley was still downstairs and Harry was laying in his bed once more.

"What are you going to tell him, Master?" Death asked in his hoarse voice. Harry hadn’t found the will to complain, when he had settled on his stomach for a second time.

Harry shrugged and looked at Death’s face. He really didn’t know at the moment. "Probably the truth."

"Would you mind if I told him about you?" Harry asked, just to be sure. Death grinned widely.

Harry had the feeling, that Death was more than happy to be able to scare somebody for once.

"No, I don’t mind..." Death said. All of a sudden, he tilted his head, as if to hint at something.

Harry was confused.

"Wha...," but Harry stopped. The faint steps of somebody walking up the stairs could be heard. "Is this Mrs. Weasley?"

"Yesss," Death said lurking over him, "You know her magic, her soul. Feel it."

He would need to access his powers as the Master of Death to do so. Harry tried to reach for the bond between him and Death and found it. A warm feeling in his chest, feeding his magic. And then something changed. Harry was aware of every single being in and around the house. Their life was pulsing like candles in a dark room. No way he could miss them. Of course there was Ron in his bed and Pigwidgeon on the Wardrobe, but they were in his room.

Harry couldn’t exactly see past it, he somehow just knew things. Kreacher was walking through the attic, Mrs. Weasley was still coming up the stairs, and Sirius was downstairs in the Kitchen. The longer Harry felt for them, the more he saw. The people who were sleeping felt different. Their life force was calmer, their breath steadier. Harry even noticed the faint glow of the spiders, which occupied each room. There were some rats in the attic and a few Doxy’s seemed to have survived, the cleaning. Harry could even sense the people who lived in the house next to them and some moths fluttering around the street lamps outside. But Harry didn’t only feel the living, he also knew exactly where everything in the building was, that wasn’t a living being. There was the magic thrumming in the walls, the portraits, even the magical artefacts, the dishes in the shelves in the cellar. Harry was overwhelmed by this. He had experienced something similar, when Death had shown him their bond, but this had only been a tiny glimpse of what he was experiencing right now. Fascinated Harry watched the strands of magic so deeply connected to their soul and life force. A comforting warmth connecting them and every particle of their surroundings.

Harry gasped when he caught a glimpse of his own hand.

Nothing.

There was not the energy, that every other human in this house was surrounded by. There was no sign of life at all. Even the walls had more life in them, than the thing that was Harry. His eyes were fixated on his dead flesh. ‘That’s what Death had meant with all of this. He was no longer only human. Fuck that. Somebody, who was partly human should have at least some kind of life in him!’, Harry thought. His hand was shaking. ‘He was dead. Had he been dead since the first time Voldemort had killed him? Or the second time...’

When he had been an Auror, he had almost been hit by a killing curse. Ron swore, that it looked like it had at least grazed Harry...but that couldn’t be. At least that’s what he had thought back then. Hysterical laughter rang in his ears. ‘The killing curse wasn’t able to harm him. Nothing was. Of course - Because he was already dead!’ Harry sucked in raspy breaths, but no air was reaching his lungs, He panted heavily but he couldn’t breathe. ‘He was dead, a living corpse. What had Death done to him? He shouldn’t even be here... Maybe he had never left the white place that looked like Kings Cross, and he was still lying in the forbidden forest, with Voldemort looming over him.’

Harry’s mouth was opening and closing like a fish on dry land, trying to breathe.

A gentle touch on his cheek, pulled him back into reality. Two hands cupped his face and Harry blinked away a few tears, he hadn’t noticed were there. The laughter had stopped a while ago and Harry, realized, that he must’ve been the one to do so. His eyes focused and he looked upon Death.

If Harry had thought, that he was dead, then Death was the same. A dark hole absorbing the life around them. Somehow the panic Harry had felt mere seconds ago bled away, as if it had never
been there. Harry could feel the bond connecting them. Death wasn’t grinning or smiling like so often, instead he frowned and looked at Harry with concern. How had Harry been able to think that this was a bad thing? Death had given him so much more than anyone had ever been able too, only thanks to him, Harry had a second chance to live. He didn’t think as he extended his hand, that had frightened him this much only a moment ago and mirrored Deaths motion. He drew his fingers over Deaths white skin, the cheekbones and the face, that was more perfect and beautiful than Harry’s could ever be, and so inhuman and different as it was similar to Harry’s. Death watched Harry curiously but after a short time, he closed his eyes and Harry smiled as he heard a familiar rumbled coming from Deaths throat. He was purring. His hands now rested on Harry’s shoulders and sternum. Deaths skin wasn’t warm, like Harry’s, more like the temperature of the room. Harry carded his fingers through Deaths silken hair, which was slightly longer than his own and even darker, if that was possible, but exactly as wild a his own. Slowly Harry was able to breath again. Only now noticing what he was doing Harry stopped and a faint blush crept up his neck.

"Harryyy...," Death said and opened his eyes, when Harry let his hand fall from his head. Harry had the impression, that Death didn’t look exactly like him anymore. Of course they were still very similar, but through the last days, Death appeared taller and his fingers were longer and he was way paler than Harry. It was as if he changed the way he was looking almost unconsciously to resemble something that was more unique and not a copy of something else.

"Thank you," Harry whispered, "I should have said that a long time ago."

Death smiled.
They waited in silence, after Mrs. Weasley had passed their door and then another five minutes, to be sure. Harry looked at the door and then at Death. This had to be long enough. He disappeared into the shadows. Harry felt like he was moving through water for a moment and then he reappeared in the Kitchen. Harry materialized on one of the chairs at the long table opposite to Sirius. Over a bottle of Whisky, he looked at his Godfather. Sirius was staring at a glass in his hands. He didn’t look well. The flickering light from the fireplace let his eyes appear even deeper in their sockets, strands of his fell in his face and a strange expression had found its way in his face. Harry could see the similarities between him and Bellatrix. She had the same dark hair and just like Sirius, she possessed the high cheekbones every Black seemed to inherit. ‘Even Malfoy the blond bastard,’ Harry thought and he grinned. ‘Merlin, he wasn’t missing the brat, was he?’ Harry turned his head, when he spotted a sleek black snake slithering up the chair next to him. Harry didn’t have the time to do anything else because in this moment Sirius flinched heavily and bumped into the table with his knee. In the last second Harry was able to grab the bottle which wobbled dangerously in its place.

"Merlin’s balls, Harry!“ Sirius pushed the hair out of his face. He seemed pretty calm, but most of the whisky from his glass was now forming a puddle on the table, "How did you get down here?“

Harry smirked. "You know, it’s not good to drink on your own,” he said and pulled the bottle towards him.

"Are you going to scold me now too?“ his godfather asked and the scent of alcohol wafted over to Harry.

"No, it’s a more of a proposal, really.” Harry replied. He licked his lips and focused on the shelf not far from him. He grinned as he managed to let a glass appear in his hand. Sirius raised an eyebrow.

"You know, it’s also not good to drink, if you are underage and I’m not even asking how you did that thing with the glass. But please be my guest,” Sirius said, and he made a wide gesture with his hand, "You are lucky, that I don’t care too much about rules right now. This is a bourbon. It’s been rotting in this house for years. I doubt you want more after the first sip anyways.“ Sirius took the
bottle out of Harry’s hand and poured some of the golden liquid in Harry’s glass and then refilled his own.

Harry took a sip and only after the familiar burn of the alcohol gliding down his throat had passed he began to talk. "I promised you I would tell you everything you want to know, but their are some conditions. There are things you can’t tell anyone else and I might ask for a favour."

"You know many things, don’t you? More than everybody thinks you do," Sirius said and he stared at Harry. There was not a trace of the drunkenness from a few seconds ago. Harry nodded.

"I think it’s better, if what I am telling you now doesn’t reach Dumbledore’s ears," Harry said. Sirius raised his eyebrows and leaned forward.

"You didn’t do something illegal, did you?“ Sirius said with a smirk.

"What do you think of Voldemort?“ Harry asked him instead. Sirius sat back in his chair, seemingly confused.

"Isn’t it obvious?“ Sirius said frowning. "He is responsible for so many Deaths. He killed your parents...“

"Don’t tell me you never killed somebody," Harry retorted. He felt Death slithering over his thigh. Sirius’ knuckles grew white, as he gripped his glass tighter.

"I have," he said, but quickly continued, "But you have to understand Harry. These were different times. It was war. The people were afraid. Both sides used curses, that were able to do more than simply capture the enemy. But the things Voldemort did, or his followers... They were feared almost as much as he was. The Longbottom boy, he is in your year in Hogwarts?“ Harry nodded.

"I know the story. His parents were tortured to insanity," Harry said.

"Then you know what they were capable of. What they are still capable of," Sirius replied.

"I won’t justify their doings. But you have to admit, that the Light side wasn’t much better." Sirius opened his mouth and shut it again.
"Dumbledore was never a friend of the usage of dark curses," Sirius said eventually.

"That doesn’t mean, that members of the Order didn’t use them and I am not even talking about the Aurors. This is not about light or dark magic. By all means I don’t care. A simple diffindo cast with enough force can cut through skin like any dark curse could. War is war, and both sides weren’t saints in this. “ Sirius looked at Harry as if he was seeing him in an entirely different light. Harry saw, how Sirius hand wandered to his wand.

"Merlin Sirius, I am not possessed or something," Harry said and laughed.

"Well, you have to admit, someone who is possessed would say the same thing," Sirius said and he smiled dryly. Harry stopped in his laughter and looked at his Godfather.

"Sirius, I am not the same boy I have been a few month ago, and not only because Cedric died in front of me. “ Harry remembered the night vividly, thanks to his merging with his younger self.

"I kinda thought of it," Sirius said smiling, but he was still gripping his wand tightly. Harry thought about the best way to explain what he was now going to tell Sirius. Harry hoped, that this would not end badly. Too much and Sirius would probably try to pull him in front of Dumbledore, even if his godfather wasn’t fond of the headmaster right now.

Harry opened his mouth but didn’t really know how to start. "I’ve gained possession of a few artefacts."

"What artefacts?" Sirius asked suspiciously with a tinge of worry in his voice, "You don’t feel different because of what happened with the wall, do you?"

"Yeah, no. It’s not because of that," Harry hoped that the next thing what he was trying to do would work. Nothing is ever really lost... Death's words echoed through his mind. He closed his eyes and when he opened them, they laid in front of him. Sirius gaped.

"This is James invisibility cloak," Sirius said and he let his fingers run over it.

"Yeah," Harry said, "It’s one of three."
"...three," Sirius looked up and let his hand fall from the cloak. Only now he seemed to notice the other two things. "This is a wand... but it’s not your wand ...I know it from somewhere." Harry nodded and pointed at the stone.

"And that is the last one."

"A stone?" Sirius said and picked it up to inspect it further, "A gemstone, and this is... Grindelwald’s symbol." Sirius stared at Harry, the whisky stood forgotten on the table.

"It has more than this meaning. It’s also the Peverell coat of arms. I’m distantly related to them through the Potter line. The cloak was originally owned by Ignotus Peverell."

"Ignotus Peverell? But that should be impossible. He lived centuries ago, the cloak should’ve stopped working after all these years...", Sirius muttered, then his eyes widened, "This wand, I remember it now. You didn’t steal him from Dumbledore, did you? Is that the reason I shouldn’t tell him about this?" Sirius stared at Harry, "As much as I am impressed if you managed to steal it, are you aware of what you have done, if that is Dumbledore’s?!" Sirius said with a serious expression. Harry smirked.

"This isn’t Dumbledore’s original wand. He won it, when he defeated Grindelwald." Harry had to admit, that it was more fun to watch Sirius put things together than telling him outright, what he wanted him to know.

"Why are you telling me all this?" Sirius asked.

"The stone once belonged to Cadmus Peverell. The wand was owned by Antioch Peverell, the oldest of the three brothers. It is the most known of the Hallows." Harry grinned, when he saw how realization hit Sirius.

"No...," Sirius said, looking from Harry to the three Hallows and back, "It’s just a children's story..."

"It isn’t," Harry said, "It’s true." He took the stone from Sirius hand and instantly it melted back into his skin. The same thing happened, when he touched the wand and the cloak.

"But... how? It’s not like I don’t want to believe you, but..."
"but what?" a hoarse voice interjected and Harry saw in the corner of his eye how a very human Death appeared behind him. This time not invisible, judging by the reaction of his Godfather. Sirius jumped up and threw his chair over in the process. He was frozen where he stood. His shaking hand was pointing his wand at Death. Silent terror was written on his face.

Harry turned around to face the being. Death was smirking a sharp smile, his eyes this time fixated on Sirius. Harry turned back to his godfather.

Sirius was now stumbling backwards. His wand slipped from his hand. With a clattering sound it hit the ground. Sirius' face was drained of all blood. His eyes had widened and they were showing more white than anything else...but his pupils were like black holes as he stared at something that - to him - had to be pure horror. He opened his mouth in a silent scream.

Harry watched curiously as Sirius was sinking to his knees, his eyes still fixated on Death. Confused Harry turned around to look at Death. The being looked like he always did. Okay, maybe he had made himself taller again, and he smiled his predatory smile... but that still didn’t explain why Sirius was now rocking back and forth, silently mouthing words that made no sense.

Harry watched him, feeling both disturbed and fascinated. The heavy silence was only interrupted by Sirius’ quiet whispers. After two minutes of Harry observing his godfather, he remembered that it was probably not a good idea to leave Sirius in this state. His current fondness of Sirius overpowered his curiosity and - even if he wasn’t ready to admit it to himself yet - a certain thrill at the fear permeating the air.

"Death," Harry asked, and the being turned to look at him. Sirius’ head snapped up and his eyes wandered searching through the air. Harry realized, that his Godfather was no longer able to see the creature. "What happened to him?"

Death still smirked, and the feeling of deep predatory satisfaction pulsed through the bond. Even Harry grinned. He couldn’t deny that he didn’t understand it - that he wasn't at least partly responsible for the feeling in their bond.

"I showed him what I really am, or what you may call a glimpse of it. Ordinary people can’t comprehend Death, in this pure form. Not when they are alive. He won’t even remember what he saw. He isn’t able too. It will vanish like a nightmare. He will remember that he was terrified, but not why."

Maybe Death had not lied, when he said, that he was lonely when Harry asked after his reasons behind creating a Master of Death. “But I have seen you too. I mean I see you all the time and don’t fall to the ground screaming for help. And when you appear as a snake, the others are also able to see you," Harry said.

"I could also choose to appear in my human form and be visible for the others."

"So, you are hiding your true self all the time that I don’t end like Sirius over there?" Harry asked smirking and gestured in the direction of his godfather.

"No, i don’t. You are an exception. You have always been the exception. Even when your soul was ready to go on, you didn’t shy away. Most souls are afraid of me, even after they have died, but not you."
"But I’m not really dead anymore, and you look still the same. Kinda…"

"No, you aren’t. But you don’t remember what I looked like. What I really looked like, when you encountered me for the first time and you don’t try to look past my surface form… You are my Master. You could look further if you wanted too." Uncertainty flowed through the bond, and the echo of what was …excitement?

Sirius blinked and stood up on shaking legs. "What the- What the Hell just happened?" Harry turned to his godfather, who picked up his wand and gripped it tightly.

"It’s okay. He’s gone," Harry lied and he stopped grinning even if he was still amused.

"He?!” Sirius said, "That was a he? This thing- What… I don’t-," Sirius gripped the back of his chair.

“Yeah well, I don’t think that he’s a he exactly…," Harry said. Death stepped closer.

“What- What did I just see?” Sirius asked, still pale and slightly shaking.

“You caught a glimpse of Death,” Harry stated.

"Death…," his Godfather uttered. Harry pushed the bottle over to Sirius.

“You could use a drink now, I think."

Chapter End Notes

I choose to upload 2 chapters today and this was the second one. I’m sorry, uploading this was kind of a dick-move because there are two parts to it but I hope you liked it anyways. Leave a comment or kudo to let me know and thanks for reading. <3
Twenty minutes and several drinks later, Sirius hands were still clasped tightly around his glass. “Death, you are the Master of Death?!” he asked Harry for the third time now.

“Yes,” Harry said slightly annoyed, “and you asked that already.” Sirius shook his head.

“I know, I know,” he said while Harry sipped on his Whiskey, ”It is just a lot to take in,” Sirius paused for a moment. “I always thought Death was something, that was there, a part of the whole life cicle... and not a conscious being or whatever this was,” Sirius took a sip, “…and it just leaves you alone, if you it want to?”, he added after a moment.

“I think he would, if I asked him to,” Harry replied and he bit his lip as he looked at Death, ”But I don’t think that I want that.” Death leaned even closer, if that was possible and Harry’s mouth twitched with amusement, when he heard the slightest rumble coming from Death, but it stopped abruptly, as if he didn’t want Harry to hear it.

"That thing-," Sirius started but Harry interrupted him.

"You know the black snake, I brought with me...." As if on cue, Death materialized on his shoulder and slithered down his arm. Sirius leaned back in his chair.

"This is Death…?"

"Yup, this is Death," Harry stated.

"But-," Sirius looked from Death to Harry, "It is so small…” Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Okay, okay. I’m not saying anything.” Sirius continued to stare at the snake. He seemed to be relatively calm now.

“See... he doesn’t remember,” Death hissed. Harry smirked.

"You didn’t call him small a few minutes ago," Harry said and Sirius paled.

"And because of this, you know stuff," Sirius said to change the topic.

"Yeah, basically," Harry nodded. ‘It was probably better, not to mention his age or some of the more gruesome things of their connection.’

“What happened?” Sirius asked.

“I already had the cloak and the other two hallows just appeared.”

“They just appeared? Don’t you think, that this is a bit suspicious?”

“Yeah, but I trust him.”

“Who, Death?” Sirius laughed.

“Yeah, Death,” Harry replied, petting the black snake, who stared at Sirius.

“What-," he swallowed once, “what do you know?”
“It’s sometimes like I get glimpses, like memories, and I- I remember you dying at the end of this summer,” Harry said hesitantly, but inwardly he was grinning. ‘That was very close to the truth. ‘At least at this point in time, he hadn’t had his visions from Voldemort yet or else this wouldn’t go this smoothly. Otherwise he would have to convince Sirius, that this wasn’t Voldemort’s doing.’

“This summer…,” Sirius murmured and looked up a pained expression on his face. He didn’t have to ask.

"The ministry. The Death eaters wanted to get the prophecy. I was stupid, I followed them there. Of course, I didn’t know that it was a trap. The order came, and you thought it was a good idea to follow. To be fair, I think it was the most fun you had all this year. You have been locked up in here for months. Bellatrix hit you with a blasting hex and you fell through the veil in the Department of mysteries.” ‘It was probably better to not mention that he tried to hit her with a Crucio for it, even if it didn’t quite work the way he intended, back then. At least not as long as he wasn’t sure how Sirius would react’ “In the end even Voldemort showed up. He and Dumbledore duelled in the middle of the Atrium,” Harry grinned, “Fudge couldn’t really deny that he was back much longer, could he?”

Sirius stayed silent for some time. They sipped on their drinks and Harry waited for him, to comprehend the news. “And then, what about Remus?” Sirius asked.

“He was devastated. But I didn’t see much of him. Dumbledore shipped me off to the Dursley’s again, and that was it,” Harry said.

“And what are you going to do now? This whole thing with being the Master of Death is a little strange,” Sirius said.

“Well on the other hand, I know some more things about Voldemort…,” Harry replied.

“Do you know something, that could help us to win?” Sirius said hopefully.

"Yeah. But after all this, I decided, that I don’t really care what Voldemort is doing, as long as he doesn’t bother me.” ‘And wouldn’t that be a miracle,’ Harry thought, “But now I’m thinking that there might be another way."

"What would that be?“ Sirius asked, while eyeing him suspiciously.

"I’m not a fan of Voldemort’s pureblood bigotry, but the wizarding world could use some changes...“

"Harry, how-,” Sirius said shocked and almost jumped up, but when Death hissed threateningly he sat back down. "Harry, this is Voldemort we are talking about!"

"Why do you think so many people are following him?" Harry asked and Sirius stopped in his rant, confused by the sudden change of topic.

"Bigotry, cowardice, fear...“ Sirius said, a cold expression in his eyes.

"Maybe now, but it was more than that. When he first started to gather followers, do you think he was like that? He has lost his sanity. And by what he has done, it’s really no wonder."

"What are you talking about?" Sirius asked.

"If I am going to tell you this, you have to swear an unbreakable vow," Harry said, "You can’t tell anyone.” Sirius looked hesitant. "Your brother found it out on his own. You can try too if you
want, but it is difficult, if you don’t have the right clues," Harry added, "I won’t force you." This last sentence seemed to convince Sirius.

"Okay,“ Sirius said, "I’ll do it. But who is going to be our witness?“ Harry stopped. He hadn’t thought about that. He exchanged a look with Death.

"Can you do it?“

"Of course,“ Death said. Harry looked at Sirius.

"A vow sealed by Death. Now we have our witness." Sirius took a deep breath, as he looked at the black snake slithering over Harry’s skin. But Sirius had never been one to back out of something. He stood up and extended his arm. Harry gripped his hand. "Well then, let’s start," he said grinning.

"Sirius Black; do you swear to you keep what I tell you now a secret?“

"I swear," Sirius said. His eyes widened when Death slithered down Harry’s arm and curled around their joined hands, but he didn’t pull back.

"Do you swear, to not tell a soul about that, other than gaining my permission first.‘“

"I swear." Death wound tighter around their joined hands and snaked even further around their wrists. The skin that was touched by the black scales burned coldly.

"Will you promise, to not use this knowledge in a way that goes against my wishes.“

"I swear.‘“

"Then Sirius Black, be bound by this oath," Harry finished.

"So mote it be," Sirius said. The inside of Harry’s arm started to burn. Sirius hissed, when Death turned into dark smoke. Harry sighed, when pleasant feeling washed over him. Sirius on the other hand shivered violently and then clutched his arm. Death reappeared behind Harry, sitting on the back of his chair.

“He made a deal with the Master of Death. As long as he is bound to his oath, he is marked by you”

Harry stared at Sirius arm. It couldn’t be... but he could sense it. He gripped Sirius wrist and pulled it towards him rather quickly. He knew where to look.

“Hey, wha-,” Sirius started to protest, but he stopped, when Harry stared at his arm.

‘No...’ Harry snorted amused. The irony of the situation was unmistakable. Just below the place, where Lord Voldemort would brand a follower with the dark mark, something had appeared on Sirius’ skin. A black triangle, not bigger than a bottle cap. Enclosing a circle and a line. The symbol of the deadly Hallows.

“Well, this is going to be harder to hide from Dumbledore than I thought,” Harry said. He let go of Sirius’ arm, but to Harry’s surprise, the Symbol slowly disappeared. The dark ink bled into the surrounding skin, leaving nothing behind.

Sirius looked as surprised, as Harry felt. Then rubbed his arm and sat down again. Harry glanced at Death, but decided that he didn’t care, that the being was sitting there. He sunk back onto his chair,
feeling Death’s legs press against his back. It was strange, how he was both invisible and corporal at the same time. "Your mark holds the power of Death. Of me...,“ Death rasped, "You could easily force him to obey you...“ The corners of Harry’s mouth twitched amused. Harry’s skin tingled pleasantly, when Death started to comb through his hair again.

"Now, what do you know about my brother?“ Sirius asked. Harry realized, that his godfather had been staring at him for some time.

"Regulus... yes.‘” Harry looked down at the golden liquid inside his glass, slightly embarrassed, that he had been this distracted. He sensed Death’s amusement more than he saw it. ‘That bastard,’ he thought, but it was more fond than anything else. When he raised his head, he was met with a determined gaze. "Okay. I think it started some time after he joined the Death eaters. Regulus was the descendant of a highly respected pureblood family and loyal. Despite being so young, Regulus was a trusted member in Voldemort’s ranks. There came a time, when Voldemort needed a servant for an important task and of course he volunteered...“

"Regulus...,“ Sirius mumbled.

"Yeah, but I’m not talking about a human servant. Regulus did what he was told. He ordered Kreacher to go with Voldemort, should the dark Lord require his services and to obey him. After the finished task, he should return.‘“

"And Kreacher knew all-,“ Sirius started enraged, but Harry interrupted him.

"Kreacher only did was he was told. He went and returned, just like his Master had ordered him. You have to know, that by this time Regulus was already doubting his choices. The Death eaters were different than he thought, Voldemort was cruel-“

Sirius snorted.

Harry smirked. "Voldemort always prided himself on the knowledge, that he had gone further with magic, than any wizard or witch ever did, and it’s true. When Voldemort was young, he was brilliant. Highly intelligent and cunning. Fascinated by magic. He knew how to use his charm. Anyone who knew him, thought that he would be the next minister of magic. He had the looks, was ambitions and maybe a bit of a psychopath-“

"A bit?“ Sirius asked but he didn’t seem to expect an answer.

"-and he feared dying more than anything else,“ Harry continue, "He is a master of the Dark arts, there are ways to prevent that.‘“ Sirius eyes darkened. "I think you already know, what I’m hinting at,“ Harry said slowly. "Come on. You may deny it, but you were raised in a dark family. If Regulus knew it, than you do too.“

"He didn’t make a horcrux, did he?“ his Godfather asked.

"Cheater...“ , Death said next to his ear and Harry smiled. Turning to Sirius again, he nodded.

"And just like you, Regulus knew, or at least suspected something, but Voldemort would never outright tell anyone his secrets. He may be a bit crazy, but he isn’t stupid.‘“

"And my brother was killed for his knowledge,” Sirius said grimly.

"Not quite. Kreacher was in a miserable state when he returned. And when Regulus asked him what happened, Kreacher told him a story about a hidden cave, a lake full of bodies and a basin made of stone. It was filled with a potion, that is impenetrable, to protect something that lies at the
bottom of it. A magical barrier, that can only be lifted if you drink the potion. I even think he
invented it himself. Voldemort ordered Kreacher to drink it, to be able to put something inside. A
locket to be exact,” Harry said and with a twist of his hand, the Horcrux appeared in his palm.
Harry felt the piece of soul shine through the metal. It pulsed wantonly, feeling another part so
close to itself. Sirius’ eyes widened as he recognized it.

“This was in the drawing room, wasn’t it?”

Harry nodded. “I took it, before someone could throw it away. But back to the story. Voldemort
left Kreacher there to die. There are enough Inferi in the lake and the whole place is warded against
apperating. But elven-magic is different than ours. Regulus had ordered Kreacher to come back, so
he did it. Regulus asked Kreacher to show him the cave. Then he drank the potion and put a copy
of the locket in the place of the original. He didn’t expect to survive. He ordered Kreacher to
destroy the locket, because he couldn’t do it. The potion does things to you, you see. But Kreacher
doesn’t know what that is. Elven-magic is light, it can’t destroy a Horcrux,” Harry said, watching
the emeralds on the locket shine in the dim light.

Sirius eyes shimmered wet, but he didn’t cry. “He died a hero... he died, trying to defeat
Voldemort. Reggie was always smart. He was eighteen when he died, you know?” Sirius laughed a
short laugh. “Yeah... yeah. You already do, huh?” Sirius wiped with his hand over his face, and
sniffed. His voice had lost the shaky undertone. “So Voldemort can’t die, as long as this thing, this
Horcrux is still there, right? We just have to destroy it, and he is mortal again.”

“Well, yeah. Not really....,” Harry replied, "This isn’t his only horcrux“

"He made more than one?! Is he crazy?“

Harry grinned. "I thought we had established that already. But yes. He made more than one."

"How many?“ Sirius asked, a dark look on his face.

Harry leaned forward, and he had the faint impression that he was looking like Death, when he
grinned his predatory grin. "Seven”

Sirius wasn’t able to answer at first. "Seven,” he uttered.

"It’s impressive, isn’t it?“ Harry said honestly, because it truly was, "That he managed to do it and
still lives."

"Seven...,“ Sirius repeated slumping into his seat. Then a spark of hope appeared in his eyes, "They
could be anywhere...“

“Yeah,” Harry said, inwardly grinning.

Sirius looked at him. “Harry, I know that you let me swear to not tell anyone about this and I
won’t. I’m not really fond of the idea, but you have to tell Dumbledore.”

“Do I?” Harry said with a raised eyebrow, but Sirius didn’t seem to notice.

"He could inform the order, we could finally do something!” Sirius said full of zest for action.

"Yeahh...,“ Harry shifted in his chair, "I don’t think so...“

"I understand if you don’t want to do it,” Sirius said, “Then I will tell him that I found old notes of
Regulus. We don’t have to mention that thing with Death.”
"You only have to ask, and he whimpers on the ground again," Death said, leaning forward and staring at Sirius like a hunter at his prey. The other man shivered despite not being able to see him.

"Oh, no. It’s not that," Harry replied amused, but he ignored Death’s statement for now.

"But then why?" Sirius asked confused.

"There are a few reasons." Harry leaned back in his chair and took a sip of his drink. “First of all, Dumbledore already knows that Voldemort made a horcrux, or at least suspects it.”

“He knows about it?” Sirius said and his magic swirled wildly, “And he didn’t tell us?”

“I think that he believes, this information would spread panic. Right now everyone still believes in the illusion, that Voldemort can easily be killed. Okay, maybe not easily, but at least, that he won’t come back if someone kills him. Most of the time, Dumbledore knows more than he lets on. No one beside him, you, me and Voldemort himself know about this. Everything we’ve talked about since your vow until now falls under your oath.”

Sirius nodded, but he didn’t say anything. Harry sipped on his drink. "This is a good whisky," he said, to breach the silence. Sirius hummed in agreement and lifted his glass to take a sip. "Actually, no," Harry said after two more sips, "That was a lie. Why do people buy this stuff? I can’t taste the difference between this and a cheap one."

Sirius choked on his whisky. He coughed, but then his coughing turned into laughter. Harry smirked. "I would have paid the person, that said this to my father," Sirius said.

"Um, actually there was another thing, I wanted to ask you. It’s because of my trial," Harry said, "I need a way to defend myself, and I could use your help.

"Sure," Sirius said, "I’ll help where I can." Then he looked at Harry with concern. “Are you alright? I mean it must’ve been much to get used to this summer, and now there’s your trial...”

“Yeah, I’m okay. Being the master of Death also comes with some advantages,” Harry said and he smiled at Sirius. With a thought, the books, he got from the Black-library appeared under his hand on the table. “I’m a joke in the ministry right now. The boy, who isn’t right in his mind.” He leaned forward and grinned. “But I think, I will use that trial to my advantage. It’s more of a long-term investment. They will soon have to deal with more than a boy, who claims that Voldemort is back.”

“You can be outright scary, you know that?” Sirius said, but he grinned. “What did you have in mind?”

"I intend to use some old laws, no one bothered to change. And luckily, we have these books." Harry pushed them over to Sirius.

"The honorable Code of the Wizengamot. From 1597 till 1900," Sirius read, when he inspected one of the books.

"Yeah. Most of it isn’t very interesting. These are the original laws and what changes have been made. But what’s interesting is this part." Harry leaned over the table and flipped through the pages. "There..."

"A lord shall claim his seat, whenever he wants, if he can prove, that he shares blood or name of a family, that has the right to claim a seat," Sirius read out loud.
"Look at the names," Harry said. "These were the founders of the first Wizengamot."

Abbot
Avery
Black 2
Bulstrode
Burke
Carrow
Crouch
Fawley
Gaunt
Greengrass
Lestrange 2
Longbottom
MacMillan
Malfoy 2
Nott
Parkinson
Peverell
Potter
Prewett
Rosier
Rowle
Selwyn
Shafiq
Weasley 2
Yaxley
"All the old Pureblood familys..."

"Yeah. Basically everyone, who shares the name, or who is related to one of the families can claim a seat in the Wizengamot."

"But why are some of them scored out?" Sirius asked.

"It was an old custom, to gift your seat to another family, to pay a life debt. There, the numbers behind some of the names are the one, who own these now. You can still claim the seat, like you can claim the seat of a family, you are related to. But the claim of a member of the family who owns it, carries more weight. They can always demand, that you give it up. But that's all on the next pages," Harry said, and he pointed at a paragraph in the book. "Here it says, that a Lord can choose someone to speak in his name. One seat is equal to a vote, and you as head of the Black family..." Harry leaned back in his chair.

"You want me to choose you, to speak in my name," Sirius said and Harry nodded. "Yeah," Harry said. His godfather stayed silent and flipped through the pages.

"But Harry... Not that I wouldn’t do it, but I don’t know if this can work the way you intend. These laws are old, and I am still hunted by the ministry. Not even speaking that I never claimed these seats in the Wizengamot nor am I a lord. I think the last Black, to hold this title was my great-grandfather and he died in 1952." [58x535]

"But you could reclaim this title," Harry said mischievously, "And I could be in possession of a letter, which states that, say should you ever not be able to speak for yourself, that I as your godson has the right, to speak in your name. And that all-" Harry pulled out the ring, Kreacher wanted to save from the drawing room, and put it in front of Sirius, "-is verified by the seal of the Blacks." [58x575]

Sirius stared at Harry with wonder. "Sometimes, as much as I hate to state it, it think that you would’ve done well in Slytherin," Sirius said.

"The hat thought so too," Harry replied grinning, "It’s mostly Draco Malfoy’s fault, that I convinced that hat to put me in Gryffindor." Sirius laughed and then smiled at Harry.

"Yeah, the hat does listen to you if you are determined enough...," Sirius said. And Harry had the feeling that maybe, he wasn’t the only one, who asked the hat to be placed in Gryffindor. Death leaned forward once more, a pale hand on Harry’s shoulder.

"There are different kinds of ambition. For some it’s the hunger for power, others want to be loved by everyone and some only want to prove, that they are better. Different," Death said and answered Harry’s unspoken question as he watched Sirius taking a sip of his whisky. Harry smiled at Death as a silent thanks and then turned back to his godfather.

"But there is another aspect, that might be dangerous, and somewhat illegal," Harry said. Sirius smirked. "You need to claim your title as a lord, for this plan to work. It can only be done in person," Harry said, "And that means sneaking out of Grimmauld Place."

Sirius grin widened, and there was a spark in his eyes, that had been missing since Harry had arrived here. "You already had me at Dangerous."

They chatted for some time, until Sirius looked at a silver watch, he pulled out of his pocket and declared, that they should now really head to bed, if they wanted to survive the next day under Mrs. Weasley’s care. The only thing Harry regretted, was that he wasn’t able to see the face of his godfather, when he vanished into the shadows, to reappear in his room.
Claiming Titles

Chapter Summary

Harry and Sirius visit Gringotts.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day was quick to come and when he woke up, Harry was greeted by Hedwig, who picked on the window. He opened it, while Ron was still groaning into his pillow. Hedwig nipped his ear affectionately, when she landed on his shoulder.

"Hello Girl," Harry said and petted her wings. A small note was attached to her foot, it was sealed with wax. Probably magical, to prevent the wrong people from reading it. Harry took the note and Hedwig graciously flew to the bowl with water. Pigwidgeon chirped excitedly, which led to Ron groaning once more.

"Shut up pig," Ron mumbled under his blanket.

Harry grinned as he looked at the piece of parchment.

Dear Mr. Potter,
you wanted to be informed as soon as possible. Preparations have been made and we await you today. If this shouldn’t be possible, please inform us per owl.
Sincerely Gringotts Bank.

Harry threw the letter into the fireplace, after breakfast. The first half of the day mostly consisted of Harry dodging Ron and Hermione’s attempts to talk to him, with Death as a invisible helper. Sirius showed up somewhat around noon, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, but when he spotted Harry, he grinned at him.

Even Mrs. Weasley’s demanding nature didn’t seem to darken his mood, while they cleaned out the showcases in the drawing room. The glass-fronted shelf with the Vampire blood and the daggers was left untouched. When they were almost done, Sirius announced, that whoever threw one of the blades at the old tapestry and was able to hit one of his relatives, would be free of further cleaning for the next day. Despite Hermione’s worries, this was the highlight of their cleaning hours.

Of course this new sport was soon prevented by Mrs. Weasley, who came back with a plate of self-made sandwiches. Fred later claimed, that he should be left out of cleaning, because he managed to hit Sirius’ name, while Ginny stated, that Sirius explicitly said, that they had to hit one of his relatives and not the black patch over his name. Harry interrupted their heated argument, by telling them, that he was the only one beside Sirius to even manage the dagger getting stuck in the tapestry.

"Kreacher will be devastated...," Hermione said, while they walked down the stairs. She was shaking her head.
"If it’s not a dark spell you use, it will repair itself on its own," Sirius said, side-eyeing Death’s snake form, which was curled around Harry’s neck and shoulders, "The blades weren’t cursed, the least you could find on them was some poison."

"Poison?!" Mrs. Weasley’s voice interrupted them from the foot of the stairs.

"Oh no, the dragon approaches," Sirius whispered. Ginny in front of him snickered. "No Molly, that was just a joke," Sirius said louder, while smiling a crooked smile and lifting his hands in defence. But Mrs. Weasley didn't buy it.

"IRRESPONSIBLE, letting children throw with KNIVES-," she said, already starting her second tirade. Harry noticed how Sirius expression fell and almost comically changed to annoyed.

"Technically they are daggers, Molly," Sirius replied in a cool tone and used the opportunity to rush up the stairs in perfect pureblood manner, while Mrs. Weasley was still too shocked to say something in return. Fred and George were also gaping, but they seemed more impressed than anything else.

Harry had the feeling that through Sirius’ involvement with him, some of the old arrogant attitude of the Black family resurfaced. He couldn’t say, that he didn’t find it amusing. As Harry saw Sirius walking away, he realized, that this was the perfect opportunity. He turned away from a speechless Mrs. Weasley and looked at Ron and Hermione.

"Hey, I think I’m going to talk to Sirius for a moment."

"Harry," Hermione said and held him back, "I-" She hesitated, "-I just wanted to say, that you can talk to us too. We are really sorry what happened, but ignoring us isn’t going to change anything."

"I know," Harry said, "I’m not angry. It’s just, that I talked to Sirius yesterday, and he promised, to help me with a few things. It’s because of my trial."

"Oh Harry," Hermione said, worry shone in her eyes. "Are you nervous? I mean they can’t really do anything, I talked with Tonks and Professor Moody, you see? And they said that wizards are allowed to use magic if they are in danger, even if they are underage," she ranted to reassure him.

"Yeah, I know," Harry said, "And I’m not really nervous, but I would like to be prepared." He grinned.

"Harry," Ron whispered with a suspicious look, side-eyeing his mother, "You aren’t planning something, you didn’t tell us?"

Harry only smirked.

"Harry, you can’t... With Sirius-," Hermione whispered, but Harry interrupted her.

"Sorry, I have to go," Harry said cheerily and rushed up the stairs.

"HARRY!" Hermione shouted, when Harry had already reached the Hallway. Harry heard Ron cursing, Mrs. Weasley shouting "RONALD!" and then quick steps following him.

Harry smirked at Death and he started to go faster. While he wasn't bothered by the thought, that Ron and Hermione knew something was up, he didn’t want to deal with them right now.

"It seems Death, that we are able to get to Gringotts earlier, than I thought," Harry hissed. The impression of a grin passed his mind.
Just around the corner, he caught up to Sirius. Harry grinned at him. "Sirius, hey. What do you think, if we hurry up with our plans. You know, sneaking out and so on."

Sirius grinned. "What time did you have in mind?"

"Like, right now?"

Sirius raised an eyebrow. "Sure, just let me grab som-

Harry quickly scanned Sirius’ clothes. A worn band-shirt reading ‘Sex Pistols’, black jeans and boots. "Nah, it will work like this," Harry said and without a second thought, he gripped Sirius arm and pulled him along through the shadows.

They reappeared in a lively street in Muggle London. Harry immediately started to walk, following the masses and pulling his Godfather along. Sirius panted. "What the hell?" he uttered and with his hands he felt his torso. His head snapped to his left and right, quickly scanning the area. Then turned back to Harry. His magic was swirling violently. Probably panic Harry guessed. "I think one time saying it, won’t be enough. So, what the Hell Harry?!", Sirius said and he looked around nervously. "You know that I am a wanted man, Muggles still search for me, not to speak about the wizards. And you chose to bring me here, in the middle of all these people?" Sirius started to laugh. Harry couldn’t tell, if it was hysterical or because of the ridiculousness of the situation. Maybe both. "And they say I am risky,...," Sirius stated, as he watched the People carry their shopping bags as they were walking past them. A few glanced curious at Harry.

"I think it’s better if you go invisible for now.‘ Harry whispered at Death. The black snake disappeared and Death in his familiar, but slightly taller form, started to walk next to Harry. Then he turned back to Sirius. "Hiding in then masses. You don’t look like the ghost, they were shown on television after you broke out of Azkaban. And I think, you fancied some shopping."

"Shopping?" Sirius said and his magic seemed to have calmed.

"Yup. Shopping. When was the last time you were able to pick your own clothes or stuff in general?"

"Ages," Sirius replied, "But I think, I just want to walk a little through the streets - or do you have any money on you, that isn’t a golden coin?" Sirius asked.

"No," Harry replied, "But thanks to Death, I am now very good at wandless summoning and I don’t think, that they can trace it. So lets say, if you could tell me, when you see an ATM, that would be great."

"An ATM?" Sirius asked.

"Yeah, there is money inside. Muggles use them, to-," Harry said, but he paused. "Don’t bother, I found one."

Sirius stared at the money, that had appeared in Harry’s hand. "Basically you just robbed a bank in front of a witness," Sirius said, after he had recovered from the first shock.

"What are you going to do? Report me?" Harry said and Sirius grinned.

"Sure. Hello is this the Auror Department? My name is Sirius Black, and I witnessed Harry Potter rob a Muggle bank," Sirius joked.

"I think, after they arrest you, they would even be willing to listen. Imagine the headline: 'Harry
Potter stealing from innocent Muggles', right after 'Black in chains - the ministry strikes again'.“ Harry answered grinning.

"Yeah,"Sirius laughed as they continued walking through the streets. "And Kingsley would have to give an interview, and explain how he finally managed to capture me."

"I would even bring you the papers after I bought myself free with my stolen money," Harry said grinning.

The next hour, they walked through the streets and Harry watched how Sirius relaxed more and more. They ended up in a buying some ice-cream cones and paused to sit on a bench. Harry had stopped chatting with Death sometime earlier, because Sirius paled every time he started talking to the invisible being. Death was curled around Harry’s neck as a snake, which strangely seemed to calm his godfather somewhat. Now he was at least able to see the creature, as he said. Harry took comfort in the weight around his shoulders, even if his godfather didn’t really approve. When the sat on the bench, Sirius cast a privacy charm, as they started to talk.

“Can you even eat chocolate, I mean with your animagus being a dog?” Harry asked after a while, suddenly curious.

"Hm?" Sirius looked up from his cone to Harry. "Oh yeah, as long as I am in my human form. I once ate a bar of chocolate as a dog. I tell you, this was not funny, even if your father and Remus thought so. I could listen to their jokes for weeks, even after my stomach pain had stopped.” Harry smirked.

They stayed for some time, until both had finished, when Harry found that it was time to do, what he originally had in mind. He turned to his godfather.

“Hey Sirius, I think we should head to Gringotts now,” Harry said. Death slithered over his thighs.

“Gringotts?” Sirius asked, "That’s where you wanted to go?" Harry nodded. "Do we have a plan for my disguise?"

“I don’t know," Harry said. "The goblins are very discreet, and we have enough gold, too ensure their secrecy. As long as they stay neutral, we don’t have to worry. But the question is, how you get past the wizards and witches."

“I could go as a dog," Sirius said.

"Yeah, but you would have to reveal yourself in front of the goblins. Voldemort might know, that you are an animagus. There is the chance, that a Death Eater sees you, and gives the hint that you are in London. It’s your decision in the end."

“Well, a good plan is always a little bit risky," Sirius said grinning. He looked much younger than he had a few days ago.

“Then why are we waiting?” Harry asked. Sirius eyes scanned the people around them. Thanks to his charm nobody noticed them. He stood up and turned into a giant black dog, quite similar to Deaths first attempt of disguise. He barked once. “I take that as the hint to go,” Harry said and he dug his fingers into Sirius' fur. Both vanished in the shadows.

As soon as they reappeared in Diagon Alley they were noticed and whispers filled the air.

"...Harry Potter-"
"- Dumbledore -"

"- you-know-who is back"

"Nonsense, I know..."

"-ave you seen it? Do you see the snake?"

"-next dark lord..."

Harry walked past them, head held high. Sirius followed him in some distance. The people were way to curious to see Harry, to care about a stray dog. Even more so, after all the things the prophet had written over the summer. Harry grinned at the masses like Death did sometimes and stared at the people who looked too long. They froze like a deer in front of a headlight, Harry noticed satisfied. They reached Gringotts without problems, and when somebody saw a giant dog entering the bank, they didn’t mention it.

The entrance hall was impressive as always. And the Goblins didn’t shoot him with accusing looks, Harry noticed with a glance, at the intact ceiling. At this time he wasn’t infamous for breaking into Gringotts and escaping on the back of a dragon yet. Harry smirked. A few witches and wizard talked to Goblins, but no one had noticed them yet. They were spotted by a goblin, who was just inspecting a bar of gold. He quickly informed the Goblin next him, who stood up and approached them.

"Mr. Potter," he greeted Harry. "I wasn’t aware, that you own a dog," he added with a look at Sirius.

"He is more of a guest, than a pet," Harry replied and bowed slightly, glad that Death was hiding under his shirt.

"Ah, these things are better spoken about elsewhere," the goblin said and turned around, "Follow me."

They walked through the entrance hall, entered a hallway and then walked through a heavy door.

"Take a seat," the goblin said and pointed at two chairs in front of a wooden writing desk. Harry sat down, but Sirius stayed where he was. The room was mostly taken up by high drawers made of dark wood and the giant writing desk. On the wall in front of them, there hung at least fifty strings which disappeared through small holes close to the ceiling. The desk was crowded with stacks of parchment a few candles burned in a lighter and three different quills were lined up next to each other.

"My name is Gornok," the Goblin said eventually. "Now Mr. Potter, I already know your name, but your guest… I suppose it’s the person you mentioned in you letter?"

“It is,” Harry said and looked at his godfather. Harry hadn’t told them, who would come with him, but he had mentioned the possibility of another person accompanying him. A person whose identity was not to be revealed to anyone else, should they come with him. Meanwhile, Sirius got the hint and changed back into his human form.

"Sirius Black," Sirius said and greeted the goblin with a bow, like Harry had, in perfect pureblood manner. It stood in stark contrast to his appearance, with his Sex Pistols shirt and the old jeans.
“Ah yes,” the goblin said after the short moment of shock. "Sit down Mr. Black“, Gornok said in a professional tone. Sirius sat down next to Harry. “Well Mr. Potter. You approached us because you want to claim your title as a lord?”

“Yes,” Harry said.

“That request is rare nowadays,” Gornok said, as he shuffled through the papers on his table, "It is no longer custom, like it once was. Ah here," he said and he pulled a parchment scroll out of the stack. "Since you are not of age yet, the things are a bit more complicated. It is explicitly stated, that lordship title can only be claimed by someone who is of age.” Sirius glanced at Harry. He could see the worry behind his eyes. His godfather already opened his mouth, when Gornok continued. “However, since you are the only Potter left, the things are a bit different. The laws regarding the lordship are old. Back then the term ‘of age’ did not only denote a wizard who has reached their seventeenth year of life. Considering these circumstances…” Gornok dove under the table and pulled a silvery case out of a drawer and put it on the table. “ As the head of your house you are officially treated as an adult and thus, able to claim the title. Congratulations.” Gornok smiled widely at Harry and showed his sharp teeth.

Through the whole monologue Sirius’ expression had shifted from worried, to surprised and now he was grinning at Harry like a maniac. ‘Yeah, he was indeed related to Bellatrix,’ Harry thought, ‘Hell, the guy had still talked to him, even after he had learned, that Harry was the master of a very real Death.’

“If you would sign here with your full name please,” Gornok said and pointed at a empty space on the parchment. The whole document was covered in names, written in dark brown ink sometimes almost black. And every single one of them was a Potter.

With his long claw-like fingers, the Gornok opened the silvery case and pulled out a quill. It was pitch black.


“This is to ensure the validity of the document. Unless you aren’t really Harry Potter, there should be no magical backlash," Gornok said turning to Harry. He looked at Harry - with what should probably be a threatening grin - but compared to Death, this was nothing. Harry smirked back and the Goblin paled somewhat. Harry noticed, that even Sirius shivered. And this time it wasn’t because of the being that was disguised as a snake. Harry took the blood-quill out of Gornok’s hand.

“Then I don’t have to worry,” Harry said and he restrained his magic. The tension in the room loosened. When Harry signed, his hand hurt stung for a moment, but there were no visible wounds. As soon as the last letter of his name was written, Harry felt old magic wash over him.

“Now, Lord Potter,” Gornok said and pulled another thing out of a drawer. It was a silver ring. "This ring was stashed in your vault and indicates your Lordship. It was usually expected to be worn after a Lord claimed his title, but these were the old days. It is up to the owner of course.” Harry took the ring. On top of it was something engraved, that Harry assumed, had once been the Potter family crest. He put it on his finger and then looked at the Goblin in front of him once more.

“My godfather would also like to claim his title," Harry said. The goblin leaned over the table and looked at Sirius.

“Is that so?” Gornok said and hummed thoughtfully.
"Yes," Sirius said and stared in the eyes of the goblin.

"Mhh," The Goblin nodded and wrote something down. "This might take a day or two. We will write you, as soon as the preparations are made," he said, sounding almost bored. "Is there something else I can do for you?"

"There is once more thing. I would also like to lay claim on the Peverell title," Harry said.

"Peverell…," the Goblin repeated slowly. Now his interest seemed roused. "Well there is no official heir left, as we know. You can lay claim on their title, as long as you can prove that you have a right to do so."

"Ignotus Peverell’s granddaughter Iolanthe, married Hardwin Potter, who is an ancestor of mine," Harry said and Death moved for the first time, since they had entered Gringotts. He slithered over Harry’s shoulders. If he didn’t know it better, Harry would’ve guessed, that Death had been napping. The goblin only spared him a small gaze.

"A simple heritage test will certainly clear us from all doubts," Gornok said. He opened a drawer at the bottom of his desk with a small key. Harry could hear glass clinking and then Gornok pulled out a vial not bigger than a finger. Inside was a liquid, that reminded Harry of Dumbledores Pensive.

"If you would be so kind," the Goblin said and held out his hand. Harry looked at the Goblin confused. "I need some blood," Gornok added at his questioning look.

"Oh," Harry Extended his arm. Gornok used the blood quill to slice into Harry’s finger. He let go of his hand, when his blood had coloured the liquid a light pink.

"Excuse me for a moment," he said and walked through a door in the back.

"It’s a charm, similar to the one my family used on the tapestry in the drawing room. New-borns appear magically on the tapestry. Of course a heritage test is much simpler because you actually have the blood of a person, but it’s the same principle. It shows your ancestors, but the blood can only be used on a charmed surface. That’s the complicated part. I guess they have a special roll of parchment somewhere," Sirius explained. Harry nodded, but his attention was on the black snake.

"You really can do something else if you want," Harry hissed in parseltongue, Sirius looked at him and then paled, when he realized who he was talking to.

"I chose to stay with you," Death hissed back.

"It’s a miracle you aren’t bored, because I am, kinda. All the time the cleaning in Grimmauld Place. I think we should visit Voldemort sometime in the future. It could be fun." Death materialized in his human form. He grinned predatorily.

"I would like that," Death said and he moved past Sirius, who shivered violently. Harry smirked.

"You like to tease him," he stated. Sirius looked at him half offended half terrified. His eyes searched for Death and Harry was suddenly remembered, that he only heard half of the conversation.

"I might," Death said shrugging and approached Harry. Harry’s eyes snapped to Death, who was still grinning. "He is the only one, who knows about me. I could kill him, if we don’t need him anymore. I know that you are curious," Death said. Harry felt the thrill for a hunt echo in his own
mind. And Death was right. He was curious and he wanted to know what it was like to kill somebody as the master of Death.

He had killed as an Auror. There were many Death eaters on the run. In his apathy it hadn’t been difficult. The use of the killing curse had been legal for a year or two after the battle, to ‘clean the world from the filth the remaining followers of Voldemort were’, as the head of the aurors liked to say. The ministry really was fucked up. But he had to admit, that he didn’t really have room to talk. Harry didn’t know if it came from Death or him, but he just knew that he wanted to try it. His morals really were not the best. Harry looked at Sirius.

“No. I know you kind of like him,” Harry said. He also didn’t want Sirius dead. He liked him. Molly on the other hand had been very annoying for most of the time. But no. She hadn’t really tried to harm him and Dumbledore was way to suspecting for his own good.

“He is alright,” Death said and he stopped behind Harry. “We can wait,” he whispered in his inhuman voice. After a while Death started to comb through his hair. Harry shivered, and it was not the unpleasant way Sirius had experienced. His godfather looked at him curiously and Death smirked.

Altogether, they waited for fifteen minutes, till the Goblin reappeared. "It seems, that everything you said was correct Lord Potter," Gornok said. "As there are no conditions to claiming that title from the Peverell family, you are now also officially Lord and head of the house Peverell."

"This would be all then," Harry said.

"Not so fast. Of course you were aware, that claiming a Lordship comes with a price," Gornok said. "Additionally the heritage test, which is 10 galleons. But as a Potter, this shouldn’t be a problem, am I right?” Gornok said and he grinned slyly.

Sirius clenched his teeth and Harry’s eyes narrowed. The goblin was right, money wasn’t a problem, but Harry didn’t like the way, Gornok had sounded. "I’ll cover the costs," Harry said, "Take everything from my vault and double it. I don’t have to repeat, that this should be handled with the uttermost secrecy," Harry leaned forward and stared at the goblin, he felt Deaths smirk next to him. He seemed to find the whole affair amusing. Gornok took a step back. Harry’s magical aura was just too much for him. "I pay my debts, that’s for sure, but never try to cheat me. You wouldn’t succeed," Harry said. With that, he turned around and left, Sirius followed him, already turning into a dog again.

Chapter End Notes

There are still a few chapters coming till Harry has his trial, I hope you still have the patience to wait, but nonetheless I think, I might even be able post it this week. :)
Kept Promises

Chapter Summary

Harry talks to Ron and Hermione, destroys a Horcrux and sees Death’s true form.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ:
Since you all want to read about the trial, I decided that I am going to upload three chapters today and you can finally read about it. (Therefore I'm don't know when the next chapters are coming, probably next week) I'm little worried about the next few chapters, cause they deepen the Harry/Death connection and it's really hard to write that and make it believable, so please comment and let me know what you think.

Much love, hope you enjoy.

Back in Grimmauld Place No. 12, they reappeared in Sirius’ bedroom. Sirius peeked into the Hallway, but nobody was there, but they could hear noises from downstairs. "I’m going to look after Buckbeak," Sirius said, "I wasn’t able to feed him yet." They parted ways on the stairs. When Harry entered the drawing room, there was no shouting from Mrs. Weasley’s side. But Ron and Hermione stared at him and pulled him aside as soon as there was an opportunity. Apparently they had covered for them, telling everyone that they were preparing a strategy for the trial. Which really wasn’t a lie considering their visit in Gringotts.

"Where were you?" Hermione whispered, while they pretended to clean out a shelf.

"Well, Sirius and I, we visited Gringotts today," Harry said, knowing, that they would bombard him with questions if he didn’t answer.

"Gringotts?" Hermione said shocked, "But Harry, how could you do this. Sirius is a criminal on the run!"

“I hate to say this mate, but Hermione is right. This is outright crazy," Ron replied hesitating.

“I know, but it’s because of my trial. I have a strategy," Harry answered. He didn’t want to tell them everything, but they deserved some answers.

“But Harry, what are you planning?" Hermione asked him.

“I claimed my Lordship title.”

“Your Lordship title?! You are a Lord now?” Hermione asked him, “But how is that even-“

“I thought this wasn’t possible nowadays,” Ron said, interrupting Hermione.

“Oh it is,” Harry replied. “It was just seen as outdated. The Ministry shamed upon it, they said it wasn’t fair, since mostly pureblood family’s claim this title.”
“Well, you have to admit, that it isn’t fair,” Hermione said.

“You are probably right,” Harry replied, “It isn’t very cheap either. It stopped a few hundred years ago. But that doesn’t mean that the Ministry did it for the others. They shamed it, because a few of this family’s were the founders of the Wizengamot. There are old laws and I’m trying to use them. Long story short, if you are a member of one of these family’s and a Lord, you are allowed to vote in the Wizengamot.”

“Harry this is-,” Hermione started.

“- Bloody brilliant,” Ron said and he looked at Harry in wonder. Harry smirked.

“Harry,” Hermione said, “These laws sound old, don’t you think, they changed them already?”

“Here,” Harry said and pulled out the book from under his bed, “This should answer all your questions. They can’t change these laws, unless every Lord in the Wizengamot agrees to that. They haven’t done that and during my trial it will be to late.”

“But Harry, one vote isn’t going to get you declared free of all charges,” Hermione said, already flipping through the book.

“No, but it’s a start,” Harry replied, “Nobody knows about it, and I hope that it stays that way.”

Hermione and Ron shared a look. “We won’t tell anybody,” Hermione said eventually. She and Ron looked at him worriedly.

“Come on guys. Do you really think, that Dumbledore doesn’t also have a plan?” Harry said to ease their worry. Inwardly he was grimacing. He didn’t plan on Dumbledore having a say in his trial at all.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Ron said, “But why did you go with Sirius? Why not with somebody else?”

“He could use some fun, going out,” Harry said shrugging.

“And he is the only one who would bring you to Diagon Ally without asking questions, am I right?” Hermione retorted in a scolding tone.

Harry grinned. 'Right,' he remembered, 'Officially he wasn’t even able to apparate on his own.'

"Harry," Hermione said hesitantly, "Sirius might not see it this way, but by asking him you put him in danger, not to speak of what could’ve happened if a Death Eater walked through Diagon Ally."

"Sirius is an adult. I told him about the risks and he decided to help me anyways," Harry said already knowing that this conversation would run into nothing.

"Hermione, Sirius is not stupid," Ron interfered, "And do you think, that any of the others would have helped him?"

"Fred and George would probably be the first to jump to his help with an idea as risky as this," Hermione shot back.

"Fred and George don’t-,” Ron started, then he stopped and turned to Harry. "Yeah, why didn’t you ask Fred and George?"

"It didn’t cross my mind, I guess.” Harry shrugged and watched Death, who killed some of the remaining doxy’s hiding in the walls.
"It didn’t cross your mind?" Ron asked almost sounding shocked and he shook his head.

The chatted for some time and Ron and Hermione asked him about his trial. Harry didn’t see Sirius, until it was time for dinner.

They entered the kitchen to the sound of his godfather laughing. Harry didn’t need long, to find the indicator of his happiness. Next to him sat Remus. He seemed exhausted but otherwise fine. He grinned at Sirius.

“Hey Remus,” Harry greeted him, when he sat down opposite to them.

“Hello Harry,” Remus said and looked at him.

“Remus, where did your beard go?” Ron asked, and he was right. It looked like Lupin had shaved a few days ago. Only stubble’s covered his jaw.

“Oh, somebody told me that it looked stupid,” he answered with a smile.

“I think it looks good," Ginny said, “I mean without the beard.” She blushed. Sirius leaned over to Remus and quietly said something. It was only thanks to Death that Harry understood what he was saying.

“Little Ginevra isn’t wrong. It looks really good.” Harry smirked as he watched them. Remus opened his mouth and closed it all of a sudden. He seemed surprised and shot Sirius a curious look, but he had already turned away and was sipping on his wine. Remus turned back to his meal but he seemed, like he tried not to smirk.

Harry caught Remus gaze. Harry raised his eyebrows and looked from Sirius to Remus. The werewolf took a big sip of his wine and broke eye-contact. Nothing indicated what he was thinking, but Harry could sense the wolf inside him growling at Remus for keeping him from touching Sirius. Hermione shot Harry a curious glance, while he leaned back in his chair, a smirk on his face.

Half an hour later most of the people had finished their meal and chatted. Some of them talked in hushed voices, like Bill and Mr. Weasley. Probably order stuff. Sirius and Tonks, were involved in a heated discussion about the bands of the 70’s. Harry listened to Ron, who told him about the latest game of the Chudley Cannons. He was lucky, this younger version of Ron didn’t know about the losing streak that would last for years to come. Ron was just explaining an almost-catch by the seeker of the team.

“But didn’t they lose?” Harry said, while his eyes scanned the people around the table. The conversations seemed to have silenced.

“Yeah, but that’s not the point. I mean, Gudgeon was so close. If it wasn’t for that stupid bludger he would’ve-“ Ron stopped, when he noticed, that Harry wasn’t listening to him anymore. Suddenly he realized that every member of the order was staring at them. The other teenagers shared confused glances, while Harry leaned back in his chair and waited.

"What?!“ Harry said eventually, when nobody said something. He did have an idea though of what was going on. Sirius coughed and looked at Mrs. Weasley. The others followed his gaze.

"Well, fine," she said, "We - and while I still think that this isn’t a good idea, in my opinion you are still way to young and even-“

"Molly," Mr. Weasley said, interrupting patiently. She sighed. Apparently it was an argument they
already had.

"We have decided, that you are old enough to hear about some of the things, the order is doing."
Ron, Ginny and the twins shared excited looks. Hermione frowned. She seemed to be the only one who thought that there might be a catch. As if on cue Mrs. Weasley wanted to send her children to bed. It was exactly the same, as the first time Harry remembered. An argument until only Ginny was sent to bed and when Sirius started to talk about the supposedly weapon the conversation was ended. Fred and George apparated into Ron and Harry’s room. They talked about it for some time. Harry laughed inwardly at the wild speculations. They stopped, when Mrs. Weasley walked past their door, to listen if they were still talking.

Harry had almost forgotten about it, but shortly after Ron was asleep a pop startled him. Kreacher had apparated into their room.

"You are here because of the locket, aren’t you?" Harry said.

"Yes," Kreacher started, "Kreacher hopes that the Potter boy stands true to his word, or maybe he is just a filthy blood traitor like the other brats," the last part was muttered under his breath, but Harry didn’t doubt, that he knew what he was saying.

"I don’t think, that this room is appropriate for this. Is anybody still up?" Harry asked Kreacher.

"Master Black is in the kitchen, with the wolf and a few of the blood traitors," Kreacher replied.

"And is somebody in the drawing room?"

"No, young Master."

"Then let’s head there," Harry said. Kreacher grunted and Harry followed him, sneaking out of room. Kreacher led the way. Death walked silently beside Harry. Kreacher seemed to feel uneasy even if he couldn’t see the being.

Inside the drawing room, Harry let the locket appear in his hand. Kreacher looked at it with wide eyes. Last time he hadn’t trusted himself with Fiendfire, but now? It would be easy, Harry just knew it. He put the locket on the floor. He couldn’t use his old wand, if the magic was to be traced. But the wand with the Phoenix feather wasn’t his only one. Harry smirked, as he willed the Elder wand to appear.

“You might want to keep some distance, I’m going to use Fiendfire to destroy it” Kreacher looked at him with awe and took a few steps back. The elder wand in Harry’s hand sang in anticipation of what was to come. Harry didn’t even need to say the words. As if it had read his thoughts, the elder wand eagerly complied. Flames in Various shapes and forms shot from it. A Thestral flew with flaming wings, Dragons and a Basilisk slithered forward. The flames hissed and made whispering noises, as if they were talking in their own language. They burned nothing, but their intended target as they moved over the ground. The locket screamed and a part of Harry felt unease at the sound. He was fairly sure that it was the connection with the Horcrux in his mind, but that didn’t change the fact, that he felt weird. Harry ended it with a flick of his wand. The empty vessel was left on the ground, still smoking and the edges had melted. Kreacher stared at it.

“You can go and check if it’s really destroyed”, Harry said and Kreacher crept closer. After a few seconds he bowed deeply. His whole attitude had changed.

“Young Master kept his promise.”, he said with shaken voice.

“I said I would help you with it. I keep my word”, Harry replied, with a glance at the locket. The
soul inside it was gone. Harry picked it up and put it in his pocket. In the end, Kreacher insisted in leading Harry back to his room. He shuffled through the Hallway in front of Harry, muttering praises and what a worthy heir Harry would’ve made. Death walked next to Harry.

“\textit{The power of the elder wand is bound to you. You don’t need to will it into existence to do magic.}”

“Are you saying, that I could’ve done it wandless?”, Harry asked side eyeing Kreacher.

“Yes. You are powerful. Way more than you think you are. The things I’ve shown you are only a small part of it. It will take time, but you could walk between the planes of existence. I know what you want me to ask. You want to know, if I can restore Tom Riddle, give him back his soul.” Death smirked as Harry looked at him surprised. “The answer is yes. And you could do it too someday”, he said when they just reached his room.

Harry didn’t sleep that night. He had Death telling him about the things, he thought Harry was able to do. And summoning something from god-knows-where was nothing in comparison. Of course, he wouldn’t be able to do the things right now. Some of them would take years to learn. But Harry found himself drawn in by Death.

“Uhm, Death. You said, that I had seen your true appearance, but that I don’t do now. What do you really look like?”, Harry asked when the stars faded away in the first morning light. Death’s white eyes stared into Harrys.

“If you really want to see my true self, you need to let go of the restrictions of the human consciousness. You have to forget what is possible and what not. I can’t force you to see me, I can only help you. You have to look for yourself”

At age eleven Harry had been thrown in world of wonder and magic, at age seventeen he had died and came back. And he remembered a life, a life he had lived until he was twenty-four. He had never thought that magic had its restrictions, like Hermione did. Magic wasn’t logical. It was easy to believe in the unbelievable. He closed his eyes and focused on the bond with Death. Power thrummed through him and when he opened his eyes, he saw.

Death was… incredible. With open mouth he stared at the being. He was endless and at the same time only in this room. Death was there but not. He could see Ron’s bed, the sleeping owls on the wardrobe and at the same time his whole vision was filled with feathery wings, giant wings which took up the whole room moving though furniture and he walls, not even bothered by them. Harry counted twelve until he was distracted by thousands of eyes watching him. He extended a hand, and he was met with one. Their palms touched and Harry felt his connection to Death stronger than ever. A part of him was Death, was this mass of feathers, dark light and eyes. Harry watched in awe when the wings moved slowly as if they were floating in water. And he should be called Master of such an eternal being? A warmth spread though him and fondness washing over him. He couldn’t describe what his emotions were, as he connected with the being in front of him.

My Harryyyyy… my Masteerr…

Death’s voice spoke in his mind. With time Death’s true image faded into the background and he stood in front of Harry like he had always looked like. It was just another part of him, but So different in comparison to his other face. Harry could still see Death’s true form. A play of the light and he could see shadows of wings, the feeling of eyes watching him, and a comforting presence in the room. Harry hadn’t realized that he was crying and smiling at the same time until his eyes focused back on the familiar face of his almost-twin. Harry felt the incomprehensible need to hug the being only to distract him from the feeling of loss, now that everything was back the
way it was before. But how could such a pathetic gesture compare to the intimacy they had shared just a few moments ago. But like always Death knew what he was thinking. The being cupped Harry’s face and brushed his lips against his forehead. Harry felt invisible hands carding through his hair. Harry sniffed and smiled.
It was early in the morning, when Harry met Sirius in the Hallway. He hadn’t thought, that anyone was already awake. His godfather looked very ruffled and was just on the way to get some coffee. Apparently a very insistent owl had woken him up. He had received a letter from Gringotts, telling him that everything was ready. Despite Sirius’ grumpy complaints, they decided, that it was probably best, if they went to Diagon Ally while no one was around yet.

Half an hour later, they sat inside the same office in Gringotts, they had the previous day. “Very well. Only to be formal. What is the title you want to claim?” Gornok asked.

"Lord Black," Sirius answered.

"Mhh." The Goblin nodded and then he stood up and walked pulled at a string, that was hanging down from a hole in the wall. The goblin sat back down, but nothing happened. They sat in silence, Harry petted Death, while Sirius’s frown deepened with every second. Gornok did nothing to help him with his confusion. But Harry sensed someone approaching. The door behind them opened shortly after and a Goblin entered.

"Sirius Black. I need everything required," Gornok said. The other Goblin nodded and then disappeared.

They waited for some time. Next to Harry, Sirius’ fingers drummed on his thighs, while Harry petted Death with a fond smile. Shortly after, the door opened again. The goblin carried a few documents and box made of shiny black wood. He walked over and put it on the table, while Gornok took the parchments. He started to shuffle through them, before he briefly raised his head and dismissed the other Goblin with a nod.

Gornok hummed as he looked through the papers. Sirius on the other hand stared at the black box, and Harry followed his gaze. It was decorated with different patterns. On top of it was a beautiful carving showing the Black Family crest. Harry couldn’t detect an opening, but the artifact pulsed hungrily with dark magic.

"Hm... mhhm... yes this should all be correct," Gornok muttered and raised his head, "Now, Mr. Black. You seem to fulfill all conditions. You are of age, listed as a heir in these documents and current head of the house."

"Well then," Sirius said and already reached for a quill.

"Oh, not so fast," Gornok said, "Every family has different conditions. While with Mr. Potter, the signing of a document with blood was all he needed to do, the Black family states, that only someone who is able to open this box, is worthy of this title." The Goblin pointed at the box with a long spindly finger. Sirius groaned.

"Typical," he muttered and took the box in his hands. As soon as he touched it, Harry could see,
how the artifact consumed a tiny bit of his magic. Sirius seemed to have noticed it too. He frowned and pushed some more magic in the box. Harry guessed, that only someone with a dark core, could cause this reaction. He turned it in his hand, but nothing else happened.

Sirius traced the lines with his fingers. "I wouldn’t be surprised, if this thing would kill me as soon as I do something wrong," he said to Harry, "Maybe it's cursed..."

They were sitting in front of the box for about forty-five minutes, when Harry decided, that he would need appropriate Dress Robes for his trial, at least if he wanted to act like a lord. He looked at Sirius. "Would you be okay with me going to buy some things, while you try to open it. I will come here when I’m finished."

"Hmm," Sirius traced some of the wooden patterns with his wand. Gornok had started to shuffle through his papers again. "Yeah, I think this could take somewhat longer," Sirius said.

And while his Godfather was dealing with the Goblins, Harry paid Madame Malkin’s a visit.

Not even half an hour later, he was the proud owner of a simple, but elegant suit - the latest wizarding fashion - if one could believe Madame Malkin and a matching black cloak with silver stitching."It need’s a few changes in length, but if you would come back in a few minutes, it will be ready," Madame Malkin said. Harry decided to pass the time by sauntering through Diagon Ally.

He didn't buy anything from the various shops, because his cloak wasn’t cheap and he still needed shoes, but he was tempted to stop by at 'Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Palor', just for old times sake. Also Florean was still alive at this point in time.

In the end he decided to head back to fetch his new attire. He bought his shoes - Finest dragon leather, for the modern wizard - a few shops further down the road and then went back to Madame Malkin’s. After all, he had been away for quite some time and Sirius was probably already waiting for him.

Harry exchanged a few words with Madame Malkin, while she waved her wand to have his cloak wrap itself before. She reached over the counter to give him the tightly tied package. Harry turned to leave, while Madame Malkin was already scurrying to the other side of the shop to help some customers.

He had already made a few steps towards the exit, when the door was opened from the outside and a pale blond figure entered. Harry stopped dead in his tracks. From the pointy nose to the somewhat arrogant look, there was no doubt who this was. While Harry remembered an older and wearier version of him, this was Lucius Malfoy at the peak of his life. His reputation wasn’t ruined yet, and he stood in favour of Voldemort - was his right-hand man even, if Harry remembered correctly.

As soon as Lucius spotted Harry, he also stopped. A few customers turned around and stared at them.

"Mr. Potter. What a surprise to meet you here," Lucius said, "Where did you leave your guard-dog? It didn't get lost did it? It would be a shame if someone caught the mutt and locked it up," Malfoy drawled. Harry smirked sharply. It was almost funny how much Lucius reminded him of an older Draco. The Malfoy’s had always been a little arrogant, but they could be charming if they wanted to. They had wormed their way into the ministry like the snakes that they were. A thought found its way into Harry’s mind and his smirk widened.

As an Auror, he was pretty good with charms, and with the power of the elder wand merged into
his skin... With a flick of his wrist, Harry threw up a privacy charm. It was as easy as breathing. Lucius raised an eyebrow when the people, which had been watching them turned back with confused looks, as if they were asking themselves what they had been looking at. The charm was way stronger than Harry had intended. He was lucky he didn’t try a blasting hex first.

"Actually, it’s Lord Potter now," Harry answered with his chin held high and just as arrogantly as Lucius. Mr. Malfoy’s eyes widened a fraction, but otherwise there was no sign of surprise on his face. A perfectly schooled Slytherin.

"...Lord Potter. Well, that is certainly new," Lucius said and Harry could almost see his mind working his way around the new information.

"It’s an old custom, Mr. Malfoy. I am surprised, that you don’t know about it," Harry added in a casual tone of conversation, almost as if he was bored, but inwardly he was smirking. Malfoy’s mask slipped slightly at the unexpected insult. But in this moment Death raised his head and Malfoy stopped. His eyes flicked from the snake to Harry and back.

"I’m going to give you an advice, Mr. Malfoy," Harry said. He leaned forward and lowered his voice. Malfoy’s eyes snapped back to his face. "Let’s just call it a favour... from a possible future ally. You should gather some information. ...what it means to be a Lord and so on. After all, your family can also lay claim on such a title," Harry said and he straightened his posture and with a smirk he added, “If you act fast enough, you may be even able to be present on my trial"

Harry could sense the confusion that quickly turned into interest. Malfoy was intrigued, even if he didn’t show it.

"But I would be thankful, if you would not use the ...obvious way, for now at least," Harry continued with an afterthought. "Dolores Umbridge, she is the one responsible for the two Dementors, which attacked me this summer. Of course this isn’t common knowledge. She is undersecretary of the Minister, and should this information reach the public, it would probably destroy her career. But who would believe me?" Harry continued, "I'm only a child."

The smirk that followed his words already stripped his statement of all credibility. He asked himself, if Lucius would use this information to get a place in the courtroom. "Well, if you would excuse me now," Harry walked past Malfoy, but stopped right next to him, "I don’t want to read in the papers, that my dog is running free. I might not be able to ruin someones reputation right now, but I do have connections Mr. Malfoy. And I know things. I guess your Lord wasn’t pleased to hear that a certain diary was destroyed, was he?“ Lucius paled and he tightened the grip around the handle of his cane. "Have a nice day Mr. Malfoy."

"Have a good day Mr. Potter," Lucius said a slowly, already deep in thought. Harry left the shop, with a smug look on his face.

"I think that this is a relationship, we should maintain," Harry hissed to Death, savouring the appalled reactions around him. Death curled tighter around his neck, and Harry felt the ghost of a touch on his shoulders and the echo of Death’s deadly grin. He smirked. He was already shamed in the papers, what were a few additional theories that he was going to be the next dark lord.

Sirius was indeed waiting for him in Gringotts. "And, have you solved it?" Harry asked him with a grin.

"Yeah. In the end I only needed to let some blood drop into a hidden compartment beneath the family crest. To be exactly beneath our family motto; Toujours pur...," Sirius said, the aversion clearly audible in his voice. Shaking his head he inspected the new ring on his finger, which indicated his lordship.
This time, Sirius brought them back to Grimmauld Place. Harry found that apparating was way more uncomfortable than his way of traveling.

"Before I forget it. This is the letter in which I am claiming the seats in the Wizengamot. You are declared holder of them, should I be absent," Sirius offered him a sealed letter. Harry looked at it and then at Sirius.

“I’m going to be honest with you Sirius. I’m going to make some decisions in the future, you may not agree with. And if you give me this, I have only more power on my hands.” Harry watched as Sirius frowned in confusion. “On the other hand, if I am in the Wizengamot, I might be able to prove your innocence," Harry said. It wasn’t very nice. He knew that he was manipulating Sirius into saying yes and it worked, just like he had thought. Sirius hesitated, but then he gave Harry the letter.

“I trust you to do the right thing,” Sirius said.

"Proving your innocence might take some time and I can't promise you anything. Hell, I have to win my trial first," Harry said while he took the letter.

"I have the feeling that you will," Sirius said. Then his smile turned into a smirk. "And hey, maybe I can accompany you. We even went do Diagon Ally. A dog shouldn’t attract to much attention."

"It’s very risky and I don't think it's a good idea, but I won’t tell you what to do. Decide for yourself," Harry said.

The time went by quickly. During the next day’s they started to clean the dining room. Ron was almost choked to death by some cloaks and Kreacher confused everyone by acting like Harry was the only worthy wizard in the house. Throughout the whole time, Members of the order went in and out. Remus helped them to fix a grandfather clock, that spat screws at every passer-by, with exception of Harry. He didn’t know if it was, because the house had accepted him or because he wasn’t exactly a human anymore. During that time, Harry noticed, more than once, how Remus eyes followed Sirius’ every moves and his Godfather wasn’t much better. Every time the werewolf left the house to go on secret missions, it was more common for Sirius to snap at Kreacher or walk aimlessly through the house.

“I don’t get it. Did you hex Kreacher, that he would worship the Ground on which you walk? You have to tell us your secret,” Fred asked him jokingly. Harry just shrugged, as if he didn’t know it himself. "Mom found some expandable ears this morning, but she forgot to look under the bed. We haven’t hidden something there in ages, so she doesn’t bother to look under it anymore."

"Put it right in front of her nose and she won’t see it," George said grinning.

"By the way, did you hear anything new?" Ron asked his brothers. Harry sighed.

Not a day passed, without the younger inhabitants of the house speculating about the mysterious weapon Voldemort wanted to get his hands on. At first Harry found it amusing, but he soon grew tired of it. He didn’t bother telling them, that he could just ask Kreacher to tell him what the order was talking about. The others blamed his lack of input on the matter on his approaching trial. As if Harry didn’t notice them whispering behind his back. But he was even glad that he didn’t have to find an excuse of his own.

Before he knew it, it was the evening before his trial. Ron, Hermione, Fred, George and Ginny got quiet, when Mrs. Weasley leaned over to him and said, “I ironed your best clothes, Harry, and I want you to wash your hair this evening. A good first impression can do wonders.”
“This was really nice, Mrs. Weasley, but I actually got a cloak for my trial,” he said.

“Oh,” Mrs. Weasley said and she looked uncomfortable. “Harry, don’t you think that the outfit from the Yule Ball-“


“I’m glad to hear that,” she said, but Harry saw how Remus frowned.

“Harry, when exactly did you buy your cloak?” Lupin asked him.

“During the holidays,” Harry answered with a smirk. It wasn’t really a lie, was it? Remus still looked suspicious, while Mrs. Weasley shot Mundungus an accusing look, as if it was his fault, that Harry had gone to Diagon Ally, while he was supposed to watch him. Sirius winked at him, but Remus caught it. That meant nothing good for Sirius. His Godfather hadn’t told anyone about his secrets yet, but apart from that, he wasn’t really able to do so without dying, so it wasn’t really an accomplishment. Would Remus tell Dumbledore? Harry tilted his head and watched them. If the latter was true...

He put his hand under the table and summoned a pen and a little piece of parchment from his room. Quickly he scribbled a few words on it. George watched him curiously. He sat next to Sirius and probably knew more that he let on. Harry put his hand over the note. He looked George dead in the eye and smirked. George stared, when Harry lifted his hand. The note had disappeared. Harry liked to give a few hints. He wanted the others to know, that something was different. It was fun to watch them, how they couldn’t quite pinpoint the reason behind it. Harry looked at George and then at Sirius. The freckled Weasley got the hint and tapped Sirius’ elbow. His Godfather was glad to escape Remus look and turned to Harry, who lifted his goblet and pointed at the table. Sirius frowned but he raised his cup. Fred and Georges heads snapped to him simultaneously, when the note appeared beneath Sirius’ goblet. Harry just sipped on his drink and smiled, when Sirius read the words.

**You can tell Lupin. If he tells Dumbledore or anyone else, you are held accountable.**

He hoped that he didn’t make the wrong decision - writing that note and allowing Sirius to tell Remus about his secrets. But it wasn't like he couldn't deal with it.

Sirius casually burned the note, which earned him some curious glances, but nothing more.

"Harry, You will come with me tomorrow morning, when I go to work,” Mr. Weasley said, not having noticed their little exchange.

"Okay,"Harry replied and turned back to Sirius, when Molly interfered. "Professor Dumbledore doesn’t think, that it’s a good idea if Sirius accompanies you, and I must say-“

"-that he is absolutely right,” Sirius ended Mrs. Weasley’s sentence, with a bitter look on his face. Harry leaned back in his chair with a raised eyebrow. Dumbledore, huh? Harry wondered what the next day would bring.

They went to bed shortly after dinner, because of Molly's insistence- Harry needs his sleep-. He did wash his hair though, because Mrs. Weasley was right. A good first impression could do wonders.
The Trial

Chapter Summary

What the chapter title says. Harry has his trial.

Chapter Notes

Finally, the chapter everyone was waiting for.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning, Harry left a sleeping Ron on his bed and went down to the kitchen, wearing his new outfit and Death around his shoulders. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Sirius, Remus, and Tonks were all sitting at the table. Tonks whistled and wriggled her eyebrows. Today she was blonde. "Harry, you look like a fancy pureblood heir. I hope you don’t try to act like one now." Remus looked at him with an odd expression on his face. Apparently Sirius had told him some stuff.

"Nah. We already have Sirius, I think that’s enough drama for us all," Harry joked.

Sirius gasped dramatically and stuck his nose into the air. Remus grinned. "How dare you Harry James Potter," Sirius said in a fake offended voice. "Insulting the head of the noble and ancient house of Black. This won’t do your future connections any good. I know who isn’t going to be invited to my next soiree." Now it was Harry’s time to look offended. Tonks was curling with laughter. In his best impression of a young Draco Malfoy, Harry snorted pretentious and rushed past him without a second glance.

After breakfast, everybody wished him good luck and then he followed Mr. Weasley. “Harry, why don’t you leave,” Mrs. Weasley gestured at Death as if she didn't quite know what to call him, “your snake.”

“Grim,” Harry said and Sirius raised an eyebrow.

“Why don’t you leave Grim here. I don’t think that it’s a good idea to take him with you. What if he gets lost?”

“Yeah, sure,” Harry turned to Sirius and smirked mischievously. “Can you look after him, as long as I’m gone?” he said and stretched out his arm. Harry felt Death’s amusement echo in his mind, when Sirius leaned as far away from Death as he was able too.

“Ah, know what? I’m just going to put him on the floor. He’ll find his way.” Death remained on the ground for a few moments and then slithered into the shadows, just to appear next to Harry in his human form. If Harry wasn’t mistaken, he looked older now. More like Harry, when he was twenty-four and not fifteen and he was wearing a different shirt and trousers now.

After they had used the long and awkward Muggle-way to go the ministry, they finally arrived in the atrium. “Well your trial starts at 9 am, so we’ve still got a little over an hour left,” Mr. Weasley
said, as they walked past a group of busy looking witches.

Mr. Weasley still thought, his trial was at 9, but Harry remembered that the ministry had moved his hearing to 8 am. They only had about fifteen minutes left to be on time. How could he do something about it, without raising too much suspicion? Harry watched the witches and wizards passing them. When they waited in front of an elevator, a few more wizards and witches joined their group.

“Everything ‘lright Arthur?” The voice had come from a bearded wizard who was carrying a box. Harry wanted to laugh at the irony of what he was going to do. He cast a wandless imperius and for the slightest second, the eyes of the wizard stared into nothingness. Thankfully Mr. Weasley was busy as he was inspecting the box with a curious look.

“What do you have here?” Mr. Weasley asked.

“Oh, nothing in particular an experimental charm gone wrong, but Arthur?”

“Hm, yes?” Mr. Weasley said raising head.

“Don’t you have to go downstairs?”

“Why’s that?”

“The trial of the Potter boy you’re with. I overheard a few people talking ‘bout it. Time and place were changed, weren’t they? An hour earlier in the old courtroom.”

“What?!” Mr. Weasley looked at his watch. “Harry! If that’s true we only have about five minutes.” He pulled Harry out of the elevator. “Thank you Bob,” he yelled over his shoulder.

“No problem, Arthur,” the bearded wizard shouted back.

They hurried through the rooms, but luckily, they didn’t have to run this time. They stopped inside a gloomy hallway. Torches on the wall were the only light illuminating his way. Hushed voices could be heard from the room at the end of the hallway. The door stood wide open. At least this time he wasn’t late.

“I can’t come with you,” Mr. Weasley panted and he stopped and leaned against the wall for support. “You’ll have to go on your own. Good luck Harry,” Mr. Weasley said, “Now go.” Harry smiled at him and then turned to the door. He raised his chin and straightened his posture as he walked. Death was moving next to him, like a silent shadow. Harry kept every emotion from his face, as soon as he passed the door. The voices grew silent, when he entered. Fifty people in plum-coloured robes, Percy Weasley in the front, Fudge in the middle next to Umbridge and Amelia Bones. He even spotted Lucius Malfey in a row, close to the door. Malfey wasn’t allowed to vote, but blackmailing Umbridge had obviously worked. Lucius looked at him stoically, when Harry raised an eyebrow.

Harry walked over to the chair in the middle of the room. The chains rattled when he sat down, but a subtle motion with his hands stopped them. Death loomed over him, a sharp grin on his face daring everyone to come closer, even if they couldn’t see him.

Fudge didn’t seem very pleased with Harry being on time. “Well, then let’s start, since the accused has arrived. Are you ready?”

“Yes, Sir,” Percy said.
Disciplinary hearing at August twelfth, regarding violation of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage sorcery, as well as the international statue of secrecy-,” Fudge said, while Percy’s quill scratched over the parchment. “-by Harry Potter, residing at Privet Drive No. 4, Little Whinging, Surrey.”

“Interrogators; Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic; Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement; Dolores Jane Umbridge, First undersecretary of the Minister; Court Scribe, Percy Ignatius Weasley-“ The door behind Harry opened and Dumbledore walked in, billowing robes and beard.

"Witness of Defence-,” Harry stood up and interrupted Dumbledore, like the headmaster had interrupted Fudge. "-myself.”

Shocked whispers filled the room. A somewhat appreciative expression on Mr. Malfoy's face. The man leaned forward, intrigued by Harry's surprising action. It was one of the rare times, Harry ever saw Dumbledore speechless. But he soon had gathered himself. "Well this is certainly surprising," Dumbledore said, as if his plans hadn’t all been thrown overboard by Harry. "Mr. Malfoy if you would be so kind," Dumbledore said and walked over to him. Malfoy looked like replying to him was beneath his dignity, nevertheless he made space for the Headmaster. Fudge smiled gleefully, because of the unexpected turn. Excitedly he shuffled through his papers. The room grew silent when he started to talk again. "Yes... the accusation.“ The murmured words faded into the background, while Harry stared at Dumbledore, who avoided to meet his eyes.

"-Potter!“

"Pardon me, if you could repeat your question," Harry said turning away from Dumbledore. Fudge seemed annoyed.

"You are Harry James Potter, living in Little Whinging surrey?“

"I am,“ Harry said calmly.

"You received an official warning of the Ministry regarding unlawful sorcery, is that correct," Fudge said.

"It is," Harry said and leaned back in his chair.

"And despite that, you cast a Patronus charm two weeks ago?“

"I did," Harry said. And he watched Death who was starting to stalk through the room.

"Knowing, that you aren’t allowed cast spells outside of school till you are seventeen?“

"That is wrong," Harry stated. Fudge already opened his mouth to continue, but he stopped surprised when he realized that Harry hadn't given him the expected answer.

"How is that wrong. You admitted it yourself, you were warned before, therefore you must know of this law,” he said as if Harry was stupid.

"The law explicitly states, that a wizard or witch, who is underage is allowed to use magic in certain situations. Situations in which life or well-being of themselves or others are threatened and I found myself in such position,” Harry replied carelessly, almost as if he was bored.

"And what was the threat that caused you to act like this?" Amelia Bones asked.
"Dementors," Harry said and didn’t look up. The slightest hint of a smirk on his face, he side-eyed Fudge, when the whole room grew quiet. When Fudges and his eyes met, Harry was looking at him with an expressionless face. This only seemed to rile the minister up more.

"Dementors?" Madame Bones asked, her eyebrows raised high. "What does that mean, boy?"

"I would appreciate it, if you would refrain from using the term boy, but yes. Two Dementors attacked me and my cousin that night," Harry said.

"Ah!" Fudge sneered. "Yes, sure. Dementors. Really smart, really smart. Telling us that Dementors are responsible for this, when everyone clearly knows, that they are invisible to Muggles."

"There is another witness, beside Dudley Dursley. But I suppose I could also just show you my memory of this evening," Harry said casually.

"We don’t have time to listen to your lies, boy.‘ Fudge said. Harry’s eyes narrowed, but then his expression changed. He stood up and smirked at Fudge, whose eyebrows furrowed with confusion. It was the first real emotion Harry showed, since he’d entered the court room. Malfoy who had grown bored over the time of the questioning, now leaned forward, once again mildly interested and Dumbledore seemed worried. Harry had hesitated to claim his seats. It would be risky and would probably cause more problems, than it was useful. It made more sense, to claim them after the trial. He already had played into Fudges hands, by distancing himself from Dumbledore and therefore his supporters, but to Hell with it. Even if he was declared guilty. What were they going to do about it? Break his wand? The thought was laughable. And was life without a little risk? Harry just wanted to see their reactions.

"As you very well know, Minister," Harry said while he started to move through the room, "The accused is allowed to present as many witnesses as they want, to prove their innocence. But I won’t play that game you are playing. This whole trial is a farce," Harry stated, while he settled behind his seat, before he put his hands onto the back of the chair. "A hearing because a little bit of underage magic...“ He snorted. Approving murmurs went through the crowd, before Harry continued. "But well, while I am already here, I might also invoke my right, to claim a seat in the Wizengamot."

Fudge spluttered. Voices were raised and the people started to whisper, until Fudge finally got the others to grow quiet. His first moment of surprise was replaced by a mix of anger and a mocking expression. He clearly thought, that this whole situation was ridiculous. “PLEASE-," he said loudly to drown the other voices, “-this is absurd. With what right?”

“With my right, as a Lord," Harry said. Dumbledore frowned as if he tried to recall the law and Malfoy sat up, with a new-found interest. Next to Fudge, Umbridge cleared her throat with the familiar “Chrm chrm."

‘Merlin, what an annoying person,’ Harry thought. Even with losing all his previous hate towards her, it was already growing again.

“I probably didn’t understand you quite right. Silly me. Did you just say, that you – a fifteen-year-old boy – wants to claim a seat in the Wizengamot? This is your own interrogation, you can’t vote, even if you weren’t underage," she said as if she was speaking with someone who was stupid.

“If you payed attention, Dolores, you wouldn’t have to ask twice.“ Harry said smugly and bit back a laugh, when he saw her offended face. A few people in the purple robes snickered. "Apart from that, the honourable Code of the Wizengamot of 1597 states that a Lord can claim his seat in the Wizengamot at any time he wants, as long as he is related to one of the family’s mentioned,” Harry
said, "Meaning, I can claim my seat during my hearing." Fudge raised his voice once again, while Amelia Bones had swished her wand. Books floated towards her. She snatched it out of the air and immediately flipped through it.

“These laws are surly outdated by now,” Fudge said, trying to calm the people in the room, who were still talking in hushed voices.

“Oh no,” Harry said smirking with a look at Malfoy. “It was seen as indecorous to claim a seat this way, or a lordship generally after the 18th century. The people stopped doing it after a while, thus the Wizengamot never bothered to change the law, even though it can’t be changed without all the current Lords in the Wizengamot agreeing to it…,” Harry said and then straightened his posture. “I, Lord Potter, heir and Head of the noble House Potter claim my seat in the Wizengamot.” As soon as the words had been spoken, Harry felt ancient magic gathering in the room.

"He is right," Madame Bones said and snapped the book shut, "A Lord can claim a seat in the Wizengamot," she said and looked at Harry sharply, "if the Lordship is validated by a neutral party, recognized by the international confederation of Wizards, such as the Ministry."

"Well Mr. Potter, I don’t remember seeing a letter with a request like this on my desk," Fudge said smugly.

"A neutral party… Well of course, the Ministry. Hmm, why didn’t I think of this?" Harry said sarcastically, "If there was another neutral party like - I don’t know - ah yes, the only Wizarding bank of the world. Oh well, there is." Harry looked at the people. Everyone was staring at him. He heard them whisper and question if that was even possible. He would be able to claim Sirius’ seats in his name and he could claim the Peverell seat. With a glance at Dumbledore, Harry decided, that it was better, to leave some things hidden. Dumbledore had probably noticed that the elder wand had vanished. He didn’t need to confirm his suspicions further. Harry turned back to the court members. "Additionally," Harry pulled out an envelope from the inner pocket of his suit. He broke the seal and threw the letter into the air. It stopped and floated a few feet over Harry’s head, so that everyone was able to see it. The whispering grew louder. Harry smirked. They were really underestimating him, even now. "In the name of my godfather, I am claiming the seats of the ancient and noble house of Black, speaking for the Heir and Head of this house, Sirius Black."

Someone in the room squeaked with fear, when he said Sirius’ name. Fudges face was red with anger, he was fuming. "This- this is unacceptable," he pressed out between clenched teeth. Meanwhile Madame Bones summoned the document that was floating in the air with a swish of her wand. She read it, eyes solely fixated on the piece of parchment.

"What he says is right," Madame Bones said, still looking at the letter. Fudge turned to her with a swelled chest. Obviously he was hoping for confirmation of his opinion. "Mr. Potters claiming is entirely legal." Fudge sucked in air. Harry sat down on the chair with the chains and crossed his ankles, satisfaction written on his face. Even if he should be declared guilty, this had been worth it. Death stood once again behind him, and Harry felt his hand trailing over his neck. Everyone seemed to wait for Fudge to continue. Even after the voices had gone down, the minister was still shuffling through his papers grinding his teeth. Percy looked torn and nervously chewed on his feather. His eyes snapped from Harry to Fudge and back.

"I name Arabella Figg as my witness," Harry said eventually, when no one made a move to continue the questioning.

"Arabella-," Fudge spluttered, before he collected himself. "We don’t have the time to search for this person," he started, the vein on his forehead pulsing dangerously.
"Ah, well," Dumbledore interfered. "It might be a lucky accident, that Mrs. Figg accompanied me here today. She is waiting just outside of the room." Fudge gaped. Dumbledore looked as calm as ever, but Harry could tell that his thoughts inside his head were spinning. Dumbledore’s bright magic was restless and the eyes behind his glasses eyed him suspiciously without even once meeting his gaze.

"Weasley, you go and get her," Fudge said when he had gathered himself.

"Of course Minister," Percy said and he rushed outside to follow the orders of the Minister immediately. Harry almost pitied him, as stuck up as he was. He came back after a moment, followed by Mrs. Figg. She eyed the empty chair and the chains nervously, as Harry stood up and stepped to the side.

"Full name?" Fudge snapped and his hands were wrinkling his papers. He was obviously trying to pretend that everything was alright.

"Arabella Doreen Figg," she said nervously.

"And you are?"

"I am a citizen of Little Whinging and live close to Harry Potter."

"We don’t have an entry reading that there is another Witch or Wizard living in Little Whinging, apart from Harry Potter," Madame Bones said immediately. "This area is strictly monitored given… given the events in the past."

"Right," Harry muttered with a deadpan look, but loud enough to be heard.

"I am a Squib," Mrs. Figg replied, "I guess you won’t have an entry about me," she said clutching her purse tightly.

"A Squib, yeah?" Fudge said and stared at her. "We will check this. You can leave the details of your ancestry with my assistant Weasley. Can Squibs even see Dementors?"

"Yes we can," Mrs. Figg replied offended.

"Well then," Fudge said patronizingly. "What is your story?"

"I went out to buy some cat food at the corner store. That was about nine at the evening of the second August. Then I heard noises coming from the ally…” Mrs. Figg sounded like she had rehearsed everything she said. Harry looked at Dumbledore. He asked himself, if the headmaster had asked her to lie. Maybe Squibs really couldn’t see Dementors. An amused smile tugged on Harry’s lips, when Death started to fixate Fudge, who paled, even if he didn’t know what was bothering him. He gripped the table until his knuckles were white. Harry grinned, when Fudge’s eyes passed him. The minister swallowed hard, while Madame Bones interrogated Mrs. Figg. Harry’s attention only went back to Madame Bones, when Mrs Figg was dismissed.

“She wasn’t a very convincing witness,” Fudge said immediately.

“Oh I don’t know,” Madame Bones retorted, "She described the effects of a Dementor attack very well. I can’t imagine why she would be lying."

“But Dementors strolling through a Muggle-town and *accidentally* meeting a Wizard?” Fudge snorted, "That should be highly unlikely. Not even Bagman would bet on this-"
“What makes you think they were there by chance?” Harry said and he sat back down on the chair. Umbridge shifted uncomfortably. What a bitch.

“I think if somebody would order two Dementors to go to Little Whinging, we would have a report over this!” Fudge snapped and stared at Harry.

“Well, I didn’t say, that these Dementors were ordered there by the ministry,” Harry said casually, but he watched Fudges reaction attentively. A year later the bastard had begged for his attention. “I think Dumbledore told you all about his opinion on the matter.”

“Indeed, he did. But these ideas are more than ludicrous. The Dementors are in Azkaban and do only what they are told.”

“Well, then I have to ask myself, why somebody in the ministry wishes me dead,” Harry said. “It’s like the people are afraid that I might spread my opinion. But that would be ridiculous, right?” Harry said and leaned back in his chair, "After all, I am only a child," Harry added with a sarcastic undertone. He watched with satisfaction, how Fudge tried to find gather some words. Umbridge even had the nerve to look offended. After a few moments Harry leaned forward again. “Of course, there is always the possibility that these two Dementors were out of control of the Ministry.”

“There are no Dementors out of control!” Fudge immediately fired back; the vein on his forehead pulsed.

Harry raised his hands. "Well if you say so. I didn’t want to imply anything. You are right. The theory that somebody inside the ministry tried to kill me is way more plausible." Fudge spluttered once again. Harry glanced at Lucius Malfoy. The man could barely hide his amusement and a few wizards and witches also smiled. Dumbledore on the other hand looked at Harry strangely.

“Of course, there is always the possibility that these two Dementors were out of control of the Ministry.”

“May I remind the people present, that Harry Potter already violated this law, by using a floating charm, three years ago,” Fudge almost shouted.

“That was a house-elf," Harry said casually. He noticed amused, that Malfoy shifted in his chair.

“A house-elf, what a joke. Two years ago you blew up your aunt-“ Malfoy raised his eyebrows. This man was Harry’s lifeline in this endless conversation. At least he was somewhat entertaining.

“Which was dismissed, by you personally,” Harry said. Awkward silence followed. “Before I wait for your verdict, may I say one more thing?” Harry asked. Madame Bones nodded, when Fudge opened his mouth - certainly to deny him his wish.

Harry stood up and spoke to whole Wizengamot. “Dear Wizards and Witches of the Wizengamot. Before you vote, please remember that we had a witness confirm my statement, that two Dementors attacked me and my cousin. The law explicitly states, that an underage wizard or witch is allowed to use magic in situations, in which life or well-being of oneself or others are threatened. A Dementor attack counts as such situation.” Harry turned to Fudge and bowed mockingly. "Minister."

The witches and wizards started whispering again. Harry sat back in his chair and waited, till they had made a decision.
"Who votes guilty?" Fudge said and raised his hand, and others followed his example. Harry stared at Umbridge as she raised her hand, eyes fixated on him. She looked away soon enough, as if something in his gaze unnerved her. Half the courtroom raised their hands.

"Who votes for the accused to be declared free of all charges?" Madame Bones said with a loud voice. Arms were raised. Less then the last time Harry had been here, and not enough. He knew that. Fudge already grinned victoriously. He had obviously forgotten about the fact that there was another person who was able to turn the verdict around. Casually Harry raised his arm. Fudges left eye twitched. Umbridge leaned forward.

"You cannot vote. This is your own trial, boy," she said in her girly voice.

"I can," Harry explained. "If a Lord claims a seat, he has the unchallengeable right to vote at every trial he wishes."

"It’s true," announced Madame Bones, the book she’d summoned earlier was still laying open in front of her. Fudges eyes wandered over the raised hands.

"With your vote it’s still not enough boy," Fudge said gleefully and clicked his tongue.

"I also vote in the name of Sirius Black," Now it was Harry’s time to grin. "The black family holds claim to two seats, which means, my second vote counts double." Madame Bones leaned over to Fudge and whispered something, when he did nothing, but stare at Harry. He was shaking.

"Well then," Fudge started, voice strained with suppressed anger, "...declared free of all charges." The tension slowly started to dissolve, but Harry wasn’t finished yet.

“As I am here and allowed to speak in Sirius Black’s name, I demand a second trial in his case,” Harry said and caught the attention of the witches and wizards, even the ones who were already standing, to go their ways. "I will know, if I am not informed about the hearing." Then Harry turned around and left, Death in his trail.

Outside a pale Mr. Weasley was waiting. "And how did it go?"

"Free of all charges," Harry replied.

"That’s great!" Mr. Weasley said and gripped Harry by his shoulders. "They couldn’t declare you guilty not with all that evidence-" The door to the courtroom opened and people came through. "Merlins beard, was the whole court gathered here to decide over your case?"

"Yeah," Harry said. A few people looked at him strangely. Others didn’t even take notice of him, but greeted Arthur instead. Dumbledore nodded at Mr. Weasley and walked past them with furrowed brows. Mr. Fudge and Umbridge were one of the last people to leave the courtroom, next to Malfoy, who talked to Fudge. The Minister rushed past Harry not giving him a second glance, but Malfoy stopped him. "I’ll see you later Minister?" Fudge looked between him and Harry.

"I’ll wait in my office Lucius," Fudge said and left, the pink toad following him. Lucius turned to Arthur with a derogatory look but then his gray eyes fixated Harry. There was the slightest hint of curiosity in his gaze. Harry wasn’t backing up, but instead stared back. Mr. Weasley stiffened. He had just spotted Percy walking past them.

"It is really exceptional how you manage to worm your way out of the greatest difficulties ...like a snake, indeed," Malfoy said.

Harry tilted his head and smiled a dangerous smile as he watched Malfoy. "Four weeks are enough
time to change. You are only scratching the surface Mr Malfoy," Harry whispered while Mr. Weasley stared at Percy. "I thought I might be a little more active, politically spoken. Exchange a few words with some old friends. Maybe even Tom, an old acquaintance of mine. He has some interesting ideas, but I think you wouldn’t know him. He is named after his father, a Muggle you see. I don’t know if you ever experienced something like our connection. It’s like we are soulmates," Harry said, grinning at the hidden irony, "But I'm disgressing. The Minister is probably already waiting for you, Mr. Malfoy. I wouldn’t want you to seem disrespectful by letting him wait, for too long."

"Yes Potter, thank you for the insight in your love-life," Malfoy said his eyes lingered for a second on Harry’s neck, where Death had materialized and slithered out of his collar, the black scales swallowing the light. Then Lucius looked at Mr. Weasley. "Weasley."

"Malfoy," Ron’s dad replied with an equally disgusted look.

"What are you doing here Weasley?" Malfoy asked.

"I work here," Arthur said.

"But not here, are you. I thought you were on the second floor, smuggling Muggle artefacts home and charming them," Malfoy said.

"No," Mr. Weasley hissed. He gripped Harry’s shoulder tightly until Malfoy had disappeared. "Was Malfoy at your trial?" he asked still sounding kind of angry. Harry nodded.

"By the way, who was this Muggle boy you mentioned?" Mr. Weasley asked, when they had reached the Atrium, "Tom, I mean." Harry grinned.

"Oh nobody. I just wanted Malfoy to know where I stand in this war. I am not stupid enough to tell a Death eater about the people I like. Who would know what Voldemort would do, if I told him about a real person I don’t want to get hurt?" Harry barely hid his laughter.

"That was probably very smart of you," Mr. Weasley said. Harry grinned alongside Death. Not one of the two men had really gotten the hint. For Mr. Weasley it sounded, like he had told Malfoy about a close - imaginary - friend who was a Muggle or at least Muggleborn. Malfoy probably thought, Harry was a lovesick teenager and that he was still supporter of the light side. There was to be hoping, that Malfoy cared enough about this information and would tell Voldemort about a new ‘weak spot’ of Harry Potter. The only one able to tell what he was really talking about was Dumbledore and Voldemort himself.

When they arrived at Grimmauld Place everybody was grinning widely, when Mr. Weasley announced, that he was declared free of all charges.

"I knew it Harry, it was the only possible outcome," Hermione said, obviously relieved and with shaking hands.

"He is free, he is free, he is free," Fred and George sang, as they started to dance around the table.

"...it’s obvious after Dumbledore came in, they just couldn’t declare you guilty," Ron said over the noise. Harry raised his eyebrows, but kept quiet and resisted the urge to laugh. "Maybe he’ll even come and party with us," Ron said.

"He is free, he is free, he is free...," the twins sang, now followed by Ginny.

"I doubt that Dumbledore has time for that," Mrs. Weasley said, putting a plate with a giant chicken
in front of Harry, Ron and Hermione. "He is very busy at the moment."

"HE IS FREE, HE IS FREE, HE IS-"

"SILENCE," shouted Mrs. Weasley. Harry grinned. There was to be hoping, that his plan worked. Voldemort needed people in the ministry and by inviting Malfoy to his trial, he had handed them a way to invade the Wizengamot on a silver platter. Almost every old pureblood family was able to claim a seat. Now he only had to wait.

Chapter End Notes

Now guys, hope you liked it, the next chapters will be posted in a slower rhythm, cause I need to write some more, but the next two chapters are already written, so no need to worry.
Fears and Revelations

Chapter Summary

Harry encounters a Boggart and talks to Sirius.

Chapter Notes

Okay guys in this chapter Sirius might be a little out of character but in this fic he is a little bit crazy and dark so well, hope you like it still. Harry's darker side also shows a little bit.

Throughout the next days, Harry noticed, that Sirius was in a bad mood. Harry didn’t know, if it was, because he wouldn’t live with Sirius, now that he was allowed to go back to Hogwarts, or because Remus was once again absent, to work for the order.

"Hey Sirius," Harry said when the holidays had almost passed. He met him in the Hallway, after he, Ron and Hermione had finally finished scrubbing a mouldy wardrobe clean. Thankfully nobody noticed Harry using his magic to keep the smell away from him and to clean some of the harder stains. "On the way to lock yourself up with Buckbeak huh?“ Harry asked, "Never leaving your room anymore, are you?“ Sirius shrugged grumpily and mumbled something. "Wanna get out of here for a while?“

Sirius eyes lit up a little bit. "Yeah. What did you have in mind?“

"Dunno," Harry shrugged, "We could visit Remus."

"Remus is on order business," Sirius said, "He is undercover with the werewolves. It would take days to locate them, apart from the fact that visiting him would threaten his mission."

"I don’t get, why Dumbledore is still sending him there," Harry said. He doubted that finding Remus would be a problem.

"I know. He hates it," Sirius said, "...to be there, with the other werewolves."

"Well he isn’t too fond of his own wolf either."

"His wolf?" Sirius asked.

"Yeah," Harry replied, "Mostly he ignores him."

"His wolf - you mean his werewolf form?"

"Mhm. I can sense him. The wolf grows stronger with the approaching full moon. It’s a bit like a split personality. Generally they are the same person, like two sides of the same coin. I think it would be better for Remus if he gave in to his wolf sometimes."
"Going around and biting people or pissing against a tree to mark his territory?" Sirius asked. "Don’t laugh, I’ve seen him doing it. He also wags his tail if he is happy."

Harry smirked alongside Sirius. "No. But if he would listen to him more, he wouldn’t put up with so much bullshit. He would’ve long quit going on missions, that he deems pointless anyways."

Sirius hummed in agreement.

"Harry, the letters from Hogwarts are here!" Ron shouted from downstairs. Sirius sighed.

"You should go. We can go out some other time," he said. Harry was already turning away but stopped to face him once more.

"Sirius, I know it’s not my business, but are you and Remus a couple?" Harry asked curiously. Sirius seemed surprised but then sighed once more, as he leaned against the wall.

"It’s- It’s complicated. We were a thing once, you know? Now...,"Sirius laughed an dry laugh, "We haven’t really talked about it since I escaped," his godfather said and pushed he long hair out of his face.

"If it bothers you do something about it," Harry suggested. "He likes you and you like him."

"I don’t know," Sirius said. "Sometimes it's more complicated than that. He thought I was a traitor for over ten years and I can't blame him."

"Sirius, the guy shaved his beard because you said it looked stupid!" Harry insisted. "You will regret it if you do nothing," Harry said and with a last glance at Sirius he left.

In the evening, Harry found himself sitting in the kitchen underneath a banner that read, "Congratulations to the new Prefects, Ron and Hermione". The whole fuss about it was slightly annoying, at least in Harry’s opinion. In any case, Sirius had found some peace after Remus arrived in the late afternoon. Harry wondered if Sirius took his advice. Judging by his good mood it was pretty likely.

Harry sat in his chair next to Ron, who explained every feature of his new broom to Tonks. Mrs. Weasley had bought one, as a reward for him being declared prefect. "...yeah, zero to seventy in ten seconds, in comparison to the old..." Harry turned away from the conversation and looked at the other people in the room.

Fred and George sat in a corner and talked to Mundungus, Moody took a bite of his chicken leg after he had analyzed it for about five minutes - Harry had felt his gaze on him throughout the whole evening - and the others were engrossed in their own conversations. Eventually Mrs. Weasley yawned loudly. "I think I’ll get rid of that boggart before I’ll go to bed... Arthur, I don’t want the kids staying up too late. Good night Harry," she said as she walked past him.

Harry nodded and then turned back to the table and his gaze passed Sirius and Remus. Harry grinned at the werewolf when their eyes met. He raised an eyebrow. Remus stared back and he seemed slightly confused. From his point of view, Harry shouldn’t be able to see what was going on. But Harry was the Master of Death. His perception had changed, and in this case... Harry shot a pointed look at the table, under which Sirius had placed a hand on Remus thigh.

Harry smirked at Lupin, who suddenly raised his head, listening attentively, when there was a noise coming from upstairs. Nobody else seemed to have noticed that Mrs. Weasley’s fight against the boggart wasn't going very well. The crying had been going on for about ten minutes, but Harry
hadn’t really cared. Remus dismissed the sound and turned to talk to Sirius.

Harry knew that Moody was watching him. The bright blue eye had been staring at him during the whole evening, apart from a few glances here and there. Mad-eye raised his head, when Harry pushed back his chair with a scratching sound and stood up. He didn’t see a reason to stay any longer. He could as well go to sleep and wait for tomorrow.

Harry left the table when, Moody’s eye rolled towards the ceiling. Harry could hear Mad-Eye grumble. “Molly seems to have some problems with the boggart...”

"Don’t worry Arthur," another voice interfered when he was already halfway up the stairs to the entrance Hall. Probably Remus. "I was thinking about going to bed anyways. I'll take a look."

Harry could hear the scratching of chairs being pushed back, as he continued his way. He knew what was waiting for them when they would reach the second floor. The hollow clonk of Moody’s wooden leg was audible as well. Harry sighed. Now he had to go to Mrs. Weasley if he didn’t want to raise too much suspicion. Even more so after his trial. Death watched him silently as he made his way upstairs.

"You know, if you hadn’t invaded my mind, I would not have to think about going in there or not," Harry whispered when he reached the door to the Drawing room. Quiet sniffles could be heard from behind it.

"You seem fairly okay with it," Death replied grinning.

"Yeah, cause I don’t really care," Harry replied. "And the part that should worry me even more, is, that I don’t care, that I don’t care."

"And yet you like me anyway," Death said. Harry shot the being a curious look. He hadn’t expected this answer. But then he remembered what Death once said, ‘...I will be you and you will be me...’

Maybe Harry wasn’t the only one influenced by their connection. If he was feeling less human, then Death was maybe experiencing the opposite. When he sensed Death’s smugness, Harry shook his head, quietly laughing. "Alright, alright. You are a right bastard, you know that?" Harry pushed the door open. "Now, come on," he said over his shoulder.

Harry wiped the grin of his face when he entered the room. Mrs. Weasley was sitting on the floor, weeping and weakly swishing her wand. "Ri-Riddikulus," she started hiccupping. On the ground in front of her was the corpse of Ron until it changed into Percy’s a second later. Or at least the thing, pretending to be him. It radiated darkness. Suddenly it changed into Mr. Weasley. His glasses were slipping from his face and a trickle of blood ran out of his nose. Molly sobbed loudly. "Ri-Riddikulus," Mrs. Weasley stuttered. A dead Harry was laying in front of her. "Riddikulus. The twins sprawled out next to each other. "Riddikulus-" It changed into Bill, eyes wide open, his arms spread, like he was trying to fly.

"Come on Mrs. Weasley," Harry said and took her at the elbow,"Get out of here."

Harry pushed her into the direction of the door where Remus was just entering, followed by Sirius and Moody. The werewolf couldn’t even react, when Mrs. Weasley stumbled towards him.

“It’s only a boggart Molly," he said, the arms full of a crying Mrs. Weasley. Harry turned around when Moody stared over his shoulder. The boggart had turned its attention towards the closest person available, and in this case, it was Harry.

Harry stared into the warping mass, that turned into the first shapes of a Dementor, but it changed not even fully formed. Red eyes on a face without a nose replaced the black hood hiding the slimy
face of the Dementor and vanished back into the masses, until it turned once again. It didn’t know what to do. Harry tilted his head, curious of what the creature would become. Honestly, he had no idea. The thought of a Dementor didn’t scare him and he had lost all fear of Voldemort a long time ago.

Except for the short moment of panic, when a knife had almost pierced Death as a snake, Harry hadn’t been afraid. Not truly. And Death couldn’t be harmed. Harry was sure of that, now that he had seen his true form.

Meanwhile the boggart seemed more desperate with every change. They happened quicker and quicker.

It turned into one of the Inferi Harry had seen in the cave with Voldemort’s horcux. Its guts were falling out of a bloodless wound in its stomach. Harry heard a shocked gasp behind him, but a moment later the boggart was was falling and changing. The organs retreated back into the body, which was now clothed, but three more gashes formed, and blood was streaming out of them.

Draco Malfoy, gasping and choking - bleeding to death on the ground, just like he had, when Harry hit him with the *Sectum Sempra* in his sixth year. Bricks of old stone grew out of the body until it had vanished completely and, a veil hiding an archway and whispering voices, had replaced it.

Harry was under the impression, that the boggart was trying to turn into everything. Harry had ever feared in his life.

The archway started to move and expanded until it was a giant Basilisk, with bleeding holes where the eyes should be. Already shrinking, it grew fur and turned into Fluffy, who promptly lost two of his heads and changed into a vicious version of aunt Magda’s dog Ripper. A shouting uncle Vernon approached Harry shortly after, "I’m going to teach you a lesson, boy!" and changed into aunt Petunia trying to hit him with a frying pan. Harry showed no reaction, besides watching it with a curious look on his face. Just before she could land a hit, Boggart-Petunia lost all her features and turned into a blurry, gender-less figure. Seemingly out of nowhere, a panicking man started to shout.

"Lily, take Harry and go! It’s him! Go! Run! I’ll hold him off-“ High pitched laughter echoed from the walls. Then, for a moment they couldn’t hear a thing, until a scream cut through the silence followed by the voice of Lily Potter.

"...not Harry, not Harry - Please, I’ll do anything-“ The blurry shape flickered and the voice grew weaker. It sounded like it came from a great distance.

"-stand aside - stand aside, girl-“ Then, there was silence. The boggart had vanished from existence.

Harry hummed thoughtfully. So he didn’t have a boggart anymore. He didn’t know if he should be pleased or if this should worry him. Harry turned around. Moody stared at him, with an unreadable expression, both eyes piercing him. Harry decided, that he would need to keep an eye on the Auror. Sirius was gripping the doorway. His knuckles were white from the blood-loss, just like his face. He was shaking. Remus didn’t look much better. Mrs. Weasley was still leaning against Lupin and hid her face on his shoulder.

"I guess it’s gone now," Harry said to breach the silence. Mrs. Weasley turned around and pulled him into a bone-crushing hug.

While Harry tried to regain his ability to breathe, Remus managed to find his voice. "Harry, I- I never-“
"This were James and Lily, who we heard... Right before they died," Sirius uttered.

"Yeah," Harry said, his arms uncomfortably pressed against his sides.

"-oh Harry, I am so sorry...," Mrs. Weasley said with a teary voice.

"Mm hm," Harry replied, finally slipping out of her grasp. He glared at Death, when the echo of amusement pulsed through the bond. Moody’s eyes darted from Death to Harry. Of course the Auror couldn’t see Death, but his perceptiveness was still impressive. Harry bit back a grin, when Mad-Eye fixated him with a suspicious look.

Harry had the impression, that he was affected the least by this encounter, apart from Moody maybe. Luckily nobody seemed to have noticed, that Malfoy's mirror image had been older than he actually was. Or that Harry feared for Malfoy's life at all. An inferius he could explain, by having it seen in a textbook before, but the veil was a whole other thing. Mrs. Weasley was sniffing again. "I can’t imagine what you are thinking of me now," she said shaken, "...can’t even deal with a stupid boggart....""

Lupin offered her a handkerchief, still staring at the place, where the boggart had been. Mrs. Weasley blew her nose. "It’s just- I worry so much. It would be a miracle, if we all walk out of this unharmed... A- and P-p-percy isn’t talking to us--" She wiped away some tears. "What if something h-h-horrible happens and we never got to reconcile? ...and what happens, if Arthur and I die, who i-i-is going to care for Ron and Ginny?"

"Molly, now it’s enough," Sirius said sharply. He seemed like Molly’s worrying was the least of his problems right now.

"It’s not like last time. The Order is prepared, we have the advantage, we know what Voldemort is planning-," Remus said, but he was interrupted by Mrs. Weasley, who shrieked at the name.

"Oh Molly, come on, it’s time to get used to hearing that name - look, I can’t promise, that nothing is going to happen, nobody can, but this time we are better off than last time. You weren’t in the Order back then. Last time, twenty Death eaters stood against one of us and they snatched one after the other..."

"Don’t worry about Percy," Sirius interfered, "He is going to come back to us. It’s only a matter of time, when Voldemort is going to show himself. As soon, as he is doing that, the whole ministry is going to fall on its knees and ask for forgiveness. And I don’t know if I accept their apology yet," he added bitterly.

"And about Ron and Ginny... Do you really think we would let them starve if something happened to you or Arthur?" Lupin said.

Mrs. Weasley smiled weakly. "How silly of me," she said and wiped her eyes.

Harry just wanted to go to leave. He tried to sneak past the group to his bedroom, as long as everyone was still standing around Mrs. Weasley. "Harry.‘ Sirius had called out his name. Harry supressed a sigh and turned around, only to see his gofather approaching him. "Could I talk to you for a moment?"

"Um, sure," Harry replied. Sirius shot a look over his shoulder and when no one was really watching them - Harry knew that Moody’s eye was still fixated on him, despite the Auror standing with the back to them - Sirius pulled Harry into the next room. It happened to be an old bedroom. Probably the one Ginny and Hermione used. "So what did you wanna talk about?" Harry asked, "Is
"I haven’t told him much by now, only that you found the Hallows. I can’t really tell him, that your snake is the Grim Reaper without him questioning my sanity, but that’s not it," Sirius hesitated. "I wanted to ask you if the things that we saw, the boggart, if they really happened."

"Essentially yes," Harry said. He wondered if Sirius would ask him about his parents or the veil. Maybe even the Basilisk. The question that came instead was unexpected.

"Do the Dursley’s abuse you Harry?" Sirius asked. Harry was taken aback. Never had someone asked him that. Neither his fifteen-year old, nor his older self had ever thought about it.

"No. I mean- I don’t...," Harry started, but then he stopped. Now that he was connected to Death he had a different view on his life. He had never wanted to live there. Living with the Dursley’s had always been more of a punishment than anything else, but never had he asked himself the question if he had been abused. Not getting food, if he did something that they didn’t like had been a fact. It hadn’t really mattered. There had been worse things out there. Maniacs trying to kill him for example. But Petunia had hit him with that pan and Vernon had choked him more than once. The words 'Freak' and 'boy' still let him feel uneasy, even now, that he lost the emotional attachment to his so-called relatives. Only magic had given him some kind of power. The cupboard under the stairs had been his bedroom for so long, he never even questioned it. And when Harry looked at Sirius, he was once more reminded, that Sirius ran away from this home when he was a teenager. Hadn’t Harry done the same when he was thirteen, but Dumbledore decided that he had to go back the year after? "I guess they did," Harry replied. "But it’s not something I can’t manage," he added with an afterthought. Harry didn’t plan on going back anyways.

"I’m going to kill them!" Sirius said and his eyes blazed dangerously. He paced through the room. "I’m going to kill them!" Harry remembered Moody and with a thought cast a strong privacy charm. "Really I’m not joking. I am already on the run, so why the fuck not? They need my house, so no one here would dare to throw me out." Sirius laughed maniacally - a sound, Harry rather associated with Bellatrix than his godfather. Death stood calmly next to him and watched with a grin. Harry sensed his eagerness. Sirius pulled out his wand and stopped in front of Harry. "I’ll go right now!" It would be a lie to say, that Death was the only one, who found the thought appealing.

"Sirius, last time you tried it that way, you got locked up," Harry said instead, but he smirked.

"I don’t care," His eyes widened. "Last time I didn’t tell Remus where I was going. That was the mistake," Sirius said in sudden realization. "He can help us, we just have to tell him."

"And Dumbledore...," Sirius rambled on, "He knows. There is no fucking way that he doesn’t." Sirius was already halfway past the way to the door.

"Sirius," Harry said, trying to stop him, a grin on his face.

"Oh no Harry, I am going to have a talk with Dumbledore now!" Sirius said and his magic swirled wildly.

"Sirius!" Harry snapped and the smirk slowly vanished from his face. His godfather was already reaching for the doorknob. Without a thought, Harry made a grabbing motion with his hand. Sirius’ wand fell to the floor with a clattering noise. A surprised shout escaped his lips and Sirius jumped back from the door, grabbing his forearm. The symbol of the Deadly Hallows flared up on his arm. It burned golden almost like fire.
"What the-", Sirius started and Harry released his grip on Sirius.

"Sirius. What do you think is going to happen, if you confront Dumbledore?" Harry said and made a step towards his godfather. The now black mark was already fading again. Sirius turned from his arm to Harry. "I’m going to tell you. Nothing. Don’t you think, that I didn’t already do that? Approached Dumbledore about it, asked him to stay at Hogwarts or with the Weasley’s? He thought it was the best solution, to live with the Dursley’s. Voldemort can’t come past the blood wards, that’s the reason he sends me back there. Objectively spoken he was not wrong," Harry said and stopped in front of his godfather, who stared at him. Harry’s voice softened a little bit. "Sirius, you have enough problems already, don’t try to solve mine too. I’m not angry with Dumbledore, for thinking that he is doing the right thing.‘ Harry’s expression changed. "But what annoys me is, that he still interferes in my life, trying to control me in a way, I don’t approve of. And I won’t let him do that anymore," he said and licked over his teeth. Sirius shuddered when Harry’s dark magic brushed against his. "The Dursley’s are my problem, and when the day comes that they die, you won’t be the one responsible for it," Harry said. He grinned sharply and Death’s amusement echoed through the bond. Sirius stared at him with wide eyes.

"Harry, don’t-", his godfather started.

"What," Harry snapped and almost laughed at Sirius concern. "Think about killing them? Like you tried to do three seconds ago? Don’t be a hypocrite Sirius," Harry said. "You are dark, don’t deny it. Try and pretend just like Remus that you are good little sheeps, but sometimes you just thirst for blood."

"We aren’t like the Death Eaters. We aren’t bad-," Sirius spat and anger sparked in his grey eyes.

"I never said, you are bad people or evil," Harry interfered, "But even you can’t deny that you loved having Pettigrew in front of your wand. You would’ve killed him if I didn’t stop you and Remus in my third year."

"That was different," Sirius said and backed up, "He is responsible that James is dead!" Harry didn’t pity him. Not now.

"You bullied Snape mercilessly even before that. Of course he wasn’t a saint either, but that doesn’t change the fact, that you almost got him killed once and you don’t regret it. Stand true to who you are, Sirius. Don’t back down, just because you think I’m a little child, who isn’t able to grasp this side of you. Pretend as much as you want, the others might believe you. But don’t try to lie to me. I see who you really are. You have always been a little bit crazy, even before Azkaban.‘ Sirius swallowed hard. ‘You know it, and Remus knows it. He is just as dark as you, or he wouldn’t have forgiven you for telling Snape, where he could find him on a full moon.‘ Harry smirked. "Let me tell you a secret Sirius," Harry said. He leaned forward and when he continued his voice came close to whispering. "Since I am connected to Death, I am darker than you can imagine. Darker than you or Remus and maybe even Voldemort, but despite all this, I haven’t gone on a killing spree," Harry said. He smiled and took a step back, towards the door. "I don’t know if it’s because of this, but I like you Sirius. More than any other person in here and I would hate to see you in Azkaban, just because you do something, that isn’t even your problem. Don’t worry about me. Try to keep Remus from being killed, because of Dumbledore’s stupid orders," Harry said. With that, he walked past Sirius and left. ‘He won’t be able to win this war anyway...’

Chapter End Notes
By the way, while Death and Harry do influence each other, they don't mess with their minds. So no mindfuckery and everything is consensual - if you were wondering. Death just feels a little more, since he is connected to Harry and Harry is still somewhat a good guy. While he is really dark, he won't just kill people like Voldemort, who throws a killing curse if someone disrespects him. Harry's morals have changed but he still rememberes what he was thinking beforehand and sticks to his somewhat good morals he once had. Out of habit or because he thinks his previous self wasn't too bad, thats for you to decide.
Ten minutes later, Harry was in his room. He had finished feeding Hedwig and let himself fall on his bed. He rested his head on his arms and closed his eyes. Even if he couldn't see anything, he knew that Death was watching him. "I wonder what Sirius is going to do now. He may deny it, but he is a Black even if he tries to escape it… and Tomorrow we are going to Hogwarts," Harry said after a few minutes of silence. "I honestly have no idea what to expect..."

"You can always choose, not to go," Death said.

"I know." Harry sighed and they stayed silent again. He smiled, when felt the phantom touch of feathers on his skin. "I was wondering... Did our connection change you too?" Harry asked after a moment and opened his eyes. Death was sitting next to him on the bed, leaning against the headboard. He hummed and seemed to think about it for a moment.

"It did. I expected it to happen, but it's," he paused for a moment. "...different than I thought."

"Different, in what way?" Harry asked.

"Oh, I can feel things. I always have-," Death answered Harry's unspoken question,"-or else I would've never made the Hallows" He carded through Harry’s hair with his fingers. He did that fairly often, Harry thought. "...I have existed for a long time, longer than you can imagine..." Death paused and continued to comb through Harry’s unruly hair, searching for the right way to explain it.

Harry sat up, when Death didn’t start to talk again. The hand slid from Harry’s head and Death stared at him. An overwhelming mix of emotions pulsed through the bond.

"You feel alive," Harry said. Death seemed stunned for a moment and then threw his head back and started to laugh. Harry watched, drawn in, by the strange sound, until it went down to a silent chuckle.

"For the lack of a better word...let’s call it alive," Death said in his raspy voice and grinned at Harry, who grinned back. Shared amusement still flooded the bond when Harry focused on it, but
there was also gratefulness. A possessive edge going hand in hand with an unspoken want. Harry had a hard time telling what his own feelings were in the whole mix. There was fondness and shared fascination. But all of this was overshadowed by another feeling. So subtle and at the same time everywhere. Harry’s eyes widened. Death still grinned. It was there without a doubt flowing back and forth though their connection. Love.

Harry exhaled. He hadn’t realized, that he had held his breath for the last few moments. He stared at the being in front of him. There were these gigantic wings, this never-ending creature, being everywhere and nowhere, but at the same time only here in front of Harry. Here for Harry, because he wanted it. Like a warped mirror image of Harry himself, Death sat there, casually grinning like he did so often. How was he able to miss, that he felt this emotion... that Death did? Love - a strange word for something, that had happened this fast.

‘But what did it matter?’ Harry asked himself all of a sudden. ‘Yeah, what had changed between them? Nothing,’ he said to himself. Just because he only now realized what had been there all along... and what weight held time for two beings like them? What was the point in questioning things, which didn’t need to be changed anyway?’

With that thought, Harry leaned forward and kissed Death. Familiar fingers twined into Harry’s hair as his lips touched their counterparts. Harry found himself sitting in Death’s lap, when his tongue reached the insides of a surprisingly cool mouth. The being reciprocated with gentle force. Harry kissed back, his tongue gliding over sharp teeth, sliding against Death’s. Eventually he pulled away, hungrily sucking in air, only to be pushed even further back by Death a moment later.

Harry’s hands reached out to keep himself from falling and they wound around the being’s neck and shirt. Harry grinned into the kiss, when his hands touched the fabric. "Why do you even bother with clothes?" Harry asked, amused at the ridiculousness of it, his lips brushing Death’s as he spoke.

"I like them, just like I like this body," Death said grinning. Harry laughed again and his left hand sneaked underneath the copy of Dudley’s old shirt, that Harry hadn’t seen for ages. The tip of a tongue slipped into Harry’s mouth again and he felt Death’s sharp teeth nipping on his lip. A quiet moan escaped him. The kiss was wet and hot and everything Harry thought he would ever desire from now on. He gripped the front of Death’s shirt and pulled him closer, while his other hand felt cool skin and muscles rippling on Death’s back. A deep vibrating noise escaped Death’s throat.

Harry smiled into the kiss, which had been interrupted by the sudden purring.

Cool hands brushed over his back. Arousal curled in Harry’s gut, hot and fluttering, as he was pressed against Death’s body. Pleasant shivers tingled up his spine, trailing after Death’s touches. Harry arched into it. Like a trick of the light, he saw feathers, pairs of wings slowly moving, like long weeds on a windy day. After a moment the image was gone. He panted when a hand glided down, counting his ribs until it settled on his hips. The friction almost was too much for Harry, and his hips rolled without a conscious thought. The kiss wasn’t really a kiss anymore, just lips brushing over each other, and harsh breaths and quiet moans. Harry felt Death’s hand sliding over his back, pushing up his shirt. It fell down, when Death let go of it and twined his hand into Harry’s hair. Death pulled and Harry thrived in the pinpricks of pleasure pain, as he followed the movement. Harry looked at Death through half-lidded eyes, his throat exposed in a way that had him shiver. Death stared at Harry with a hungry expression. Never had he been more aware of how predatory this grin could be. Harry’s eyes fluttered shut, when he felt teeth grazing over his neck, nipping and teasing. Possessiveness pulsed through the bond and Death’s tongue painted a wet stripe just beneath his yaw. The cool air hitting the wetness brought Harry right to the edge. The friction between them increased, when Harry was pulled closer once more, hips grinding against each other, his pants painfully tight. Death sucked on the place, where his shoulder and neck met. When he bit down hard, Harry came with a shaky moan, his hips twitching a few times, until he
came down from his high.

Dazed, Harry pushed his hair out of his face and looked at Death, who smirked at him. Harry reached for the spot where Death bit him. The skin wasn’t broken, but Harry hissed when he pressed down on it. This was going to bruise for sure.

Death didn’t seem very sorry, judging by the smugness radiating from the bond. "Hey," Harry started slightly embarrassed, only now noticing the wetness inside his pants. He blamed his teenage body for the rather short time-period he had needed to come, "Did- did you even... um come?" He bit his lip. "I mean, can you even come?"

"*I can feel what you feel,*" Death said and pleasure trickled trough the bond. "*This body is just how I choose to appear. I can make it come, if I want to.*"

Harry grinned at Death. "We should do that again sometime."

"*We should...*" Death said and cupped Harry’s face with his hands. Harry’s eyes fluttered shut, when he was pulled in for a kiss once more.

The floorboards in the hallway creaked. Harry pulled the blankets over his shoulders, just when Ron entered the room.

The next day, Harry was glad, that he stood up early. He packed his stuff with a little bit of magic, while Ron was still sleeping. When he heard Kreacher shuffle past his door, a thought invaded his mind. Since he had claimed a seat in the Wizengamot, he should be informed every time a trial was held. But who knew, if a letter meant for him somehow got *lost,* just like the one, which should inform him about the time and change of location of his trial. What he needed was a spy and who was more suited for this job than a house-elf. Dobby was working in Hogwarts and would surely agree to help him. But the Headmaster was not stupid. He would have an eye on Dobby, that was for sure. After all, if the House-elf who is friends with Harry Potter – who might be possessed by Voldemort at the time – disappears, one should notice. Kreacher on the other hand was neither indebted to Dumbledore nor did he even like him. Harry walked out into the Hallway. Kreacher had already vanished around the next corner, but when Harry called his name, he appeared.

"What can Kreacher do for the young Master," the old elf said and bowed deeply.

"I need a spy inside the Ministry," Harry responded.

"Master Black ordered Kreacher, to not leave the house," Kreacher replied, his nose almost touching the floor.

"You are bound to me aren’t you, Kreacher?" Harry asked the elf.

"I am," Kreacher said and finally raised his head, "but Master Black is the head of the house."

"Let me deal with Sirius. I’ll tell him to give you permission."

"Yes, Master Harry," the elf croaked.

"Since I have claimed my seat in the Wizengamot, I need to know about every trial that is held as soon as you know about it. Any other information that might be interesting to me or of value is also
appreciated," Harry said. "I want you to keep a close eye on Malfoy and Yaxley. Everyone with influence inside the Ministry, who supports the old way. Supporters of Pure-blood supremacy. You are the House-elf of the noble and ancient House of Black." At that, Kreacher straightened his posture and a proud expression showed on his face. "I trust you to know what I kind of information I appreciate."

"Of course, Master Harry," Kreacher said and bowed deeply.

"You are dismissed," Harry said and Kreacher disapparated. Harry sighed and watched the dust floating in the empty Hallway. Death grinned.

Half an hour later, Harry watched calmly while the whole house was buzzing with live. Death, once again as a black reptile was snugly curled around his torso. Everybody was searching for their stuff. Owls were screeching in their cages, Mrs. Weasley was shouting at Fred and George for accidentally pushing Ginny off the stairs, when they enchanted their suitcases to fly down on their own. Even Mrs. Black in her portrait was screaming, for the first time since Harry had silenced her. Through the chaos it was no miracle, that no one beside Harry noticed a very ruffled looking Sirius leaving the room that Remus was usually occupying.

Harry couldn’t help but feel smug about it. He shot Sirius a look and his godfather froze. A strange tension seemed to hang between them, but then the moment was gone, and Sirius grinned at him, but Harry had the feeling, that the smile wasn’t all that honest. The werewolf, who just wanted to exit behind Sirius, groaned when Harry smirked at him knowingly. While Harry walked downstairs, he still heard their muffled voices.

"I swear, sometimes he is just like James…," Remus said. Sirius barked a laugh.

"But Harry is way more perceptive. James told me, that he had the suspicion that I was seeing someone back then, but he didn’t know who. Every time I disappeared, he looked at the map. James walked in on us twice, until he realized that we were actually having sex."

"Twice? I thought he knew, after he caught us in that secret passage. What did he think we were doing?" Remus asked curiously.

"Hiding from Filch, which was by the way what he was thinking, every time he spotted me and you on the Map together."

"ALL OF YOU COME DOWNSTAIRS NOW PLEASE!" Mrs. Weasley shouted through the house. Hermione rushed past Harry, Crookshanks in her arms and a suitcase following. In the end they were all standing in the Hallway, Mrs. Weasley shouting over the sound of the screaming portraits.

Moody claimed that they couldn’t go, until Sturgis Podmore appeared, because otherwise there was one bodyguard missing.

"Bodyguards?" Harry asked, inwardly groaning.

"Yeah. Moody insisted," Hermione said. Harry sighed. "I don’t need an escort", he said and remembered that Podmore was under the Imperius around that time. ‘Wasn’t he killed by a dangerous plant someone smuggled into his room in St. Mungo's after he tried to take the prophecy? Or had that been someone else…’ Well either way, he wouldn’t appear anytime soon.

"...Sirius! Dumbledore said no...," Mrs. Weasley said, and Harry turned around. A giant black dog
was sitting on the ground and wagging its tail. "...fine. On your responsibility!" The dog barked.

Finally, they left, when Moody announced, that Podmore probably wouldn’t show up. Harry was accompanied by Tonks, who looked like she could be his grandmother today, with her wrinkles and grey hair. Sirius ran in front of them, his tail wagging. He jumped up on Remus a few times, who seemed to blush when Sirius tried to lick his face. Laughing Lupin pushed him away when he almost fell over. Harry sensed the wolf part of him twisting happily and urging Lupin to follow, when Sirius jumped forward.

Nothing noteworthy happened until they reached King’s Cross. At least if one didn’t ask Mr. Weasley, because every few minutes he pointed something out that thought was fascinating. Eventually, they were all gathered at Platform 9 3/4.

Moody grumbled something about telling Dumbledore that Sturgis hadn’t shown up the second time this week, while Harry knelt town to say goodbye to Sirius. "I wasn’t lying when I told you all of this yesterday. I do really like you, and I hope you don’t try to hex me, next time we meet. Although I really meant what I said." Sirius stared at him with a tilted head, as if he was considering something. "Sirius," Harry said seriously and cast a wandless "Muffliato" around them. "I need to ask a favour of you. I know we aren’t on best terms right now, but I need you to allow Kreacher to leave the house. Just tell him that he is allowed to follow my orders." Harry couldn’t say anything more, when Remus turned to him. The marauder would certainly notice the Muffliato. Thus, Harry dissolved the charm and stood up. Remus patted Harry’s shoulder.

"Be careful," his former professor said with a serious look on his face.

"I will be," Then Harry smirked. "Good luck with Sirius, but you probably won’t need it anymore. Don’t think, that I didn’t see the hickey on his shoulder this morning," Harry added quietly. Sirius barked, which sounded suspiciously like his laugh, as he was listening to them.

"It was great to get to know all of you," Tonks said cheerfully. Mrs. Weasley tried to hug them all, but Harry was able to dodge it, by quickly entering the train. The other teens followed him, when the last warning whistle could be heard. Everyone still lingering on the platform quickly entered the train. Kisses were exchanged and owls hooted in their cages. All the noises faded into the background, when the door closed behind them. Fred and George soon left them to find Lee. "He shouldn’t have come with us," Hermione said with a glance at Sirius through a window.

"Come on Mione, he hasn’t left the house for months," Ron said. Harry ignored their bickering and instead tried to find an empty compartment. Ginny followed his example, red hair trailing behind her, when she followed him.

"Um, Harry," Hermione said and bit her lip. "We need to go to the other Prefects," she said like she was afraid, that Harry would shout at her for leaving him alone.

"It’s okay. You can always find us later," Harry said, while Ron didn’t want to meet his eyes. They were really concerned about Harry’s opinion on that. It was almost laughable.

"Yeah, there is no rule against it. After all... we have to - I don’t even wanna go there. I’m not Percy!" Ron stated and Ginny snickered. While Ron and Hermione went to the front of the train, Ginny and Harry turned into the other direction, to find a place, that wasn’t already occupied. As they had reached the last wagon, they met Neville, who was struggling to carry his suitcase and his toad Trevor at the same time. Despite Neville’s insistence, that there was no compartment left, they settled inside the one, the other Gryffindor boy had avoided till now. Inside sat Luna Lovegood.
Just like the first time Harry had met her, she seemed different in a way. There was the wand she kept behind her ear, and a necklace made of butterbeer-corks. Her pale blue eyes looked up from the magazine she was reading upside-down. Lunas magic pulsed around her in weird patterns, only emphasizing her oddness. She stared at Harry for a long time and didn’t waver in her gaze, even when Ginny asked her about her holidays. Harry wasn’t bothered by it. He watched Death slithering over his hands and listened quietly.

"You are Harry Potter," she said eventually.

"Yeah," he answered. Luna turned to Neville.

"But I don’t know who you are."

"I’m nobody...," Neville said.

"No, you are not. This is Neville Longbottom," Ginny started while Harry zoned out of the conversation. He was already bored. Harry turned, sideways, resting his head against the window and closed his eyes. He soon was lulled into a sleep-like state, only feeling the cool glass on the back of his head and Death’s occasional flick with his tongue.

The only noteworthy interruption of his state had been Neville, when he poked the mimbulus mimbeltonia, which he got for his birthday. A cactus-like plant that pulsed and tried to cover them all with a bad-smelling liquid as soon as the tip of Neville’s quill was forcefully shoved against it.

It was like a reflex, that caused Harry to flick his hand to deflect the horrid slime. He was the only one to evade being covered by it. It was almost scary how easy it was to do magic now. Thankfully nobody noticed he hadn’t used his wand in the chaos. Cho Chang opened the door not even five seconds after the incident.

She had obviously been looking for him. She stared at the scenery with an embarrassed look on her face. It was probably a mix of the image of these people covered in slime, the smell and Harry’s lack of interest that made her leave. She closed the door to their compartment after she uttered a, "See you later Harry."

An hour had passed, when Ron and Hermione let them fall onto the seats next to them. Harry had been asleep by then, but was violently ripped from his peaceful slumber, when an indignant Ron complained loudly about Malfoy being Prefect of the Slytherins.

Harry groaned and lifted his head from the window.

"And what do you want to do about it? Complaining certainly won’t help," he said slightly annoyed and still somewhat drowsy. Ron stopped in his tirade.

"But it’s Malfoy...," he said as if this was explanation enough. And maybe it was. Ron’s attention was suddenly caught by something else. He looked at Luna and noticed that she was still reading her magazine upside down.

"And? Something useful written in there?", he asked her after he had stared at her for a while. Apparently, he wasn’t sure what else he could say. Before Luna could answer Hermione interfered.

"Of course not. The Quibbler is rubbish, everybody knows that," Hermione said. Harry bit back a grin at Hermione’s embarrassed face, when Luna announced, that her father was the managing editor of it. Just when Harry started to relax again - Death slithering halfway into his shirt - the door to their compartment opened once more.

Irritated, Harry looked up, but then a smirk appeared on his face. Pale and blond, with a pointy face just like his father, he stood in the doorway. Draco Malfoy, flanked by Crabbe and Goyle. "How’s
it going?” Harry asked and grinned at the intruders.

"Behave Potter, or I’ll have to punish you,” the Slytherin said with a smug look on his face. Merlin, he was so young. And arrogant. Harry had almost forgotten about it. Harry remembered his older version much clearer than the younger counterpart, but seeing Draco in front of him like this was certainly a reminder.

In his older years, Harry had thought about a few things and he was now very sure, that in all his hate for Malfoy, there had been a certain attraction too. But his confused teenage self had never really gotten past obsessively stalking the Slytherin.

Malfoy, unaware of Harry’s amused thoughts, continued. "You see, I - unlike you - was chosen as a Prefect this year, which means that I am allowed to discipline you,” he said smugly. Harry’s amusement grew, while Ron, who sat next to him was steaming.

"I’m impressed,” Harry said. Malfoy gaped. This was something he certainly hadn’t expected. "And all the effort you made, to tell me that... wow. After all, you searched the whole train to find me. Admirable, that you hold on to your traditions. I was already worrying you wouldn’t show up this year.” Harry smirked at Malfoy.

Draco spluttered and his cheeks flushed pink. "In your dreams Potter!” Malfoy said, when he had gathered himself. Then his gaze fell upon Death. "You and a snake? I thought you were more into dogs. After all, you brought your mutt with you to the platform. Shame if he was reported,” Draco said to spat his dignity, but his sneering mask couldn’t quite cover the lingering embarrassment.

Harry was more amused than anything else, but Malfoy threatening Sirius wasn’t something he could approve of.

"Oh Draco-" Ron, Ginny, Hermione and Malfoy all stared at him with an equally shocked look, as he used that name, while Luna continued to read the Quibbler undisturbed - "you don’t know what is waiting for you, if you can’t keep some things to yourself. I’m sure your father told you, to keep your mouth shut," Harry’s eyes glinted dangerously, "...and if he didn’t, well that’s his problem then.” Harry smirked at Malfoy. Death’s tongue flicked against the skin just beneath his jaw.

Shared amusement pulsed through their bond, when Malfoy swallowed hard, but then he clenched his teeth.

"We’ll see about that, Potter." With a last degrading look at Ron and Hermione, Draco turned to leave. Crabbe and Goyle followed him with matching looks of confusion on their faces. Ron on the other hand, seemed, like he didn’t know if he should congratulate Harry, for making Malfoy leave this easily or declare him crazy. But while, Ron didn’t seem to have understood what Malfoy had been saying, Hermione shot him an uneasy look. She knew, that Malfoy probably knew about Sirius and also that he was an Animagus. But with Neville and Luna inside their compartment, she didn’t dare to speak about it. When Ron started to loudly chew on a chocolate-frog, Harry decided, that it was probably the best decision to sleep for the rest of the train ride.

When Hermione woke him up, the sun had set and bright stars lightened up the sky, where no cloud was hiding them. "You should change, we are almost there,” she said. She was already wearing her cloak, the badge indicating her status as prefect shimmering on her chest. Harry noticed, that Ron inspected his reflection in the window, smoothing down his cloak, just beneath his own badge.

Harry yawned, and stretched like a cat. He caught a glimpse of his own image on the dark window, which caused him to comb through his hair with his fingers. He gave it up, when it only got wilder than it had been before. He asked himself why he was still bothering with trying. Maybe he should cut it the way, he had when he was an Auror. Harry suppressed the urge to pull a face at his own reflection and instead petted Death’s smooth scales and turned to the others.
Ron and Hermione disappeared when the train slowed down, to supervise the people, when the usual chaos started. Everyone was gathering their stuff and leaving their compartments.

"I can carry that owl," Luna offered, when Harry was left with two cages, while Ginny was carrying Crookshanks. Harry gladly accepted, while Neville gently put his toad Trevor into a pocket of his cloak. When they left the train and stepped onto the platform, Harry noticed, that unlike Luna, Ginny or Neville, he didn’t have a problem with walking through the masses of chatting people. The crowd unconsciously seemed to part in front of him. Like a forgotten instinct to avoid Death they kept their distance. Well, he certainly wouldn’t complain about it. The scent of pines which were growing down by the shore of the lake filled the air. Harry closed his eyes for a moment and forgotten memories invaded his mind, of tournaments and dragons, snowy winters in Hogsmeade and warm fireplaces. While he might have lost the connection to the people in his life, Hogwarts was still his home.
Hogwarts

Chapter Summary

Nothing exciting happening here, just Harry arriving in Hogwarts and maybe a little Harry/Death fluff at the beginning

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

An unexpected voice drowning the noise of the crowd caught his attention. "First years in two rows please! First years here...," a very female voice shouted. Harry spotted Professor Grubbly-Plank; her face lit up by a lantern.

The street was still wet from the rain, and Harry was surrounded by the squelching noises of countless feet walking through the mud towards the carriages. After a while, he noticed that Ginny and Neville had been swallowed by the crowd. A fluttering feeling rose in Harry's stomach, when he spotted Hogwarts in the distance.

The towers cut through the black night-sky like blades, its windows were golden lights matching the stars. Hogwarts pulsed with magic. Even in the distance Harry could see the swirls intertwined with the building, surrounding the castle like a glowing halo in the dark. With a smile on his face, Harry turned away and let himself being carried along by the faceless crowd.

Only when he reached the carriages, he stopped a little offside in the shadows. Death materialized behind Harry, tall and inhuman as ever. Harry smiled when he felt Death’s chin on his head and hands sneaking their way around his torso in a protective way. Possessiveness pulsed through the bond, and Harry knew, that Death was grinning. He continued to watch the people entering the carriages, chatting with their friends laughing and trying to escape the cold.

Without a word, Death drew Harry’s attention to the closest carriage. The Ravenclaw girl, who had just wanted to lift her suitcase inside, squeaked, when it moved on its own. Well not on its own of course, but it was enough for the girl to snatch her suitcase and to join her surprised friends.

The reason for the strange behaviour of the carriage were the two Thestrals pulling it. With a horse-like curiosity they came closer, clouds of steam coming out of their nostrils matching the rhythm of their breathing. Harry was reminded of small dragons.

The carriage leaving the usual row had raised some interest, but the pupils were eager to leave the cold. No one investigated further, other than sparing them a few glances. Most of them quickly turned to the other carriages, which left Harry to inspect the skeletal horses. He hadn’t seen Thestrals in ages and he watched them curiously as they approached him. Harry laughed, when one of them nudged his shoulder. Death extended an arm and began to pet one of the creatures, while the other one licked Harry’s hand affectionately.

"They are close to the afterlife, Thestrals. Only visible to the ones, who saw someone die...," Death said. Harry was surprised to see, that they weren’t really dark. The magic connected to their life-force was neutral. Harry smiled at the creatures who started to nip on his clothes, maybe searching for treats.

"Harry!" someone shouted, and he turned his head. A red mop of hair, emerged from the crowd and Ron came closer, followed by a dishevelled Hermione a few moments later. "Where is Pig?"
he asked.

"Luna’s got him."

"What are you doing?", Hermione asked and looked at him strangely. To her, he was probably standing alone in the dark, an abandoned carriage in front of him. Of course, she wasn’t able to see the Thestrals nor Death, who - when Harry’s attention was no longer on him - took pleasure in sneaking his hands under his shirt and he teased Harry with light touches. When a finger traced a line right over his waistband, Harry couldn't supress a shiver. After he shot Death a look, the being even had the audacity to grin at him, smugness echoing through their connection.

"I can see the beings who pull the carriages now," Harry said, turning to Ron and Hermione. Both stared at him as if he’d grown a second head. "The Thestrals," he added helpfully and understanding reached Hermione’s eyes, a pitying glance following right after.

"Only people, who saw someone die can see them," Harry repeated Death’s earlier words. Ron’s eyes widened and he stared at the Thestrals, or the – for him – empty space. All of a sudden Ginny left the crowd, an angry Crookshanks in her arms. Luna appeared behind her, Pigwidgeons cage in her hand.

They all entered the same carriage, while Ron tried to sit as far away as possible from Luna, when she asked him if he’d noticed the wrackspurts following him.

"Have you seen Grubbly-Plank?" Ginny asked into the silence. "What is she even doing here? Hagrid can’t be gone, can he?"

Harry knew fully well, that Hagrid was still trying to keep the giants from joining Voldemort, but he kept his mouth shut, while the others discussed the topic. The ride wasn’t long and soon they passed the two pillars with the winged boars on top and stopped in front of the school. Harry petted the Thestrals as a last goodbye, then he joined the people, walking up the stairs to enter Hogwarts.

The great hall was enlightened by hundreds of candles floating beneath the dark ceiling, which was looking like the cloudy sky outside. Luna split from their small group on the way to their house-tables and Ginny joined a few fourth years who were greeting her loudly. When they sat down, Harry noticed the odd looks he was receiving. And not only the humans, no. The ghosts also stared at him strangely. When Sir. Nicholas floated past their table, Harry stared at him, and the ghost brought some distance between them. Even he seemed like he wasn’t sure what caused his newfound unease at coming close to Harry. Maybe they sensed his connection with Death. After all, ghosts were the imprints of souls, who feared the afterlife.

Meanwhile Ron and Hermione were scanning the table of the teachers for Hagrid. "He isn’t there," Ron said, and Harry let his eyes wander over the empty seat, before he spotted the pink menace.

"Who is that?" Hermione asked, following his gaze.

"Umbridge. She was at my Hearing. She’s the undersecretary of the Minister." Their conversation came to an abrupt end, when McGonagall placed the Sorting Hat on his stool. The whole Hall listened, when the Hat started to sing his song.

" In times of old when I was new
And Hogwarts barely started
The founders of our noble school
Thought never to be parted:
United by a common goal,
They had the selfsame yearning,
To make the world's best magic school
And pass along their learning.
"Together we will build and teach!"
The four good friends decided
And never did they dream that they
Might someday be divided,
For were there such friends anywhere
As Slytherin and Gryffindor?
Unless it was the second pair
Of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw?
So how could it have gone so wrong?
How could such friendships fail?
Why, I was there and so can tell
The whole sad, sorry tale.
Said Slytherin, "We’ll teach just those
Whose ancestry is purest."
Said Ravenclaw, "We’ll teach those whose
Intelligence is surest."
Said Gryffindor, "We’ll teach all those
With brave deeds to their name,"
Said Hufflepuff, "I’ll teach the lot,
And treat them just the same."
These differences caused little strife
When first they came to light,
For each of the four founders had
A House in which they might
Take only those they wanted, so,
For instance, Slytherin
Took only pure-blood wizards
Of great cunning, just like him,
And only those of sharpest mind
Were taught by Ravenclaw
While the bravest and the boldest
Went to daring Gryffindor.
Good Hufflepuff, she took the rest,
And taught them all she knew,
Thus the Houses and their founders
Retained friendships firm and true.
So Hogwarts worked in harmony
For several happy years,
But then discord crept among us
Feeding on our faults and fears.
The Houses that, like pillars four,
Had once held up our school,
Now turned upon each other and,
Divided, sought to rule.
And for a while it seemed the school
Must meet an early end,
What with dueling and with fighting
And the clash of friend on friend
And at last there came a morning
When old Slytherin departed
And though the fighting then died out
He left us quite downhearted.
And never since the founders four
Were whittled down to three
Have the Houses been united
And they once were meant to be.
And now the Sorting Hat is here
And you all know the score:
I sort you into Houses
Because that is what I’m for,
But this year I’ll go further,
Listen closely to my song:
Though condemned I am to split you
Still I worry that it’s wrong,
Though I must fulfill my duty
And must quarter every year
Still I wonder whether sorting
May not bring the end I fear.
Oh, know the perils, read the signs,
The warning history shows,
For our Hogwarts is in danger
From external, deadly foes
And we must unite inside her
Or we’ll crumble from within.
I have told you, I have warned you…
Let the Sorting now begin.

"Missed the topic this year, did he?" Ron said, while he was eyeing the empty plates on the table longingly. But with his statement he wasn’t the only one. On every table, voices were raised, and the people started to whisper. "Did the hat ever warn someone before?" Hermione asked, but she got no answer.

"Unite inside... yeah right. I’m not going to befriend Slytherins, that’s for sure," Ron said and shot Malfoy and little horde of followers a disgusted look.

McGonagall’s glare silenced them and then she read the first name. "Abercrombie Euan." A shaking first-year stepped forward and when the head shouted Gryffindor, he almost ran to their table with a shy smile on his flushed face, while the next kid was already walking towards the stool.

The sorting was over as quickly as it had started. Dumbledore clapped his hands and food appeared on the tables. The hall was now filled with the sounds of cutlery clinking and teenagers eating and chatting.

When everyone was sitting on their benches sated and sighing, Dumbledore stood up. Harry listened absentmindedly to the headmaster, giving his usual speech. Harry had yet to decide what to do. If he continued to act as carelessly as he had during his time in Grimmauld Place it would certainly raise some suspicions. Sirius wouldn’t betray him, but Dumbledore was already suspecting that the horcrux was influencing Harry. His strange innuendos and the information that he gained a new pet-snake over the summer would’ve already reached Dumbledore’s ears. Not to mention his trial. And while the headmaster had only been at Grimmauld Place twice, or maybe three times while Harry stayed there - in Hogwarts he would be under constant surveillance. One couldn’t even trust the paintings in here. Maybe it was time to lay low for some time.

Harry’s attention snapped to Umbridge, when she interrupted the headmaster. Harry watched her with narrowed eyes. There was just something about her, that annoyed him.
Umbridge’s magic surrounded her in sickly strands, and only increased Harry’s growing dislike of her. Her magic was light, but it looked weak in comparison to the pulsing aura surrounding Dumbledore. More than once, Harry felt her toad-like gaze fixate on him. This year would probably start even worse, now that he had embarrassed Fudge in that way on his trial.

Ron and Hermione had to show the First years where the common room was, therefore, Harry was left to go there on his own. He joined the crowd, which was slowly leaving the hall. Death accompanied him as a snake and curled around his arm beneath his cloak. Harry noticed that many students side-eyed him with fearful looks. He smirked at every single one of them. The previous weeks of hateful articles in the Prophet hadn’t been without an impact.

When Harry reached the Portrait of the fat lady, he realized that he didn’t know the password. All of a sudden Neville showed up behind him. The Gryffindor panted heavily. "I know it, Harry. I know it," he said excitedly. "Mimbulus Mimbeltonia." he panted, and the portrait revealed the entrance to the common room. When Harry climbed through the hole, everyone's attention was immediately directed at him. Most of the first years seemed scared, while the older Gryffindors pointed at him and talked in hushed voices. Harry snorted disparaging and walked past them. He nodded at Fred and George, who were pinning something on the blackboard.

Harry let his hands glide over the old wall, when he walked upstairs tracing the magic-interwoven bricks with his fingers. He smirked when he felt the powerful wards pulse under his touch. Harry hadn’t even noticed, that he had reached the door to his dormitory until he stood directly in front of it. Dean and Seamus were already inside and pinned posters and photos on the walls.

When he entered awkward silence ensurred, and Harry was certain, that the others had just been talking about him. Harry walked over to his bed and opened his suitcase to change.

"Hey Harry, how was your summer?" Dean asked, while he was putting on his pyjama and Neville entered. Harry smirked.

"The last few weeks weren’t too bad," he replied. "Yours?"

"Yeah, they were alright," Dean chuckled. "Better than Seamus’ for sure, he just told me."

"Why what happened, Seamus?" Neville asked and put his cactus on his drawer.

"My mum didn’t want me to come back," he said after a moment of hesitation.

"Ah, yeah. The Prophet?" Harry asked and casually threw his cloak on his bed. Seamus stared at him, as if he was expecting him to continue, but Harry didn’t answer. Instead he let Death slither onto his bed and changed into a more comfortable shirt.

Eventually Seamus had gathered the courage to ask what everyone was already speculating about. "Listen... what actually happened in the night, when... you know... the thing with Cedric Diggory…" Even Dean listened interested but tried very hard not to seem like he was.

Harry paused a moment in consideration. What would happen if he told them the truth? At the moment, he wasn’t very keen on interfering Voldemort’s plans. At least as long, as he wasn’t really sure what he was going to do. And Voldemort tried to stay hidden. But no. What would be the difference? If no one was believing him, why should they consider the opinion of a few teenagers that were friends of Harry Potter. Maybe it would soothe Dumbledore’s worries to an extent, if he tried to spread this knowledge. And the first time around Fudge had managed to deny that Voldemort was back, until he literally appeared in front of his nose. Harry sat down on his bed and sighed. The anticipatory faces of the three Gryffindors were still fixated on him. On the other hand, if he told Seamus and Dean the truth, he would need to go through with it. It would be exhausting to act like his fifteen-year-old self again, but the thought of Umbridge’s satisfied face, when she
talked shit was even worse. Riling her up would be worth it. He raised his head and looked at Neville, Dean and Seamus.

"You are sure that you want to know?" he asked them. They shifted uncomfortably for a moment but then Seamus nodded.

"Yeah. We deserve to know." Harry raised an eyebrow, but he complied.

"Cedric and I fought our way through the maze and all of a sudden we met. We could already see the trophy. He was faster but there was another monster. I helped him out instead of gripping the trophy. We decided to touch the it at the same time. A mutual win for Hogwarts. Turned out, that the trophy was a portkey, though. We found ourselves on a graveyard. Voldemort and a Death Eater - Peter Pettigrew - were already waiting for us. Voldemort ordered him to kill Cedric. He was hit with the killing curse and I was captured. My blood was used in a ritual, to give Voldemort his strength back. Then he wanted me to duel him, which was nothing more than a joke. I managed to grab the Trophy though... and Cedric’s body. I was lucky that the portkey still worked. Then you all know what happened," Harry finished without an emotion. He spared them the details of Voldemort gaining a new body. While Harry doubted that they would find out about the Horcruxes, he still didn’t want to take a risk in that matter. The teenagers stared at him even Ron who showed up at the doorway. "Of course, you can always believe the Daily Prophet, I guess that’s your choice," Harry said and slipped under his covers. Awkward silence ensured.

"I believe you. My grandma says, that everything that is written in the Prophet is rubbish. She doesn’t read it anymore," Neville said when they all were laying in their beds. Nobody added something.

The next morning Harry was woken by a scream. "Holy shit Harry! There’s a snake on your bed!" Dean shouted. Harry sat up, still dazed.

"What the hell, Dean," he muttered and wiped over his face with his hand. He picked up his glasses from the bedside drawer. It was more of a habit than actual need. Strangely his eyes seemed to adjust every time he slipped them on or off. His vision was great either way. Harry regretted having forgotten to close the curtains on his bed last night. "If you hadn’t noticed, he was already there yesterday," Harry said and looked at Death, who was splayed over his legs.

"Huh?" Dean seemed confused. The others stared at the scenery. Ron seemed like he had still been asleep two seconds ago. Neville didn’t look much better. Seamus was already on his feet, halfway out of his pyjama. Ron stared at Harry and then at Dean. Groaning, he let himself fall back on his pillow, when he realized what must’ve happened.

"That’s Harry’s pet," he explained. "Why couldn’t you tell them yesterday Harry? It would’ve spared us this wake-up call."

"You’ve got a pet snake?" Seamus asked as if he didn’t quite know what he should think of it.

"Yeah, what about it," Harry asked him and stood up.

"Nothing... it’s just-," Seamus started.

"What, Evil?" Harry asked while he put on a clean shirt and trousers.

"-like you are a Slytherin," Dean added.
"Yeah, he’s not wrong mate," Ron added, and Harry laughed to the red-heads confusion.

"You know, if Malfoy hadn’t been such an arrogant bastard when we were eleven, I would’ve landed in Slytherin," Harry said while he put on his tie. "**You coming?**" Harry asked Death in parseltongue - mostly to mess with the others - and extended his arm. Death slithered towards him, till Harry picked him up. He left his roommates with stunned looks on their faces.

When Harry walked through the common room someone approached him from the side. "Hey Harry, how was your summer?" Angelina asked him and continued without waiting for an answer. She didn’t even notice Death, which caused most people in the common room to distance themselves even further. "Listen, I am the new Quidditch Captain, since Wood is gone," Harry froze. "We need a new keeper. Try-outs are this Friday at five pm. I expect the whole team to be there. We’ll see how the new guy fits in, okay?" She smiled at him and turned around. He had all forgotten about Quidditch. Harry hadn’t played for ages. After the war, there hadn’t really been much time and then ... he had just lost his interest in it. But quitting Quidditch was something, his fifteen-year-old self would’ve never done. He had made his decision, which meant, that he would have to go through with it, if he liked it or not.

As Harry was aimlessly walking through the castle, he was thinking about skipping breakfast and visiting Sirius instead, but then he recalled that it was the first day of school, which meant that they would be getting their timetables. He sighed and turned around, Death like a shadow behind him.

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**Chapter End Notes**

Since nothing noteworthy is happening in this chapter, another one will be coming this week. Although the next chapter is still mostly school but I hope you like it anyway.
Harry exhaled and closed his eyes for a moment. Cold wind was blowing through his hair, messing it up even more. He breathed the cool air and tiny raindrops hit his face. People were hurrying over the Hogwarts grounds, heads kept down and scarfs wrapped around their necks, to protect them from the windy weather. For the last hour, he’d been listening to the monotone voice of Professor Binns talking about the giant wars. Being outside was a relief. Harry was one of the few people who hadn’t pulled up their hood to protect their faces from the weather. High above their heads a Thestral was flying towards the forbidden forest. Harry turned his head and looked at Death, who was standing next to him. The cloudy sky and the cold didn’t seem bother him at all, even less than Harry. He stared into the distance, but Harry knew, that Death was aware of him and his thoughts. Gusts of wind pulled on the scarfs and cloaks of the students hurrying over the place. Death’s clothes weren’t moving at all, but nonetheless his hair seemed like it was. Harry had learned to associate the movement with Death’s wings, which he sometimes noticed in the corner of his eyes. The weather seemed to fit Death in a way. Harry watched a small group of chatting Hufflepuffs walk past them, only to look at Death’s profile once more. Harry really wanted to touch him right now. But trying to approach an invisible being? Harry would look like a maniac if he did so.

Death turned his head and smirked at him knowingly. Harry repressed the urge to stick out his tongue when he felt Death’s amusement. "You are an idiot," he muttered under his breath. Death’s smug smirk didn’t vanish, but he pressed a kiss on top of Harry’s head. Fondness pulsed through the bond, when Death’s arms sneaked around him. Harry had to keep himself from smiling, but he didn’t quite manage it and the corners of his mouth twitched upwards. His resistance broke entirely, when Death’s nose was still buried in Harry’s hair and the being started his familiar purring.

"Hi Harry," someone said all of a sudden. Death raised his head and stared at the person, and Harry also turned his head. Possessiveness pulsed through their connection when was faced with Cho Chang.

"Hey Cho," Harry replied and felt Death looming over his shoulder.

"Um, hey," she said and bit her lip. "Did you have a nice summer?" she asked and shivered. Harry had the vague impression that it wasn’t only the weather, but that Death’s stare had also something to do with it.

"It was okay," Harry said. "How was yours?"

"Alright, I guess," she said and blushed slightly. Harry suddenly remembered their awkward kiss and date his younger self had endured. The crush he’d had on her since the fourth year had vanished entirely after the day in Madame Puddifoots. All of a sudden Harry shivered. He could feel Death breathing just next to his ear and neck.
"Listen Cho. I know this might come out of the blue, but I’m not interested in you the way I was last year," Harry said hoping that she got the hint. Another breath let his skin tingle. The bastard didn’t even need to breath. Harry was sure, that Death only did it to mess with him.

"Oh," Cho said. Her shoes seemed very interesting to her now. "Okay"

Harry had to admit that he didn’t pity her. He should probably pay more attention to Cho, since he was trying to keep up appearances.

"Over the last summer, a lot of things have changed, you know. I just wanted you to know. It wouldn’t be fair to keep that from you," Harry said inwardly cursing Death. The only thing he could sense was amusement. Not that he was complaining, when Death nipped on his skin right beneath his ear. The possessive bastard.

"Yeah. I mean, I understand that. I mean I’ve thought about it a lot too," Cho said. Harry watched with growing dread, that tears started to well up in her eyes. "I mean, w-with Cedric and..."

"Harry!" a voice called him from behind and Ron bumped into his shoulder. Harry couldn’t express his gratefulness at Ron’s timing and lack of observation skills. "-the Hell mate, you can’t just run off all the time-," Ron stopped when he noticed Cho, who was staring at the red-head with a baffled expression, eyes still glassy but too surprised to cry. "Is that a Tornados badge?" Ron asked her after a moment. Cho looked down and there was indeed a white and blue pin on her cloak. Then she raised her head and looked at Ron.

"Yeah," she said still sounding confused.

"I think we should head back. Snape won’t take it too kindly, if we are late," Harry interfered.

"Yeah. You’re probably right," Ron added and already started to walk away.

"See you," Harry said to Cho and then he turned around and followed Ron.

In the queue in front of Snape’s classroom, Harry stood next to Hermione and Ron, who were loudly arguing about the incident with Cho. "...but Ron, she clearly wanted to talk to Harry..."

"How should I know? It’s not like she said that I should go away. And that stupid badge. Surely, she is just a fan of the Tornados because they won the cup last year."

"Sometimes Ron you are just so dense."

"What? And you are perfect-" Harry ignored their bickering and instead walked through the door, which creaked when it opened. Neville seemed like he wanted to be anywhere else but here. Ron and Hermine didn’t even notice that he was gone, still too focused on their argument. Harry went to a table in the back, located in a more shadowy part of the room. Hundreds of vials on the walls sparkled in the gloomy light. Slowly the other pupils trickled into the room. Small groups of Slytherins and Gryffindors gathered around the tables.

The door opened once again and Severus Snape entered, his robes billowing behind him. "Now Silence," he demanded and stopped in front of his desk. "Before we start with today’s lesson, I think it would be wise to remind you that you are taking an important test this June, where you can prove, how much you learned about the brewing and usage of potions. As stupid, as a part of this class definitely is, I am still expecting you to receive at least an Acceptable for your OWL’s, otherwise you are going to feel...," Snape stared at Neville, "my discontent." He turned away from
the frightened Gryffindor and continued. "After this schoolyear many of you will certainly no longer study with me. I’m only teaching the best, which means that some of you will certainly say goodbye.” Harry didn’t look away, when Snape’s eyes were now fixated on him.

Harry used to practice brewing a lot during his time as an Auror trainee since it had always been a somewhat weaker subject of his. Harry was sure, that he was able to brew a decent potion. After all, the good grades he’d finished his Auror training with didn’t come out of nowhere. Snape broke their eye-contact and turned to the class. "But till that happy moment of farewell, we still have a year ahead of us," he said with a silken voice, "If you are taking your NEWT’s or not, I advise you to focus your attention on keeping the high level I am expecting from my OWL students," Snape continued. "Today we are going to brew a potion which often asked for in the OWL’s and is known as Draught of Peace. It lessens fears and dampens nervousness; but beware… One wrong move and your Draught will trigger a deep slumber, of which some won’t wake.” He swished his wand and words appeared on the board behind him. "The necessary instructions are listed on the blackboard and you can find the ingredients in here," Snape said, and the door to the storeroom sprang open when he flicked his wand a second time. "You have one and a half hours… begin.”

Immediately everyone scrambled up and started to collect their ingredients. It was a difficult potion, at least if you didn’t have the memories of someone who went through Auror-trainig. With ease, Harry cut the ingredients added some of the required moon-stone powder and every so often regulated the heat of the flames with a flick of his wand. Somewhere between Seamus messing up his charm for the heat-regulation and almost setting Dean on fire and Snape snapping at Neville when he accidentally pushed a vial of hellebore syrup off the table, Harry rolled up the sleeves of his shirt and took his glasses off. Otherwise the steam had him see the whole room through a foggy veil. Meanwhile, Death started to walk through the room.

Brewing as it turned out, was mostly about accuracy and the right recipe. Snape’s company might not be very pleasant, but it had its reasons that he was a potions master. With Snape’s improved instructions on the blackboard, Harry had no problems with brewing the Draught, unlike Ron whose caldron sprayed green sparks.

"Silvery steam should now rise from your potion," Snape said, when they had only ten minutes left. Hermione’s potion matched Harry’s, but not many people seemed to have manged to brew a flawless potion. While Snape slowly started to slide through the room and inspected every cauldron, Death materialized curled around Harry’s arm, cool scales pressing against his skin. Snape walked past Hermione only glancing at her cauldron and wrinkled his nose at Ron’s, but when he reached Harry’s cauldron he stopped. He stared at the potion with unblinking eyes and an unreadable expression. That he didn’t say a word, could only mean one thing. There was nothing wrong with it. Harry grinned. Snape’s dark eyes snapped to Harry’s face. He seemed somewhat taken aback, seeing his face without the glasses but then his attention was caught by Death. He sneered. "Five points from Gryffindor, for bringing a pet to my class," he said with an oily voice. Ron’s jaw fell, and he stared at Snape with an unbelieving look. Harry on the other hand wasn’t too bothered by it. He smirked and lifted Death onto his shoulders.

"He is just angry that he couldn’t vanish my potion," Harry hissed at the snake. He watched with undeniable satisfaction, how Snape paled. To Harry’s amusement Death even raised his head, hissed and bared his fangs. The reaction caused Snape to take a step back. Harry followed the potions teacher with his eyes, when he stoically walked over to the next table and inspected Zabini’s cauldron.

During the lunch-break Harry mostly ignored Hermione and Ron, but they were arguing again and didn’t even notice Harry’s lack of input. Earlier Hermione mentioned, that she hoped Snape would be nicer to them, now that he was in the Order. Ron insisted that there was no real evidence that he
ever stopped working for Voldemort. It would actually be an interesting discussion, if it wasn’t held by two teenagers who barely knew what was going on, so Harry focused on his food instead. The next subject would be Divination. And by what Harry remembered about it, he wasn’t very keen on it.

While Hermione grabbed her stuff to go to Ancient Runes, he and Ron moved towards the Northern tower where Trelawney’s classroom was located. As soon as they’d climbed the rope ladder and entered through the trap door Trelawney fixated on Harry. She pressed a hand against her heart and shook her head dramatically. "Oh, my poor, poor boy. You are surrounded by an aura of Death." Harry snorted with amusement. With Death accompanying him, she didn’t even know how right she was. This lesson was fairly relaxing, all they had to do was to sit on their pillows and interpret each other's dreams. Harry didn’t remember dreaming at all last night, therefore Ron told him about a made-up dream of his. They were assigned to keep a dream journal for the following month and while they walked through the castle to go to Defence against the Dark arts, Ron bemoaned their extensive homework load.

"...the essay for Snape and now we have to keep this stupid journal. It’s only the first day, and who knows what this Umbridge is going to do," Ron said as they walked past the portraits of a giant wolf-like dog and a chubby witch, who seemed to be tipsy from the wine in her painting. Harry sighed, when they saw the first students already entering the classroom, to what would probably be the most boring lesson, they ever had. Umbridge was already standing inside of the classroom, a black bow on her head and solely clad in pink. She smiled sweetly when everyone was finally seated.

"Good afternoon class," she started. When scattered murmurs were the only reply that she got, she clicked her tongue.

"That wasn’t very convincing. I would ask you to greet me by saying Good afternoon Professor Umbridge. Let’s try again. Good morning class," she said.

"Good afternoon Professor Umbridge," the class said in unison, a few of the pupils rolling their eyes.

"That wasn’t too difficult was it?" Umbridge said. "Put your wands away and get out your quills please," Umbridge said. Harry hadn’t even bothered to pull his wand out of his pocket. The pink toad tapped the Board with her surprisingly short wand and the chalk began to write.

**Defence against the Dark arts, a return to basic principles**

"Well then. Your previous education in this subject has been sloppy and fragmented at least, hasn’t it?" she turned around with carefully folded hands. "The continuing change of teachers all the time... Of which obviously none of them bothered to teach following a curriculum that is approved by the ministry. This certainly led to you being vastly beneath the standard of OWL students expected this year...." Harry was already bored to Hell. "You’ll be pleased to know however, that these problems are about to be rectified. We will be following a carefully structured, theory centred, ministry approved course of defensive magic this year." And while the sounds of quills scratching on parchment filled the room - Umbridge had them copy what was standing on the blackboard - Harry was already regretting his decision to stay low for a while.

"We can kill her," Death said grinning and Harry sighed. Killing Umbridge would certainly be satisfying even if it was a bad idea, as long as he was planning to stay at Hogwarts. Who knew what Fudge was going to do, when the pink toad disappeared? Probably sending Dementors again or maybe even try to arrest Dumbledore. On a second thought, this might not be a bad idea at all. But no. For now, she would need to stay alive, if Harry didn’t want to attract attention. Harry didn’t
bother to start reading, instead he looked at Hermione, who hadn’t opened her book either and was raising her hand. "Yes, my dear," Umbridge said when the whole class stared at Hermione and she could no longer pretend not to notice her. "Do you have a question about this chapter?"

"Not to the chapter, no," Hermione replied.

"Well we are reading it just now," Umbridge said sweetly. "If you require other information you can ask after the lesson."

"I have a require about your course aims," Hermione said.

"And your name is?" Umbridge asked with raised eyebrows.

"Hermione Granger."

"Well Miss Granger, I think the course aims are completely clear if you would read attentively "

"Well, not to me. Nowhere it says how to use defensive magic."

"Using defensive magic?" Umbridge laughed in her high girly voice. "Well, I can’t imagine a situation inside my classroom, which would call for the use of a defensive spell, Miss Granger. You aren’t really expecting to be attacked in my classroom, are you?" Harry snorted.

‘Yeah right, no Defence against the Dark arts teacher would ever try to attack them, no,’ he though sarcastically. Death grinned and seemed to share his amusement. He sat down on the table located to Harry’s left. Parvati unconsciously leaned back. "We won’t use magic?" Ron asked loudly.

"My students raise their hands if they want to say something Mr-?"

"Weasley," Ron said and stuck his hand into the air. Umbridge stared at Harry for a moment, when he didn’t raise his hand but instead leaned back in his chair to watch. He wouldn’t allow her the satisfaction of having power over him, even if it was only the decision of when he was allowed to talk and when he had to be silent. Umbridge turned to Hermione.

"Yes, Miss Granger did you like to ask something else?" she asked.

"Yes. Isn’t it the point of defence against the dark arts to have us practice defensive spells?"

"Are you a ministry approved educational-expert, Miss Granger?" said Professor Umbridge with her too sweet voice.

"No but-"

"Then I fear, that you are not qualified to decide what “the point” of teaching is. Wizards who are way older and smarter than you developed our new study program. You are going to learn something about defensive spells in a safe way, without any risk. Yes Mr-?"

"Dean Thomas."

"Well Mr. Thomas?"

"If we are attacked, I mean it won’t be without a risk."

"I repeat; do you expect to be attacked during class?" Umbridge asked.

"No but-," Dean answered but Umbridge didn’t let him finish.
"I don’t want to criticize the way this school was led until now," A false smile appeared on her toad-like mouth, "But you were exposed to some irresponsible wizards in this subject, really irresponsible - not to mention dangerous half-breeds" Harry tilted his head and thought that killing her, by putting her in front of Remus on a full moon would certainly be interesting.

"If you are talking about Professor Lupin, he was the best we ever-," Dean said angry.

"Hand, Mr Thomas! As I was saying, you have been introduced to spells, that have been complex, inappropriate to your age-group and potentially lethal. You have been frightened into believing, that there are going to be dark attacks every other day."

"No, we haven’t," Hermione said.

"Your hand is not in the air." Hermione raised her hand and Umbridge turned away.

"It is my understanding, that my predecessor, not only performed illegal curses in front of you, he actually performed them on you."

"Yeah, well and yet you are insisting, that we won’t need learn spells to defend ourselves, despite us being attacked in our classroom already," Harry said loudly, "Who knows that this won’t happen again. I for my part, expect to be attacked."

"Mr. Potter," Umbridge said. "Who do you think is going to attack children like you?" she said sweetly.

Harry tilted his head and started to count on his fingers. "Hmm yeah, okay let’s see. Quirrel tried to kill me in my first year in Hogwarts and in the second one... Apart from the fact that Lockhart tried to Obliviate Ron and me, he managed to vanish the bones in my arm. Then there was Lupin, who was really nice, but he had to lock himself up every full moon. Then the year when a literal Death Eater taught us," Harry said. Everybody was staring at him. "And oh yeah, this summer I was attacked by two Dementors, but the Ministry managed to keep it out of the papers just like..." Harry pretended to be thinking very hard, "What’s his name? The maniac who tried to kill me as a baby... Ah yeah. Lord Voldemort," Harry added, grinning inwardly. Ron gasped; Lavender Brown shrieked; Neville fell from his chair, but Professor Umbridge didn’t move at all. She stared at Harry with dark satisfaction.

"Ten points from Gryffindor." The people in their class stared either at Harry or Umbridge. "Now let me make a few things quite plain," Umbridge said. "You have been told, that a certain Dark Lord was raised from the dead and is at large once again. That is a lie."

"Yeah;" Harry said and grinned. "I know the feeling of accidentally casting a killing Curse. It’s not like you have to want it to work," he said sarcastically. Harry bit back a grin, when Umbridge looked at him, as if she’d shout at him every second.

"Come here Mr. Potter," she said, and Harry knew that she had been so close to losing self-control. Harry pushed back his chair, and casually walked over to Umbridge. He watched her smirking, as she pulled a small pink roll of parchment out of her purse and pulled out a quill. No one was
talking. Harry knew everyone was watching him. The only sound was the scratching of Umbridge’s feather on the parchment. "Bring that to Professor McGonagall," she said with a voice like honey after she had sealed the letter with her wand.

"Gladly, Professor Umbridge," Harry said mockingly and then left. Harry already knew what the note would be saying, and McGonagall only confirmed his suspicion. Detention, every day of the following week. He left McGonagall’s office with a biscuit in his hand and the words of her warning lingering in his mind.

Chapter End Notes

I edited the beginning of chapter 19 a little bit but nothing too drastic
Inside Information

Chapter Summary

Harry has his first Detention with Umbrige, Death feels protective and Kreacher has some news.

Chapter Notes

Oh, you are so going to hate me for the Detention with Umbridge, I already know it. But you get some Death/Harry. Also a kind of lemon (It's mostly hinted at) so for the people who are scared to imagine other people having sex, you have been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next day came soon enough. As much as Harry liked being in Hogwarts, he had to admit that he was bored. The highlight of the morning had been a small article in the Daily Prophet deeming him the next dark Lord, which caused the pupils to whisper and stare even more than usual these days. During charms, Flitwick had them repeat summoning charms and later McGonagall introduced them to a vanishing spell. Harry - of course - managed to vanish his snail on the first try, which earned him ten points for Gryffindor and a strange look from Hermione. After Transfiguration, they grabbed their stuff and left for Herbology and in the afternoon they headed towards the forbidden forest. Professor Grubbly-Plank was already waiting for them, to study Bowtruckles with the Slytherins. When Draco loudly announced that his father had been talking to Fudge about the school, Harry’s interest was piqued. But as much as he had hoped for interesting news, the Slytherin didn’t exploit the topic further.

Harry was almost relieved when he was finally sitting in the great Hall and Dinner was served. Next to him sat Hermione. She had been reading a book while she was eating, but now she stared at Ron with a somewhat disgusted look. The red head seemingly inhaled his food, while at the same time he was discussing Quidditch with Seamus. The ghosts were still avoiding Harry and so did nearly Headless Nick when he floated past them. He greeted them with a nod but otherwise kept his distance. Too involved in avoiding Harry, the ghost floated right through Neville’s body and caused the Gryffindor to flinch violently. Parvati shrieked when his cup toppled over and pumpkin juice dripped all over her cloak.

During Lunch, stripes of light had still illuminated the old stones. Small particles of dust had been visible as they floated through the air, but now the ceiling of the great hall was turning darker with every passing minute and the first candles magically started to light themselves. Harry spotted Malfoy on the Slytherin table, but then his attention was caught by something else. He sighed when he noticed a familiar dark-skinned girl stomping towards him. A very angry Angelina approached him and snapped at Harry for managing to get detention during the Quidditch try-outs. Harry endured her speech without complaints. When Angelina was finally storming away, Harry found that he would be glad when the day was over.
At least Death had never left his side. He was wrapped around his arm in his snake form for most of the time. Half an hour later, he followed Harry like a shadow when he was on the way to Umbridge’s office. And he still had to figure out what to do with the toad. Killing was no option, and outright telling her to shove off... Harry sighed. Trying to lay low was more difficult than he had imagined.

He entered the office without a plan. It was just as pink and overwhelming as he remembered it. No portraits on the walls, but china with the moving kittens on them, pink pillows on equally pink chairs and a tea service on her table. Harry immediately spotted the black feather and the empty piece of parchment. It was the only thing inside the room, that wasn’t round, pink or disgustingly cute.

"Good evening Mr. Potter," Umbridge said and looked suspiciously like a toad who had just caught a fat fly.

"Good evening Professor Umbridge," Harry replied and smiled back with an equally creepy smile. It seemed to disturb her somewhat, but she continued without a pause.

"Please, take a seat," she said and pointed at the chair opposite to her. Harry sat down in front of the empty parchment. "Well, Mr Potter. Before we begin with your punishment, let’s repeat why you are here." Umbridge looked at him expectantly "Why do you think, you are here Mr Potter?" she asked him eventually, when Harry just stared at her with a deadpan look.

"Honestly?" Harry started, "Because you don’t like what I had to say." Harry leaned back in his chair and glanced at Death who loomed over him. The being stared at Umbridge with a smirk that promised nothing good and Harry could sense a thirst for blood echoing through the bond.

"No Mr. Potter," Umbridge continued sweetly. "This is your punishment, for spreading evil, attention-seeking stories." When Harry just stared at her she smiled. "Well, apparently we are learning to restrain ourselves, aren’t we? You are now going to write a few lines for me, Mr. Potter" She offered him the Blood-quill. The feather was long, thin and black and pulsed viciously with dark magic. "I want you to write; I must not tell lies," she said sweetly.

Umbridge watched with glee, when Harry put the sharp end of the quill onto the parchment. Bloody lines appeared on his skin, parallel to the writing and a sharp pain came with it. Harry wrote, not a muscle in his face telling what he was thinking. Death frowned as he watched Harry. Uneasiness pulsed through the bond, alongside with confusion. But Death didn’t try to keep Harry from what he was doing. Slowly the parchment was filled with words and it shone red in the light of the candles. Death was sitting right next to Harry and he watched him with a dark expression. Harry knew that the being didn’t like what he was doing.

Umbridge started to squirm in her seat after some time. Harry had the feeling, that it had something to do with Death’s dark presence growing stronger and more noticeable with every line. And while it might be a comfort to Harry it certainly didn’t make Umbridge feel better. The minutes passed by and eventually Harry asked himself why he was even bothering. "Okay, know what? To Hell with it," he said and stopped writing. Umbridge stared at him, and confusion turned into anger.

"Mr. Potter! I think another Detention will serve yo-" but she wasn't able to end her sentence, because Harry had just flicked his wrist and stunned her. The solution was so easy, he didn’t know why he hadn’t thought about it earlier. No wand meant there was no trace they could follow. Dumbledore was the only wizard that Harry knew was powerful enough to sense magic and he doubted that he would just walk into Umbridge’s office without a reason. Harry stared at the unconscious toad. Her mouth stood open and her head had fallen onto the back of her chair. The bow on top of her hair slowly slipped from its designated place.
Harry's gaze didn't linger much longer. He materialized the Elder wand and with a thought he modified her memories. She would simply think, that she had fallen asleep after he had left. Harry traced the bloody lines with his fingers and a cast a glamour on the parchment. Now it seemed like he had written for hours. After he had put the blood quill back on Umbridge's desk, he left without another look.

As soon as he reached the common room, Harry headed for their dorm. He changed and went to bed, carefully closing the curtains. He didn’t want to repeat a scene like the first morning. When he had just settled on his pillows, Death materialized right on top of him. The being was sitting on Harry’s stomach, hands caging his head as he loomed over him. "We should just kill her," Death said and Harry missed the familiar grin on his face, which usually came alongside these suggestions.

"We can’t kill her, I decided to stay low," Harry said and added a privacy ward around his bed. Better not having someone overhear their conversation.

"That was a stupid idea," Death said and Harry chuckled.

"Probably," Harry said smirking and stared at Death. "Tomorrow I will use that time better," he promised.

Something that felt close to relief echoed through the bond and only now Harry realized, that him using the blood quill must’ve bothered Death more than he'd originally let on. "I promise," Harry added and the being hummed in agreement.

Harry looked at Death, who was so close that his hair was almost touching his face. Surprised Harry noticed, that Death’s eyes weren’t purely white like he had always thought. Almost unnoticeable there was the slightest distinction of colour. Just where the iris of a human would be, his eyes were darker. Not much but enough to be noticed when one paid attention. Harry wondered if it always had been this way, or if it was one of Death’s unconscious changes in appearance. He must’ve stared for longer than he thought because after a few moments he noticed the smirk on Death’s face. Under the intense gaze Harry suddenly felt like prey. He exposed his throat almost by instinct. His mind was wiped blank, arousal sparked deep in his gut and buzzed through their connection.

Harry’s breath hitched when the being leaned closer. He could feel Death breathing against his lips and a hand gliding over his neck. Like a choking hold only without pressure, but then Death’s fingers went on. Over his jaw and cheek, always a sharp grin on his face. Harry’s mouth parted in anticipation. The moment seemed to stretch endlessly. But then - finally - Death closed the gap between them and kissed him.

Harry arched into the touch when a hand was gliding over his ribs and another one twined in his hair. He gasped when Death deepened the kiss and he was pressed closer. This time, there was no frantic chase for release, no. Harry fell apart under teasing touches, nips and slow kisses.

That night Harry fell asleep curled up against a purring Death, invisible wings around him and love pulsing through the bond.

It was still dark in the dormitory when Harry’s eyes suddenly opened. He sat up and knew immediately that the others were still asleep. Death materialized at the foot of Harry’s bed. The being stared at Harry with a grin on his face. It took a second, for Harry to realize what caused him to wake. He pulled back the curtain from his bed and stared at the empty spot next to his bed. The air seemed to part, and the wards pulsed. Two seconds later Kreacher appeared with a plop. The elf bowed deeply when he realized that Harry was awake.
"Master Harry," he said and after a moment he continued, "I did not realize that you were indisposed."

Harry blushed and a hand wandered automatically to his neck. All of a sudden, he realized, what he had to look like. His hair was probably even a wilder than usual and his neck and collar bones were covered in hickeys, if he could trust his feeling and that didn’t even include the lack of clothes he was wearing.

"Okay just gimme a moment," Harry said and with his right hand reached down the other bedside to find his them. Death just sat there and smirked entertained, while Harry put on his shirt. Eventually Harry combed through his hair with his fingers and then dismissed his appearance with a thought. This would have to do. He looked at the house-elf who was still staring at the floor.

"Okay, you can stop your bowing now Kreacher," Harry said and greeted him with an acknowledging nod after the elf raised his head. Harry hummed thoughtfully and turned, so that he was facing Kreacher, legs dangling from the edge of his bed. Sirius hadn’t left him hanging. "What made you come here?" Harry asked.

"I have information about the ministry," Kreacher said and bowed once more, while smirk appeared on Harry’s face.

"Tell me," Harry demanded and Kreacher raised his head.

"Sturgis Podmore was caught sneaking around in the Ministry. He is a filthy half-blood, sometimes he is visiting-," Kreacher’s talking slowed down and it seemed to be hard for him to utter the next words, "-with the other blood-traitors and speaking abou-" Kreacher stopped all of a sudden and grabbed his throat. He gagged as he tried to voice what he wanted to say, but obviously he was not able to. Apparently, the command to keep everything about the order a secret was still active.

“I know, just continue,” Harry said and freed Kreacher from further explanation.

“The Wizengamot is going to hold his trial on Thursday, 9 am,” Kreacher said.

“Thank you Kreacher,” Harry said, "Anything else?"

“Young Master also ordered Kreacher to keep an eye on the Malfoys.” Harry nodded.

“Go on.”

“Lucius Malfoy tried to lay claim on the seats in the Wizengamot, which are owned by the Blacks.” Harry raised his eyebrows.

“Tried? He didn’t succeed though, that’s what you are telling me.”

“Yes,” the house-elf said. Now Harry was curious.

“What were his reasons for laying claim on the seats? Do you know?”

“He argued, that his son – Mr. Draco Malfoy – was the only male descendant of the bloodline of the Blacks. The Minister was eager to comply, but he wasn’t able too. I overheard Mr. Malfoy talking... His wife Mrs. Cissy Malfoy was also not able to lay claim on the seats. She asked the goblins in Gringotts. But since Master Sirius is still alive, despite him being a filth-” Harry’s eyes narrowed and Kreacher stopped before he continued once more. “Despite Master Black having escaped Azkaban, he is still head of the house. He named you to represent the noble an ancient house of Black. As long as he isn’t dead, his word holds true.” Harry smirked. So, Malfoy really
lost no time. He turned his attention back on Kreacher.

"Well done, that was good work. Thank you Kreacher." The elf bowed deeply.

"Thank you Master."

"You can go home now, if you want," Harry said.

"Of course, young Master," Kreacher said and disapparated. Harry stared at the empty spot thoughtfully. How many Wizards and Witches hadn’t bothered to ensure the loyalty of their servants and treated them like dirt? If he had learned something in his life, then it was that these beings were way more complex than many people thought.

The next two days passed without a noticeable interruption. Ron could barely hide that he wanted to play for the Quidditch-Team, even if he tried very hard to keep it from Harry. Daily he sneaked out to practice with his new broom. Meanwhile Hermione started knitting hats for the house-elves to free them. She left them under garbage inside the common room even trying to get Harry to support S.P.E.W. by starting to knit hats. Ron always removed the trash covering them, insisting that the elves should at least be able to see what they were collecting. Harry exceeded in all his classes apart from Defence against the Dark Arts, thanks to Umbridge’s dislike of him and Harry’s sarcastic remarks. During the day, she continued to be the same annoying toad as ever. But sometimes she seemed strangely uneasy around Harry, who smirked every time it happened. In the afternoon, she greeted Harry with her disgustingly sweet smile and asked him to write lines. But Harry didn’t plan on doing that. He hit Umbridge with a stupefy as soon as he entered the disgustingly pink office. The thud with which her head had hit the wooden desk was certainly satisfying. Harry modified her memories and duplicated the parchment he had filled with the bloody lines during his first detention. He put it on her table before he left. Harry used the spare time to do his homework, which was still an extensive load. Death accompanied him even during the most boring sessions of Binns monologue about the giant wars and Harry was glad to have him around.

It was Wednesday when Harry had to listen once more to Hermione scolding the twins for testing their products on volunteers. Harry casually watched them argue, while he was lounging in an armchair next the fireplace. Death was sitting on the back of his chair and nuzzled Harry’s neck and hair, long fingers tracing patterns over his skin. Occasionally the creature possessively nipped the side of Harry’s neck which sent pleasant tingles down his back. Harry’s potions book was placed on his lap. He had long stopped pretending to read it. He had been staring at the page about antidotes and poisons for at least half an hour, while he was trying very hard to resist the urge to just turn around and kiss Death. It was then, when his attention was caught by the twins and Hermione. Harry hadn’t really been sure what to do when Podmore would have his trial. Should he stay in Hogwarts, or just skip the first few classes on Thursday without giving a damn and go the Ministry? But a new thought invaded his mind. Begrudgingly Harry left Death and his seat by the crackling fire and walked over to them, after Hermione had succeeded and Fred and George were packing their stuff under her watchful glances.

"Hey," Harry said.

"Oh no," Fred replied with a fake scared voice after he'd turned around. "It’s the next dark Lord."

"Have you seen his snake? It can only be ‘you-know-who-junior," George added dramatically and then he smirked. Even Harry grinned when he was reminded of the latest Article in the Daily Prophet. Their interpretation was actually a very good representation of the current situation, with students whispering and pointing at Harry every time he walked through the hallways.
"Are some of your products already working?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, the fainting fancies seem to work quite well," George replied while he was picking up a bag with purple and orange pieces of candy.

"We are also working on the Nosebleed Nougats," Fred added and pointed at the bag, "but we still haven’t found a good way to stop the bleeding afterwards."

"As your sponsor, you surely wouldn’t mind me borrowing one of the fainting fancies, would you?" Harry asked with a mischievous grin. The twins shared a look.

"George," Fred said and his eyes widened comically, "The day has come."

"The new dark Lord asked us to join him," George replied and bowed deeply.

"Of course, everything our mighty saviour desires shall be his...," Fred added and joined his brother by bowing even deeper, while Ron entered through the portrait hole.

"Do I even want to know what is going on?" Ron asked and stopped next to his brothers.

"Finally finished with your duties as a prefect?" George said.

"Or did you skip it to do something else? "Fred added with a look at Ron’s dishevelled look, his hair still wild and sweaty from his secret Quidditch practice. Ron's face flushed red to the tip of his ears.

"I… no- I just wanted to do my - I forgot something...my trunk... just," Ron stammered and rushed towards the stairs to their dormitory the lingering glances of his twin brothers following him. It was obvious that they didn’t buy his lie.

"Mind telling us, what you are planning?" George asked curiously after he turned back to Harry.

"Nah, I just need to skip some classes tomorrow morning," Harry replied.

"Mmhh," Fred said and nodded.

"That can be arranged," George added with a look at Hermione. The girl was now focused on knitting one of her house-elf hats. As if she’d noticed the looks, she raised her head and stared at them suspiciously. "But it’s probably better, if we go somewhere else," George said and lowered his voice. "Merlin knows, what Hermione is gonna do to us when she finds out what we're talking about." Harry grinned. This night he went to bed, his pockets filled with fainting fancies and a plan on his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you guys for reading! In the upcoming chapter there is finally going to be some action again and Umbridge isn't going to get away that easy, don't worry.
Let me know what you think of it :)
Harry attends Sturgis Podmores trial and has his last Detention with Umbridge.

I actually wanted to post this chapter a few days ago, but my wifi stopped working, but I'm actually kinda glad because I got to rewrite a few things and I hope you're going to like it.

On Thursday morning, Harry was sent to go to Madame Pomfrey immediately after he fainted during Divination. He reminded himself to compliment Fred and George on their inventions. Professor Trelawney was thrilled at first and was certain that he’d had a vision. Eventually Harry managed to convince her that he had really fainted, but that it was probably caused by the heavy scents inside the classroom and nothing too severe. Ron’s worried look followed him when he left through the trap door.

When Harry had reached the hospital wing, Poppy Pomfrey examined him from head to toe, but couldn’t find anything out of the ordinary. After Harry incidentally mentioned the lack of sleep he was getting, since Umbridge’s Detentions, she insisted that he went to bed and ordered him to rest till he felt better. Harry smirked when he heard Madame Pomfrey’s angry muttering through the door, about "having a word with this irresponsible toad".

Harry cast a quick "tempus" and changed into the clothes he had worn on his trial. There wasn’t too much time left. Of course, he wouldn’t really be able to hide that he had been in the ministry. That much was obvious, but for the next hours no one would bother to search for him just because he wasn’t attending his classes.

Harry had thought about just leaving it be. He was certain that the trial would end just like the first time around. He knew that Sturgis had been under the Imperius. The wizard had been told to steal the Prophecy, but no one besides Harry or Lord Voldemort would be able to pick it up. Even if the dark Lord didn’t know about that yet. But despite Harry knowing how the whole story would end, showing Fudge that he was able to storm into the Ministry even though they didn’t bother to invite him was something he couldn’t resist. With a last look at the curtains of his dorm, Harry vanished.

He reappeared inside the ministry, unhurriedly emerging from the shadows. The flickering light of the torches didn’t reach the dark corner of the corridor where he was standing. It was just the same which led to the courtroom where he’d had his trial not long ago. While walking through the hallway, Harry realized that he didn’t really know where Sturgis’ trial would be held. But the luck was on his side. A wizard in a plum coloured robe rushed past him, cursing under his breath about being late. Harry followed him silently. He walked through a door not too far away from Harry’s courtroom.

A few people raised their heads to look at the newcomers. Some of them shot Harry suspicious
looks, even more so, when they noticed Death who was wrapped around his neck. But most of them were still talking in hushed voices and took no notice of him. To Harry’s interest he wasn’t the only ordinary Wizard inside the courtroom. Harry easily spotted Lucius Malfoy with his blond - almost white - hair, his familiar magic surrounding him in silvery swirls. He was clothed in a similar fashion to Harry. A black suit and equally dark cloak. Every time he shifted; the light of the torches illuminated the exquisite pattern which was woven into the fabric. Probably very expensive, just like one would expect from a wealthy pure blood. His hands were curled around a walking stick with a silver handle which was shaped like the head of a snake.

Malfoy was chatting with the man next to him. Harry frowned. He recognized the other wizard from somewhere.

Suddenly Harry recalled a vision he’d once had, in which Voldemort had been torturing a Death Eater after he had given him the wrong information. This was Avery, the Death Eater who had told Voldemort about the shelves with the Prophecies, only that he forgot to mention that not every person was able to pick up a certain Prophecy.

Harry smirked when he remembered what would be waiting for Avery as soon as Voldemort would learn about that fact.

There was also a guy with a visitor’s badge and if Harry guessed correctly, this had to be a journalist of the Daily Prophet. He was quite young and had brown hair. He seemed bored but didn’t look too bad in his simple suit. Probably a Muggleborn. He was twirling a quill in his hand and stared at his notebook. As if on cue, the Journalist raised his head. His eyes grazed the newcomers, undoubtedly hoping for the whole trial to start. He took a double take when he spotted Harry. His eyes widened, wandering from his scar to Death in his snake form and back. Harry shot him a glare. The Journalist flinched and lowered his eyes. ‘Great,’ Harry thought sarcastically, when the wizard eagerly started to scribble something down. He hadn’t expected to be able to keep his attendance of Podmore’s trial a secret, but having it announced in the Daily Prophet was something else entirely. He sighed and turned away from the man.

Not far away from Lucius and Avery, Harry spotted a lean man with dark brown hair and pale skin. His chin was raised high and his piercing eyes wandered through the room with an imperious expression. The similarities to his son were uncanny. It had to be Theodore Nott’s father. There was another wizard, who - despite him wearing a purple cloak - stood out of the crowd of members of the Wizengamot. And even while Harry wasn’t really sure, something told him that this had to be Selwyn. Also, one of Voldemort’s followers if he remembered correctly.

Harry smirked as he sat down next to an elderly witch, who - as soon as she noticed who he was - put some distance between them. Harry ignored her and continued to watch the Death Eaters with smug satisfaction.

The old pure-blood families really hadn’t lost any time to increase their influence. If it was for their personal gain or on Voldemort’s orders, either way, Harry’s plan had carved a path which had them gaining even more influence in the ministry. A smirk tugged on his lips. This small factor promised a very interesting future...

Meanwhile many people were staring at Harry, but he ignored them and instead started to talk to Death in parseltongue which only freaked them out more. Selwyn, who sat closest to him of Voldemort’s followers paled when he noticed what Harry was doing. Harry ignored her and continued to watch the Death Eaters with smug satisfaction.

To Harry’s disappointment, Fudge didn’t show up, nor did Dumbledore to rush to Sturgis’ Defence.

But Podmore was led in soon enough. Two Aurors held his arms in firm grips, and his hands were bound by a chain. It fell to the ground and rolled itself up, when one of the Aurors flicked his wand. The rattling noise managed to silence even the last whispered conversation that was held, and the room grew quiet. They shoved Sturgis towards the middle of the room, and he stumbled
over his feet by the force of the push. Madame Bones began with her interrogation, but Harry
didn’t listen. He watched Podmore instead. Sturgis Podmore was an ordinary guy. At least it
seemed that way at first glance.

"…hearing at august 31, regarding trespass and attempted robbery at the Ministry of Magic.”

He was a wizard in his early forties with blond hair and a square jaw. His eyes darted around the
room and let him seem somewhat paranoid. This impression was only enhanced by his magic. It
encircled him in sharp spikes retreating and curling in on itself. Sturgis’ eyes seemed to linger on
Lucius Malfoy for a moment, but Harry doubted that someone beside him noticed. Podmore
flinched when he was interrupted by the authoritarian voice of Amelia Bones. "You are Sturgis
Podmore, of number two, Laburnum Gardens, Clapham. Is that correct?"

Sturgis kept his mouth shut. He just stared at Amelia Bones and occasionally his gaze ran over the
crowd. Harry leaned forward and rested his chin on his hand. ‘Yeah… no word would come over
these lips.' And Harry was right. During the whole interrogation Sturgis Podmore didn’t speak a
word. Harry had no doubts of how this would end.
Sturgis wasn’t even trying to defend himself. And if he were, there was still evidence that he had
been in the Ministry that night. There was even a witness.
The man was called Erich Munch. A man working in the Ministry, who – when asked how he
cought Podmore – told a story that sounded more like a scene from one of the Action films Dudley
always watched, not like the actual truth. Madame Bones had to interrupt him twice, to tell the
watchwizard to keep to the facts and Harry doubted that the stocky man had been able to chase
Sturgis through various departments like he had just told. And watching the other people in the
courtroom, he wasn’t the only one. Nott openly snorted and rolled his eyes, which earned him a
few offended looks, but Harry’s mouth twitched with amusement. No one besides Harry and the
Death Eaters knew that Podmore had been cursed. It was all over in less than an hour. If Mr.
Munch hadn’t exaggerated everything, it would’ve probably taken even less time.
Despite all that, when it came to vote, no one was doubting that Sturgis was guilty as charged.
Even Harry raised his hand alongside the crowd. Not that it would’ve made any difference if he
had voted innocent.

Podmore was led out of the courtroom, shaking and pale. He was obviously no longer aware of
what was going on around him. His stoic look had vanished right after his sentence had been
announced. Harry saw his mouth moving, unspoken words of denial coming over his lips. Podmore
looked like he couldn’t believe the extent of his punishment himself.

‘Six months in Azkaban,' Harry mused, when he left the courtroom shortly after, ‘and they hadn’t
even mentioned which door he wanted to go through…’ Suddenly, somebody bumped into him.
Harry already prepared to glare at the person in a way that only Death could master, when he
noticed that it was the young Journalist rushing past him. An old wizard behind him was cursing
about "the young Wizards of today" and "no manners, whatsoever". Apparently, Harry wasn’t the
only one the Journalist had passed without a second glance. With a twist of Harry’s hand however,
every memory of himself at the trial had left the young man’s mind. It was trickier without a wand.
Harry wasn’t used to direct his magic without it and while it didn't matter if he underestimated his
power while using a privacy charm, changing memories was a delicate thing to do. There was a
reason why the Ministry had a special group of trained people for that.

The Journalist stopped in his tracks, seemingly confused and some people shot him annoyed
glances, while Harry summoned the notebook of the Wizard. With a thought, the notes about his
presence vanished and every evidence of his attendance at this trial had disappeared. When the
notebook was once more safely stashed in the pockets of the brunette wizard, he shook his head
and walked away. If his mind was now a little more messed up, well, that wasn't Harry's problem
was it?

Harry smirked, and continued to follow the other members of the Wizengamot - they all kept a respectable distance – and he had almost reached the end of the corridor, when he heard his name. But not in a hushed whisper, like they were all present in the conversations around him, no. Someone obviously wanted to speak with him.

When Harry turned around, he found himself face to face with Avery. "Lord Potter, I suppose," he said mockingly. Harry threw a glance over Avery’s shoulder. Malfoy was standing next to Nott, but Harry knew that they were listening. They had stopped their conversation, as soon as Avery had approached Harry.

"Lord Avery," Harry said and bowed his head in an equally mocking manor.

"Aren’t you a little young to participate in such events?" the man said, obviously surprised that Harry knew his name.

"Well, I am wondering how you were able to make it," Harry said nonchalant. "After all, you’re probably very busy figuring out what you’re overlooking." Harry lowered his voice and leaned forward with a lopsided grin. "The plan with Podmore didn’t turn out the way you thought it would, did it?" Harry smirked at Avery’s enraged face. Harry felt Death moving around his neck.

"Try to play tough as long as you can Potter," Avery spat, side eyeing the people passing them. "I can’t wait to see you writhing on the ground like you did last summer," he whispered between clenched teeth, his eyes focused on Harry and a hard look on his face. Harry could feel Avery’s magic dancing around him, dark and viscous, like honey and roses. Harry felt his own blood pumping through his veins. He licked over his teeth almost tasting the challenge of Avery’s magic, Death’s predatory nature a tugging sensation in the back of his mind. The urge to show Avery who would be the one writhing on the ground was almost too tempting, but instead Harry straightened his spine and snorted. If Avery wanted to remind him of the day on the Graveyard, Harry could do the same.

"If I recall the events correctly, I wasn’t the one kneeling on the ground and begging Voldemort for forgiveness," Harry said quietly, drawing out the last few words of his sentence. "If you’ll excuse me, I have classes to attend," he added and left Avery where he stood.

The snake around his neck disappeared and Death materialized next to Harry in his human form. Amusement pulsed through the bond, that was familiar, but there was something slightly different about it. And he couldn’t tell what it was. Harry frowned, trying to figure it out. He side-eyed Death and the being smirked to himself.

He wouldn’t tell him what the emotion was, that much was obvious. "You are laughing at me, aren’t you?" Harry said slowly and turned to look at Death. He tried to sound offended, but his own amusement betrayed him. A smile tugged on Harry’s lips, but Death just offered him another silent grin. Then it dawned on Harry. "You thought it was cute! Me dealing with Avery!" Harry stated and stared at Death.

"I might have," Death just said with his never-ending smirk on his face, as they were walking towards the Elevators. "You can be quite endearing, when you threaten people," the being added, when they left the crowd, unnoticed and walked down a dim corridor.

"Oh, shut up," Harry muttered, not quite being able to hide the blush creeping up his neck. Death laughed hoarsely. Harry almost stopped, staring at Death in awe, once more fascinated by seeing him laugh. Death looked at him, mirth echoing through the bond and Harry smiled. They only walked past the next corner before they disappeared in the shadows.
Harry was pacing through the castle deep in thought. Dumbledore had to know that he left Hogwarts, so why hadn’t he asked Harry about it yet? It was Friday and a whole day had already passed since Podmore’s trial. It was a nagging feeling in Harry’s gut, that Dumbledore didn’t seem to mind at all what he was doing. Or could it be that Dumbledore really didn’t know that Harry had left the castle. Harry shook his head. He doubted it. If he didn’t know it, he would hear about it sooner or later. But maybe the headmaster was facing worse problems right now. After all, a member of the order had just been sentenced to six months in Azkaban only for wanting to break through a door... And he still avoided Harry, thinking that Voldemort was influencing him. Harry snorted at the thought and with newfound interest, he lowered the walls inside his head and inspected the piece of soul. It was rooted into his being like a tree. It pulsed at the contact after all this time. The thing stretched curiously, like it had been awoken from a slumber. Suddenly Harry felt it. Emotions echoing through his mind, and it wasn’t the bond between him and Death. This was different. Invasive and strange, but nevertheless Harry could sense confusion and fear but also curiosity. At first it was faint, but then it grew stronger. Harry barely evaded the pull and slammed up his walls, but for a split second he had been sure that Voldemort had been aware of him. Harry exhaled. Hopefully that wasn’t the case. Having a dark Lord prod inside one’s mind wasn’t very pleasant. The portraits on the wall followed him with their eyes, but Harry ignored them. Soon he would reach Umbridge’s office for his last Detention.

"You have plans for today, haven’t you?" Death asked him in his inhuman voice, when they had reached the door.

"I don’t really know what I am going to do by now," Harry said. "I guess we’ll see spontaneously," Harry grinned at Death. The rest remained unspoken. Harry suspected that the portraits were still watching him. But Death knew exactly what Harry was thinking. ‘Just because he decided that he wouldn’t kill Umbridge, didn’t mean, that he couldn’t do anything else to her. Umbridge might think, that Harry had to endure a few torturous hours with her as only company, just like the last days. What she hadn’t thought about, was that not only Harry was alone with her - she was alone with Harry. With a dark smile he entered Umbridge’s office.

After the familiar greeting, Harry took the black quill. He let it hover over the parchment but then he put it down. "I changed my mind. I don’t think that I will to do that."

Umbridge’s confused expression changed and she stared angrily at Harry. "Mr. Potter, you are going to listen-"

"Oh no," Harry said and grinned at Umbridge. "You are going to listen to me now."

Umbridge paled with anger, and she opened her mouth. "How dare you-"

Only a thought and Umbridge was silenced. "You know, on Monday I still thought I would have to endure the Detentions with you, since cursing you might be a little too suspicious. But well, I guess we were both wrong with our expectations of how it would turn out." Harry smirked. "I never really had the chance to take revenge on someone, but it might be fun, so why not," Harry said and Umbridge’s eyes widened. Harry stood up and turned around. He looked at the painted kittens and froze them in their frames, just to be sure. While they might not be able to talk, he didn’t need any witnesses. When he turned back to Umbridge again, a wand was pointed at him. Harry grinned and Umbridge mirrored his expression.

"Attacking a Teacher, Cornelius was right. You deserve to be punished," she said.

"Oh, I don’t think so," Harry said. "Imperio," he whispered. It wasn’t like he needed to say the
words, but he wanted to see the expression in Umbridge’s face; and maybe a little for the
dramatics. Her eyes widened a fraction, but then a glazed expression appeared on her face.

"I want you to tell me about you," Harry said with a grin. After all, who knew what kind of
blackmail material he could get out of this? With a dazed expression Umbridge started to talk.

When Darkness started to creep over the sky, chasing the last reds and oranges of the sunset away
Umbridge had finished. Now she was sitting in the chair opposite to Harry a dazed expression on
her face. Ah yeah. Little Dolores Umbridge wasn’t the pureblood she always pretended to be since
she had reached a position in the ministry. As the daughter of Orford Umbridge - a Wizard, and
Ellen Cracknell, who was a Muggle, she was just like one of the half-breeds she hated that much.
She had a brother who was a Squib and whom she hated for not being able to do magic. And
despite all her stupidity, she had reached a high position in the ministry by talking to the right
people at the right times.

"That was all very interesting," Harry said, "but well I can’t have you remember this at all. But we
still have some time left, what do you think? Harry looked at her and then at the empty parchment.
"Sit down Dolores," Harry said. "I think we’ve reached the point, that we can call each other by
our first names." Umbridge stared at him, already seated in the chair behind her desk. "Oh but, not
there," Harry said and pointed at the empty parchment. "Here," he said with a smirk and Umbridge
did as she was told. In the meantime, Harry sat down on the pink chair, she usually occupied.
Death stood next to Harry and stared at Umbridge with a predatory look. Harry could tell that he
wanted nothing but to kill her.

"Now-," Harry said and leaned forward to pluck the wand out of Umbridge’s fat fingers. She had
been holding onto it until now. "-I want you to write some lines for me," Harry said and leaned
back with a grin. "You are going to write; I must not tell lies just as long, as you would’ve made me
write these words." With a dazed expression, Umbridge took the blood-quill and wrote the first
sentence. "And I want you to know about it. Not enough to really remember it, just like a dream,"
Harry added and the expression in Umbridge’s face changed. She looked at him with a mix of both
anger and fear, but she wrote, still under the influence of the curse. She finally stopped close to
midnight, the skin on her wrist red and tender, but there were no scars or wounds.
Harry hummed thoughtfully. He took the parchment that was glistening with red lines and traced
them with his fingers. When he took his hand away, the girly curves and lines had changed to
resemble his own handwriting. "After I leave, you are going to think that we both stayed here, and
I wrote lines with the blood-quill till you let me go. You won’t be able to tell anyone about this as
long as I don’t allow it," Harry said and stood up. "Goodnight Professor Umbridge," Harry added
and left with a grin on his face.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think <3
Harry plays Quidditch for the first time in years and he pays Lucius Malfoy a visit.

Hey guys, there's the new chapter. Hope you like it :)
"No," Harry responded immediately, and Ron seemed relieved. When the red head asked Harry what he had done in his free time, Harry used the same excuse he had told Madame Pomfrey. He blamed Umbridge and the Detentions, saying that he was so far behind with his homework, that skipping Divination was a price he would gladly pay to finish Snape’s essay. Ron seemed to get his point; despite being somewhat upset that Harry didn’t ask him to join. But thankfully the joy over being declared the new Keeper of the Gryffindor-Quidditch team predominated his disappointment. And soon he proudly showed Harry his new cloak, which Wood had been using when he had still been the Keeper of the Quidditch team.

On Saturday during breakfast, Ron started to stare longingly at the high ceiling that showed the grey sky outside. Harry sighed. Today was the first Quidditch training. A distant fluttering announced the arrival of the morning post. And soon hundreds of owls were flying through the air, screeching and stealing small pieces of food from the plates of their owners. Everywhere people were showered with letters and packages from their homes, magazines or the daily prophet. A ruffled looking barn owl landed next to Hermione and dangerously close to Ron’s scrambled eggs. The bird stretched out her leg, a small leather pouch was bound to it. After Hermione took the Daily Prophet, she paid the owl with a Knut. As soon as she’d put the money into the pouch, the bird stretched its wings and took off, but not without stealing a piece of toast from Hermione’s plate. The bushy-haired girl was already looking at the pages of the Daily Prophet, too invested to notice the little theft.

"And, something interesting?" Ron said while he was chewing on his bacon.

"Not really," Hermione said and flipped pages, "Only an article about the wedding of the bassist of the weird sisters - wait a second," her eyes widened. "Oh no... Sirius!" she gasped. Harry looked up from his breakfast.

"The Ministry of magic was informed by a reliable source, that Sirius Black, infamous mass murderer...," Hermione skipped a few lines and continued. "...currently hiding in London!"

"Malfoy...," Harry said thoughtfully and rolled the knife he was holding between his fingers.

"What?" Ron said loudly, "You didn’t-" Hermione hushed him and continued.

"...Ministry warns, that Black is very dangerous... killed thirteen people... escaped from Azkaban."

Hermione put the Daily Prophet onto the table. "The usual rubbish," she concluded, but a worried look passed her face. "Well, now he just isn’t able to leave the house anymore, that’s all. Dumbledore warned him after all." Harry shook his head. ‘Sirius wouldn’t like that, that’s for sure’

"Do you mind if I borrow that for a moment," he asked Hermione.

"No, not at all," she replied, and Harry took the paper. He noticed a small article about Sturgis Podmore’s trial, almost hidden by a giant add for Madame Malkins self-ironing cloaks.

Sturgis Podmore, 38, of number two, Laburnum Gardens, Clapham, has appeared in front of the Wizengamot charged with trespass and attempted robbery at the Ministry of Magic on 31st August. Podmore was arrested by Ministry of Magic watchwizard Eric Munch, who
found him attempting to force his way through a top-security door at one o’clock in the morning. Podmore, who refused to speak in his own defence, was convicted on both charges and sentenced to six months in Azkaban.

‘At least no notification about his attendance.’ Harry’s eyes rushed over the page. "MINISTRY SEEKS EDUCATIONAL REFORM," was a headline right on the top and just beneath the section, he found the article about Sirius. Next to it was a picture of the day his godfather had been arrested. It showed a maniacally laughing man, restrained by two Aurors. Sirius had been twenty-one at the time he was brought to live in a prison cell surrounded by Dementors. He had spent a third of his life in Azkaban and now he was once again locked up at a place he hated. Harry put the prophet down. He stared at the picture of a newlywed Donaghan Tremlett for a moment, but he didn’t really look at it. His mind was occupied otherwise, and the bassist of the Weird Sisters was the last thing he focused on right now.

Harry doubted that Lucius had been stupid enough to ignore his warning, was he? He raised his head and his gaze fell upon Draco Malfoy on the other side of the great hall. ‘Maybe... but even if Draco had been the one to tell the papers about Sirius’ whereabouts-’

"Harry," Ron said, interrupting his thoughts, "Do you think that we could practice a little bit, you know, before the training?” he asked hesitantly.

Quidditch training. Right. Harry plastered a smile on his face.

"Sure,” he replied. Under Hermione’s scolding looks – You two should really think about your education or did any of you already write the essay about the difficulties of Conjurations for Transfiguration? - they headed for the Quidditch-pitch.

On the pitch, Ron gripped his broom so tightly, that his knuckles stood out white, his freckles more noticeable than ever. "Come on, relax. You’ve been flying before," Harry said. Ron laughed a little shaken, but then he took off. Soon after he left the ground the tension seemed to leave him.

Harry watched him for some time. Ron was a decent flyer, but Harry could see why Angelina had thought Hooper had been better. He exchanged a look with Death, who was standing next to him. "I guess it would be a little strange to take a snake up in the air," Harry said and Death smirked at him.

"I could turn into a Crow," he replied amused.

"Yeah, and I fly over the Quidditch pitch with a bird following me," Harry said, snorting at the image. He looked up in the sky, where Ron was circling the pitch. When Harry turned his attention back to the ground, Death smirked at him. "Fine, I know. I can’t avoid it anyways," he said eventually.

Harry swung a leg over his broom and took off. He rose from the ground and when he looked down, Death had disappeared. Harry stared at the empty spot with wide eyes, but an indeterminate sensation in his chest had him raise his head. He spotted Death sitting on one of the Quidditch stands and the being smirked at him. Obvious amusement echoed through the bond. Harry had just wanted to pull a face at Death, when Ron’s voice interrupted his doings.

"You coming Harry?!” he shouted from the other end of the pitch.

"Yeah!” Sighing Harry turned his broom around and flew towards Ron.

Contrary to his expectations Quidditch was fun. Harry didn’t realize how he’d ever been able to grow tired of flying. Every time Ron managed to deflect one of his attempts to throw the Quaffle
through one of the goal posts, Harry hunted after it, his Firebolt shooting through the air. 
Time was passing by without them noticing and behind the clouds the sun reached its peak. 
Ron panted, sweat gluing his red hair against his forehead. Exhausted he picked up the Quaffle and 
flew to one of the stands to rest. But Harry didn’t feel tired at all.

Like an arrow he darted through the air, higher and higher until he reached the point where time 
was standing still. Harry closed his eyes and breathed the cool air as he was floating, sunbeams 
were breaking through the clouds and the earth seemed to have stopped moving for a moment. The 
air reached his lungs, and then - gravity made itself known, stretching its claws to pull Harry back 
to the ground where he belonged. He felt the wind on his back and shoulders, his head pointing 
towards the grass, fingers loosely wrapped around the handle of his broom. Harry was falling.

He fell. Faster and faster. He cut through the air like a knife, the ground coming closer with every 
second, inevitable and deadly. And Harry laughed. It was exhilarating.

"Harry..."

Harry opened his eyes and Death stared at him. He fell, just like Harry did, a warped mirror image 
with a smirk on his face. For the slightest of seconds, Harry could surmise the wings of this being 
in front of him and Death looked like something ancient and forgotten, like a falling angel. And 
then Harry was pulled back into the present. He suddenly grew aware of the ground, which he was 
approaching rapidly.

"It's time Harry," Death said with his sharp smile. Harry smirked at him and then he gripped his 
broom and pulled himself out of the fall.

And not a second too late. His muscles ached and his feet were brushing the grass for a moment, 
when he eventually managed to evade the collision with the ground.

"Harry! What the-" Ron was flying towards him and stumbled once as he was landing and 
immediately running towards him. "Merlin’s Balls," he uttered between loud breaths and he looked 
at Harry like he was a maniac. "I thought you were about to die! Holy shit..." Ron panted until his 
breathing had somewhat normalized and then he grinned, and a laugh bubbled up his throat. "That 
was awesome," Ron said. "It was crazy and suicidal, but awesome. But don’t you dare to ever 
scare me like that again." Harry smirked.

Two hours later, when the actual Quidditch practice started, Ron was still talking about Harry’s 
'stunt' as he called it.

"I mean, I’ve seen him doing nosedives before like - no big deal - when everyone else would’ve 
already backtracked, but this... He was so close to the ground, I swear," Ron said and gestured at 
George, while Fred and Alicia were fetching the balls. Despite Ron being totally wrapped up in 
telling his story, it didn’t take long till he noticed the unwelcome visitors. He paled immediately 
when he spotted the Slytherins on the stands.

"Just treat them like they're not even here," Angelina said and brushed the braided hair out of her 
face. In the end her advice didn’t help much. Harry doubted that Ron would catch a Quaffle, while 
the Slytherins were cheering mockingly and curling with laughter every time he messed up. But 
when Ron finally managed to catch the red ball, he threw it so hard that Katie was hit in the face 
and blood started to trickle out of her nose. They continued though, because she insisted that she 
was alright.

Harry was hunting for the snitch - it was way too easy since he could simply follow the magical 
signature of the golden ball - when Angelina declared that the training had ended, since Katie’s 
nose was bleeding so much that Fred and George had to escort her to Madame Pomfrey.
They didn’t talk much when they were back inside the castle. Ron stomped towards the showers with a grim look on his face and when he came back to do his homework, his mood hadn’t really improved.

The next day started out mostly the same. Ron was still awfully quiet during breakfast, but after they had headed for the common room to do their remaining homework, he broke his silence. In Harry’s opinion it wasn’t much of an improvement, because now he had to listen to Ron’s complaints about the extensive workload they were facing.

For hours they sat in the castle. Sunbeams shone through the windows, painting a bright stripe of light on the wall opposite to Harry. The common room was mostly empty, since most of the students enjoyed the last warm days on the school grounds. Besides them, only a few second years remained inside. Apart from their quiet conversations, one could only hear the crackling of the fire, quills scratching on parchment and a slight clinking noise, since Hermione knitted a woollen hat for the house-elves. Ron was writing his essay for Professor Sinistra which Harry had already finished during his Detention on Thursday. Harry yawned and stretched in his armchair, sharing a look with Death. "I think I’m going to take a nap. I didn’t sleep much during the last week." Ron hummed in agreement, too focused on his essay to even hear what Harry was saying. Hermione on the other hand looked at him with a frown.

"Don’t worry. I’ve already finished my essays," Harry said, while he stood up. He could still feel Hermione’s gaze in his back, when he crossed the common room. He had barely reached the spiral staircase, only just walked up a few steps till he was no longer visible, when heard his name. Hadn’t it been for his connection with Death, he probably wouldn’t have been able to listen to them at all. But as a result, Harry stopped in his tracks and leaned against the cold stonewall. Death stood in front of him, mirroring his posture.

"Do you think that he’s alright?" Harry heard Hermione whisper, while he stared at the dust floating through the air. The particles were illuminated by the light shining through a window a little further up the stairs. He could almost imagine Hermione turning her head to check that he was really gone.

"Who, Harry?" Ron said and the scratching noise of his quill stopped.

"He doesn’t really talk to us anymore, does he?" Hermione replied.

"I mean, he’s grown quieter this year... ," Ron mused.

"Yeah, I noticed it too. But there is more, isn’t it? He zones out sometimes, as if he doesn’t even listen to our conversations or other times he just wanders off and we have no idea where he has been," Hermione said. "It’s just that- I just can’t shake off the feeling that there is something he doesn’t tell us. That he’s hiding something."

"I," Ron hesitated, "I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want you to worry, and before you say anything - Harry assured me it was fine - but on Thursday morning, during Divination he fainted-"

"He fainted?! Not because of his scar, right?" Hermione sounding shocked.

"No, no," Ron immediately interfered, "I mean, at least I don’t think so. Fred and George told me that they asked them for some fainting fancies."

"Are you sure?" Hermione said doubt straining her voice, even too worried to complain about Fred and George.
"Yeah," Ron replied, "But it’s no wonder he’s changed," he added after a moment with more confidence, "After everything that happened. The tournament, Cedric’s death and you-know-who..."

Harry heard a sigh. "I know. You’re probably right," Hermione replied after a short pause. "And now the article about Sirius..."

Nobody said a thing, until Hermione’s hesitant voice cut through the silence once more. "At first I thought he was still angry with us because of the letters... when he first arrived at Grimmauld Place. I didn’t think too much of it, but now-"

"Hermione," Ron interrupted, "I know you think there is something going on… but give him some time. Perhaps there isn’t even anything wrong and you’re just over-thinking things," Ron said.

"It’s just..." Hermione stopped and sighed.

"You worry too much," Ron said. After some time, the scratching of Ron’s quill started once more. And when nothing was added, Harry pushed himself from the wall. Thoughtfully he continued his way upstairs and Death walked behind him.

‘Hopefully that wouldn’t become an issue in the future...’ Harry shook his head. There were other things that deserved his attention right now. More important things. After all, there was still the fact that Sirius’ hiding location had been reported to the news. He knew exactly who he would need to pay a visit. Inside the boys-dorm, Harry closed the curtains of his bed and cast a privacy charm on them. With a last look out of the window, he disappeared.

Harry slipped through the wards as if they weren’t even there. And when he materialized in the entrance hall of Malfoy Manor, he smirked. Everything was white. Even the floor seemed to be made out of marble.

Sensing the presence of Lucius Malfoy nearby, Harry raised his head. But there was also someone else, someone familiar. Harry frowned, trying to figure out who the person was. ‘Maybe Narcissa...’

Death watched him, tall and grinning like so often.

"You are not much help, you know that?" Harry said, and Death only smirked.

"Remember Sturgis Podmore’s trial?" he said in his inhuman voice. Harry paused and then he groaned.

"Don’t tell me, that it’s the Journalist," Harry said. "What is he doing here?"

"Probably interviewing someone," Death stated dryly.

"I figured that much," Harry replied, but his lips twitched, almost breaking into a smile. Calling upon the powers of the invisibility cloak, Harry turned to the staircase to his right, walking towards the other wizards.

Harry stopped in front of a shiny wooden door. It was enchanted to keep any possible spies from listening in, but Harry could make out two voices. Using the same trick Death had shown him once, Harry put his palm against the door. He pushed through the solid form, his hands turning into shadows and so did his body as it followed his arm.

Harry found himself inside an office, the afternoon sun illuminating the room with long stripes of golden light. Lucius Malfoy and his guest were seated on opposite sides of a large desk next to the big windows. The previously muted voices had now risen to their full volume, but apparently the
interview or whatever this was had just ended. The journalist was tapping his parchments with his wand. And while the notes were magically arranging themselves, Harry looked around the room. There was a large fireplace, the light of the dancing flames reflected by the glass doors of a cabinet next to it. Harry noticed two portraits on the walls, both showing men with pale blond hair, who undoubtedly had to be ancestors of the Malfoy family. "Septimus Malfoy" and "Brutus Malfoy" were the names written on silvery plaques attached to the picture frames. Both of them sneered at the interviewer, who now was snapping his briefcase shut after he had gathered all his stuff. Malfoy stood up and so did the Journalist. The brown-haired wizard extended his hand and Lucius shook it over the table. "Thank you for your time Lord Malfoy."

"It was my pleasure," Malfoy said with a winning smile on his face. "Are you sure you don’t want to stay for a drink Mr. Limus?" Malfoy asked, and the younger man smiled weakly. "Thank you for the offer Lord Malfoy, but I fear that I have to decline. I still have important business to attend to, but another time I would gladly accept your invitation," the young Journalist said, arrogance bleeding through his voice. Harry almost found it laughable, how nettled Malfoy seemed to be by the man. Lucius silvery magic twisted with annoyance but nevertheless, his face showed nothing of his true emotions.

"Of course," Malfoy said smoothly, and Harry had the feeling that Lucius had known exactly, that the Journalist would decline and just asked to meet the required niceties. "You are free to use the floo if you want to," Malfoy said and pointed at the fireplace.

"Ah yes, how very considerate of you, Lord Malfoy," the Journalist said and grabbed his briefcase and a hand full of floo powder. "A pleasant afternoon," he added, while threw the powder into the fire. The man stepped into the green flames and as soon as he had disappeared the smile was wiped from Malfoy’s face. He fell back into his chair and sighed.

Amused Harry watched how Malfoy massaged his temples for a moment until he swished his wand and a whisky carafe floated from the cabinet over to the desk. Malfoy put his wand down and after he had poured himself a glass, Harry decided that he had waited long enough.

Harry walked towards the desk and as soon as he was seated in the chair, the Journalist had occupied just minutes before he made himself visible.

At first Malfoy didn’t even notice him, but when Harry conjured a glass for himself and pulled the carafe over the dark polished wood, Malfoy’s head snapped up.

"Didn’t expect me, did you?" Harry said grinning while he poured himself a whisky. Death walked over to stand next to Harry.

A mask of nonchalance appeared on Malfoy’s face and replaced his shocked expression. The only other person audacious enough to enter like Harry had was probably the Dark Lord himself.

"Potter," Malfoy said and casually swirled his drink. But his violently pulsing magic betrayed his intention to appear unaffected.

"Malfoy," Harry replied amused and copied Malfoy’s motion before he took a sip.

"Tell me one reason, why I shouldn’t hand you over to the Dark Lord," Malfoy said and his grey eyes were fixated on him. Harry put his glass down.

"Because of this," Harry said and summoned Slytherins Locket. A thought, and the melted locket looked like it had before fiendfire had burned through its core, even if the piece of soul was no
longer inside. Harry let it dangle from its chain and Malfoy stared at it, his eyes wandering from Harry to the former horcrux.

"What should I do with this, Potter?" Lucius said and his eyes focused back on Harry. His fingers twitched next to his wand.

"Well," Harry said smirking and his eyes blazed, "I remember mentioning to you that I don’t want to read Sirius’ name in the papers, but guess what I had to see yesterday morning..." Harry said and traded the locket for the glass on the desk. "Sirius Black sighted in London. What a coincidence." Harry leaned back, took a sip of his drink and looked at the thing that had once been the vessel for a piece of Voldemort’s soul. The emeralds embedded in the locket gleamed in the sunlight, as did the metal. Tiny points of colours - the reflected light - illuminated the ceiling.

"What makes you think it was me?" Lucius asked, and Harry turned away from the locket. He stared into Lucius’ eyes, considering.

"I don’t think that it was you," Harry said after a moment. "You don’t know if I am a threat yet, or if I am just a child that’s talking big. You would want to find out, but you wouldn’t provoke me in such an obvious way since you aren’t sure yet if I am able to back up my threats. You are smart enough not to do that. At least I hope that you are."

"Then what are you doing here?" Malfoy asked and his magic gathered around him.

"While you might be smart enough to avoid making a mistake like that, that doesn’t mean that Draco is," Harry retorted and Lucius swallowed. "And I’m making you responsible for that. I’m angry, but since I don’t believe that you were the one to break your promise, I will give you a choice." Harry pointed at the locket. "I could’ve just hidden that inside your Manor, without you noticing. But instead I will leave the locket with you. Try and hide it for all I care. Or you give it back to the owner."

"And who would that be," Malfoy asked in a disinterested tone.

"Lord Voldemort," Harry said with a vicious grin. Lucius paled when he realized whose property Harry had stolen and he stared at the shimmering pendant. "It’s your decision," Harry said and took another sip. "If I might give you an advice. Don’t try to hide it from him, if you are not sure that he isn’t going to find it. Because if he does - and he will find out that its missing...," Harry smirked, "...it will be a bloodbath" He took another sip and put down his glass. Malfoy visibly clenched his teeth and Harry stood up. "There is one more thing. If you give it back to him... tell Voldemort that Dumbledore knows. But better try not to be in the room after you said it though," Harry added with a grin. He turned around and walked towards the door, without sparing another look. Harry could almost feel Lucius wand pointing at him, but before Malfoy could cast a spell, Harry had vanished.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think :)
Lucius stared at the door, where Potter had still been standing a second ago. It shouldn’t have been possible for the boy to disapparate. He was only fifteen and even then, there were wards to prevent intruders from leaving. Slowly he lowered his wand. But had Potter really been disapparating? He had vanished in a swirl of darkness. For a moment it had seemed like the shadows in Lucius’ office had been growing, creeping over the floor till they reached their peak just before Potter was gone. And then, nothing.

Everything looked like before, and the room was once more dominated by the golden light shining through the windows. Lucius’ fingers traced the carved pattern on his tumbler, which he had gripped so tightly. He could pretend that this whole affair was a hallucination of his overworked mind. Let the evidence disappear and never speak about it again...

He stared at the second glass on his desk and the accursed locket. Innocently it reflected the light of the afternoon sun, spots of it dancing on the walls. As if this thing hadn’t just made his life much more difficult. He would rather be told to tame a dragon than dealing with this. But Lucius – unlike the Minister – had never been a man of ignorance. He downed his glass and stood up. It was time to speak to his wife.

At the same time Albus Dumbledore was sitting in his office, surrounded by his many strange and delicate devices, which to the untrained eye might appear like a waste of space. The portraits of his predecessors watched him, seemingly disinterested. He looked at an instrument on his desk, similar to a clock, but instead of pointers it possessed nine circles which moved in various speeds around the middle.

Ten minutes had passed. It wouldn’t take much longer for him to arrive. The headmaster hummed amused when his look fell onto the letter which was laying next to his other notes. The Minister had once more not been able to hold back and written him concerning - as Cornelius had put it so nicely - "a necessary distribution regarding power inside the school" as well as "the end of his presumptuous way of leading Hogwarts" and "habits of meddling in affairs that weren’t of his
concern".

But Albus amused humming soon turned into a sigh. ‘No, this wasn’t really a laughing matter. While Cornelius sending Dolores Umbridge to work, or rather spy in Hogwarts was a problem, it was a trifle in comparison to the threat out there. The ignorance of the Minister regarding Voldemort’s return didn’t do much to improve the situation.’

The headmaster sighed once more. He could already feel another migraine approaching. ‘There had been traces of Death Eaters moving in the south. But that was two months ago. Now it was quiet. Too quiet for Albus’ liking. Since Bertha Jorkins kidnapping last summer there hadn’t been any other mysterious disappearances. At least none that he was aware of. The only thing Albus could be sure of was, that Voldemort was still focused on acquiring the Prophecy.

And Death Eaters were gaining influence inside the ministry with every new member infiltrating the Wizengamot. Now it was no longer only Lucius Malfoy using his connection to the Minister who they had to deal with. It had been predictable, certain even, that Voldemort would try to strengthen his influence inside the ministry, but it had happened much faster than Albus had anticipated. And it worried him.

Unfortunately that wasn’t all of it. There were still other things. Things he couldn’t explain but troubled him further. Like the disappearance of the Elder wand in August. And maybe the most worrisome thing of all—'

The sound of a knocking on the door interrupted Albus’ string of thoughts and he raised his head. "Come on in."

The door opened and the man he had been waiting for entered. "Severus," Dumbledore said his eyes sparkling behind his glasses.

"Headmaster," the professor said, reciprocating the greeting with an unreadable expression. Albus had long given up on brushing his mind against Severus’ to pick up on the thoughts floating on the surface. Severus was a master occlumens. He could hide his mind just as well as preventing his thoughts from showing on his face.

"Good evening Severus," Dumbledore said and motioned for the potions master to sit down, yet the man remained standing. It was mostly only habit nowadays to offer the potions professor a seat.

"You wanted to speak to me?" the black-haired man said instead.

"Yes," Dumbledore replied and folded his hands. He looked at them for a moment till he raised his head, blue eyes fixating black ones. "I worry about Harry," he said seriously. Severus snorted at that.

"Potter. Of course. What did he do now?" the man asked.

"Why must you still harbour that hate Severus. He’s just a boy," Albus said to his former student.

"Yes, and just as arrogant as his father," Snape shot back.

Albus sighed in defeat. He hesitated only for the briefest of seconds, till he started to talk again. "Now that he has returned, I fear that the influence Voldemort has on Harry is far greater than I ever dared to assume."

The potions professor raised an eyebrow. Dumbledore stood up and walked towards the window, his back facing Severus. The grounds of Hogwarts were spread out in front of him. The water of the lake was still and peaceful, like a mirror reflecting the golden sunlight. Some of the trees
growing on its shore - foothills of the forbidden forest - were already turning a slight shade of
different browns and oranges, telling of the approaching autumn. Only when he turned back again,
he continued. "I must ask you for a favour Severus. Keep an eye on him. You are aware of his
connection to Voldemort. You are the only one I can ask."

"Why me? Why not you?" Severus said.

"I can’t. If he is really possessed by Voldemort, what do you think he will do, once I come near
him?" Dumbledore answered. When nothing was added, Severus spoke up once more.

"Was that all?"

"Yes," Dumbledore said and turned to look out of the window again. He only heard a rustling of
clothes and the door falling shut. Then he was once more left alone inside his office.

This time Dumbledore refrained from sighing. ‘Did he ask too much of Severus? He was already
risking his life by infiltrating Voldemort’s ranks. The man carried great burdens... But didn’t they
all? Everyone would need to make sacrifices in favour of winning the war. Some to greater, some
to lesser extent. Even now people already spared their time to work for the order. Voldemort was
recruiting again. Acting quick was now everything they could do. Remus was once more with one
of the bigger werewolf packs in Scotland. They lived as outcasts, even maintaining their hierarchy
after and previous to the days of the full moon. Only a few of them lived in cities or towns and
returned there after the monthly transformations. They were likely to join Voldemort if they
thought that they would gain something from it. But there was still hope. Unlike the giants they
hadn’t joined the Death Eaters yet. With Lupin away and the beginning of the school year, Sirius
was once more alone at Grimmauld Place. It was a dangerous situation. Albus hoped that the man
wouldn’t do something foolish. The article in the Daily Prophet only proved that Voldemort knew
about his ability to turn into a dog. And yet Sirius seemed to be the only adult Harry really
trusted...

Yes Harry...’ Dumbledore paused for a moment and watched the peaceful landscape. The sun sank
with every minute, painting the sky in beautiful pinks and oranges. A flock of crows emerged from
the treetops - six silhouettes standing out against the light of the sun - probably startled by one of
the many creatures living inside the forbidden forest. ‘Harry had changed after he had witnessed
Voldemort’s return. It was nothing unusual and Albus would have worried more, if the boy was
acting like he had before. But there was a new edge to Harry, a darkness he couldn’t quite pinpoint.
Not long ago, he heard about Harry’s attendance of Sturgis’ trial. It had been a shock to
Dumbledore. Just like the incident with the boggart, this was another question he had no answer to.
Well there was a possibility, but he didn’t dare to think about it too much. He had long considered
that Voldemort had insured his survival by far more gruesome means than most wizards would
even dare to think about. But a new theory had wormed its way into Dumbledore’s mind - and for
once he, hoped that he was wrong - but if he wasn’t, then Harry was the one to probably carry the
greatest burden of them all.’

Ron sighed and looked up. During the last hour of writing his essay for Professor Sinistra, he had
noticed that Hermione was staring at him constantly. "What?" Ron snapped eventually, when he
saw her looking at him from the corner of his eye. "I’m trying to finish this here, Hermione. Aren’t
you always insisting, that it’s best to work without distraction?"

"What? I wasn’t saying anything," Hermione said. Sighing Ron put his quill away. "But you
obviously want to. So come on, spit it out."

"I mean. I- there’s another thing."
"Is this also about Harry?" Ron asked and Hermione bit her lip.

"It’s just, I remembered something. And it would fit Harry’s behaviour. That he is hiding something and that he disappears from time to time, that he doesn’t seem to be listening, because he is thinking about something else... it would make sense," Hermione said, probably mostly to reassure herself, but with every word she seemed more content.

"What are you talking about?" Ron asked with a frown.

"What did he tell you, after he fainted during divination?" Hermione asked the red head once more.

"He wanted to finish his essay for Snape...," Ron replied confused.

"Hmmm," Hermione said tapping her mouth with her index finger, a sly smile on her face and her knitting project forgotten on her lap.

"Would you mind telling me, why this seems to excite you that much?" Ron asked and leaned forward.

"Do you think that Harry is seeing someone?" Hermione said and Ron spluttered.

"What- Harry?!"

"I wasn’t really sure before, but now I swear that he had hickey on his neck, when I talked to him at Grimmauld Place," Hermione said.

"Nooo...," Ron said and his eyes stared into the distance. ‘Could it be...?’ He thought about his friend. Harry was just... Harry. "Who- who would he be seeing?" he accidentally said out loud.

"Maybe he met someone during summer?" Hermione mused. "Or it’s someone he already knew... and he wrote to that person..." Ron’s mouth stood open when he remembered something.

"Didn’t he have a crush on Cho last year?" Ron said.

Hermione snorted. "I didn’t think you’d notice."

"Hey, Harry’s my best mate. Of course, I’d notice," Ron said scowling and crossed his arms.

"And didn’t you tell me, that when Harry walked out of potions before we could follow him, that he was talking to her?" Hermione said, ignoring his mood.

"Yeah...," Ron said slowly as he remembered. "But she didn’t seem very happy."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Of course, she didn’t seem very happy, Ron! After all you just interrupted them, didn’t you?"

"Oh," Ron said and looked down. But that only let his gaze fall onto his essay. His shoulder slouched even more, while Hermione continued to talk.

"...we should keep an eye on them. There is still the possibility that Harry is seeing someone else..." Hermione’s exited expression vanished, and she looked at Ron who stared at the scribbled words. She hesitated and then she sighed.

"Come on. I’m going to take a look at it," she said. Ron raised his head and looked at Hermione with a grin. New life seemed to have replaced the defeated look on his face.
"You are the best, Hermione," he said, and the girl blushed.

"Oh, shut up," she mumbled and took the parchment.

Lucius’ hand fidgeted with the sleeve of his suit. As soon as he noticed what he was doing he stopped. The sun had long set, taking the golden streaks of light with it and making place for the darkness which had settled not long ago. Lucius was sitting in an armchair in the sitting room, the fifth glass of whisky standing in front of him on the table. It was untouched. He wouldn’t lose his dignity by drowning his problems in alcohol. Narcissa was residing on the sofa next to him. She was wearing a blue dress and her blonde hair fell down her back in soft waves. Not a muscle on her face showed what she was thinking, while she sipped her wine. They had just finished their discussion about what to do with the locket. It was laying on the table, half hidden behind a piece of black cloth he had conjured earlier. Who knew what kind of curse the locket could be bearing? He hadn’t touched it with his bare hands, but his wife had. After thoroughly examining the pendant - Narcissa was far more experienced with the essence of dark magic, thanks to her being raised as a Black - she had announced, that the piece of jewellery was just that. An old but simple locket, probably a family heirloom with no magical abilities. There might once have been a spell interwoven with the metal, enabling the owner to hide something inside. But now the magic had already faded away.

"Are you sure that it really belongs to the dark Lord?" Narcissa had asked him after she had sat down. The answer was no. He wasn’t. Even more so, after it turned out that there was nothing magical about the locket. Lucius eyed the pendant with distrust. There was just something about it… alone the way it had gotten here.

They had talked about the possibilities they had. They didn’t know if the locket really belonged to the Dark Lord. If it did, hiding the pendant would only buy them some time. Potter had mentioned that the Dark Lord would notice that it was gone. And Voldemort was an accomplished legilimens. It was almost impossible to hide something from him. And why should Lucius do that? He wouldn’t betray the trust of the Dark Lord in that filthy manner. Either way, their Lord would be interested in hearing about the fact that Potter had broken into Lucius house only to give him a locket. Lucius stared at pendant on the table for a few more minutes. He raised his head and determined he stood up. Narcissa put her slender hands onto his shoulders and a fond smile appeared on Lucius’ face. "I will be fine," he said to reassure his wife.

"If you insist," Narcissa said and she kissed his cheek. Lucius didn’t doubt that she saw right through him. Narcissa pulled back and then turned around and left the room. Lucius’ gaze lingered for a moment. She would certainly stay awake till he returned. He turned his attention towards his left arm. Then he rolled up his sleeve to reveal the Dark Mark, his symbol forever burned into Lucius’ skin. He touched it with the tip of his wand and hissed when it started to burn, the black snake under the skull writhing as if it was alive.
The man - or was it a being? - was sitting in an armchair inside a dark room. Lonely stripes of silvery light breached the gaps of dirt on almost blackened windows. Flames were dancing in the fireplace and illuminated the waxen figure. It hadn’t moved for hours, unaware of the time passing and deep in thought. A giant snake was curled up in front of the fire, cherishing the warmth. But all of a sudden, the mood changed.

The being hadn’t changed its posture, nor had the snake. The crackling of the fire and the occasional creaking of the walls - which wasn’t unusual for an old building like this - were still the only noise. But there was an alertness in the room, tension was hanging in the air.

Pupils had narrowed to slits, revealing more of the unusual colour of the eyes. They flashed a dark red in the dim light of the fire. Nostrils flared and the man raised his head. A tug in his gut, a dull burning had alerted him, ripped him from his thoughts and forced him to turn his attention away from his mind and to something else. It took a second for Voldemort to locate the origin of the call. Long spindly fingers felt for the smooth wood of his wand, considering. After a moment, he looked at the snake. "Nagini, come here. We are going to leave for a while," the man hissed almost soothingly.

The snake raised its head, and then lazily slithered towards its master leaving traces on the dusty floor. When it had reached Voldemort, he petted her head with his long fingers. Shortly before he apparated he looked once more into the orange flames. ‘Lucius better had a good reason to summon him like this.’ A second later and the Riddle House stood empty once more.

Voldemort didn’t bother to announce his presence. The wards pulsed disapprovingly when he forced his way through them. The dark Lord spared a fleeting glance at the furniture and snorted at the pompous decorations. Moonlight shone through the windows and illuminated the entrance hall in an eerie way. It made the walls look like they were made of bone rather than marble. The man turned his attention to the cold fireplace. With the slightest move of his wand, newly awoken flames started to lick on the remaining wood, lightening it once more. ‘Lucius better be greeting him soon, if the man already dared to call him at this hour.’

Lucius rushed down the stairs to the entrance hall, but as soon as he reached the even ground, he stopped. The dark Lord was already there. He stood in front of the fireplace; his spidery hands were folded around his wand in a position similar to someone who was praying. The fire illuminated his waxen features and put a golden shimmer to the almost white skin. A movement on the floor, and Lucius noticed that Nagini was also here. Lucius kept his distance to Voldemort as well as the giant snake, not daring to step closer without being asked to do so. He stayed there for almost a minute, but when his master didn’t move, nor acknowledge his presence Lucius spoke up.

"Mylord-," Lucius started and bowed, his words cutting through the silence like a knife. Before Lucius could carry on further, the other man had raised his hand and he shut his mouth. The dark Lord still stared into the fire like it was the most fascinating thing he had ever seen. Lucius swallowed hard, frozen in his place. The only one moving was the snake which writhed slowly, winding its massive body around the legs of its master.

"Lucius...," Voldemort said eventually. His voice sounded almost gentle, but he was still facing the flames. "I hope you have a good reason for calling me here," he said and turned towards his servant.

"Yes Mylord," Lucius quickly replied.

"Go on," Voldemort said when Lucius didn’t immediately continue.

"Potter was here this afternoon..."
"Potter?" Voldemort said and for the first time that day his attention seemed to be focused on Lucius.

"Yes Mylord, Potter. He just showed up in my office, it shouldn’t have been possible."

"And what did he want?" Voldemort said and looked at Lucius intently.

"He gave me something... something that, according to him, belongs to you, Milord"

"Hand it over to me," Voldemort demanded and he stretched out his arm. Lucius quickly pulled out the locket, which was wrapped up in the black cloth. He gave it his Master and then again put some distance between them, by taking a few steps back. "Potter also said, that I should tell you, that Dumbledore knows. Whatever he meant with that."

"Say Lucius," the dark Lord said, as he slowly began to unwrap it. "Why didn’t you call me earlier?"

"I didn’t want to bother you, if this was just a minority Mylor-,

Crack

Lucius flinched as if he was hit, when a loud noise, cut through the room like a whiplash. With widening eyes, he watched, how dust was trickling into the fire. Nagini hissed affronted. A giant crack split the wall from the fireplace to the ceiling. Even the chandelier was swinging dangerously. Voldemort wasn’t even looking at Lucius anymore. Yet the dark Lord also ignored the damage his magic had done to the wall, when it had lashed out. He only stared at the Locket, but with a look, Malfoy had never seen on his face. He didn’t dare to name it. But as sudden as the expression had come, it disappeared and Voldemort’s eyes flashed dangerously, a red streak of colour in the dimly lit room.

Lucius expected to be hit with a cruciatus curse or maybe even something worse. He already mentally prepared himself for the excruciating pain, so his confusion grew all the more when nothing happened. His Lord just continued to stare at the pendant, until he gripped it tightly as if he wanted to crush it.

And then, he raised his head.

It took all of Lucius’ self-restraint to not take a step back. He shivered at the fury he saw burning in the eyes of his Master. But there was also a spark of something else. Lucius could feel the dark magic gathering in the room almost drowning in it.

"You won’t speak of this. With nobody Lucius, did I make myself clear!" Voldemort hissed between clenched teeth. Lucius could only nod. And then, the Dark Lord had disapparated, leaving him alone in his damaged entrance hall. Lucius would never dare to say it out loud, but he swore that the Dark Lord had been afraid.

Chapter End Notes

Leave me a comment if you liked it. Even if you didn't like it. Tell me what you thought of this chapter. I probably won't write another one that doesn't feature Harry
and Death, but I just wanted to show some outside pov
Reunion

Chapter Summary

Harry pays Sirius a visit and he gets to talk to Death.

Chapter Notes

Ok guys, I'm so sorry I haven't been posting anything for like three weeks but I got swallowed up by the Umbrella Academy fandom and only now I managed to escape. Mainly because all the fanfic's I read need to be updated. So I am really sorry. I just thought I gotta post something so you get a new chapter and the next one's mostly finished so it shouldn't take too long for the next one to appear.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hey Sirius," Harry said when he appeared inside the sparely illuminated Kitchen of Grimmauld Place, Death right next to him.

"Harry!" Sirius’ head snapped up. He was sitting at the end of the table, where he had been brooding over some notes and he smiled. "What are you doing here?"

"Visiting you," Harry said. "I guess you might want some company, even more so after the article in the Daily Prophet."

Sirius dismissed the statement with a wave of his hand. "They always speculate where I am, it’s nothing new." Harry shrugged and approached the table. With a scratching sound he pulled back the chair next to his godfather.

"If you say so..." Harry said while he sat down, and Death started to roam through the room.

"What is all of that stuff?" Harry asked with a nod at the notes and sketches scattered all over the table.

"Plans and information collected by the Order," Sirius said and unconsciously shivered when Death walked past him. A smile tugged on Harry’s lips. He didn’t doubt that Death had done it simply to mess with him. "You shouldn’t even be aware that these exist, at least in the opinion of the others," Sirius continued, "But you also shouldn’t be able to appear out of thin air, so there goes my iron will to treat you like a small child," Sirius said jokingly.

"How are you?" Harry asked him seriously.

"I’m fine," his Godfather said and pushed a few strands of his dark hair out of his face. He sighed. "Bored most of the time. I haven’t seen anyone for three days. Not even Kreacher keeps me company. Not that I’m complaining," Sirius added with a smirk. "By the way, why did you want me to allow him to leave the house?"

Harry smirked. "I needed a spy in the Ministry, and nobody notices a house-elf. Most of the time,
people just forget they are even there. And Kreacher likes me."

"Yeah, and this is by far the strangest thing that happened during the last months. And, are you already regretting it?"

"No not really. Thanks to Kreacher I knew the time and day of Podmore’s trial. Although It wasn’t very exciting."

"You were there? Didn’t go too well for Sturgis... six months, the poor guy," Sirius said with a haunted look and Harry hummed in agreement.

Both of them stared at the notes in front of Sirius for a moment. The thing Sirius had been looking at, was a map with small drawings and scribbles in every corner. Circles and arrows marked various places all over the landscape. "I also visited Lucius Malfoy today," Harry began casually while he studied the map.

"Malfoy?" Sirius said surprised.

"Yeah," Harry replied.

"Why?" his godfather asked him, and Harry finally looked up.

"Not long ago, I told him, that I don’t want to read about you in the papers. More specifically where you are currently hiding," Harry said. "I can hardly let him think that I’m a little boy, whose threats he can easily dismiss." Sirius looked at Harry and frowned.

"What did you do?" he asked.

"I might have given him one of Voldemort’s horcruxes, that doesn’t hold a piece of his soul anymore. I told him, that he can try to hide it, or that he can give it back to his Lord," Harry said smirking.

Sirius barked a laugh but then his expression changed, and guilt sneaked into his gaze. He was obviously torn between the two emotions. "Hey what is this map?" Harry said to distract him from his thoughts. Sirius’ grin turned into a sigh. He pointed at various points and traced a line between them.

The current movements of the Werewolf packs. Or at least that’s our best guess. As long as Remus isn’t back, we can’t really tell..."

"Why is he still going there?" Harry asked, "Dumbledore?"

"Dumbledore," Sirius grumbled.

"But he must know that the werewolves will never join the light side," Harry said. "It’s stupid to believe that."

"He just wants to have an eye on them. Even if they won’t join us, they might stay neutral. Or they join the enemy. It’s better to know what is waiting for us," Sirius said without real emotion, as if he was reciting a speech that he had heard countless times already. Empty words that had stuck, even if he didn’t believe them himself.

"If they think they have to join a side to survive, they will probably choose Voldemort," Harry mused. "There is too much discrimination in the wizarding world. With Voldemort they know where they stand."
"Yeah," Sirius sighed, "I almost wish that they would join someone even if it was Voldemort... then we would at least know what we're dealing with."

"...and Remus wouldn’t have to spy for the Order anymore," Harry added with a look at Sirius, who sighed.

"Knowing Dumbledore, that wouldn’t stop him from asking Remus to go there...." Sirius said and looked at his hands. They were still slender, but not as skinny and skeletal as they had looked right after he escaped Azkaban. He was fidgeting with the silver ring he was wearing, the Black insignia shone in the light every other second, when it was once again twisted into another direction.

Harry watched Death, who reached inside the wall and touched a rat, whose life force had already flickered when they arrived. "But what if they had another option," Harry started thoughtfully and broke the silence. When the being pulled back, the rat was dead. Harry turned his head and looked at Sirius again. "Someone who they can join and stay neutral for now..."

"Like who?" Sirius asked suspiciously. Death had eventually stopped walking through the room and joined their circle, stopping right at the opposite side of the table of where Harry was currently seated.

"Well, I’m the master of Death, I’m very neutral," Harry said and looked at the being with a grin, but Sirius didn’t seem very convinced.

"Dumbledore already offered them protection. He didn’t even ask them to fight, but they declined. Many werewolves are afraid that their status will be revealed when they openly join a side. And by what Remus tells me, the packs who live as outcasts don’t want to follow someone."

"Maybe they’re just not a fan of Dumbledore," Harry added with a smirk but Sirius expression stayed solemn.

"Harry, last time Remus came back with two infected bite-wounds and someone tried to stab him. And he said it went well," Sirius said. "What do you think, they will do to a fifteen-year old, who isn’t even one of them?"

"I am more capable than you think," Harry said.

"Harry, this is not a question of capability," Sirius said adamantly and leaned forward. "Even Moody wouldn’t simply go there without backup. It has its reasons that Remus is the only one able to do the job," Sirius exclaimed.

"I think I could manage it," Harry retorted insistently. Meanwhile Death casually sat down on the chair right next to Sirius.

Said man leaned back in his chair an crossed his arms. "Okay. Fine. Let’s say you find them. You just walk into their territory and then what. Talk?"

"Yeah," Harry said and shrugged. Sirius shot him a look and raised an eyebrow. "Hey, in my defence, I didn’t really think about it before coming here," Harry added and lifted his hands in defeat. "It was just a suggestion." But the longer he thought about it, the better he liked the idea. He looked at Death, an unspoken question in his mind.

"Sounds like fun," Death said. Sirius stared at Harry, unaware of their silent conversation.

"Good," he said. "Because I don’t want to be the one to tell the others the reason why you died, so they can pick up your pieces," Sirius added and eyes wandered through the room, lingering on a
half empty whisky bottle on the sideboard.

"Technically...," Death said, his hoarse voice echoing through the room. Sirius yelped and almost fell from his chair. Harry would’ve laughed if he didn’t share his surprise, "...he can’t die, since he is a part of Death."

"What the hell," Sirius uttered, but Harry didn’t listen to him. He was too involved in processing that – for the first time – Death had made himself visible in his human form. And that he had basically just said that Harry was a part of him, which was kind of cute? But then it hit Harry. Sirius repeated his previous statement, at the same time as Harry said, "I can’t die?" He had thought about it before. How could he not after everything that had happened?

Death, who was still smirking at Sirius turned his head and looked at Harry. "Not really."

Death had once said that he was no longer only human. Harry had asked himself if he was immune to the most feared of the unforgivable curses. After all, he had already survived it twice. But never had he dared to think of himself as immortal.

"But what if - I don’t know - a building would fall on me," Harry asked Death curiously.

"You would probably stay in the ‘inbetween’ for some time and then reawaken in your body."

"But wouldn’t I – I mean my body would basically look like a bloody pancake at this point wouldn’t it?" Harry asked engrossed in the topic. Strangely the discussion of his own death didn’t really bother him anymore. The day he’d had panicked when he had noticed his own life force – or rather lack of it – and that it was closer to Death, than that of a human being seemed to have happened ages ago.

"I would fix it for you," Death said and smiled. Harry mused if he was the only one who could differentiate Deaths scary grin from a genuine smile. Death’s smile widened and he was now outright smirking. Harry realized that his eyes might have lingered on Death’s lips a little longer than he thought. The being tilted his head in the slightest of ways and stared at Harry intensely. Harry was already considering if he should just cross the distance and kiss the teasing bastard when another voice interrupted them.

"Okay, just shut up for a moment, will you!" Sirius snapped. Death and Harry both turned their heads. Harry had almost forgotten about him. His godfather had straightened up in his chair and was staring at them. "Are you telling me-," he looked at Harry, "-that this-," he pointed at Death, "is Death."

"Yeah," Harry simply replied and shrugged. Sirius stared at Death and the being met his gaze with unblinking eyes. Harry watched them a smile tugging on his lips as they both didn’t waver in their stances.

"But he looks so-," Sirius finally broke the silence.

"What?!" Harry interfered, and he stared at his godfather his chin raised high. "-Just like me?!"

"Actually, I was going to say, not as scary as I remembered him," Sirius said and looked at the being who loomed over him. Harry could tell that Death was amused. Just like someone would sit through the curious inspection of a toddler, he was now watching Sirius doing the same. "...-but now that you mention it... You two do look like you could be related. Apart from the eyes...," Sirius added with a shudder.

"You do realize, that you can talk to him too, you know?" Harry said.
The question is; do I want to...,” Sirius replied and turned to look at Harry. He jumped when Death responded instead of Harry.

"Rude," the being said, his hoarse voice echoing through the room like a gust of wind. He was smirking. Harry shared Death's amusement while Sirius face went through a set of emotions, as if he didn’t quite know what to think of the unexpected reply. His face eventually settled on something that clearly resembled a ‘What the fuck’ expression and Harry turned to look at him.

“Well Sirius. Are you in?” Harry asked expectantly.

“What?” his godfather replied, shaking off his stupor, yet still side-eyeing Death.

“Visiting Remus of course,” Harry clarified and smirked.

“Like now?” Sirius asked and seemed quite startled. "And they say I am the crazy one,” he muttered and shook his head as he stared at the map in front of him.

"Of course. Or did you have any plans?” Harry said. He crossed his arms and looked at his godfather enthusiastically.

Sirius raised his head and looked at Harry. "We don’t even know where they are... and even then...,” he sighed, "I dunno."

"Come on Sirius," Harry said and leaned forward. Death who had been staying on the opposite side of the table materialized behind him. The being now sat on the back of Harry’s chair in a position a regular person wouldn’t have been able to maintain for long. Either because they felt uncomfortable or simply fell off the chair. But Death didn’t seem to be bothered. He lurked above them like a hawk. "Never had I thought, that persuading you to do something dangerous would be this hard," Harry said.

And even Sirius couldn’t suppress an amused snort at the statement. "We could use some company," Harry added. Sirius seemed to really think about it for a moment, then he looked at Death.

"You make sure that I don’t die,” he stated. Death leaned forward and stared at the Black heir. There was no trace of the previous grin that had been residing on his face. Not a word was spoken. The tension in the room grew heavier with every second. Sirius swallowed hard. He seemed to shrink back into his chair under the intense gaze. His grey eyes started to wander through the room, just to avoid meeting Death’s unnerving look. Harry observed the situation with great amusement until Sirius seemed to be ready to flee the room at any minute. Only then Harry broke the silence.

"Come on," he said and turned around to look at Death. The amusement that was vibrating in their bond told Harry exactly how offended Death was at Sirius’ request. Though he didn’t put it behind Death, to really mean it when somebody besides Sirius or Harry would dare to ask him a question like that. The being paused its staring and looked at Harry.

"Fine,” the being said, and a smirk appeared on its face. Harry snorted. Of course, Death would like the idea to take Sirius with them, if only because this offered him the chance to mess with him a little longer.

The tension that had been hanging in the air was gone and Sirius slumped into his seat. "You are an asshole…,” he said and looked at Death, who simply raised an eyebrow. Harry couldn’t suppress a laugh. "-But I’m in," Sirius announced.
Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it, even if nothing much happened. The next chapter is going to be mostly written from Remus point of view and we get to meet some werewolves. Let me know what you think... <3
Dry leaves rustled beneath their feet with every step they took. At least when Harry or Sirius moved. Despite Death being corporeal, his steps were silent, and he followed Harry like a shadow.

"You know, if I had known that you didn’t really know where they are either, I would’ve thought twice about coming with you," Sirius started somewhere behind him.

"Hey, it was you who demanded that we approach them by foot," Harry stated over his shoulder.

"And by the way, I don’t think that it’s going to take that much longer."

Harry had found out the hard way that locating someone you were connected too didn’t compare in the least to searching someone else. It wasn’t like he hadn’t tried to find Remus. While Sirius had looked at the maps and notes the Order had left in their Headquarters to narrow his position down, Harry had tried to reach out with his senses. But there was just so much going on around him... He could feel the moths swarming the streetlights outside, the sleeping neighbours, rats inside the walls and the wards of Grimmauld Place were pulsing with energy. Harry was drowning in all the different life forces surrounding him. He hadn’t even known how much he tuned out on a daily basis, till he really opened his sense. His mind had snapped back and forth, but without a line - a thread to guide him, he wouldn’t be able to find Remus. Harry had to accept that - while he could cover a certain distance - nowhere near he would be able to find someone on the other end of the country.

During his whole attempt of finding Remus, Harry had sensed Death’s amusement grow alongside his own frustration. With an annoyed huff he had opened his eyes and shot Death a glare. The bastard had only smirked, probably laughing about Harry’s pitiful attempts to get hold of anything that wasn’t located within a mile. Harry had simply ignored the feelings buzzing through their bond and turned away to face his godfather. Sirius was still analysing the notes and maps scattered on the table, unaware of their wordless exchange.

After a few moments of silence, Harry felt a gentle touch on his back.

Death’s amusement still hadn’t subsided, but long arms sneaked around his torso and Harry’s frustration melted away into nothingness. He could feel the being leaning against him and soft lips brushed over the skin on his neck. Harry bit his lip to suppress the content sight that was about to escape him. Death pressed a kiss on the spot behind his ear and Harry reacted without a conscious
thought, baring his neck to offer a better access. Harry’s breath hitched when he felt teeth grazing his skin and Death started to nuzzle his neck. He could nearly feel the vibrations in Death’s breath when a pleased rumble left the being’s throat.
The noise seemed to startle Sirius out of his thoughts. When his godfather lifted his head, he was met Death’s pointedly stare over Harry’s shoulder.
In the end it was Death who offered to just take them to the location of the werewolf pack. The being didn’t have any problems locating Remus.
Sirius had insisted, that they would approach them on foot. Just simply apparating into their territory could equal a death sentence, if on could believe him. Apparently, most of the werewolves out there weren’t too fond of wizards. During their whole discussion till the moment, when Death finally took them to the place, Harry could feel Sirius’ curious eyes resting upon them.

There was rustling behind him and Harry snapped back to the present. Sirius had quickened his pace, to catch up to them. Soon enough his godfather was walking side by side with Harry once more.
The calming scent of the forest washed over them, as they continued to pave their way through the woods. The sun had set not long ago, and it had been replaced by an unusually bright night. The first stars illuminated their way. Not that it made any difference. Thanks to his connection with Death Harry was still able to perceive everything fairly well, despite the lack of colours. Even at the darkest parts of their surroundings, where the shadows of the trees prevented the pale light from reaching the ground, Harry could still distinguish the shapes of rocks and branches on the ground. Sirius on the other hand wasn’t that lucky. He sighed heavily as he walked next to Harry.

"I shouldn’t have picked up smoking when I was a teen," Sirius complained. "My lung is killing me."

Harry grinned amused. "I think it’s more likely the fact that you didn’t stop talking since we arrived here," he replied.
And it was true. During the last fifteen minutes Harry felt like he got a glimpse of what his godfather might had been like in his teenage years. Before he had been locked up in Azkaban and was subjected to the ongoing company of Dementors. And who could blame him if he experienced a throwback in time. After all, sneaking around in a forest at night to visit a fellow werewolf sounded quite familiar. Harry smirked when he noticed that Sirius had stopped dead in his tracks.

"Sometimes you really remind me of your father, you know," Sirius uttered between two breaths, as he started to walk again. "Somewhere in the afterlife he is probably high-fiving himself because you turned out to be as much of a little shit as he was."

Harry laughed. "Maybe. But to my genes also comes environmental influence. If you consider this, your continuous presence has probably influenced me more than my father ever could. By now I’m just an altered version of you...," Harry joked.

"You wish," Sirius replied, "Being me comes with having glorious hair and you can hardly claim that for yourself, can you?"

"Oh, now that was unnecessary," Harry said, trying to sound offended. A sensation in his chest caused him to look at Death. The being seemed fairly entertained by their exchange.

"You can’t deny it though," Sirius pointed out. Harry snorted and shook his head. His reply was drowned out by Sirius’ cursing, as his godfather fell once more victim to one of the branches on the ground. "Fucking hell! How do you not stumble over anything in our way?!" he asked - more rhetorical than anything else. "I mean he-," Sirius pointed at Death, "That I can understand... but you?"
Harry shrugged. "Don’t blame me," he replied. "You were the one who insisted that we use - and I quote - ‘as little magic as possible’ when we approach werewolves."

Sirius only made a grunting noise. He couldn’t argue with that statement and for some time the only thing one could hear where leaves rustling on the ground and their steady breathing. Again, it was Sirius who breached the silence.

"Hey, did you-" Sirius stopped mid-sentence to let out a groan of desperation. Apparently, he had once more gotten caught in some kind of thorny bushes. He sighed loudly, before he finally started the attempt to free himself. After a minute of useless struggling he threw up his arms in defeat. "Oh, fuck this!" Sirius said and he just pulled back his leg, not caring when his jeans ripped. A circular movement with his wand later, and Harry got to witness the same spell that Lupin had used during his third year in Hogwarts.

Now, a soothing light illuminated their surroundings and Sirius appeared to be holding a handful of flames. "Much better," he stated and inspected his leg for a second. A few bloody scratches peaked through the ripped pieces of fabric.

"What about the danger of meeting werewolves who aren’t too fond of magic?" Harry said with a smirk, referring to Sirius’ earlier speech.

"At this point I don’t care if it’s a stray root or a shape-shifting puppy," Sirius said, his face illuminated by the flames, "I just don’t wanna die knowing, that I could’ve evaded the thing leading to my demise if I had put on a fucking light." Harry chuckled, but then his attention was caught by something else.

He didn’t know what it was that told him that something had changed, but he just knew, that Death’s focus had shifted. Harry looked at the being which stared into the distance.

A bloodcurdling howl cut through the night.

Harry’s mouth opened in a silent o and he stared into the darkness. Streaks of silvery light fell through the crowns of the trees surrounding them, illuminating their faces in an eerie way. When they looked at the sky, the moving clouds revealed a perfectly full moon. "Well," Harry said after a moment, "Talking to the pack might be a little trickier than we thought." And when he returned his gaze at Death, he found himself grinning.

About two hours earlier there were still streaks of sunlight falling through the branches of the tall trees surrounding the small clearing.

Remus sat not far from one of the few campfires that was still burning. Two pits were nothing but glimmering coals by now. At least if one didn’t count the occasional bone hiding in the ashes. Nobody bothered to put another log into the shrinking flames, instead most of the people waited in silence while the dark smoke hanging in the air slowly dissolved into nothing.

Remus had been here for about a week. Long enough to recognize a few familiar faces and to be known by them. Absentmindedly he scratched his arm, when a sharp sting reminded him of the barely healed cuts next to the purple bruising on his wrist. He looked at his dirty hands. There was still dried blood mixed into the earth staining his fingers and the skin over his knuckles was raw and open.
Besides Remus not many werewolves sat on the ground; only the ones who seemed rather relaxed than restless. Most of the others were standing in small groups or pacing around. Over the course of the last days the tension had slowly reached its peak. By now only the people who had been werewolves for the longest time were still chatting and making jokes. They had barely two hours till the orange sky would be replaced by a dark night, and the woods were once more haunted by vicious beasts, howling and searching for prey, the full moon hanging over them like a curse.

It was a big pack, bigger than Remus had originally thought. If they were to join Voldemort, it would be a harsh blow for the light side. He counted seventeen members, maybe eighteen. Every other day somebody would leave and return a few hours later with money or food. Sometimes even bringing clothes or - what caused the loudest cheers - cheap liquor and cigarettes. Today they were twenty-four people, if he included himself and the others who appeared to be strangers to the pack. There would’ve been another one. A guy, who arrived shortly after Remus. He was popular at first. He told some good stories, but then the man had chosen to show off. He bragged about a wand which he brought with him. A few comments later and he was no longer known as the funny guy, but the one who had unwisely chosen that carrying a wand made him better than some of the people here. Now his body was left to rot in the woods. Thrown away just far enough, so that the smell wouldn’t attract any unwelcome animals.

During the whole fight, Remus had palmed the handle of his own wand which was hidden in a pocket on the inside of his coat. Otherwise he had done nothing but watch the confrontation, trying to hide how much it affected him. The following night he had barely slept at all.

A laugh breached the silence when somebody made a crude comment about the nervous looking bloke, who was sitting not far from the main group. He clearly didn’t belong to the pack. He twitched anxiously and his eyes jumped around like he didn’t know where to go. The guy acted like a scared animal.

There was another lone wolf. A wiry woman with messy hair, who would probably leave tomorrow. It was common for some people to join a pack and leave after the full moon had passed. Even Remus had to admit, that running with others left the beast inside his chest more content than staying on his own.

Remus eyes wandered back to the man who they had commented earlier on. He was probably in his mid-twenties and had joined them yesterday just before the sun had set. Nervously fidgeting with his sleeves, he had lingered behind the trees for at least an hour. As if nobody could smell him.

Eventually he had approached them, wary and with staggering steps. He didn’t dare to look anybody into the eyes anymore, after he was fiercely shut down just minutes after he had entered the clearing. He had made the mistake to stare at a pack member for too long and said werewolf hadn’t taken it very kindly. Remus could tell, that the newcomer had never experienced a full moon before, nor did he know how to act around other werewolves. He seemed rather scared. Sometimes he scowled with disgust when another werewolf did something unexpected or bared his teeth in an inhuman way. It was a miracle that the man was still alive with all his disrespecting behaviour, even if he wasn’t aware of himself doing it most of the time. He would have to rearrange his mind. Soon he too, would’ve to endure the judging looks of ordinary wizards, who thought all werewolves were filth.

Remus eyes lingered on him. The newly bitten wizard flinched whenever someone came close to touching him. He was the epitome of innocence in comparison to some of the other people here. His clothes didn’t look very worn and there was no visible scar staining his skin. The pack had deemed him their new plaything. Someone who belonged to the group next to the fire turned his attention towards the anxious werewolf. The pack member clicked his tongue and
wriggled a cracker in his hand, as if he wanted to feed a pet. The wizard twitched on his spot when the werewolf leaned forward and made another noise, prompting him to come closer. A few strands of filthy brown hair fell into his eyes, as he continued to mock the other werewolf. The pack member closest to him cheered him on, amused by the exchange and took another drag of his cigarette. Finally the werewolf laughed and threw the crumbled pieces at the rookie, before he turned back to the fire.

Remus couldn’t help but pity the wizard, and yet there was a small part inside of him, that was glad that the wizard was shown his place after the man had once again scowled at the scars of some of the people here.

Despite the constant mockery and the suggestive comments uttered from time to time, Remus had the feeling that the man would stay. Abandoned by his family after he had been turned, he had nowhere else to go. Even the lowest ranking members were protected - plaything or not. Sooner or later he would be the omega of the pack. At least here they wouldn’t look down on him for being a werewolf.

Remus’ attention was caught, when one of the pack members stood up and walked towards the trees. Probably to take a piss. His thin face was hidden beneath a layer of filth and dirt - Remus imagined, that he didn’t look much better - but underneath, the guy was young. Barely eighteen, but he already wore some scars. He was walking past a small group of people, who stood a little offside near the trees and Remus focus shifted and he tried to recall what he knew.

The group consisted of three people. Two of them were brothers and they had obviously known each other when they arrived. The third one had emerged from the woods shortly after, tall and full of confidence. They were searching for a new pack to join, but maybe they would leave to form their own after tonight. Remus eyed them warily.

One of them possessed an angry red scar that covered half of his shoulder. It looked like somebody had once tried to rip a big chunk out of it and he was listening to his brother, who was in the middle of telling a story. A gruff laugh echoed over the clearing, when he gestured to emphasize his tale about a rather gruesome beating if one could believe the movement of his hands.

Earlier Remus had seen how he performed a few tricks with a stack of gambling cards. They weren’t magical in any way, but Remus doubted that the man was a Muggle. Not many of them survived being bitten by a werewolf.

The third man in their group stood out. He was older than most people here and his dirty blond hair was streaked with grey. He didn’t look as sick and thin as the average werewolf, despite the bruising in his face and the split lip. The werewolf was tall, and his shoulder width was fairly impressive.

Remus was able to suppress the growl that built in his throat, but his lips curled upwards to reveal clenched teeth when the other werewolf turned his head and stared at him from the distance.

Remus could feel the beast twisting beneath his skin and it howled in dark satisfaction when the other man squirmed. Some part of it seemed to show on his face, because the tall werewolf broke their eye contact. Remus noticed that he was smirking.

He pushed his fingers into the cold ground, while he recalled the events which had occurred the previous night.

Shortly after his arrival, Remus had managed to claim a place close to the fire. It was September and with every passing day the nights grew colder.

Last Wednesday was the first morning they woke up to a thin layer of frost coating the trees and grass surrounding them. At this point, a place by the flames was viciously protected. Even the pack members snapped at each other when someone did as much as accidentally invade another one's space. If an outsider were to challenge a pack member for their place, they would certainly find themselves next to the corpse in the woods, their mauled body bloody evidence of their own
audacity.

The woman with the messy hair knew the unspoken rules. She had only dared to approach a fire once. A few werewolves had returned from a close town and brought some food. She had snatched a piece of bread when nobody had been looking and quickly returned to her place next to the roots of a big tree. Remus could see her shiver during the night. Her knees were pulled up to her chest, arms wrapped around her body which was pressed into a small hollow on the ground next to the tree. Remus didn’t help her. Even if she were ready to accept his help - which he doubted - kindness had no place out here. Not among strangers.

Some werewolves had grumbled in disapproval when Remus approached the fire for the first time, but they didn’t do anything about it. Remus didn’t come close enough to bother them and since the moon wasn’t quite full yet, not many werewolves stayed at the camp during the nights. There was still enough space for all of them.

Remus wasn’t like the freshly bitten man who allowed himself to be mocked and used however they wanted.

Remus might be quiet, but they could see it in the way he was walking, how he was carrying himself. The wolf shone through and as long as he didn’t overstep his boundaries by bothering anyone, he was left alone.

Yesterday had been a day like any other day. Remus didn’t really chat with the others if he didn’t have too and even though he sat close to the fire, he kept enough distance to not attract too much attention. He was dismissed easily. Just another werewolf, who was in search of a pack or wanted to stay for a few days till the full moon had passed.

It wasn’t unusual. Most werewolves lived a nomadic lifestyle. Jumping from town to town, doing dirty jobs to earn some money. The ones who knew how to do a little bit of magic used it to their advantage. But not many werewolves possessed a wand and only a small percentage of them knew more than a few basic spells. A magical education like Remus had been granted, even though he had been bitten as a child was almost unheard of. But of what use was it? Many employers turned him down as soon as they knew that he was a werewolf.

There were many who took part in illegal affairs. Remus couldn’t hold it against them. At least there they were not restricted to hide that they disappeared every full moon. Mundungus would know his fair share of werewolves even if they would never admit to it. Should the Ministry investigate a crime - the fact that you were a werewolf would make them suspect you all the more - guilty or not. In the dirtiest of alleys no one cared what you were, as long as you kept to your business. But there was no real loyalty. If it meant to save their own skin, they would rat you out without a second thought.

There were others who kept away from the wizarding world entirely. Living from pickpocketing, theft or they begged in Muggle towns.

Some formed packs, small groups of werewolves developing close bonds. They moved together and together they transformed on a full moon. Some lived in their own houses, returning to their pack once in a while and then they left again, only to reunite during the next full moon.

Here the dynamics were very similar. People were coming and going. The number of the werewolves who were staying overnight grew with the upcoming full moon. Remus was fairly accepted by the pack, though if an outsider wanted him gone, nobody would bother to interfere. At least, that way Remus was able to listen to the conversations without anybody really acknowledging his presence.

When they weren’t cracking jokes or telling stories, they talked about the things that were important for their survival. They talked about food, clothes, where they would stay when the nights would get colder and possible jobs they could work. But every now and then, they were speaking about different things. A pack that was recruiting. Speculating voices questioning whether ‘he-who-must-not-be-named’ had really returned, or if it was all just delusional talking.
Hushed whispers telling about Greyback gaining more influence in the northern parts of the country. Even here he was feared and maybe even respected, though his methods were mostly viewed as extreme, despite violence being a part of their daily life. These were the pieces of information which Remus collected in his mind, repeating them over and over to be able to report them when he would return to the Order.

Then, nobody had tried to mess with him yet but that had changed quickly. Remus wasn’t a member of the pack. He wasn’t protected by them and the newcomers noticed that too. Thus, when the shadows started to grow longer and the first stars appeared on the dark sky, the newly formed group started to shift in their place.

This night was cold, colder than the nights before. Remus hadn’t dared to cast a warming charm. Not after the incident with the other werewolf a few days before. Instead, he had crept closer to the fire while still keeping a respectable distance to the chatting pack members. He doubted, that any of the people here carried a wand, even though most of them were probably magical. Too many of them despised regular wizards. Remus could feel the exhaustion in his bones take over, but the beast beneath his skin let him grow restless. It caused him to stay on the edge, never quite able to find sleep. The uneasy feeling in his guts grew, till Remus couldn’t take it anymore. He pushed himself from the ground and he noticed that somebody almost stood right next to him.

Straightening his posture, Remus was faced with the older werewolf, his two companions still lingering by the trees, watching the exchange. The werewolf in front of Remus wore a baffled expression, as if he hadn’t expected him to still be awake or even notice his approach. It didn’t take long for Remus to analyse the situation.

"What do you want?" Remus asked calmly, using his voice for the first time in days. He kept his stance casual, but not once did his eyes leave the blond werewolf. At least the Brothers were cautious enough to keep their distance. They seemed like they wanted to stay away from trouble. For now, at least. He could sense the tension in the air, the wolfish part of him twisting and pushing outwards. The conversation next to them had died down, and the pack members now turned to look at them with barely concealed interested. The freshly bitten werewolf, who was sitting on the ground not far from them shuffled nervously.

"'tis a nice coat that you’ve got here," the older werewolf said. His greyish hair shone in the light of the flames as he flashed his teeth in a cocky grin. The closest thing he could do without plainly baring his teeth. On the outside Remus didn’t bat an eye at the barely concealed threat, even though a growl was about the break from his throat. The strain was high so close to the full moon and he could almost taste the tension on his tongue.

"What do you want?" Remus repeated but the other werewolf simply ignored him.

"You know this place by the fire seems quite comfortable," he said and then he stared at Remus with unblinking eyes.

"I don’t want any trouble," Remus pressed forward between clenched teeth. He went against every instinct in his body, daring him to fight.

The other guy took a step forward and the grin disappeared from his face. "Move," he said. Remus stood still like a statue; his hands trembled. The wolf in him wanted to claw and bite till all he could taste was blood, but his conscious thoughts kept him at bay. Remus couldn’t afford to get into a fight. He had promised it.

Last time he had returned to Grimmauld Place Sirius had paled when he’d noticed the new scars on his torso and arms. Bite-marks and scratches, not to mention the scar next to his ribs, caused by a
rusty knife which Remus had thankfully been able to heal with magic, otherwise he would’ve probably died of the blood loss. One look at him and Sirius knew exactly how close it had been, even though Remus played it down. It probably didn’t help that he had stumbled over his own feet twice, till he had finally been able to sit down. Sirius hadn’t spoken a word during the whole Order meeting. But his eyes hadn’t once left his friend.

When Remus had finished reporting to Dumbledore, he had fallen into his bed like a dead man. He woke surrounded by the darkness and the smell of cigarette smoke and the lingering scent of a familiar shampoo. Only then, he’d realized that Sirius had to have slipped into his bed. He was sleeping, but even then he had hugged Remus tightly, as if to make sure that he was still alive. Remus had sworn to himself, that he would make sure to avoid danger as much as possible. They only had each other. He couldn’t do that to Sirius. Should he die, Remus doubted that Sirius would stay sane. He banned every thought about a situation where it was the other way around from his mind.

Nevertheless, it took all of his self-restraint to take a step back. Noises of disappointment accompanied his action. The group next to the fire jeered and booed as they were starting to lose their interest. The grey-haired guy in front of Remus sneered and he looked at the two werewolves lingering at the trees, while Remus turned around to leave his former sleeping spot.

"I knew it. Just like I said he’s backing down like a little bitch. I don’t even think he is a real wolf. Look at him. Acts like he was bitten by a little doggy..." He continued to mock Remus accompanied by the cheers of some pack members. "Yeah go and fuck off. Hide by the trees..." Remus could barely pay attention. It took all of his self-control to keep walking. He promised...

"Good dog," the man said and imitated a bark.

The beast inside Remus snarled and his skin prickled like it was on the verge of breaking free.

"Ohh, not so fast," The other werewolf drew his sentence out, like he had just remembered the most important thing. "I think you forgot something," the blond man said and Remus could almost feel the smirk that had to be plastered onto his face.

The wolf inside Remus fought against the restraints put on him. Remus didn’t even realize that he had slowed down in his pace while the man continued to talk. "This coat of yours- " Remus didn’t hear the ominous oohs and hisses, when the other man extended his arm to grip his shoulder, attempting to keep him from walking away any further.

The man didn’t get to finish his sentence. The moment Remus felt a hand on his shoulder, he snapped. The wolf howled in victory. With a flash of something primal in his eyes, Remus spun around. A snarl ripped through his teeth and he crashed his knuckles directly into the face of his opponent. When his action was rewarded with a sickening crunch, Remus felt his lips pull back in a dark grin.

The other werewolf was too surprised to do anything about it, but when the first spray of blood hit his face, he bared his teeth in an inhuman manner. Remus didn’t wait for him to recover. The crowd cheered when he threw another punch. This time, Remus could feel the skin over his knuckles split with the impact. It didn’t lessen the satisfaction he felt.

The blond werewolf had finally gathered himself and he lunged for him. Moving on instinct, Remus evaded the first blow. An angry growl cut through the air. The next punch hit its aim.

A fist collided with Remus’ mouth and hot pain exploded in his face. He staggered backwards. The
taste of blood hit his tongue. And Remus laughed. His voice was still hoarse from the infrequent use. He spat on the ground, the metallic liquid still staining his teeth. The wolf inside him thrived on it. It wanted more.

The blond werewolf gnashed his teeth. Remus could see the muscles beneath his jacket rippling. He ducked just in time to dodge the punch. He threw out his hand, instincts driving him to go for the throat of his rival. And when his opponent gripped his wrist to block the next punch, Remus just switched to his other arm. It caught the other guy off guard, but he was stronger than Remus. The sheer force used to squeeze Remus’ arm eventually forced him to turn his attention towards freeing the bruised limb. As soon as he stopped punching, he received a harsh blow into the ribs. Crack.

All air left his lungs. Remus couldn’t prevent the next hit from reaching his head. He reeled backwards. And with the following punch to his face, he lost his footing. For a moment time seemed to stand still. There was only silence. He hit the cold ground. Remus hadn’t thought that there was any air left, to get knocked out of his lungs but he was proved wrong. Yet with the impact, his senses returned. The howling and shouting of the people watching their fight rang loud in his ears. The scent of earth, blood and smoke filled his nose when he finally got to inhale.

Remus blinked once; his pupils expanded as he stared at the dark night sky. Constellations of bright stars filled his vision and for a split second all he wanted to do was give up. Being able to stay on the ground and never stand up again. Then his survival instincts kicked in. The sky blurred into a dark surface in the distance, and his focus shifted towards the blond werewolf looming over him. The guy was grinning and looked at the people to his left, obviously enjoying the attention he was given.

‘Stupid,’ was the only thought that crossed Remus mind. Then he went for the leg. He kicked hard. While he didn’t manage to shatter a knee, it was enough of a distraction. The other guy cursed and jerked back. Remus tried to grab the next best thing which turned out to be a stick, but before he could get hold of it, he had to roll to the side, to evade being stomped on. The blond werewolf had miscalculated. Apparently, Remus had aimed better than he thought. His opponent was still cursing over his injured leg, when Remus pushed himself from the ground. In the same motion, he jumped forward. With the weakened leg it was easy for Remus to knock the other werewolf off his feet. Remus didn’t even notice that he was bleeding, till he saw the blood running down on his arm when he threw the next punch. But that didn’t stop him. His next actions were a blurred memory of wanting to rip and tear, till he finally came to realize that he had pinned the other guy down. A knee over one arm and his right hand fixating the other one while his remaining fingers were curled around the blond guys throat. Remus was squeezing so hard, that his fingers were white. The older werewolf finally stopped to squirm under his grip. Remus loosened the iron hold the slightest bit and his opponent immediately took the chance to take a few rattling breaths, even thought there was barely any air reaching his lungs. Remus licked over his dry lips tasting blood. He didn’t know if it was his own. He didn’t care. Slowly he loosened his grip, but then he could see anger flashing in the eyes of the pinned man. ‘Oh, this wouldn’t do.’ Remus leaned forward, till his face was almost in biting range of his rival. Then he lowered his voice to a volume, and spoke without a care, as if he was doing a regular small talk. "You know, I wouldn’t refer to Greyback as a little doggy," Remus said and put some distance between their faces. The other werewolf wore a look of confusion till his eyes widened when he remembered his earlier words - ...Acts like he was bitten by a little doggy - and realization dawned on him. As soon as Remus pulled back, the older guy didn’t bother to linger on the cold ground any longer. And when he started to walk away, battered and bruised under the jeering shouts of a few other
werewolves, Remus couldn’t hold back. "Good Dog," he muttered, taking deep satisfaction in the short pause the other guy made before he continued his way.

Remus pulled his hand from the ground, earth crumbling between his fingers. He hadn’t bothered to mention that he had actually never run with Greyback. The rumour that he had once belonged to Fenrir’s pack had spread like a wildfire since yesterday’s fight. They viewed him differently now. Wary, but kind of fascinated. They didn’t dare to ask him about it though. Remus was glad that they kept their distance. He even allowed himself to heal his ribs with a whispered incarnation. With his wand hidden inside his coat, he was able to do it without drawing too much attention. Twenty hours had passed since then. He left his other injuries how they were. There was a still strain in his face. His mouth felt swollen and his bottom lip was split. It didn’t bother him too much. At least now when he took a breath, he didn’t feel like someone stabbed him with a burning iron anymore.

He stared at the sky as it grew darker with every passing minute. It wouldn’t take much longer. He could feel it. Remus trusted his senses. The wolf was as much a part of him as his human side. It had taken a long time for Remus to accept that. He still struggled with it sometimes, but over the last months, during which he had infiltrated various packs he had to listen to his wolfish side. He hadn’t always ignored it. As much as Remus wanted to deny it, Greyback bit him when he was just a child. He was barely five years old when it happened. Back then he hadn’t thought about suppressing the wolf. Even during his years in Hogwarts, when he was afraid that someone would find out his secret, he had still trusted his instincts.

That all had changed after the horrible Halloween night in which James and Lily had died. Gone were the times when he had barely been able to tell the wolf and his human mind apart. After all, how could he trust the creature that hadn’t once warned him about Sirius’ betrayal? Remus smiled in bitter irony and flexed his dirty fingers. Back then he had felt more doomed than ever. He had cursed himself for even daring to listen to his instincts. How in the world had he trusted his wolf enough to avoid Peter? Who cared now that his scent had just been wrong? Who cared that the wolf beneath his skin had growled every time he came close? Who cared about the subtle changes in Peters behaviour? It was war, they all were different now. But then, all of a sudden, they had been dead. James. Lily. And then Peter.

Their friend, who had possessed so much more courage than they had ever thought and had died innocently by the hand of the person Remus had trusted more than anyone else in his life. What did it matter now, that the wolf in his chest had howled with anguish of being separated from the only remaining member of its pack? The one formed in bright starlit nights, filled with laughter and the scent of firewhisky drenching their dormitory. When they carved their names into the wooden posts of their beds…

_Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs. And Remus the only one left to remember..._

How far away were the evenings in the common room where secrets had been traded and a whispered ‘Mischief Managed’ erased any traces of their nightly roaming. He had grieved for the mornings in the shrieking shack when Sirius was the last to leave, barely evading Madame Pomfrey when she collected Remus to bring him to a bed in the hospital wing, only for him to wake up to the scent of sweet candy and surrounded by the faces of his friends. The day Sirius had been imprisoned was the day he had sworn to never trust his wolf again.

Things were different now. Remus had started to listen again, to loosen the chains he had put on this dark part inside his core. Twelve years are a long time... It was difficult — old habits die hard – but at the same time it was freeing. At first Remus had felt like he was about to explode when he had let the wolf to come through. It had been such a long time, since he had he allowed the beast to
have this much control. But he needed his wolf to survive, just like the creature relied on Remus. Remus hadn’t even realized how much he’d missed it. They were slowly working as one once more. The beast was eager to being let loose after this long and it lingered just beneath Remus skin, waiting to be finally free once more. There was a part, that still resented this dark piece of him that wanted nothing but rip and tear every time someone wronged him. But while he was scared it was familiar. Remus had been a werewolf for so long that he didn’t even remember what it was like before. He knew how to control it, to ignore even the most basic instincts. But there was no need to. Not out here where everybody had a beast beneath their skin. During the last week, Remus had found it harder to see the wolf as a separate being. With every hour closer to the full moon the borders in his mind blurred. Right now, every part of his body yearned for a hunt, instincts for once not drowned by the wolfsbane potion. With every passing moment, the wolf grew more and more eager. They thirsted for blood.

Darkness was settling. It was only matter of minutes till the moon would appear on the sky. Remus stripped off his clothes. There was no place for shame. He stood naked just like the others. Shivering. But it wasn’t because of the cold. He was radiating heat. The moon hung in the sky like a silvery sphere. And the heat inside him grew. It expanded, melting through his bones like lava, till it burned him from the inside. Remus opened his mouth in a silent scream. The pain was unbearable. There was the cracking of bones, whimpering and snarling and a howl echoed through the night. Then, he no longer knew his name.

As soon as the howl had faded away, Sirius’ whole demeanour changed like someone had flipped a switch. Stripped of all masks, his previous attitude melted away like it had never been there at all. His whole attention was now directed at the spot from where the eerie noise had come from. Like a dog who had detected its prey and only waited for the command to hunt, he had blocked out everything else. There was a flicker of something in his eyes, but then Sirius turned his head and it was gone. He looked at Harry.

"We should go," he said, and the previous tension left his body. "There is no point in staying here. It won’t take long for them the smell us."

Harry didn’t reply. Instead he turned to look at Death. The being was grinning, teeth too sharp, white eyes in stark contrast to the darkness surrounding him. Death already knew what Harry’s answer would be. And as Sirius watched their exchange, he seemed get it too.

"You are unbelievable," Sirius said and threw his head back in defeat. He closed his eyes and sighed. It was probably a sign of his craziness that he didn’t do anything else to stop Harry from staying here. "You-," he pointed directly at Death, "You make sure that no one harms him," he said with all his seriousness and he gestured at Harry. Death’s smirked widened and the darkness surrounding him was more present than ever. His whole presence seemed to swallow up the pale moonlight as he leaned forward.

"Oh, If I were you, I would rather worry about myself," Death said, his pale eyes directed at Sirius, who only now seemed to grasp with what being he was faced with. Death’s hoarse voice appeared to be echoing itself, when he said his next sentence. "They tend to go for humans."

Chapter End Notes
I hope you liked it. Please leave a comment and let me know what you think about the way I portrayed the werewolf dynamics and the rest of the chapter. I made Remus a little darker I guess, but I hope you liked it anyways.
Chapter Summary

Harry and Sirius fight against werewolves and we get a glimpse of Moony's mind in his wolf form.

Chapter Notes

Hello guys. I'm sorry I haven't posted this long. I could now come up with excuses but the truth is, I accidentally deleted some stuff I had written, which was almost a full chapter and then my motivation equaled zero for the next few weeks, and till I finally had another chapter I was satisfied with took its time. But finally I got to write seven pages so here's the next chapter. I hope you like it. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Its consciousness rose slowly, instincts taking over till no human thought remained. The wolf whimpered when it registered the pain within its body. Bright and hot it cursed through its veins, till the last waves of it slowly subsided. It licked over its muzzle, cold air hitting its wet nose. The beast stretched its sore muscles, stiff joints popping - newly formed - just like the bones they were connecting. Only after shaking its thick fur, it took in its surroundings, curiously scenting the air. Soil and rotting leaves were the first thing it noticed. Disgruntled it flicked its ear as it felt the scent of smoke invading the cool air. But it was faint enough to dismiss it. Then its attention shifted onto the more immediate threat. There were others of its kind. The smell of sweat and blood still lingered, and it shifted warily, fur in its neck slightly rising at the unknown beings around. Its lips pulled back to reveal sharp teeth. When another wolf tried to come closer the being growled. The other creature smelled foreign. Wrong. Not like its pack. But despite the growling, the interloper didn’t back down. The werewolf snarled again and snapped at the other wolf; jaws connecting with a clicking sound as they closed around nothing but cold air. A warning.

The other wolf lowered its head.

Not satisfied yet, the werewolf stared at the other one till it whimpered submissively. Pleased being snorted, a cloud of steam forming around its snout. It turned away and absentmindedly nosed the pile of fabric on the ground. It smelled like itself. Dismissively it raised its head and walked towards the shadows of the treeline. It relished in the feeling of its muscles moving beneath its skin. Never taking its eyes of the other wolves, it tried once more to scent the air. The restlessness inside it grew. There was not a trace of its pack. A confused whimper left its mouth as it circled the other wolves. Hunger for something gnawed in its core. Like fire it burned through its veins, the need to run, to fight and claim. It licked over its teeth. Made to rip and tear. An image of bones snapping beneath its jaw. The need to hunt overwhelmed the urge to find its pack. It needed prey. It wanted blood.
A wolf not far from it howled.

It stopped dead in its tracks, head turning, ears pointing forward. It shivered with anticipation. An invitation to join. Shared need for a hunt. After a moment of silence there were others who joined in. Howls after howls cut through the night, till eventually the wolf itself joined the chorus.

Paws dug into the earth as they made their way through the forest. The sounds of their voices echoed through the woods, announcing their presence to anyone who had dared to enter them tonight. They ran as one. Mindless minds, snarling and howling at first. They snapped and growled at each other, till everyone had learned their place.

Then there was silence, no noise beside the dull sounds of their paws hitting the ground and their breath as they ran.

Like water they parted when they their way was blocked by trees, jumping over rocks and thorny bushes till they ran next to each other once more. The moved like a river as they wound their way through the woods in search for prey.

A sudden alertness let them slow down. Like a wave it hit them and one after the other raised their heads. A howl breached the silence. Then the wolf caught it too.

The whiff of something familiar in the air. The scent of something it knew. But the need to stop and protect was overridden by its instincts to follow the others. Because while it was familiar, it also smelled like prey.

Sirius ruffled through his hair; his expression unreadable. He hadn’t talked much since Deaths earlier announcement. He had just stared at Harry for some time and then he leaned against a tree. At Harry’s questioning look, he had just said, "They are going to find us anyway. So, we can just as well wait for them to come to us, instead of walking through this goddamn forest."

Harry had shrugged. "Fine with me," he had replied and sat down on the earthy ground, legs crossed and Death next to him.

"What do you even want to do when they find us. Fight them?" Sirius asked.

Harry tilted his head. He didn’t really have a plausible explanation. He could hardly say that he felt Death’s craving for entertainment pulse through his own veins as well. "I guess I’m just curious about what is going to happen," he eventually said. It wasn’t wrong.

Sirius stared at him.

"You can always go home if you want to," Harry added. His godfather shook his head.

"And leave you here?" He snorted and turned away.

Since then, Sirius hadn’t spoken a word. Harry watched his godfather, as he stared into the darkness. He didn’t really move besides the occasional twitching when he heard a noise in the distance. The flames in his hand had long disappeared, but there was a new-found tension in his stillness. Like a rubber-band that was about to snap. The ghostly howls that had filled the night like an eerie song had expired not long ago. Sirius twirled his wand between his fingers, eyes never stopping to scan their surroundings. The hoot of an owl breached the silence and his eyes flicked towards the source before turning back.

While Sirius was here to protect Harry and to a large part also because he wanted to see Remus – maybe even for the thrill - Harry had other reasons. Having these werewolves as allies equalled
telling Voldemort and Dumbledore to fuck off at the same time. If the pack was to join Harry, it would be an unknown factor to both the light side and the dark Lord. It would certainly be entertaining to see the outcome of this.

Till now, Dumbledore hadn’t appeared like he had noticed Harry’s change in character. But who was he kidding? The headmaster knew always more than he let on. But Dumbledore had to depend on his foreboding’s. Voldemort on the other hand… Harry had left enough hints for him to know that something was up. If Lucius Malfoy had done what he was supposed to at least.

If one could believe the pieces of information Harry had gained as he’d listened in to the Order meetings, Voldemort was also recruiting. He had Death Eaters talking to the giants. Greyback and his pack were roaming the country. A big pack like the one Remus was currently invading could make a great impact. Nevertheless, talking to them on a full moon was hardly possible. Harry wasn’t stupid. But he was curious.

Besides Remus when he was thirteen, he had never seen a werewolf on a full moon. Even during his time as an Auror, he had only dealt with the aftermath of such nights. After the fateful day of the battle of Hogwarts, werewolves had still been viewed as dangerous and maybe even filth, but their reputation had slightly improved thanks to Remus being awarded the Order of the Merlin. Even if the man himself had - at this point in time - already been dead. Buried in a cold grave, never knowing how his life had impacted the wizarding world.

It had been unheard of – awarding an Order of the Merlin to a werewolf. Outrageous for some. Had not others of its kind slaughtered their children and loved ones? Greyback’s pack ravaging over the country under the leads of a madman till he finally fell on the day of the battle… After Harry had spoken up, those who had raised their voices grew quiet. Now, the awarding of the Order of the Merlin was only seen as an act of kindness to grant an overlooked hero the recognition he deserved.

Harry saw it as it was. A gesture of kindness and tolerance to society, but a shallow one. If Harry hadn’t insisted, it would’ve never happened. Oh, how the Ministry had tried to repair the damage done, when it was revealed that the darkness had not simply sneaked up to them... Like a Lethifold to digest them in their sleep, while they were unaware of what was going on. No, in their ignorance it had invaded their insides and bloomed there like a sea of flowers.

Like someone trying to find their reflection in a broken mirror, the Ministry’s image had lain in shambles. But a simple ‘Reparo’ wouldn’t do to piece the broken shards back together. Harry could’ve demanded anything from them. No one had wanted ‘Voldemort’s vanquisher’ to be on their bad side at that time.

He had only wanted his peace, but that had been an impossible task. The following weeks after the battle were a blurry mess of days filled with meetings and press conferences, flashing lights and headlines in the papers. And while he had been hiding from the cameras - weeks of staying away from society - the Ministry had slowly rebuilt itself. Harry remembered Hermione throwing herself into work, to accomplish what she wanted, pushing through new laws while he had sat in Grimmauld place not knowing what to do with his life…

In the end all of his decisions had brought him here. Back to when he was fifteen.

Harry didn’t even know that his eyes had wandered till they rested on Death. Him being corporal - or whatever one may call Death’s visible state to other people – didn’t change the strange air that was surrounding him. Harry didn’t doubt that Death could blend in if he wanted to, but right now he seemed like a part of the woods. The being was sitting on the ground next to Harry, looking as if he did belong here. Like an old god - predatory and ancient - the moonlight never touching him,
yet his pale skin stood in sharp contrast to the dark. The shadows around him almost seemed to move. But he didn’t seem out of place... Here in this moment, Harry and Sirius were the one invading this forest.

For a moment Harry got a glimpse of his giant wings floating right through the trees, hovering over them like a dome. But then he blinked, and the image was gone. When his eyes found Death’s face, the being was smiling. It was a fond smile and it echoed through their bond. Harry found himself reciprocating the gesture, a pleasant fire warming his chest from within.

The barest hint of feathers brushed over Harry’s back and his eyes fluttered shut for a single moment. When he looked at Death once more, he felt the phantom touch of a hand stroke through his hair. Death grinned from afar. A fond smile tugged on Harry’s lips and he tilted his head, goose bumps forming on his skin where the invisible appendages touched him.

No words were spoken, but their bond was whirring with emotion.

Minutes passed and the moonlight was breaking through the clouds. Then Harry noticed it. At first it was more of a feeling than a sound. A thrumming in the distance, dull and muffled like a beating heart. Harry felt their souls pulsing with life yet burning with hunger like a fire devouring the forest. They were like shards of a mirror, each one reflecting a small piece of the darkness that also resided in Harry. But while they were dark creatures - compared to Death, they were bright. If they were to be stars, Death was the void surrounding them.

Then Sirius’ head rose in a quick motion and he pushed himself from the tree he had been leaning against.

The thrumming was now no longer only the one of souls. They could hear paws hitting the ground, twigs snapping beneath them and when Harry stood up, he could see their bodies moving in the distance. The wolves were finally here.

But they didn’t attack. They stopped not far away, hidden by the darkness and the trees surrounding them. Harry’s eyes followed their movements curiously. Why had they stopped?

Death stood up gracefully and took a few steps till he stood next to Harry. He sounded like the forest itself – wind and rustling leaves – when he replied to Harry’s unspoken question.

“They sense death. They know what is residing here,” he said quietly and they both watched the wolves in the shadows. “If I were to desire it, I could make myself imperceptible to them. Their minds are running on instinct. What they don’t sense they won’t fear. In this corporeal form, I’m already suppressing the main part of my natural aura. Otherwise your godfather would probably not talk so lightly in my presence...” Death grinned as he looked at Sirius, who was standing a little farther, his back facing them since his whole attention was directed at the threat out there. Death’s eyes lingered for a moment, before he continued. “Right now, they don’t care about me... But you.” Harry felt Death’s breath as the being leaned even closer and spoke right next to his ear. “Your body, your magic... Everything to your very core... Massster, you reek of death.” The being almost purred the sentence, while he nuzzled the spot behind Harry’s ear. As soon as his words had faded away, a real rumble made its way from Death’s throat.

Harry turned his head. He was looking into Death’s eyes, their faces so close, that he could feel the vibration in Death’s breathing. Harry’s own breath hitched as he looked upon this beautiful creature, and he couldn’t help but lean in for a kiss. Death’s purring intensified and their bond flared up with fondness when Harry pressed against him.

He felt sharp teeth bite his lip in a possessive way, before they eventually pulled apart. The feeling still lingered even after he ran his tongue over his lip. Harry smiled.
Eventually Death started to talk again. 
"They are too cautious to approach us for now," the being said and stared into the woods. "But they hunger. For prey. For blood." He grinned at Harry, their bond still buzzing with happiness. "There is fear, but in the end their hunger will win."

As if on cue there was a dull growling coming from the trees. Harry stared at the werewolves hiding in the darkness. There was a glint in the shadows there and then. Every time their eyes caught the light. They didn’t dare to come closer. Nonetheless the beasts paced restlessly, their body’s blurring into their surroundings. Moving shadows in the greater dark.

"Why won’t they attack?" Sirius asked in a hushed voice, his eyes never stopping to scan the shades between the trees. Unlike Death’s inhuman voice, his words cut through the silence like a knife. As soon as they had left his mouth, Sirius knew that this had been a mistake. As if a spell had been broken, Harry sensed the tension spilling over. It only took a second for Harry to notice the beast that would be the first to give in to its hunger.

At first it moved hesitantly, its pacing turning into a small step towards them. But then it left all hesitation behind. Harry saw its muscles moving when it leapt forward in full speed. The moonlight revealed a massive wolf; its pale fur almost silver in the light. There was no doubt who it was heading for.

Sirius slid back a foot to improve his balance. Harry frowned. Sirius had made a deal with Death. He wouldn’t die tonight, Harry was sure. Death would keep to his word and yet Harry doubted that the being would interfere, when a werewolf came as close as to bite Sirius. A slight tinge of worry fluttered up in Harry’s chest, but it died down quickly. This wasn’t Harry’s fight. He wouldn’t tell Sirius what to do. If his godfather didn’t want to turn into his animagus form to avoid being bitten, then it was his decision. And after all Harry was curious. All he did was watch.

The wolf was snarling, baring its teeth and Sirius mirrored its expression. A threatening grin had appeared on his face and his eyes glinted madly. To Harry he seemed like a feral animal himself. His magic was as wild as ever. It whirled around him like a hurricane and for once Sirius didn’t restrain it. He shifted.

The wolf leapt forward. Threads of saliva connected its teeth. In the last second Sirius made a wicked movement with his wand. He slashed it through the air like a dagger, the same time he jumped out of the way. The wolf howled as it fell to the ground. It slid forward with the momentum of its attack, leaving a trail in the dirt before it came to a halt. Its whimperes turned into snarling and it staggered back to its feet. Dirt and blood stuck to its pale fur. The wolf growled dangerously.

Sirius eyebrows furrowed as he watched it baring its teeth again. Apparently, he’d expected his spell to make more of an impact. But then his expression was replaced by a feral grin at the challenge. It only widened, when the wolf made a move to charge again. While the werewolf had been getting back to his feet, there had been a shift between the trees. The others could smell the blood. Harry saw the wolves that had been pacing before grow even more restless. They came closer. Not all of them. There was still hesitation and they were careful. Calculating. For now, they would leave the fight to the reckless wolf. But nonetheless, he could see their thirst for blood.

Sirius on the other hand didn’t seem to notice. He was wound up in his fight with the werewolf, a mad spark in his eyes. He was playing with it, never striking to kill, but Harry wasn’t complaining. He wanted the werewolves as allies, therefore killing them would be rather counterproductive
anyways. He could only hope that Sirius wouldn’t be too reckless. Though he had to admit, that even after all this time in Azkaban and holed up in Grimmauld Place, Sirius’ duelling skills were still remarkable. Sometimes he almost failed to keep the werewolf at bay, but this was more likely attributed to Sirius’ decision to draw out the fight and less his lack of skill. Apart from that, it only seemed to increase his excitement. Sirius’ grin never waivered as spell after spell was fired from his wand. Death seemed rather indifferent to the fight after a while. He wandered over to a tree, leaning against it and he watched the scene like a bored emperor might watch his gladiators fight.

The other werewolves grew restless, Harry noticed as he scanned his surroundings. A pulse of interest that wasn’t his own spiked up in his chest. At the same time, there was a string of curses coming from Sirius.

Harry turned, only to see how Sirius barely avoided getting bitten by the werewolf. He stumbled back to his feet and made a messy movement with his wand. Whatever Sirius had wanted to do was thwarted by the wolf, who already started another attempt of attack. Sirius dove out of the way. With gritted teeth he fired another spell and the wolf was pushed back. Only now Sirius had room to breathe once more.

Flashes of light illuminated the darkness. They painted the night in vivid colours as Sirius fought the werewolf. The fight went on and when the wolf once again almost got Sirius, Harry snapped.

"Merlin’s balls Sirius! If you won’t change into your animagus form, quit playing!" Harry ranted, when his godfather didn’t make an attempt to stop the beast. "Death might keep you from dying but keeping you from getting injured or turned isn’t something he is responsible for!"

Sirius seemed surprised. His grin vanished and with a blank face, he pointed his wand at the ground. Roots on in front of the - once more - attacking wolf started to hiss and move like snakes, strangling the werewolf and keeping it at bay. For now, at least. He turned to look at Death, his anger now directed at the creature.

Death just raised an eyebrow. It was more of a feeling than really seeing it, but Harry was sure that the many eyes of his true form were piercing Sirius. His godfather still glared at Death unaware of the predatory attention he was receiving. Harry decided to ignore their antics. His gaze was focused on the shadows moving between the trees. Groups of wolves came closer. They were now on every side, surrounding them in a generous circle. The sign of weakness Sirius had been showing had encouraged them. Their eyes glinted in the dark. Harry didn’t doubt that Death could keep them at bay easily, but for now...

"Try not to kill them," Harry said and looked at his godfather, "Or there won’t be any werewolves left to be allies." Sirius looked him in the eyes and nodded. After a moment of consideration Harry added, "And for god sake Sirius. If you don’t want to be turned transform into a dog!"

Behind them, they could still hear the werewolf fighting against the snakelike roots. Next to him Sirius grinned.

The beasts, which Harry had deemed the most restless charged simultaneously. Harry could feel Death’s gaze in his neck as the being watched. Now his curiosity was roused, but the creature wouldn’t interfere. Not yet at least. The trees were an advantage insofar that not many werewolves could attack at once. They needed to weave their way past them, but so did Harry and Sirius.

Highly aware of Death’s attention, Harry called upon his magic. He glanced at the being for a last time before turning around. Death only smirked. Harry inhaled, then he let himself melt into the shadows.

He reappeared between Sirius and two approaching werewolves. The beasts only increased their pace when they spotted him. His magic was flowing freely beneath his skin. Shadows thick like
water slithered between his fingers. Harry tilted his head and focused on his magic. Like fog he
directed it over the ground. Light and luring he let it slither over the werewolves like a cloak.
They hadn’t even noticed what was happening. They ran towards Harry, red tongues hanging out
of their mouths, a wild glint in their eyes. They howled in victory. Harry could feel their darkness
and he returned their look, shadows in his eyes. They were beautiful in their hunt. Predatory beasts
and yet they were outmatched. Harry grinned.
He followed them with his magic. Only when the wolves had almost reached him, Harry gave up
all subtly. He tightened the invisible nooses around their necks and chests till he could hear the
joints of their rib-cages crack. They came to a halt, stumbling and falling, gasping for breath. They
snarled and growled as they snapped and clawed at the invisible death traps.
Harry released them when he felt their minds slip. Unconscious but alive.
Soon his attention was demanded by other werewolves approaching from the shadows. Now Harry
also turned to use spells. Even if he didn’t speak the incantations aloud it was easier than directing
his magic in the way he had before.

Out of the corner of his eye Harry spotted Sirius, who was fighting three werewolves
simultaneously.

"How is it going?" Harry shouted over the noise of exploding wood – Sirius’ had just used a
blasting hex and missed – and the growling of the werewolves.

"Honestly? I don’t think I had this much fun in weeks," Sirius replied, and he grinned madly. But
after a moment his expression wavered. "I’m more worried about you than about me,” Sirius
added, when a wall of purple flames erupted from his wand.

Harry couldn’t help but laugh.

"I can’t die, remember?" Harry added with a chuckle and he sent a silent ‘Stupor’ towards a
werewolf who was about to jump. They were trying to separate them, stirring them in different
directions.

With a thought Harry melted into the shadows and reappeared next to his godfather. There was a
spark in Sirius eyes when he heard the werewolves howl. He was grinning as he fired another spell.
Harry smirked when he realized that Sirius was just as crazy as any Black.
It was in his blood. While Bellatrix might top anyone else, the same insanity also lived in Sirius.
He was just better at masking it. Maybe being surrounded by other people one might consider sane
also added to that factor. Their temper was after all quite similar.

"Yeah, I would rather not rely on that-” Sirius interrupted his thoughts as he referred to Harry’s
supposedly immortality. He ended his sentence rather abruptly to evade another attacking
werewolf. Sirius disapparated with a crack and reappeared behind a tree. Harry shook his head in
amusement.

‘Hell, Sirius was just as loyal as Bellatrix. She was fixated on Voldemort, and Sirius… Well he had
his friends. Besides, the Order wouldn’t be very happy to see Sirius going around and torturing
people, unlike a certain snake-faced wizard. But Sirius’ friends weren’t really there to ground him
anymore, were they? One of them was dead, the other one a Death Eater and Hell, if Remus wasn’t
at least somewhat crazy too, Harry would write a love letter to Umbridge.
It didn’t help that both Black’s had been locked up in Azkaban for years. Or still were in Bellatrix’
case. Oh, it would be interesting to meet her once more’, Harry thought with a grin. ‘He wouldn’t
be surprised if her magic was just as wild as Sirius’.’ But while Sirius focused on another threat
and Harry was lost in thought, a cold tingle went up his spine. Harry whirled around. The werewolf
was already too close.
Harry’s mind was blank. He reacted on instinct. His arms snapped up to shield his head, while the beast already charged. At the same time his magic lashed out.

*Crunch.*

The sound of a body hitting the ground. Harry exhaled shakily as he slowly lowered his hands. He heard the wolf’s shallow breathing.

In.

Out.

All he could do was stare; surprise etched into his features.

A wet gurgle. Blood trickling from its mouth.

Adrenaline pumped through Harry’s body.

Blood was staining the fur around the beast's muzzle. The ground was dark where it was slowly spreading, too thick to be absorbed by the earth. The werewolf was dead. Every bone inside its body seemed broken. Harry could hear his own blood rush through his veins.

A movement in his peripheral vision. He flinched. All sounds returned, and with it the realization of where he was. He whirled around.

"Death..."

The being stood in front of him. Harry exhaled once more. It had only been a second. The barest moment of hesitation and yet the werewolf had almost ripped him into pieces. Anger at his own reaction, or rather lack thereof threatened to rise in his throat like bile. But Harry swallowed it down.

"Harry..." There was no judgement in Death’s voice. Harry breathed in deeply. Death’s dark presence grounded him immensely. The invading wave of emotions was gone as soon as it had come.

"I really thought this would be more fun," Harry stated after two shaky breaths.

"Oh, I am entertained..." Death said grinning and he tilted his head. A flutter of *something* made place in Harry’s stomach and he grinned back. He had the faint impression that Death had really liked to watch him. Liked to see him kill.

"This whole fighting thing might not be the smartest idea," Sirius said, panting heavily as he dove behind a tree.

"...and that’s coming from you," Harry added, and Sirius snorted while he fired another blasting hex. They wolves were wary of them now. They circled them in a greater distance, only charging when they detected an opening. Right now, they had time to breathe.

"I’m not the one who wants to run around in a forest full of werewolves on a full moon. And me thinking, that I should try to act like the one with the impulse control, is saying something about *you,*" Sirius said with a pointed look at Harry.

"Okay fine. Point taken," Harry replied. "But pretending that you are only here for my sake is an
outright lie," he shot back. Sirius stared into the darkness. He didn't reply to Harry's statement, but instead a question of his own escaped his lips.

"Moony…?"

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked it. I didn't really look through this before I posted it so I hope everything is alright. I also finally got to edit some of the earlier chapters, if only roughly and I really need to edit the first few chapters but for now I'm happy if I can work out a regular uploading schedule.
**Chapter Summary**

Harry and Sirius face Moony in his werewolf form and later on Harry gets to meet the pack in their human forms.

**Chapter Notes**

Okay guys, this chapter took me some time. Again. But well here it is. Look out, there is hinting at attempted suicide! for people who are triggered by that. I don't know where that came from.

And all the werewolves are OC's, I hope that won't keep you from reading though, but keep in mind that Harry needed someone to negotiate with. And after that they won't really show up again. More details at the end of the chapter. Also this chapter has once more some focus on Wolfstar.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry followed his godfather’s line of sight. He was right. There between the trees stood a wolf, cautiously watching them. Yellow eyes glinted in the dark like coals. Its soul was burning with hunger. But there was something different about its behaviour.

Harry wondered why he hadn’t noticed him earlier.

The werewolf had been keeping his distance, but now that he’d been detected, he slowly moved towards them.

Remus aura was unmistakeable.

Yet there was a new edge to it. The wilderness that was usually so contained within his core had taken over.

Unlike Sirius, Harry would’ve had trouble identifying Moony only by his looks. It had been ages since he’d seen Remus’ werewolf form. Even though his godfather was barely able to make out the wolf’s silhouette in the darkness, he had recognized him.

It was interesting to see Remus like that. His magic wasn’t swirling around him, nor did it interact with his surrounding like it usually did when he was human. Harry could still sense it, but it was focused more inward. Confined. Like the blood pulsing in his veins it ran through his body, moving slowly, almost as if it was asleep. Though it made sense. After all, werewolves didn’t need their magic to kill.
Then he left the shadows.

He was big.

As a human Remus was already tall. Even here he was one of the bigger wolves, although he appeared to be leaner than most of the others. Nonetheless Harry could see his muscles rippling under his brownish fur. Moony was creeping forward with smooth but hesitating steps. His amber eyes were fixated on Sirius. There was wariness visible in his every movement.

If Harry didn’t know it better, he would say that the werewolf might even be confused. But that didn’t make him seem less dangerous.

Sirius stood like he was frozen. Clouds of steam formed with every exhale as he stared at the wolf. Six feet of cold air was the only thing separating them.

A low growl erupted from Moony's throat.

Sirius swallowed. He had fought against the other werewolves without holding back, but Harry somehow doubted that he would do the same to Remus.

Harry leaned forward without a conscious thought. His breath hitched with anticipation. Moony still hadn’t attacked, but his stance was clearly that of a predator.

"Sirius, I think it would be better if you changed into a dog," Harry said quietly, his eyes not leaving the werewolf. Nothing indicated what was going to happen. He felt Death’s dark presence behind him, his own curiosity mirrored in their bond. Other wolves that had already retreated a littler earlier, now moved closer once more. Harry didn’t dare to blink.

The sound of a snapping twig broke the silence.

Moony’s ears twitched and for a second his eyes strayed from Sirius. Another werewolf emerged from the shadows behind him. It came closer, angry lines interrupting the pattern of the grey fur covering its muzzle.

While Moony was still distracted, Sirius tried to put some distance between them. Remus attention snapped back to the Animagus before he could even finish his second step.

A snarl ripped through Moony’s teeth. Sirius stilled. The other werewolf tensed, and its muscles bulged beneath its fur.

It all happened in the blur of a moment. The foreign werewolf jumped. Moony charged. And where Sirius had been standing was now a black dog.
There was snarling and biting. Teeth digging into flesh. A red smear staining the leaves on the ground. The grey wolf whimpered.

Harry stared at the scene. His mouth stood open in surprise. Next to him Death was grinning.

The grey werewolf had jumped for Sirius. Moony followed barley a second later. But he wasn’t going for Sirius. Instead he went after the other beast, jumping at its throat and he dragged the wolf to the ground before it could reach the Animagus. Moony growled at the grey werewolf. His opponent was baring its throat, the fur there sticky and wet with blood.

Sirius seemed just as stunned as Harry - if one could tell that much from a dog.

Moony had placed himself between Sirius and his opponent. Eventually the other beast retreated but Remus kept his stance, still baring his teeth. He bristled when his eyes found Harry.

Lupin growled, his lips pulled back to reveal even more of his bloody canines. Harry stared at the werewolf, Death standing right behind him.
Their eyes met.
Moony turned away.

Now that Sirius had changed into his dog-form, Moony seemed more at ease in his company but he was still cautious. He stalked towards Sirius, eyeing his surroundings warily.

Harry grinned when he saw that the Animagus had started to wag his tail and his ears perked up.
The black dog took a step towards Remus who promptly growled.

Padfoot whined pitifully. After a moment he tried once more to cross the distance between him and Moony. This time the werewolf didn’t protest.

Sirius approached the wolf with careful steps, his body lowered to the ground and still wagging his tail. Eventually, Moony scented the marauder and the tension in his posture bled away. Padfoot licked over Remus muzzle. Harry could barely hold back his laughter when both started to yip excitedly.

A movement behind the trees reminded Harry that there was still something to be dealt with. He looked at Death.
No words needed to be spoked. Harry sighed when he felt Death’s presence wash over him. Sweet and sharp it permeated the air, like the scent of a rotting carcass upon the snow.

Harry thrived by it, yet he was by far not the only one who sensed the danger of this other predator. There was a growling coming from the woods. The wolves were afraid.

The shadows around them seemed to waver and grow, the further Death’s influence went. It was nowhere near the feeling which Harry had experienced as he’d witnessed Death in his true form, yet he shivered at the pure presence. Their bond sang with their shared magic and Harry revelled in the sensation of its darkness that was spreading with every second.

The werewolves didn’t feel that way. What had been growls and snarls became whimpers. Their souls flickered and the burning hunger reflected in them made place for something else. Something that wasn’t less carnal, but almost unknown to these creatures.

Fear.

It made them dangerous.

Harry could see it in their glinting eyes, in their nervous shifting and postures. But in the end, they didn’t lash out.

Their silhouettes blurred into the shadows as they retreated. Slowly one after the other turned around. The light of their souls grew smaller with every step that brought them further away. To places where they would once more be the beasts to silence the creatures of the woods. They would hunt in other corners of the forest, for their hunger was not yet stilled and their thirst for blood followed them like a shadow.

Harry’s eyes wandered till they rested on Sirius and Remus once more. Moony seemed tense and even Sirius’ posture was stiff, although Harry was sure that Death had spared them from his powerful aura.

Then the darkness surrounding them snapped back like a rubber band and the night was once again calm and light. The moonlight - Harry hadn’t even realized that it had been gone - returned with the retreating of the shadows.

Harry’s attention was caught by Death. The being watched Sirius and Remus and then he turned his head. He motioned Harry to follow him.

Not one sound was made as the being started to walk towards the shadows. He stopped and leaned against a tree, waiting. Harry looked at Moony and Padfoot and with a whistle he caught the
attention of his godfather. Sirius’ ears perked up and he raised his head. Harry nodded towards Death, who disappeared between the trees. Without checking what Sirius would do, Harry followed the being.

It didn’t take long for him to catch up and soon he was walking next to him.

"Where are we going?" Harry asked, while he stepped over a rotting tree trunk.

"I figured you might want to talk to the werewolves, when they have returned to a somewhat more lucid mindset. What better spot to wait for them, than the place where they will have to return to collect their belongings?" Death said with a smirk.

Harry didn’t object. As they continued onwards, a werewolf and a black dog didn’t stay too far behind.

Leaves rustled beneath their feet as they walked through the forest. More and more light fell through the branches overhead and eventually the trees gave way to an open space. Harry realized that this had to be the place where the werewolves had waited for their transformation.

Death stayed at the edge of the moonlit clearing, while Harry started to examine the improvised camp.

Piles of clothes were laying on the ground, some folded in careful consideration of the state they were in, others bunched together next to ratty blankets and worn bags. Empty bottles littered the ground surrounding the cold firepits. A broken log had been pulled towards one of the fires, probably to be used as a bench. Fresh carvings stood bright against the rotting wood. A hint of amusement caused Harry’s mouth to twitch when he noticed a tic-tac-toe game etched into the wood right next to initial "G". But his eyes didn’t linger much longer, instead he proceeded to look at the firepit. A few coals were still giving off heat and the barest hint of smoke invaded the air. Small bones protruded from the ashes, most likely leftovers of a sparse meal.

With a flick of his wrist, branches and twigs rose from the ground and floated towards Harry. They stacked themselves till they somewhat resembled a shape he was satisfied with. Another movement of his hands, and a fire was burning.

Death appeared next to Harry when he kicked a few stones and pine needles out of the way to be able to sit down more or less comfortably, next to the crackling flames. The creature followed suit ever so gracefully and dropped to the ground in a fluid motion.

They both looked at the edge of the clearing, when a noise told about their followers. Soon enough, Padfoot and Moony appeared between the trees.
When the werewolf spotted them, he seemed reluctant to go any further. Even Padfoot’s playful nipping couldn’t stop Moony from growling. But eventually Sirius’ efforts paid off and the werewolf turned away. Apparently, Harry and Death had proved that they were no immediate threat.

After a while Moony and Padfoot started to play. They chased each other into the forest, only their silhouettes visible as they darted past the trees.

Harry felt the heat of the fire on his face, when suddenly gentle hands found their way onto his scalp. He leaned into Death’s touch; his fingers started to comb through his hair.

The time passed slowly. Moony and Padfoot had disappeared into the woods an hour ago, their shapes no longer visible behind the treeline. The fire next to Harry was still burning, although the flames were getting smaller.

An owl was hooting in the distance. Harry stared at the sky. Stars vanished and reappeared behind the moving clouds and he watched them shift in their positions with every passing minute.

A noise caused Harry to turn his head. Halfway between the trees and the fire, he spotted Moony and Sirius, who had apparently returned. They laid down next to each other, the werewolf’s snout firmly resting upon Padfoot’s neck.

Eventually Harry’s head also found its way onto Death’s lap whose hands were still carding through his hair.

They stayed that way for a long time.

The flames next to them slowly burned down, until the night was almost over. Only a few stars were still visible when the first colours bled into the darkness above the horizon. The moon had vanished behind the top of the trees and birds were singing in the distance.

A whimper coming from Moony caused Harry to sit up. Sirius had also raised his head and he jumped up. Restlessly he moved in front of the werewolf who was still whimpering.

There was a crack, followed by another one, and Harry saw how the bones beneath Remus skin shifted. It was alien to watch the beast become human. Fur retreated, bones cracked and shifted, while Moony was squirming and whimpering. His magic was swirling wildly, warping and changing, the wilderness retreating till a familiar aura had replaced it. The whimpers finally stopped, and on the ground was a person, naked, curled in on himself and breathing heavily. Remus was back.
Sirius quickly changed into his human form; his transition much smoother than Lupins. He crouched down in front of Remus, who pushed himself from the ground and sat up. Harry could see how his arms trembled. Remus blinked, disorientated. He flinched when Sirius reached out to cup his face with his hands, but then the touch pulled him back into reality.

"What-" Remus asked, his voice hoarse.

"Moony, it’s me," Sirius said with a gentle voice.

"Sirius?" Remus blinked again and then realization hit him. "Sirius, what the Hell are you doing here?!" He stared at him with unbelieving eyes. "What were you thinking- coming here?! Out of all places you came here?!” Remus hissed; his voice hoarse from the strain. He pulled out of Sirius’ grasp and turned his head, scanning his surroundings for threats, when his eyes reached Harry and Death.

Harry grinned at him. Remus’ eyes flicked from Harry to Death and back again.

"What the-" Remus started, confusion visible on his face.

"I think I might owe you an explanation," Harry said. Remus just stared at them, while Sirius picked up a blanket from one of the piles on the ground. He walked back to Remus and let it slide over his shoulders. The motion seemed to ground Lupin somewhat and a determined look found its way onto his face.

"Yes. Yes, I think you do," Remus said and with these words he stood up and quickly examined the clearing. "But not here," he added as he walked over to a pile of clothes laying on the ground. He dressed himself quickly, not caring about his nudity. It was a too familiar motion for him to worry much about it.

When neither Harry nor Sirius made a move to stand up Remus stared at them. "I am not the only reason that you are here, am I right?” he asked grimly, "You want to talk to the werewolves,”

Harry nodded. The lines in Remus' face hardened. He walked over to the scarcely burning fire without addressing them. Sirius frowned as he watched Remus crouch down next to the pit while he patted down the inside of his coat. Moony’s hand pulled back to reveal his wand. He summoned more wood, not unlike Harry had done earlier and stacked it over the burning coals. A little bit of
magic to help the heat to spread, then his wand disappeared once more in the pocket of his coat. With a sigh Lupin sat down next to the fire.

Hesitantly Sirius dropped down next to Remus, probably afraid that he would get shouted at again. But Harry saw Lupin leaning against Sirius shoulder - for comfort or support - he didn’t know. They stayed silent for a second and Harry used the opportunity to look at Remus.

The werewolf shivered in the cold air, despite being so close to the dancing flames. Remus was thinner than the last time Harry had seen him. His eyes were underlined by dark circles and a layer of dirt seemed to coat him everywhere. Not to mention the remnants of a fight, that were clearly visible in his face. Lupin’s lip was split, and a colourful bruise painted his cheek all the way down to his jaw beneath the scruff that had grown there over the last weeks. Overall, he seemed exhausted, but his gaze was sharp and focused. The scars in his face were more prominent than ever.

Harry’s eyes wandered towards Death, when he felt a hand sliding over his lower back. Then Remus’ voice breached the silence.

"What happened? Why are you here?" the werewolf asked silently, but his words carried a weight and an urgency with them that had even Sirius sitting up straight. "And who is that?" Remus added after a moment.

"You don't have to worry. Nothing happened to the Order, if that is what you are thinking. No one even knows we are here," Sirius said, but apparently it was the wrong thing to say because Lupin stared at him.

"No one knows you are here, and you tell me I don't have to worry?!" Remus hissed. "A pack of werewolves is about to show up here every moment. I don't know if you got the memo, but not even a week ago they killed someone for bragging too much about his wand. You better give me a good reason for being here or you go home on an instant!"

Harry watched the exchange calmly. "I’m guessing Sirius already told you that I am in possession of the three deadly Hallows," he invoked, and Lupin turned his head. The werewolf nodded.

"He told me, though I still find it a quite unbelievable," the former professor replied and licked over his chapped lips. His eyes snapped to a place over his shoulder and he scanned the treeline, before they focused back on Harry.
"Well, what he said is true," Harry added and then looked at Death. "This is Death." The creature grinned and stared at Remus while Harry turned back to face the werewolf. "He might look human right now, but I wouldn’t ask about his true form. Sirius only got a tiny glimpse of it once and I doubt he would recommend it to anyone."

His godfather paled at the words. Remus took it all in with a stoic expression. He stared at Death, but his face revealed nothing. Harry couldn’t tell what was going through his mind, but Death leaned forward.

"He doesn’t believe you, Master…” the creature said in his inhuman voice, and a sharp smile revealed his teeth. Remus stayed silent. His eyes were fixated on Death. Sirius watched the situation with a concerned look on his face. Even though Death’s look had already rested on Remus, now all his attention was equally focused on him. The impression of countless eyes staring at the werewolf flared up in Harry’s mind. It was gone as soon it had come.

"But we already met," Death’s grin grew. Harry followed the exchange curiously. "Don’t you remember?" Death asked and tilted his head. The werewolf paled. Sirius seemed confused, but Harry had a hunch of what Death was driving at. The sinister meaning of Death’s words tore through assumptions that had been formed way back in Harry’s past and which had never been questioned before. Not until now.

"You welcomed me with open arms, but the beast in you didn’t want to let go. It fought for the things it had to live for."

Panic was visible in Remus eyes now. A frown had appeared on Sirius face and he looked at his lover, fear slowly replacing the confusion resting there. But Death hadn’t finished yet.

"I didn’t take you, for your time hadn’t yet come. Your soul wasn’t ready to go on." Death’s stare was unwavering. The being straightened his posture and the grin had vanished. He just watched, and Harry could sense his curiosity in the bond.

Realization had now fully dawned on Sirius and like a storm it wiped away the confusion clouding his mind. He looked at Remus with shock in his eyes.

"Moony…” he whispered, his magic pulsing in distress at the revelation.

The scars in Lupin’s face stood prominently against the whiteness of his face. "I…” he swallowed hard. "I just couldn’t… I just- " A shaky breath made its way into Remus lungs. "They were dead. They were dead and you were in Azkaban. What was I supposed to do?”
Everything was quiet.

Remus stared into nothingness. He seemed so lost in this moment. His mind was elsewhere, wandering through a maze of shadows and repressed memories. While Sirius had endured the Dementors, Remus had had other Demons creeping through his mind. Ironically the beast he’d resented for years had been the one to keep him from dying.

"Oh Moony…" Sirius’ voice sounded broken. With gentle hands he motioned Remus to look at him.

The werewolf rested his forehead against Sirius’ and his hand gripped the Animagus’ shirt tightly. If Harry would’ve still been in possession of all his morals, he would’ve probably looked away at the intimacy this moment brought.

Remus breathed in deeply and then pulled back.

"This is in the past." Moony’s eyes were still locked with Sirius’. A silent exchange seemed to be happening because the werewolf spoke once more. "It hasn’t happened since then and it won’t... I promise."

Sirius’ magic settled a little at the statement, but his anxiety was still very visible to Harry.

"As to why we are here…" Harry eventually continued to break the heavy silence, "I want to have this pack on my side. Or to clarify, I want to keep them from joining Voldemort as well as Dumbledore." Harry said.

"You want a pack of werewolves as allies? This pack nonetheless?" Remus said, and he shook his head. "They will rip you into pieces. You have nothing you can offer them."

"I’m more worried if they are willing to listen. During the night we killed one of theirs."

"You were here during the whole night?" Remus asked, concern once more taking over his face.

"Nothing happened," Sirius’ quickly interfered. At Remus look he quickly continued. "Okay nothing too severe happened. We are all still alive."
"You brought Harry with you-" Remus started but Harry interrupted him.

"It was actually me who took Sirius’ along," he replied, and Remus turned to face him. He looked like he was about to say something but then his eyes rested upon Death and he stayed silent.

"Why are you here? What do you want to achieve by gaining this pack as allies?" Remus eventually asked. "Where are you going with this?"

The question was expected, and yet Harry found himself unprepared. He hesitated. Harry doubted that Remus would accept, 'to spite Dumbledore' as an answer, thus he went with a statement that wasn't an outright lie. "I think the Wizarding world needs a change. There are too many things going wrong. Look at the ministry! It's a pile of incompetent biased Wizards, who don’t give a fuck about what is going on!" Harry said and he didn't even have to fake the bitterness in his voice. At Remus shocked look he laughed a joyless laugh. Sirius stayed silent.

"Look at how they treat you. Look around!" Harry pointed at the piles of clothes scattered all over the clearing. "This is how they treat werewolves. This is how they chose to live because of all the hate going on. The ministry rather swipes their problems under the carpet than dealing with them! You can’t deny that."

Remus face was set in stone, yet Harry could see the bitterness in his eyes. Harry knew that he needed to choose his words carefully. Unlike Sirius, Remus still trusted Dumbledore. Despite all the wrongdoings from Dumbledore’s side, there was still a deep-set gratitude residing within Remus and an obligation to stay with the headmaster.

Harry licked over his lips before he continued. "I don’t want to lie to you. And I won't. But let me say this; I won’t let myself being used. Neither by Voldemort, nor Dumbledore. I’m making my own decisions, and in this case, that involves talking to this pack," Harry said.

"Harry…," Lupin started, "It's okay to feel that way. But this? Talking to this pack? This is a bad idea. There has to be another solution. We should go. I'd rather inform Dumbledore that my mission has failed than knowing you will stay here."

"No," Harry said calmly. "My decision stands. You can stay here, or you can go."

Nothing could be heard but their breathing and the sound of birds. The sky was slowly turning pink and the remaining stars got paler in the light of the morning.
"Sirius, you can't agree with that," Remus said when the shock had worn off. "He is fifteen!"

The snapping of a twig caused everyone to turn their heads. A woman had appeared on the edge of the treeline. Her hair was long and matted. Scars littered her wiry body. She stood like a deer caught in headlights when she spotted them. Her eyes widened, and a feral aura surrounded her. After a second, she snatched a bag from the ground and disappeared into the forest.

Lupin breached the silence, with an urgent look on his face. "You said you killed a werewolf tonight. If they return, there is no guarantee on what they will do."

A movement next to him caused Harry to look up. Like so often Death had directed Harry’s attention without speaking a word.

A flock of crows fluttered up, startled by something moving in the woods beneath them.

"I don’t think it is going to take long for others to show up," Harry said, ignoring Remus' attempts to change his mind and he pointed at the birds rising from the treetops. Lupin seemed defeated. Harry shared a look with Death and obliging to his unspoken suggestion, the being bled from human sight and switched to the strange state of being there and yet not, like a shadow moving in the corner of your eye.

Once more only visible to Harry, Death’s presence stretched and expanded, turning into a more familiar form even though to Harry his appearance hadn’t really changed. Nonetheless he could feel the unseen restraints Death had put upon himself in his corporal form fall off. A deep rumble rose from the being’s throat. Harry smiled. The sound only intensified when he reached out and put his hand on Death’s chest where he could feel the vibrations. Their eyes locked and Harry found himself captured by the intense gaze. Death raised a hand and pushed his fingers through Harry’s unruly hair. Harry’s chest lit up with fondness.

When he turned back to the others, he was met with strange looks from both Sirius and Remus. Lupin was scanning the area with a frown, whereas Sirius wasn’t fazed by Death’s sudden "disappearance". He was more likely wondering about Harry’s interaction with the - to him - invisible being.

Harry just returned his stare with a raised eyebrow.

It didn’t take long, before dark silhouettes had separated themselves from shadows till, they resembled the shapes of people walking towards them.

There was cursing and gruff laughter, but it all stopped abruptly when the werewolves noticed Harry and Sirius next to Remus. The silence weighed like a heavy blanket, until a tall man with
filthy brown hair falling down to his shoulders started to cross the distance between them with
determined steps. The others followed him shortly after and as they came closer Harry noticed that
they were covered in bruises and scratches. One of them was limping and clutched an injured
shoulder with shivering hands. Two others had dried blood smeared all over their faces and chest.
And while the guy with the filthy hair was still walking towards them, others appeared between
the trees and entered the clearing. Remus stood up, a grim look on his face. Sirius and Harry
followed suit.

Most of the people went to various piles of clothing on the ground and started to dress themselves,
but the guy approaching them didn’t seem to care.

"What the hell, Fletcher?! Who the fuck are these guys?" It dawned on Harry that Fletcher was
probably the name, Remus had used to introduce himself to the pack. The werewolf was now
standing right in front of Lupin and he seemed furious. "Either you talk now, or we’ve got a
problem."
His teeth were bared. Harry noticed that his upper left front tooth was chipped. Death just grinned.

"Calm down, Hastings," Remus said, subtly shielding Sirius and Harry by shifting his weight and
taking a small step to his left.

"Calm down?!
"The guy took a step towards Remus and stared over his shoulder. He was so close, that Lupin could
probably feel his breath on his skin. Sirius’ hand twitched next to the wand in his pocket. Hastings’
nostrils flared. He breathed in deeply then his eyes locked onto Sirius and Harry. "What are they?
People from the Ministry, Death Eaters?" he hissed between clenched teeth. The werewolves, who
had just finished putting on their clothes came closer.

Meanwhile a threatening grin appeared on Hastings face. "Know what? It doesn’t matter. I’m
gonna carve into their faces either way."

A low growl erupted from Remus’ throat.

Suddenly another man appeared next to Hastings. His expression was grave, and he looked Sirius
and Harry up and down before he addressed the man in front of Remus. "Lincoln, get dressed," he
said quietly.

Hastings retreated, but not before he glared at Lupin for a last time. The man who was now
standing in front of them seemed to be in his thirties. The hair on both sides of his head as well as
all the back of his skull was cut short, while the rest of it was worn as Dreadlocks, kept together by
a single strand around them.
"Do you know these people?" the guy asked Remus and nodded towards Harry and his godfather.

"Yes," Lupin replied. The other man stared at Sirius for a moment. He seemed deep in thought. Then he looked at Remus once more. "Five minutes. Then we are going to talk," he said and stomped away.

Lupin let out and audible exhale. A few people around them began to whisper. Most of them had put on the last items of clothes by now and a circle was slowly forming around them.

"That was Conall," Remus said quietly and he looked after the Werewolf with the Dreadlocks, who grabbed his clothes and a bottle, which had still some kind of clear liquor in it. "He is the one you want to talk to. He is the closest thing to a leader they have. Try not to piss him off. If he wants us dead, there is nothing holding them back."

And while this werewolf was putting on his clothes, Harry looked around.

A guy with a mohawk caught his eye, but soon he noticed an older werewolf lingering in the distance. The man was glaring at Remus but was soon distracted by a frantic looking man with a big scar on the place where his neck and shoulder met.

Hastings hadn’t gone too far away. He was rummaging through a bag on the ground, till he found out a lighter and gave it to a man next to him. The other werewolf lit a cigarette with it, the small flame illuminating his dark skin. He gave the lighter back and while doing so he noticed a scared looking guy staring at him. "Watcha looking at, pretty boy?" he snapped. The other werewolf flinched and quickly averted his gaze. "Yeah, that’s what I thought...," the man muttered and took a drag of his smoke.

Just on the other side of the fire, a lanky looking guy was trying to wipe dried blood from his face.

"Hey Nash, what did you get between your teeth last night?" a guy asked with a crooked grin.
"Fuck off, Phineas!"

"Spencer, what do you think?"

"Probably a deer," a werewolf who was tying up his shoes said dismissively. When he looked up, Harry saw the scars running through his face.

"Doesn’t tastes like human, that’s for sure," interfered another man standing further away. He was cleaning the space between his teeth with a sharp knife.

"Nobody asked you for your opinion, Gunner," the werewolf named Nash snapped. He was now frantically trying to clean off the blood. The man with the knife giggled.

A whistle caught Harry’s attention. Conall - now fully dressed - was sitting on the log next to the fire, the bottle of liquor still in his head. The first real sunbeams reached over the trees and they painted the clearing in golden light.

Remus motioned Harry and Sirius to follow him. They took a few steps till they stood in front of the werewolf.

Conall looked at them for a moment, then he gestured at Sirius with his bottle. "You are Black, aren’t you?" It wasn’t really a question. The people around them started to whisper. Harry caught snippets of a heated discussion on his left. Sirius opened his mouth, but Conall had already turned to face Remus. "And your name isn’t Fletcher either, is it?" he asked. Lupin said nothing. Conall took a swig of the bottle and wiped his mouth. "We all know where this is going," he said, "so let’s be honest-"

A growl to caused everyone's head to snap around. The man with the scar on his neck broke through the crowd and stormed forward. Conall jumped up. Sirius moved so fast; it was almost a blur. A slash of his wand, the werewolf stumbled. Blood stained his chest. Sirius stood with iron gaze; his wand pointed at the attacker.

The crowd roared. Their eyes flashed with anger. The werewolf - despite his injuries - tried to charge once more. "You KILLED him!" he growled as he lunged forward.

The blond werewolf, who had been talking to him earlier had made his way to the front.
"Stop it!" Conall's angry voice cut through the noise, just as the man gripped the other werewolf by his shoulder, to hold him back.

The man with the scar trembled with fury, but the rest of the pack was stunned to silence. "Do you have any - ANY idea what you have just DONE?!" Conall yelled.

"I don't care-"

"SHUT UP!"

Connell was furious. "Let me rephrase it for you," the Alpha said and pointed at Sirius. The liquor in his bottle sloshed dangerously close to the edge.

"Black is a known follower of you-know-who. And he-," another violent gesture towards Remus, "openly admitted to being bitten by Greyback. And you have nothing BETTER IN MIND AS TO ATTACK THEM?!" Conall shouted.

Fear flashed in the werewolf’s eyes. He was trembling from the adrenaline. But the fear was soon replaced by anger. "THEY KILLED MY BROTHER-"

"I DON’T CARE IF HE IS DEAD OR NOT!" Conall’s eyes burned with anger. "You," he gestured at the guy holding him back, "Get him out of here!"

The werewolf with the scar on his neck meanwhile snarled. "Pull your shit together," the blond werewolf hissed at him.

"Wilson is dead. I’m gonna kill them!" the other guy shouted, and he tried to break free.

"NOW!" Conall demanded.

The danger in his voice hit everyone like a whiplash. The blond werewolf seemed to notice it too and he pulled the other man away. The crowd parted silently to let them through. Dragged along by his companion, the man with the scar left, but eyes burned with hate.
Nobody said a word till the two had disappeared between the trees. Conall was pacing in front of the fire.

"Conall-" someone started from the side-lines.

"Shut up!" He threw his bottle to the ground. It exploded next to the fire, droplets of liquor vaporizing in the heat of the flames. Shards of glass were everywhere. Conall stood like a statue, before he sat down on the log. He stared at the shattered bottle for a moment.

"Let’s cut the bullshit," he said quietly. When he looked up, he seemed like a man who had accepted a doomed fate that couldn’t be avoided. "Are you here to recruit us, or not?" he asked.

Harry had been watching the whole thing play out from the side-lines, but now he took a step forward. He pushed past Remus who made no move to hold him back but was clenching his teeth so hard it almost looked like it had to hurt. "They aren’t," Harry said.

Surprise was etched into the Alpha's features. "I on the other hand-"

"And who are you, if I may ask?" Conall interrupted him.

"My name is Harry Potter."

The mood changed instantly.

"Harry Potter...," Conall repeated. He raised his eyebrow A few whispers could be heard. "Well if that isn’t curious..."

The werewolf looked at Remus and Sirius intently. "I take it, you are not sent here by you-know-who then, huh?"

There was a new edge to his voice and the danger was audible, but there was also curiosity.

"Let’s get to the point," Harry said and Conall's attention snapped back to him. "I want you as my allies," Harry stated.

Conall snorted. A mocking smile appeared on his face. "Just to be clear...," Conall said with a sneer. "You want to recruit us?" Gruff laughter echoed through the clearing. "To do what. Tie your
“Shoes?” the werewolf continued. The laugh increased. Conall smirked till the crowd had quieted down. “No, but seriously. Why in Merlin’s name should we follow a kid?”

Harry flashed a grin. “I think I can give you a few reasons.”

Behind him, Death stretched his wings.

Chapter End Notes

So what do you think about the werewolves? I’m quite fond of Conall to be honest and I was listening to a lot of Viking music while I wrote them. I even have a list with all of their names, even though they won’t really show up again. (Apart from the next chapter obviously)

I wanted to keep this fic close to canon - as much as it is possible with a MoD Harry - and I’m going back to the main characters soon.

A little more infos on there werewolves for the interested people. (Kudos to you if you still read that part) I included just one woman and she was only staying for the full moon, because I thought that this pack has a few members, who are probably not very hostile towards females. I don’t think any woman would want to stay there longer than a few days. I implied more things that I really wrote, but the newly bitten guy will probably have a very hard time for the next few months. About their dynamics, I introduced Conall as their leader/Alpha since it is easier to have Harry talk to one guy and I thought it made sense that a bunch of werewolves listened to a person they respected. I also read a lot of wolf-behaviour stuff even though most of it didn’t even make it in there. Apart from Remus/Sirius interaction.

Leave me a comment and tell me what you think!
A Deal struck

Chapter Summary

Harry makes a deal with the werewolves.

Chapter Notes

Hello guys, the new chapter is here. Btw short info,

I EDITED THE CHAPTER PREVIOUS TO THIS. (Only relevant if you read the 27 chapter previous to 15.08.2019)

I thought that it didn't really fit Remus character to agree to Harry's shenanigans so easily. Nothing has really changed in the other chapter apart from the fact that Remus is a little more reluctant to let the others talk to the werewolves, so don't be confused if he is a little bit angry in this chapter.
Also I started to rewrite some of the earlier chapters but nothing to severe. Only added/rewrote some sentences and edited some stuff.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harry's words echoed through the air. The werewolves were still grinning, and the occasional chuckle could be heard. Nobody was taking him seriously. "Well-," Conall gestured widely with his hand, "Enlighten us then," he demanded and leaned forward with a smirk.

"My name carries weight. Both sides want me, in one way or another," Harry said. Sirius shifted nervously.

"And in what way would this be a reason for us to follow you?"

"The side that gets me is going to be the side that wins."

Some people laughed, but others had stopped grinning altogether.

"That is an awful lot of confidence that you have there, kid," Conall said. A werewolf next to him spat onto the ground.

"You can't deny it though, can you?" Harry said with a smirk.

"Well, in that case I figure that by giving your corpse to the dark Lord, one side would certainly win much faster. I guess that this should also give us some kind of advantage, don't you think? And in addition, we wouldn't have to deal with a fourteen-year-old wannabe leader," Conall drawled. A small scar running through the scruff on his face wrinkled when he licked over his canines. The crowd shifted.

Sirius gripped his wand tightly and the other Marauder bared his teeth.
"We should go. Immediately," Lupin hissed quietly. "That was a bad idea...," he mumbled, more to
himself than anyone else, "This was a bad idea from the beginning…"

Harry ignored Remus’ muttering and stared at Conall. Death leaned forward predatorily. "Touch me and you are dead," Harry said in a calm voice, but his grin was icy.

"Oh, come on Conall," someone said not far from the Alpha, "You still want to listen to this kid?" It was the werewolf who had cleaned his teeth with a knife not long ago.

Conall said nothing. The only thing one could hear was a quiet scratching sound, as his hand was stroking over his beard. Something in the way Harry had spoken, seemed to have made an impact.

"Raoul?" Conall lifted his head as the words left his mouth. His eyes were locked onto a tall man with dark skin. He had been silent the whole time. Grey streaked his hair and Harry noticed that a chunk of his ear was missing as he turned his head. "What do you think?" Conall asked the other werewolf.

The man was silent for a moment. Everyone was listening. His voice was hoarse when he started to speak. "We should consider what he has to say… before we act."

The reactions to his statement varied. Some of the werewolves groaned in disagreement, a few people nodded solemnly, but there was also growling and even someone shouting in the back. Conall silenced them all with well-placed stares. When it was once more quiet - besides the occasional grumble and the birds in the trees - Conall looked at Harry.

"So, what is it that your offer then?" he asked, "What can you give to us, besides a good position in the war and the chance to be on the winning side," he almost spat in a demeaning manner, "Because how things are right now, we have a good chance to achieve that without listening to you."

"Protection," Harry simply said.

"What makes you think we need protection?" Conall asked him.

"Even a pack like yours can’t stay neutral forever."

"Why not? It has worked until now," Conall said and he looked at Harry expectantly. Harry was sure that Conall knew exactly what was going on, but the werewolf wouldn’t waste time by talking to some ‘kid’ as he had put it, that didn’t even know what it was talking about.

"Oh, come on. Greyback’s pack is roaming the land like it hasn’t in years. You know as well as me what that means. Voldemort is recruiting. It is only a matter of time till his people are going to find you. And then you will have to choose a side," Harry said.

Conall grinded his teeth. A serious expression had replaced the sneer on his face. Harry continued.

"But that’s not all, is it? The ministry doesn’t believe that he is back. But there are a few people who know, and they will not hesitate to fight. They will attempt anything they can, to keep you from joining the dark side."

"Well, neither of them have been here yet," Conall said.

"I wouldn’t be too sure of that," Death commented dryly, with a look at Remus. An amused smile tugged on Harry’s lips.

"Besides, all these empty promises won’t change which side we are going to pick in the end,"
Conall continued. Harry snorted.

"Because some of you like to choose where and who they hunt on a full moon, am I right?" he said sarcastically.

Conall snarled. Others took a step forward.

"Harry-," Lupin hissed, but he grew pale when Harry grinned sharply, causing his presence to resemble Death in a way it hadn’t before. The creature purred.

"How I see it, you only have two options in the end," Harry said and lowered his voice, "And we all know; what Voldemort is offering, is more than the light side will ever be willing to give you. And even if his promises are empty, a chance is a chance, no matter how slim"

A grim silence had settled over the clearing. The truth had cut through the tension like it was nothing. For a moment they only listened to the birds twittering in the trees, while the golden spots of sunlight slowly won in size with the ever-rising sun.

Conall was once more stroking his jaw with his dirt-stained fingers.

"Your speech was really nice and all that-," he started eventually, "-but you still didn’t tell us what your offer really entails." Approving murmurs went through the crowd. Conall’s mouth curled around the next word as if it had a bad taste to it. "Protection," he drawled and licked over his lips, "Who are you going to protect us from? Who can you protect us from?"

"Death Eaters… the light side. Maybe even the Ministry," Harry said. "Sooner or later you will have to pick a side. That much is clear. But what I am offering you is a third option. You like your freedom. The idea of Greyback showing up and demanding that you follow his command appeals to you just as much as locking yourself up on a full moon – which is probably what Dumbledore will request if you choose the light side." How things were right now, Dumbledore most likely couldn’t care less about this part if it only meant the werewolves wouldn’t join Voldemort, but Harry wouldn’t dwell on the details too much. Instead he continued. "I offer you a solution to this. The option to stay neutral. If someone forces you to choose, I will help you stand your ground. I won’t keep you from fighting or joining either side. But if you do, you are no longer my responsibility. In the end I will be part of this war too, therefore there are no guarantees. But I can help you to remain neutral for probably longer than you can without me."

"You are a kid."

"Well what do you lose by trying?" Harry said.

"And what would you gain from this? There is always a reason, so what is yours?" Conall retorted.

"Mostly I do it out of spite," Harry stated, "Your pack is big; a valuable asset in this war. If neither Dumbledore nor Voldemort get you, well…," Harry smirked, "Let's just say it would please me greatly. The only condition I have, is that – should you accept my offer – you don’t tell either side about me. I don’t care if you mention our deal, but I don’t want my name flying around."

Conall looked at the ground. He seemed to consider it. The pack around him talked in hushed voices. It was clear that they would support whatever decision Conall would make.

It wasn’t like the outcome would change much, but Harry couldn’t help but feel a little bit nervous. He had no idea how the werewolf would decide.

Eventually Conall raised his head, "Let’s ignore for a moment that you came here with a convicted mass-murderer-," Sirius flinched, "-on your side. Merlin knows where you got to know him," Conall nodded towards Remus, "But you are telling me, that you came here on a full moon -
knowing that there was a big chance you would end up dead - only to keep us from joining either side… out of spite!?” The werewolf snorted and a crooked grin split his face. "You are insane you know that?” Conall said but he smirked at Harry.

Harry shrugged "Well, I can’t deny a fact…,” he said and grinned back. Most of the werewolves also wore amused expressions.

"Fine," Conall said after a moment of silence, "You got yourself a deal."

Harry could almost feel Remus’ surprise. Conall stood up and took a few steps towards Harry. He extended his hand and Harry shook it. Harry was about to pull away when the werewolf held on. He stared intently; his eyes glowing in the light of the morning. "To be clear, I don’t think you can keep your promise. You are a kid. But as you said, we’ve got nothing to lose. A deal is a deal. We won’t mention your name and will even keep the identity of your company a secret – as long as you don’t disappoint us,” Conall said, a wolfish grin on his face.

Harry smirked back. The hidden message was perfectly clear. Should be not be able to keep what he promised – which Conall had stated perfectly well - he didn’t believe anyway – they would not hesitate to use the information they had gained, against him. "That’s all I wanted to know," Harry said, "But should I hear something about me or my …company outside of this pack, you will regret it."

"Alright," Conall said and let finally go of Harry’s hand.

"You still need a way to contact me," Harry suddenly remembered. Conall stared at him with a raised eyebrow. Harry thought for a moment then he looked at his godfather. "You don’t mind if I ask Kreacher to help me with this, do you?"

Sirius seemed surprised but then he shook his head. "Nah, you can ask him if you want "

"Kreacher," Harry called out and with a sudden pop, the House-elf appeared. The noise caused many members of the pack to jump and even Conall flinched back when the small creature appeared in front of Harry. Bowing deeply, Kreacher started to speak.

"What can Kreacher do for you Master Harry?" When he looked up his expression changed, and the elf sneered at the werewolves. "Filthy half-breeds," he muttered under his breath, but Harry cut him off with an urgent look.

"Kreacher, if one of the werewolves here asks for you, to deliver a message to me, would you do it?" Harry asked him.

"Kreacher would if Master Harry asked him to," the House-elf said and bowed once more, with a pained expression on his face.

"Then I ask you to," Harry stated.

"Very well young Master," Kreacher replied.

"You can go now "

Kreacher disapparated immediately. Apparently, he didn’t want to stay in the company of "filthy half-breeds" any longer than he had to. He may obey Harry now without complaints, but other than that his character hadn’t really changed.

"So, you heard it. If you call for Kreacher he will appear, and I will see how I can help you," Harry
said. Conall nodded. "Then I guess, I’ll see you around… if the circumstances call for it," the werewolf replied with a wild smirk.

"We’ll see…," Harry said. Then he looked at the pack. "It was my pleasure," he added and grinned. As soon as the words had left his mouth, Remus grabbed both Harry’s and Sirius arm and whisked them away in an apparition. Harry barely had the time to get used to the feeling of being pulled along and squeezed through a straw before they were already standing on the doorstep of Grimmauld Place number twelve.

Harry sucked in a deep breath and he exchanged a look with an equally stunned Sirius, while Remus tapped his wand onto the door with a grim look on his face. Death materialized next to Harry, seemingly unfazed but Harry knew that the being wasn’t too thrilled by Remus action. A rattling of chains and the door swung open. The werewolf entered without looking at them and as soon as Harry and his godfather had also stepped into the entrance hall, Sirius opened his mouth. "Moony-," he started.

"Shut up Sirius!" Remus turned around. He still appeared to be tired and he was deathly pale, yet his eyes flashed wildly. "What the hell were you thinking?!" he asked Sirius and Harry. "You are lucky, they didn’t rip you into pieces. Do you know what they can do with this kind of information? You gave them access to Kreacher for fucks sake. Have you any idea, of how easy it is for them to get in contact with Voldemort? They know where Sirius is currently hiding-"

"They don’t know that," Sirius interfered.

"-they know you are with Harry Potter, where the hell would you be other than England? It only confirmed the article in the Daily Prophet…," Remus whirled around. "Fucking Hell," he muttered.

Remus stomped towards the door that led to the kitchen. "What was I thinking? I must’ve been out of my mind to let you speak to them," he mumbled under his breath.

"Don’t you want to lay down, maybe sleep-" Sirius began, but Remus cut him off while he was still walking away from them.

"I need a drink first," he said, and he opened the door leading to the basement so violently that it slammed against the wall. It stood wide open when he disappeared on the stairway.

The paintings on the walls seemed shocked and they talked in hushed voices while they stared at the open door.

Harry patted Sirius’ shoulders. His godfather wore an expression that resembled a kicked puppy. "It’s gonna be fine," Harry said, "He is just tired and a little overwhelmed, probably."

"Well, I think it could’ve gone worse," Sirius stated and shook off his stupor. After a moment of hesitation, he walked towards the kitchen and Harry followed.

Downstairs they were greeted by the sight of a worn-down Remus who was sitting on the table and who had just finished pouring some whisky into a glass, the bottle still in hand. When he looked up, he sighed but the anger seemed to be replaced by simply weariness. Lupin pushed the bottle into their direction. Sirius reached for it while sitting down and Harry walked over to the opposite side of the table and pulled back a chair, Death right next to him.

They sat in silence while Sirius summoned two additional glasses and poured some of the liquor into them. Remus spared the second glass with a look of disapproval when Sirius pushed it over to
Harry, but in the end, he didn’t say anything. Quietly they sipped on their drinks. Harry went as far as to offer his to the invisible Death, but the being ignored it in favour of nuzzling Harry’s neck.

Eventually Remus shook his head and he snorted. "You were really lucky," he said. "Actually, I was surprised how well they handled it. I don’t think I or Dumbledore could’ve reached the same result."

Harry shrugged. "Well, they have nothing to lose by choosing to be my allies."

"Yeah, but they were willing to listen. I think your boldness impressed them. Don’t let Conall fool you though. They will talk about it now and probably discuss if they should really take on your offer. Many will want to hand you over to Voldemort. They think that it will be the best deal they can struck."

"Well they are not wrong," Harry said, "But they won’t succeed. Death would kill them all, if they did something that would seriously harm me. Apart from the fact that I would probably do the same if they ever pissed me off."

Remus rested his head onto his hand. His exhaustion was obvious. Sirius leaned over and put an arm around Remus’ shoulder.

"Come on," he said quietly. Harry watched them curiously. It was rare to see Sirius this gentle; his usual forwardness and loud personality were nowhere to be seen. "It’s what - six am? And we are drinking," Sirius said with a chuckle, "I never deemed you the type, Moony…"

A tired smile appeared on Lupin’s face.

"You need to sleep, and Harry needs to go back to school…," Sirius said. Remus nodded without raising his head. The Animagus looked at Harry, an unspoken question on his mind.

"Oh, I can handle myself. Go, get some sleep," Harry said and with an afterthought he added, "Both of you." Sirius’ exhaustion hadn’t really stood out to Harry, since in comparison to Remus he almost seemed well rested, but the dark circles under his godfathers’ eyes reminded Harry that his newfound freedom regarding sleep didn’t apply to everyone.

Sirius smiled. "All right Harry. Feel free to visit, okay?" With that, he hoisted up Remus, who already seemed half-asleep.

"I will," Harry replied. Lupin now stood up right next to Sirius and he looked at Harry for a moment.

"I won’t even ask…," Remus said, probably wondering how Harry managed to even come here in the first place. Then he looked at Sirius, "But we are going to have a talk." The werewolf wiped a hand over his face, not even flinching when his fingers met his split lip, "Not today though," he added. He looked at Harry once more. "Take care Harry, and stay out of trouble for a while alright?"

Harry smirked. "Of course," he replied, an obvious lie if one considered his plans.

Lupin shot him a knowing look – he was a Marauder after all – but he didn’t seem to find the energy in himself to care. He just sighed, while Sirius was smirking. With a last goodbye, they left the kitchen.
Meanwhile Harry leaned back in his chair. He looked at Death. "Sirius was right in what he said earlier. It could’ve gone worse."

Death smirked. "Indeed… but wouldn’t it have been more fun then, too?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Harry said, "I ask myself if the werewolves would still be alive, had they really tried to kill me…"

Death tilted his head, "A question, which we will never know the answer to…" the being replied. He raised a hand till it rested on Harry’s head. Sliding it through Harry’s hair, he leaned closer till his nose was almost brushing against Harry’s temple, "But If I was to choose… Had they succeeded, no breath would climb through their throats any longer, as they would be carcasses left for the crows."

Harry shivered. "Even though I would come back?"

"Even though you would come back," Death purred.

"And if I wanted you to spare them?" Harry asked with bated breath.

"Then they would live," Death said,"Though I would hope that, should the time ever come, you change your mind. I don’t interfere as long as you don’t ask me to, but this is a situation where I might feel my self-control would slip."

Harry snorted and he turned his head to look at Death. "It wouldn’t really slip though, would it? Since honestly, you would enjoy every second of killing them."

Death smirked. "I just might…"

Harry laughed. A deep rumble made his way from Death’s throat and Harry leaned forward to capture Death’s lips with his own.

"We should head back soon," he said as he pulled back. The being smirked.

"Soon… That implies that there is still some time left…," Death retorted. Harry raised an eyebrow and his eyes found the kitchen-table.

"Well, if you say it like this…"

Chapter End Notes

I didn't know if I should include the line with the table but I thought it was kinda funny so I left it in.

Let me know what you think.
Happenings

Chapter Summary

Harry is back in school, Umbridge gets promoted and Voldemort changes his priorities.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, I finished this chapter and I thought I'll just post it right after. I haven't really looked over it so I hope you like it. Don't know if I'll edit it but for now it's going to stay that way and I'll tell you if I am going to change something.

There is some fluff, some stuff you probably already know from the books, that I stole and we see a little bit of Voldemort.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

About half an hour later Harry found himself back in the dorm in the Gryffindor tower. He was walking down the stairs leading to the common room, hoping that no one would ask about the purplish bruise beneath his jaw. It wasn’t the only one, but the only bruise that was currently visible since it wasn’t covered by Death who was curled around Harry’s neck in his snake form. The being writhed slowly, smooth scales sliding against Harry’s skin and he flicked his tongue out then and now to scent the air.

"Harry!" As soon as he had entered the common room, Hermione already rushed towards him. "Where have you been all night? We looked all over for you," she said eagerly, but before Harry could reply she already waved him off. "It doesn't matter anyways-" she stopped midsentence; her attention seemingly caught by something behind Harry. "Ron! Look who finally showed up," she said over his shoulder.

When Harry turned his head, he was indeed faced with the sleep-deprived Gryffindor. Ron’s head resembled a red bird’s nest and he ruffled through it with a yawn. "Where’ve you been mate?" he asked just like Hermione had earlier. Then he blinked at Harry and his gaze fell onto the hickey on his neck. His eyes widened.

"It’s not important right now, Ron," Hermione said dismissively, seemingly not aware of Ron’s discovery. "Show him the letter!"

Ron’s eyes lingered on the bruise for a moment till he noticed that Harry was looking at him. "Yeah, the letter…," he said. "But I need some food first, besides, we can’t miss the article," he added with a meaningful look at Hermione.

"Right," Hermione said. "Let’s go. Ron can explain it to you on the way."

And indeed. While they went down to the great Hall to get to breakfast, Ron told Harry all about the letter he’d apparently received last night.
"...I can't believe that Percy sent me that letter," Ron ranted angrily. "Here-" he rummaged in his bag and pulled out a wrinkly piece of parchment- "I wanted to rip it into pieces, but Hermione told me to keep it, to show it to you first." He handed Harry the letter and continued with his rant. "Dolores Umbridge, a delightful woman...," Ron said as if to imitate Percy, while Harry smoothed out the wrinkles of the parchment. "Yeah Right. Just like Malfoy is a joy to be around. All-important he thinks he is since he is working for the ministry. That slimy..."

A faint memory surfaced in Harry’s mind. He recalled that Ron had once received a letter from Percy and as soon as he read the first lines, he remembered what it had been about.

Dear Ron,

I have only just heard (from no less a person than the Minister for Magic himself, who has it from your new teacher, Professor Umbridge) that you have become a Hogwarts prefect.

I was most pleasantly surprised when I heard this news and must firstly offer my congratulations. I must admit that I have always been afraid that you would take what we might call the "Fred and George" route, rather than following in my footsteps, so you can imagine my feelings on hearing you have stopped flouting authority and have decided to shoulder some real responsibility.

But I want to give you more than congratulations, Ron, I want to give you some advice, which is why I am sending this at night rather than by the usual morning post. Hopefully you will be able to read this away from prying eyes and avoid awkward questions.

From something the Minister let slip when telling me you are now a prefect, I gather that you are still seeing a lot of Harry Potter. I must tell you, Ron, that nothing could put you in danger of losing your badge more than continued fraternisation with that boy. Yes, I am sure you are surprised to hear this - no doubt you will say that Potter has always been Dumbledore's favourite - but I feel bound to tell you that Dumbledore may not be in charge at Hogwarts much longer and the people who count have a very different - and probably more accurate - view of Potter's behaviour. I shall say no more here, but if you look at the Daily Prophet tomorrow you will get a good idea of the way the wind is blowing - and see if you can spot yours truly!

Seriously, Ron, you do not want to be tarred with the same brush as Potter, it could be very damaging to your future prospects, and I am talking here about life after school too. As you must be aware, given that our father escorted him to court, Potter had a disciplinary hearing this summer in front of the whole Wizengamot and he did not come out of it looking too good. He got off on a mere technicality if you ask me and many of the people I've spoken to remain convinced of his guilt.

It may be that you are afraid to sever ties with Potter - I know that he can be unbalanced and, for all I know violent - but if you have any worries about this, or have spotted anything else in Potter's behaviour that is troubling you, I urge you to speak to Dolores Umbridge, a really delightful woman, who I know will be only too happy to advise you.

This leaves me to my other bit of advice. As I have hinted above, Dumbledore's regime at Hogwarts may soon be over. Your loyalty, Ron, should be not to him, but to the school and
the Ministry. I am very sorry to hear that so far Professor Umbridge is encountering very little cooperation from staff as she strives to make those necessary changes within Hogwarts that the Ministry so ardently desires (although she should find this easier from next week - again, see the Prophet tomorrow!). I shall say only this - a student who shows himself willing to help Professor Umbridge now may be very well placed for Head Boyship in a couple of years!

I am sorry that I was unable to see more of you over the summer. It pains me to criticise our parents, but I am afraid I can no longer live under their roof while they remain mixed up with the dangerous crowd around Dumbledore (if you are writing to Mother at any point, you might tell her that a certain Sturgis Podmore, who is a great friend of Dumbledore's, has recently been sent to Azkaban for trespass at the Ministry. Perhaps that will open their eyes to the kind of petty criminals with whom they are currently rubbing shoulders). I count myself very lucky to have escaped the stigma of association with such people - the Minister really could not be more gracious to me - and I do hope, Ron, that you will not allow family ties to blind you to the misguided nature of our parents' beliefs and actions either. I sincerely hope that, in time, they will realise how mistaken they were and I shall, of course, be ready to accept a full apology when that day comes.

Please think over what I have said most carefully, particularly the bit about Harry Potter, and congratulations again on becoming prefect.

Your brother,

Percy

Harry stared at the cursive lines for a moment longer. Percy was in for a rude awakening if he continued to believe so blindly in words of others…

Harry couldn't help but think of Percy as naïve, if not stupid for writing something like this letter.

…the people who count have a very different - and probably more accurate - view of Potter's behaviour…

What and idiot! Percy knew him. They had even shared a tent at the Quidditch World-cup. Harry’s personality couldn’t have changed that drastically in a year to be described as unbalanced and violent… Well it was a logical conclusion after he had witnessed the death of Cedric to think of him as unbalanced, but on the other hand the Ministry denied any involvement of Voldemort. If the rumours went on, there would soon be an article about how Harry had killed Cedric himself, as a personal vendetta against the Ministry…

Harry snorted dismissively and gave the letter back to Ron.

"You know, if you want to ‘sever ties’ with me, I won’t get violent," Harry said sarcastically.

Ron didn’t seem to think it was very funny. With a dark look, he pulled out his wand and pointed it at the letter. "Incendio," he muttered, and the parchment caught on fire.

A group of first years walking next to them shrieked, when the letter went up in flames. Ron put his wand away in grim satisfaction, just before they entered the great Hall.
"Ron that was really unnecessary," Hermione said, but she didn’t seem too upset. Soon after they had sat down on the table, Ron nudged Harry with his elbow.

"Hey, now that we talked about the letter, what did you do last night?" he asked.

"Um-" Harry started trying to find a good excuse, but he was saved by the morning post arriving. The swooshing of hundreds of owls soaring through the air, delivering letters and packages for the students filled the great hall. Hermione basically ripped the daily prophet from the affronted owl’s leg after she’d paid it. The owl stole a piece of bacon from Hermione’s plate before it took off, but Harry doubted that she’d noticed it.

She took one look at the daily prophet and gasped.

"What is it?" Ron asked with wide eyes and he tried to get a look at the front page, but Hermione already smoothed it down in front of them. A giant picture of Dolores Umbridge was smiling at them sweetly.

"MINISTRY SEEKS EDUCATIONAL REFORM:

DOLORES UMBRIDGE APPOINTED FIRST-EVER "HIGH INQUISITOR"

The Headline could not be overlooked. And while Harry stared at the picture, Hermione began to read out loud.

"In a surprise move last night the Ministry of Magic passed new legislation giving itself an unprecedented level of control at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. "The Minister for Magic has been growing uneasy about goings-on at Hogwarts for some time," said Junior Assistant to the Minister for Magic Percy Weasley. "He is now responding to concerns voiced by anxious parents, who feel the school may be moving in a direction they do not approve."

This is not the first time in recent weeks Fudge has used new laws to effect improvements at the wizarding school. As recently as 30 August Educational Decree Twenty-two was passed, to ensure that, in the event of the current headmaster being unable to provide a candidate for a teaching post, the Ministry should select an appropriate person.

"That's how Dolores Umbridge came to be appointed to the teaching staff at Hogwarts," said Weasley last night. "Dumbledore couldn't find anyone, so the Minister put in Umbridge and of course, she's been an immediate success, totally revolutionising the teaching of Defence Against the Dark Arts and providing the Minister with on-the-ground feedback about what's really happening at Hogwarts. "It is this last function that the Ministry has now formalised with the passing of Educational Decree Twenty-three, which creates the new position of Hogwarts High Inquisitor.

"This is an exciting new phase in the Minister 's plan to get to grips with what some are calling the falling standards at Hogwarts," said Weasley. "The Inquisitor will have powers to inspect her fellow educators and make sure that they are coming up to scratch. Professor Umbridge has been offered this position in addition to her own teaching post, and we are delighted to say that she has accepted." The Ministry's new moves have received enthusiastic support from parents of students at Hogwarts.

"I feel much easier in my mind now that I know that Dumbledore is being subjected to fair
and objective evaluation," said Lucius Malfoy, 41, speaking from his Wiltshire mansion last night. "Many of us with our children's best interests at heart have been concerned about some of Dumbledore's eccentric decisions in the last few years and will be glad to know that the Ministry is keeping an eye on the situation." Among those 'eccentric decisions' are undoubtedly the controversial staff appointments previously described in this newspaper, which have included the hiring of werewolf Remus Lupin, half-giant Rubeus Hagrid and delusional ex- Auror 'Mad-Eye' Moody.

Rumours abound, of course, that Albus Dumbledore, once Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, is not longer up to the task of managing the prestigious school of Hogwarts. "I think the appointment of the Inquisitor is a first step toward ensuring that Hogwarts has a headmaster in whom we can all repose confidence" said a Ministry insider last night." Wizengamot elders Griselda Marchbanks and Tiberius Ogden have resigned in protest at the introduction of the post of Inquisitor to Hogwarts.

"Hogwarts is a school, not an outpost of Cornelius Fudge 's office'", said Madam Marchbanks. "This is a further disgusting attempt to discredit Albus Dumbledore." (For a full account of Madam Marchbanks' alleged links to subversive goblin groups, turn to page 17)."

Harry raised an eyebrow. That would explain the Journalist he’d encountered when he had visited Malfoy Manor. But then another thought found its way to the forefront of his mind. The article mentioned that the members of the Wizengamot had to agree for Fudge to be able to pass the legislation. Harry absentmindedly thumbed the edge of his knife. Good to know, that Fudge still didn’t invite him. He continued to stare thoughtfully at plate, while Hermione folded the paper.

"Now we know why Umbridge is here. Fudge managed to get his legislation passed and now she’s even got the power to inspect the other teachers!", Hermione ranted. "I can’t believe it! This is atrocious!"

"I know," Harry agreed, but his thoughts were elsewhere. His eyes scanned the teachers table. The pink menace was nowhere to be seen, just like Hagrid, whose place was still empty.

Ron grinned.

"What?" Hermione asked.

"Hey, I’m interested how she is going to inspect McGonagall," he said happily. "Umbridge won’t know what hit her."

"Hermione jumped up. "Oh quickly. If she’s inspecting Binns’ lesson, we shouldn’t be late…”

It turned out, that Hermione’s worries were unfounded. During History of Magic the toad was nowhere to be seen, nor was she there during potions with Snape, who handed out their moonstone essays that he’d graded.

"I graded you, as if you’d handed your work in for your O.W.L.’s," he said with a sneer while he walked through the rows. "This should give you a rough overview of what the exam requires of you."

Harry stared surprised at the ‘A’ that was scribbled into the upper right corner of his essay.
An ‘Acceptable’ was better than he had expected, because while he might know now how to brew a decent potion, writing essays wasn’t really a skill that Harry could brag about.

Meanwhile Death was creeping through the room, invisible to everyone but Harry since Snape probably wouldn’t take it too kindly if he spotted Harry’s ‘pet’ in his classroom again. The professor had now returned to the front and he continued with his speech.

"The general outcome of this homework was pathetic. Most of you would’ve failed, if this had been your exam. This week’s topic for your essay’s are the different kinds of poisons and antidotes and I expect a lot more effort or I will start to hand out detentions to the idiots who got a ‘D’"

Malfy giggled. "Did someone get an ‘D’? Ha!"

Harry sighed. He missed the older version of Draco. He had been a lot less annoying, and they even had some decent conversations from time to time.

Harry got distracted when he noticed that Hermione was trying to subtly peak over his shoulder to find out which grade he had gotten on his essay. Without another look, he put it away and focused on the strengthening potion they would brew today.

After the lessen they headed to the great hall to grab lunch. Throughout the whole way Hermione only spoke about the essays and their grades, till Ron – who had grown increasingly irritated with every minute - admitted that he’d gotten an ‘P’ and if she’d wanted to know what grades they had she should’ve just asked. Hermione had blushed with embarrassment at the statement, but in the end, it didn’t keep her from speculating about their O.W.L.’s.

During Lunch on the Gryffindor table, their conversation was highjacked by Fred and George, who told them about a class inspection they would brew today.

But it turned out, that they weren’t the only ones Umbridge would visit today, because an hour later, after Harry and Ron had sat down on the comfy cushions amidst the heavy scented air in Trelawney’s classroom, the head of Professor Umbridge rose from the trapdoor on the floor.

Thus, a very cringeworthy lesson with Trelawny began, followed by another boring hour of Umbridge having them read the next chapter of Slinkhart's book on Defence and even another class inspection with Umbridge, which had Harry massaging his temples to keep the approaching headache in check. During the whole week, Umbridge was seemingly everywhere. Walking through the hallways, inspecting classes and not to mention teaching her own class, till suddenly on Thursday evening Hermione jumped up from her chair and started to pace through the empty common room. "She is a horrible woman," Hermione said, "horrible."

"Who? Umbridge?" Ron asked and looked up from his potions essay.

Hermione nodded. "We need to do something."

"How about we poison her?" Ron said dryly. Harry snorted amused.

"She is just an awful teacher," Hermione continued, ignoring Ron’s statement. "And we don’t even learn how to defend us!"

"And what do you want to do about it?" Ron asked, while it slowly dawned on Harry. He already knew where this was going.

"Well," Hermine started, "you know I already thought about it, and maybe-" she hesitated- "maybe it’s time that we take matters in our own hands. That we learn Defence against dark Arts ourselves…"
It didn’t take long till Harry found himself once again confronted with the question if he wanted to teach Defence against the Darks.

He frowned as he was faced with the expectant looks of Hermione and Ron. "Look…," he said slowly, trying to ignore the throbbing in his temples. "I will think about it okay."

Hermione grinned at him. "That’s all I was hoping for," she declared beaming and then continued to focus on her knitting project.

Harry stood up and headed towards the dorms. He couldn’t share Hermione’s excitement. Did he even have the time to teach the DA? Originally, he had wanted to focus on Sirius’ trial. The article in the Daily Prophet had reminded him that there were still things that needed to be done. And dealing with Fudge was certainly a priority on his list. The werewolves had stayed quiet since he had visited them and neither had he heard something from Sirius and Remus.

Death materialized in his human form and started to walk up the stairs next to him.

And what was this goddamn headache that had been nagging him for the whole last week?! At first, he’d thought Umbridge was the reason for the constant throb in the back of his head but now he wasn’t so sure anymore.

"It's the piece of soul," Death suddenly said.

"What?"

"The piece of soul in your head. It channels his’ emotions."

"Voldemort’s?" Harry asked, and he cast a silent privacy charm around them. "But shouldn’t I be protected from it?"

"You are connected to his soul. It isn’t like a mind you shield yourself from. A soul is much more complex," Death explained while they entered the dorm. "If his emotions are strong enough you may feel their echo," the being said and stopped, which prompted Harry to do the same. The being looked at him. "It is rare, a connection like this," Death said and touched the scar on Harry’s forehead. "I find it rather fascinating," he added grinning and his hand slid down to Harry’s cheek.

"And that’s why you didn’t bother to tell me what was going on, huh?" Harry said with a raised eyebrow and pulled out of Death’s touch. "You wanted to watch it before I would find out what was going on and asked you to remove it."

"Well you could’ve just asked me if I knew something about your headache," Death said smirking.

"You are a twat, you know that?" Harry said while he turned around and walked towards his bed. He put his glasses onto the bedside table and when he looked up, he saw that Death had materialized on his bed and was watching him. The being wasn’t grinning. Harry stared at him for a moment. The sensations in their bond had him realizing that Death had felt a bit hurt by Harry’s action.

"Are you sulking?" Harry asked amused when he realized why the being acted that way.

Death just shot him a look.

Harry laughed and he climbed into the bed, shooing Death over. When he had covered himself with his blanket, Harry noticed that Death was still sitting on the edge of the mattress, surrounded by only shadows.
"Come on," Harry said and pulled the being towards him, till he was able to curl comfortably against Death’s chest, who slowly put his arms around Harry. "You know that I love you," Harry murmured into the shirt that Death was wearing. A ridiculousness in itself. Death started to purr loudly, and Harry smiled at the feelings pulsing through their bond. Death’s nose was buried into Harry’s hair and Harry could sense the dark mass of eyes and wings that was Death’s true form gather closer around him, blanketing him in comfortable shadows.

"I’m keeping it by the way," Harry began after a while. "If you were wondering. The horcrux. So you can spy on it a little longer," he added with an amused smile.

He could feel Death’s grin.

"I guess you could block it out completely if you wanted to," Death murmured into Harry’s hair. "You would need to focus on it first for some time, but I don’t think it would be a problem."

"You haven’t seen something like this before either, have you?" Harry asked.

"Not in this way, no. And you are my Master. That changes things further."

Harry hummed. Sleep started to extend its tendrils and reached for his mind. But before it was fully there, he could feel the brush of lips against his forehead.

"Sleep well Harry…"

Lord Voldemort was surrounded by darkness. The flickering light of the few candles illuminating the room didn’t quite reach him. The shadows resting upon his face seemed to push his eyes deeper into their sockets, carving his features down till they appeared to be thinner than they already were. Dark irises were hidden behind closed eyes. The creaking of a chair cut through the silence. The dark Lord didn’t react. He was like statue. Unmoving; eerie perfection and yet… Dark magic had blurred his once handsome features, melting away the humanity left in its creation - a sacrifice in order to reach its artistic goal. If it weren’t for his spindly fingers caressing the smooth surface of his wand, he could be dead.

Dust was whirling through the air. Unseen in the dim light but its smell permeated the air just like the fear which hung heavy in the room. The slit-like nostrils on the pale face widened slightly as the dark Lord inhaled. Breathing in, as if he could scent the anxiety residing within these walls. The dark Lord opened his eyes. The silent gasp echoing through the room could as well have been a thunderclap. Pupils narrowed, revealing more of the dark irises as he let his eyes wander over the faces of his followers. There was a flash of red every time one of the candles managed to hit the eyes with their light. Otherwise Lord Voldemort’s face showed no sign of the cold fury that was burning through his veins, fuelling thoughts that were the reason for this gathering. The diary was gone. Destroyed. A mistake foolishly made by Lucius Malfoy. The blond man swallowed hard under the dark Lord’s lingering gaze before the red eyes continued their journey.

Had he been someone lesser, he would share the fate of the muggle recently added to the sea of
corpses protecting a now empty place. The dark Lord closed his eyes once more to control his anger. He’d had to make sure. But the locket in the basin had been worthless. A piece of metal accompanied by the note of a dead man. Its original counterpart shared this pitiful fate. An empty shell without soul, having nothing to offer but the famous name of its long-gone owner clinging to it.

He opened his eyes. The slightest hiss told of Nagini whose massive body writhed under his chair in slow movements. Avery squirmed in his place. She wouldn’t be allowed to leave his side. Not how things were right now.
The ring had also vanished without a trace, leaving only the wards which should’ve protected it in its place…
This left only two. Their state in both cases a mystery. The one in Hogwarts was out of reach, the cup on the other hand… but no. Going there would only direct attention towards its location and he had other plans already.
Either way, he would give them something to focus on…
For now the department of Mysteries had shifted to the back of his mind. The circumstances demanded it.
Dumbledore might know about his Horcruxes, but he needed time to find them. This time was precious. So give Dumbledore something else to do. Two months was all the dark Lord needed.
Two months and Dumbledore would have much more to worry about than only his horcruxes.
Lord Voldemort’s eyes wandered over the rows. About thirty Death Eaters were waiting to be told the reason for their summoning and the time to act had come. His gaze lingered on the places that were left empty, before he finally began to speak.

"My friends," he began quietly and yet all attention was on him in a second. Nagini hissed quietly. "It is time, for our brothers and sisters to join us… Those, who have been waiting for years - loyal in their suffering."
Lord Voldemort stared at the faces of his followers. They averted his gaze, shame and guilt resting upon their features. The dark Lord’s eyes lingered for a moment, before he continued.
"We will end their misery and free their minds and bodies from their prison. We will not rest until the time comes when we can raise our wands in victory, and we will once more fight side by side."

Chapter End Notes

I have to say I really like writing Voldemort. He is always kinda creepy and otherwordly and I like that. Let me know what you think of him. (and the chapter) :)
And also Death is kinda influenced because he is connected to Harry that's why he is able to feel emotions that way, but don't let that fool you he is still a creepy fucker, and Harry isn't that sane either.
The weekend following the article in the Daily Prophet, Harry decided that he would write a letter to the Ministry regarding Sirius’ trial. Two weeks had passed since then. Nothing.

No answer from the Ministry, no noteworthy occurrence whatsoever if one didn’t count Hermione’s and Ron’s whispering behind his back. Every time Cho greeted him in the Hallways - she did it more often nowadays - they exchanged meaningful glances.

During the whole time Umbridge was a pest. Now that she was High Inquisitor nothing kept her from punishing students for the most ridiculous things. Only one day after she had been promoted, the first Educational Decree was introduced. It punished students found in possession of a spell check quill. And it wouldn’t be the last.

Umbridge handed out detentions as if they were candy. After Educational Decree Number Nine was created – it expelled students found in possession of sweets from "unauthorized suppliers" – Harry spotted Fred and George more often than not plotting in a corner, grim looks on their faces. Not that the Decree could keep them from testing their inventions.

So, when Hermione asked Harry if he had thought about teaching Defence against the dark Arts, he agreed to do it just to spite the pink toad.

It was the first weekend in October, when they were allowed to go to Hogsmeade. It was the date Hermione had set as the first meeting of interested students.

"Where are we even going?" Ron asked after they had just left the grounds of the castle. "The three broomsticks?"

"Oh – no," Hermione said. "No, it’s always so busy and loud. I told everyone we would meet in the Hog’s head, the pub you know. It’s not on the main road. I think it’s a little, well… seedy… but
usually there aren’t any students in there, so I don’t think anyone is listening."

Harry raised his eyebrows. A group of students would attract way more attention in the Hog’s head than in the tree broomsticks.

They walked down the main street, passing the post office where owls after owls rose into the air and then they spotted the twins together with Lee Jordan in front of Zonko’s. Shortly after weaving through a crowd of students, they left the busy street and walked through a small ally until they finally reached the Hog’s head. The building was old and small, and its sign creaked in the cold autumn wind. Harry entered first, while the others hesitated for a moment.

He knew the Hog’s head. When Harry had been an Auror he’d sometimes met informants there. In addition to that, it was also a good place to get a drink without attracting too much attention, since someone not showing their face wasn’t too unusual in there. At least if one wasn’t acting too suspicious. Usually Harry would’ve covered his face with the hood of his cloak by now, but today it wouldn’t matter.

After he’d stepped through the entrance, Harry walked past the dirty windows until he had reached the very corner of the room. Barely any light fell through the filthy glass. The whole pub was illuminated by candles that were stuck to the rough surface of the wooden tables. Wax was dripping onto the wood and the years of use were clearly visible. Harry quickly got used to the smell that was permeating the air. Something akin to a goat. Hermione was wrinkling her nose as she took in their surroundings.

Harry leaned against the wall and crossed his arms. Death in his snake form was peeking out from under his scarf, while Ron stopped awkwardly next to him. The red head started to fidget nervously with a loose thread dangling from the worn sleeve of his cloak. Meanwhile Hermione was still lingering in front of the door. The room was almost empty. A man was standing at the counter. Harry didn’t think he was fully human. His whole head was covered by dirty grey bandages and he was drinking some kind of smoking liquor. The man hadn’t even looked up when they’d entered.

However, the two hooded figures sitting next to the window had briefly stopped their conversation. After a fleeting turning of heads, they continued to talk with a strong Yorkshire-accent. On a chair in front of the fireplace sat a witch who was covered head to toe by a black veil. And while Hermione was walking towards the counter with determined steps, Harry took a double take at the witch. A faint memory surfaced, of someone listening in to their first meeting in here... But it was the magic surrounding the person, which had Harry realizing that the witch next to the fireplace was actually the very manly Mundungus Fletcher.

Harry stared at the man until he shifted uncomfortably on his chair.

"Harry," Hermione hissed when she came back, three Butterbeers in his hands. "I don’t think it’s a good idea to stare at the people in here." She motioned for them to sit down on the table closest to them and Ron handed Hermione the sickles he owed her. Harry also searched the pocket of his cloak until he found two silvery coins.

"I don’t know Hermione. Maybe someone we know is hiding beneath that veil," Harry said, trying to keep a serious expression while he pushed the money over the table. Hermione frowned and stared at the ‘witch’. "Umbridge is smaller, if that’s what you are thinking," she said. She handed them their butterbeers and Ron inspected the dusty bottles with an uncertain look on his face.
The man with the bandages knocked onto the counter and the bartender - which Harry only now remembered, was Aberforth, Dumbledore’s brother - appeared and poured him another drink, that the guy promptly downed.

"Know what," Ron murmured after he had raised his head, and he looked excitedly at the counter, "in here we could probably buy anything we want. I bet, this guy would sell us anything, he wouldn’t care. I always wanted to try- "

"You are a prefect," Hermione interfered with a glare.

"Oh," Ron said, and his smile vanished. "Right…"

Meanwhile Harry blew some of the dust off his bottle and opened the rusty cap.

Suddenly a beam of light parted the room, accompanied by the creaking of the door. Neville stepped into the room and he was followed by Dean, Lavender, then Parvati and Padma Patil together with Cho and one of her friends - Marietta, if Harry remembered correctly. Then Luna Lovegood entered, her magic swirling around her in calm pastels, right behind her appeared Katie Bell, followed by Alicia Spinnet, Angelina Johnson, Colin Creevy and his brother Dennis, Ernie Macmillan, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Hannah Abbott and another girl with a Hufflepuff scarf. The door barely closed, when a hand pushed it open once more and Anthony Goldstein entered, accompanied by Michael Corner, Terry Boot, who was followed by Ginny, then Zacharias Smith and lastly Fred, George and Lee Jordan.

It took its time till everyone was seated, but after they had gathered around the table - every person now in possession of a butterbeer and a chair - the group fell silent. All of them stared at Harry expectantly. He just leaned back and met their looks with an unwavering expression. Eventually Hermione breached the awkward silence.

"Well… um… yeah, you know why you are here. Um… well, Harry had the idea-" Harry raised an eyebrow and Hermione quickly corrected herself- "or to clarify, I had the idea, that it would be good, if people who want to learn Defence against the dark Arts, and I mean really learn, you know, not the rubbish, that Umbridge does. Because no one can call that Defence against the dark Arts."

Anthony Goldstein agreed loudly, which had Hermione gaining some confidence in her words.

"Well I thought it would be a good idea if we would take matters in our own hands. With that I mean, that we learn how to really defend ourselves, not only in theory but by using spells…”

"I bet you want to pass your O.W.L.’s in Defence too, am I right?” asked Michel.

"Of course-," Hermione said, and she inhaled audibly, "but I want more. I want to be really trained because… because Lord Voldemort is back.”

Marietta shrieked and butterbeer went all over her cloak. Terry Boot flinched, Padma shivered, and Neville tried to mask his yelp as a cough. Overall though, they stared at Harry eagerly.

"Well, that’s the plan," Hermione stated, oblivious to the reason why most of the people had really come to this meeting. "If you want to be a part of it, we need to decide how we- "

"Where’s the proof that You-know-who is really back?!” Smith interfered in a pompous way.

Harry absentmindedly started to peel the yellowish label off his butterbeer, while he suppressed a sigh. There it was.
"Well, Dumbledore believes that-" Hermione started.

"You mean, Dumbledore believes him," Zacharias said and nodded towards Harry, who hadn’t even looked up.

"Who are you by the way?" Ron interfered pretty aggressively.

"Zacharias Smith," the boy said, "and I think we’ve got a right to know why he claims that You-know-Who is back."

"Look," Hermione said, "this meeting shouldn’t be about that..."

For the first time Harry looked up and the motion caused Hermione to stop. She watched him, anxiously at what he would do. Harry leaned forward, pushing his butterbeer aside with the movement and then he stared at the blond Hufflepuff. He looked at Smith considering. It was probably the best if he stuck to the truth. Mostly. Everyone seemed to hold their breath. Zacharias squirmed under his gaze and Harry lingered for a moment, before he leaned against the back of his chair once more. "I won’t waste my day explaining to you what Dumbledore already explained to you last year. If you don’t believe him, you won’t believe me either," Harry said.

"Dumbledore only told us that Cedric Diggory was killed by You-know-who and that you brought his body back to Hogwarts," Smith said defensively. "He didn’t tell us any details, he didn’t tell us how Diggory was killed and I think we all would like to know-" Zachariah continued, but he stopped abruptly when he noticed that Harry stared at him intensely.

"You all would like to know what it was like, huh?" Harry asked after a moment with a raised eyebrow. Zacharias swallowed hard.

"You want to know details...," Harry continued.
Most of the people were oblivious to the tone that had found its way into his voice. They were too eager to finally get to know the whole story. Zacharias on the other hand seemed to regret having asked. Harry’s eyes were still resting on the Hufflepuff, when he paused. "Fine," Harry said.

Hermione and Ron gasped, and a surprised look had found its way onto Smith’s face. The tension in the air was electrifying. Harry leaned over the table, the dim light of the candle illuminating his features.

"Did you know that a cruciatus curse depends on the caster?" They stared at him with wide eyes. Even the bandaged guy on the counter had stopped his drinking. Harry licked over his lips and smirked. "That is something Crouch didn’t talk about - or Professor Moody as you remember him probably. The more powerful the caster the more powerful the spell. But you also have to really want it to work. Now imagine someone as powerful as Voldemort casting it on you," Harry said. Death moved around his neck. Neville was white as a sheet. "It hurts," Harry said. And his grin turned icy. A bittersweet feeling rose in his chest, because what now followed wasn’t a lie. "God it hurts more than anything you ever experienced. Breaking a bone is nothing compared to it. You feel like you are on fire and at the same time there are thousands of knives piercing your skin. Your flesh is getting boiled from your bones while your head is cracking open. There is nothing you can do about it. Maybe you can scream but that’s all. You can’t run, you can’t move away and the only thought running through your mind is how wonderful it would be, if you just died."

"Harry," Hermione whispered with a shocked expression. Harry’s eyes wandered over the faces of the people surrounding him. His pupils widened. Blood pumped through his veins and a strange excitement had taken hold of him, as he sensed the emotions, that were dominating the room. All these people were like prey in this moment. They stared at him with wide eyes, frozen like a deer in
"Anything, just to stop the feeling that has you thinking that your limbs are getting ripped from your torso," Harry continued with a sharp smirk, chasing after the thrill of this sensations. This was how Death had to feel when another soul met his true form. Fear spiking the air, helplessness at what they were confronted with. Death had told Harry that he had been lonely-rejected because of it… Harry didn’t doubt that the statement was genuine and yet… A creature didn’t do what it was made to do without a certain enjoyment. He had the proof. It echoed through their shared bond. Glee at the fear they caused, triggered by the thrill of being a predator surrounded by prey. Had Death been in his human form, his expression would’ve been a slightly darker reflection of Harry’s.

"Harry stop," Hermione pleaded.

Harry stopped.

The girl looked like she was about to throw up and others around them wore similar expressions. Neville looked even worse. Harry leaned back and took a sip of his bottle, a smirk still playing around his lips. Death’s amusement pulsed through their bond and the snake hiding under his scarf writhed slowly.  

"I thought you wanted details...," Harry stated after a while to breach the silence. When no one spoke up he continued. "Cedric was lucky in a way. The killing curse is simple. As soon as it hits you, you are gone..."

No one said a word.

"Oh, and by the way- "Harry added- "it wasn’t Voldemort who killed him. Peter Pettigrew, a Death Eater cast the killing curse. Voldemort was the one who demanded it. In the end, it doesn't really matter, does it? Dead is dead," Harry said. The others around him were still too shocked to react.

The only sound was the hushed talking of the people next to the window. Someone's chair creaked. Air popped loudly in the fireplace and the guy with the bandages gestured with his hand for another drink.

Harry put his bottle down. "Well, does this count as proof? Or do you want to hear more?" he asked.

"No," Anthony eventually uttered. He cleared his throat. "I think – I think we heard enough…," the boy continued with a slightly steadier voice.

"I thought so," Harry replied amused. "So how about we return to the topic we are actually here to discuss?"

No one objected.

In the end, their gathering didn’t last much longer, and they decided that they would all think of a place where they could hold their future meetings before they would pinpoint a date.

Soon they had left the old building and were once more wandering through the busier streets of Hogsmeade.

"was really insensitive, Harry. Didn’t you see Neville? He was white as a ghost," Hermione said,
while she inspected a quill that was displayed in a window.

Harry shrugged.

"Who was this Michael guy?" Ron suddenly asked, and Hermione sighed. She turned to face him. "Honestly Ron-

Since Hermione had mentioned earlier that Michael Corner was Ginny’s boyfriend, Ron was bombarding her with questions. Harry stopped listening when his attention was caught by something else. Because not too far behind he noticed a familiar presence.

Mundungus...

Apparently, Dumbledore still had people watching him. Harry huffed into his scarf. ‘Well if that wasn’t a delight. But fine. If the headmaster wanted to have a constant eye on him, then good luck.’ Harry managed to ignore his steady follower by focusing on another problem. Namely the inevitable question where the DA should meet. The room of requirement was their best solution and yet Harry was hesitant. The room was a great asset. Right now, it was barely known and also the hiding spot of one of Voldemort’s Horcruxes. Using it would only lead to Dumbledore paying more attention to it. But the only alternative was the Chamber of secrets. Harry doubted that a room holding the remains of a giant basilisk would be the perfect fit and a group of pupils all disappearing in the same bathroom was also kind of suspicious...

Harry hummed into his scarf. He would have to think about it.

Saturday turned into Sunday and the good weather caused everyone to feel somewhat elated. After they had finished their Homework, Harry decided to write another letter to the Ministry regarding Sirius' trial. Now the only thing he could do was wait.

The remaining day passed quickly and with the new week came another Educational Decree. The students were horrified. Umbridge’s most recent invention had led to all clubs and most importantly the Quidditch teams being disbanded until further notice. The newly formed DA had even more to worry about, and yet Harry couldn’t care less.

He had other things on his mind. Mainly the Ministry, which continued to be a pain in the ass. There had been no answer when he’d asked about Sirius’ trial. And even if they were to listen, they would probably lock Sirius up as soon as they got their hands on him, or even worse; have a Dementor kiss him. Harry also wouldn’t put it past them, to simply refuse because Harry was the one demanding it.

All in all, he was pissed. And while this whole affair probably had to be handled very carefully, Harry's state of mind had him on the edge. For now, he had to focus on the problem of even having a trial happening in the first place.

During the following week Harry barely paid attention to his classes, but even he noticed that the teachers were just as annoyed by Umbridge as he was. And their bad mood affected the whole school.

Harry was under the impression that Umbridge was someone Snape might even despise more than him. After Umbridge’s inspection of his potions class, the professor had even snapped at the Slytherins. It wasn’t a good week for Neville.

Even Flitwick was quicker to take points.

McGonagall was teaching her class like always, but even time Umbridge passed her in the Hallway she wore an expression as if she’d just stepped into Hippogriff-shit. Most noticeable of all were Trelawney’s lessons though. She was an emotional wreck since the moment Umbridge had put her on probation. Sometimes Harry spotted her wandering through the halls, a slight scent of
sherry trailing after her like one of her colourful scarfs. The only one happy during that week was Angelina, who had managed to re-establish their Quidditch team. The second, they were allowed to fly, she sent them out in the most horrid weather to train. A pointless hour later they returned to the castle - soaked to their bones and mud staining their feet.
Mr. Filch’s angry muttering still echoed through the hallways half an hour later.

In the end Harry had chosen to tell Ron and Hermione about the room of requirement. With its equipment and ability to offer things that were needed, it was superior to the chamber of secrets. And there was also a tiny part of Harry, who wanted the chamber to remain a secret, more so than the room of requirement. He didn’t know if this was attributable to the horcrux or if it was a part of his own twisted mind causing these thoughts.

The first meeting of the DA – which was finally also officially called that way - took place on Wednesday. Overall it went better than Harry had expected. His headache on the other hand never vanished completely. Out of curiosity Harry had lowered the walls inside his head once, to get a small glimpse of Voldemort's emotions. As soon as the Horcrux was no longer locked away, the dull throbbing turned into a flash of anger and impatience. Apparently the dark Lord was quite …busy. But he wasn’t the only one who felt like something didn’t happen fast enough.

Harry was thinking a lot about proving Sirius’ innocence. But the Ministry had ignored his letters. His irritation grew the more he thought about the situation and the reverberation of Voldemort’s emotions in his head didn’t help either. Death was mostly amused by the whole thing. The entire week he smirked at Harry’s grumpy remarks. But simply walking up to the Ministry and demanding that his godfather should get a trial was also no solution.

"Why not?" Death had asked him Saturday morning, while Harry was once more brooding over his breakfast.

The words resounded in Harry’s mind. ‘Why not?’ He looked up from the Daily Prophet which he hadn’t been reading anyway. Another Article about Fudges revolutionary Educational System was decorating the front page. ‘Yeah, why not?’

Harry had thought about it the whole week, and no solution had suddenly graced his mind with its presence. 'So what did he have to lose?'

Chapter End Notes

In this chapter Harry got to be a little creepy. He really enjoyed to scare the other's :) I'd love to hear your opinion, criticism is also appreciated as long as it can help me (to improve my writing/the story) You don't have to focus solely on this chapter btw. ;)

Thank you for reading <3
Twenty minutes later Harry found himself in London. Death was once again, curled around his neck in his snake form. After they appeared next to one of the many fireplaces, Harry took a quick look at his surroundings.
The Atrium wasn’t very busy. It was Saturday after all. The golden Symbols on the high ceiling glowed faintly while they moved over the blue surface in mysterious patterns. A familiar sound told of the departure and arrival of people as they stepped in and out of the green flames. When Harry spotted the Elevators, he walked towards them with determined steps.
He ignored the security stand where visitors usually had to have their wand registered, instead he moved like he belonged here. It was probably because of this, that he didn’t draw much attention. It was easy enough to fall back into old patterns. He had worked here as an Auror after all.
Or rather would work here? But that time would probably never come, now that he had merged with his younger self…

Harry moved with purpose, quickly weaving through the groups of people, but when he passed the fountain, two wizards standing next to it shot him disparaging looks as soon as they recognized him.
One of them was about to open his mouth, probably to make a comment of some sort, but the look Harry shot him, caused the wizard to rethink his decision very quickly.
And while Harry continued his way towards the Elevators, the black snake which had been curled around his neck dissolved into smoke. Like a waterfall, the shadowy mass sank to the ground, yet only to materialize in another form. The blink of a moment later, Death was walking next to Harry.

"Where are we heading?" the being asked grinning.

"To the Minister."

Death’s smirk widened at the grim look on Harry’s face.

The elevator ride was not a pleasant experience. At least not for the people sharing their space. Harry was apparently still interesting enough to be stared at, and while he had been thinking about other things – mainly about what he would tell Fudge – Death had cared a little more. Even
invisible, his presence could be very ... intense. When they had only moved two floors and the doors opened to "Level Six, Department of Magical Transportation, incorporating the Floo Network Authority, Broom Regulatory Control, Portkey Office and Apparition Test Centre," - as a monotone voice announced - everyone they had still shared the elevator with, had left.

Harry grinded his teeth. 'Sirius would have his trial. That much, he owed him. After his godfather had offered him his seats in the Wizengamot, he had the right to get something back. Fair was fair. But Fudge, that bastard was still in denial over Voldemort’s return. Well it wasn’t like Harry cared what the Minister did about Voldemort, but right now this factor was certainly a pain in the ass.'

Finally, they came once more to a rattling halt. The elevator doors opened to reveal the last floor; ‘Level one’. Now there was to hope, that the office of the Minister was still located where Harry remembered it to be. With a look at Death, he left the elevator.

Harry walked past the other offices of the administrative staff. No one stopped him. A door to his left opened, but Harry’s magic pushed it close. He couldn’t deal with this now.

Reaching Fudges office, he didn’t bother to knock. His magic had the wooden door ripped open in a second and Harry entered only a moment later. "Hello Minister," he said with a dark grin.

Fudge was frozen in his seat. He stared at Harry as if he’d seen a ghost. But he wasn't alone. In front of the heavy walnut desk sat another person, who was just turning around. Lucius Malfoy... The man seemed equally startled, but after a moment he was already schooling his expression to display a more neutral emotion.

"Get out," Harry hissed between clenched teeth. There was a flash of fear in Malfoy’s eyes.

He reached for his snake-handled cane and stood up. Harry could feel Death’s amusement as the being watched from next to the door. Meanwhile the Minister seemed to have regained his voice. He also rose from his chair.

"What in Merlin’s name-" Fudge started.

Harry cut him off with a gesture of his hand. He spoke to Malfoy, but his eyes pierced Fudge. "I and the Minister have something personal to discuss." 

Lucius didn’t miss the dangerous note in his voice. Fudge on the other hand seemed indignant. He stared at Harry like a fish sitting on dry land and his face took on an angry shade of red. 

"Cornelius, it was a pleasure, but I think it is better if I return another time," Malfoy said smoothly. Fudge’s head snapped towards him.

"Lucius...," he started, trying to keep his composure and he took a step towards him. "Certainly, you won’t be bothered by this child," he added in a condescending way.

Malfay waved him off. He was already halfway out of the door. "I have matters to attend to, things, that need my attention anyways. We will continue our discussion some other time..."

Harry didn’t miss the curious look on Malfay's face before he left, but now his focus returned to Fudge. "Minister-," Harry began, "I am here because of some letters I sent. They didn’t seem to have reached their recipient." The door behind him slammed close.

Fudge flinched. "I don't know what you are talking about," he started.

"Then let me remind you," Harry replied. "Sirius Black - I'm guessing that name rings a bell – he
never had a trial. I demanded one after my hearing."

Fudge laughed. "Black is a known criminal and fugitive-," he said, while turning around. He reached for a carafe standing on a shelf behind him, before pouring himself a glass of whatever alcohol was in there.

"He is innocent-" Harry started, but the Minister turned around. He knocked the glass onto the table, effectively cutting Harry off while spilling half its content.

"He killed thirteen people," the Minister stressed enraged, "That is a FACT!" Fudge had slammed his hand onto the table and small droplets of spit sprayed over the paperwork in front of him as he shouted the last words. For a second, the vivid image of Vernon Dursley had replaced Fudge in Harry's mind. The older man breathed heavily and Harry's jaw tensed. Fudge exhaled once more before he straightened his posture and collected himself. He looked Harry up and down and his expression changed while he did so. "Black was the only one there - the only suspect. Even a boy like you should be able to comprehend that," the Minister said patronizingly.

A sound that was almost a growl rose in Harry's throat. Fudge reached for his nearly empty glass, but before he could dismiss him once again, Harry's hand shot out and closed around Fudges throat. A sound that was a mix of a surprised yelp and a choking noise. Harry shifted his grip to pull Fudge closer by his collar. He was meeting him halfway over the desk.

"Now listen here, you piece of shit," Harry hissed between clenched teeth and pressed the tip of his wand against Fudges neck. All blood drained of the Minister's face. A bead of sweat rolled down his temple. A sound that was almost a growl rose in Harry's throat. Fudge reached for his nearly empty glass, but before he could dismiss him once again, Harry's hand shot out and closed around Fudges throat. With the other hand he materialized the Elder wand. The Minister made a sound that was a mix of a surprised yelp and a choking noise. Harry shifted his grip to pull Fudge closer by his collar. He was meeting him halfway over the desk.

"Let's kill him." Death interjected from Harry's right with his raspy voice and he leaned closer. The being looked at him hungrily, excitement buzzing through their bond.

Harry tilted his head, never taking his eye of his prey. Fudge's sweaty skin was pale where the tip of his wand was resting. The pressure increased when the Minister swallowed hard. Harry stared into his fear filled eyes. "Yeah I think you are right. We should kill him. The outcome would certainly be interesting…"

A dark purr vibrated in Death's throat. Harry stared at Fudge with a hungry look.

"No- No," Fudge uttered and he raised his hands as much as he dared to, "You can't kill me. I am the Minister!"

Harry increased the pressure of his wand.

"Lucius-," Fudge suddenly stuttered between his gasps for air. His magic spiked and spun rapidly. Harry gritted his teeth.

"What?!" he asked. His pupils were blown wide as he stared at Fudges fear-filled face.
"Lucius, he has seen you. There are witnesses. They will know it was you! You will rot in Azkaban if you kill me!"

Harry's smirk widened. "I doubt that."

Fudge's face took on a greenish colour. But then his fear turned into anger. "I demand you let me go. I AM THE MINISTER!" Harry didn't budge and when the man struggled, he only tightened his grip. Fudges emotions clashed in one big outburst, as he realized that he wouldn't be able to escape. "They will send Dementors after you! This time they will do their job. All that you are is a liar, just like the whole batch! Dumbledore sent you, didn't he?! He finally goes through with his plans to replace me!"

All of a sudden Harry felt disgusted by the man in front of him. By his ignorance. His paranoia, how he clung to the last strings of the power, he thought he still possessed. He was pathetic. Weak. Harry looked at Death, who stared back. Their unspoken exchange lasted for a moment longer before Harry exhaled and forced a smile.

"Unfortunately, he is right," Harry said, successfully interrupting Fudges ranting before he pulled back, "We can't kill him," Harry added and his smile wasn't so fake anymore, when he silently added the words, 'not yet' inside his mind.

The Minister gasped for air and his hand wandered to his throat.

"Pity," Death rasped. He knew what Harry was thinking. Killing him now would only lead to problems. And they needed him. For now. A pink circle on Fudge's skin still showed where Harry's wand had rested.

"DON'T even try it," Harry snapped when Fudge was attempting to subtly reach for his own wand. Reluctantly the Minister pulled his hand back. He glared at Harry.

"I demand a trial," Harry said, stating once more the reason why he had originally shown up here.

"After all this you think that I will grant you that wish?!" Fudge retorted angrily.

"Yes," Harry said and he leaned over the desk once more, his hands resting on the smooth surface. Fudge unconsciously took a small step back. "Yes, I do think so, because you don't want me to give and interview to …let's say Rita Skeeter," Harry licked over his teeth, "I will talk about all the incompetence the Ministry has shown throughout the last years. I will tell them about the Dementors this summer, that the Ministry slowly loses control. I will tell them that Sirius Black is still on the run and why the Ministry won't do anything to find him and most of all I will tell them about Voldemort…"

"They will never believe you!" Fudge shot back. Harry pushed himself from the table and straightened his spine.

"Well, maybe not. But they will know about it. And they will think about it. And if they think about it, it slowly takes over their mind. There is doubt. And doubt can lead to so. Much. More," he finished. Satisfied Harry saw that it had hit a nerve.

"There isn't even a guarantee that Black shows up," Fudge said defensively.

"That isn't something you have to concern yourself with," Harry replied, "Just make it happen."

"You are insane…," Fudge said, while Harry was walking towards the door.
Harry turned around. He smirked. "Well, but keep in mind dear Minister…I could've always put you under the Imperio, and no one would've been the wiser." Harry's smirk vanished. "And by the way. Don't underestimate me, by attributing my actions to Dumbledore."

Fudge clenched his teeth.

Harry bowed mockingly. "It was my pleasure. I guess I will hear from you soon..."

As he left, he could still hear the Minister mutter to himself. His words echoed through the the open door. "Insane... completely crazy..."

Harry smirked.

Hours had passed. The fire in the Gryffindor common room was throwing flickering shadows onto the walls. It was almost midnight. The common room was empty apart from Harry who was sitting in a comfy armchair in front of the fireplace. Death was residing in a seat opposite to Harry, his presence swallowing the light surrounding him.

"Do you think he is going to tell somebody about my visit?" Harry asked, while he stared into the flames. Without looking, he knew that Death was tilting his head.

"Maybe. But Harry Potter walking into the Ministry and threatening the Minister to kill him, sounds insane, even how things are right now..."

Harry hummed absentmindedly. It was quiet for some time after that; the only noise was the crackling of the fire.

"What are you thinking about? Something is distracting you," Death said, abruptly interrupting the silence that was dominating the room.

"You always know what I am thinking about. You can read my mind," Harry stated absently, while he continued to watch the dancing flames.

"It's gotten harder. You are still changing. You are so deeply caught up in your mind that if you aren't projecting your thoughts; I only get a vague sense of it."

Harry raised his head. He looked at Death who stared back. A small grin appeared on the creature's face. "We will be equals someday. After all, you can't be a Master if you don't have the ability to understand what you are commanding," Death smirked at Harry's stunned expression. "Don't concern yourself with that. This will take a few centuries at least."

"Oh, only a few centuries, nothing to worry about," Harry said sarcastically after he had regained his ability to form words.

Death grinned at him. "Now, what were you thinking about?"

"Fudge, I really wanted to kill him," Harry said.

"Is that what's bothering you?" Death asked.

Harry shook his head. "No."

Death smirked as if he'd already known what the answer would be. "You were delighted by it," he stated in his hoarse voice, his eyes the only thing visible in the growing shadows. "The thrill..."
Death materialized right in front Harry, who shivered at his tone of voice. "The fear..."

"I was so close to going through with it, but then he was so..." Harry paused. He had trouble finding the right words. "...weak... not worthy to even be considered prey. In this moment it would've been like squishing an annoying bug..."

"Well what else could he be?" Death stated as if it was the simplest conclusion in the world. As Harry was about to stand up, he moved closer, caging Harry with his body. The being leaned forward, his face hovering mere inches in front of Harry, "After all, he is weak in comparison to you." Death smirked and then he added amused, "The residual part you were feeling is just personal dislike..."

Harry laughed. He looked at Death with mirth in his eyes and the being smirked at him. Something changed as the moment went on. As if a heavy blanket had settled over the room, dulling everything, but each other's presence. Harry's breath hitched and he wetted his lip with the tip of his tongue. He blindly reached out, till he could feel Death's torso. Absently he started playing with the hem of Death's shirt and dipping beneath, till he could feel cool skin beneath his hands. Death's smirk had lost some of its sharp edge, yet something else had replaced it, something not less hungry.

The being lifted a hand and pushed Harry's hair out of his face. He continued the motion, combing through the black strands with his fingers, till he tightened his grip at the back of Harry's head. He tugged slightly, causing Harry to expose his throat as he was directly looking at the being that was hovering over him. Harry breathed shallowly; he could only look. Death's free hand was now resting on his face, his fingertips tracing invisible lines on his cheekbone. The being leaned forward and Harry held his breath, his hands motionless on Death's stomach and hipbone before the distance was finally breached and they were kissing.

Harry pulled Death close, spreading his legs wider to make room for the being. Death started to trace his spine with gentle movements, the other hand still tightly interwoven with Harry's hair. There was an almost inaudible hiss in the fireplace, just as Harry had let his hand wander on Death's chest, pushing up his shirt alongside the way. The hint of something akin to irritation was coming from Death's side of the bond, but it was the sensation of a presence in the fire, that had Harry turning his head.

"Sirius," Harry uttered surprised. The head of his godfather was residing in the dancing flames and he smirked at Harry.

"Hey Harry. I thought you might still be awake," Sirius said energetically.

Harry sighed. "Obviously." Sirius was apparently not able to see Death, who was still very much limiting Harry's moving capacity, but now the being pulled back to give Harry more space, letting go of him as he did so.

Sirius squinted his eyes. "Uhm, were you ...busy with something?"

Harry glanced at Death. "Kinda, actually...," he said as he slowly sat up in the armchair.

"Well, I thought you might want to hear about the news I've got," Sirius stated, blissfully unaware of the stare he was pierced with by Death. "The ministry sent a letter today - Merlin knows how their owl managed to deliver it - but I'll have a trial!"

Harry ruffled through his hair. "That's great Sirius," he said not very enthusiastically. Instead he looked at Death who was now fully standing in front of the armchair. Harry could feel his
irritation, even though he tried to hide it.

Sirius' smirk shrunk a little. "You don't have to come over-"

Harry waved him off. He pushed himself from the armchair with a sigh. "No, no. It's fine. Just- just gimme a sec."

His attention alone was enough to have Death turn his head and Harry stepped closer till he could press a kiss against the being's throat in a silent apology. Death purred and then his hand was once more in Harry's hair and Harry was arching into another kiss. He almost didn't feel the shift in the air, but the reaction it caused pulled him back into the presence.

"Oh," Sirius was staring up from the fireplace, and the way his eyes flicked from left to right, told Harry that he wasn't the only one being able to see Death. "Oh," Sirius repeated himself as the realization of what he had been interrupting fully hit him. Death smirked. "I, um I guess I'll see you later," Sirius said, before his head disappeared from the fire, leaving only the glimmering coals and the orange flames.

Harry stared at the empty fireplace in stunned silence. Then he broke into laughter. Death grinned contently.

Harry punched Death's arm. "You knew exactly what you did there," Harry said. Death only grinned. "Don't smirk like that. It's your fault that I have to explain a lot of things now. And it won't be much fun," Harry continued. He couldn't bring himself to sound like he cared much and after all, Death was able to sense his amusement.

"I don't regret it," the being rasped, "He was the one interrupting after all."

Harry laughed. "You are an idiot," he said. Then he stretched and pressed a kiss against Death's lips. "Come on. Sirius was here for a reason after all."

Chapter End Notes

Some of you might have already noticed that I have started to post the Outtakes and Cutscenes of this fic in another work called "Master of Death - Outtakes". So for the interested people you can look it up. I plan to add some background infos about the werewolves and maybe some more details about the laws I made up for Harry's trial to this work, but after that I'll just add the cutscenes.

I'm still going through the earlier chapters to edit them. I think I'm at chapter 13 and I hope that I finally got the quotation marks right. :D

Also what did you think about this chapter?
They materialized in the hallway of Grimmauld Place No. 12 shortly after Sirius' departure. Harry noticed that Mrs. Black had returned to her painting. She wasn't shouting despite the curtains being wide open, but she ogled Harry with a disgusted look. Harry smirked at her and saluted, as he walked past the frame, which Mrs. Black only commented with a degrading snort.

He made his way to the kitchen, where Sirius was probably residing. Harry sensed Kreacher roaming through the house, as well as someone else sleeping in a room upstairs, but it was probably only a member of the Order recovering from a mission or something.

Opening the door at the end of the stairs to the basement, Harry spotted his godfather who was sitting at the table. He seemed rather lost. When he heard the squeaking of the door, Sirius looked up. He stared at Harry and then at Death who was standing behind him.

Harry shared the being's amusement. He tried to hide it in sake of his godfather, but shortly after he pulled back a chair opposite to Sirius and sat down, Harry was already grinning again. Death cared even less, and he openly smirked at Sirius as he stopped next to Harry.
There was a piece of parchment laying in front of Sirius. Harry guessed that it was the letter, which had caused his godfather to call Harry.

"Well," Harry said with a badly concealed smile and he cleared his throat. "So, is that the letter you were talking about?" he asked and nodded towards it.

Sirius stared at him for another moment in silence. Two seconds passed, before he opened his mouth, "What the Hell, Harry?! You are fucking Death?!!"

Harry snorted amused.

"Close but no," said being interfered.

"It's kind of the other way 'round," Harry added, "Though I wouldn't be opposed to try it," he continued with smirk.

Sirius groaned. "Merlin, why did I even ask?" He wiped his face with both of his hands. After a moment he raised his head. Harry reciprocated his stare, before Sirius eventually started to speak once more. "You are fifteen and he is like…" Sirius looked at Death, "You can't tell me that the age difference here is healthy. Did you even… before that, I mean…," Sirius groaned again. "Merlin, I never pictured myself to be forced to give this talk."

Harry laughed. "You don't have to, if you don't want to. I guess, that'll spare us both a lot of awkwardness."

Sirius' eyes flickered from Death to Harry. "Doesn't it bother you, that he kinda looks like you?" he asked. Harry looked at Death. The being did still resemble him in a way, but it was nowhere near the similarity that had existed at the beginning. Death was taller than Harry and his features were sharper. He looked like an adult, whereas Harry still had to deal with his teenage body every day. He didn't have a scar and there were no glasses – not that Harry would need them himself nowadays – and his nose looked different, not to mention the eyes. Death was building his own body now, and he seemed more comfortable in it with every passing day. There was a predatory air around Death, that was so natural, so easily incorporated in every of his fluid movements, that no one – not even Harry - would ever be able to ever match it. "I don't care. He can choose to look however he wants," Harry eventually said.

As if on cue, Death's features blurred and all of a sudden there was another version of Sirius standing where, Death had been. Harry could still sense his true form lingering behind what he was now resembling, but for Sirius there was probably no difference between them, apart from the eyes and the eerie perfection in Death's mirror image of him.

"Like he said, I can choose whatever form I want," Death rasped.

"This," Harry began and looked at his godfather, "This on the other hand creeps me out," he said while he pointed at Death, who - with a look at Harry - changed back to his more familiar form.

Sirius swallowed. "Yeah, I get that."

"And after all, you can't be that surprised, can you? It's not like we were very subtle," Harry added and leaned back in his chair.

Sirius stopped and Harry could basically see his mind revisiting all the small signs that he had witnessed. "You have been …together, like all that time?"

"Well, we first kissed in the last week of the summer holidays, so you could say that," Harry said.
"Wait," Sirius said, "You were here during that time, weren't you? Does that mean – I mean... have you ever... like here?"

Without his conscious approval, Harry's eyes wandered to a spot further down the table, before he could restrain himself and focus his look back on Sirius. His godfather stared at him with a deadpan look. "In the kitchen. On this table..." Harry's restrained laughter made the answer more than obvious. "Aw, come on!" Sirius stated, while he threw his hands into the air. "You know we eat here!"

Harry burst out in laughter and Death smirked at Harry's amusement. He wiped a tear out of the corner of his eye while Sirius shook his head. "You have to admit-," Harry said, between gasps of air, "-that you wouldn't mind Snape having sat there..." Sirius' mouth twitched, and he snorted at the thought. "...or-," Harry gasped for air, "or Dumbledore," he added and now Sirius joined him in his laughter.

"You are evil," Sirius uttered, "Outright evil." They continued with their laughter, till Harry restrained himself.

"Okay, okay," he said and took a deep breath. "We should talk about the thing you really wanted to talk about."

"Alright," Sirius replied, "But I want you to show me the exact spot, so I know where I have to use a cleaning charm, okay?"

"Deal."

Fifteen minutes later they were already deeply engrossed in the topic of Sirius' trial.

"It's a long time till then," Harry said. "The letter stated that you are expected on December 23rd. That's over two months."

"Maybe they don't know where I am. They want to make sure I show up. After all, it could take weeks till the letter reaches me."

"Maybe...," Harry said, "But maybe it's a trap. Maybe they are preparing. Your capture would put Fudge in a very good spot. The public opinion would add to his favour."

Sirius hummed in agreement. "I know," he said with a dark look. "But at least I've got more time to prepare."

"Most importantly they need to be kept from sweeping everything under the rug. If it isn't known that you get another trial, the Ministry will certainly claim that they captured you themselves," Harry said.

"I can already see the Headline, 'Sirius Black, infamous mass murderer finally caught...!'," Sirius replied grimly, "But you are right. Any ideas how we can manage to change that?"

"Well, I might have one or two. Though revealing that you get a trial now, would only lead to a mass panic. The people would try to burn you alive. We need to be cunning in what we are doing, so you at least have a chance at winning this," Harry said.

Death snorted amused, and he raised an eyebrow as he looked at Harry. He was probably remembering exactly how subtle Harry had been, in order for having a trial happening in the first
place. Harry shot him a look.

"How optimistic of you," Sirius said sarcastically as he watched their exchange.

"Hey, you know I am right," Harry said and turned to his godfather, "They think you've been a follower of Voldemort for over a decade now, what do you think will happen? Your whole trial will be a farce if we don't do that right."

Sirius sighed. "This will be harder than I thought." Harry nodded. "And what is your plan?" the man asked.

"I don't want you to raise your hopes in vain. I have a rough idea, but you should focus on the other stuff first."

"If you think so," Sirius replied grumpily.

"Hey, where is Remus by the way?" Harry asked the already familiar question. He couldn't feel the werewolf anywhere nearby.

Sirius sighed. "He told Dumbledore that his last mission failed."

"And, what does that have to do with anything else? After all, he did stay with this pack for some time, didn't he?" Harry asked confused.

"He told Dumbledore that he couldn't stay any longer or his life would've been threatened. Originally it was planned that he would return there the next full moon."

"Well, he could've done that," Harry said. "I don't think that they would kill him without a reason. He did well there. They respected him."

"What for?" Sirius stated, "He wouldn't have gathered any information."

"Is he still so devoted to Dumbledore's cause?"

Sirius raised his eyebrows at that. Then he sighed again. "I think he wanted a break. He needed one, that's for sure."

"And yet another mission."

"Yeah. Dumbledore came by a few days ago. Apparently, there is word out there, that another werewolf wants to join the light side."

Harry looked up. "That certainly sounds interesting."

Sirius nodded. "Another werewolf in our ranks would mean another force to negotiate with the packs. Or someone to have Remus' back if he is undercover."

"And of course, he went."

Sirius nodded.

"And that's why you felt the need to pop up in the common-room fireplace and ask for my company in the middle of the night," Harry concluded with a smirk, to get his godfather out of his dark mood.

Sirius groaned. "Oh, don't remind me. I don't even want to know."
"You are lucky that Death wasn't visible to you, huh?", Harry teased, and he looked at the being, who had been silently watching their conversation for most of the time.

Sirius buried his face inside his hands.

"Someone is coming." Death said. Harry called upon the powers of the cloak just in time, because there was a hiss in the fireplace and a red-headed Tonks stumbled from the flames, dragging ashes onto the floor as he did so. Sirius raised his head and he scanned the room, but of course there was no sign of either Harry or Death. Meanwhile the Auror stopped her half-hearted attempts to brush the dust of her shoulders and instead fixed her hair. It was probably thanks to her exhaustion, that she didn't notice Sirius immediately. She blinked tiredly till her eyes focused on the man sitting on the table.

"Oi, Sirius. Still up that late?" she stated surprised.

"Tonks. I thought you were still in the Ministry," Sirius said and she yawned.

"Well my shift actually ended ten minutes ago. Hestia took over. I didn't want to wake mum and dad." Tonks yawned again, "I thought I might just sleep here, if that's alright." The woman made a few steps and Harry quickly materialized on the other side of the room, to avoid being sat on. Tonks sank onto the chair that Harry had been occupying just seconds ago and Sirius watched her with raised eyebrows.

"Of course," Sirius said. "Mundungus is also here. He needed a hideout for a night. Apparently, he angered some 'half-troll' of a man, as he called him."

"Ah," Tonks replied, probably too tired to actually pay attention. She could've been Ginny's sister, the way she was looking.

"You can use the bedroom on the second floor. You know which one."

"Mmmh," she said.

"Do you think it's a good idea, if Andromeda doesn't know where you are?"

Tonks shook her head at the same time as she waved him off. "I just need to get home before she wakes up tomorrow."

"Alright, whatever you say," Sirius replied.

"Is Remus around?" Tonks asked out of the blue and Harry was once more reminded, that his godfather had been quite jealous of her crush on Moony.

"No," Sirius replied curtly. "Order business."

Tonks nodded. "I'll probably head upstairs to hit the hay." she said. The - at the moment - red-headed woman pushed herself up and made her way to the door.

"'night Tonks."

"Goodnight Sirius," Tonks uttered and she left the room. Harry waited a few moments, before he made himself visible again.

"Well that was close," Harry said from the other side of the room.

Sirius jumped in his chair. "Merlin's balls, I thought you were gone," he said.
"No," Harry replied with a grin, "As I said, being the Master of Death comes with some advantages. But I should probably head back soon. I still need to finish an essay for Snape."

"Sometimes I really forget that you still go to school."

Harry shrugged. "Well, you try and focus on your trial and I will see what I can do."

"Alright. And Harry, thank you."

"What for?"

"Well, the Ministry wouldn't have sent me this letter without someone pressuring them," Sirius said, "And I can't shake off the feeling, that you had something to do with it."

"Fair is fair. I owed it to you," Harry said and he smirked, "And it wasn't like I didn't enjoy it." Sirius raised his eyebrows.

"Do I want to know?"

"It's probably better if you don't know. Should they ask you, if you knew of the illegal means with which your trial came about, you should better be able to answer with no," Harry said.

"If you say so," Sirius said curiously.

"I'll swing by next week to see how things are going. Oh, and Sirius?"

"Hm?"

"Try to better avoid the floo. Umbridge has an eye on it."

"I'll take it into consideration," Sirius said with a smirk. "I guess I'll see you then."

"Goodbye Sirius," Harry replied, before the shadows swallowed him.

Harry reappeared on the same spot where he had left. In front of the fireplace of the common room. Death materialized right next to him. The flames had mostly burned down and two cats had settled on the armchair that Harry had been occupying about an hour ago. Somehow staying here didn't seem as appealing as it had then, and he turned to look at Death.

"Care for a walk?" Harry asked and Death smirked. He thought about taking the Marauders map with him, but while sneaking into his shared dormitory wouldn't have been a problem, Death could probably warn him about every approaching person anyway.

The fat lady muttered something in her sleep, as he climbed through the hole behind the portrait. Hogwarts at night had always been strangely peaceful. Though it was weird, hearing no one talk or walk in these corridors. Like watching from the other side of a mirror. And yet so many Hogwarts students before him had to have been sneaking through these hallways at night. It was strange, imagining a young Tom Riddle walking the same paths to discover Hogwarts' secrets, or Marauders themselves...

Dust was floating through the air and Harry walked aimlessly, letting his feet dedicate the pace as he took a familiar path. Harry and Death moved in silence for some time. Most of the portraits were sleeping, as no light disturbed their rest. Harry didn't have to rely on spells anymore, to see in the dark, though the world around him was oddly colourless. "Fudge was right...earlier that day,"
Harry said, and his voice echoed from the walls and a few portraits muttered grumpily at the noise. "Who else but Sirius would've been able to commit these murders?"

Harry realized that he had to decide where to go now, since they had reached the grand staircase. "We need another suspect, which in turn means we need Pettigrew," Harry said as he stepped onto the staircase in front of him. He felt a slight breeze as he left the - in comparison - narrow hallway and stepped into open space that was literally a tower as high as seven floors connecting each and every part of the castle.

"We can easily kidnap him," Death rasped.

"You do realize, that we need him alive," Harry joked.

Death grinned. "Alive for now. In the end, he'll meet me either way."

"Oh," Harry said with honest surprise in his voice, "I actually never thought about it that way."

"I am Death," the being stated.

"Yeah, well obviously," Harry responded with a smirk and continued his way.

"And yet you seem to forget it sometimes..." the being added somewhere behind him. Harry stopped dead in his tracks. Above him, he could hear the sound of stone sliding against stone, as the staircases moved lazily. He turned to look at Death, facing the familiar human form, that was only a fraction of the being that Harry knew as Death.

A predatory presence, tall and thin, sharp edges blurring into the darkness. The usual grin was missing, but if it had been there, his teeth would've seemed shaper than humanly possible. His hair was darker than shadows, as it was swallowing the light around him like a reverse halo.

The black strands moved in a way, that Harry had learned to associate with Deaths wings, even if he couldn't really see them. There was a soft glow to his pale skin, not unlike moonlit bones sticking out of a dug-up grave. He was motionless, his catlike movements replaced by a stillness that was just as fitting. 'A timeless being,' Harry mused before eyes returned to his face. Death stared back; his expression unreadable.

Somehow what Death had said was important.

"I want to see you. All of you," Harry said quietly. Death's expression still hadn't changed, but Harry could feel his emotions. His words meant more than any listener could ever grasp. But they could communicate without words. They were connected in a way that was humanly not comprehensible. But Harry had been a human for such a long time. It was hard – difficult to understand it. But there was a part inside of him, that started to understand.

...I will be you and you will be me

They bled into each other, like the sky and the ocean on some days do. Two different things, yet the horizon not visible in their fluid transition of colours. Harry was still changing, adapting. He was connected to Death, and a part of him was death, how ever small it was right now. Harry knew it would grow. He was changing, but so was the being.

There was a shift, a ripple through the planes and Harry saw Death. And he understood some more.

The end just was – had always been. Just like existence, it was nothing one could grasp and yet Harry knew the being in front of him. Because there was a being.
The end is neither big nor small. It is everywhere and nowhere, and it will be, as long as there is existence. But somehow in its endless circle of existing and ending; death, dying - the end itself had developed a consciousness, a mind on its own. Death was caused by death and yet the being was the cause of death. It was like asking what had been there first, the phoenix or the ashes - the personification of death or the act itself. A paradox of existence.

And this being, older than time had chosen to bind itself to a tiny human. Out of boredom, out of loneliness, but most of all to be seen, to be understood. A craving for companionship.

And Harry wanted to understand. He wanted to know this being. All of this was new to Harry, for his existence had been so brief in comparison to the being that simply was. But to Death, this was new too. By binding them together, Death had irrevocably turned itself into a being, that had gained another layer of awareness of its conscious self. That had gained a soul.

Death had told Harry, that he had been able to feel emotions before, but as they bound themselves to each other, the being had, for the first time, learned what it felt like to experience emotions by human definition, which in turn made him human in a way. And it was frightening and exhilarating at the same time.

And while death was everywhere as long as existence was, the consciousness - the being born out of death, was here with Harry.

Eyes and wings and shadows, endless and gigantic, filling the tower from the ground to the ceiling. Not restricted by this room, by these dimensions, Death was just as big as the space he had chosen to take up.

Death wanted to be understood, to be seen. And the being was afraid, just like Harry was afraid of what was to come. All of this was new, but Harry saw Death. And he started to understand the being. And someday - as frightening as the thought might be right now - someday they would be equals.

It was a realization, that they wouldn't talk about. Harry knew that much. At least not right now. Years would pass, maybe even decades till they would mention what they had experienced right now, what Harry had started to learn. This was only the beginning. The beginning of something so big that Harry couldn't yet wrap his mind around. But there was a spark. And that was enough.

Harry smiled. He laughed as he caught his own thoughts, deeming Death very human in this moment. Which was a strange thing to think, considering that he was surrounded by this being, that was the darkness residing in the tower full of staircases. Harry could no longer see the hundreds of portraits on the walls. There were eyes, countless of eyes looking at him and black feathered wings and shadows, which weren't really shadows. It didn't matter which form Death took.

Harry reached for the being that was everywhere surrounding him, with his hands, mind, soul and magic.

There was a pulsing that was physical and yet not as Harry made contact.

"I love you, you know," Harry whispered and he couldn't help but feel a little silly. But if the ripple running through Deaths form wasn't any indicator of what he was feeling, the happiness pulsing through their bond certainly was. Harry inhaled and as soon as the air had left his lungs again, Death was standing in front of him, in his very familiar - human form.

Harry realized that this body was now just as much a part of Death, as his wings and his eyes that he had always considered his true form. But just like Death had said during their conversation with Sirius earlier that day; he really could look however he wanted. And if he had put a little bit of
effort in, to find a form that resembled Harry's in the way that he appeared human... who was there to judge him? He was Death after all.

Harry smirked when Death stared at him. Not even half a second passed before he could feel Death nuzzling his neck with a purr and he could only hold onto the being's shirt as his back was pressed against the banisters. There were teeth grazing his skin and Harry gasped as a shiver ran down his spine. The sudden movement of the staircase had him realizing where they were. He gripped Death's shirt tighter and he hadn't yet tried something like this, but the intention alone seemed to be enough. He melted into the shadows pulling Death along, or maybe he was being followed but he didn't care.

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Harry was met with an amused snort when they reappeared beneath one of the stands on the Quidditch pit, a very popular spot to make out and the only place Harry's distracted mind had been able to think of, where they might for once be undisturbed. "Stop laughing," Harry said when Death continued to smirk at him, but the fondness in his voice betrayed his words. "It was the first thing that came to my mind," Harry added, but Death didn't seem to mind that much, since he leaned forward and let his nose run over Harry's neck, till he reached the spot behind Harry's ear. A deep rumble left his throat.

Meanwhile Harry started to let his hands wander beneath Death's shirt. He liked the feeling of skin on skin, had always loved touching, but this was something else entirely. He could feel Death's emotions reverberating in their bond just as he knew how his own feelings were pulsing through.

Harry could feel a hand sliding up his neck, intertwining itself with his hair and tugging. Harry followed the movement like so often. There was a pulse of possessiveness every time he bared his throat that way. A deep predatory satisfaction that Death found in Harry's vulnerability, was sparking through their bond and another emotion that Harry couldn't quite name yet.

But then his eyes met Death's.

It was awe. Pure and simple.

Harry couldn't breathe. Or maybe he could, but he didn't notice if he did so. There was only the being in front of him. He could feel the rumble, that had Death's chest vibrating and there was another hand taking hold of his waistband in the front, while sharp teeth ran over the spot, where his blood was pulsing. And then Harry was being pushed against a wall. Heat started to build deep in his guts as Death licked over his exposed skin.

Harry tugged Death closer till there was no space separating their bodies. He wanted - he needed to feel more, and he let his hands wander over the being's skin, till Death pulled back and Harry was able to get the shirt off the being's body. Then there were hands holding Harry in place, fingers pressing against his hipbones as Death nuzzled against his stomach and ribs, pushing Harry's own shirt up, before he playfully nipped his skin, leaving an imprint of teeth for a second, before the blood could return to its spot. Death eventually pulled Harry's shirt over his head, letting his hands run over his chest along the way, before he let the piece of clothing drop to the ground and he cupped Harry's cheeks.

Harry didn't feel the cold like he used to, but even then, he didn't think that he would've cared, if he did. Cool wood was pressing against his back, as he was kissing Death, while a hand found its way beneath his waistband. Harry arched into the touch and he wasn't able to do much more than to meet Death in open mouthed kisses.

He breathed heavily against the other's lips, as fingers wrapped themselves around his hard member. Something sparked deep in Harry's stomach with the pressure against his skin and the
cadent movements. But suddenly this wasn't enough. "Please...," Harry managed between gasps. "I- I need..."

Death slowed his motion till it matched the rhythmic pulsing of Harry's blood. "Harry...," he whispered grinng, his lips brushing against Harry's and then he nudged his lover's cheek with his nose. "What do you need, Harry?"

The Gryffindor gasped. "fucking tease...," he managed to utter against Death's jaw in hot breaths, and the being sped up the movement of his hand with a predatory grin. Harry's breath hitched and Death licked over his cheek.

"Harry...," Death continued. Harry's eyes fluttered shut, while his head fell back against the wall, meeting the wood with a dull thump. He held onto Death's shoulders as the spark of pleasure slowly started to build.

"Come on Harry...," Death rasped and Harry panted.

"Need you...," Harry gasped, "Please...," His eyes snapped open, when the hand pulled out of his trousers. The smoldering heat that had already started to spread through his stomach retreated, till it was once again a low burning coiling in his guts. Harry couldn't keep a whine from spilling over his lips, at the loss of contact. Death purred loudly against Harry's throat. He pressed closer and his hands slid over Harry's ribs.

"Come on," Harry began, "Come on...," his sentences more gasps than actual words. He reached out and tugged on Death's pants, before he remembered that he had magic. The remaining layers separating them were banished to a pile on the ground and a pulse of amusement went through their bond.

Harry's feverish eyes focused on Death, who was still mostly pressed against Harry, but who did nothing to end his misery. Instead he watched him with an amused smirk. The teasing bastard. Well two could play this game. Harry slowly leaned forward, but instead of kissing Death, he buried his face in the being's neck, nuzzling the spot beneath his jaw, not unlike Death did so often when he was focusing on Harry.

What should have been payback to finally get Death to move, was actually quite nice and Harry hummed as he nosed Death's skin. He breathed in deeply, taking in the scent that had already become so very familiar. The motion took some of the frantic need for release out of Harry. And while it was still there, the want was more of a slow burn heating up his insides, which he ignored in favour of continuing to rub his nose against Death's neck.

Therefore, it took a sometime for him to realize, that Death hadn't moved at all since Harry had started to nuzzle the being's neck. After he did notice this particular factor though, Harry pulled back. "Are you alright?" he asked slightly confused and maybe a tiny bit concerned.

All of a sudden, their bond was flooded with astonishment, love and adoration. Harry gasped at the intensity of it. Death leaned forward to kiss him and Harry's eyes fluttered close once more. After a few seconds though, their kiss grew more heated and Harry licked over Death's teeth, pushing back and he wrapped his legs around the being's hips as he was hoisted up.

Harry thanked Merlin for his magic, because it was only a thought that separated him from getting what he wanted, even if it only was lube and finally Death breached him. It was still tight, and Harry's breath got knocked out of his lungs, till his hips were flush with Death's and his member had fully settled inside him. And then the being began to move.

The wooden wall roughly scraped against Harry's back, but he couldn't care less. Death was starting to lick over Harry's collarbone. The steady movement caused his breath to hitch, but it was a gentle nip on his jawline, followed by a slight changing of angle, that had Harry moaning loudly.
The pleasure that had never fully disappeared came back with a new intensity and the stretch alongside the pressure against that bundle of nerves, punched little moans out of Harry's lung. The heat began to spread beneath his navel and Harry could only pant as the tension in his muscles increased. Blood rushed in his ears. A purr climbed up Death's throat, when Harry let out another whine as the being sped up his movements. There was a hand back in his hair and Death was licking over Harry's throat. Teeth scraped against his skin, before they bit down sharply and then the tension reached its peak in a mix of pain and pleasure. The heat inside Harry's stomach exploded, and he came with a whimper. His muscles clenched rhythmically, and his hips jerked without a conscious thought, as he rode out his orgasm, before Death also stilled after a few continuing thrusts.

Harry could still feel the aftershocks of the feeling wash over his body in lazy waves, as well as his rapidly beating heart. His lips found Death's after a little bit of idle searching and he pressed a slow kiss against them that was soon reciprocated.

Now that the heat of the moment had passed, Harry's limbs started to feel stiff with the uncomfortable position they had been forced to keep. He suppressed a strangled noise, when he felt Death slide out of him, and then he was standing once more on his own feet.

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Death looked at him with a smirk and Harry grinned back. He stretched his stiff limbs and a distinct tiredness started to settle in his bones. While Harry didn't need to sleep and exhaustion wasn't really taking over, he couldn't deny that he did miss his bed right now.

Harry lifted his hand to his neck and pressed into the tender skin, where Death's actions would undoubtedly leave another mark. He looked at Death with an amused expression when he felt his possessiveness bleeding through the bond.

Harry let his hand fall from his neck and with a sigh he turned to face the scattered clothing on the ground. After a moment of consideration, he just slipped on his underwear and pulled his shirt over his head. Then he waved with his hand and the remaining pieces vanished from the ground. If he was correct in his assumptions, then they should be waiting next to his bed in the castle.

When he turned around, Death was also wearing his clothes again. Harry glanced at the being, trying to find out if he looked slightly more disheveled than before, or if this was only his imagination. Death smirked at him, as if he knew exactly what he was thinking.

"We should probably head back," Harry said after a moment while he was looking at Death. An owl hooted in the distance, as he disappeared into the shadows.

Death was already there, when Harry reappeared on his bed inside the Gryffindor tower.

"Show-off," he muttered as he made himself comfortable. Death smirked and Harry couldn't keep the smile off his face, nor did he want to, as the being settled beside him and wrapped his arms - and whatever invisible appendages he possessed - around Harry as he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

So here you go, you made it that far and (probably) read about Death and Harry having sex. Let me know what you thought of it and the chapter as a whole.
Sunday was pretty uneventful, and Harry mostly used the time to sort through his ideas, of how to make Sirius’ trial public knowledge without causing the people to burn him on a stake. The remainder of the day, he and Ron went to the Quidditch pitch to train the red-heads abilities as a keeper. He wasn't as skilled as Oliver Wood had been but played decent enough if he wasn't too nervous.

Death was watching from the bleachers and even sat on top of the hoops for some time, which caused Harry to have half a heart-attack at first.

It was Monday during the third lesson – Harry was sitting in front of his cauldron which contained a spotless potion – when he was forcefully reminded that he had forgotten to finish his essay for Snape. The professor towered over him threateningly. Not that Harry was intimidated, but he had a hard time suppressing the groan that was about to leave his lips at Snape's words. "Detention Potter. Maybe that will teach you some discipline. Seven pm," and with a sneer he added, "I've got a few toads that need to be disembowelled. Don't be late."

"You couldn't have reminded me, could you?" Harry hissed at Death, after Snape had turned away. The being only commented Harry's glare with a smirk.

A few tables further down, Draco sniggered. "Oh, fuck off Malfoy," Harry said loudly over his table. It was time that the guy grew up a little bit. Ron next to him snorted.

"Ten points from Gryffindor," Snape retorted smoothly without even looking up as he inspected Parkinson's potion.


'Brilliant,' Harry thought sarcastically as he was met with the dark stares of the other Gryffindors.

After Potions followed Divination, during which Professor Trelawney predicted that Harry would die a gruesome death and that he would soon meet a dangerous stranger, who – what surprise – also wanted to kill him. It didn't help that she was still on probation.
Defence against the Dark Arts was even worse. Umbridge watched him like a hawk and she pressed her lips together when Harry did nothing, that would justify inviting him to another detention. He even kept his mouth shut, when she made a few comments about Diggory's death that had people whisper in shock and Dean Thomas jumping up from his chair, and yet Harry was simply staring at the dry pages of his DADA book. It didn't keep Umbridge from trying though. Even after the lesson had ended, Harry still found himself in an ongoing state of irritation.

The ghosts of Hogwarts, who were already avoiding him, turned around as soon as they saw him, and during Dinner, Neville obliviously declared that the bench on which they were sitting had to be really old, if it already had started to rot. Only then, Harry reigned his magic in and he went to the common room to finish his potions essay, before he went to face Snape for his Detention.

It turned out, it wasn't Snape waiting in front of his office but Filch, who promptly went and lead Harry to the trophy room. The awards and medals in there always caught some dust and it was a regular punishment for Hogwarts students, to have to clean them without magic. After Filch had put down a bucket with cleaning utensils, he confiscated Harry's wand. "I'll be back in one to two hours. And I will know if you didn't clean anything," he said, while a purring Mrs. Norris rubbed herself against his legs.

Harry watched Filch turn his back and disappear in the dim-lit hallway. Mrs. Norris' eyes were like torches as she stared at Harry. But a look from Death and she hissed, before following her owner.

"Well, it could've gone worse," Harry said and turned to Death, who was leaning against a wall. "Better than disembowelling Toads, at least." The being watched amused as Harry cast a wandless "scourgify" over the whole room. "Now the question is, what was so important that Snape can't handle my detention himself?" Harry said. Death raised an eyebrow.

Five minutes later Harry was walking past the portrait of Brutus Scrimgeour, that was hiding a passageway to the fourth-floor corridor. He had to evade a few students, but with the power of the invisibility cloak on his hands, it wasn't really a problem. Soon enough he reached the dungeons.

Harry materialized in a shadowy corner of Snape's office and Death appeared a little further to his right. Not far from them sat the professor. He was bent over his desk, dark hair hanging down as he was grading the essays that he had collected earlier that day. Apparently, Harry had overestimated Snape's hate for him. The satisfaction of watching Harry disembowel Toads was evidently no match to his current workload.

Harry was about to leave again, but a small movement caught his attention. Snape's eyes had flicked to a clock standing on his desk. It was probably nothing, but since Harry didn't have anything else to do anyway, he decided to stay for some time. Maybe the man was busy after all?

Death had already started to inspect the room and after a minute Harry followed him. Shelves upon shelves lined the walls. Mostly they held jars which contained all kinds of macabre things. All of them were labelled scrupulously in a familiar handwriting. There were vials holding different poisons and natural antidotes as well as potions and other stuff. Right in front of Harry was a jar with pickled Murtlap-tentacles, and next to it one, that was containing fully intact Mooncalf eyes. They stared at Harry motionlessly as the floated in their potion. Others contained plants and one jar held something, that Harry recognized a fully preserved Doxy. He walked alongside the wall, till the rows of jars abruptly ended because an old wooden door with a heavy iron handle and lock took up that place. Snape's private storage closet. Another doorway was located on the opposite wall, the wood of the door a little smoother and Harry guessed, that it was probably leading to his private quarters.

He wondered how the man could even read the handwritten papers in the gloomy room, since the
fireplace was the only thing illuminating it. And yet, the many glass jars reflected the light in way, that could almost be described as pretty.

Harry turned his attention to the shelves on the other side of the room, where Death was already residing. He let his fingers run over the labels as he inspected their contents. Harry had gotten so used to the quiet shuffling of papers and the scratching of a quill, that he nearly shattered one of the glass jars when Snape sighed loudly.

Death chuckled amused and Harry shot him a glare, before he turned his head and looked at the professor. When nothing more happened, he continued to examine the jars on the wall.

After a few uneventful minutes of walking through the room, Harry eventually turned his attention back to Snape. The man pinched his nose as he was reading through a passage of an almost unreadable essay. "Hopeless," Snape muttered as he crossed out the whole paragraph and scribbled something next to it. "Utterly hopeless."

Harry repressed an amused snort. Then, without a warning, Snape stood up. He tapped the stack of papers with his wand and while they organized themselves, he extinguished the fire with another silent spell before making his way to the door, that led to the dungeons. Harry vanished from the – now – dark room and appeared in the hallway, just to see Snape exit his office from the other side. Death had followed his example and they watched the professor locking the door with his magic. Curiously, Harry followed Snape.

"Where do you think he is going?" Harry asked Death, after he had silently cast a spell, that was frequently used by Aurors to disguise their presence during an observation. It was harder to keep up while moving and Harry had to focus quite a bit. Though Snape didn't turn around after he'd spoken and thus Harry guessed that he'd had to have done it alright.

Death tilted his head and he stared at Snape for a moment. "The headmasters office," he said. And indeed. Shortly after, they stood in front of the Gargoyle that guarded its entrance.

Harry cancelled the silence spell that had allowed him to move without making any noise. Dumbledore could sense magic, if Harry remembered correctly. The night in Voldemort's cave full of inferi was still something he couldn't forget.

Despite the fact, that Harry didn't know how apparent a simple spell would be inside a castle full of wizards and witches, he didn't want to take a risk. Only relying on his cloak, Harry materialized in Dumbledore's office, while Snape had yet to tell the Gargoyle the password. Death appeared somewhere behind Harry as he started to take in the room.

It was cluttered with strange devices, some of them whirring others standing still, reflecting the last beams of autumn sunlight falling through the window. His eyes wandered over the cabinets on the walls. They lingered a little longer on the closet in which the Pensive was currently hidden from sight, before they landed on Fawkes who was grooming his feathers on a bird perch in a corner of the room. Most of the portraits seemed asleep, but some of them watched the door and one wizard was scratching his nose. Eventually Harry's eyes fell onto the Headmaster.

He hadn't really seen Dumbledore since the speech at the beginning of the schoolyear. The man was currently seated by his desk, writing a letter with furrowed brows. His wrinkles were deeply engraved in his face and his beard was tucked into his belt. He seemed worn, Harry thought. Exhausted. Then there was a knock on the door.

Dumbledore raised his head and alongside the change of posture, the tired expression vanished. "Come in, Severus," he said while he put down the quill and pushed away the letter.
"Headmaster," Snape replied after he'd entered, acknowledging Dumbledore with a nod.

"Severus," the older wizard greeted him, "Right on time. Have a seat," he added, as he folded his hands in a familiar way. Snape stayed where he was, but the headmaster didn't seem to be bothered by this and simply continued. "How is Harry?" he asked after a moment.

Harry raised his eyebrows at that.

"Potter?" Snape snorted, "That is the reason why you called me here?" He stared at Dumbledore. When the headmaster only reciprocated his gaze, he started to talk, yet only after another dismissive snort. "Nothing seems out of the ordinary. He walks to his classes with Granger and Weasley. Most of his free time he plays Quidditch or spends time with his friends, of what I have seen. According to a conversation between Weasley and Granger, he appears to have withdrawn from them, yet that was to be expected after the unfortunate events of Mr. Diggory's death last summer." Snape looked at Dumbledore, but the man showed no sign of wanting the professor to stop. "His potion skills this year appeared to have improved, yet the short-lived impression that he might be able to pass his O.W.L.'s was thoroughly ruined by the lack of effort he puts in his work," Snape continued and Harry noticed a hint of sarcasm in his voice. He seemed to think of this whole 'interrogation' as ridiculous. Dumbledore gestured for him to stop.

Harry watched them attentively, while tracing the shapes of his teeth with his tongue. 'So, Dumbledore had asked Snape to have an eye on him. What a delightful turn of events,' Harry thought dryly and he glared at the headmaster. 'Sneaky fucker. Not that it was a surprise though.'

"I doubt that this is the only reason why you asked for my presence," Snape said.

'More like refuse to believe,' Harry added in his mind, but he couldn't help but agree with the professor. He stared at Dumbledore curiously, just as eager as Snape to get more information. Dumbledore sighed and he looked at his hands before raising his head once more.

"The Minister visited me in today." Harry perked up at that.

Snape's raised eyebrow was the only indicator of his surprise, but Harry knew that he was just as stunned. "I thought he was rather …fond, of ignoring this whole situation," the black-haired professor conveyed eventually.

"He wasn't here to talk about Voldemort."

"What did he want?" Snape asked. Harry bit his lip thoughtfully. He already had a good grasp on what this was about.

"He threatened me," Dumbledore said over his half-moon glasses. Despite the bad news that Fudge had gone to the headmaster that shortly after Harry's own 'visit' in the Ministry, he couldn't help but feel amused. Harry turned to Death, wanting to know what he thought of that matter, but now he literally had to bite his lip to hold back a snort.

He hadn't paid much attention to Death since they had materialized in this room - too engrossed in what was being discussed. And yet his attention had completely shifted. Death was still standing somewhere behind Harry, but his gaze was focused on the other side of the room. He glared at Fawkes with a mix of disdain and spite. The expression was something so unusual, that it had taken Harry a moment to comprehend the amusing sight. Unfortunately, Harry couldn't linger on it because Dumbledore had continued with his speech.

"-wasn't his visit that worries me. It was what he said." Snape's eyebrow seemed to have risen even
higher, but apart from that, his face remained emotionless. "I could now list the insults he used and some very foolish - if creative - conspiracy theories of his, all describing various plans of mine to undermine his authority in the Ministry... yet if I leave all of this out, one obvious fact remains." Snape's dark eyes pierced Dumbledore. "Someone was in the Ministry and threatened Cornelius Fudge. Someone, who he thinks I have sent to him."

Snape was silent, until he realized what Dumbledore was implying. "And you think that person is Potter," the professor stated deadpan. "He is a fifteen-year-old boy. He can't even apparate."

"There are other means to travel," Dumbledore said calmly.

The professor sneered. "The knight bus?" he offered sarcastically.

"Someone could've taken him with them."

Snape seemed to think about that for a moment. "...Black would certainly help him if he asked," he began slowly. "But why should Potter threaten the Minister?"

Dumbledore hummed and nodded as if he was pleased by Snape's conclusions. "Why was Harry present during Sturgis Podmore's trial?" he added after a moment.

Snape only stared.

"Many unanswered questions, Severus..." The headmaster took off his glasses, "Things I can't explain... and it worries me," Dumbledore said as he polished them with his sleeve. The potions professor watched silently, before they sat once again on Dumbledore's crooked nose. "Keep an eye on him, Severus," Dumbledore said.

As Snape turned to leave, Harry looked at Death. The being was now no longer glaring at Fawkes but reciprocated Harry's gaze.

"I should've known," Harry said as soon as they had left Dumbledore's office. "It was pretty obvious that Dumbledore would hear about my attendance of Sturgis' trial, but I hoped that at least Fudge would be sensible enough to realize that Dumbledore wouldn't send a fucking student to the Ministry to threaten him. His paranoia concerning Dumbledore is even bigger than I thought," Harry rambled as he walked past a corner and ducked into a secret passage behind a curtain. "God that man is stupid... You can't even call that ignorant anymore."

Harry stopped in the middle of the narrow passage and turned around. "And what was this with you and Fawkes?" he asked curiously. Death simply stared back as Harry smirked at him.

"I don't like them," he rasped after a moment.

"What, Phoenixes?" Harry said with a snort and he leaned against the wall.

"They are an anomaly. They don't die. Not like they should, anyway," Death replied. Harry grinned amused.

"And what am I then?" he asked and licked over his lips.

"You are my Master," Death replied and he took a step closer, his face hovering over Harry's.
Harry stared at him with a smirk. "I think you just don't like them, because you can't scare them," he said. "Fawkes didn't seem to be very bothered by your glare."

The being huffed. Harry reached out and put his hands against Death's chest, tugging him a little closer. He leaned forward and pressed a kiss against the being's lips. Harry smiled when a familiar rumble climbed up Death's throat. He placed another kiss on Death's throat - a spot that was easier to reach since that bastard still chose to make himself taller than Harry - before he buried nose in Death's neck. "We should head back soon," Harry said, his lips brushing the being's skin as he nosed Death's neck. "Officially I am still cleaning trophies." Harry could feel the Death's hands moving over his spine. He lingered for a moment longer, before he pulled back with a sigh. "Come on. If I don't show up, I'll probably have to really disembowel Snape's toads for the rest of the week."

Filch did show up about twenty minutes after they'd arrived back in the trophy room and the Squib eyed Harry suspiciously, when he saw how clean the room was. In the end Harry argued how he should've magicked the dust away if he didn't have his wand and Filch reluctantly let him go.

Harry had finished his homework around eleven o'clock and he happily headed to bed afterwards, glad to leave that day behind.

The following school-day passed quickly and afterwards, they held their second meeting for the DA. Harry had them practice the basics and while there was a lot of groaning and complaining, it became evident that most of the members didn't even know how to do a passable shield charm. The objections turned into quiet grumbles and soon they took turns in trying to disarm each other as well as deflecting the spell. "That was brilliant," Creevy said with a flushed face as Harry oversaw all of the DA-members leaving the room of requirement. He nodded absentmindedly, while Lee, George and Fred walked past him, before he closed the door to the now empty room. It was time to make good on his promise to Sirius. He gestured towards Ron and Hermione that he would catch up later and as soon as he'd walked around the corner he disappeared into the shadows.

The entrance hall of Grimmauld Place No. 12 was not empty, like Harry had expected when he appeared in the dim room. Instead he was met with the surprised stare of Dedalus Diggle, who stopped dead in his tracks, when Harry appeared right in front of him. In hindsight, it had been pretty foolish to not expect something like this to happen eventually since he'd continued to barge in like that.

"Mr. Potter!" the man exclaimed and promptly lost his purple top hat. The buzzing of voices was audible from the basement. Apparently, Harry had arrived just while an order meeting took place.

"Well this is unfortunate," Harry stated. From the corner of his eye, he noticed Death looming over his shoulder. The being smirked at Dedalus threateningly. The smaller Wizard flinched and the way his eyes widened told Harry, that he was able to see the being.

"Pity," Death rasped with a smirk. "Now we have to kill him."

Dedalus Diggle eyes flicked between Harry and Death. The mix of fear and confusion was probably the only thing that had kept him from shouting for help by now. The portraits on the wall watched curiously, some of them had sat up eagerly as soon as Death's words had left his mouth. Crazy bunch of Blacks that they were.

Harry smacked Death's shoulder. "Yeah right. Not suspicious at all, no..." he said with an amused smirk. Death overtime had acquired a strange sense of humour, and Harry had to admit that he
liked it. Though he wasn't quite sure if this particular statement had been genuine or not.

Diggle seemed to have finally decided that he should act. He grappled for his wand and opened his mouth, but before he could do anything, Harry's head had snapped back to him. He had materialized the Elder wand and was pointing it at the small wizard.

"Oh no, I wouldn't do that if I were you," Harry said, and for good measure he cast a "silencio" on the man. Death seemed to find the whole situation very entertaining. Mrs. Black watched from her portrait, and for the first time she regarded Harry with a look that wasn't outright disgust but rather a hint of curiosity.

Harry stared into Diggle's wide eyes. "Obliviate," he said after a moment. A dazed look appeared on Dedalus' face and before he could realize what was going on again, Harry materialized on the stairs one floor above the wizard. Death stood once more next to him and Harry leaned forward to watch the order member over the railing.

"Wha-," Diggle muttered and he looked around confused. After a moment he picked up his hat and walked towards the door that was leading to the kitchen. The eyes of the portraits followed him. Harry waited till he had disappeared and then made his way back down to the entrance hall. He turned to the portraits, mainly Mrs. Black, who was staring at him with thinly veiled interest. Harry reciprocated her gaze for a moment.

"I hope this stays between us," he eventually said, addressing the images of witches and wizards hanging on the walls. "I don't want Dumbledore sticking his nose in stuff, that isn't his issue." Harry's eyes wandered to a particular wizard, who was loitering in a frame that was certainly not his. Phineas Nigellus Black was looking around indifferently. Harry stared at him. "Don't think I can't burn both of your portraits till they are nothing more than dust." He casually flicked his wand and a wall of fiendfire appeared behind him. Harry could feel the sizzling heat on his skin, but the flames didn't touch him. Its many shapes were roaring and hissing, angry because they weren't allowed to devour anything. The former headmaster paled in his portrait. Harry turned to Mrs. Black, "That goes for all of you. I doubt your sticking charm would survive that either," he said before he once again addressed all of the – now affronted looking – wizards and witches. "Family affairs stay in the family."

"You are no Black," Phineas spat, "We don't owe you our loyalty."

"What a pity," Harry said and the flames crept forward.

"Alright, Alright! Fine," the former headmaster shouted. The fiendfire behind Harry vanished.

Harry sighed. "Well, I have to admit that what you said is true. No one here owes me anything. But Sirius is the head of the house. You owe him your loyalty-," Harry stared at Phineas, "-first and foremost. Apart from you no one has pledged allegiance to anyone else." The former headmaster just stared. "Keep in mind that Dumbledore did nothing to help Sirius Black to prove his innocence, when he needed him back then. But now he happily uses this house as his headquarters… Let's just call it a favour. I will help to reinstate the house of Black, by proving Sirius' innocence and you will keep my secret. Certainly, you wouldn't want that all that remains of your legacy are a bunch of crazies, who rotted in Azkaban."

Phineas had grown quiet and he seemed to consider Harry's words. "How do I care, if some foolish wizard gets obliviated anyway," he said eventually. "If Albus Dumbledore asks me outright though, there is nothing I can do," Phineas added and he turned around and left the frame.

"I guess, we've come to an understanding…," Harry concluded. Mrs. Black snorted.
Harry took a deep breath, before he made himself invisible and walked towards the stairs leading to the kitchen below. This agreement was still better, than having the portrait of Phineas vanish entirely from Dumbledore's office in Hogwarts. There was no way the headmaster wouldn't notice, if it were to suddenly disappear.

Chapter End Notes

I know there is the slight plothole why Harry didn't just obliviate the portraits... Well, there is no canonical info on that topic. We don't know if this is even possible and therefore we just pretend that it doesn't work for the sake of this story, alright? (We just ignore that Hermione could blindfold the portrait in the 7th book) And Harry might have forgotten about it anyway.

Also I struggled with that chapter. This is the other reason why it's not that long. I have no idea if I will keep what I have written after that and even with this I don't know if Harry and Death were still in character. But I just wanted to get something out, so I don't have to overthink this.
Chapter Summary

Harry and Sirius talk a lot and prepare for Sirius' trial.

Chapter Notes

I should probably read through this once again, but I thought I'd just post the chapter since I'm probably not going to make any changes anyway. So have fun reading it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The sound of voices grew louder with every step he took and soon Harry could make out the words that were spoken. "-can only guess. Last we know they were close to Fort William."

There was no charm blocking him from listening today, unlike the other times during the holidays, when a whole bunch of teenagers was staying at Grimmauld Place. When Harry had reached the foot of the stairs, he reached out with a hand, and as soon as he'd pressed his palm against the wood of the door, he went through it.

"But that was weeks ago," Kingsley said in his soothing voice, just as he entered. Harry shook off the weird feeling of moving through solid matter and looked at the group gathered around the table. Next to the dark-skinned Auror sat Dedalus Diggle – who thankfully showed no sign that he'd been obliviated just minutes ago - instead he was twirling his hat in his hands. Minerva McGonagall was occupying the chair to his left, but her head was turned into the other direction, eyes fixated on Dumbledore sat at the end of the table. The headmaster was stroking his white beard while he listened to the conversation, nodding thoughtfully from time to time. On his right was Moody, of whom Harry could only see the backside, but the Auror’s appearance was just as uncanny as Tonks’, who sat next to him with her signature pink hair, followed by Molly and Arthur Weasley. Harry spotted Sirius on the opposite end of the table, a grim expression on his face, as he was residing in his usual seat next to the fireplace. Close to him sat Mundungus, who didn't seem to be listening at all, instead he was loudly rummaging through his pockets. On Sirius' other side stood Bill Weasley. He was hovering over a map.

Harry had already seen it, shortly before he and his godfather had visited Conall's pack. A few strands of Bill's hair had left his ponytail and fell into his face, dangling over the map just like his earring with the fang attached to it. Harry briefly wondered if his brother Charlie had given it to him. Arthur’s gaze was also trained onto the scribbles and he leaned towards his son, looking at the spots that Bill was tracing with his fingers.

Remus was absent, probably still on his mission. But Severus Snape was there, although the man seemed like he didn’t want to be here at all. He was looking at Kingsley, clearly ignoring his left, where - apart from an empty chair – Mundungus was the only thing separating him from Sirius.

"It's the only trace we have right now," Dumbledore said calmly.

"Well, we know Greyback is heading towards the south," Bill said, eyes on the map. "We only
know of two areas in which werewolves run in packs big enough to be of interest to him."

"Then he is probably going to the one that's residing around Aberfoyle," Tonks mused. "That one is closer, if their last location is still anything to go by."

"But we shouldn't only focus on the big packs," Kingsley said. "Smaller groups might be actually more inclined to join a side."

Dumbledore nodded thoughtfully, but Sirius snorted. "Isn't that why Remus is out there, searching for this supposedly lone wolf who wants to join the light side?" There was a hint of bitterness in his voice and by the way the other's reacted, Harry could tell that it was a topic which had already been discussed more than once.

"Another werewolf on our side is a great asset, you know that just like anyone here," Moody started in his usual gruff tone.

"We don't even know if the rumours are true," Sirius resumed, anger spiking his voice and he leaned forward. "Maybe we are just wasting our time-"

"Black, I would be thankful if you could reduce your whining to a minimum," Snape interjected and Sirius' head snapped around. "We are here to actually discuss matters of importance... Just because you are emotionally-"

"If we could return to our actual topic, perhaps?" Kingsley suggested. The potions professor actually seemed inclined to let it rest, but then Sirius opened his mouth.

"Yeah, shut up Snievellus," he said after he had processed Snape's comment. Mundungus sniggered, but he immediately put some distance between him and Snape, when he saw his thunderous expression.

Dumbledore sighed.

Meanwhile, the potions professor collected himself. The fury that had been visible on his face just seconds ago, was replaced by a mocking smile.

"It was already pretty obvious that you can't keep your personal relations out of the order business," the man sneered, while Sirius on the other end of the table was fuming. "Perhaps you should just give up on taking part in these meetings. If I think about it, there is no point in you attending anyway," Snape proceeded, "After all, how useful can you be to the order, if all that you do is staying in that house all-"

Sirius' chair scraped over the floor as he jumped up. Death smirked.

"Please," Dumbledore began, but Sirius simply ignored him. There was a mad glint in his eyes as he stared at Snape who also didn't seem very inclined to stop at this point. Mrs. Weasley shook her head and many people at the table wore similar expressions.

"I dare you to finish that sentence," Sirius pressed out between clenched teeth. His magic was spiking all over.

"Well, what is it that you actually do you do to help the order?" Snape said. "Have you ever considered that even Lupin doesn't want to put up with your moods anymore-" Even before the professor finished, Harry knew that this was a low blow. Whether Snape knew of what kind Sirius' and Remus' relationship was or not. Harry's theory was soon verified by Sirius himself, who pulled out his wand at the same time as Dumbledore rose from his chair.
"That is enough!" the headmaster said determined.

This was the moment Sirius lunged over the table. No one seemed to have thought that this was even a possibility. For the blink of a moment everyone was stunned, but before Sirius could reach Snape, Bill had moved quick-wittedly and grabbed the Animagus to hold him back.

"Oh, I would love to show you some of the curses my mother showed me-" Sirius spat, his eyes full of anger while he strained against Bills hold.

Death eyed him with interest.

"SIRIUS!" Dumbledore yelled, and only then his godfather seemed to realize what he had actually said. The Animagus went white as a sheet. He sat down without another word, after Bill let him go.

Snape stared at Sirius with a strange look, while the others on the table didn't seem to know what they should do. Harry had to admit that he was equally surprised. For a moment, there had been actual fear in Snape's eyes. Harry had been able to taste it in the air as Sirius had lunged over the table.

Meanwhile the man in question summoned a whisky-bottle as well as a glass from the sideboard, not without causing some of the order members to flinch as he flicked his wand. Sirius poured himself a drink, his eyes daring anyone to say a word.

An awkward silence had settled over the room. Harry noticed that Dumbledore was looking at his godfather with concern.

"Well," Kingsley said and cleared his throat. "Have there been any news from Hagrid?"

Dumbledore's eyes left Sirius and he turned to the Auror.

"Not yet, but after my last correspondence with Madame Maxime, I am confident that he will return soon," the headmaster said. His casual tone seemed to have brought some of the normalcy back and the people sitting around the table visibly relaxed.

Harry chewed on his lip as he looked at his godfather. The man was staring at his drink with an unreadable expression. While Sirius hadn't been innocent in this whole argument either, this confrontation with Snape seemed to have hit him harder than anticipated. After a moment of hesitation, Harry left his spot next to Death and moved towards his godfather.

"Bill, did the Goblins mention anything about a possible alliance?" Dumbledore asked.

"Well, they will probably do what will benefit them the most. Right now, staying neutral is probably their best option and they are careful not to promise too much. Though I've got a contact in Gringotts...," Bill began while Harry crossed the distance to the other side of the room. He was careful not to brush against the oldest Weasley-brother as he walked around the red head, who gestured to emphasize his report.

"Sirius," Harry whispered right next to his godfathers' ear, as he'd reached him. The man flinched and almost spilled the contents of his glass, but he quickly regained his composure.

Mundungus didn't even look up, but Dumbledore's blue eyes fixated Sirius, his gaze lingering for a moment. Moody's magical eye also changed its direction. Harry was lucky that Moody hadn't paid much attention to the upper floors a few minutes earlier. Otherwise this visit would've taken a whole other direction by now. After a few moments, Dumbledore's focus returned to Bill.
The curse breaker was still talking, so Harry didn't worry too much about being listened to. "Sirius," he repeated quietly, "It's me, Harry."

He had to take a step aside when Sirius stood up abruptly, pushing his chair back with the movement. The conversation on the table stopped at the sound of wood scratching over stone.

"What?!" Sirius snapped when all eyes were directed at him, "Can't a man go to the toilet?"

The faces slowly turned back to Bill, who - after another moment of hesitation - continued with his report. Anxious glances trailed after Sirius, while he walked past the pantry to reach the staircase. Harry quickly followed him. From the corner of his eye he saw how Death disappeared in the shadows of the gloomy kitchen. But only a second later, Harry himself left the room by slipping through the door right after his godfather. When it fell shut, Sirius started to talk.

"Harry?" he asked quietly, after having only taken a few steps up the stairs before stopping.

"Yeah," Harry replied.

"Where are you?" Sirius asked.

"Right behind you," Harry said, startling his godfather as he nudged him forward. "Come on, Moody's probably going to have an eye on you. I shouldn't even be here, so I won't give him the shock of his life by starting to make myself visible now."

"Alright," Sirius said and he continued his way upstairs. "What are you doing here?" he asked after a moment.

"I said, I would come by and pay you a visit, didn't I?" Harry responded.

"I suppose," Sirius grumbled.

"God, your mood is really not the best right now, is it?" Harry stated, staring at Sirius' back as they walked up the stairs. The Black's magic twisted sharply at this proclamation.

"Not in the way Snape meant it. Merlin...," Harry said. "You know that he had to say something to rile you up, after you provoked him. I think he even was afraid of you for a moment."

"Probably deserved it," Sirius muttered grumpily, "Slimy bat." He pushed the door open to the entrance hall.

"How is it going with the preparations for the trial?" Harry asked, trying to change the topic while he left the narrow stairway. His attention briefly focused on something else when he spotted Death, who was already waiting in the entrance hall.

"Well, how do you think it is going?" Sirius replied grimly and he turned around in the dimly lit entrance hall.

"Not very well then, I guess."

Sirius stared vaguely into Harry's direction, but after a moment he gave it up and turned back around. There was no use in trying to spot an invisible person. "You guessed right," he replied with a sigh.

Death joined them as they made their way to the staircase. The severed heads of former house elves hovered over them like the parodies of gargoyles as they walked upstairs. Empty eyes watching,
witnessing and having witnessed the insanity taking hold of their masters over the years, while they were guarding their rotting residence.

"I would need at least one witness to prove that it wasn't me who killed all these people," Sirius started, "But everybody who might have seen something, is either dead or was obliviated. The only person that could prove my innocence is Wormtail. And he is hiding beneath Voldemort's cloak like a coward. Which is. And capturing the traitorous rat is as likely as spotting a Demiguise in a jungle," Sirius continued. His bony fingers twitched uneasily. After they had reached the first floor, he opened the door in the hallway that led to the closest bathroom. Sirius waited a moment longer before closing it, so that Harry was able to slip in after him.

"I thought that maybe, I could attempt a similar approach to you though," Sirius said and he leaned against the sink. There was a crack running through the porcelain, right beneath his fingers and the mirror on the wall was old and tarnished.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked, his eyes leaving Sirius when they fell upon Death who entered the room by simply walking through the wall.

"Well, Death Eaters aren't the only ones who are able to claim seats in the Wizengamot."

"You are thinking about the Weasley's," Harry stated after a few moments.

"Yeah." Sirius raised a hand from the sink to brush his long hair out of his face.

"That might even work," Harry contemplated, "Though they are probably not able to buy the title."

"I thought of that already. I would lend them money. Bill could take it from my Vault, if I gave him permission."

Harry nodded, but then he realized that he was still invisible. "I think it's a good idea," he said out loud, "Bill could do the whole claiming thing. It would be pretty subtle since he is working in Gringotts anyway. The Ministry won't be able to undermine the claiming of their seats, if they don't know what's going on."

"There are a few other light families who are able to claim titles, though I doubt that they would be of much use," Sirius added.

"The Longbottom's?" Harry suggested. Sirius shrugged.

"It's not like I could simply pay them a visit and ask them, if they would like to vote on my trial."


Harry frowned.

"You don't like the idea," Sirius stated even before Harry could open his mouth. The man had a good grasp on what Harry was thinking.

"I don't like that it involves Dumbledore," Harry began slowly, "He is already engaged in so many things that aren't of his concern. Why add another one?" The recent conversation between Snape and Dumbledore was still replaying in mind. "You could send Remus," Harry suggested.

"Remus is on an order mission," Sirius retorted. "And Augusta Longbottom doesn't know that I am innocent. I doubt she would believe Remus or anyone else in that matter. But she is loyal to Dumbledore. I'm sure, she would listen to him."
Harry had to admit that Sirius was probably right. He sighed and looked at Death for a moment. The being was sitting on the edge of the bathtub. He seemed rather dismissive of the topic. His fingers trailed idly over the snake shaped faucet of the tub. The steady sound of leaking waterdrops hitting the porcelain disturbed the silence.

"You know, this whole 'you-being-invisible' thing is kinda strange. I feel like I'm talking to myself," Sirius began suddenly. "Who knows, maybe I'm only hallucinating," he said with a strange laugh.

Harry looked up with a smirk. "Nah, don't worry. You handled it rather well, if I can say so."

"Well, we used to hide beneath the invisibility cloak all the time during my school years…" Sirius gaze grew distant - his mind caught up in memories of the past.

"Maybe we should talk another time," Harry suggested. "When there aren't that many people here and you aren't pretending to use the toilet while we have our conversation," he added with a smirk. Sirius blinked distractedly before he wiped over his face with his hand and sighed.

"Alright," he said and pushed himself from the sink. "Hey, before I forget it… How is your thing going?"

"My plans regarding your trial?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded."Mhm."

"Actually, I didn't have much time to think it through yet," Harry said.

"You still don't want to tell me, what this is about?" Sirius asked, "Because somehow, I've got the feeling that even you don't know what you are actually planning."

Death raised his head and stared at Harry, smirking sharply. Harry huffed. "Maybe the details aren't something I thought of yet," he said. His godfather raised an eyebrow and he stared pointedly at a spot over Harry's shoulder, probably intending to look at Harry's face. Nevertheless, pretty accurate for someone who didn't see the person they were talking to. "I will though," Harry continued. "Your trial takes place in a few months; we've still got time."

His godfather replied with a sigh. "Yes, but I don't know if I'm lucky or not. Right now, I just wish it would be over…," Sirius added.

Harry didn't know what he could say after that statement. For some time, the leaking faucet and its water droplets were once again the only sound in the room. "Alright," Harry began eventually. "Let's meet up another time. When it's less busy here and you can actually see me. In a few days maybe? After the weekend?"

Sirius hummed. "Yeah, alright," he agreed after a moment.

"Maybe we've both made some progress then," Harry said with a smirk.

"Hopefully," Sirius added. "Though I don't look forward to reading through these dry books that are laying around in this house."

Harry snorted. "Yeah, I know what you mean. Maybe you can ask Tonks about a few casefiles to find some strategies for your trial."
Sirius shrugged. "Maybe."

"Well then… I guess I'll see you next week?" Harry said.

"Yeah," Sirius sighed. "Goodbye Harry."

"Bye Sirius." With that, he vanished into the shadows.

Back in Hogwarts, things were a little bit different. Now that Harry was aware of Dumbledore ordering Snape to keep an eye on him, he could basically feel the eyes of the professor following him around. But with thinking about Sirius' trial, school, homework and Quidditch practice, Harry was too busy to do something suspicious anyway.

Before he knew it, a week had passed, and Harry appeared once more in Grimmauld Place to visit Sirius. His godfather had actually taken Harry's advice and he'd asked Kingsley – not Tonks – if he was able to get a few documents that could help him, should he ever have a trial. The Auror, if confused, had obliged and thus Harry and Sirius were able to look through all the papers that had something to do with the "infamous mass murderer Sirius Black" and his escape from Azkaban. The documents were scattered around the floor in Sirius' bedroom, which the man hadn't seemed to have left in days, besides feeding Buckbeak and the occasional walk to the bathroom, judging by the state of it.

The fact that Remus was still absent, might have played a part in that. "Apparently he has the best chance to find him, according to Dumbledore that is," Sirius said, while Harry eyed the empty bottles next to the bed with a frown. The stench of whisky was still lingering in the room.

"How much are you drinking, Sirius?" Harry asked his godfather, as the man picked up a file from the bed and started to flip through it. He didn't even care about his close proximity to Death, who was sitting by the headboard, cross-legged and who watched attentively.

Sirius waved him off, without looking up. "You sound like Remus," he said.

"Well but he is usually right, isn't he?" Harry said. Sirius huffed and he finally turned to look at Harry.

"You don't have to worry about me. I'm fine."

Harry snorted.

"Alright. Maybe a little more, now that Remus is gone," Sirius said and he closed the file and sat down on the mattress.

Harry pushed himself from the ground, where he had been sitting and he took a few steps towards his godfather. "I know that it's hard. There is your trial, that you are worrying about and Remus is on a mission…"

Sirius ruffled through his hair. "It's not that," he interrupted Harry suddenly, "Well not only that…"

Harry stared at him. His godfather stared back. Harry could see his Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowed. When Sirius continued to talk, it was barely louder than a whisper. "I get Nightmares."

"Oh," Harry replied, inwardly cursing himself for his eloquent choice of words.

"I dream of the Dementors," Sirius said quietly. "Of Azkaban." Harry stood motionlessly. "It messes with your mind, being there," Sirius said and he looked at Harry with his grey eyes. "The
ones who come in new, they still scream. Mostly during the night. They scream and cry and kick the walls, scratch the bricks till they are bloody… but eventually, they grow silent. Empty shells… all of them. I don't know what was worse. The screams or the silence…"

"I'm sorry," Harry said after a moment. Sirius shook his head.

"You don't have to be sorry. It's alright, I mean I'm dealing… But since Remus is gone… I could talk to him about it you know. It helped. Him, being here…" Sirius stood up; the file forgotten on the bed. "And now he is once again on a bloody order mission."

Sirius began to pace, his voice drenched with growing anger. "I mean he can do what he wants, he's a grown man, but it's just so stupid!" He stopped and turned to Harry, who still stood on the same spot on which he had stopped earlier. "He didn't even want to go on another mission! But Dumbledore asks and he jumps," Sirius snorted with frustration, "I mean, it was different with the packs. I was worried, but at least I knew that he could handle himself, you know. But now? He is looking for a werewolf, who – for all we know – might not even exist! The people he has to talk to, the spots where someone like that will hide or live, they are dangerous. Knockturn Ally is only the tip of that filth!" As if this rant had drained him from all energy, Sirius posture fell and the fire in his gaze vanished. He sighed. After a moment, he turned and picked up the file from the bed.

"I kind of worry about him," Harry said to Death a few hours later, after they were back in Hogwarts. It was already pretty late but sleeping hadn't sounded very appealing to Harry. Because of this, he and Death were sitting beneath the open sky on one of the Quidditch stands. It was a dark and cloudy night. Not many stars could be seen, and the autumn wind tugged on their clothes. It smelled like snow.

"Sirius Black," Death stated.

"Yeah," Harry said, "Remus being away… I don't think that it's very good for him."

"Dumbledore takes a great risk if he sends the only werewolf, he has on his side to look for a mysterious stranger," Death said. Harry looked at him confused. "Maybe he would overthink his decisions if someone told him of their concerns…" Death smirked and then Harry realized.

In hindsight, it was pretty easy to alter Snape's memories. It might be attributable to the fact, that Harry was in possession of the Elder wand. Or that the man had been sleeping when Harry had pointed said wand at him. Either way, Harry just hoped that it would work out.

If Snape was the one to approach Dumbledore, the headmaster would at least not think that the man did it to soothe Sirius' worries.

Chapter End Notes

I kind of liked to write the scene between Snape and Sirius, though I have no idea what to do with Snape in that fic. His character is a mystery to me. I would love to include him more but I have no idea what his motives would be. Maybe that changes in the future maybe not. We'll see.
Also I hope you don’t get bored since there is not a lot of action but well. I'm not going to rush things.
The next afternoon, Harry returned to Grimmauld Place. As soon as he arrived, he could sense Sirius' presence on the topmost landing. Death writhed slowly on his shoulders and a silent hiss could be heard when the being's tongue flicked against Harry's collar bone.

Nowadays Harry was so used to seeing Death in his human form, that he'd almost jumped at the sudden weight appearing on his shoulders. He had stopped dead in his tracks then - forgetting for a moment that he was on his way to Herbology - which in turn had caused Ron to release a string of curses while he barely avoided knocking into his friend. In the end, they'd managed to make their way to the greenhouses without another incident. During their walk there, Harry had smiled when he noticed that Death had crept further under his shirt as soon as they'd stepped outside.

The change of seasons couldn't be ignored any longer and the few warm days they'd still been granted in the beginning of the month had been chased away by the icy wind that swept over the Hogwarts grounds. Snow could be spotted on the mountain tops surrounding the castle, grey clouds hanging over them. The cold autumn air had the younger students researching warming charms and the Quidditch players slowly started to resent their captains for the rigorous trainings in the chilly weather. Even inside the walls of Hogwarts, students had started to wear their dragonhide gloves.

Harry doubted, that Death was also affected by the change of weather, but even now - hours later – the being was still curled around his shoulders. He wouldn't ask Death to change back if he didn't want to, however, the fact that the being had yet to get bored of it only confirmed Harry's growing suspicion, namely that he enjoyed being carried around that way.

Said being was now slithering down Harry's arm, defying gravity in a way that shouldn't be possible, while the dusty air of Grimmauld place's entrance hall whirled with their arrival. Harry's gaze wandered over the rows of portraits before his attention shifted. A feeling in his gut told him that Kreacher was somewhere in the basement. Probably in his nest next to the boiler. Buckbeak appeared to be still living in the former bedroom of Mrs. Black and apart from a few spiders he couldn't sense anyone else in the house. The magic that had once belonged to the invisibility cloak snapped back. Harry could feel it
retreating into his core in time with his exhale. Accompanied by the scrutinizing stares of the portraits he made his way upstairs.

Reaching the door with Sirius' nameplate - a relic from the Black's youth - Harry knocked. He could hear some shuffling and then there was silence. Harry frowned as there was no answer and he knocked again. Another minute passed and then Sirius finally opened it.

Sirius' hair was messier than usual, stubbles decorated his cheeks and he blinked at Harry with a sour look on his face. Though when he saw that it was his godson, his expression softened a little bit.

One look into the room confirmed Harry's suspicion that not much had changed. Harry pushed past his godfather, not bothering to wait for an invitation. It became apparent that Sirius had most likely been holed up in there since Harry had left the previous day.

It was stuffy. Velvet curtains blocked the sunlight from entering and the state of the room didn't appear to have changed at all.

Files were still scattered all over the floor alongside scribbles that hadn't been there yesterday, and the bottles next to the bed had gained new company. At least this one didn't seem to have been emptied. Altogether it was a mess, but it wasn't the state of the room that worried Harry.

When he turned around, Sirius was still standing at the door and he met Harry's gaze with tired eyes. The man pushed his long hair back while his other hand was resting on the doorframe. Sirius was wearing the same clothes that he'd worn yesterday and judging by the state of them he had probably slept in them. Harry simply looked at his godfather. Not a word was spoken.

"I should probably take a shower," Sirius eventually said, his voice raspy as if he'd just been sleeping.

"Yeah, I think you should," Harry replied with a nod. Sirius rubbed his neck and with a quiet sigh, he turned and disappeared from Harry's sight. Harry listened to his steps in the hallway till he could only hear a muted shuffling. There was the sound of a door falling shut, and Harry turned around to face the depressing room once more.

"I hope Remus returns soon," he absentmindedly mentioned. The being that wasn't really a snake flicked its tongue against Harry's skin. "For his sake mostly. I mean look at this. He's a mess without Lupin, but I guess who isn't after all that."

Harry kicked an empty bottle over the floor. Its journey ended at one of the bedposts with a clinking sound.

"I wasn't in a much better state before I came here," Harry said and he stared at messy sheets. The memories of the seven years that had taken place between his first and second encounter with Death were like fog. Now that he was neither his old nor his younger self, they were even stranger to grasp. The memories of a life he wouldn't live.

He remembered the countless hours of Auror training, the time he had invested in this job so shortly after the war and yet... They had felt pointless. It hadn't been something he enjoyed. Not really. He had been good, yes. And yet it was merely a distraction. Something to do, something so that he hadn't had to deal with the things going on around him. And hunting the remaining Death Eaters down had been a good pastime, but even their numbers had to dwindle eventually. And then, what was there to distract him from realizing that maybe the reason that he couldn't love Ginny the way he had before wasn't the war but something that was running much deeper? A change that had already begun and wouldn't be completed till a choice was made. A choice that was never meant to be postponed.

For seven years Harry had been stuck between two sides, unmoving, separate from the living but
also not dead. He had been like a ghost. Never changing, halfway on his way to become the master of a being that had granted him time. Borrowed time. The choice had always been something he had to make. Go on… or become the Master of Death. He had searched for something that wasn't there then, but at least he'd had something to do during that time. But after the first few years had passed - after his resignation…

Months ruled by apathy until he'd finally gathered enough strength to at least pretend…

Returning to this, the time in which he was fifteen had been like breaching the surface after years of living underwater. A first breath after a lifetime of aimless floating only surrounded by dull sounds and gloomy light.

Death writhed slowly as Harry stepped over the scattered papers. Reaching the window, he pulled the curtains apart. Only now it dawned on Harry why Sirius had used his wand to open the drapes the previous day. Particles of dust rained down upon him and he had to squeeze his eyes shut to avoid getting something in there. He could feel Death's amusement and a snippy retort was already resting on his tongue, when the weight from his shoulders suddenly disappeared. Death's snake form dissolved into smoke and then a human hand brushed through his hair, getting rid of the dust that had settled in the black mop.

Harry looked up and he had to blink a few times to get used to the harsh light invading the prior darkness of the room as he let go of the curtains. Death was standing next to him, tall, imposing and an air of obscurity surrounding him. Harry could sense his fondness and a mirthful expression was resting on the being's face.

Harry smiled. His eyes lingered a little longer, tracing the sharp features of the Death's face. They differed ever so slightly from how he had appeared a few weeks ago. Still changing, just like Death's height seemed to vary from time to time. Yet he was always tall.

There was a certain androgyny to his face, a sharp jawline and a predatory smirk that didn't help to lessen the unsettling effect that his eyes had to have on someone who wasn't Harry. Slightly darker where the iris of a human would be, but nevertheless unnerving. His hair was the only thing that was still the same.

Harry had always thought that it was an exact copy of his own. Perhaps though, it had been the truest of Death's features right from the beginning. Darker than black, swallowing light and yet reflecting it when there was no source of illumination around. Sometimes moving, floating around in what Harry knew was a resemblance of dark wings. Always there, always present and yet unseen.

Harry's gaze wandered further. His smile turned into an amused grin when he took in Death's casual clothes. Furthermore clothes, that the being seemed to change every so often. To be fair a hooded cloak would only play into the cliché and Harry had yet to see him wear a shirt that wasn't a shade of black or white, but then again… Witnessing the being wearing one of Mrs. Weasley's knitted jumpers might be too much for Harry. The image alone had him grinning.

Death who still standing in front of him looked at Harry as if he'd followed his whole trail of thought and he raised an eyebrow. Harry shook his head, amusement still evident on his face as he turned his attention back to his current mission.

He opened the old window and was immediately met with a cold draft, that while chasing away the stuffiness also managed to scatter the papers on the floor even more apart. With a wave of his hand, Harry prevented the documents from following the whirling air. He could hear the dull gurgling of pipes and then water running as he stepped away from the fluttering curtains. The house was eerily silent otherwise.

For a moment Harry stood awkwardly in the chilly room, not knowing what to do. He vanished the
empty bottles next to Sirius' bed and then sat down on its edge. He was soon joined by Death who leaned against the carved headboard just like the day before. Minutes trickled by, the silence only disturbed by the dull sound of running water and a car passing by. The bed creaked and then there was a shift on the mattress before Harry felt a hand carding through his hair. He smiled, a warm feeling spreading through his chest.

When Sirius reappeared, he had shaved and was wearing fresh clothes that Kreacher had probably brought him. He stepped into the room barefoot, commenting Death's presence with a snort as soon as his gaze fell upon him.

"I hope there was no funny business going on in my bed as long as I was gone," Sirius stated with a look at them.

Harry snorted amused, while Death leaned towards him and nipped on the juncture of Harry's neck with a sharp grin. Sirius stared uncomfortably, before he cleared his throat and turned towards the window. Harry could hardly contain his laughter.

"How long was that open? It's freezing in here," Sirius asked, and Harry swung his legs over the edge of the bed.

Harry didn't answer his question. "I see you've been busy," he commented instead with a nod at the new notes on the ground after his godfather had closed the window.

Sirius ruffled through his hair. "I thought it couldn't hurt to write some things down."

Harry looked at his godfather and the dark circles under his eyes. It dawned on him that maybe Sirius had tried to find another way to find his sleep. Recalling the half-emptied bottle of whisky and the lethargy in Sirius' voice, Harry guessed that his nightmares had prevailed after all. With another look at Sirius, Harry decided that he wouldn't ask. Instead he pushed himself from the bed and rubbed his hands. "Well then, let's take a look at what we've got."

Tension that he hadn't noticed earlier seemed to bleed out of Sirius' stance while Harry watched him. Hopefully Remus would return soon.

Harry visited Sirius every day after that. Even if it was only an hour, just to keep him company. He used the excuse of Sirius' trial and while it was the truth that they had to prepare, it wasn't his only reason for visiting. Him being here seemed to distract Sirius somewhat. They read through dry books depicting the Wizarding law - old and new – as well as the information the Ministry had gathered about Sirius. It was their luck, that Kingsley was responsible for the manhunt after the Animagus, yet Harry was under the impression that this whole researching didn't really lead to anything. He didn't dare to admit it out loud of course, but sometimes he spotted a similar expression on Sirius' face.

There was a lot of fake information about Sirius' whereabouts and there were passages of interviews with people, who had supposedly spotted "Black" during the last two years. It was as if Kingsley had just grabbed a bunch of documents from his desk that wouldn't be missing and had given them to Sirius. But then there was also stuff from before. Information about the time previous to Sirius' imprisonment. School records, jobs, family history…

The man scoffed at the photographs of Bellatrix and Rodolphus and he paused for a moment when there was one of Regulus Black amidst the Slytherin Quidditch team. Harry watched how he folded it carefully and put it into his pocket.
It was then when Harry had asked what he'd been like. Regulus. And Sirius had told him. How proud Regulus had been when he was chosen for the Quidditch team. How one time, his brother had accidentally coloured their mother's hair blue when he didn't want to wear a certain cloak. And how different it was when they were in school. When the first paperclips of Death Eater raids had found themselves on the walls of Regulus' room.

They talked about many things after that. Sirius told him about the marauders map, how they had found a spell that would draw paths onto paper if you just walked them.

Harry then told Sirius about the secrets they hadn't found. He told him about the chamber of secrets, the Basilisk that had lived there and that there is a room in Hogwarts that the house elves call Come and Go room and that can give you everything you need if you just know where to look.

With the stories that had found their way into this daily routine, the time passed rather quickly.

After a week, they had a pretty good grasp on what the Ministry knew about Sirius, but that didn't change the fact that he would be questioned about the murder of 13 people. Or twelve, if Harry could do anything about it…

Just like Sirius, Harry knew that they needed Pettigrew if they wanted to win this trial. And after a few days, he admitted that much to his godfather.

But Harry didn't elaborate his plans any further than telling Sirius that they somehow involved Peter. Better the man wasn't involved in any illegal activities concerning his trial.

Because Death was right. They could kidnap Wormtail easily. And yet, doing it now wouldn't make much sense. Voldemort would probably send Death Eaters to search for Pettigrew as soon as he'd disappeared. Not out of concern for the man, but he'd want to keep his return a secret. And even if Voldemort thought that Pettigrew had fled on his own, he wouldn't allow a traitor to live.

And then there was the question of where to keep the man till the date of the trial. Grimmauld Place? And risk Sirius killing the man, before the trial had even begun?

Additionally, Harry's resentment towards Dumbledore had grown to the point, that he wanted the man as little involved as possible. And keeping Pettigrew's presence in Grimmauld Place a secret was an impossible task.

Harry had thought about the chamber of secrets. It was pretty secluded after all but having to care for the prisoner…

No, kidnapping him now would really not make much sense. It would only lead to problems.

But speaking of problems… It was not only Sirius, Harry had to deal with. Over the course of the week he had also noticed that Umbridge seemed to hate him even more than before. Harry lost points for the stupidest things and he knew if he made only the slightest mistake, he would have to serve another week of detention. Maybe Fudge had told her to be cautious around him after the “incident”, or maybe it was just the foggy memories of their detentions resurfacing. Alongside Snape's continuous spying and Ron and Hermione's concerned glances, Harry was glad to get out of Hogwarts from time to time.

On Saturday when Harry appeared in Grimmauld Place, it was no longer only Sirius who was greeting him, but also Remus.

"Apparently, since my last mission 'has failed', Dumbledore thinks that it might not be the best idea for me to be the one looking for this werewolf," Lupin explained, as they were all seated at the table in the kitchen. "The werewolves know now, that there is a traitor among them, a werewolf who infiltrates packs and spies on them. Dumbledore fears that they might have been the ones to spread this rumour. Though he doesn't think that it is likely, it is still a possibility according to him," Remus finished.
"Really," Harry said, inwardly grinning. He exchanged a quick look with Death. Apparently, Snape had talked to Dumbledore about his "concerns", and quite successfully so. He turned back to Lupin and his godfather.

Remus seemed a little worn down. He was wearing a sweatshirt, that Harry was fairly sure belonged to Sirius. The werewolf appeared to be freshly showered and shaved, but he was still a little thin. He was smiling though, and Sirius seemed to be more than thrilled that the man was back.

"You are glad," Harry stated as he looked at Remus, "That you no longer have to look for this guy."

Remus shrugged. "I have been on missions a lot lately."

"Dumbledore asked Mundungus to take over," Sirius said with a smirk.

"He has connections…," Remus added at Harry's expression. "If he puts some effort into it, he has a better chance in finding that man than I do."

Harry hummed. "Did Sirius tell you that he is going to have a trial?" he asked after a moment.

Remus nodded. "But without Wormtail he has only a small chance at winning this."

"Yeah. We are working on that," Harry said.

It was this way, that Remus joined their small group in their researching and working through files that Kingsley had brought.

Harry still visited Grimmauld Place, but since Remus was back, he used the opportunity to soothe Ron and Hermione's worries by spending more time with them again.

Two days before Halloween - he didn't know who was more surprised, he or Ron – Hermione bluntly asked him who he was seeing.

Rain hit the windows of the common room and thunder was rolling in the distance, while they were sitting in a corner of the common room, since their usual spot in front of the fireplace was occupied by some second years playing Gobstone. The room was buzzing with life, which was almost certainly attributable to Weasley twins, who were promoting their new inventions by testing them on themselves in front of an entertained crowd. Angelina was also sitting in a corner, brooding over a notebook that had once belonged to Oliver Wood.

With the oncoming Quidditch game Slytherin against Gryffindor, the tension was high. Even under Umbridge's watchful glances, students were hexing each other in the hallways and more often than not, Harry had to dodge a jinx while walking to his classes. His Auror training was really put to use these days.

Harry looked up from his sketch for Grubbly-Plank when Hermione closed her Arithmathy book with a heavy *thud*. Ron also raised his head.

"Alright Harry," she said. Harry looked at her with a frown, while Death's black snake head was peeking out from under his collar. "I'm giving it up."

Harry glanced at Ron with a "Do you know what she is talking about?" look, but Ron simply shook his head as Hermione continued.

"We've never asked you, since we thought you would eventually tell us about it yourself, but two months have passed and I just-" Hermione pushed her book aside. She leaned forward and looked
at Harry intensely. "You know, I've kept a close eye on every girl in Hogwarts, I even spoke to Greengrass." Ron raised his eyebrows. "Hell, not even Lavender could tell me something and she and Patil usually know everything that is going on, so I'm simply going to ask," Hermione looked at Harry with an almost desperate expression. "Who is she?"

Harry looked at her confused.

"The one you are seeing. And don't bother to deny it, the hickeys on your neck are a dead giveaway," Hermione added with a nod.

Unconsciously Harry raised a hand and his fingertips brushed over the purplish bruise on his neck. He smiled amused. Ron and Hermione were now facing him with equally curious looks. Harry stayed quiet for a moment and looked at them. It was only logical that they had stuck to the conclusion. Harry had barely spent any time with them and during the last week even less. He sighed.

"You're not denying it then?" Hermione asked. "You are really seeing someone?" Harry shrugged. Ron and Hermione grinned.

"And, who is she?" Ron asked.

"Have you ever considered that it might not be a she?"

Ron and Hermione stared at him. Harry began to casually pack his stuff after finishing his sketch with a few additional lines.

"But I thought you and Cho..." Ron uttered eventually. Harry shrugged.

Hermione leaned forward. "So, you are-," she lowered her voice, when she noticed that the third year that was walking past them had slowed down in her walk, "...gay?" she whispered.

"I like guys and girls. If you want to put a label on it, feel free to research." Harry said. While it been a revelation to realize that he was attracted to both men and women, he had been too apathetic at the time to care enough to look further into the topic. Besides, who cared if from now on the occasional hook-up had been a guy? Harry had long accepted that he wasn't normal, but what was normal even? The Dursley's concept of perfection was something he had deemed bullshit a long time ago. And after finding out that he was a wizard at age eleven, the fact that he felt attracted to guys as well could hardly fazed him.

"Bi. It's called Bisexual," Ron blurted out and Hermione's head snapped around and Harry stared at him surprised. Ron's ears went pink as he blushed furiously. "Charlie, you know... um he - he likes neither... Mom, she always asked him if he would get a girlfriend or so and then she said it would be okay if he, um, if he liked blokes, you know but Charlie said he didn't... and Mom cried at first because he would never get married-" Hermione stared at Ron, as if she'd never seen him before and Harry knew that he probably didn't look much different. Ron's face took on an even darker tint when he realized that he was rambling and he caught himself, "Anyway, he explained that stuff a little bit."

Harry regarded Ron with a curious look, while Death hissed quietly. Not only Hermione saw Ron in a new light.

Chapter End Notes
I might rewrite this chapter someday, I don't know what to think of it. I read it so often I really don't know if it's good or bad but I tend to bad. If you want to leave an uplifting comment go for it, also you can point out any grammar mistakes that you see, I feel like I overlooked a few in that chapter.
As hilarious as Harry had deemed Ron and Hermione's reactions at first, he still caught himself being relieved when they didn't treat him differently after the revelation that he wasn't straight. Apparently, their friendship was something he wasn't as indifferent towards as he had thought. The following days Hermione beat herself up because she didn't consider his mysterious girlfriend being a guy, while Ron was not so subtly trying to get a name from Harry. But while Hermione and Ron were acting no different towards him, new hushed whispers seemed to follow him everywhere. Rumours had spread like wildfire and the entirety of Hogwarts didn't seem to have another topic to talk about. It wasn't like he wasn't used to it, but it was annoying nonetheless. Even the DA meetings were streaked with a strange mood, but for now no one had outright dared to ask, if the rumours surrounding him were true.

Halloween came and went, and the death of Harry's parents was no more than a ghost of his past. But for the first time in weeks, Harry mused what Voldemort might be doing.

He also had visited Grimmauld Place again, but with Remus on his side Sirius hardly needed him to be there. Besides, reading the same files over and over again had really lost its appeal to Harry. And there was not much else they could do to prepare for Sirius' trial. He gladly left that to Lupin. Moreover, he barely had time to visit them anyway, since Angelina decided that every free minute should be spent on the Quidditch pitch until the coming game against Slytherin had passed. Fred and George even contemplated if they should pretend to be sick to skip some of the worst training-hours, they spent in the grisly weather.

Soon enough the day came, and Ron was an emotional mess. Harry had all forgotten about the "Weasley is our King" song but was early reminded by the crown-shaped badges that most of the Slytherins were wearing. He guided Ron past them, but luckily the red head was too occupied with his own thoughts to notice what was going on around him. In passing Harry grinned when he spotted Luna who was wearing a giant lionhead-hat. She smiled when she noticed him and waved distractedly.

The weather conditions for the game were good. It was cold but there was no wind. The frostbitten grass sparkled in the few beams of sunlight breaching through the cloudy sky and it crunched beneath their feet as they followed the steady stream of people heading towards the Quidditch
Half an hour (and a long speech from Angelina later) they were already in the air, facing off against the Slytherins. To Harry's disappointment, he spotted the snitch almost immediately. Well, to be fair, it was hard to ignore its magical signature while he was constantly looking for the golden ball, but a little challenge would've been nice. Since he would be able to find the snitch within seconds anyway, Harry dismissed the small ball for now. Instead he hovered above the teams whose players were shooting through the air and watched the game.

Montague had replaced Flint as the Slytherin-Quidditch captain. He seemed to take after the latter in terms of choosing his players, as Crabbe and Goyle - the new beaters - were obviously not chosen for their brains but more likely because they shared some physical traits with their predecessors.

Lee's comments were barely audible over the noise of the roaring crowd when George managed to hit Montague with a Bludger.

"CHASER DROPS THE QUAFFLE… AND KATIE BELL CATCHES IT. KATIE BELL FROM GRYFFINDOR AND SHE PASSES IT TO ALICIA SPINNET – ALICIA ON HER WAY TO SCORE."

The wind howled and the green mass down at the Slytherin stands cheered when Bletchley caught the red ball before it went through one of the hoops. Ron seemed like he would fall from his broom at any moment, his freckles standing in stark contrast to his pale face when the Slytherins started their counterattack.

"-WARRINGTON WITH THE QUAFFLE! WARRINGTON ON THE WAY TO THE GOAL –"

Harry only saw how Ron tried and failed miserably to fend off Warrington, who scored the first points in the game.

The Slytherins went wild. Their collective voices rose, chanting their new anthem. "Weasley cannot save a thing, he cannot block a single ring, that's why Slytherins all sing: Weasley is our King."

Lee's voice echoed through the stadium, trying to drown out the chanting. Ron looked like he wanted to puke. Harry smirked when he spotted Death, who was sitting on top of the highest hoop, legs dangling casually over the deadly abyss.

Lazily Harry began to circle the pitch, mirroring Malfoy's movements. Meanwhile Slytherin scored three additional times, Pansy Parkinson directing the silvery-green mass that was roaring and moving like one giant creature, their chanting swelling to excruciating heights.

"Harry, what are you doing?!” Angelina shouted, when she noticed that Harry was once again simply hovering in the air, arms folded over the handle of his broom and watching. "Come on!"

With a sigh, Harry pushed himself in a straighter position and lazily scanned the air. He had planned to wait a little longer to catch the snitch, maybe till they had scored some goals for Gryffindor, but with a look at Ron he decided that it was probably better to rescue the boy from this situation. He didn't seem like he would hold up a lot longer. Then Harry's eyes caught onto something on the other side of the pitch. There - barely three feet over the Ravenclaw stands hovered the snitch.
Harry didn't hesitate any longer. He leaned forward. His firebolt shot through the air like a cannon ball. From the corner of his eye he saw Malfoy, who followed him.

"-POTTER SEEMS TO HAVE SPOTTED SOMETHING! AND DRACO MALFOY IS RIGHT BEHIND HIM-"
Harry grinned. Now that was finally a challenge. But Malfoy was too far behind. Wind was pulling on Harry's clothes as he shot through the air. The golden ball was right in front of him. Harry stretched out his arm. A quiet whistle was his only warning. Instinctively Harry made a sharp turn. He didn't care about the Bludger that shot past him. It would've certainly hit him if he hadn't dodged it when he did, but what was bugging him more was the fact that the snitch was gone.

"OH, THAT WAS A CLOSE MISS BUT THE SLYTHERIN SEEKER IS USING THAT TO HIS ADVANTAGE… TOO LATE THOUGH," Lee's magically enhanced voice bellowed, echoing Harry's thoughts.

Luckily Harry only needed a moment to locate the golden ball again. It was zapping towards the Slytherin side of the playing field, but then again, Malfoy was now right next to him.

"-THE CHASERS HAVEN'T BEEN LAZY, KATIE BELL – oh no – THAT WAS SIMPLY MISCALCULATION, THAT CAN HAPPEN TO EVERYONE… COME ON KATIE AND THERE IS PUCEY WITH THE QUAFFLE-"

The crowd cheered - somewhere in the background Lee announced that the Slytherins had scored another goal, but Harry was too focused on the snitch. As soon as he went after it, Draco was right beside him. He could see it now. Nothing more but a distant gleam weaving through the goal posts – changing direction and soaring towards the sky. Harry spared Malfoy a quick look. The Slytherin had a better broom, but Harry didn't plan on losing. Their shoulders brushed as they tried to follow after the snitch.
"Come on," Harry muttered under his breath. He needed to go faster. Draco was still right next to him. "Come on…"
If they continued like that, it was questionable if Harry would win. But there was a thought, something in the back of his mind… Draco had a better broom, that was a fact. And yet the Slytherin didn't go faster, instead he was still following Harry's lead. This could only lead to one conclusion; Draco hadn't seen the snitch yet. If Harry was right with this assumption…

Harry dove down. Malfoy followed him.

Harry grinned.

"-THE SEEKERS ARE RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER – THERE IS NO WAY TO SAY WHO WILL GET TO THE SNITCH FIRST-" Lee shouted.

The ground was coming closer.

Fast.

Adrenaline pumped through Harry's veins. They plunged down, wind rushing next their ears, drowning out every other noise.
Harry turned to look at Malfoy, who was still right next to him. As if he'd noticed Harry's gaze, Draco turned his head.

One second.
Harry smirked at the Slytherin.

Two seconds.
Malfoy frowned, confused eyes staring into Harry's.

Three.
Harry pulled out of the nosedive, leaving Malfoy with a look of panic on his face as he realized that Harry had been bluffing.

CRUNCH

A collective gasp tore through the crowd when Draco collided with the ground. Harry laughed victoriously. Cold air rushed past him as his eyes zoomed in on the snitch. The spectators were stunned into silence. The golden ball took a turn. Then the outraged voices of the Slytherins clashed with the cheers of the Gryffindors. "Time-out! We want a time out!" Montague shouted over the noise. Harry's fingers closed around the snitch. The game was over. A whistle and the crowd exploded, noise doubling in volume. Cheers and hoots - cries of rage and howls of victory colliding in one big soundwave that rolled over the stadium. When Harry reached solid ground, he saw Madame Hooch landing about 50 feet further down the field. Next to her, a heap of silver and green on the grass, as well as Snape who had crossed the pitch in quick steps. Then Harry was swathed by ecstatic Gryffindors who blocked his view.

"Brilliant Harry," Fred said, sounding a little out of breath.

"-that Wronski Feint," George finished as he appeared right next to his brother before he threw an arm over Harry's shoulders.

"That ferret didn't know what hit him," Fred added and Angelina walked over to them, broom still in hand.

"If you can pull off that performance every game, the Quidditch cup is going to be ours in no time," she said with a grin. Harry grinned back. The snitch struggled weakly inside his hand. Katie landed next to them; cheeks flushed from the chilly air but beaming. Ron was nowhere to be seen but no one seemed to notice. Meanwhile Angelina launched into another speech with such passion that she almost seemed to rival Oliver Wood in his obsession with sport.

"Hey!" A shout had the Gryffindors turn their heads. The red wall in front of Harry parted and gave way to Montague, who stomped over to them. Even the Weasley twins took a step back at the murderous look on his face.

"What the fuck was that!?!" the tall Slytherin started furiously. "My Seeker is going to be in the hospital wing for at least a week because of your stupid stunt!" Harry looked at him with a raised eyebrow, but then Angelina took a step forward, hands on her hips.

"That 'stunt' as you put it, is perfectly legitimate according to the rules - as you very well know."
Katie joined Angelina and the twins glared at Montague, while Angelina continued, "Besides, you are just pissed because you lost!"

Montague took a step forward, but Warrington appeared behind him and pulled the captain back by his shoulder. "Come on, Graham. Someone has to write to Draco's parents - tell them what happened…” The Slytherin Captain looked over his shoulder and nodded curtly. Warrington left them but Montague stayed for a moment longer and stared at Harry.

"You are going to pay for that Potter," he spat before he joined the other Slytherins. Fred and George glared daggers into his back and Angelina shook her head in disbelief.

When they eventually headed for the showers, no one paid the crimson-stained patch of grass any attention.

Ron hadn't been in the changing rooms and even an hour later, he was still nowhere to be seen. But when Harry stepped into the common room, he noticed Hermione on an armchair amidst the partying Gryffindors. Her heavy bag was resting next to her feet and the girl herself was knitting one of her elven hats.

Harry had to weave through the crowd, beaming faces congratulating him to his win before he reached Hermione.

"Hey." The sound of Harry's voice had her looking up. "Have you seen Ron?" Harry asked her, while he absentmindedly scanned the crowd. He combed through his still damp hair with his fingers, when he spotted Fred and George emerging from the crowd. Maybe they knew where their brother was.

"Oh god, Harry. Why did you do that?" Hermione blurted out. Harry turned to stare at her confused. Her brown eyes were wide with concern and only then Harry realized that she was talking about Malfoy's crash. And apparently, he wasn't the only one. George had joined them, and he opened his mouth before Harry could answer.

"That's the sport Hermione," the Weasley twin said with a smirk, "It's brutal."

"Besides," Fred added, appearing on Harry's others side, "he didn't have to follow Harry down there."

"It was horrible," Hermione said, but here words were drowned out by a group of cheering Gryffindors, who were loudly greeted by the twins.

The tone in which Hermione had spoken these words shook something deep inside of Harry, but it was the look on her face that made him ask himself the following question, 'What if - for all that he had gained from becoming the Master of Death - what if he had also left an important part of himself behind?'

Ron appeared late that night, after all the festivities had already passed. Harry was sitting upright behind his closed curtains. He heard how the red head quietly slipped into his bed, most likely hoping that everyone was already asleep. He didn't ask Ron where he had been when the boy returned.

The Slytherins hated him. There had always been a certain dislike, but now their eyes burned with fury every time he passed by one of them. Harry was being bombarded with hexes on the hallways every time he took as much as a step out of the common room. It soon became something of a habit
to expect an attack on his way to class. But this wasn't what occupied his mind. Yet when Montague outright smiled at him over the house tables two days later, Harry couldn't help but wonder what the Slytherin was up to. Though he didn't have to wait long for the mystery to be solved. Because right then, a frightened second year appeared in front of him, delivering a note that demanded his presence in Umbridge's office. Montague watched him with a smug expression all the way out of the great hall.

The same evening Harry was sitting in an armchair, chin resting on his hands and staring into the fireplace of the Gryffindor common room. Death was watching him silently from afar.

"This is bullshit!" Ron exclaimed and his voice pulled Harry out of his thoughts. Harry could hear him jumping up from his seat and he started to walk up and down agitated. "They can't ban you from the Quidditch team! You did nothing wrong. Malfoy that slimy snake-"

"Is still in the hospital wing," Hermione said coolly and snapped her book shut. At Ron's offended look she deflated a little bit. She sighed and turned towards Harry. "Look, if it's so important to you why don't you ask McGonagall if she can help?"

"Angelina already talked to her," Harry replied motionlessly. Shadows danced on his skin, the warm light smoothing down his features. "She can't do anything. And frankly I don't care."

Somewhere behind him he felt how Hermione's magic twisted angrily.

"You don't seem to care about a lot lately," she hissed. Harry closed his eyes with a sigh.

"Hermione, you can't say that," Ron declared shocked.

"Oh yes, I can!" she continued, and Harry could feel her eyes on him. "Because if you cared just a little, you would've already noticed that Hagrid is back," Hermione said, referring to the fact that the half-giants hut had been inhabited for two days by now.

Harry opened his eyes and stared into the flames. "But I did already, didn't I?" he replied quietly. "And that's the real problem."

No one stopped him when he stood up and went to bed.

As soon as he reached the dorms Death materialized in front of him.

"You are upset," the being stated while Harry walked past him to change into his sleeping attire.

Harry snorted dismissively. When he opened the curtain to his bed, Death was already sitting on his mattress. The being stared at him with a frown.

"I don't want to talk about it," Harry snapped and slipped under his covers.

He tried to push away the ill feeling that echoed through his chest when Death pulled back. Instead he closed his eyes, hoping to force himself to sleep.

A day full day had passed since the short conversation with Death and Harry had never felt more irritated. He was standing at the shore of the black lake. The first traces of ice could be seen on the water. He was fed up by the endless whispers surrounding him. He was annoyed by Hermione who avoided him. He resented the words that had reminded him of something.
And he was angry Death for being the cause of this in the first place.
Harry wanted to scream.
At least here no one would bother him. Icy wind pulled on his clothes as he stared at the smooth surface, trees stretching towards the sky right above him. It was only a matter of time till it would start to snow. Darkness settled over the land. Other students who had been outside had long headed towards the castle.
Harry was finally alone.
Well, almost.

"Go away," Harry said. His breath formed small clouds in the cold. He could feel Death's presence shifting somewhere behind him.
It was a halfhearted attempt. The being hadn't left him the first time he had asked him to leave, he wouldn't do it now that it was the third time. Death was silent. When Harry eventually turned and walked towards the castle, Death was following him.

In the distance, there were lights illuminating Hagrid's hut.

The next day didn't turn out any better.
Nor did the next.

Harry carried anger in his core, drowning every other feeling that dared to invade his mind.

There were no longer people who tried to curse him in the hallways. They avoided him, whispering behind his back as if he didn't hear the words they said. It was like second year all over again.
Harry hissed at them between clenched teeth. They took a step back anyway so what was the point in pretending that he cared. Why was he still even bothering? Dumbledore probably thought he was possessed by Voldemort anyway, judging the amount of times he could feel Snape's eyes following him. It couldn't help that his desk had started to rot beneath his very fingers during the last Defense against the dark Arts lesson when he was once again confronted with Umbridge's smug grin. Even Ron kept his distance after Harry had snapped at him, probably joining Hermione in whatever she was doing.
Harry didn't try to look for either of them.
Instead he headed out of the castle, towards the black lake. The only place where he could somewhat ground himself.

The tall pine trees rustled quietly in the wind as he walked beneath them. Harry gritted his teeth when he sensed Death following him. He didn't acknowledge the being and instead buried his hands deeper in his pockets as he stomped towards the forbidden forest. He couldn't be near the being right now.

"You are angry," Death said, breaching the silence. The being hadn't talked since Harry had asked him to leave for the first time.

"Well detected," Harry replied, his eyes firmly focused at the path in front of him.

"Do you really want me to go?" Death asked and Harry stopped, trying to ignore the hint of emotion that wasn't his.

"Why so considerate all of a sudden?" he asked snappishly.

"I don't want you to be unhappy," the being said.

Something snapped inside of Harry at these words. He whirled around. The trees creaked. For the first time in days, Harry looked at the being that had followed him around for more than three
months now. "Then maybe you shouldn't have lied to me about a few things before I became your Master!" Harry shouted.

The fire burning through his veins couldn't hide the twinge he felt echoing through the bond connecting him to Death.

"I told you that you would no longer be human," Death said eventually, utterly still.

"Well, because that paints the right picture!" Harry began sarcastically, "You think I had any knowledge of what I would become after that?!" Death's human form didn't move but Harry could see him flinch. There was a feeling like ice crawling up his guts, but Harry pushed these emotions aside. "I EVEN ASKED YOU IF I WOULD STILL BE MYSELF!"

"And you are. Just because you are changing doesn't mean that you won't be the same. You still have all your memories-"

"Emtpy memories," Harry interrupted, "Hollow! Devoid of something I don't even recognize! You make it sound like I only gained things from this! But you took something from me and I don't even know what it is!" Harry yelled.

Death was silent.

"Malfoy's wellbeing for example - or rather the lack of it - didn't even faze me! I didn't think about him when did what he did! I just wanted to win. And even now I can't bring myself to care! If he is dead or not, why should it bother me?!" Harry continued and he kicked against the trunk of a tree. The wind howling above them seemed to take on in force.

"Why now? You didn't care about similar things before that," Death asked. Harry's head snapped back and he took a step towards Death.

"No. No I didn't - I don't. And the worst thing is that I didn't even SEE it before! I had to be reminded of it! Because I remember now what you first told me. You said I would keep my feelings! And that's the problem, isn't it?! Hagrid, the Weasley's - I remember how I felt about them before - and now - now I feel nothing!"

"You don't feel nothing," Death said quietly.

"Don't I?! I can't even be mad at Hermione for avoiding me! Or Ron. It's probably better for them anyway!"

"No, you feel a lot," Death said. Harry's view blurred. "Or else you wouldn't be this angry right now... But you aren't angry. Not really, are you?" Death said softly.

"Fuck you," Harry spat and he felt tears running down his cheeks.

"You are sad," Death said and then he was standing in front of Harry. "You are sad because you have started to form a connection to some people again. And that's making you realize what you have lost."

"You lied," Harry whispered.

"I didn't know it then."

"This is still your fault," Harry said.
"I know," Death replied sadly and he cupped Harry's face. "I'm sorry."
And when the being hugged him Harry cried. He mourned for something he had lost and of which he didn't quite know what it was.

Chapter End Notes

Soo what did you think? I just wanted to include a part in which we see that becoming the MoD isn't all sunshine and flowers. I guess that this chapter was mostly Harry realizing that he lost some of his humanity along the way. Also I feel sorry for Death for putting him through this. Harry wasn't very nice to him. I hope this whole transition was fluid enough and you could all follow Harry's thoughts in this.
Infamous creatures

Chapter Summary

Harry and Death reconcile and Kreacher appears to tell Harry, that the werewolves demand his presence.

Chapter Notes

Hello. The chapter could still use some work but meh.

There will be fluff in the beginning but the chapter is going to be pretty dark later on as is Harry. So proceed at your own risk.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Since their confrontation had taken place Harry couldn't bear to look at Death. After he had wiped off his tears, they had returned to the castle in silence. And they hadn't talked since. Not that they talked that much anyway, but it was different.

Harry knew it was irrational to still avoid the being, but he just couldn't help it. Without the anger fuelling his core he grew painfully aware of just how much Death had been impacted by this confrontation as well.

He told himself that it was because he wasn't quite ready to forgive the being yet. But even with all the effort he put into convincing himself of this lie, his attempts to do so remained fruitless.

Most of the time Death sat quietly just a few feet from him, always keeping his distance. Sometimes Harry thought that he picked up a hint of something akin to melancholy, but it wasn't enough to be really sure. Harry was worried. Now that their bond was no longer clouded by incoherent feelings, Harry had expected to once more being able to feel the full range of Death's emotions. But instead something cold had settled inside his chest.

Ron in the meantime had decided that there wasn't anything wrong with Harry at all. Apparently, he had come to the conclusion that being thrown out of the Quidditch team was excuse enough to explain his sour behaviour and thus he had just tried to avoid the fallout.

Though Hermione had always been too smart for her own good.

Harry doubted that Malfoy's crash had prompted her to confront him the way she had. Most likely, the bluff on the Quidditch field with the addition of him not caring about Hagrid's return had just been the last puzzle piece falling into place of something, that had made her suspicious from the very beginning.

Harry knew that she wouldn't let go of that topic till she knew exactly why he had changed that much. Even if it meant countless hours in the library. If Harry could believe the conversations he had overheard, Malfoy had gotten away with a few broken bones and a severe concussion. Nothing Madame Pomfrey hadn't been able to fix, but the Slytherin was still in the hospital wing - sleeping most of the time because of his "horrible injuries". At least according to Pansy Parkinson, who loudly announced it every time someone seemed even remotely interested.

But Hermione wasn't the only one who was worried about the incident on the Quidditch pitch. Harry felt Snape's eyes following him wherever he went, which told him that Dumbledore was
equally alarmed. Even the portraits of Hogwarts had begun to watch him in similar manner. Despite all this, nothing prepared him for the letter, which openly requested his presence in the headmaster’s office the following afternoon.

As much as these things bugged him, in the end, none of them came even remotely close to the horror that was the distance which had begun to spread like ice between Death and Harry.

Harry shifted uncomfortably before he knocked on the door leading to the headmaster’s office. He glanced at Death, who was still accompanying him. Silent and unmoving. The voice of the headmaster asked him to come in, but it still took a moment for Harry’s to tear his gaze away from the being.

Then he pushed the door open and stepped into the room. The quiet whirring of the many instruments filled the air as soon as he’d entered. Harry spared the portrait of Phineas Niggelus a quick look and the Black sneered at him before he pretended to be asleep, like all the others.

Dumbledore was sitting behind his desk, his eyes hidden behind his half-moon glasses. "Ah, Harry. It’s a pleasure too see you again." Harry snorted. The headmaster wasn’t even trying to meet his gaze. "Take a seat, Harry," Dumbledore said and pointed at the chair opposite to his desk. After Harry had settled, the man continued. "Tell me, how have you been? I’ve heard that you had quite a disagreement with your friend Hermoine Granger recently."

This time Harry held back the noise that was about to spill over his lips. He had barely thought about this development since he’d fought with Death. If one could even call it a fight. Funny that this lack of care had been the subject of it in the first place and now it hardly mattered to Harry anymore. "I think that the rumours surrounding this topic are slightly exaggerated," Harry retorted after a moment, with as much emotion as he could muster.

Dumbledore's brows furrowed at his words.

"You are certainly wondering why I asked you to come to my office tonight," the headmaster begun after a moment, changing the topic so suddenly that Harry suppressed a frown. "And before you ask, it is not because you are in trouble," the man added with a smile.

Harry watched him silently.

Dumbledore looked upon his folded hands as his expression turned serious. "You've certainly noticed Professors Umbridge presence within these walls."

"Noticed?" Harry raised an eyebrow. "You should fire her," he added for good measure. It was worth a shot.

Dumbledore sighed. "Unfortunately my boy-" Harry ground his teeth at the expression - "it isn't that easy."

"Because the Ministry wants her here."

Dumbledore nodded. "Cornelius’ paranoia has taken on a new level of severity. And yet he still chooses to ignore that Voldemort has returned."

Harry, getting the hint that he should at least put some effort into playing the part of the angry boy he’d once been, raised his voice. "This is just stupid. Why won't he see what is obviously happening right in front of him?!"

"He is afraid of the responsibility that comes with acknowledging the threat that is out there."

"Then maybe he shouldn't hold this kind of power," Harry said, "if he can't deal with it."
Dumbledore hummed. Harry saw the tension in the way he was holding himself. Something about Harry's statement seemed to worry him.

"Well, as to why I've asked you to come here," Dumbledore began after some time, when Harry didn't add anything. "You are already aware, that the scar that marks the spot where Voldemort tried to kill you as a child somehow connects the two of you."

Harry could barely hold it together at this statement. He forced himself to nod and apparently it was enough, because Dumbledore continued.

"There is a chance, that Voldemort will one day become aware of this connection and then it is very likely that he will try to use it against you."

"But he didn't notice it yet, did he?" Harry asked feigning concern.

"No, I don't think so," Dumbledore replied.

'Liar,' Harry thought bitterly. Out loud though he said, "And how can I keep it that way? I don't want Voldemort controlling my mind!" The thought these days was laughable.

But Dumbledore seemed to be pleased by this answer. He hummed in agreement and his posture relaxed a little bit. "There is a branch of magic that allows you to close off your mind. To keep other Wizards from invading your headspace."

"Okay, and how can I do it?" Harry asked.

"Professor Snape will be the one to teach you about Occlumency."

The groan that followed wasn't even faked.

"I know that you are not very fond of Professor Snape, Harry. But keep in mind that this is Voldemort that we are speaking about. I expect you to bury your grudges for the sake of your own well-being in this."

Harry sighed.

"Professor Snape will inform you, when your first lesson is going to take place," Dumbledore said. His tone of voice indicated that this was all that had to be said about this topic.

Harry agreed grumpily, declined a lemon drop and after Dumbledore had wished him a good afternoon, he left.

As soon as he was out of the door Harry groaned again. Well that was the last thing he needed right now - Snape trying to infiltrate his mind. He would at least have to slip up a few times in the beginning to convince him that he wasn't outright possessed. Great. It wasn't like he had other things on his mind right now.

That evening Harry was staring once again into the fire illuminating the Gryffindor common room. It seemed to become a habit now.

The Quidditch team was out on the pitch to train, and Hermione was still avoiding him. Harry was alone, except for two third years who left as soon as they'd spotted him on the sofa, and Death who stood in a shadow corner of the room.

Harry glanced at the being before his gaze returned to the light source. He was angry at himself.
Death had been hurting just as much as he because of their confrontation. After all, the being wasn't the one who had asked his Master to leave. And now they weren't talking, just because Harry was too much of a coward to apologize.

Death had been different at the time that he'd made his promises, just like Harry himself had been. He couldn't fault the being for something it hadn't been able to understand then. Harry had agreed to become Death's Master without much of a thought and even though he had been naive then - maybe even still - he hadn't once regretted his decision. Harry scowled. He was a fucking Gryffindor, so he had to kick himself in the ass and finally get over with it.

"Death," Harry said out loud before he could make up his mind. He bit his lip as the being moved over to him.

"Come on, sit," Harry said after he'd looked at Death who was simply standing next to the sofa. "I can't- It just feels weird if you are standing and I'm-" Harry stopped as Death complied and he turned to face him.

They looked at each other for some time. Death was probably waiting for Harry to breach the silence.

"Hi," he began after he couldn't bear the silence any longer. He felt weirdly out of place after all that time of not talking. Death simply looked at him. The bond between them was still reduced to a dull pulse. "Look," Harry began, "I've never-" He paused. "I never apologized for what happened."

The being shifted but Harry didn't even let him start a sentence. Now that the words were out he couldn't seem to stop himself.

"It wasn't right to shove all my anger at you. I could've talked to you like a normal person instead of ignoring you, all the time. And even now... I mean, I was just so ashamed of myself that I couldn't bring it up and look to what it all led. It wasn't even really your fault in the first place. I was just fed up with so much stuff and - and even if it was-" Harry stopped.

"I shouldn't have asked you to leave. It was wrong. I thought just needed some space... but now that we aren't talking or acknowledging each other, I just..." Harry sucked in a shaky breath. "I don't even know what I would've done if you had really left me alone. But after all that I've said, I-" Harry exhaled. "I just wanted you to know that I'm sorry," Death was still just looking at him, "and that I could understand if you wanted to leave after all that took place."

Harry stared down at his hands.

No words were spoken.

Suddenly, as if a floodgate had been opened the bond inside Harry's chest flared to life. And then all that he could sense was the overwhelming mix of emotions. Harry's head snapped up.

Death had never wanted to leave him - couldn't. Even when Harry asked him to, and still not when the being thought that he'd deserved it. So he had chosen the next best thing. Death was dealing with so many emotions all the time - emotions that were so new to him - that he might even be more lost than Harry sometimes. And Harry had felt so angry, so very hurt.

Despite the fact that they were once more experiencing what the other one felt, Death still seemed taken aback when Harry put his arms around him. "I'm sorry. I'm so so sorry," Harry whispered into Death's shoulder as he hugged him. "Of course I still love you."

Utter relief rolled through the bond like a wave reaching the shore and Harry tugged Death closer. The being rubbed his cheek against Harry's head.

"I can't promise you that I'll never be angry with you again," Harry said after some time, "but even if I am angry, I'll always love you. That doesn't just go away, you know," Harry said and he smiled into the beings shoulder, inhaling the comforting scent, when Death buried his nose inside Harry's
hair and he pressed a kiss on top of his head.

"Love you too," Death's replied quietly.

Despite everything that was going on, Harry found it hard to keep the grin off his face during the following days and Death seemed to stick closer to him than ever. The fact that they had exchanged a lot more than hugs later that evening couldn't hurt this cause. But the hours of blissful ignorance couldn't keep going forever.

More often than not, Harry found his thoughts circling around Voldemort. Something was going to happen. He could feel it inside his head. Something big. Sirius told him, that Grimmauld Place was now constantly occupied by different members of the Order. Maybe they also thought that something was up, or Dumbledore knew once again more than he let on. Everywhere he was going, the eyes of the portraits followed him, as did Snape's. Though the man had yet to approach him regarding the lessons in occlumency. Either way, visiting his godfather to escape this madness was also no longer an option. At least how things were right now.

In other words, Harry was bored. Ron's company could only do so much, and Malfoy had been awfully quiet, even after he was released from the hospital wing. Harry almost wished that someone would try to hex him again. Not even Death could pull him out of this mood. On the contrary, the being seemed equally affected. The frequency in which he suggested to simply kill Umbridge or someone else seemed to increase with every passing day. And Harry couldn't help but think that this would at least spice up the monotony of the ongoing hours.

When Kreacher appeared one night, it was like seeing a light at the end of a dark tunnel. Although Harry could've done without being ripped out of his sleep to see this light.

"Kreacher," Harry stated surprised as soon as he recognized the old elf, blinking at the creature drowsily.

"Master Harry," Kreacher said with a bow.

"What's up?" Harry asked and he swung his legs over the edge of the bed, while he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes.

"I am here to inform you that the werewolves demand your presence," Kreacher said, while he used the word 'werewolves' as if it was an insult.

Harry frowned. "Now?" he asked.

"Yes, Master." Kreacher bowed even further down and his leathery ears were almost touching the floor.

"Fine," Harry said curtly and he waved with his hand. "Thank you Kreacher. You can go now."

"As you wish," the house-elf said and disapparated.

A few beds further, Seamus shifted in his sleep.

Harry groaned and pinched his nose. Then he caught Death's eye. The being was sitting at the foot of his bed and looked at him expectantly. "I know, I know. Finally, something is happening," Harry said and he stood up.
Death smirked.

"Why couldn't they need me while I was awake?" Harry muttered while he dressed himself. "No, just send Kreacher in the middle of the night... This better be important." He suppressed a noise of frustration when he didn't find his shoes immediately, but a summoning charm solved the problem quickly. Eventually he put on his cloak and when the next gust of wind passed the window, he was gone.

Harry reappeared inside the forest that was housing the pack he had visited not long ago. Death appeared right next to him and he sensed him stretching his wings towards the sky. Harry inhaled the icy air and amidst the scent of coming snow he could detect a faint trace of soil and decomposing leaves. If he was right, he should be close to the spot where he and the pack had talked the last time. It was better to approach them from afar. Who knew what was waiting for them on the clearing? If the werewolves were still even here. But Kreacher would've probably told him about a change of location. So, Harry started to walk into the direction where he suspected the clearing to be.

All around tall trees were towering over them. Their shadows were seamlessly bleeding into the night and above their heads a cloudy sky showed glimpses of the stars.

They made their way through the woods in comfortable silence, the only sound accompanying them was the crunching of frozen leaves beneath Harry's feet.

All of a sudden, he sensed souls in the distance. A nudge of Death had him looking up and there were pillars of smoke standing against the sky, partly obscured by skeletal branches of leafless trees.

Campfires.

Soon after, the sound of voices drifted through towards them but they silenced ever so quickly. The werewolves could probably smell Harry. But that would be too easy, now, would it? Harry grinned as he cast a spell over him that would hide his scent and another one to muffle his steps. He couldn't help but feel slightly giddy with anticipation. Finally, something that promised some action.

There was light shining through the mass of trees and it grew with every step that brought Harry closer to the clearing. The scent of smoke and something else wafted through the cold air. The conversation that had come to a halt started anew, but before Harry could make out what was being spoken, words turned into a snarl. Low growling could be heard, voices being risen till a shout turned into with a whine.

Someone laughed.

Death grinned.

Even before they stepped out of the tree line, they could see the people gathered on the clearing. Their auras were wild, the wolves beneath their skins urging to break free. Harry stopped just beneath the last trees that gave way to the open space. Groups of people were obscuring the way to what was going on in the middle - their dark silhouettes standing against the light of the fires, shadows dancing over the frozen ground. Even though Harry wasn't invisible, they appeared to be too involved in what was going on to notice him.

"We aren't interested," someone said and while Harry couldn't see the person, he was fairly sure that it was Conall who had spoken.

"Well, but just moments ago it seemed like not all of yours would agree with you, don't you think?" another man said. The voice was raspy and strangely familiar.
Only now Harry noticed that the people gathered on the clearing were split into two fractions. The men closest to him seemed to belong to Conall. Harry recognized their auras. A few people shifted nervously when a growl cut through the air.

"I'm just suggesting that you make a decision. I didn't come here to kill you," the man with the raspy voice said. The unspoken 'but I won't hesitate' trailed heavy after the statement.

"You entered my territory. It would be my right to tear into you this very moment," Conall growled.

"Then what's stopping you?" A moment passed. "That's what I thought," the intruder exclaimed with a gruff laugh when no one answered.

Harry exchanged a look with Death. He had waited long enough. It took only a second to remove the spells that had hidden him so far and then Harry moved from his spot. Moments later, the first werewolves turned their heads. Faces that were shrouded in shadows - glinting eyes - taking him in even before he stepped into the light. As he passed the first rows the werewolves regarded him with strange looks.

A man that Harry recognized as Hastings laughed when he spotted him, filthy brown hair following his movement. Quiet murmurs filled the air, clouds of breaths evidence of their whispers. Death followed him like a shadow.

Then Harry reached the front. An open space around one of the fire-pits seemed to be the center of attention. Immediately, he spotted Conall, who stood in front of his pack. He acknowledged Harry's presence with a quick look, but the Alpha wasn't really who caught Harry's attention.

The faces of the other pack were unfamiliar… except for one.

Britain's most notorious werewolf.

"Fenrir Greyback." The name rolled off Harry's tongue with ease, despite the long time he hadn't spoken it out loud.

"And then I thought you were lying," Greyback rasped to Conall, as his eyes flicked over Harry. "Doesn't look like much, does he?" A slight shift exposed the werewolf's body to the light and revealed old scars that decorated his bare chest.

"It's him," Conall pressed out between gritted teeth. Strands of matted grey hair fell into Greyback's face, but his eyes flashed brightly when they found Harry. Harry stared back.

His gaze lingered on the famous scar for a moment before he looked into Harry's eyes. "The boy who lived," the werewolf drawled. A grisly smile revealed sharp teeth and Greyback's long coat fluttered as he made a step towards Harry, heavy leather boots leaving imprints on the ground. The wolf sat right beneath his skin and it shifted in tune with every move he made. Harry had never seen a man so deeply intertwined with his beast. "They all think you are special, even the dark Lord himself," Greyback said, as he stepped over a tree-trunk that was usually used as a bench. He stopped right in front of Harry and crudely sniffed the air.

Harry didn't move, but he could feel Death stirring behind him. Meanwhile Greyback leaned closer and Harry could feel his hot breath on his face. An air of sweat, dirt and blood surrounded the werewolf. "To me you smell like meat regardless of what they say."

Some people behind Harry shifted uncomfortably at the close proximity to the infamous man. "Big words for a man who doesn't exactly smell like a flower either," Harry replied.

Greyback threw his head back and his laughter echoed over the clearing. But then a hand shot out and he gripped Harry's jaw with dirt-stained fingers.
Ice flared up in Harry's chest. But it wasn't his emotions that he was feeling. The night drained of all light. Stillness settled over the clearing; no noise disturbed the silence but the creaking of the trees. The werewolf seemed oblivious. Greyback stared at Harry with an iron gaze.

"Disrespect me again and I won't care if the dark Lord wants to kill you himself. I'm sure he won't mind too much if I deliver you in small pieces," Fenrir rasped. The light of fire no longer seemed to reach them, and the flames had lost their warmth. Death leaned over Harry's shoulder; his face even closer than Greyback's. Harry didn't as much as blink at the werewolf's threat.

"Master…," Death purred next to his ear and Harry felt a tingle going up his spine, Death hand's trailing after it. "Harry… Let me kill him," the being said with his inhuman voice.

"And if a few bites were missing, no one would be the wiser," Greyback continued unbothered, and then he smirked, "Young flesh always has a certain…flavour to it."

Death's presence slowly spread over the clearing. Another werewolf whimpered. Even Greyback seemed to notice that something was off at that point. "Harry…," Death rumbled as he rubbed his nose against Harry's cheek, "let me kill him…"

"I suggest you let go of me," Harry said to Greyback, whose smirk returned as quickly as it had left.

"And why should I do that?" the werewolf rasped.

"Because every man values something," Harry replied and his eyes flicked over Greyback's shoulder.

He hadn't paid much attention to the man's companions yet, but now his eyes roamed over the unknown faces. Greyback's pack seemed to consist of less people Conall's. There were men in their thirties and forties, but also werewolves barely older than Harry appeared to be. But all of them were feral, skittish, with their beasts close to the surface hungering for blood.

Greyback snorted amused. "And what are you going to do then?" he asked.

Harry grinned. "Take the youngest," he whispered. Confusion flashed in Greyback's eyes. He didn't know that Harry wasn't talking to him.

Death's presence was suddenly all over the clearing. Fear prolonged its icy grip, taking hold of everyone who wasn't Harry. Someone screamed. Harry smirked when Greyback let go of him and whirled around. There was a boy in his ranks. He couldn't have been older than fifteen.

He looked at Harry with wide eyes.

"You cannot run," Death said as the kid struggled to get up. The boy froze. He had pissed himself. The sour stench permeated the air.

Death was right in front of him.
Harry leaned forward; pupils blown wide.

"I don't want to die," the boy whispered.

"I know," Death replied almost gentle. He reached out to touch the werewolf's cheek. When the being pulled back, Harry saw the boy's life seeping from his body. He struggled to get air, gasping and coughing he arched his spine, till his chest fell with a last expire and his eyes lost focus. He was dead.

It was silent on the clearing. Death returned to Harry's side like nothing had happened. The shadows retreated and gave way to the light and warmth of the fire illuminating the night.

"You know," Harry said, directed at Greyback who was still staring at his dead pack member. "The difference between you and me is that the thing that I value can't die."

Death purred next to his ear.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't write it, but you can believe me that there was a lot of make up sex going on between the two. (Death/Harry) I hope you got what I meant, but basically Death is confused a lot of times and when Harry was so angry and sad, especially when these emotions were directed at him, he thought that it was better for him to leave Harry alone. But because Death is a dork who is in love, he didn't want to leave Harry alone so he tried to distance himself as much as he could for Harry's sake. Also, what did you think of Greyback? I really love his character. He is so delightfully evil but it was really hard to get his character right and his voice. But I like him.
**Sending a message**

Chapter Summary

Harry is still with the werewolves and tells Greyback to deliver a message. Additionally breaking news arrive through the Daily Prophet and Harry visits Sirius to discuss another approach for his trial.

Chapter Notes

Hello guys. I hope you had a happy Christmas (if you celebrate it. If not I hope you had a good time anyway) and a happy new year. Or will have, hopefully. So here's the new chapter. I didn't really look through it again. I just posted it directly after finishing and I hope you like it.

**ATTENTION:** I will EDIT this work so that there are less chapters. I won't delete anything just pull a few chapters at a time together so that the chapters are overall longer and what have once been 3 chapters are now one. So don't be suprised when there are suddenly about 18 chapters instead of 38. The new chapters that I will post are going to be the same lenght as always - about 7 pages each - but I will probably stick these together as well as we go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Silence dominated the clearing. Shell-shocked faces all around. Greyback was the first to move after a resemblance of life returned to his limbs. Even before he turned around, Harry could sense the magic that rolled off him in furious waves. Harry hadn't paid much attention to it beforehand, more fascinated by the beast beneath the man's skin but now he took a closer look. It was neither really dark nor was it light and there was an earthiness to it. Like nature was wild and merciless at times so was Greyback. But the hint of decomposing leaves amidst a forest turned into something more vile as his eyes focused on Harry. Dark and dripping like rotting meat on the carcass of a deer and his emotions added an acidic aftertaste to it.
"I can always bite new ones," Fenrir said, his expression surprisingly controlled while the beast beneath his skin howled in anguish.

"But," Harry said, just to dig a little further, "it doesn't replace him, does it?" He nodded towards the boy who now possessed about as much life as the mix of pine needles and dead leaves upon which he was resting. The kid's eyes stared into nothingness; the fear he had felt still imprinted on his bloodless features.

A rough growl broke through Greyback's teeth then, a sound that was mirrored by the members of his pack. Harry snorted amused as his assumption was proved right. A few werewolves crouched down next to the cooling corpse of the boy, but he paid no mind to what they were doing. "It's not like I didn't warn you beforehand," Harry remarked unceremoniously before a movement in the corner of his eye caught his attention. Conall. Harry turned around to face the man with the
"Anything to add?" Harry asked him sarcastically, recalling that the werewolf had been suspiciously silent while he had dealt with Greyback. Conall simply shook his head. "It's nice to get at least some kind of reaction from you, since I came here today to protect your pack," Harry began, "You are lucky that I tend to keep my promises, so that even after I saw what was really going on here I kept to my part of the bargain."

The few members of Conall's pack who heard what was being spoken shifted tensely. The man himself though met Harry's unspoken accusation with a hard expression. Before Conall could reply though another voice from his rows spoke up.

"So did we."

Harry's head flung around to find the person. "Excuse you?!" he snapped when he found the man. Four equally jagged scars ran over the speaker's face and he met Harry's gaze with his chin held high.

Harry had forgotten the guy's name, but it was one of the younger members of Conall's pack.

"We never did anything that opposed our agreement," the werewolf with the scars said. Harry's eyes pierced him like daggers.

"Technically? Maybe," Harry said. "But don't bullshit me," he hissed and stalked towards the bloke. Shadows seemed to follow his movements and the scarred werewolf faltered. "Don't you dare to pretend-" Conall stepped forward and blocked Harry's path.

"You seemed to manage pretty well on your own," Conall stated, most likely in an attempt to soothe Harry's temper.

"Well that's bloody obvious now, isn't it?" Harry replied with a dry laugh. "But you probably didn't think so earlier, am I right?"

"I did what was best for the pack," Conall said, now with a hint of steel in his voice. He exposed his teeth a little more than he had to as he spoke and the scar beneath his stubbles wrinkled with the motion. A threat - barely noticeable but there. Some werewolves behind him tensed, preparing to attack if their leader were to demand it.

Harry didn't even think about backing away. "You tried to sell me out," he said coldly. Death smirked at Harry's display of ire. Above them an icy wind howled and the trees at the edge of the clearing creaked quietly. Harry paused for a moment. "I think we should call our agreement quits; don't you think?" Conall seemed suddenly uneasy with Harry's change of temper.

"No hard feelings," he replied.

"Oh, why would you think there'd be any?" Harry asked him with a dangerous grin. Then he turned to Greyback, who had watched the exchange silently. "By the way, before I forget it. They were the ones who called me." Harry gestured towards Conall's pack; whose members now stared at him with wide eyes. "So, by an extent it's their fault that the boy is dead. And as you might have heard, our agreement is naught, so I won't care what is going to happen to them. They have chosen their path."

"I'm not a lapdog that you can push around," Greyback rasped. He looked over Conall with a sneer, before his eyes focused back on Harry.

"Well, but you are doing his dirty work, don't you?" Harry retorted. He hadn't expected Greyback
to lung for him as soon as the words had left his mouth.

Harry gasped for air as Fenrir's hands had closed around his neck. Death was there on an instance, invisible or not, but Harry almost unnoticeably shook his head. No. There was no need for his interference. Not yet.

"Try anything and the next wolf dies," Harry managed to spit out. Greyback stopped right where he stood. Barely one armlength away from him, but his fingers were still clasped around Harry's throat. He sensed Death's dislike of the situation, yet Harry couldn't help but feel exhilarated by the danger he was in.
In a way it was like Quidditch. You never knew when a Bludger would cause you to fall. But Greyback was no match for Death. That much was sure. Was he a match for Harry though?

"You think I care after what you have done? That they care?" Greyback snarled, interrupting Harry's train of thought. Harry choked as the werewolf pulled him closer. Greyback's people who had been surrounding their dead pack member had risen to their feet. Their eyes flashed in the light as they stared at Harry, an eerie silence surrounding them. Like hunters stalking for prey.

Harry licked over his dry lips. "If the next one to die is you? Sure," he uttered with a hoarse voice and grinned. Greyback gnashed his teeth. Harry could see that he didn't like the lack of fear surrounding Harry, but the man didn't let go. Rather the opposite happened, and his grip grew even tighter, nails digging into Harry's flesh. Over Greyback's shoulder, he could see the man's pack.
The beasts inside of them twisted and snarled, trying to rip through their skin just like they wanted to tear through their enemies' flesh. There was steel glinting in the shadows, daggers being pulled out but also wands. They didn't seem to possess the same restraint regarding magic that dominated Conall's pack. And they thirsted for revenge.

"I want you deliver a message to him," Harry said.

"I don't owe you anything."

"No, I guess you don't," Harry replied hoarsely, feeling the pressure of Greyback's palm against his windpipe. "But I think that the dark Lord would like to hear what I have to say. Of course, you could avoid mentioning this encounter at all, but we both know it doesn't really work that way," Harry said and he stared into Greyback's piercing eyes. "Because he knows when you are lying," he added almost whispering."And I despite everything you say, I don't think he would be very pleased if you took the opportunity to kill me from him."

"I don't give a shit about a wizards opinion," the infamous man spat. "I could crush your throat this very moment," A gruesome smile split Greyback's face and he licked over his chapped lips, "...drink down your blood and taste your flesh." The werewolf turned Harry's head from side to side, slowly, the smirk still on his face. Death's dark presence started to creep over the clearing once more. "Delicious, delicious..."

The man leaned forward to scent him again, now close to his neck and Harry grimaced. Somehow this irritated him more than anything else Greyback had done before. The grip on his throat he had under control but Greyback trying to smell him. Just no. The werewolf pulled back with a strange look on his face. "Someone ever tell you that you smell like death? You've got this stench all over you, but you are lucky that I'm not picky." The werewolf smirked. "After all, death and I we are no strangers."

At that Harry laughed. He couldn't help it. He shook with laughter, gasping for air before he grabbed the werewolf's wrist and the hold on his neck tightened. Harry's eyes pierced Greyback. Enough playing around. The fun had left this game some time ago.
Harry gathered his magic. A gate had been opened to the darkest part of him, the piece he shared with Death, that piece of him that was Death. He allowed only a small part of it to come forth. Never before had he never attempted to control it, to direct it and he wasn't able to now, not yet, but he could restrain it. Death floated through his limbs, his skin his blood. And Greyback's eyes widened even before he realized what was happening. Still gasping for air, Harry laughed when Greyback's screamed. His dirty fingers had started to blacken and his skin begun to rot away where it was in contact with Harry.

Panic, pure unaltered panic rolled in waves from Greyback as he tried to pull away. Harry let the wrist slip through his grip, while the others stared at the werewolf whose arm had started to decay in front of their very eyes.

Harry sputtered as Greyback let go, laughing and coughing at the same time while all that was residing on the clearing was fear and Death's amusement.

Eventually Harry straightened his spine and he smirked at Greyback who was cradling his arm. "No stranger to Death huh?" A black taint seemed to stain the withered skin, not unlike what Dumbeldore's hand had looked like after he'd touched a ring that had once been Voldemort's horcrux. "You could say that," Harry muttered to himself. He waited till Greyback looked up, their eyes locking. "Tell Voldemort that I want Pettigrew," Harry said. It was not a request. Before the werewolf could reply, Harry disapparated only to reappear somewhere behind the treeline. Greyback didn’t seem to take Harry's disappearance very well. And since they couldn't attack Harry...

The sounds of screams accompanied him, as he let himself being whisked away by the shadows. Some secrets should still be kept.

Back in Hogwarts, Harry looked up at Death with a smirk. "You showed off there a little bit, didn't you?" he asked amused. Death met his gaze with a solemn expression. The being reached out his fingers splaying over Harry's neck. His touch was gentle not at all like Greyback's rough hand.

"You are bleeding," he said. Surprised Harry touched his skin where the werewolf's nails had been digging into his flesh. When he pulled away there was red staining his fingers. Harry stared at it.

"I didn't notice."

"There are bruises as well," Death continued and Harry chuckled at the sour expression on the being’s face.

"We can't have that now, can we? Someone else leaving their marks..." Harry said jokingly. He almost yelped when Death was suddenly invading his space and rubbing his nose against his cheek.

"Exactly," Death purred. Laughing, Harry pressed a kiss against Death's collar bone.

"Alright, but this can wait for tomorrow. For now, I'm knackered."

And it did wait for tomorrow, though after grabbing a shower first thing in the morning, Harry immediately looked up a healing spell. He could hardly walk around looking like he had been choked by - well - a werewolf. Though this was a point Harry hadn't taken into consideration. Greyback was a werewolf. Full moon or not, while the bruises were easily healed with an
"Episkey" the cuts were another thing altogether. Barely more than scratches, just deep enough to draw blood, they were still wounds inflicted by a werewolf and thus would have to heal by themselves. The only thing he could do was wait and cover the physical evidences with a glamour.

Death was more than miffed, if that was a word one could use to describe the being’s antics.

"Why don’t you just go and kill Greyback yourself?" Harry asked Death during breakfast, when he had once again stated that they should just end the werewolf’s life. While Death was currently not in the form of a snake, no one would bother to take a closer look, the Gryffindors already used to the black snake hiding beneath his clothing. Though a few people in hearing range flinched at the sudden display of parseltongue. Harry had never really bothered to use it in public after the debacle during second year, but right now it was the easiest way to talk in private. Using a "muffliato" would only draw attention, not to mention that Hermione would know immediately what was going on. Though right now that might not be the case. She was sitting a bit to the left on the opposite side of the table, an open book next to her that seemed to demand all of her attention. Her fork was hovering in the air, and she had yet to notice that the piece of scrambled egg that she'd been about to eat had long dropped onto her plate again. "While I appreciate you asking - Greyback has to deliver a message after all - it's not like you have to ask for permission to kill someone. I mean you are Death, aren't you?" Harry continued while eyeing Ron, who was glaring at Michael Corner from afar.

"I can't," Death said suddenly very quiet. Harry paused.

"What do you mean you can't?"

"I can't simply take someone before their time has come, just like I can't bring back someone who has already gone on."

"But you killed the werewolf on the clearing," Harry said confused.

"You told me to."

"So, if I tell you to kill someone, you have to kill that person?" Harry asked with a frown.

"No," Death said, "but I can."

"Me being your Master is a loophole that you are exploiting..." Harry stated in sudden realization.

Death shrugged. "It might be. A tiny bit."

Harry snorted amused. In this moment a rustling in the air told of the arriving morning post. Owls flooded the hall, hooting and screeching as they tried to find their owners. Nothing out of the ordinary but as soon as the first owls had delivered their post a shocked silence overtook the Great hall. A few feet to Harry's left, Neville had dropped his cutlery and it clattered loudly on his plate. He was deathly pale.

"Oh god," Hermione gasped and Harry didn’t think it was the owl stealing her bacon that was responsible for the worry in her voice. She looked up, almost as pale as Neville and locked eyes with Harry. Then she grabbed the Daily Prophet that had just been delivered to her and scooted up the bench. All reservations of the last days seemed forgotten as the girl stared at Harry and Ron.

“What’s going on?” Ron asked with a frown. Without another word Hermione pushed the Daily Prophet over to them.
A massive headline took over half the page alongside ten black and white photographs. "MASS BREAKOUT IN AZKABAN"

The Ministry of Magic announced late last night that there has been a mass breakout from Azkaban.

Speaking to reporters in his private office, Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic, confirmed that ten high-security prisoners escaped in the early hours of yesterday evening, and that he has already informed the Muggle Prime Minister of the dangerous nature of these individuals.

"We find ourselves, most unfortunately, in the same position we were two and a half years ago when the murderer Sirius Black escaped," said Fudge last night. "Nor do we think the two breakouts are unrelated. An escape of this magnitude suggests outside help, and we must remember that Black, as the first person ever to break out of Azkaban, would be ideally placed to help others follow in his footsteps. We think it likely that these individuals, who include Black's cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange, have rallied around Black as their leader. We are, however, doing all we can to round up the criminals and beg the magical community to remain alert and cautious. On no account should any of these individuals be approached."

Harry glanced at Death. Sirius trial had just gotten a lot harder to win. He hadn't expected the breakout till January. Apparently, his actions had already changed the timeline more than he had expected.

Ron’s look was grave after his eyes had scanned over the last few lines of the article.

“Poor Sirius,” Hermione whispered. “I mean he couldn’t leave the house before but now it’s almost an impossibility.”

“Rabastan Lestrange…” Ron said and stared at the picture of the infamous wizard, next to his brother and the other escapees. “It says that he was imprisoned for torturing Alice and Frank Longbottom…”

“Yeah,” Harry said.

“These aren’t Neville’s parents, are they?” Ron said aghast and looked up to stare at Neville as did now many others. Whispers travelled through the rows of students.

“Yeah, they are,” Harry confirmed, “They are in St. Mungos. Tortured to insanity.”

“That is horrible,” Hermione said.

“But look,” Ron said. “Apparently he wasn’t the only one.”

Harry nodded. He pointed at the picture next to Rabastan. “That’s Rodolphus, his brother. He is married to Bellatrix,” Harry’s finger wandered further.

“Sirius’ cousin,” Hermione said.

“Yeah.”

Ron stared at the pictures frowning. “I think I recognize him,” he said and pointed at the
photograph of tall, pock-marked Augustus Rookwood. Greasy strands of grey hair fell into Rookwood’s face and the wizard within the mugshot grimaced at Ron’s poking finger. “Dad mentioned him a few times. He knew him.”

“It says here that he was a spy,” Hermione said and she leaned over the table to read the lines listing his crimes, “He gave valuable information through the Ministry to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.”

Ron nodded. “He worked as an Unspeakable. He and Dad didn’t really talk much but apparently no one suspected him. He seemed to be a decent guy before… well you know.”

Hermione took in the information eagerly. “And the others?” she asked.

“Oh I don’t know that much about them,” Ron said and he would’ve probably blushed at the intense stare he was met with, if it weren’t for the grave topic. “But that one, Dolohov,” Ron spat and pointed at another mugshot. “He was there when they killed, my uncles, mom’s brothers. Gideon and Fabian. We don’t really talk about it at home, because mom always gets really quiet then. Dad once sat us down and told us all that he knew about how it went down, you know. They fought till the end, and they apparently got a good chunk out of another Death Eater. It was brutal,” Ron said and he stared at the picture quietly for some time. Then he cleared his throat.

“I’m really sorry,” Hermione said quietly.

Ron shook his head. “I barely knew them.”

“But still,” Hermione replied.

No one seemed very inclined to pay much attention to their lessons after the grim news had hit the school, though it would’ve had more of an impact if the teachers had bothered to actually teach that day. Even the adults stood in small groups whenever they had the chance and talked in hushed voices. McGonagall had them copy a paragraph from the textbook and the remainder of the lesson they spent quietly talking. Flitwick didn’t even attempt to pretend to be teaching and even Professor Trelawney was seen walking amongst the “regular” people. The only ones being their usual selves were Umbridge and Snape, but even the latter hadn’t once snapped at Neville which was such unnatural occurrence that Harry was wondering why not more people took notice of it. The very walls of Hogwarts seemed to whisper and if one bothered to listen, there were portraits mumbling about what had become of these people that had once been simple students of Hogwarts.

A shadow had fallen over the school, bringing unwanted attention to those who had lost loved ones to Voldemort’s followers. Susan Bones whose whole family had practically been wiped out apart from her aunt and parents was followed by swarms of pupils and the same happened to others. Fred and George dealt with anyone who somehow remembered that the Weasleys were related to the Prewett brothers and both had taken turns to keep an eye on Neville, who walked from class to class like a zombie. Even Harry was now once again a centre of attention. And as soon at the opportunity presented itself, Harry excused himself and went “to take a nap” to gain some distance from the demanding crowd. At least that was what he told Ron and Hermione. In reality, he was visiting Sirius.

Kreacher greeted him, as he appeared within the walls of Grimmauld place. And when Harry asked him if Sirius was around, he was directed towards the kitchen.

Harry snorted when he heard Kreacher happily hum to himself as he walked away. The elf seemed more than thrilled that another Black had escaped the fate of wasting away beneath the ministrations of Dementors in Azkaban.
As Harry walked down the worn stone steps to the kitchen, he could already feel that Sirius wasn’t alone. He knocked against the open door to announce his presence and was met with the equally somber faces of his godfather and Remus. They appeared to have been talking to each other just before Harry had entered. The Daily Prophet lay discarded on the table.

“Harry,” Sirius said surprised and stood up.

“Hi,” Harry greeted back and looked at his godfather and Lupin. “I thought I’d pay you a visit after I heard the news.”

“Grave news indeed,” Remus said with a dark look on his face.

“Come,” Sirius gestured towards the chair next to him. “It’s been quite some time till you last visited. I’d already thought you’d forgotten about me,” he added jokingly, but Harry noticed the streak of truth in his words.

“Nah, I wouldn’t,” Harry said and made his way over. “There was just a lot going on.”

‘Dumbledore keeping an eye on me for example.’ He didn’t voice this thought so. Harry took a seat while Death remained standing, the being invisible to everyone but him.

“Do you want something to drink? Eat?” Sirius asked but Harry declined and then they sat around the table quietly for some time.

“The breakout…” Harry began eventually.

“Yeah, the breakout,” Sirius repeated grimly.

“It makes things a lot harder for your trial,” Harry said. His godfather said nothing.

“We could’ve predicted that Fudge tries to blame the whole thing on Sirius. It’s his last resort. Otherwise he would have to admit that the Dementors have now joined the enemy,” Lupin said, “Though I have to admit that I haven’t thought about the impact it has on your trial yet,” he added with an apologetic look at Sirius.

“Don’t worry,” Sirius sighed. “The outcome rested on razor-edge anyways. We would’ve had a hard time winning this beforehand and now that shit went down, we know that it was a fruitless attempt from the beginning,” Sirius said hopelessly. “Maybe the family crazy finally took over.”

“Don’t say something like that,” Remus said.

“Why not?” Sirius retorted. “What have I been but insane for clinging to this hope that is now torn to shreds by the hands of an even more foolish man.”

“No, it’s not foolish to cling to a hope,” the werewolf said.

“I agree with Remus on that,” Harry said. “Besides, there are other ways to get your freedom.”

“And what did you have in mind?” Sirius asked sarcastically.

“Well for one we could always overthrow the Ministry.”

Remus snorted and Sirius stared at him deadpan.

“I’m serious,” Harry continued.

“We are three people. I doubt that we could do much ‘overthrowing’,” Remus said.
“Voldemort has already begun infiltrating the Ministry. Half the Wizengamot is made out of Death Eaters. Even if his presence would be publicly acknowledged I’d give him about two years and he has it sacked,” Harry said casually.

“Do you suggest we join him?” Sirius asked frowning. Remus seemed shocked at his question. The werewolf would’ve probably never thought of Harry hinting at something that outrageous. But Sirius knew him a bit better.

“Well obviously right now wouldn’t be the best moment to do so. Voldemort wants me dead and you two hate him. Not to mention your dear cousin, Sirius, with whom you’d have to deal if you were to join him.”

“The funny thing is, that I somehow regard this as the worst part of it all,” Sirius said. Remus seemed aghast by their casual discussion of that topic.

“But no,” Harry said. “What I suggest is bribery.”

Sirius laughed dryly. “My mother would be proud. Bribing the ministry like a real Black,” he stated.

“And who would you plan to bribe, Harry?” Remus asked solemnly.

“Well the most obvious person would be Voldemort. I recently sent a message to him anyways, concerning Pettigrew, but it was more of a heat-of-the-moment decision. But now, if I think about it why not get a bit more out of the deal,” Harry mused. Death watched him entertained, undoubtedly following his thought process.

“You sent a message. To Voldemort,” Remus stated.

Harry shrugged. Lupin stared at him.

“Oh, I see,” the werewolf began. “Yeah, why not? Let’s just owl Voldemort and hope that he sends Pettigrew back to us. Maybe he even ties a ribbon around his neck,” Remus said and his voice was dripping with sarcasm. “Have you lost your goddamn mind?!” he shouted all of a sudden. “You sent a message to Voldemort? That was your plan?”

“Well no, actually I planned to kidnap Peter,” Harry said. “I though it would just be more fun to kidnap him when Voldemort knows that I plan to get him, you know?”

Remus mouth opened and closed again. He didn’t seem to find any words to reply to Harry’s statement.

“Harry,” Sirius now spoke up and leaned forward, “you didn’t really send a message to Voldemort, did you?” he asked carefully. “And like Remus said, you can hardly send him an owl.” Harry all of a sudden asked himself if someone had ever tried to send Voldemort an owl. Somehow the thought amused him.

“I did, actually. But I didn’t send an owl. I don’t even know if the message reaches its recipient, but recently I encountered Greyback-“

It was the expression on Remus’ face that prompted Harry to stop.

“You encountered Greyback,” Sirius said. “When?”

“Well yes. Yesterday, I think. Or today if you want to be exact. He was there to recruit the
werewolves.”

“Conall’s pack?” Lupin asked.

Harry nodded. “There won’t be much left of them I guess.”

“What happened?” Sirius asked.

“Let’s just say Greyback didn’t get to kill me and that pissed him off. Though I wasn’t there to see much of the outcome.”

“Ten people died, eight of them from Conall’s pack,” Death commented from behind. Harry turned around.

“Do you know what happened to the survivors?”

“I could look for them if you want me to.” Death replied.

“No it’s alright. I was just wondering,” Harry mused. When he turned back around, Sirius stared over his shoulder. Remus seemed on the verge of a breakdown.

“He is here, isn't he?” Sirius asked.

“Yup,” Harry said.

“This is so creepy. To not see him, but to know Death is standing behind you.” The being itself smirked.

“I feel like I need a drink for this conversation,” Remus stated. When Sirius was raising his wand, Remus waved him off. “No, no I didn’t mean it literally…” Then he seemed to change his mind. “Know what. Yes actually. I’ll take that drink.” At Sirius motion a bottle of fire-whisky came floating out of the pantry as well as three glasses, but Remus snatched the Whisky out of the air before Sirius could reach for it.

“You two get nothing. Harry is too young and you seem to do just fine without right now,” Remus said with an irritable look and Sirius sighed but didn’t complain, while Lupin poured some of the liquid into a glass.

“So, and now you will tell us exactly what you are planning to do,” Remus demanded after taking a sip and sternly watching Harry. Harry met his gaze with an unwavering stare. He crossed his arms.

“I guess that’s fair,” Harry said after some time, breaking the silence. “Voldemort own’s half the Wizengamot and that means half the votes for your-” he nodded towards Sirius – “trial. Then there is me and the Weasleys who can vote, if they claim their seat of course, and yours.”

“And you plan to bribe Voldemort into ordering his followers to vote for Sirius’ freedom,” Remus said.

“Exactly,” Harry replied.

“Besides, Lucius Malfoy has connections. Maybe he can also pull some strings,” Sirius pondered.

“Hold on for a moment,” Remus said, “It might be just me, who is overthinking things, but did it perhaps escape both of your minds, that Voldemort wants you, Harry, dead? And apart from the fact that I have no idea how you want to communicate this with him, you are actually suggesting to bribe Voldemort of all people!? This whole idea is just insane,” Remus said. “Let’s say you find a
way to talk to him and let alone survive that encounter. Why in the hell should he even agree to it?"

“Because I offer him something that he values more than Sirius’ being the scapegoat for his breakout,” Harry said.

“And what would that be?” Remus asked. “The only thing that I can think of Harry - and forgive my bluntness - would be your death, which I hardly regard as a good idea.”

“Well then I am a few steps ahead of you, because I know at least seven.”

Harry didn’t remain much longer in Grimmauld place. He couldn’t stay away from Hogwarts for too long and their conversation had come to a halt when Harry refused to tell anything more. Remus, he could tell, was kind of fed up and Harry couldn’t help but pity him, as he seemed to be the only sane soul in the room. Though late at night Harry was laying in his bed and pondered what would be the best way to approach Voldemort. How in the hell did one contact a dark Lord? Appearing right where Voldemort was, was probably a bad idea. After all they weren’t really on good terms. And the only thing Harry could think of, would be sending an owl. Damn Remus and his sarcasm. Maybe he would find another way if he forgot about it for a few hours. And with that thought in mind, he fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Remus turned out pretty sarcastic. And I really like him so I hope he didn't appear like a dick. But we have to forgive him he is the only one with a sensible mind in this house.
A day in the life of Severus Snape (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Basically what the title says. The day the daily Prophet announces the Mass Breakout of Azkaban from Severus' pov.

Chapter Notes

Originally I wanted to post everything from Severus' pov in one chapter but it's gotten pretty long already and since I know I'm gonna take a while to finish writing the rest I thought I'd just post the first part of his day so that you've got something to read even thought nothing too exciting will happen yet.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was cold in the Dungeons. Cold and dark. That at least was the general view, Hogwarts' population had of the lower floors of the castle. And Severus had to admit that they were right. To an extent. While the hallways were freezing and steps seemed to echo for miles at a time, every Slytherin could tell you something else. Once you left the dim torchlight illuminating the hallways and stepped through the hidden entrance to their common room, you were greeted by an imposing area decorated with black leather sofas, carved chairs and an seemingly eternal flame licking on the wood in the fireplace – the watchful eyes of the house elves keeping it that way. Ancient charms saved the warmth in the stones and the cold was kept on the other side of the windows to the great lake. Only the gloomy light was allowed to fall through and since the walls tended to radiate the warmth on both sides, the merfolk was occasionally seen lingering around when the winters were harsher.

The same charms that kept the cold from invading the common room of the Slytherins also laid upon Severus’ office and chambers. They were old and had been there long before he had accepted his teaching post. And he was thankful for them. Whatever the others may think, even he was not immune to the cold that settled among the walls of the castle during the later months of the year.

Severus woke with a start, sitting up while his hand was already halfway done reaching for his wand before he realized where he was. His warm blanket was pooling around his waist and he shivered because of the cool air. Blinking, Severus tried to recall the already fading details of his nightmare - the reason behind his abrupt awakening in the first place. In his mouth the phantom taste of blood still lingered, as did the blurring image of a spell slicing into throat. Almost subconsciously his hand wandered to his left arm. Steeply Severus pushed the nebulous memories aside and stood up; groaning, as he left his warm bedsheets behind entirely. He knew it was no use trying to go back to sleep, though he didn’t look forward to teaching on Mondays. The mix between Slytherins and Gryffindors always proved to be explosive and today he would even have to deal with two of these classes.

Severus stared at his forearm before he turned to dress himself. The dark mark was no longer the faded thing that it had been just a few years ago. Now it was jet
black and pulsing with life, sharp outlines contrasting with the paleness of his skin while the snake inside the skull almost seemed to move.

Severus didn’t bother to look into the mirror before he left his chambers and went into his office. A glance at a clock told him, that the sun wouldn’t even rise until in a few hours. Then his eyes fell onto the essays on Dragon’s blood on his desk. He had avoided to grade them till now, not very keen on having to decipher the scrawls of his first years, of whom most of them still had no idea how to properly use a quill, the splotches of ink evidence of their lacking skill. With a sigh he sat down, after a murmured "incendio" had ignited the wood in his fireplace, then he pulled the stack of parchments towards him. If he was already awake, he could just as well make use of the time and get some work done.

The grading even managed to distract him somewhat from the prospect of teaching the Gryffindors but it did nothing to brighten his mood. Eventually though, Severus headed to the great hall for breakfast.

It was still very empty sans few students here and there, who were sitting on the house-tables, yawning and munching on their breakfasts with tired eyes. The staff table was sporadically occupied as well. Minerva was silently sipping on a cup of tea while Filius chatted with Professor Sinistra.

Severus headed for the seat next to the Transfigurations professor, who acknowledged him with a nod. He reached for a jug of juice and they sat in comfortable silence, the quiet murmurings of Aurora and the Charms professor resounding in the background. Meanwhile the house tables slowly gained some students and the hall grew lively with chatter. Professor Vektor arrived in the hall, as well as Professor Grubbly-Plank, who only grabbed a bite to eat and then headed back outside because “that bloody Porlock disappeared again and I really don't want to look for another one.”

Dumbledore’s seat remained empty. Nowadays he was rarely seen in the great hall. Not that he wasn’t absent half the time during the other schoolyears. The exception maybe the incident with the Basilisk.

A Basilisk for Merlin’s sake.

It was a pity that he hadn’t been able to head to the chamber to collect some potion ingredients. Such creature was hard to come by and since it had to be at least several hundred years old, its scales and bones were probably saturated with magic. Severus thoughts wandered to the other empty seat.

Rubeus Hagrid had arrived in Hogwarts about a fortnight ago but had yet to return to the staff table. Severus huffed. The way the man looked right now it was probably better that way. He had only seen him briefly, but the marks the giants had gifted the man with were a sight that was better kept from students and certain teachers alike.

Severus’ gaze strayed further, over the house tables and the students in front of him. Draco Malfoy’s blond hair stood out amidst the darker heads of his peers. Severus’ gaze rested upon the son of his friend for a while. Draco had kept rather silent since the incident on the Quidditch pitch. He sat hunched over his plate, idly picking on his food but Severus didn’t doubt that his usual personality would return soon enough. If it weren’t for Potter, he might have even been glad that the boy’s ego got put in its place for once. Lucius had sheltered his son far too much and the real life, when it hit would hit hard. The thought had his eyes jump to the other side of the hall. There was Potter. He was sitting next to Weasley - the girl, Granger on the opposite side, nose buried in a book. Nothing out of the ordinary. If Dumbledore had him observe the boy for another two weeks, he might as well demand a raise.

During his musings, Severus’ attention had only briefly left the rest of the table but long enough for him to miss the arrival of one Dolores Umbridge.
It was the feeling of Minerva suddenly stiffening next to him that had him turn his head. Severus held back a grimace when he spotted the bothersome Ministry witch.

“Good morning,” she said in the affected girly voice. Minerva’s sour expression mirrored Severus’ own state of mind. They exchanged a knowing look with each other after Professor Umbridge wrinkled her nose when she received no answer. Huffing she sat down a few seats further down the table and next to him Minerva relaxed in her posture. “Thank Merlin,” the Transfigurations professor whispered under her breath and Severus agreed whole heartedly.

“-lack of manners and if Cornelius knew about the conditions in this castle-“ Umbridge commented loud enough so that everyone sitting on the table could hear her.

“Is it too soon to hope that she will last about as long as the previous teachers in her subject?” Minerva whispered, leaning towards Severus.

“I could recommend you some poisons if you want to speed up that process,” Severus stated dryly.

“You say that, as if you've already given the idea some thought,” Minerva said with a slight smirk.

“Unlike some of us,” Severus said, “I can’t turn into a cat to avoid meeting her in the hallways.” If he hadn’t been talking to Minerva McGonagall, he’d almost thought that there was a faint blush dusting her cheeks.

“Ah. So, you noticed,” she replied, her attention suddenly firmly focused on her breakfast.

“Indeed,” he replied amused and the corner of his mouth twitched, before he took a sip out of his goblet.

“Though I fear this tactic is something I cannot longer use,” she replied after some time.

“How come?” Severus asked and reached for a toast.

“She tried to pet me,” Minerva hissed as she viciously cut into a fried egg.

Severus paused mid-motion and stared at her with raised eyebrows. The witch blissfully unaware of his astonishment continued with her rant. “And she is talking about a lack of manners. Merlin help me, if she introduces another Educationl Decree..."

A glance past Minerva told him that the women was currently launching into a speech about Fudge’s most recent act of foolishness, trying to find someone who would listen to her. Professor Vector shuffled away a little further with her seat. Severus leaned back again but it prompted Minerva also to look over her shoulder.

“Oh, poor Filius,” she said then, turning back. Severus looked up, and indeed. Over the course of a few seconds, the charms professor had fallen victim to Umbridge’s conversation and was now listening to her, nodding absentmindedly while the woman prattled about her position in the Ministry. “He is just too polite to turn her down.”

“At least we don’t have to listen to her that way,” Snape replied while he spread butter onto a toast.

“Severus’,“ Minerva hissed but a smile played around her lips. Though her expression soon changed when he asked her if she knew where Dumbledore was.

“He’s been away half the night already,” she whispered concerned, “I don’t know what’s going on, but I fear that it’s something serious that time,” she added in a hushed voice. “Albus usually
informs me where he’s going or at least when. I had to ask a house-elf to know what was going on!” Her affronted voice sparked amusement within Severus, but it didn’t diminish the seriousness of the message. “He appeared to be in a hurry, apparently.”

Snape nodded solemnly and after that, both were no longer in the mood to chat. They returned to their breakfast in silence.

Somehow his eyes returned to Potter. Severus knew what the headmaster was suspecting, but to him, the notion that the dark Lord was possessing the boy seemed - to put it frankly - ridiculous. He doubted that the dark Lord would waste his time by taking over Potter’s body and then keeping up appearances by acting like a schoolboy. If the dark Lord were to do so it would hardly go unnoticed.

But there was no way one could know if the boy wasn’t somehow being influenced by him. Even Severus had to admit that. The dark Lord was a master legilimens. Influencing a mind though without the victim noticing was much harder yet at the same time more subtle than possession. And there wasn’t much known about the connection between Potter and the dark Lord. It was a mystery to everyone. Perhaps not to Dumbledore. He mostly always knew more than he let on.

Despite that, Severus was less than thrilled by the headmasters recent ‘request’. He gritted his teeth and his fingers gripped his knife tighter. Teaching the brat Occlumency was now really not something he looked forward to.

Although he couldn’t deny that Potter had seemed off that year. Already from the beginning. But that was to be expected after witnessing the death of a fellow Student... and the ritual the dark Lord had used to make himself a body. A ritual in which the boy had been apparently involved...

Severus had seen the dark Lord’s new form, but to imagine it being shaped...

Potter had been there, the only one apart from Wormtail – the coward – who hadn’t even dared to look up at that moment. He could not deny that it was a fascinating piece of magic. Dark, gruesome and powerful it had undoubtedly been. Magic like this always took a price. And it had been paid in blood if one could believe Wormtail’s telling of the events. This was magic in its highest form. Making something out of nothing.

Twisting an already existing thing into a shape to wear, or possession of a weak-minded host were easier ways to start his reign again. But the dark Lord had not settled on such methods. He had made his own body. And with Wormtail being the executor of that ritual it had to have been a bloody simple one. Without a doubt it had been the dark Lord who had arranged everything. To simplify such a complicated matter to words and ingredients was a craft every potion’s master would give their soul to possess. Years had been poured into the invention of potions to regrow muscles or bones, but to make a whole body with a working blood circulation, lungs and a brain was an art and skill not many could even hope reach.

It had been this, magic and power, his fascination with the dark arts that had him joining the dark Lord in the first place. No longer doomed to be reduced to the punching bag of the ones around him. He had worked hard to reach his goals and even harder to earn respect, until he had been treated with it even amongst the ones who looked down on him because of his blood.

Today, Severus prided himself to be a capable man. People valued him for his abilities. And where others were led astray by anger and emotion, he was calculating. Always observing, weighing every decision in his mind. It was this, that allowed him to live on knives edge. He was walking a thin line, balancing between two sides. Every step on the way could lead to death. But a misstep and something far worse could await him.

His train of thought was interrupted by the arrival of the morning post. Owls flooded into the hall
from the openings in the ceiling and swarmed over the heads of the students and teachers alike. A plain brown owl landed in front of him to deliver the daily Prophet, expectantly stretching out a leg to receive its payment. It hooted impatiently while Severus searched the pockets of his cloak for a few sickles. After he had paid the demanding thing, it fluttered off but not before stealing a piece of food off – luckily – Minerva’s plate. The woman shooed the owl away while receiving her own issue of the paper by an imposing barn owl.

Severus knew he was good in what he was doing. So, it was no wonder that he felt a twinge of irritation when he smoothed out the Daily Prophet and found himself caught off guard by something, he’d been sure to know.

He’d expected it, of course, anticipated it maybe even but it unnerved him that he hadn’t known. He looked down at the images of various wizards and witches who, at one point in time, he had not expected to ever meet again. The headline above announced that there’d been a mass breakout in Azkaban.

He could not forgo noticing that not only he was stunned to silence in the great hall.

Minerva McGonagall leaned over to him as soon as she had scanned over her issue of the Daily Prophet.

“Did you know?” she whispered quietly. Severus shook his head.

“I wasn’t informed,” he replied curtly and maybe a little bit bitter though Minerva didn’t seem to notice. She sat back up in her chair to read the article while Severus used the opportunity to do the same. "MASS BREAKOUT IN AZKABAN"

The Ministry of Magic announced late last night that there has been a mass breakout from Azkaban.

Speaking to reporters in his private office, Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic, confirmed that ten high-security prisoners escaped in the early hours of yesterday evening, and that he has already informed the Muggle Prime Minister of the dangerous nature of these individuals.

"We find ourselves, most unfortunately, in the same position we were two and a half years ago when the murderer Sirius Black escaped," said Fudge last night. "Nor do we think the two breakouts are unrelated. An escape of this magnitude suggests outside help, and we must remember that Black, as the first person ever to break out of Azkaban, would be ideally placed to help others follow in his footsteps. We think it likely that these individuals, who include Black's cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange, have rallied around Black as their leader. We are, however, doing all we can to round up the criminals and beg the magical community to remain alert and cautious. On no account should any of these individuals be approached."

Severus snorted and folded the paper in front of him. “Black, what a joke. If he had even half enough of a brain…“ he muttered more to himself than anyone else. Minerva made a noise of disapproval as she put her own issue of the Daily Prophet down. She shook her head.

“No wonder Albus was in such a hurry. Now we can be sure that the Dementors have chosen a new master,” she stated, thin lipped and pale.

“If they remain in Azkaban though—“ Severus commented before he silenced himself. Dolores Umbridge was eyeing them from her seat in what she probably thought was a subtle approach. Sometimes he couldn’t help but wonder if she knew that she appeared like a toad. The students
sure did, and the nickname had been surprisingly fitting in Severus’ eyes. He closed his fingers around his goblet to take a sip. Today he would prefer something stronger than juice.

The first two hours of teaching passed agonizingly slowly. His seventh years should be ready to take their newts at the end of the year and yet none of them seemed to be able to grasp the concept of an antidote to blended poisons. A topic that they had already discussed a year prior. Sighing, Severus’ pinched his nose. He had decided to do a repetition of an – apparently not so - simple topic to be able to focus on his own thoughts for a while, but to no avail.

“Mr. Jordan,” Severus snapped as he caught the Gryffindor’s movement out of the corner of his eye. The boy looked up from his neighbour who he had been whispering to just moments before. “If you kept your gossiping to yourself and tried to focus on your potion instead of distracting your neighbour, you would’ve noticed that this bean that you were about to add so thoughtlessly to your potion would’ve caused it to emit toxic fumes. I have yet to have a student die within this room, but if your own incompetence shall lead you to this fate, I will not hold myself accountable for it.” The boy sheepishly put the bean aside and looked at the instructions on the blackboard. “Five points from Gryffindor,” Severus announced before he stood up to take a look at the student's potions so far.

Eventually the lesson was over and Severus headed to his office for a short but needed break. On his way he debated whether to get a house-elf to bring him some tea, when a wizard in the portrait next to him cleared his throat. Severus walked past it, but the man followed him a few frames, before the potions professor finally turned to look at him. He raised an eyebrow.

The wizard in the portrait panted loudly, underlining his lack of breath after running, while the lady inhabiting the invaded frame was pushed into the background with a yelp. “Professor Snape, Sir,” the wizard began eventually, “the headmaster wishes to see you.”

“How?!” Snape asked.

“Yes. Now. Otherwise I would’ve said so, wouldn’t I?” the portrait snapped. Severus exhaled annoyed. He turned on his heel and headed for the headmaster’s office. “A thank you, would’ve been nice!” the wizard shouted after him. Severus ignored it.

He really wasn’t paid enough for this job.

Reaching the hidden staircase to the headmaster’s office, the Gargoyle jumped aside readily without Severus having to call out the password; probably already informed of his imminent arrival. Stepping up the worn steps, Severus knocked onto the door.

“Come on in,” the familiar voice resounded, muffled by the barrier between them. The door swung open and Severus stepped over the threshold.

The headmaster seemed weary and tired as he gestured for him to sit down. Severus remained standing. He didn’t know what it was that kept him declining the offer. Maybe the same thing that had Dumbledore offering him a seat every time he entered this office. A childish game of who would give in first perhaps or maybe it was simply a habit. Probably a bit of both.

“Severus, you probably know why I called you here,” the headmaster said quietly. He seemed old in that moment, tired, as he looked down at his folded hands. Dumbledore’s looks hadn’t really changed since Severus’ had first seen him – a time when his worst fear had been to be sorted into Gryffindor. Dumbledore had always been old – even then. Rarely though did he seem old, like today. Weary and exhausted, his wrinkles carving deep lines
into his face. The most recent events took a toll on him. But unlike many these days, Severus didn’t take it as an excuse to underestimate the man.

“The mass breakout,” Severus said with a nod. Dumbledore said nothing but his eyes wandered to the paper resting next to his hands. The image of Thorfinn Rowle stared at them with crazed eyes.

“By now everyone will already know what happened. Though the less unfortunate will fault Sirius for something a much more dangerous man should be held accountable for,” Dumbledore said and his eyes sparkled behind the half-moon glasses when he looked up for the first time. A twinge of annoyance went through Severus, but none of it showed on his face.

“I wasn’t informed about the time of the breakout nor the date, if that is what you are hinting at,” he replied, punctuating each word. Dumbledore didn’t attempt to poke at his mind, though the stare was discomforting regardless.

“Has he called you yet?” Dumbledore asked then, changing the topic so abruptly as if he had received an answer simply by looking at Severus' face.

“No.”

“He will, I think. If not today, then during the next days.”

Severus knew that it was likely. A stay in Azkaban for a decade didn’t just pass without leaving its traces. The dark Lord had capable healers within his rows. There were enough people who could tend to the escapees, but the potions Severus' had access to could restore the health of these people way quicker and on a much more effective level.

“I wanted to inform you,” Dumbledore said, “that a meeting of the Order will take place in Grimmauld Place today. 8 pm, if you can manage. If Voldemort calls you to him you can inform Minerva, she will deliver the message to me. For now, I will try to regain some sleep and then pay the Ministry a much-needed visit. A few things are still unclear and I have yet to speak to the Minister. This is worrying, Severus,” Dumbledore said and he stared at Severus intensely. “I did not expect Voldemort to take this course of action so soon. I thought he was more interested in the Prophecy and yet I underestimated his priorities. You know of nothing that could’ve prompted this change, do you?” Dumbledore asked him again with his unwavering stare. This time he felt a presence invading his mind, but he brushed it aside without as much as blink.

"I know of nothing that could've changed his current plans," Severus said truthfully yet anger boiled beneath his skin. But he was nothing if not disciplined. "We knew that Azkaban was one of his goals and that he would approach the Dementors eventually. This is hardly a surprise," he sneered. "You know that he hasn't been around much lately. He pursues other things. Things no one dares to ask about."

Dumbledore raised his eyes at that. His fingers unconsciously seemed to feel for the handle of a drawer in his desk but when he noticed Severus' eyes following his hand, he pulled it back. Then he stood up and walked over to Fawkes who was sitting on his bird stand in a corner. He patted the shimmering feathers and the bird chirped quietly. "That changes things," Dumbledore muttered. "Then it might be true... but he can't know about it, can he?" the headmaster quietly said to the bird. Then he turned around abruptly. "Severus," he said with an urgent voice. "If Lord Voldemort ever mentioned something, or will mention about certain... objects - even only a hint - I need to know about it," he said. Severus stared at him.

"A little more detail maybe?" he asked after a moment of silence. ‘‘Objects’ is a fairly broad expression.”
Dumbledore walked back to his desk animatedly. "They will be precious to him. More I can't say at that moment."

"Because you doubt my stance in this war," Severus stated.

"No, Severus," Dumbledore said and he shook his head, "I simply don't know more about it myself."

He did not question the older wizard further.

"I think you have classes to return to now, don't you think?" Dumbledore suddenly said as he sank back into his chair.

It had been some time since Severus had been thrown out of the man's office this unceremoniously, but the headmasters drained voice had him in a more forgiving mood. Besides, it wasn't like the man wasn't right. Severus turned on the spot and left the room.

He didn't see how the headmaster pulled a holey diary out of his drawer, thumbing the jagged leather thoughtfully.

Severus did not have time to enjoy what little time remained of his break. In the hallways he came upon a dispute between a few Ravenclaws and two Hufflepuffs. He might have taken more points than necessary but his mood wasn't the best right now and they should rather be glad that he didn't report them to Umbridge like her most recent decree demanded. School inquisitor... ridiculous.

The next classes consisted of the fifth years of Slytherin and Gryffindor. Potter was sitting in the back again and yet Severus couldn't deny that his potion skills had greatly improved that year. As if he'd noticed his gaze, the boy looked up with an unnerving smirk. Severus refused to acknowledge that the hairs in his neck stood up as he was met with the piercing stare.

He turned to take a look at the other students. Longbottom was white as a sheet as he stood behind his desk, mechanically cutting the ingredients and pushing them into his cauldron. Surprisingly it turned out better than his most attempts while young Goyle was stirring something that looked like grey slime. The thick bluish smoke rising up over his potion and slowly gathering beneath the low ceiling told Severus that he had undoubtedly forgotten to add the beetle eyes after the second stir. He stood up and walked over to him. “Mr. Goyle, until today I was sure that you were able to read but now, I am not so certain anymore.”

“Sir?” the boy asked and raised his head.

“Third line on the blackboard, Mr. Goyle.”

“Oh.”

Severus repressed the urge to sigh. ‘Oh’ indeed. “Back to your work. For the next lesson I would recommend you to pay more attention,” he said quietly.

They could probably both do without Mrs. Goyle complaining about ‘Gregory’s’ grades. The girl sitting behind him giggled. “Miss Parkinson,” Severus said. “It would do you better if you focused on your own potion, if you don’t want to end up with something similar to the results Longbottom usually produces.” The girl shrunk back and hastily began to stir her potion after she’d noticed that it had begun bubbling in a dark orange.

Severus pinched his nose to in a fruitless attempt to keep the oncoming headache at bay. The objects the headmaster had mentioned still lingered at the corner of his mind. Yet he couldn’t think of a reason that would have the dark Lord grow attached to useless paraphernalia – his snake
Though Dumbledore rarely asked him to look out for something if he didn’t deem it important even if the revelation about that fact came only months later. Severus decided that he would prepare an assortment of healing potions as soon as he found the time, just in case that Dumbledore was right with his assumption about being called later that day.

Five hours, a class of Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs as well as an incident with a melted cauldron later, Severus sighed in relief. Though he had to remain in the classroom for a while longer to prepare some of the potion ingredients that he couldn’t buy fresh in the capacities he needed for his classes. Disemboweling toads was a disgusting task that had to be done and there was a reason that it was one of his preferred ways to have students spend their detention. Ingredients for potions should be contaminated as little as possible with magic beside their own - if they possessed such properties. Thus, he was elbow deep in toad-guts when a hot flare of pain had him dropping the knife only to clutch his left arm with a hiss.

Chapter End Notes

I have no idea how to characterize Snape tbh. What did you think of him?
Snape really deserves a raise

Chapter Summary

Snape is being summoned by the Dark Lord and tends to a few familiar Death Eaters. Also Severus being a bitter man hating everyone and everything.

(i would appreciate it if you took a quick look at my question at the end of this chapter in the notes after reading. Thank you :D)

Chapter Notes

Hey it's me again. Returning after a month of silence but at least this chapter is a little longer than my usual chapters. I did not look it through. Again. But I just had enough of overthinking and posted it like I had written.

WARNING. I tagged this fic for graphic violence and I had my reasons. I don't know if it's "worse" in terms of gruesome what I have written so far but I wrote a bit about Snape remembering about Death Eater raids and his parents so if you want to skip it just skip a few paragraphs and some italic sentences after Bellatrix starts laughing and continue reading after you spot this ---

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Molten lava ran through his bones, licking his flesh like fire as the dizzying call of the Dark mark pulled on his body and mind. The dark Lord was summoning him. Only the last few months of continuous calls enabled Severus to keep his composure. He swallowed hard, relaxing his fingers that had gripped the edge of the desk without his approval. Severus reached for his wand and with a whispered spell the bloody smears that were staining his forearms disappeared. Carefully Severus pulled down his rolled-up sleeves, hiding the symbol that stood black and demanding against his skin. With gritted teeth he threw a stasis spell over the gutted toads in front of him. He could already see himself having to throw them away. All that work for nothing. Severus couldn’t help but let the pained noise escape his clenched teeth and when the Dark mark seemingly burned itself deeper into his skin.

Quickly Severus stepped out of the classroom, locking it behind him with a silent spell. His arm throbbed painfully, while he walked with his head raised high, keeping up a swift pace though not too fast to draw any attention. Cold sweat was running down his back as he headed for his office without an outward sign of distress. But as soon as Severus had reached his rooms he sunk against the door after it had fallen shut behind him.

Severus allowed himself a moment of weakness, exhaling sharply while the pull in his arm persevered. It would not help if he remained where he was, fingers digging into the dark mark that grew more insistent the longer he resisted its call. From experience he knew that the pain would
subside eventually. Though he also knew that should he ignore the call, a far worse fate would await him. He could feel the black snake writhing beneath his palm, mocking him with its very existence. Taking another deep breath, he pushed himself from the wall. With well-practiced movements Snape grabbed a handful of floo powder and threw it into the glimmering remains of this morning’s fire. Green flames immediately flickered to life, rising to an impressive height before they shrunk to a more manageable level.

"Minerva McGonagall's office," Severus said as he stuck his head into the fire. The unpleasant spin did nothing to keep the nausea at bay which rose and receded in turns with the ebbing insistence of the mark. After a few seconds Severus was greeted with the sight of a desk or rather the lower half of a desk and a dusty stone floor illuminated by flecks of light. "Minerva?"

As soon as the name spilled over his lips Severus heard the scratching of a chair and suddenly feet appeared in his field of vision as they stepped in front of the fireplace.

"Severus!" Minerva's surprised voice was followed by her head as she leaned down and Severus could see her face. A few dark strands had left her usually meticulously coiffed hair which told Snape that she had been worrying about something. Dumbledore most likely. But there were more pressing matters to attend to.

"I have to leave," Severus said curtly. "He summoned me."

Minerva’s eyes sparked with concern but she nodded solemnly; her lips pressed into a thin line. "I will inform Albus as soon as I can," she said. “When will you return?”

“I don’t know,” Severus said. He didn’t wait for the witch to answer because another throb of his arm reminded him that time was precious and he pulled his head out of the fire.

As soon as he had straightened up, Severus walked over to his wardrobe. It would at least take a minute to lift the complicated spells that prevented nosy people from discovering what was hidden within it, but the effort was necessary. With Umbridge in the school even more so.

Wordlessly Severus performed a piece of magic which alone should have guaranteed him the post as Defense against the dark arts teacher. Though even after he had lifted the protective spells, a familiar tingling went up his arm - the wards - when went to retrieve the two items stored beneath the false bottom. A smooth mask stared up at him unblinkingly, resting upon a shadowy robe. Both went into an inner pocket of Severus’ cloak. He didn’t put them on. Not yet. Back in his office, Severus’ reached into the drawer of his desk – spells too prevented its content to be summoned by magic – and grabbed the leather bag that was stowed in there. Potion vials clinked together before it joined the other items in a pocket.

Severus glanced at the clock. He could walk over the school grounds to disapparate, but while it was a more direct path it might take longer depending who he would meet on the way. One couldn’t be too careful nowadays. The ministry was sticking its nose in stuff that wasn’t any of their business and besides, if one was headed where he was going it was better to use the least watched path to reach the destination. Severus gathered his thoughts while ignoring the pulsing mark as best as he could. It was not unusual for him visit Diagon alley to shop for things if he ran out of certain potion ingredients… After a moment of contemplation he threw another handful of floo powder into the fire before he disappeared within the flames.

The Leaky cauldron seemed as filthy and shabby as always. A few visitors were scattered all over
the room. Some alone, some in groups around tables, chatting and drinking. The scent of cheap liquor and sweat hung in the humid air, briefly disturbed by a cold breeze that swept through the barroom when someone entered the pub. “Close the damn door!” an old witch complained over the noise. The person who'd entered simply growled under their hood and ordered a beverage of a more questionable nature. Severus did not bother to greet the toothless owner of the pub, who weaseled through the crowd, a tray with dirty dishes floating next to him. The place had him itching for a drink. Right now, he would rather sit amongst the blissful fools who sat at the bar and got drunk but instead he headed for the back.

No one paid him much attention. People were coming and going, simply walking through or using the fireplace to get home. Someone like him was no rarity here. The sound of voices cut off abruptly as he closed the door behind him, changing into a low background hum. Severus could see his breath as he stepped into the cold. With a last look he finally gave in and followed the pull of his throbbing mark.

Malfroy Manor’s silhouette stood sharply against the twilight. With a silent pop, Severus had appeared in front of the impressive building. He hadn't anticipated this place to be his destination, but it made sense. Lucius would know days beforehand if the Ministry planned to pay him a visit and he doubted that the dark Lord wanted to host the Azkaban escapees in his own headquarters.

The iron gate leading to the entrance stood wide open, but Severus had no qualms about the fact that Lucius would know about his presence as soon as he stepped through the wards. The pain in his arm had finally stopped, but pinpricks of needles seemed to penetrate his nerves as an aftereffect of the rough treatment. Walking towards the manor, Severus eyed the fountain and the perfectly cut grass with disdain. He’d never understood how someone could find pleasure in such things. But Lucius had always liked to show off his wealth. Somewhere in the distance he could hear the call of a peacock. Severus resisted the urge to roll his eyes.

He didn’t even have to knock before the door swung open on its own and revealed Lucius who strode towards him in a welcoming manner. “Severus,” the man said when he had reached the door and he briefly clasped Snape’s shoulder in greeting.

“Lucius,” Severus responded, acknowledging the gesture with a nod. “Where is he?” Snape asked and Lucius motioned for him to enter. An opulent signet ring flashed on his left hand.

The door fell shut, the sound echoing through the entrance hall while the blond man answered Severus’ question. “Upstairs. He is already waiting for you. Come.”

The wizard signaled Severus to follow him and both began walking towards the grand staircase leading to the upper floors.

“I haven’t seen you in while,” Lucius began while he led the way. Severus took the time to look at the man’s face. There were dark circles under his eyes, but he carried himself with the same elegance as he always did and a familiar air of equitable arrogance seemed to surround him. Despite the visible signs of exhaustion, not a single hair appeared to be out of place and Lucius’ outfit was sophisticated as always. Apparently, Severus wouldn’t need his Death Eater robes tonight.

“My condolences,” Snape said after a moment in his oily voice. “Your father-”
Lucius waved him off. “Narcissa already told me you spoke to her.”

“So, she did deliver my message,” Severus responded. “Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do. Dragonpox. Not uncommon at that age.”

“I know,” Lucius stated and took a turn. “She wanted to try anyway.” Severus said nothing. They walked in silence, the thick embroidered carpet on the floor muffling their steps.

After some time, the dull sound of voices could be heard. Eventually Lucius stopped in front of a door. The blond man gripped the decorated door handle but turned to look over his shoulder once more.

“He is in a good mood,” Lucius replied then, quietly answering the unspoken question that hung in the air. And so, he pushed the door open.

Bright light fell through three big windows facing the west and broke within the crystalline pieces of a chandelier dangling from the ceiling. Multicolored spots of it were reflected in a big mirror that adorned one of the walls, just as richly ornamented as the frames of the portraits which occupied the remaining space. The room was tastefully – if for Severus’ own tastes maybe too extravagantly – furnished. Despite all that and in contrast to the other rooms of the manor, this one could almost be described as cozy. But all these things were not what demanded Severus’ attention.

Inevitably his eyes were drawn to long spindly fingers that wandered over the back of an armchair. As soon as his gaze had fallen onto this pale hand that traced the silken fabric in idle nonchalance, all trace of homeliness had vanished from the light-flooded room. The air seemed to have frozen.

Lord Voldemort stood tall and inhumanly still next to the only seat of its kind amidst the sitting area. Pale skin stretched over a skull, translucent and paper thin in the sunlight; blue veins all so subtly drawing intricate patterns onto the back of a head. The few people in the room sat tensely on their seats, no one outright daring to move. Except for one man.

The dark Lord turned around. Slowly, careful. A flash of red beneath pale eyelids. “Ah, Severus...” Snape noticed from the corner of his eye that Lucius had joined his wife, who was sitting stiffly on one of the sofas, her delicate fingers wrapped around a glass of wine. “Welcome,” the cold voice said. Invisible needles prickled down Severus’ spine. The dark Lord’s stare was calculating as they pierced Severus. As if he already knew what was hidden behind the obscuring shadows veiling Snape’s mind.

"Mylord,” Severus said and bowed, averting his gaze as he did so. But when he looked up again, the snake-like man, eyes still fixated on Severus. The invasion was subtle, almost unnoticeable for those who were untrained in the art of minds. But Severus was prepared. His emotions were locked away, hidden, even from himself; the hollowness of some thoughts concealed by others whom he allowed to float on the surface.

A lie was best told if it wasn't so much as a lie as a twisted version of the truth.

Severus doubted that Dumbledore knew exactly how much reality could be found in this statement. As a spy, he walked a thin line between the sides. A line that was blurring from time to time. So much, that even Severus didn’t know what side he was walking on during some moments. One did not fool the dark Lord by simply pleading one’s loyalty, nor could Severus shut off his mind completely, blocking every invasion to achieve that goal.

It was the vulnerability, the truthfulness behind certain statements that had him earning the dark Lords trust, time and time again. If there was something the Dark Lord appreciated, it was not being lied to.
He could feel how the intruding presence brushed against the surface of his mind. Simple thoughts resided there though already interwoven with more complicated matters. The ridiculousness of the pompous room decoration. His annoyance about Dumbledore's demands to keep an eye on Potter. Umbridge breathing down his neck at school. A hint of curiosity after seeing the faces of the Death Eaters in the paper. And even further in the shadows: His hurt pride at not being informed about the breakout beforehand. The seconds seemed to stretch endlessly till eventually, the dark Lord broke their eye contact. Snape exhaled quietly, the tension leaving him with the subsiding intrusion.

Severus noticed that in one of the corners stood a grand piano, dust obscuring the shiny surface. His eyes flicked through the room, picking up more details. Some of the portraits lacked movement. Muggle paintings, landscapes and portraits of various people, their eyes dead and lifeless. If they hadn’t been worth a small fortune, Severus was sure, Lucius would’ve thrown them out. The Carrow siblings were lounging on a sofa opposite to the blond man and his wife. They were clad in their Death Eater robes as was Avery, who nervously rolled his wand between his hands. They had the same dark rings under their eyes as Lucius.

“Undoubtedly,” the dark Lord began and Severus’ attention shifted back immediately, “you’ve heard about the good news.” The man moved towards a side table where he picked up a glass of the same expensive wine that Narcissa was so desperately holding on to. “They already published an article in the Daily Prophet, didn’t they?” When the dark Lord turned around, he was grinning. Severus found it disturbing.

“Yes,” Snape replied, "Though I have to admit, my Lord, that I was surprised to read about the break out."

One of the Carrows breathed in a little too fast, to make it to sound natural. Those who hadn't been watching before lifted their gaze at the daring statement.

Voldemort’s long fingers traced over the rim of his glass. Luckily, he didn’t appear to be angered but instead he seemed amused. "Do not fret Severus. You are trusted with knowledge of ...different matters. It would do no good to distract you from your task now, would it?" He made a pause till Avery pressed out a fake sounding laugh while the Carrow siblings smirked. Lucius and Narcissa watched stoically.

The dark Lord raised his hand and they fell silent once more. The man looked down at the red liquid in his glass, swirling it once, twice, before he sat it back onto the table. Whatever amusement had been visible before had vanished when the dark Lord looked up again. "There was no need for you to know, Severus. And sensitive information like this is better not handled in close proximity to Dumbledore..."

Snape's face betrayed no emotion. But something had pushed its claws deep into his flesh at the last sentence, holding his stomach in an iron grip. The emotion trickled down his neck like cold water, before he could lock it back up in the depth of his mind. The implication of the statement had been clear. Snake-like nostrils flared, as if to pick up on whatever scent it was, that wafted through the air. Smelling the fear.

Suddenly the dark Lord’s eyes flicked to the side, lingering on Avery’s fidgeting hands for a moment before they returned to Severus.

“Our …loyal friends are resting upstairs right now. But they will need some tending.” The dark Lord tilted his head as if he was listening for something. “They should be waking soon. If they haven’t already,” he added, his voice almost gentle. Severus did not mistake it for kindness.
“Certainly Severus, you brought enough of the potions they require?” the Dark Lord asked then expectantly.

“I think so, milord,” Severus replied. “I have taken an assortment of potions with me, though I might need to fetch additional ones depending on the state they are in.”

“Ah,” the dark Lord said seemingly pleased, “Prepared as ever.” The snake-like man walked over to the armchair, claiming the spot in a fluid motion.

“If I may suggest,” Lucius began and all faces, sans Narcissa turned to him. The blond man paused then, but when the dark Lord showed no sign of interrupting him, he spoke again. “Severus could use the floo in the entrance hall. It isn’t being watched like so many others these days. If he were to require additional potions that is.”

“He may,” the dark Lord said and waved his hand dismissively. “You will lead Severus to his patients. Afterwards we shall continue our discussion concerning the Ministry.”

"Of course." Lucius stood up and made his way over.

"My Lord." Severus bowed and when he straightened up, Lucius’ was already waiting at the door.

Once again Severus followed Malfoy through his house. The watchful eyes of portraits followed them on the way. They turned a corner passing through a hidden door that led to a smaller set of servant stairs. A short cut, according to Lucius. Never used by house-elves but human servants when paid workers were still considered a status symbol and not as much as a nuisance as they were today. Long before his time, obviously.

Eventually they entered wide a corridor with doors leading from it left and right, which Severus guessed were guest rooms. The most obvious hint that they had reached their destination though was sitting on the ground, seemingly asleep. The short man had pulled his shabby cloak around him, leaving only his pointed nose and large bald patch on his head to be seen.

Lucius facial expression displayed his distaste of the wizard. Without hesitation, he pulled out his wand and pointed it at the man. If the man’s squeaky yelp was anything to go by Lucius had fired a stinging hex. Wormtail shot up and blinked a few times, his watery eyes jumping between them.

“Malfoy,” he uttered in recognition, “Snape.”

Severus sneered at the man.

“The dark Lord will certainly be pleased if he hears about your lack of care regarding the task, he entrusted you with,” Lucius stated, his aversion clearly audible.

Wormtail flinched, his magical silvery hand shining beneath his sleeve. A shuffling could be heard behind one of the doors. The man’s eyes flicked fearful to the room in question.

“Are they awake?” Lucius asked and Pettigrew’s head snapped back to them.

“They have been resting for the last few hours.”

Severus snorted. “And you know that of course because you kept watch so attentively,” he drawled and watched not without satisfaction how with every word rolling over his tongue, Pettigrew’s expression turned sourer. The man glared at Severus, who sneered but Lucius interrupted them before Wormtail could respond to the jab.
“Wake the others,” Malfoy ordered. Only reluctantly the short man turned to face him and there was a grimace on his face.

Lucius’ icy eyes pierced Pettigrew. “It is your privilege to stay in this house,” the blond man said sharply while he towered over the other wizard. “It would do you better to be grateful for my generosity to let you stay in my home. If it were for me, no Wizard of such filthy descent as you would be allowed to take step over my threshold—” Pettigrew flinched back despite Lucius nonchalant tone - “but I respect the dark Lord’s wishes… That being said, your presence is being tolerated; nothing more. You are here because our Lord called you here, but keep in mind that I am in no way obligated to treat you like my other guests. And should you, in any way, test my patience,” Lucius said and looked down at the wretched man who now stood hunched over, “you can go and spend your days in the cellar. That is—” Lucius added and sneered - “after all, where rats like you belong.”

Severus smirked when Wormtail squirmed under Lucius gaze, hate flashing in his watery eyes while there was nothing, he could do about it. Lucius' voice could draw you in, a trait that had been already evident during their Hogwarts years. Polite smiles and pretty words could mask an insult you only realized had been aimed at you when the man was long gone. Unlike Snape who never bothered with unnecessary pleasantries and small talk, Lucius seemed to thrive in it. But all politeness and affected behaviour aside, Lucius was a man whose threats should be taken seriously. And Wormtail knew that just as well as Snape.

Meanwhile the blond man had turned around to look at Severus, “I will make sure that you find some floo powder in the entrance hall should you require it.”

Severus nodded in acknowledgement while Lucius turned back to Pettigrew. “Why are you still standing here?” Wormtail squeaked and shuffled away, heading for the door furthest away, knocking before he slipped inside.

Lucius sighed. “I realize that filth like him are useful from time to time, but why the dark Lord tolerates him in his presence is a mystery to me.”

“Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”
The muggle saying had left Severus lips before he was even fully aware of it. But Lucius didn’t seem to have noticed.

“I suppose you are right. A man like Wormtail should be kept an eye on,” Lucius said. “After all, he was a traitor once before.”

Something bitter went up Severus’ throat.

Lucius, unaware of Severus tension continued his pondering. “Who knows how quick he would switch sides again if the opportunity presented itself?” he said quietly and his eyes followed Wormtail who reappeared and knocked onto another room to wake its occupant.

Malfoy’s statement had caused some memories to resurface, that Severus desperately tried to keep down. Lily’s death had been in equal measure his and Wormtail’s fault, despite the dark Lord being the one to carry out her sentence.

There was no denying that if it hadn’t been for Severus bearing the news of the prophecy, the dark Lord would’ve never even considered the Potters a big enough threat to go after. He hadn’t known then what his words would do and how big of an impact they would make. But he had begged the dark Lord to spare Lily, even though it hadn’t been enough.

He had gone to the house after she’d died. But everything had already been taken care of. Two bodies had been carried away while the third had been burned in the backyard. And while a baby
was hailed the savior of the wizarding world, only a small smudge of blood remained of its mother. The spot where her head had made impact with the ground after she’d been hit by the killing curse.

Severus had visited her grave too, just after the Potters had been buried. At the same time Black had probably been shipped off to Azkaban. Only two people had attended the funeral. He had watched them from the distance. Lupin, shabby as always and Lily’s sister, whose hideous black dress and veil were still burnt into his memories. And while Severus resented himself for being part of the reason that Lily had died, he at least could claim the part of someone who hadn’t known what his words would do. Pettigrew on the other hand… He had willingly given up the location of the Potters. No amount of fear or torture could’ve extracted the knowledge from his mind if he wasn’t willing to give it up. Even Black would’ve done a better job at that. Not that Severus would ever admit it. And while Snape resented himself for his part in Lily’s death, Wormtail was just as guilty - if not more.

“Well,” Lucius said and cleared his throat. “I shall head back to report to the dark Lord.” He was eyeing Severus in a strange way. “If you require anything else feel free to send Wormtail.” Severus nodded and Lucius turned around, forcing Pettigrew to jump back through the doorway where he’d just exited as he left with swift steps.

With a heavy sigh, Severus turned to the closest door. He didn’t bother to knock.

The room was dark, curtains pulled close but with a flick of Severus’ wand, sunlight fell through the window and onto a man who was currently trying to sit up on the bed.

Severus stopped. If he hadn’t known it better, he’d have sworn there was an inferi sitting front of him.

“Ahhh, Snape,” the skeletal man said with a croaking voice after he’d blinked a few times in the bright light. But as much as the appearance was shocking, the stench that emitted from the person was even worse. A yellow toothed grin split the face and Severus approached the man.

“Rookwood,” he said. More of a guess than real recognition, the scars on his face the only thing to go by.

The man laughed. “Not as pretty as I was, am I?” Rookwood lifted a trembling arm, thin fingers combing through even thinner grey hair. His dark eyes glinted from deep sockets. They followed Severus’ movements as he stopped next to the bed and pulled out his bag with the potions. “You don’t seem to have changed at all,” Rookwood continued after a moment. “The old man still headmaster?” Severus looked up, but the other wizard snorted and grinned. “Ah don’t answer. If he weren’t, you wouldn’t be standing in front of me but be laying in one of these rooms too, that were so generously provided by Abraxas.”

“Abraxas is dead. Lucius is now the head of the house,” Severus stated while he reached into his bag.

Rookwood fell silent. For some time, the only noise was the clinking of glass while Severus pulled out various potion vials and held them against the light. Severus hummed. No. Maybe this one. He pulled another vial out and sniffed its contents.

“Ah,” Rookwood said then. “And I thought old Abraxas would outlive me, the icy bastard. And yet here I am.” Rookwood chuckled but it turned into a cough. Severus only spared the shaking man a glance while he pulled another potion out of his bag. Rookwood reached for a glass of water that was standing on the bedside table. He spilled more than he drank but it seemed to help. “How did he die?” Rookwood asked after the glass was returned to its previous spot.
“He passed in August. Dragonpox.”

“Hmm.”

Severus turned to look at Rookwood and presented him with four vials. “These first three should help with the malnourishment, the cough and your overall …physical state. This one-” Severus held up the fourth vial and put it onto the bedside table- “is Dreamless sleep potion. I’ve only got small dosages with me since I’m guessing all of you will need it and I have yet to make more.” Rookwood grunted. “I’d advise you to take the first three now,” Severus said while he packed up his things and headed out of the room.

As he closed the door behind him, he was met with the sight of Wormtail standing in the middle of the hallway. They stared at each other silently. It was the first time that they were alone with each other since, well, years. The rat twitched as if in fight or flight mode but kept his mouth shut - undeniably in fear of Severus reporting to Lucius. Though there was something about him in that moment that reminded Severus of the many times Wormtail had stood and watched, yeah even laughed when Potter had jumped him in the hallways of Hogwarts when he’d still been a boy.

An old wave of hate welled up inside Snape and he felt the urge to pull out his wand, but he pushed it down. He would not waste his time by lowering himself to this level. Black’s level. He was no longer a boy and he had a task to do. He dismissed Pettigrew with a snort and went back to his work.

The next people he encountered were Jugson and Gibbon, both barely conscious enough to drown their potions before they fell back into their beds.

After Gibbon followed Mulciber, who was almost as jumpy as Wormtail, a haunted look in his eyes as they flicked through the room. Severus gave him the same potions that he’d given the others and additional potion to soothe the mind. He thought about bringing something that helped with hallucinations the next time - just to be sure.

Thorfinn Rowle was quiet. Apathetic eyes stared past Snape through a filthy veil of blond hair. He took the potions Severus gave him and drank them without complaint. Severus’ gaze was drawn to Rowles bony fingers which were stained with crusted blood. Where his nails should’ve been, he saw gory patches. But nothing magic wouldn’t fix later on.

Dolohov was the first one after Rookwood who could hold a conversation. There was a hard streak around his mouth and he drained his vials as if they were the revenge he was so obviously thirsting for.

The Lestrange brothers were both up and talking quietly to each other. They seemed to have shared a room. Severus doubted that it was out of necessity but after staying alone in a cell for over a decade it was nothing he questioned. They took their potions without protest, but there was hate in their eyes as they took in Severus’ appearance. Undeniably, they had come to the same conclusion as Rookwood, only they took it more personal.

Travers grinned maniacally when Severus entered his room. The few minutes Severus' spent in there were slightly disturbing. During the whole time, Travers had switched between sobbing and laughing hysterically while he petted his blanket with a maniacal look on his face. As glad as Severus was to get out of that room, he didn't look forward to the next even though it was the last.

She looked up when Severus entered, her eyes wandering over his body and coming back to his face. He couldn’t help but notice that she was the only one to have taken a bath since he had first stepped into one of the guest rooms. But here wasn’t much left of her former beauty. Her hair hung
long and matted over her gaunt shoulders. She bared her damaged teeth at him.

“Bellatrix” Severus said as he greeted her.

Her eyes continued to follow him like a cat.

Vials clinked together as Severus compared the potions, his eyes switching from his bag to occasionally roam over Bellatrix form. Malnourished, like the others. Maybe something to get the scabs and wounds to heal up quicker.

Bellatrix clicked her tongue and Snape held back a grimace when he instinctively looked up. She snickered.

“Oh, Severus,” she began sweetly, if a voice abused by years of screaming in Azkaban could even reach that tone, “Dumbledore has trained you well,” she added but then her voice gained an edge. “But that’s no miracle after all the years you spent as his lapdog.” She looked down at him even though she was sitting on a bed and Severus was standing. They stared at each other for a moment and then the witch began to cackle.

Her laughter pulled memories from the depth of Severus’ mind. Memories he had long forgotten and locked away, but suddenly he was nineteen again; watching in awe how the witch had wielded her wand to torture a faceless Muggle.

Her laughter rang the same back then - the day he had been granted the honor to accompany the Death Eaters on a raid for the first time.

Nothing could have prepared him for this night. There had been talks, jabs and bets on who of the "rookies" would throw up and who wouldn't.

He had listened with his head held high as the dark Lord had spoken to them, his elite, his most trusted, before they had apparated to a Muggle village. This raid had been a retaliation to avenge the deaths of those who had fallen victim to one of Crouch's most recent organized hunts.

Severus had watched with grim satisfaction at the beginning, had not cared for the screams and the laughter, the scent of smoke in the air. He had killed just like the others, with flashes of green and the Sectum Sempra. A curse that would become his trademark.

Only when the nightmares had set in days afterwards, he realized that they had purposefully kept him from encountering any children.

Severus would later learn that it was an unspoken rule, established without an order or a conscious decision. Those who were sent to the raids by the dark Lord to keep the more enthusiastic individuals in line also made sure that none of the "first-timers" would face a kid younger than thirteen. He had been grateful for that fact. But he wasn't as lucky afterwards.

Despite all the cruelty that was so easily displayed by each of Voldemort's followers, this was a line most Death Eaters didn't want to cross.

People like Yaxley or Rookwood were lucky. Lucius as the dark Lords right-hand man had been expected to take part in at least a few of the raids, but as a valuable Ministry workers it was better to keep them away from places where Aurors could show up any moment and have them recognized or captured.

Foot soldiers like Severus had been on the other hand...

The count of children was the highest amongst the survivors. But there were days when they were ordered to keep no one alive. And an order of the dark Lord would always be carried out.

Rosier, before his death at Moody's hand, had been one of the few Death Eaters to actively seek out
the children on these raids. He would kill them one by one with the *Avada Kedavra* not even bothering to end the miserable lives of the crying parents before he moved to the next house. Severus had despised him with all his might after he had learned of this fact.

Rosier had always been a person he had counted amongst his friends at Hogwarts. Or at least considered as one of his more pleasant acquaintances. Apparently a tradition Evan had taken over after he had replaced his father in Voldemort's ranks. The hate had turned into something else when Snape witnessed the aftermath of what someone like Greyback would leave if he got there before Rosier.

The dark Lord didn't care how they reached certain results if his orders were carried out. But fear was a powerful weapon.

Severus had tried to avoid taking part in raids as much as he could as time went on.

But in the beginning it had been different. There was a reason that he had been able to climb ranks so fast. His *efficiency* had been impressive. Justifying his actions by things he had been told and repeated without much thought, Severus had killed without restraint.

After all that was what a Muggle deserved. They were nothing more but filthy pigs, inferior according to his fellow Death Eaters and who was he to deny this statement? Had he not experienced it first hand?

At that time Severus had resented his mother almost as much as he had hated his father. She who was just as capable as any witch had cowered before her Muggle husband despite her magic. How pathetic Severus had deemed her then. He had despised her for staying with Tobias Snape, while she not once raised a hand to defend herself when the *fucking dishes* weren't *DONE AGAIN*!

*Oh, I'm so sorry Eileen.*

He had always been sorry.

*I'm so sorry I lost my temper, but look it wasn't my fault that I got so angry...*  

No.

*Eileen darling... I didn't mean it...*  

Tobias Snape had never been at fault

*...but if you had just done the FUCKING DISHES, Eileen I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GET SO ANGRY!*  

*And WHY THE FUCK IS HE AWAKE!? HUH!? What are you staring at boy?!*  

There was still a dent in the wall where the single dirty frying pan had made impact next to Severus' head.

Severus hadn't known then, how deep love could reach and that his mother in her own twisted way had loved her husband still after everything he did.

The realization later in life though hadn't made it much better. He hadn't been able to understand why his mother hadn't hexed Tobias Snape into oblivion the next time he had even *dared* to throw as much as a cigarette after her. Why she hadn't pulled out her wand and showed Tobias Snape what being a Witch really meant.

But that night when Severus had watched Bellatrix cursing this Muggle, he had seen what this supposed superiority truly meant.
The man had not mattered to Severus then - he hadn't allowed himself to feel sorry for a Mudblood and yet... This one man out of many had stayed with Severus to this day, his image more vivid then any of the others whose ghosts haunted him in his nightmares. Because Snape remembered how for a split second, even then – before Lily, before the mark, he had doubted their cause.

When the dark blood of this nameless Muggle had soiled the ground in an ever-growing puddle of red till the liquid had reached Severus’ feet and screams rang through the air.

He had watched, frozen on the spot, how Bellatrix had torn the man’s flesh from his bones, exposing more of his ribcage to the stuffy air with every spell she fired while the screams had continued.

There had been so much blood.
Too much blood and yet it hadn't stopped.

Where Severus had been standing, his robes had slowly begun to soak up the liquid.

But the man simply hadn’t died.
If not from the shock the Muggle should've long been unconscious because of the blood loss.
Severus stared and Bellatrix had thrown cutting curse after cutting curse while the puddle beneath his feet had continued to grow with every passing second.
And the man had screamed, screamed himself hoarse while his bones had been freed from their fleshy cage. Not allowed to die, not allowed to fall unconscious. Kept alive by magic.

Bellatrix favoured the cruciatus curse over all other curses. But while the dark Lord had trained her in the dark Arts she had liked to experiment from time to time. Testing the knowledge she had gained...

The sight had caused the first crack in Severus' naively constructed world-view.
Bellatrix' cackling laugh while she had taken apart that Muggle had forced Severus' to consider that maybe magic didn't make them superior. It just gave them the power to do what they wanted.

A thought that had been discarded quickly but stuck with him over the course of the years. But he hadn't allowed himself to doubt then. After all, wasn't power what counted?

Three hours after the screams of the man had died down Severus' arm had been on fire from the taking of the mark but he had worn it like a badge of honour. His very own reward.

Over the next few days every lick of invisible flames against Severus’ skin had been a reminder of the cause he was serving and Severus had been proud.

He had belonged...

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Forcefully pushing back his memories of the past Severus locked up his emotions. He couldn't allow himself to feel sorry for the people who had fallen victim to his own foolishness including himself. Not if he wanted to keep his sanity.

A glance at witch who was no longer laughing but watching him with newfound interest reminded him even more of his place.

Bellatrix had always lived on an edge, closer to crossing a certain border than others. Azkaban wouldn't have helped her sanity and being aware of his surroundings was essential in company of people like her.

Despite the state of Bellatrix appearance she held herself like royalty. “You lived like a king in a
castle, didn't you?" She asked suddenly, "Lazy and fattening up in company of your mudblood friends while we rotted in Azkaban..."

Her anger could no longer be overheard. Severus watched her carefully. "How was it all these years?" she spat.

"Bella-"

"You dare to interrupt me! Filthy halfblood," Bellatrix hissed, "While you lived a life in luxury, protected by Dumbledore of all people-" she continued, voice almost hysterical while she began to shift in her bed - "I had to listen to Mulciber two cells further down arguing with the voices in his head for the last THREE YEARS!"

Snape had pointed his wand so fast at her that she couldn't even blink. The witch swallowed, her thin throat bobbing right in front of the tip of the offending weapon, frozen on the spot where she had been about to leap from the bed, fingers clenching around nothing but thin air.

"I suggest you compose yourself before making any hasty decisions," Snape said calmly.

They stared at each other for a moment. No one willing to move first. Bellatrix exhaled and sank back into her pillows. Her burst of strength had apparently drained her more than anticipated even though she masked it well. She sneered at him. "Severus, Severus... still the same boring person I remembered you to be."

"If it brings you any comfort, you don't seem to have changed that much either," Snape replied dryly.

Bellatrix huffed. "Go on then," she spat, crossing her arms. "Do what you have to do and run home to your mudblood friends. At least I know that my stay in Azkaban was worth it. Our loyalty will be rewarded by the dark Lord and we will reclaim our righteous place by his side. His most loyal. His most trusted."

'Not changed much indeed,' Severus thought while Bellatrix continued her ramblings. Her fanaticism didn't seem to have diminished at all during her time with the Dementors.

During his stay in her room Bellatrix didn't try to attack him again, which Severus guessed was mostly due to the calming draught he gave her as soon as he was able to get her to drink the first of his potions.

Severus was on his way back to the room where the dark Lord and the others were residing and he had almost reached it when suddenly the muffled sound of an argument interrupted the silence. It seemed to come from the entrance hall. Dull voices that grew louder with the increasing intensity of the dispute. Then a noise like a whiplash. A spell perhaps?

Snape froze where he stood. 'Had Aurors entered the residence?' As soon as the thought invaded his mind he dismissed it. 'It wasn't very likely. Lucius would've known. If not the Ministry who would dare to enter Malfoy manor without an invitation. The order? Even less of an option.'

Severus held his breath and listened. The noise downstairs quieted down. It didn't take long till he could hear someone approaching. The heavy breathing was a better indicator of the distance parting them than the muffled steps on the carpet. Snape moved into the space of a doorway, disillusioning himself and keeping his wand in hand.

But it turned out to only be Lucius. Severus waited another moment before he cancelled the charm
that was camouflaging him. Even then, Lucius didn't spot Severus immediately. The blond man
was breathing heavily, obviously in distress and he pushed a few strands of hair out of his face
while he was walking toward Severus in a swift pace. Only then did he look up and notice the other
man.

"What is going on?" Severus asked as soon as Malfoy had raised his head.

Lucius angrily fixed his tie that seemed to have loosened during whatever had been going on
downstairs. "Greyback!" he hissed then and pushed past Severus who raised an eyebrow but
followed the other man.

"He is here?" Severus asked suprised.

Lucius grunted in acknowledgement. "I convinced him to wait in the entrance hall for the time
being."

That explained the argument. But not the reason for Greyback to appear. "What does he want? I
thought he was recruiting in other parts of the country," Severus said while he followed after
Lucius who had not once slowed down in his pace.

"He wants to talk to the dark Lord," Lucius retorted. "Apparently he's got news... I can't believe the
nerve of the man. He shows up here! At my house!" Malfoy ranted, now sounding more like he
was talking to himself and not Severus. "The nerve of the man. Isn't it enough that I am housing
thirteen fugitives right now? No, of course not. That werewolf is standing in my entrance hall with
half of his pack waiting outside of my wards."

They had reached their destination and Lucius exhaled once, regaining his composure before he
pushed open the door.

Chapter End Notes

I hope this chapter didn't feel long you in terms of exhaustingly long. I felt the pace
might be a bit slow at times, but maybe that's just because I took so long to write it.
Thanks to all of you who are still reading this fic, it's been almost a year since I started
posting and over a year since I started writing so I guess that's pretty cool.

SHORT QUESTION below

My Snape pov. part turns out to be longer than I planned. I actually wanted to write an
order meeting from Snapes pov. too but since I already wrote more than I planned with
Snape in focus, and it is taking pretty long I am just gonna ask you guys.
Would you like me to continue to write from Snapes pov till after the Order meeting,
(which would be at least another chapter) OR do you want me to switch back to Harry
and Death?

Also Snape turned out to be pretty Death Eatery in his motivations and that and yet
now super on Dumbledores side. I wanted to have him a little more neutral tbh but
maybe that's still coming with the Occlumency lessons
End Notes

Comments and Kudos are always welcome.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!